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The Brogue
THE CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL
OF BELHAVEN COLLEGE

BELHAVEN COLLEGE
Brogue

(brōg), n.

1. a marked accent, esp. Irish or Scottish, when speaking English: *a sweet lilt of brogue in her voice.*

2. any strong regional accent.

3. a rough shoe of untanned leather, formerly worn in parts of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.
Contents

The Brogue 2007 Volume 7

From the Editors
The Brogue Awards
   Undergraduate
   High School
Student Awards and Publications
Staff and Contributor Biographies
Belhaven College Information

Poetry

I Am Not a Doctor, Christina Miles
Silent Sunday Morning in the Cafe, David Rahaim
My Mother's Last Breath, Cheryl Alexander
A Portrait of a City, Addie Leak
In Living I Die, In Dying I Live, James Humphries
Strip Poker, Stephanie Evans
Concentric Homesickness, Adie Smith
My Mother's Loss of Dignity, Cheryl Alexander
Lullaby of Leaves, Addie Leak
You and I, David Rahaim
Tessie, Martha Krystaponis
A Cake Decorator Reflects on SpongeBob and Boys: A Poem About Breakups, Redo's, and Starting Over, Stephanie Evans
   Seaweed and the Ocean, Christina Miles
A Girl Gets Sick of a Rose, Addie Leak
To Be a Stone, Stacy Nott
Remnants of the Oregon Trail, Lydia Diers
Today I Met Reality, Elyse Marcellino
Officer Kent Interviews a Witness, Cheryl Alexander
Amy Marie, Stacy Nott
Midnight at Carmel St. Vincent, Stephanie Evans  
Analysis of a Rope, Martha Krystaponis  
My Sister: The Little Mermaid, Christina Miles  
Cleaning Out My Grandmother’s Attic, Addie Leak  
11.15.97, Adie Smith  
Croissants, Addie Leak  
Return to Salem, Stacy Nott  
First Cold Spell, Addie Leak  
Bear, Jill Matarazzi  
Madison, MS, 11:30 PM, and So On, Haylee Franklin  
I Am a Shell; There Is No Answer, Cheryl Alexander  
Farewell of the Sugarplum Fairy, Lydia Diers  
Digging for Sand Crabs, Martha Krystaponis  
House-Sitting at My Grandparents’, Christina Miles  
After-Party, Addie Leak  

Fiction  

Under the Name of Saunders, Andrew Hedglin  
Twentieth Birthdays, Elyse Marcellino  
Tilted Squares, Brandon Whitlock  
A Perfect Date, Christina Miles  
Duskiya, Catherine Karlak  
A Prison of the Mind, Lea Schumacher  
To Have and to Hold, Andrew Hilleke  
A Day at the Zoo, Addie Leak  
The Grey and Endless Gulf, Andrew Hedglin  
I Was a Second-Grade Julie Andrews, Brandon Whitlock  
Tombstone Pond, Andrew Hilleke  

Nonfiction  

Belize 2001, Jill Matarazzi  
What Goes Around Comes Around, Jill Matarazzi
Artwork

Study of a Sculpture, Adie Smith
Forgotten, Erica Goforth
Journey, Shio Akiho
Shaving, Kelsey McNamee
Standing Beside Myself Again, Lucy McPhail
Earring, Rupa Kern
The Cutty Sark, Addie Leak
Haystack Rock at Canon Beach, Oregon, Kimberly Brown
The Firmament Displayed, Sarah Bannerman
Self Portrait, Susanna Davenport
Richness, Hosik Kim
Olivia, Susannah Nelson
121, Steve Delatte
Meowsa, Jaimie Bolton
Safe, Series, #1, Samantha Mobley
Green, Kenny Richardson
Safe, Series, #2, Samantha Mobley

High-School Contest Winners

Alligators, Lauren Klaskala (Poetry)
Sibling Ties, Rachel Wiley (Fiction)
The Organic Vegetable Garden, Lauren Klaskala (Nonfiction)
From the Editors

Bret Lott, in his essay *Toward a Definition of Creative Nonfiction*, tells the story of the Reverend Francis Kilvert, an English curate who kept a journal from 1870 to 1879. He led a simple life, and Lott records that Kilvert reflects, in one passage, on why he even bothered to keep such a journal. “Life appears to me,” Kilvert writes, “such a curious and wonderful thing that it almost seems a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some record such as this.” Lott concludes that this is part of what it means to write creative nonfiction; the very act of writing is an attempt to preserve the lives we have lived. It’s true for poetry and fiction as well as for nonfiction; every piece of good writing preserves some aspect of life, the author’s or someone else’s.

Whether a piece deals with witnessing a loved one’s decline, living through the awkwardness of a first date, or experiencing the exhilaration of being onstage, it encapsulates part of what it means to be alive. For the Christian, the act of writing also demonstrates what it means to live in faith by mirroring God’s role as Creator. Both art and writing play major roles in the Christian walk: more than once the Bible tells us that God wants us to be creative. In Exodus, for example, God gives specific details for the temple decorations; in Psalms, David’s poetry of praise is set to music. In obedience to this calling, both the writers and the artists featured in this volume of the *Brogue* have created works that shimmer with vitality.

We are very grateful to our advisor, Dr. Randall Smith, for his support and guidance—not only with the publication of this year’s journal, but also in our studies and lives. We also would like to thank our industrious and good-natured staff for their assistance, as well as Bryant Butler for the layout and design of this year’s *Brogue*. Finally, we owe a big thanks to the Belhaven Art Department faculty for their enthusiasm and assistance in providing the artwork contained in this volume.

Producing the *Brogue* has been a learning experience for us this semester in more ways than one as we (the editors) learned what it means to lead and to edit. We have very much enjoyed reading through the pieces included in this *Brogue*, as well as seeing what our incredible art department has to offer. We hope that the final product of our efforts will bring you as much pleasure as it has brought to us already.

Addie Leak
Jill Matarazzi
Editors
This issue is dedicated to the memory of

ANDREW HILLEKE

1983-2007

Belhaven College Alumnus, May 2006
Friend to the Creative Writing Program at Belhaven

Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His saints.
—Psalm 116:15 (NKJV)

All the way my Saviour leads me;
Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promis’d
In my Father’s house above...
—All the Way My Saviour Leads Me, Fanny Crosby
Study of a Sculpture, (B/W Photograph)

BY AD’IE SMITH
I am not a doctor; I am a writer.  
I don’t think I would switch.  
Why? Because, I call

My sister, and we talk. She says, 
While driving home from medical school,  
“I smell like a cadaver.” We talk more.  
I ask why. “Because we started dissecting  
Today. We’re working on the neck,  
And moving down from there.”  
“Oh, of course.” What else could  
I say? I call her two weeks later.  
“We are playing with the arms,  
Practicing shots. I got Fred in the  
Deltoid.” She named her cadaver Fred.  
“How fun,” I say. At the end of the semester,  
Fred’s torso has been pulled apart and pieced  
Back together. “I think we’ll need new  
Bodies in January. Fred looks  
Rather mangled,” she says.

But me? I tell her about my writing  
Class: the stories I’ve written  
And ones I’m reading. “They say  
Ezra Pound spent ten hours a day  
Editing poems.” I edit mine, injecting  
Iambs and analyzing meter. When  
It’s done, every sentence has been  
Changed. “I’m glad we’re starting  
A new genre next semester,” I  
Say. “I feel rather mangled, and I  
Think I reek of syntax.”
Silent Sunday Morning in the Café
DAVID RAHAIM

What life can I assume
a potted vine has?

Was it moral for some person
to plant that vine
in its shallow pot,

to water the plant
when soil goes dry,

watch over months its growth

and delicately curl its reaching green arm
around the coffee mug display shelf?

Was it moral to plant
the vine here
where there is no
drowning rain
no burning sun
no grazing animals
or unyielding ground
no children playing with matches
or absent minded lovers
plucking off leaves?

Was it moral to plant
the vine here,
in this coffee shop,

where spinning fans
move a paper snowflake,

the last of the Christmas decorations

hanging from the ceiling tiles
like a forgotten
star

?
The steady, slowing thunder of the locomotive’s engine gave one last lurch before it halted as the *Old South Express* coming from Nashville stopped at the depot in Corinth, Mississippi. Jacob Matthew Saunders stepped onto the baked concrete platform and smelled the Mississippi air, thick with honeysuckle, for the first time in nineteen years. There was no one but a sleepy station master, an unconscious wino, and a chorus of crickets to greet him for his grand return home, though he expected no better. Jacob staggered up to the edge of the platform and then staggered right off, willing himself not to use his arms to stop his fall. After he landed, Jacob checked for a broken shoulder, but was luckless. Everything seemed to be intact. The oppressive July sun was much too hot, so Jacob got up, dusted himself off, slipped off his jacket, and draped it over his left arm. Then, realizing his foolishness, he ambled around to the steps of the train depot. He sat down, hung his head, and wept.

Hot as the afternoon was, Jacob decided to walk the two miles back to his childhood home. He had known when his train was coming in but had not called his father with the arrival date. In fact, his father was not aware he was coming home at all. He had been contacted by his Aunt Jeanie. Of course, not being able to ask his father for help was nothing new. It had never seemed to Jacob, or his younger brother Eli for that matter, that their father had ever been too compassionate a man. His face had been creased into jowls ever since they could remember, and his ferocity with the leather belt had lost no velocity in the eighteen years they had lived with him. His stern manner had convinced his boys of the reality of Santa Claus for years because they could not conceive their father would ever spend all night assembling bicycles for them just for Christmas.

Jacob looked back toward the direction of the train depot. He remembered one day in 1957 when he was eight and Eli seven. They were playing cops and robbers on a Sunday afternoon when the then-busier depot was deserted; of course, playing around the depot was against the direct orders of both parents. Eli had been the robber, and with his natural tactical skills, had taken the higher ground of the platform. Jacob had been patrolling the perimeter with the great care and his trusty pop-gun ready at his side.

“Bam! You’re dead!” Eli shouted with jubilation, possible only from an unpunished outlaw.

Jacob was disgraced, again. Eli was always winning these games. If Jacob didn’t want this, about being beaten three times in one week, to get all over school tomorrow he had better think fast.
“You missed! The tragedy was off by a country mile!” Jacob had meant trajectory, but honestly, his new terminology had worked well enough. After all, bad guys weren’t supposed to win. “So bam! You’re the one who’s dead, you slimy rascal!”

Eli, being the more agreeable brother, played along. In fact, he was a little bit of a ham. So as he was swooning in his death, hands over his heart, steps unsteady, he was not paying any particular attention to where the edge of the platform was and consequently, stepped off into nothing.

The resounding crunch was enough to tell both the Saunders boys that Eli had broken something. Jacob had been hoping it was just Eli’s plastic pistol, but it soon became obvious it was, in fact, Eli’s left shoulder.

The game ended and the brothers dejectedly trudged home down the gravel road. Eli slouched because he was in manifest pain; but Jacob sagged because he was going to take the heavy end of the licks for this misadventure and because he was older and thus responsible for Eli’s well-being. It would be evident who the leader of the expedition to the forbidden train depot was.

It pained Jacob to remember the scheme he concocted next. He fashioned Eli a crude sling out of Sears catalogues, pine tar, and bits of spare rope, which was wholly inadequate.

The situation became known in a most unfortunate manner that night at dinner. “Elisha, kindly remove your elbow from the table. We are not animals, and this is not a trough,” Mrs. Saunders gently corrected the younger brother.

“I can’t, Momma.”

“Eli, stop fooling around. Mind your mother and take your elbow off the table,” their father grumbled.

“But, Daddy, you don’t understand, I really—”

“—What he means to say,” Jacob interrupted, “is that his shoulder is really sore from playing baseball today. That’s what we did this afternoon.”

“Well, all the same, I appreciate his pain, but this is a matter of etiquette. Remember to exercise in moderation, boys.” Mrs. Saunders cheerfully chirped.

“I can’t! I broke my shoulder! Jacob and I was playing at the train depot!”

Much action ensued after that statement. Everybody got up from the dinner table. Mrs. Saunders took off Eli’s shirt. Jacob ran to go get the country doctor and was granted a temporary reprieve. Eli was howling as his mother removed the shoddily made arm-sling. Mr. Saunders glowered and presided over the chaos.

When Dr. Fredericks came to set Eli’s shoulder, Mr. Saunders grabbed Jacob by his wrist with one hand and brandished a leather belt with the other.

“Dammit, boy! I can’t believe the disrespect you have for your parents!”
First, you deliberately disobeyed orders, and now your brother’s got a busted arm. You made a mistake. You would have gotten five licks for that, but now you got a bigger problem. *Ten licks*, boy. You gotta learn to be a man and face the consequences. Boy, don’t you ever lie or run or hide! If you ain’t gonna do it ‘cause someone tells you, do it for yourself, son!”

Eleven years later, Jacob and Eli were just outside of Cincinnati, looking for construction work and taking their great trip across America. Occasionally, in some diner along the way, they would meet a band of hippies heading west to California and both groups would laugh at each other’s strange ways. The Saunders boys would laugh at the hippies’ long hair and the hippies would laugh at their Southern accents. They both, however, shared an intense dislike for wearing shoes.

It was in Ohio they received a postcard from their mother. The postman had delivered a powder keg: each boy’s draft notice had come in the mail. The Saunders had always been a soldiering family and were known for their patriotism all over Alcorn County. In fact, that’s how they ended up in Corinth. Their great-great-grandfather had moved them there from Pennsylvania to live closer to his brother’s unmarked grave at a Civil War cemetery. A member of their family had fought in every American conflict. Jacob and Eli’s own father was a decorated veteran of both World War II and Korea. But their mother was not a Saunders and had already contacted her uncle in the government to secure the boys Canadian visas. Run or fight. Mother or father. This was their choice.

Because their mother was the more beloved of their parents, they decided to follow her plan. Jacob, being the quicker-minded of the two, went to work right away. He bought them two train tickets that left in a week for St. Paul, Minnesota. They could meet one of the contacts from their travels there, hop in a Volkswagen, and head for Toronto.

Jacob felt good about the plan of outrunning of their destiny, but he could see the doubt in Eli’s eyes and hear the confusion in his curt assents. Eli had always been more attached to his father. Jacob had suspected Eli was his father’s favorite, but never let it interfere with his love for his little brother. Eli was the better hunter, the better football player. Eli wasn’t as verbal as Jacob and consequently incapable of the guff their father hated so. Truth be told, their mother probably favored Jacob a little. So when Jacob found the note waiting on the motel night stand the day of the train ride north he was saddened, but not surprised.
Dear Brother,

I took the pick-up and I’m heading back to Corinth. Don’t worry, and don’t think you done wrong by not fighting. If anything, I shoulda told you. Pray my fightin’ skills don’t fail me now. Hey, VC, bam! You’re dead. Remember? Please write Momma and tell her why I had to go. Much love to those who find themselves in our journey in my absence. I read that in a poem once. I’ll see you in Mississippi one day.

—Eli

Jacob set down the letter with trembling hands, and ran out of the hotel room.

He ran to the front desk and asked the lady if she had seen a man with a black moustache and Southern accent wearing cowboy boots. The lady shook her head and Jacob felt a tear welling in his eye. This is no time to cry. He looked at his watch; the train left in an hour. There was no telling where Eli was by now, but if Jacob tried to follow him back to Corinth, one of two things would happen; he’d be shipped off to Southeast Asia or put in jail. That brave bastard. Why’d he do this? We had a plan!

His voice broke as he entered the train station and told the man at the ticket counter, “I’m here for the 10:00 to St. Paul.” He prayed for Eli the whole time he rode the train to Minnesota.

On April 3, 1970, just after getting out of his last class at university, he stopped by his mailbox and found a tear-stained letter from his mother. It told him that Elisha James Saunders, twice decorated for bravery, had been killed in battle in the Mekong Delta.

In 1985, Jacob received the called from Aunt Jeanie to learn that his mother had died: he was not surprised. He had talked with his mother often and knew that the cancer was getting worse. She had called and written constantly for him to come back to Corinth for eight years since President Carter’s pardon. She had visited him in Toronto, met his wife Anne and their two daughters, and toured the Anglican school at which he taught literature to incorrigible teenagers. She lamented the loss of his Tennessee Valley accent. But she had never brought Jacob’s father with her. He was afraid to ask why.

Now, as he crossed the property line to his boyhood home, he paused...
and sighed. It was ironic what could not keep him in Corinth, now brought him back home, striving for proper honor, albeit for his dead mother. He put his coat back on and knocked on the door; he had long since lost his key.

Jacob's father came to the door carrying a cane and looking frail, but still intimidating; he gave Jacob a long, hard look. Jacob's father looked at his full, red beard and academic tweed-suit with leather patches on the elbows.

“You. You son-of-a-bitch. Come in, why don’t you?” Jacob's father was always a terribly profane man for a god-fearing, foot-washing Baptist. His foul language was no litmus test for his anger. Actually, Jacob was glad he was let in the house at all.

It was already five o'clock by the time Jacob arrived at the family estate. That meant it was already supper time in the Saunders home. Jacob had been sending some of his salary back home to his aged and infirmed parents to pay the bills for quite some time. Mrs. Saunders’s disability checks, Medicare, and Social Security got the Saunders through the monthly money-changers.

The dinner was awkward as Jacob and his father sat on opposite ends of the great elliptical wooden table eating their pork and beans, cornbread, and turnip greens in relative silence, grunting when either needed something passed to him. Jacob was sure by the way his father was assessing him with his eyes, that his mood was somewhere between anger and contempt. Jacob thought briefly about taking the Civil War saber down from its place above the mantle and slaying himself as penance, right in front of his father. But below the sword were the fallen heroes of the Saunders family, Eli among them. This was the final blow to Jacob's conscience.

“Daddy, I get the impression that you don’t want me here. I’ll see if I can't rent a car and drive to Memphis for a late train back to Toronto,” Jacob put down his napkin and rose to leave.

“Goddamit, son, sit down! You think I’m some sort of monster, don’t you? You think I want to sit here and stew in my anger? Well, dammit, I wouldn’t have run like you, but you must think I’m one hard son-of-a-bitch to wish you gone again after eighteen years.”

Jacob didn’t know what to do with this new-found forgiveness. He could scarcely believe it, so he went on the defensive. “The only person I had contact with in this family was Momma. You didn’t visit, or call, or write, or do a goddamn thing, Daddy. I couldn’t be the hero Eli was and it haunts me everyday of my life. Why wasn’t I supposed to think you didn’t care?”

“Well, I had a job. I couldn’t just take off work to go see my ex-patriot son.” His father had meant expatriate. Malapropisms ran in the family. “Also, I guess I’m still just a hard, stubborn old man. Did you think your Momma was just making that stuff up about me missing you? You’re my—first-born son.”

Jacob and his father stood motionless for a second, staring each down. When Jacob's father didn’t hear an affirmation, he spoke up again.

“Jesus H. Christ, you’re still a-doubtin’ me, ain’t ya? Well, get the keys
to the truck. You'll see. You'll see.”

Jacob did as he was told, puzzled and alarmed, and just slightly relieved at the same time. At this point, his father was either telling the truth or hauling Jacob off into the woods to shoot and bury him. It was all the same to Jacob at this point. His father told him to head to the First Baptist Corinth Cemetery.

“You do remember where that is, don'cha, Johnny Yank?”

When they arrived, Jacob and his father slowly climbed the large hill next to his mother’s freshly dug grave. But that was not what Jacob’s father had come to show him. They climbed further upward.

“It’s positively shameful that you were too much of a coward to visit your younger brother’s grave until fifteen years later. But if anybody would forgive you, it’d be Eli. He gave you a degree of loyalty you can’t even fathom, son. In fact, he sent the strangest request for an epitaph in a letter home, just a coupla months before he died. Neither Jenny nor I understood the damn thing, but we figured it was one y’all’s inside jokes.”

Jacob glanced, dumbstruck, at Eli’s tombstone. He was touched beyond words.

Elisha James Saunders
1950-1970
U.S. Army, Lt. 2nd Class
“My tragedy was off by a country mile.”

“Well, give up the guilt, son. I forgive you, Eli forgave you, and goddamn it, you know your momma couldn’t even forgive you because she couldn’t even see what the hell you did wrong.”

Jacob’s father suddenly became quiet and anxious, drawing a deep breath and closing his eyes as he cautiously changed the tone of the conversation.

“Jacob, I hope this doesn’t take away from the fatherly blessing I just bestowed upon you, but I need a favor.” Mr. Saunders took another deep breath, as if swallowing his pride. “I can’t live at the cabin anymore without nobody but the ghosts of Eli and Jenny, and you sitting in Canada with you and your family scared of me. I’m only coming back to this cemetery twice more. Once more tomorrow for Jenny’s funeral, and the second time in a cheap pine box—“

“—It doesn’t have to be cheap, Daddy.” Jacob interjected.

“Goddamit, son, you never did understand much about being a Saunders, did you? It had better be cheap. And don’t interrupt your father—where was I?”

“Halfway to Toronto, I think.” Jacob was finally starting to relax for the first time all day.

“Well, yes. You see, the thing you never did see is that while the
Saunders are a soldiering family, the family part comes first. I—I don’t want to die alone. I haven’t even seen my daughter-in-law, communist that she must be; she’s Canadian and married to you! And my grandkids. I want my chance to be a granddaddy.”

“I’ll check with Anne, but I’m sure she’d love to have you. I think you might need to curse a little less, for the sake of Marie and Wendy.”

“I’ll curse all I goddamn want to.” Mr. Saunders replied defensively. “I cursed all the time at you, and look at—well, okay, I’ll give it some thought.”

They stood on the hill at the cemetery until the light began to fail before Jacob’s father turned around and started his hike toward the truck. He turned around and smiled at Jacob.

“Do they have many wars in Canada?”

“Not really. Why do you think I went there?”

“Well, goddamit, I’m gonna have to change that. You and Canada.”

“I’m sure you will, Daddy.”

After that, Jacob embraced his father for the first time in his life. It felt good to be loved by his parent, but, just in case of a mistake, he pretended he was just steadying his father for the walk down the hill.
Forgotten,  (B/W Photograph)
BY ERICA GOFORTH
My Mother’s Last Breath
CHERYL ALEXANDER

The room I entered was a dream of this room. There the dimness wavered, as if alive, thrumming in time with the restless heart-dance, the eeh-oh eeh-oh of the artificial respirations pumped at 450 tidal volume, 16 breaths per minute into her pigeon chest making chills rise, then fall to the beat of the cardiac monitor...a gross concerto led by the maestro, a grim reaper, hovering with cape half-wrapped around the tiny body, eeh-oh eeh-oh, Mamma won’t wake up, the beat dance slows—60, then 50—moving and working for nothing...hazing this room now...blurring...no blink...eyes closed...a smile...nothing...eeh...oh...
Twentieth Birthdays
ELYSE MARCELLINO

Twentieth birthdays are very odd things. They call us to adulthood—pull us, rather—and show us from the mountain top what life may and very likely will be from this point on. However, amidst all of the pointing and dreary wisdom, there comes a sudden longing to stop time. Never again will the sandbox be where we go to smooth out the day’s troubles, and never again will the teenage years free us from the load of true responsibility. At times, those doing the “crossing over” feel a surge of panic. It’s quite natural. Sometimes, the resigned will step into adulthood eagerly and confidently. That is not quite so natural. Then there are always those romantic souls that fly with the emotion of the moment, reveling in the knock of the unknown. And that is precisely why, one soppy April night, four shrouded figures could be seen traipsing solemnly across a field to a very small lake.

“Oh, my poor sheet!” exclaimed the girl in blue, laughing in the next instant.

“Come now,” said the girl who had crossed over but an hour before, “Let us proceed solemnly to the lake.”

They immediately, amidst suppressed laughter, assembled themselves into a line and proceeded across the field in a somber, orderly fashion. A raging storm the day before had kindly left puddles and wet grass for them to daintily avoid in the normal fashion, but these determined girls trudged through the worst of it, intent upon their sparkling destination. Reaching a wooden swing by the lake, they rearranged their makeshift togas and pulled out their plastic cups with all the flourish of champagne glasses. A bottle of sparkling cider was brought forth, and each girl received a small portion of the delicious stuff in her glass. They promptly clinked glasses, sipped, and rallied themselves to proceed ‘round the lake.

The girl who took the lead in the processional was turning twenty, and it was she who was being celebrated in such a mysterious way. Her eyes were alight with excitement, but she restrained her enthusiasm by reminding everyone of the sobriety with which the entire ceremony should be conducted. She was the Lady of Shalott, and the rest of her entourage was made up of the beloved Rowena, Goldberry, and Antigone—an interesting mixture, to be sure, but an inspiring one at that.

“We should hum to keep up the spirit of the thing.” said Rowena, and, in an accord, four voices began to hum in varied, monk-like tones.

In between breaths, Goldberry asked, “Do you see any snakes?” There was a collective shaking of heads, and silence followed until Antigone in the back stopped and exclaimed, “Hey! This is more like a hike than a
processional!"

Then the group threw formation to the wind as hilarity hit them all at once, and the leader finally said in laughter, “Alright, I’m slowing down.”

Nothing, except perhaps the sighting of an unusually large bug, could hinder their progress, and so they slowly proceeded along the bank of the lake, farther and farther. A row of bushes threatened to slow them, but the fearless leader plunged through a narrow break in the greenery, forbidding hesitation. Between a brick wall and evenly placed trees hanging out over the lake, the group found themselves in a pretty sort of tunnel. The moon overhead and blackness falling, their minds bewitched by the beauty of nature’s hiding place, a few of the girls stopped to dream for just a moment. Caught up in the spirit of the thing, there was a general consensus (among all but the one it affected) that the Lady of Shalott should throw off her cloak and run through the tunnel. The other girls would wait for her on the other side with her garment, as she had nothing else on. They carried out this plan in a rather loud manner, and then, as if no wild thing had just occurred, they proceeded solemnly back to the swing. The bottle was waiting for them, much lighter than before.

They agreed that vows were the next thing to fulfill the tradition, and so they proceeded onwards in strange shapes until uniting in a circle. After whispered deliberation, heads were pulled up, shoulders drawn back, and a romantic attitude of desperation taken on by all.

The first girl raised her glass, “I will never be afraid of making a decision.” She drank.

The next girl raised her glass, saying thoughtfully, “I will never let the potential die.” She drank.

“I will never run from adventure,” exclaimed the third. She drank.

Then the last said, “I will never truly grow up,” and they all drank heartily to a collection of vows to which only the most romantic of souls holds.

After solemnity came chaos, and the four sheeted figures were left with the reality of getting back into their place of residence without arousing curiosity. Eventually, their voices drifted into silence, and the lake was left in peace.

And the moon smiled to see that imagination had not disappeared, and such things still occur on twentieth birthdays.
Portrait of a City
ADDIE LEAK

Walk so fast that your feet sound
techo rhythms, staccato clacking, a song,
a bass line on the dirty dry London pavement.
Keep in step, glancing furtively around, with the crowd.
Suits starched, faces forward. If you keep up, maybe
you can blend in. So ends the day.
I fall asleep, a student exhausted by the
double-time of daily life here, window open.

But I’m not asleep really.
A trickling breeze breaks the thick hot air,
but only just. I sweat above my sheets.
Accents from the White Hart spiral up,
soothing undone sounds I’ll miss back in Mississippi,
and when midnight strikes along with Big Ben upriver,
they disperse into the humidity we brought.
It hasn’t been this hot in London for a century.

I heard a woman in the subway sing
opera today for spare nickels,
her voice echoing like a siren’s song
underwater, and gave away my mocha to a
beggar wanting pounds for a taxi home.
She must commute each morning
because she’s always here, waiting,
quiet in the dusk.
In Living I Die, In Dying I Live
JAMES HUMPHRIES

I drag the cold steel across my flesh,
a warm line of red pain opens in its wake
teaching me the truth of life and death.
Blood is the key to life,
the physical manifestation of soul.
Christ’s blood was shed to free our souls.
Equivalent to spirit is blood,
beneath our skin, in our flesh, giving life.

Crimson carpets the floor, still I live.
Jagged columns of scarlet cover me.
Claw marks left by my fingers,
clean rows of torn tissue.
The knife is intimidating,
but more forgiving than fingernails.
Molted feathers intermingle with blood.
Nothing remains of my heritage,
only bones protruding from my back.

A body ornamented by centuries of scars.
All of them weep blood.
This reminder of the world’s pain
that world fades from sight,
and all that exists is darkness,
thick and crushing,
like the blackest depths of the ocean.
Besides the blazing fire of this blade,
the only light is a speck
eons away.

Crystalline tears adorn my cheeks.
Stretching to that light is a wasted effort,
yet I still struggle to return to it.
This darkness, this nothingness is unbearable.
I scream, but sound cannot exist here.
A silent cry to heaven,
wherever it is,
save me, please, God save me.

He shouldn’t answer.
He has many times before
but in the end I always come to this place.
I am the manifestation of wasted effort.
Journey, (Lithograph)
BY SHIO AKIHO
“Anything else I can get you?” Carissa shook her head at the waiter, who fidgeted a bit with his apron before adding, “Are you sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“No condiments? Or refills?” They both looked at her mostly full glass.

“No thank you, I’m fine.” He remained standing by the table, shuffling his feet. Carissa brushed a few strands of hair behind her ears.

“Are you sure?” For the first time, Carissa looked up at him, arching one eyebrow as she did.

“What about me seems like I’m not fine?” The waiter blushed and gazed intently at his shoes.

“Well... I mean... every time I’ve seen you here, you’ve been with someone. Now you’re alone. I just wanted to make sure everything was fine.”

“Ah. Nice gesture. But misplaced. There’s nothing wrong with me,” The waiter looked up. “I was supposed to meet a friend here tonight, but she didn’t show up. You see? Perfectly reasonable explanation.”

“Oh.” The waiter looked a bit crestfallen. “Okay. Still... if you need anything...” He began to walk away.

“Wait!” He turned back rather quickly, although Carissa was a bit slow in continuing. “Which... which fork do I use?” The waiter gave a crooked, toothy smile.

“The one on the right.” Carissa watched him walk away. A bit scrawny, but not altogether bad-looking, she thought. Unruly dirty blonde hair could probably be tamed, he could bulk up a bit if he really tried, and he was certainly nice enough...

Unwilling to continue that train of thought, Carissa picked up the fork on the right and indulged herself in her spinach ravioli. Luckily, she had thought to meet at Spaghetti Warehouse, where she could at least eat spinach ravioli while her friend remained conspicuously absent for the second dinner date in a row. Carissa decided that she was going to try to make the most of her night.

Halfway through her meal, a passing waiter lost her balance and spilled water all over Carissa. After profuse apologies, excuses, and attempted appeasement, Carissa decided she needed to escape to clean herself up in the bathroom. The most of her night turned out to be very, very little.

“Carissa!” beckoned a shrill, nasal voice when she was halfway to the restroom. She turned to the voice’s origin, her embarrassment begging her to keep moving but her conscience forcing her to be politely social. “Over here!” Tasha Lilly, curly blonde hair cascading over her shoulders and full, red lips parting in a perfect-toothed smile, waved a well-manicured hand at her victim.

“Hi, Tasha. How are you?” Carissa asked her coworker at the art mu-
seum as friendly as she deemed possible. Tasha's tight, trendy, tempting little violet dress overshadowed Carissa's corduroy pants and formless green jacket completely. Carissa made her way to the table, her feet dragging and her painted smile shining forth.

“God, what happened to you? You look like those kids who fall into the fountain!” Carissa tried not to take offense at the unfavorable comparison.

“Rissa?” mentioned the figure sitting across from Tasha. Carissa turned her head sharply and saw him.

Kelly Morgan.

“Hi, Kelly,” she stammered. “I didn’t know... you...”

“Carissa, this is my new man, Kelly Morgan. Wait... do you two know each other or something?” Tasha asked, playfully stroking Kelly’s hand.

“Uh... we’ve met,” the “new man” answered, lightly scratching his elbow. Carissa looked at him: the sunglasses in the dark auburn hair, the goatee he kept impeccably neat, the navy blue, striped button-down shirt from some name brand she could never remember...

“So, anyway, what happened, Carissa? Why are you soaking wet?” Tasha asked, staring expectantly as her hand entwined with Kelly’s.

“Someone spilled water on me... I’ve really got to go clean this up.” Not waiting for approval, Carissa began traveling away.

“See you tomorrow at the museum!” Tasha called after her. Carissa covered the remaining ground at what was, for her, record speed, and ducked into the restroom, where she began intensely scrubbing her clothing with a paper towel.

Shortly, she had done all she could and stood in front of the mirror looking at her reflection. Her hair wasn’t dark enough to be brown, light enough to be blonde, or thick enough to really do anything with. Her face was rounded and undistinguished. Her body was nothing spectacular, especially when compared to Tasha’s curvaceous silhouette.

Kelly had always told her that she was a lot prettier than she thought she was. It meant a lot more back when he was Carissa’s boyfriend. They had met some time ago in the art museum that she and Tasha both worked at: one for her love of art, and one because her manager thought she was gorgeous. Had Kelly met Tasha there? It made sense. He came often enough ever since that first time.

It had been almost a year before. Tasha was working the ancient exhibits upstairs, which Carissa was thankful for, as she was able to work the more modern, recent section alone. Free from all annoyances. At least, that was what she thought before he walked up to her.

He looked practically identical to his appearance in the restaurant: same hair, goatee, sunglasses, and shirt. He walked up beside her.

“Excuse me, but could you tell me about that piece right there?” He pointed at an orange square hanging at an odd angle.

“I believe all the pertinent information is printed on the card below it.”
“I can read. I read it. But that doesn’t explain what the heck it actually is.”

“What it actually is?” Carissa arched one eyebrow at him. “This is an art museum. That is an art piece.”

“You really think an orange rhombus classifies as art?”

“That’s not a rhombus, sir, that’s a square.” He laughed, tossing his head back a bit with a wide open grin.

“That... is no square.”

“Yes, it is a square. It’s an optical illusion. The angle it’s tilted at makes you think it’s really not a perfect square, but it is. That’s the most intriguing thing about it. It seems like it’s not real, like it’s a fake, but it’s really perfect.”

“How do you know it’s a perfect square?”

“You look at it from enough angles, and you find out for yourself.”

“I think you may have to help me make sure.” Against her better judgment, Carissa found herself helping him. Wednesdays were slow: there was no one else around, she had nothing else to do, and he was charming. They looked at it from all kinds of angles and ended up lying down on the cool tiles, their heads at the wall, looking up at the square.

“I guess it really is a square,” he conceded. “By the way, I’m Kelly Morgan.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Carissa Stribling.” It was the first time she ever shook hands with someone while lying on the floor.

“I’m glad to meet a girl who can really appreciate art. You know, there’s a gallery opening up on Saturday and I’ve been invited to the party. With a guest. Would you like to go? I’d really hate to go alone, and I have an extra invitation that will just go to waste if I do...” Carissa hated to accept what sounded suspiciously like a date from an almost complete stranger, but she had heard about the gallery opening and she desperately wanted to go. He wasn’t bad company, either, and Carissa was suddenly possessed with an impulse to do something completely against character. Lying on the museum floor by the tilted square, she accepted. The gallery continued into a café, then a play, then a full-blown romance.

The relationship was decidedly odd. One worked in public relations for Maytag, the other for an art museum. One watched action movies, the other independent films. One ate Mexican food, the other Italian and Thai. One loved hanging out in groups, the other preferred to be alone. Art was practically the only thing they had in common. And they had kept it up for almost eleven months. Almost.

A woman walked into the bathroom, waking Carissa from her remembrances. She exited and decided to take a different route back to her seat.

The scrawny but nice waiter came up to her almost as soon as she sat down.

“I’m so sorry about the spill. This is her first day. And I realize it didn’t make your evening any better,” he stammered, forehead wrinkled in concern.
“I told you. You don’t have to try to make my evening better.”
“I know, I know... but I want to. Can I at least get you some free dessert?” Carissa smiled at his efforts. She was about to politely turn him down when she remembered the couple she had just seen. Time to move on.
“Come ask me at the end of the meal,” she replied, causing the waiter to saunter away with an even bigger crooked, toothy grin.

The spinach ravioli was delicious, and she ate slowly, methodically, washing it down and taking her time. Still, it wasn’t long before she was done and someone approached her table.
“I was thinking... oh.” Instead of the waiter she expected, Kelly stood before her table. “Hello, Kelly.”
“Can I... can I sit down?”
“If you like.” He slid into the booth opposite her. “So... you and Tasha?”
“No,” he answered quickly. “Well... not really. She just wanted to go out and I agreed once. We won’t be going out again.”
“What happened?”
“After you went away, she started laughing at how wet you looked and... well... other things I won’t mention if you don’t want me to.”
“I think I’d rather you didn’t. What did you do?”
“I stopped her and told her I didn’t appreciate it. Then I sent her away. Not that it crushed her... I think she hooked up with a guy sitting two tables away. And I got stuck with the check. I don’t even like Italian. This was her idea.”
“That was... nice of you,” Carissa said, idly picking at remnants of ravioli. “I guess.” He scratched his elbow. “And you? Any men?”
“No. I haven’t seen anyone else. Of course, it’s only been a month or so.”
“One and a half.”
“You keep track?” she asked, a hint of a playful smile returning.
“Of course I do. How could I forget the day I proposed and you turned me down?”
“I wasn’t ready.”
“That wasn’t enough of an explanation.”
“You know all my explanations. I’m just not ready to commit to you. I have too many doubts. We have one thing in common. Only one thing! You can’t build a relationship off of one thing.”
“How do you know?”
“It doesn’t make sense. Sooner or later, we’re going to get bored with each other. And I... I don’t think I’d be able to take that. You mean too much to me for that.”
“And you mean too much to me to live without you.”
“That’s sweet, Kelly. Purely saccharine. Also very corny.”
“So my lines aren’t the best. So my reasons don’t make sense. It seems impossible, I know... I’ve wondered so many times why I like you so much... but maybe, ‘Rissa... just maybe... the impossibility is a lie and things would
actually work out perfectly between us.”

“Perfectly?”

“More or less.” Kelly stood up. “Look... I know you can be a pretty hard one to convince, but if you ever think it’s possible, just stop by. Chances are, I’ll be willing to talk.” He set his sunglasses on the table beside her fork. “Bye, 'Rissa.”

“So, can I interest you in one of our desserts?” the waiter asked, jolting Carissa from her thoughts. Kelly was gone and the waiter was smiling crookedly at her instead. “The cheesecake is practically divine, but anything with ice cream is always a sure bet. Do you like nuts?”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t think I’ll have a dessert after all,” she said as she stared out the window, toying with the sunglasses. A pair of taillights turned down the road that led to a familiar apartment.

“Why not?” the waiter asked, his smile completely vanished. “They’re great desserts. Besides, you seemed really excited about it earlier. It just doesn’t make sense!” Carissa looked up at him, slipped the sunglasses on, and smiled, which only frustrated the waiter even further.

“You’re absolutely right,” she replied, rising to leave the restaurant. “It doesn’t make sense in the least.”
Strip Poker

STEPHANIE EVANS

How interesting it is
To get sucked
Down a hole, a rubber tube

Bouncing under my behind as I shoot towards
Soft splashes awaiting, lapping the sides
Of hot concrete. One push by toes painted glossy red

And I’m sliding, fast then faster,
Flying towards the earth to meet

my fate: Oreo cookies scraped
Clean of cream
Standing in as poker chips

For unfamiliar friends laughing
At a bright idea.
My smile mingles hesitantly

With flushed cheeks
As I hide behind

a pillow, bare.
Concentric Homesickness
Adie Smith

I am an onion, baking in the fluorescent sun.
I peel off my layers. No, I crisp them off,
lying in a pile of forgotten skin on the sidewalk.
Crisp.
Sores ooze under my fingernails.
I long for my kitchen.

She is silhouetted by the afternoon sun;
the aloe plant basks in green.
Her sharp edges repel me.
Crisp.
Cool scissors slice through her green shell.
Her healing leaks out.
Shaving, (Pencil Drawing)
BY KELSEY MCNAMEE
Alice Harrison gazed dully out the window. Each passing streetlight was like a marker of the silence that enveloped the car. Neither Karl nor Alice had spoken a word since they left the restaurant, both under a trance. Memories from the evening replayed in Alice’s mind, a continuous stream of humiliation to enhance her bad mood. The fact that Karl wouldn’t wipe that stupid grin off his face just made it all the worse. He can’t get it out of his mind either. I’ll bet he can’t wait to get rid of me so he can start laughing his heart out.

Their date had started out so well; their conversation flowed easily and they were having a great time. Karl had taken them to a nice Italian restaurant across town, which happened to be one of Alice’s favorites. Their waitress, Annette, was new on the job but that wasn’t too much of a problem. It gave them more time to talk to each other. As they waited for their salads to arrive, the conversation lagged. Alice examined the restaurant and shredded her roll to bits on her plate. When she looked down, she was somewhat startled to see the mess she had made. She reached for her napkin, so that she could circumspectly clean off her skirt, but her drink was precariously balanced on the corner of her napkin. It tipped over and flowed across the table and into Karl’s lap. Oh shoot, oh shoot…she fumbled for her napkins and threw them at him… Why did I do that? Why? Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! Klutz! Why do you have to be such a klutz?

“It’s ok, Alice; it’s ok. Don’t cry over spilled milk, or Dr. Pepper. It’s not worth it.” She smiled up at him. Karl just drummed his fingers on the table and chuckled. Thankfully, their dinner came quickly, and they were momentarily spared from conversation. The mussels were delicious, and Alice soon relaxed.

“So, what types of books do you like?”

“Oh, you know just…” The one especially strong mussel that she had wrestling with for the past three minutes, slipped out of her grasp, flew behind her, and landed on the lap of a rather stout cowboy. “…. Westerns?” He laughed, and she glanced sheepishly behind her. The cowboy just smiled and waved. Alice crossed her eyes in frustration, which made Karl laugh harder and inhale the water he had been sipping. He started choking and sputtered that he wasn’t about to die, so don’t worry. Alice giggled. Her infectious laughter drew eyes from around the room. This wouldn’t have been so bad, except that Alice snorted amidst the laughter. I have never been so embarrassed in all my life. Her face burned as the blood rose to her cheeks. Look at him, he’s just sitting there laughing at me. Oh, of course, he is being a gentleman about it. I’ll bet everyone here thinks he’s laughing with me. Argh! I can’t believe this! I haven’t done anything right tonight.

Alice couldn’t have been more relieved when Karl asked for the check. Sure, they had had fun, but there was only so much humiliation she could
take in one night. She scooted her chair back, interrupting Annette and another waiter as they were caught in an awkward dance as they tried to pass each other. Though the other waiter was quite experienced in such situations, Annette was not used to being suddenly run over by an unwitting customer. The steaming bowl of minestrone soup, which Annette had insecurely balanced on her tray, went airborne. After performing amazing feats of acrobatic wonder, it landed squarely on Alice’s head. She was stunned. She watched as twelve different reactions crossed over Karl’s face. Alice felt the soup wash down her back and watched the beans, vegetables, and noodles as they dropped in to her lap. *Soup. I have been souped... I can't believe it.* Tears fell down her face as she sat there, too dazed to realize what had happened. *I can't believe it. I can't... I can't...* Annette helped her stand and walked her to the bathroom.

There Annette scrubbed furiously at Alice’s hair as apologies gushed from her mouth. “I am so sorry. I feel so terrible. Is there anything I can do for you? Anything I can get you? Don’t worry; you won’t have to pay for your dinner. I’m sure we will get your clothes dry-cleaned for you. In fact, you can probably come back and eat again for free. I am so sorry. I really am.” She was fluttering around Alice’s head, picking noodles and bits of celery from her hair. Alice scrubbed at her shirt furiously. *I can't believe she did that! I can't believe she spilled that soup all over me! What kind of dunce must she be? I mean, how hard can it be to keep soup in a bowl? Five-year-olds can do it, why can't she? She is such an idiot.* Her paper towel had turned into a knotted rope as she furiously rubbed it against her shirt. She threw it down, grabbed another one, and twisted it in the same fashion.

“I’m fine, alright, just leave me alone!”

“I was just trying to...”

“I know. I know. You have made a mess of this already. Just leave me alone!” Annette walked out dejectedly. Alice watched her leave and looked down at the mess she had made of her shirt. With a sigh, she reached into her purse for a hair tie and pulled her hair out of the way. *Well there’s nothing else I can do now. I shouldn’t have screamed at her. But after all, she did pour soup on me.* She walked back to her table. *Oh good, Karl has made a new friend.* Karl and the other waiter, sat at the table laughing together over something. *Undoubtedly he is telling him about how I pelted that guy with a mussel. They both stood as she approached. They look like deer caught in the headlights; I shouldn’t make any sudden movements or they might bolt.* Her glance took in the two of them. Neither said a word. Neither wanted to admit to laughing over what happened. “So, there’s good news and there’s bad news,” she began awkwardly, “the bad news is... I have soup all over me. The good news is I don’t need to box up my leftovers, I’ll just carry them out.” Then men exchanged glances and then both started laughing. Karl held his arm for her to take as they walked out.

“They gave me some coupons for you. You get another two meals free
and stuff like that. You know if you had milked it a bit more, I’ll bet you could have gotten more…” She had rolled her eyes at him.

Now they just sat in silence waiting for the endless ride to be over. Another two blocks, that’s all there is. Endure this silence for two more blocks and you will be fine. You never have to meet his eyes again. It took less then five minutes for them to arrive at her apartment building, turn off the car, and unload. He walked her up the three flights of stairs and they stood awkwardly outside her door. “Well I guess I’ll head in now.”

“Um, can I call you tomorrow?” He scratched the back of his head, and pretended to meet her eyes.

“If you want to I can’t stop you.”

“Well I guess I’ll see you later then.” With a smile, he was gone. Perhaps it wasn’t such a bad night after all.
My Mother’s Loss of Dignity

Mama—nurse—I, daughter—nurse, entrusted with accession while her cancer husks her bones. She qualifies for life but does not participate,

FOX news and NFL her only diversions. She kisses dad goodnight, prays with every movement, seeks a relief. Tonight, as I gave my mother her bath,

I felt her arms, looked at her stomach, held her hands and thought: When had she lost this much weight? She explained about her starry blue eyes that say I have cancer, I’m in pain, I’m going to die. Surgery is over; stainless steel bones replace crumbled cracker legs.

Now lasers radiate alien cells murdering femur, tibia, humerus—clinging to life without dignity, unwilling yet to give that final gasp. It will never be over, only the players will change.

How moronic that a cliché belongs here defining an infinite but obscure spot of time, so sweet, so precious, so bitter as to be worth it all...just life, with dignity.
Lullaby of Leaves  
ADDIE LEAK

We’re stargazing, but there aren’t many stars: one or two, maybe, specks flicked from a cosmic paintbrush into the purple city sky. The grass on the hill holds us in place; friction prevents sliding into the soccer field, where the dervish sprinklers twirl, muted and oblivious in the dusk. The fragrant green pillows our heads, and I remember a lullaby my mother sang when I was young and too exhausted to sleep. 
*Bed is too small for my tiredness;* The air hints of pine overhead, dirt and something industrial—

give me a hilltop with trees. Bats flit across the sky like wind-tossed scraps of velvety cloth from far-off places; globed street lamps dimly light the September haze. Crickets chant, and I wonder what they’re doing so far from the country and the freedom of the tall yellow grass; maybe they wonder the same about me. *Tuck a cloud up under my chin;* I sink into the languor of the night, a long way from home, but home nonetheless, curls lifted by the lazy wind; *Lord, blow the moon out, please.*
Duskiya
CATHY KARLAK

The Pacific, restless with winter’s onset, was choppy beneath storm clouds that stretched far inland, ran smack into the Olympic range, and were building up mass. Bad sign. Bad weather. Bob Abies leaned heavily on his ice axe. Still far above the clouds as he hiked down from the summit, he could only guess at what was happening below. The peaks were pink-lit and muffled by dawn, and he paused a moment to take it all in: the blue glacier ice fall, frozen and eloquent, the vast and shimmering snowfields around Crystal Pass. A long day was ahead of him, even by his own route, and it would be good and dark by the time he reached the green sanctuary of the Hoh rainforest. A sudden sunbeam called out the black fingers of a moraine ridge and he smiled. No need to hurry. He could read clouds. If the weather was decent, he’d sleep tonight under a canopy of moss. If it was bad, he would bivy and wait it out, if it could be waited out. If not, he’d probably die. He packed light; it was the end of the season: these facts were as hard and irrefutable as the stone deep under the snow. No one was waiting for him; no one was looking for him. At least not up here.

The few towns that dot the foothills of the Olympic Peninsula receive the most rain in the continental United States. Forks gets edged out by Quinalt each year, but Forks has a stoplight. There aren’t many stoplights along the northernmost stretch of Highway 101, and there aren’t many people who brave the dim backwoods winters. Constant damp will put even the most pioneering spirits in a funk now and then. From the way Sheriff Danny Shelton was hammering up posters outside the Thriftymart, he wasn’t much of a pioneer. With each vehement thud, his boss’s words rang in his ears. To hear him tell it, Danny wasn’t much of anything at all.

“It’s been a month, Shelton! And no leads, nothing! What have you been doing all this time?”

Never mind that there were leads, ones that just didn’t pan out. Never mind that people out here could get so bored and starved for excitement that they would flat out fabricate Bob Abies sightings just for their chance at fifteen minutes of fame. Never mind that everyone was afraid, everyone was stressed, and with an atmosphere like that, how could you get anything done?

He had put seven nails into this one. Danny was so sick of those eyes staring down at him, small and deep-set under shaggy brows. No one had ever called Bob Abies but by his full name. It might have been a way to put a label on him, since no one knew too much about Bob. He used to be a park ranger, and though retired, still wore the khaki uniform, and sold cards and
small paintings in local gift shops, though a lot of shops had taken them off their shelves after the restraining order came down. Danny sighed and glanced at the missing child poster he had tacked up beside the other. It was of an eight-year-old girl with a beautiful snagged smile and wide brown eyes like a startled doe. He had been there when the Johnstons placed the order, commanding Bob Abies to have no more contact with their daughter Carin, the day after they found the two at his cabin after she had been missing for days. She wouldn’t talk and he admitted nothing. He hadn’t fought the charges but had simply vanished. And a few months later, she had vanished as well.

It was cold. Danny glanced over his shoulder across the parking lot at the lush foothills and up to the snow-capped Olympics. The weather hardly helped his mood, the sky gray as lead and almost as heavy. Fog and forest seemed to be constantly closing in. He needed coffee. He threw his tools in the back of his Explorer and drove off in search of a cuppa.

“Now what do you want?” The bells on the coffee shop’s door had jingled, alerting the barista of his presence, but she hadn’t turned to greet him.

“Umm, a triple tall nonfat latte?”

“Oh, Danny! Sorry, sweetheart, we’ve had people in here all day asking all sorts of questions. Some of your more over-eager colleagues. And Fox News Northwest! As if I knew anything more than you can already read in the papers!” She sighed, still flushed and flustered, as she pressed the espresso and started the milk steaming.

“I mean, I don’t know much about anything. I just work here, you know?” She wiped her hands on her apron and met his eyes with blue apologetic ones.

“Believe me, I know.” He said it with feeling. There was a little homemade notice about Carin taped to the register. She just shook her head as she fixed his cup, and when he tried to hand her a five, she just shut his hand on it.

“On the house. Just try and find her soon, okay?” He nodded, thanked her, and left. Not bothering to add that at this point there wasn’t much hope of finding anything but a body. If that.

A lifetime as a ranger in Olympic National Park had taught Bob all the trails, developed or not, in the wilderness. He had his favorite haunts, even in the winter. If you went to the coast, you were pretty much assured long periods of solitude, regardless of the season. If you went backcountry during
the winter, well, you probably wouldn’t see another soul. Bob liked being
alone. He didn’t like people and lived by himself in a cabin in the unincorpo-
rated area between Forks and LaPush. Never married. Never was interested.
The only family he ever had in this world was a half-sister who worked at the
casino, and his mother, who finally died when he was a teenager, who her
whole life was no more than a whisper, a tide going out. He learned early on
to love nature, and to rely only on himself, by caring for no one, making no
emotional investments. Up until last year, it had worked.
Bob still thought about her. She never got his name right; she slurred
it all together— “baba-bees” she called him. The memory hurt, but only a
bit. He set his pack down on the forest floor and started to set up his tent.
Behind him, the trees pressed in with cold and sharp needles. Bob shivered.
You were never truly alone in the forest.

★★★★★

Work was worse than he had left it. Danny couldn’t even find a place
to park for all the extra cars—other detectives on the case and a swarm of
local news crews. The only reason they were here was because Deputy Sheriff
Johnston had been taken off the case. Not that he was ever supposed to be on
the case—the missing girl was his daughter, after all—and now even he was a
suspect. He hadn’t handled himself well, had chucked a coffee mug in anger,
and almost instantly the newshounds had come sniffing for a story.
Secretly Danny was glad to see him go. He was only making it more
difficult for others to do their work. As were these news crews. Once they
realized he was walking towards the department, a mess of flashbulbs and
fuzzy microphones started in his direction.
“No comment.”
“...given her history of running away, was all well at home?”
“Sheriff, could you tell us—”
“Sorry, no comment.” But the voices continued to barrage him with
questions, and finally he turned before opening the door.
“Look, now...” Instantly there was silence, and he was painfully aware
of how thin his voice sounded, how unprofessional and unprepared, but
he soldiered on. “This is a stressful...an emotional time for Deputy Sheriff
Johnston, for all of us...please give us some space...the space we need to do
our jobs, and make sure this little girl gets home safely.”
“Sheriff, who are your primary suspects in this investigation?”
“No further comments,” he managed to say with finality and slammed
the door shut behind him.
★★★★★
The weather hadn’t been ideal, but he had made it off the mountain without much difficulty, and he was stretched out in a forest clearing that was all too familiar. The last time Carin had found him was as he was leaving on a long trek. She was seven then, and stubborn. She refused to go back. Bob knew this was impossible, even risky, but he suppressed his better judgment and let her stay with him for a while, and taught her things like how cryptogams, the lichen and liverworts and mosses, held in water like a sponge and kept the forest cool and dank for the elks and birds and slugs. He was always careful with her: he had a gentle manner with wild things, and animals weren’t afraid of him. He taught her how long ago people used to make beds out of moss, and the particular idea thrilled her, of sleeping each night on a mossy mattress and foraging for berries and mushrooms for food.

“But what if they were poisonous?” she asked, skipping beside him to keep up with his long strides.

“Well, they died, and people remembered this and no one else ate them.”

She mulled this over and accepted it as fair. Later they lay side by side in the moss, imagining this lost world, and she told him stories from school, like the one day in first grade when a boy at her table had eaten apples seeds on a dare even though they were poisonous and he could have died.

That night, Bob showed her how to build a small shelter from fir boughs, and she slept well, comforted by the closeness of the trees. The next morning they began their hike back, and he told her in no uncertain terms that she must never come and visit him again.

“No,” she said.

He wasn’t surprised by her reply or by her obstinacy, but he did his best to explain, “You can depend on the forest. You can depend on the forest and on yourself.”

“I want to stay with you, baba-bees!” She grabbed his pants leg. He stopped walking and looked down at her, gravely.

“You can’t.”

“Why not!” It wasn’t a question, but he answered it anyway.

“Because your parents, and lots of other people in town, think it’s strange that an old man like me is spending so much time alone with a little girl like you.”

“But you’re my friend! You teach me things.” They were almost to her backyard. He picked up his pace and she tripped trying to catch up. Bob knelt down and looked her in the eyes.

“Listen to me: people are hurtful. Especially when they get old. They only suspect the worst in other people. Do you know what ‘suspect’ means?” She nodded. He doubted she did, but he didn’t have time to explain, so he tried another tack.

“I’m your friend right? And friends don’t get their friends into trouble, right?” He thought he heard footsteps. “Well, if you keep trying to find me,
I’m going to get in a lot of trouble, and they’ll take me away from the forest. Wouldn’t that be sad?” Someone was approaching. “So stop trying to find me.”

“No.” Carin crossed her arms and pouted.
“I can’t take care of you. You’ve got to be brave and stay at home.”
“I hate home. I hate them.”
“No you don’t. Don’t run away anymore, promise me.”
“No.”
“Promise me!” He was getting anxious, like a caged animal. Whoever was coming was almost there.
“No.”
“Goodbye, friend.” It sounded solemn, too solemn, but she was too busy sulking to notice. Bob Abies stood up and hurried back into the forest’s depths, and he didn’t turn back once.

\\

Danny had just made it up his gravel driveway when his cell rang. It was nearly five in the morning and coffee was no longer cutting it as a viable substitute for sleep. He snapped it open, talking softly to avoid waking the dog.


He pondered recent events as he drove through the thick pre-dawn fog. After the incident with the Deputy Sheriff, word came in that search teams had located human remains somewhere in the Buckhorn Wilderness out by Dosewalips. The bones were too big for a child and had been exposed to the elements for too long for it to be Bob Abies, but somehow the news had leaked out, and before the last media van had finished packing up and leaving Forks, the first ones were back and setting up shop. And now Bob Abies’s cabin had burned. Danny turned the Explorer off onto an old logging road and slipped into four-wheel drive. Sometimes this whole thing seemed like a witch hunt, and now, unable to find the witch to burn, someone had torched its house. Nice sentiment, but what about the possible evidence that had been destroyed? He rubbed his forehead. Or was it Bob himself who had set fire to his own cabin in order to hide something?

It was just getting light when Danny reached the scene, and he opened his car door to the scent of smoke heavy on the cold morning air. The cabin, now reduced to a charred heap of timber, was surrounded by a stand of maples and a brilliant red and gold carpet of fallen leaves. Steam seethed up from the damp, blackened timbers. A spider web full of dew glimmered in the faint sun, and he caught his breath at the absurd beauty of the scene. What lack of sleep would do to you. He shook his head to clear it, and then shook the hand of the forensics expert who had tromped up to him.

“Damn.” Danny rubbed his forehead again. “Arson, Cliff?” Cliff checked his clipboard as he spoke.
“Can’t quote me on it yet, but yup. Traces of accelerant found...” The talk got more technical and Danny found his tired eyes and attention wandering off into the shadowy pine depths behind the house. “...ignited stored camp stove fuel...flashover occurred...”

“You didn’t find any human remains did you?” Danny interrupted. Cliff sighed.

“None. It was a fairly sloppy job. If it weren’t for those fuel cans, it wouldn’t have burned so—sorry, hang on.” He stepped away to answer his phone. Danny walked slowly through the scene towards the pines that had captivated him, perhaps lured in his sleep-deprived state to their hallowed and silent dark. In retrospect, he could never explain the meeting that followed, and so he never tried.

“Hello. Sheriff Shelton?” Bob Abies looked just like he did on the poster. Just like he always had looked, except maybe even more gaunt and grizzled and old. His pack was still on his back as he leaned against a tree and watched the forensics team picking over the debris that was once his home. It was dim and his eyes and teeth shone white as he watched Danny expectantly. Danny’s hand slipped instinctively to his holster.

“I’m going to have to ask you to come with me.”

Bob Abies folded his arms slowly, and spoke slowly, with an almost serene calmness.

“I prefer to talk here.”

He remembered the first time she had found him. Two Junes ago, she had surprised him; she was six then and had run away for the first time. It was evening and Bob painted after dinner. That night he worked on his Quileute alphabet series: b for bá-yak, raven, d for duskiya, the kelp-haired child-snatcher. Something was whimpering in the backyard, no animal that Bob Abies had ever heard before. He set his brush down and peered outside, shocked to see a small girl sitting by his woodpile, bawling. Bob observed her for a moment: her brown curls were matted, and her arms were covered in bruises and were scratched by the nettles that grew in abundance behind his house. He wondered when someone would come for her. He wondered how she had gotten this far out into the woods—it was a long way from his house to the next. It soon became evident that she was alone. Bob stepped outside, moving slowly, as if he were approaching a wounded animal.

“Hello?” His voice seemed odd and out of place in the forest, he never spoke to himself and thus hadn’t spoken in weeks. Carin started, terrified.

“Hello, it’s ok, easy there,” he murmured as she began to cry again, scooting off the chopping block and edging to the woods. “Easy now, it’s okay. Are you lost?”

She nodded, shivering in her summer outfit.
“Where are your parents?”
She shook her head.
“Where are your mommy and daddy?” He asked, gently as he could.
The girl still didn’t respond, just held her chubby fingers to her mouth.
If it had been an animal, Bob Abies would have known what to do. You
can make splints and warm milk and build nests with boxes and towels for
animals. But children? Bob shrugged, stooped and backlit in the doorway of
his cabin.
“Well, want to come inside?”

“I need to ask you some questions. I’m going to have to ask that you
come with me.” Danny had drawn his pistol and was covering his apparently
unconcerned suspect.
“Ask me.”
“I’d feel better talking in town. Come on, walk.” Bob met Danny’s eyes
as if daring him to do something.
“Let’s go!” Danny raised his voice a bit, hoping someone in the clearing
would notice, but the sound hadn’t carried. He could probably take Bob in
a fight: he was young and athletic, but it was hard to tell with mountaineers
like Bob. They had some kind of immeasurable inner strength that Danny
couldn’t understand. This whole situation was ridiculous. Well, if he was
going to make a move he’d have to get Bob Abies distracted first. He started
formulating questions, conversational and easy at first, to warm the suspect
up. You like living out here? Any ideas on who might have burned your
house? Bob answered, as if unaware of how ludicrous the whole situation
was. Even time felt altered, as if Danny were dreaming.
“So when’s the last time you saw Carin?”
“After the restraining order she came looking for me once. I told her
never to run away again. I guess she didn’t listen.” Bob’s eyes were on Danny
the entire time.
“Why did she keep running away?” Danny readied himself for sudden
movement. He knew if something went wrong Bob Abies would be long
gone into the forest before backup could even cross the clearing. Bob knew
the land—they didn’t.
“Why do kids run away?”
“I’m asking the questions. Why did she keep running away to you?”
“We were friends.” Danny raised his eyebrows in surprise at this state-
ment.
“Friends? Friends! We have another term for that—”
“Don’t you dare.” Bob’s eyes went wide with emotion. “I would
never—” The suspect was getting upset. Danny pushed harder.
“What happened to her, Bob?” But the moment had passed and he
merely shrugged.

“Look around you. This isn’t a playground. I told her to stay at home. Wild things never listen: you can’t reason with them, and you can’t get them to listen.”

“Well I’m going to need you to come into town with me so we can put down your statement. I’m not arresting you; it’s innocent till proven guilty—” Bob snorted, but it was a small explosion behind Danny that stopped him mid-sentence. He spun around to see the team backing away from what appeared to be another fuel canister. It was only a quick glance, but when Danny turned back Bob Abies was gone. There were no leaves disturbed from his flight, no branches swaying, no footsteps in the distance. It was as if he had never been there, as if no conversation had occurred. Often, Danny wondered if it had.

Olympic covers a million acres, at least, and anything left outside on the Peninsula will dissolve with time, dissolve or be overtaken by the prolific growth of ferns and briars. Bob remembered once when he was a ranger, he spent two years digging out a trail that had been unused for five years and was swallowed back by the forest. He knew this land better than anyone else.

He was only a quarter Quileute and didn’t put much stock in the taxilit, not for him at least. He’d tried it once: he went out in the woods for two weeks when he was twenty-four, had waited for a totem animal or a spiritual revelation, but none came. Instead he felt a gradual dying away of one world and an awakening to intricacies of another—the homey scent of loam, the saplings that sprung up from nurse logs, the way fern fronds curled at their tip and raindrops hung from them late in the afternoon, each gleaming in the liquid sunlight until time itself seemed to stop. Bob saw all these things and returned refreshed but disappointed to his station.

Decades later he stood on a bluff and started in amazement as a doe walked softly across the crescent of sand of the beach beyond. The tide was in, the rock yard was hidden, and thick fog rolled in with the waves. She looked at him once before disappearing into white, and as he met her eyes, he felt a deep peace with nature and with himself. He caught his breath and hiked down to Rialto, where a few tourists braved the elements to watch the fierce winter sea. Bob could see in the distance the dismal Makah fishing village and little James Island, and he knew that somewhere in the fog beyond was James Island, A-Ka-Lat, the one-time burial place of chiefs. The island was only a sea stack; it was once the shore he stood on, land reclaimed by the ceaseless workings of the sea. Bob felt young when he stood beside the ocean. He was older than anyone knew, just well preserved by the elements, and was sick of the sight of people, of all people, of the spectacle the land had become, the developing resorts, the socially-conscious tourists ferried.
in from Seattle to watch the Quileute and Makah sell their culture, the only thing they had left.


The networks did a special on her—the unsolved case, the missing mountain man—and it caused a stir in town for a couple of weeks. People got riled up at the accusatory nature of the piece, as if they had just given up or forgotten. No one had forgotten Carin, but life went on. If something got good and lost in the forest, it stayed in the forest and became part of the forest. They accepted that she was gone. The only way people could ever live out here and not go crazy was to accept that some things just couldn’t be changed: the tides came and went, it snowed, the snow melted, the forest awoke and grew, and the mountain made its own weather, would always make its own weather.

They still hadn’t found her, not a trace, by the time the Johnstons moved off the Peninsula. They got divorced shortly after, and Danny guessed that the Deputy Sheriff was still drinking because his wife was granted sole custody of their other children. The Sheltons didn’t stick around much longer. Danny took a post in Eastern Washington, where the problems were flat and as open and predictable as the yellow fields, problems with illegal migrant workers and scandals with rich vacationers, but no morning fogs to obscure the facts or forests to swallow up evidence and the truth.

“You liked living out here by yourself? I mean, you never got lonesome?” Danny had asked, when he was questioning Bob Abies in woods.

“Nope. Not much of a people person.”

“Well, a lot of people in town find that kind of suspicious.”

“Look,” he had said, right before he disappeared. “The only thing you ever need to fear in life is other people. The only reason people get scared out here is because they’re alone to face themselves.”

Danny never felt alone in the forest after that case, he’d explain. So after it, he just left the forest alone.

Bob Abies turned his back on his cabin and on Danny and on life. He went again into the cold forest, felt it open before him and close behind him, walked deeper to find the places where time stopped, where he could delve into the ancient. He walked deeper to find the places where wild things dwelled and were born and laid to rest, each step taking him farther back and closer to the beginning, nearer to home, to his beginning and his end.

He had been walking the coast at sunrise, was rounding a treacherous headland, huge boulders worn smooth by the sea. It looked as if some giant had tossed them into a pile stretching up to the towering tree-line; now they
were soaked by the mist and the sea, slick with seaweed and a creeping brown film. Bob saw several fat starfish that morning, orange and purple and hard, not soft like you’d expect. He scrambled down from the last few rocks, fingers dipping into anemone pools, and the cove stretched out before him. The tide was out entirely, and the same white-capped ocean that pounded the sea stacks offshore was absolutely flat; still quicksilver pooled around a thousand orphan rocks. Two downed trees lay between him and the beach—a fish and a whale bone, he thought—a thin pine with its twigs still intact, and a cedar trunk bleached white from exposure.

He had seen her shoe first; it was red in contrast to the branches that held it. She lay in a heap, limbs sprawled wildly from a long fall, and the greedy tide trying to tug her free. Bob had carried her deep into the forest and put her in a grave without a marker.

He wondered how she had gotten so far out in the wilderness. It was a miracle she had lived in the forest, had made it to the ocean. She must have listened to his lectures well. It was a miracle that the tide had not sucked Carin away, and a miracle that he had found her. Not that Bob Abies put much stock in miracles. He had learned through hard experience not to care for wounded animals, that you could never save them, that they would always die and that this too was a part of nature. So when he found Carin, he didn’t cry. He just buried her well, and hoped she was at rest.
Standing Beside Myself Again, (Pencil Drawing)

BY LUCY MCPHAIL
You and I

we are one winged angels,
heads in the clouds,
heals dragging dust.

And I drop my left side,
you, your right.

*Pick yourself up to fly with me,*
*I say, you lean too far left.*

you,
*pick your left side up. It is too heavy for me.*

And so we spiral.

But there is love there,
we just can’t see for all the spinning clouds,
the spinning earth.

*Today on TV.*
*I saw a man jump from a balloon*

nineteen miles up
*for the first freefall from space.*

What bravery is this?
*or foolishness...*

Oh, woman, we are damned together,
one wing each torn away
so hold my hand and flap.

*Maybe together,*
*heaven can be reached.*

But, if it is our destiny
to fall as Icarus
fell,
*well,*
if we are together,  
can keep our heads,  
our hands  
together,  

imagine the sights,  
imagine the beauty,  

imagine what that man saw  
as each layer of atmosphere  
broke before him  
like glass,  

imagine his clarity.  

When we die on the rocks,  
at least,  

at least  
we can look at each other  
in our minds and know  
we were not blind,  

our eyes were  
one set of eyes,  

our brains one brain.  

I would stroke your long fingers  
to the end.
Tessie

Lithuania, 1896

MARTHA KRYSTAPONIS

My feet hurt. The rough path from Kaunas to the German ocean causes a blister to build on my heel, encased in brown box shoes. I clutch my son’s sweaty hand as his legs try to keep up with mine. What must his feet feel?

My eyes sting. Sweat trails down my forehead, through creases—paths of past worry. Anthony doesn’t care that his cap is gone, and my babushka now covers the hungry orphan miles behind. We rest near Castle Trakai. My son’s eyes close, while mine cannot.

My stomach wrenches, seeing a shack and a field where three people dig for potatoes. Food can be gold. But my husband waits for us in Klaipeda, holding three tickets in his calloused fingers. I help the family dig to fill Anthony’s mouth, but not his stomach.

My nostrils flare with desire as I watch him eat without washing the food or his hands. I can smell it, filling me yet leaving me emptier. Once I smelled like lemon soap, and the Lithuanian mountains welcomed me as a flower on their slopes. But only a stench rises from me now to my son’s nose.
To Be a Stone

I am happy to be a stone.
Charles Simic, “Stone”

One of a long tradition, honored and terrible.

Stained with the blood of martyrs in Jerusalem, licked by the fire of God on Mount Carmel, stricken by Moses’ staff that water might pour forth, rolled away from an empty tomb.

Of my tradition, the slayer of Goliath; those that bore the law from Sinai; Ebenezer, when the LORD routed the Philistines; and that One, rejected by builders, now become chief Cornerstone.
They had driven the iron stake five feet into the dry earth. The dusty cracks around it looked like the wounds on his back—gaping, crusty, painfully dry and irreversible, unless the rain came and filled the cracks and washed the dried blood from his skin. It had been so long since he had felt the rain.

The shackle around his neck was a worrisome trial. It chafed at his throat and the wiry beard hair that grew above it caught in the nails. His hair caught in the chain. Sometimes he could feel the wetness of blood when he moved his head too fast and lost some hair in the process. But blood was just another daily reality. He could not even remember if it was blood that filled in the wrinkles of his hands and his nails or if it was just dust. They were both red.

He did not know how long he had been chained to the stake, if it was days or years or eternity. Although his soul was weary from fighting, time was not what he was fighting for. His name he held tight in the back of his throat, afraid to open his mouth lest it dissolve in the sultry air. Every day the sun turned his skin into leather; he felt like a snake. And when it peeled he imagined sliding out of it and looking at a new, warm, glistening body, smooth and alive. But the chain was too short anyway. He would never have room to leave his skin behind.

The shade from the distant forest was something he thought about all day. With his wooden, thirsty tongue he tried to form a lullaby he remembered, but the words were patchy and the verse was full of holes:

Mossy will guide you back
For I love child,
And the stream your name
Like during summer’s
During summer’s
During summer—his life was summer. Not the fertile, free summer of youth but the desert-summer that filled his nostrils with dust and choked him with longing. “Water,” his tongue cried, but he had no answer. Water—and the word was a forgotten moment.

in the lake the sun an explosion of blinding ripples he was blind her back with the freckle on her shoulder blade sank below him he was floating in cool desire goose bumps the response his body gave she turned her smile brighter than the light his eyes as wet as the lake and he reached out his hands to her slippery

But the moment closed into a cloud of dust. They were coming.

Always the sneers, the laughter, the cattle prods. They stood over him and spoke loudly. He did not hear what they said.

“He’s a proud one, isn’t he?” one shouted, and another cursed. He felt the dull pain again as they moved the prods.
“Teach him—teach him—teach,” and it became a shout. Their shouting was the faint roar of a distant storm in an endless monotony of pain. He watched as slowly, quietly, a drop of red fell from his bent neck and was absorbed by the granules of dust. Then more. A tiny beetle scurried by, caught in a cloudburst of blood.

When he awoke, the cool night wind had taken the place of the heat. His body ached, but pain was easy to ignore. A tin plate of meat and a bowl of water sat close to his hand. He ate and drank greedily, not minding the smell. He could see the yellow lights in the huts and hear noisy laughter while far off stood the hairy shadows of the forest, grim and protecting.

He lay on his back and gazed up at the stars. If he closed his eyes he could still see their brightness. In his mind he fought against the promises of space. There would be space in the sky, in the earth, in the forest. But there was none for him. He remembered few things but one memory always came in the night the peepers sang as if their hearts would burst for the throbbing beauty of spring and he ran through dewy grass to his favorite tree to climb—reach the stars—so close like the blossoms of leaves on the gnarled branches pluck one from the sky a diamond for his mother a necklace a crown don’t fall off the bark was rough to calloused feet and soon the morning would burst over the mountain but for now he cried because the air smelled like tender growing things and earth and a whisper of rain

A whisper of rain—but no, it was his fingers scratching the sand. What happened? What happened? His body ached so badly. And often a feeling told him something was wrong—something was tampering with his acceptance of life’s cosmic finality. Something was wrong...he slept, exhausted by the thought.

Days of monotony, of sameness, filled his mind like the passage of worn ideas. He remembered nothing but yesterday and tomorrow and forever, but sometimes a glitter of beauty was found in the path, like the glitter of gold in a stream—a memory of reality outside his tortured unreality. Those glitters were hard to see. They came and threw food at him in the morning and laughed at his confusion. He ate like an animal, chewing the food without touching it. Then he sat on his knees and tried to speak, tried to remember words. The iron chafed his skin, and he scratched his wrists and ankles constantly. He tried to speak...

“My—m-m-memory fails me—it c-c-canNOT be Loretta h-h-after all this—n-n-no!”

The stutter made him drool. And he was afraid lest his name slip out of his mouth and pop like a bubble. He didn’t try to speak again. A dream was haunting his days, a dream he often found during the silent pain of sleep. Sometimes, in the sun, his eyes would lock onto a far-off tree or a stone boulder and the dream would return to his mind.

in the forest running from shouts from the sticks that tore his skin through
the brogue

the vines those helpful snakes almost away from the noise from the pursuit but
the sight of children playing and laughing under a tree make his innards bitter
and painful and he is falling, begging to go back to be taken care of to feel the
iron so strange and familiar to know that time is not defined by stages but by
pain and he awakens to

Sweat encased his body and he shivered in the brutal light. The dream
clothed him in fear. To be given freedom and to reject it—he was afraid.
Because it had happened so many years before to the one he loved. It had
happened before...

One day, when they were beating him, he was aware of two pained eyes
gazing down at him. They broke his concentration and made him cry out,
and so they moved their prods longer and harder than ever. But as he lay and
sucked his wounds, those new, brown eyes lodged in his mind, and his throat
ached slightly. When the sun went down he was not surprised to hear soft
footsteps, but he jumped at the hand on his arm.

The voice of a child spoke to him; a child’s warm hand fed him bread
and tender meat. He could not understand the boy’s words, but he could see
the shine of his luminous eyes in the lamplight. “Eat...?” And he nodded and
grimaced, trying to smile, to show he understood. “Why.” And he knew that
word too, but he had no answer. He gazed out silently at the forest until the
boy left.

Every night the boy came, smuggling him food and clean water and
speaking slowly and gently. The boy’s story came in pieces as time passed
“A kitchen boy hired but why? Your blood is black like my skin so strange
and I told them I wouldn’t beat you but this food is stolen; they don’t know. See
that mound, that’s where they carried his body and laid it to rest. He died in-
stantly, they said, never knew his own hit him. Why. You can’t speak to me and
tell me why you did it and why they put you here. My mother sang to me songs
of the home and the river and the forest of monkeys one played with me and ate
a mango from my fingers. And my sister’s hair is thick and curly like this short
fluffy grass and eat this rice for your stomach, good with vegetables.”

But he never spoke back. It was enough to listen and eat and imagine
the stories of the brilliant land. It made his mind struggle within him. He
remembered too much now, knew too well the answers and the horror of
those answers, remembered too well the heaviness of the chisel in his hand as
he smashed it against...he crunched into a bone and spat it fiercely into the
sand.

One night, it rained. He lay on his back and felt the water pouring over
his face and rough flesh, like an anointing. He could smell her perfume in
the wet wind and he felt his eyes burn. Her body eluded his memory, the
taste of her skin and the beauty of her tortured eyes were distant and empty,
void of expression. There were no words to describe the wetness of her skin,
like the meaningless, slippery wetness of the rain. He could not hear her
voice, could not remember the words she spoke, could not see the look on her face as she said

“You’re free.”

It was the kitchen boy. The little lamp in his hand flickered. He heard the clink of iron against iron, looked down and saw free ankles.

“Run away. Run to the forest.” The boy’s breath was thick and afraid. He felt free wrists and now, God hurry. The neck. He sat stunned, blinking in the rain.

“Go. GO.”

and it was everything it was the whole world as her body draped across the bed, the crumbled note in his hand like a jeer, the one word black and spinning. Goodbye. goodbye. GOODBYE. the one word the one meaning of life of existence the empty bottle by the bed the thump of his heart the shaking of his fingers as he pressed his warmth against her cold breasts begging GOD GOD a heartbeat GOD GIVE ME there was no heartbeat and her tortured eyes stared at him at the empty bottle he smashed to the floor.

“They may come; they may—GO. You are free.”

the coolness of his mind like the coolness of the chisel in his hand, so simple, stop the screaming and the twisted sneer that spoke words like bile, stop the bent back stop the STOP and it was easy to smash bone if one was strong enough, strong from life from pain from the headstone in the back of his mind, and so he struck an unsuspecting head and found himself in chains as they hissed the word murder to him. But he did not know the meaning of that word.

“Thomas.”

her voice his name

“Thomas.” His name?

“Thomas. Go. The trees—the forest—go now before...”

Brown eyes reflected the yellow light of the huts.

He looked at the darkness, felt words from his depths spilling into his throat, filling his mouth, words from his very core bulging from his lips. He looked at the darkness, imagined the waiting arms of the forest, heard his name again and knew.

“Go! GO!” The desperation so clear, so tangible. “What are you waiting for? You are free! Free!” A whispered shriek, imploring luminous eyes.

her headstone, his name, the chisel smashing his master’s skull, fear clamped his heart like the

Iron collar. He saw it, wet and covered with sand. He picked it up, brushed it off. “My name is Thomas.” His name spun in the air, splashed against the rain, echoed the light of the little lamp. “Thomas...” And it disappeared with a gust of wind, floated away into the trees. He held the collar in his hands. “Thomas,” he whispered.

He placed the two halves of the collar around his neck and began to weep.
Earring, (Pencil Drawing)
BY RUPA KERN
A Cake Decorator Reflects on SpongeBob and Boys: A Poem About Break-ups, Redo’s, and Starting Over

Like the pale pink smear
Of buttercream baby booties
Severed by my spatula,
I would start over.

I scrape white cake clean of Brill Brand
Because the order was wrong,
And they wanted SpongeBob SquarePants.
He wanted Double D and no talk-backs.

They stand there
With faces like fondant;
Their smooth cheeks and bland eyes
Remind me of the morning after.

They watch me cut the bag,
Insert the coupler,
Choose my tip, and
Screw it.

I’ve run out of bucket yellow.
I’m out of yellow gel, too—damn.
Deli is always stealing our supplies!
Take is all they know how to do.

I try to be calm,
Scanning every label of CREAM CHEESE,
BAVARIAN CREAM, DOUBLE DUTCH.
But it’s not what I need. It never is.

I’ll have to use liquid airbrush—
It’ll take the whole bottle.
My arm aches as I mix right, left, figure eight,
Scrape it together and start over.
Ok, grab the kit, and I’m ready to decorate.
I place Bob’s googly plastic eyes
Atop the neatly scored, base-iced cake.
All I can do is laugh.

I pump and squeeze the bag,
Twist and angle the wrist just right.
Ok, one last shell border and
Bob will finally be gone.

I slide it off the turntable,
Box it up, print out the sticker.
They’ll get a 50% discount.
All that work for this?

“It looks great.” (In a frosty tone)
“Thanks, sorry about the mix-up.
Come again.” But they won’t be back.
They never come back.
Seaweed permeates the ocean, more than I have ever seen before. A wall of the stuff three feet wide had to be scaled before we reached the water. I throw the first grenade.

It hit my sister, a shot to the head. Gustin returns fire; a slimy, scratchy mess smashes into my face. Evasive maneuvers—I crouch to grab more ammo, and it slips through my fingers. Somehow I grab a handful and throw it into the air. A direct hit, Gustin goes down. Now my sister and I are left to battle. She stuffs a handful down my suit; I squirm to get it out. But seaweed is hard to remove. I return with my own handful, stuffed into her suit. Gustin rejoins fire, but now we both go after him. The sun is high in the sky, and the saltwater heats my face. We come to a truce.

We walk to the car over blistering Sand. A quick shower later, after scrubbing the grit from my hair, I’m clean. I walk downstairs, and my sister laughs as she pulls a strand of seaweed from my shoulder.
The Cutty Sark,  
B Y A D D I E L E A K  
(Color Photograph)
Kenny had missed Kayla at school all day until after lunch, before chemistry lab. Lab was one of the few classes he did not share with Kayla, so he was anxious to find out where she’d been before he got sealed into the dungeon basement laboratories.

There she was, rummaging through her locker. Kenny knew the bell didn’t ring for another eight minutes, so plenty of time to tell her. The hall was busy with classmates shuffling each other and books, so there wouldn’t be a scene.

“Kayla?”
She almost jumped at her name. Her booksack smacked the floor loud enough to draw a few split-second glimpses.
“Kayla, it’s me, Kenny.” He picked up her booksack, dusted it off and offered it back to her. Without pausing, Kayla accepted, whispered her thanks and, collecting a text and notes, started off straight down the hall.
“Um, Kayla?”
She slowed, as if afraid if she stopped suddenly her heavy booksack would not stop with her, thereby throwing her to the ground. She finally stopped. Her brow wrinkling into a puzzled stare, she turned back, acknowledging.
Hope. “I just wanted to let you know that—I’m sorry. For everything, but especially about— her.”

Those were sophomores, the three of them having gone to the same school since sixth grade. Kayla and Margaret had known each other before, even lived in the same neighborhood, whereas Kenny lived on the other side of the school district.

Sixth through eighth grade, the three’s friendship blossomed to near-kinship; Kayla and Margaret treated Kenny like a brother, asking him about his guy friends and jokingly scolding him when he did or said something stupid. In a class on Greek literature, the bored girls, sitting on either side of him, drew on both sides of his face, in permanent ink, scenes from Achilles’ shield; on one side of his face there were parades and dances, musical notes floating above it, whereas on the other, a city on a hill on top of a dust-cloud, spear and sword points sticking out of it, stars and swirls sprinkling it over to show it was a fighting army.

Not too long after that, things changed. In seventh grade, some of their friends began pairing up; having a friend of the opposite sex came to mean something other than it did for Kenny and the two girls. Not something more, just something else.
Oblivious, Kenny continued associating with Kayla and Margaret as if nothing had changed. But when he saw one of his few male friends, Trey, kissing Charlotte, he stared, not turning away as he used to.

Trey, noticing, detached himself enough to blurt out. “Hey, Kenny, grow up! Get your own girl, or pick between Kayla or Marge.”

Caught, Kenny grimaced. He didn’t forget Trey’s comment, though. He shared what Trey said with the girls.

“Oh, Kenny, kiss me!” said Marge, puckering her lips, then laughing. Kayla’s face had darkened, then joined Marge’s laughter.

Kenny was silent.

Eighth grade was worse. Most of their friends had paired up by then. After Trey broke up with his second date, he congratulated Kenny for sticking to Marge.

“What do you mean?” said Kenny.

“Huh? Whadya mean what do I mean? I mean how many guys out there can claim to have dated the same girl since like seventh grade?”

“But we’re not dating.”

“Sure, Kenny.”

“Is everybody talking about us?”

“I dunno, but Charlotte told me Marge and Kayla were arguing.”

“What?”

“Yeah. Marge says y’all are dating, though Kayla doesn’t says she isn’t.”

Kenny noticed Marge wearing more makeup lately, and less clothing. He also found himself running into her more frequently, in the halls and at lunch, and that they had more classes together. He’d written it off to coincidence, but now...

I’ll ask Kayla, thought Kenny. She knows Marge better than anyone.

He found her after school, walking alone down the street. He caught up to her.

“Kayla. Where’s Marge?”

“I don’t know, Kenny,” she said quietly, almost whispering.

“Well, apparently she likes me,” he said, stretching, “and I guess I’m supposed to like her. I mean, if she really likes me, huh?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, don’t you? You’re her best friend, after all?”

“No, Kenny. We haven’t talked in months.”

Kenny stopped. “Why?”

She didn’t answer, just continued walking. Not very helpful, thought Kenny. Maybe Marge will tell me.
“Of course I know,” said Marge in biology lab the next day. “She’s jealous.”

“Jealous,” Kenny repeated, sinking the scalpel into the frog’s head; the frog’s legs twitched as the scalpel burrowed into the brain stem.

“Yes,” said Marge, grimacing at the mutilated frog. “Careful, Kenny, or Professor Hunt will—”

“Catch you ruining a perfect specimen,” said the professor, startling them from behind. “Mr. Fredericks, kindly dispose of that specimen and start over with a new one. And you, Miss Morls, desist from any further conversation.”

Kenny obligingly tossed the carcass into the hazmat bin and fished out another frog from the large jar on the teacher’s table.

Kayla made no move. Was she even blinking? He hesitated, watching for signs.

“Marge and me, we broke up. Told her I missed talking to you.”

She stared, frowning.

“She called me a bunch of things, said I never really liked her, which was true enough so I agreed.”

She smiled. He grinned, warming to his tale.

Ninth grade was Kenny’s worst year. Kenny found himself having to work at keeping Marge “happy.” It was as if everyone expected him to keep her happy, and that it was also expected that he fail. She became the kind of pet one has to remember to feed, lest it prove a menace to the neighbors and a hazard to your health. He constantly deferred to her, asking her what she wanted to do, and sacrificing all his desires to please her. When she asked him to stop talking to Kayla, he barely protested. After all, she never spoke to him unless he asked her something, so clearly she had no interest in him. Marge, though, she always spoke to him, and occasionally asked him questions.

“So, how was the test in- what class was it, again?”

“World History.” One of the few classes we don’t share, Kenny thought.

“Oh yeah.”

“Kayla’s in that class.”

“Really? Hmm.”

“You remember Kayla don’t you? Y’all used to be best friends.”

“Yeah. I guess we grew apart.”

Yeah. Happens to everyone, Kenny thought.
Kenny stopped. Kayla was looking away from him, as if disturbed. This was unexpected. Moments passed, the traffic picked up pace, the bell for class due to ring any second.

She finally looked at him again. “Kenny, before you go on, I need to tell you something.”

A cold hand settled on Kenny’s throat. This was not in his script.

“I’m with someone.”

Lockers were slamming, stamping feet. Any second now.

“We’ve been going out for months, not a lot to know about us.”

Who, he wanted to roar. Who stole you? From me!

“You remember Trey? He’s made quite a turn-around since he walked the aisle last summer.”

The bell started ringing, frightening Kayla to spin and race to class, leaving Kenny with the fragments of his life to pick up.
A Girl Gets Sick of a Rose*
ADDIE LEAK

They say
rouge brings out
the devil in a woman.
Maybe I believe them,
sashaying
a barefoot salsa,
lace swirling around my knees.
Red crescent lips
itch to leave a mark
on that smooth-scrubbed cheek
that would turn as scarlet
as the kiss left behind,
but I’m not quite
audacious enough.
I flush when
we slow dance,
his hand on the small of my back
which curves, embarrassed,
away.

From “Song in the Front Yard” by Gwendolyn Brooks.
Haystack Rock at Canon Beach, Oregon
(B/W Photograph)
BY KIMBERLY BROWN
Remnants of the Oregon Trail

LYDIA DIERS

Two tracks cut deep into tender earth, now hardened gray and crusty with inquisitive white roots of coarse grass protruding from the petrified fissures.

Once wagons thundered through these ruts, Etching their stark autograph into the face of the wilderness.

A lopsided cross on a pile of rocks marks the grave of a nameless pioneer left by the trail when death beckoned. Left behind or gone ahead—who is to say? All are gone now.

No trees shade the hushed gateway to the west. Only grass murmurs with meadowlarks swinging on its supple stalks, though harness chains and clanging pots once disturbed the natural hush.

History forgets personal struggles of the often bitter quest: young wife buried, son crippled, piano left behind for wolves to play. But beyond are cities, people, towns: testaments of success.
We all lay on the roof of Jackie and Stephanie's father's dance club. It was mid-afternoon, and the sun didn't let us forget it. Being so close to the equator in Punta Gorda, Belize definitely had its perks for any sunbather.

The younger kids ran around us, playing with the bubbles we had brought for them. Jackie looked over at me.

"Ya want me to braid your hair again. I can change the design."

I touched my newly washed hair thinking of last night when I had taken the first braids out. I sat on the top bunk with the door to my room open. Rodney, the only guy in our little missions group, passed the door. A split second later he ducked his head in.

"Oh my gosh, how did Howard Stern get down here to PG?" he said.

"Uh yeah, cuz you’re funny," I said throwing my pillow at him.

He just smiled and continued down the hall, laughing as if I couldn't hear him.

I looked back at Jackie, and agreed to let her braid my hair again. She went down and put some water in a bowl and brought up her brush. She brushed my hair, and I winced in pain because of my sunburned scalp. Stephanie wasn't kidding when she said her older sister wasn't gentle when she braided. My head jerked and snapped back in every direction possible waiting for her to finish each row. My eyes watered every once and awhile when a chunk of my hair would come loose. I didn't mind though, it was during these three hours braiding attempts that Jackie and I would have the best conversations.

She often asked me questions about my boyfriend.

"Aren't you scared of him," she asked.

"No, I think it would be better to say he's scared of me," I answered.

"I'm so scared of guys."

"Really?" I was shocked by her statement. "By the way you scream at the ones who even look in your direction, I never would have guessed."

"Ya. That's just a way to keep them out of my hair. I know what they want, and I'm not poor enough yet to give it to them. It's a good thing if you get pregnant with a boy's baby, and he has rich parents."

At first statements like this used to shock me, but something about the way Jackie talked about them made it normal. I was sixteen, and in Punta Gorda, girls my age were having babies with multiple wealthy men, all because their parents couldn't afford to feed them.

"I need to get out of here. Maybe I could go to college in the States. Maybe you and I could go together," Jackie said.

"Maybe, but don't they have any colleges here in Belize?" I asked.

"None worth wasting your money on," she replied.

The only college in Punta Gorda was a Seminary that offered computer
classes. Jackie’s family practiced Dugu, which was a form of Voodoo. She would never have dreamt of going to a Christian seminary. Her parents would have disowned her.

“Maybe I could get a running scholarship,” she mused.

“That would be good. You should come to a school near where I live, then you could move in with me and my family.”

“Ya I’d like that. But doesn’t it snow where you live?”

“Yeah.”

“I would freeze!”

“Probably.”

Jackie continued to braid my hair in silence. After about two hours, my neck hurt, and her fingers were getting stiff. I pulled my long hair into a low bun and tied a bandana around it so that people couldn’t notice that my hair was only braided on the top layers. After my hair was secure, we went downstairs to see where the rest of her family had gone.
The Firmament Displayed,  (B/W Photograph)

BY SARAH BANNERMAN
Today I Met Reality
ELYSE MARCELLINO

Today I met reality;
We nodded and shook hands.
But then he slapped me in the face
And shrugged at my shocked glance.

I saw him lurking in the eyes
Of my friend's tired face;
Innocence forever gone
And duty in its place.

The rain outside did seem to me
To move into my heart—
Oh, the pain of seeing truth
And what it's ripped apart.

Our next encounter did instead
Pull back a heavy veil,
As light crept o'er the way things were
And led them to prevail.

Though guarded gazes we did see.
Reassured I stood,
Wiser from the ling’ring sting,
I rested in the good.

A burden slipping off my back,
I went to seek another
Who simply laughed to see such things
Compared in serious manner.

We spoke of books, in their disguise,
Of guile and of truth:
Reality lost in the word
But not in life, dear youth.

Desperate to understand
I cast aside my fears—
Desire-clouded vision gone,
And dried the blinding tears

I happened upon one more soul,
Who traveled my same road.
And linking arms, we went about
In search of princely toads.

When who did we run into but
Dear old reality—
Surprise! Surprise! Wide-eyed we saw
Less frightening was he.

We looked him over with respect,
Then burst out into laughter
To see the humor in his role
Of pain and joy and pastor.

The knowledge of “never again”
Was taught to me this day,
Yet not without “someday perhaps”
And “so again, we pray.”

Today I met reality
And providentially,
My human heart was induced
To see what all must see.
Officer Kent Interviews a Witness

CHERYL ALEXANDER

What did you see last night?
Well, I saw them brawling, heard him when he cursed.
The woman and boy, they were in a fight?
Yep, he spat on her, threw her down headfirst.

What happened next, what did you see then?
Well, sir, she got herself up, threw herself a punch.
Was she hitting herself or the boyfriend?
The boyfriend, yessiree, I could hear his nose crunch.

So, did he hit her again; what happened after that?
Yep, so she got up and kicked him, kneed him in the balls!
And then what happened, Mrs. Batt?
Well, by golly, he took a big fall!

So did he get up? Just what happened next?
Well, he didn’t want to stop, so he smacked her head!
When you say “smacked,” what do you mean, the context?
Well—Officer Kent is it?—I mean he shot her in the head!
Humming softly to herself, Ana twirled the pen around in her chubby ten-year-old fingers and stared abstractedly at the wriggling tuft of feathers that protruded from the top. She was half-consciously trying to look intelligent and pretty for the clerk behind the register, pursing her lips just so and letting a little frown wrinkle her suntanned forehead. He didn’t seem to be paying much attention. She snuck a peek at him from the corner of one eye; he was talking to a long-legged brunette in safari shorts. She was probably closer to his age than Ana. Oh, well. She put the pen down and turned to find her aunt and cousins again. She was tired of waiting for the trolley and ready to just go on into the zoo. The souvenir shop was getting old. Did it really matter if the baby couldn’t walk all that well yet? They should’ve brought a stroller. Now where had they all gotten to?

She rocked up to her tippy-toes; surely her family had just migrated over to an aisle out of her line of vision. But—no. They weren’t there. They weren’t in the store at all.

No, they definitely weren’t. Her eyes widened in panic, and she had a sudden urge to run and yell but felt like her feet had been super-glued to the floor. She recollected vaguely that people were probably watching, and she didn’t want to look like a scaredy-cat little girl. They were probably just waiting outside. Be calm. Her rebellious body ignored the warning; her heart felt like it was about to beat out of her chest. She unfroze herself, gathered her thoughts, and, struggling to keep her face blank, strode decisively to the door like she’d been planning it all along. It shut with a jingle, effectively hiding her from the sight of the cute register guy and his tall, skinny girlfriend, and Ana surveyed the crowd in front of her frantically, no longer caring that her face was beginning to twist into a frightened mask. She was just past waist high now and mostly could just see legs. And lots of spider veins. She strode back and forth, her nerves on end. Yes, lots of spider veins—but no Aunt Jessie. Lots of brown hair, but no Allison.

They must be at the bat cave. We were supposed to go there first. She trotted, and then ran, her sun-bleached hair streaming back from her temples and her fanny pack bouncing on her hips. But she couldn’t locate her aunt or cousin in the crowd there, either, and managed to make matters, if possible, even worse by slipping on the damp floor and beaming her head against a rock. That slowed her pace a little, and, back in the clear, fresh sunlight, she made her way at a brisk walk down a random path. Her face screwed up in concentration and distress, imagining that she recognized strangers every few yards. Where could they have gone? She began to pass the lion and tiger pens. There’s no way they could have gotten this far this fast. Not with the baby. She stopped walking and sank against the chain link fence near the cheetahs. Who cared anymore if she looked weak and scared? Who cared if she got
kidnapped? She poked her lip out with a tough frown intended as a precau-
tionary dam for her eyes. I’ll never find them. She proceeded to soak her
knees. Nevermind about that dam. I guess I’d better get used to this. Hey guys,
she turned around bleary-eyed to face the big cats, who were watching her
restlessly. Name’s Ana; guess I get to live here with you now.

The cheetahs stared back at her as though they understood, even pausing
in their relentless pacing to sympathize. Of course they understood. She
figured that they’d purr for her and rub against her if they could, and she
derived some warm fuzzies from the thought. For a wild moment, she bitterly
considered trying to climb the fences. But, no. There was razor wire up there,
and she wasn’t that naïve. Wouldn’t it be an adventure, though? She could
just see the newspaper headlines the next day: Lost Ten Year Old Girl in Fit
of Insanity is Torn to Pieces by Razor Wire and Zoo Animals. Peachy.

Guess I’d better walk back. Her walk was more of a trudge this time. She
wasn’t sure she believed she’d find anybody at all and still felt a little knot-
ted in the stomach and achy in the head. They certainly wouldn’t find her if
she stayed way out here. She felt a little calmer as she walked. Wow, tigers are
pretty. Are they really so ferocious as everybody says? That thing could rip me to
shreds, I guess. He looks hungry, too. She sped up just a little.

I could live in the zoo if I had to. I bet the monkeys would take me in. She
examined them as she passed. She didn’t want to live with the blue-bottomed
ones; they just looked all-out weird. The chimpanzees were too high energy
and would drive her crazy. Was there a good alternative?

Her thoughts and stumpy legs soon carried her back to the entrance of
the bat cave. A figure in orange ahead of her caught her attention and her
heart leaped. “Aunt JESSIE!” She ran up behind her aunt, a little breath-
less, and tugged at her shirt, prompting the woman to turn around. Her jaw
dropped. That’s not Aunt Jessie. Ana blushed crimson and let go of the shirt
as though she’d been shocked; the woman was about twenty years older than
Aunt Jessie and had a double chin and garish fuchsia smile. She looks like a
reflection in a funhouse mirror. Ana backed away, muttering an apology.

“Are you okay?” She whirled to face the speaker, and her eyes widened
in shock.

It was the guy from the souvenir shop. Of course it was the guy from
the souvenir shop. What, was he on break or something? She stared at him
blankly for a second. Goawaygoawaygoaway. “I’m fine.” She sounded con-
defident. Or defensive. She wasn’t sure which. He was; his eyebrows immediately
jumped up to hide under his hairline. “I mean… um.” She tried to look in-
occent and casual. Go away...

“You just looked a little lost, dear,” said a new voice as an arm snaked its
way around register boy’s hips. And here was Ms. Legs. “Dear?” Ana tried not
to glare at her. Both pairs of blue eyes watched her expectantly.

You’re never going to find your family if you don’t tell them, stupid. For a
moment, her cool gave way as she stared back down the row of manicured
trees that divided the walkway.

She set her teeth. Dr. La Fleur told her that she ground them and had informed her mother that she might require a special appliance to help her break the habit, but she didn’t really care. It relieved stress. She wouldn’t wear one of those things anyway. *I might find them.*

“No. Thanks. I’m all right.” She smiled as carelessly as she could and was rewarded with a sugary sympathetic look from the brunette. He smiled. For her? Her stomach did a back handspring. They left, and she watched them go until the brunette reached over to grab souvenir-shop boy’s hand and intertwine their fingers like football laces. She scowled. And remembered that she was lost. Her stomach sank.

She stumbled into the bat cave. Bat Cave. Batman! She’d watched some of those movies with Allison for the first time last week, and they scared her. Surely nothing weird like that went on *here*; the movies were all made up after all, weren’t they? A hand clamped itself down on her shoulder. Augh! She jumped in fright and tried to sprint away.

“ANA!” Oh. No, it wasn’t a kidnapper—or anything worse. She turned around and buried her face in Aunt Jessie’s midsection. A lecture would follow. Of course it would. Sneaking a glance up, she realized that she’d never seen her aunt look so harried. But she was safe now. She wouldn’t have to live with the monkeys or with the Joker. She’d never been so glad to see Aunt Jessie’s spider veins.
Amy Marie
Born and died January 31, 1989
STACY NOTT

I first met her in an empty cradle.
Her tiny green dress folded away
with her footprint, her lock of hair.

My parents’ hungry arms secured me:
how could I know someone smaller
had gone out of this dim mirror?

When I first learned to want a sister,
I imagined her sharing my room -
a companion with blue eyes but no speech.

Later, she led me to rooms
the Builder added to my mansion,
taught me to long for the light
of the Morning Star.
Self Portrait,  (B/W Photograph)
BY SUSANNA DAVENPORT
The Grey and Endless Gulf

Emily Cain was watching the CBS Sunday Night Movie curled up on the couch with her mother next to her when the phone rang. Emily got up and wiped the popcorn grease from her hands onto her faded turquoise pajama bottoms. They were her favorite; the ones with the ducks on them.

“Mom, tell me if there are any breaking developments in the chemotherapy of this poor, impoverished girl.”

“There’s only fifteen minutes left; you can begin to see the color creeping back into her cheeks.”

Emily smiled in spite of the inherent cheesiness of their Sunday ritual. She wouldn’t admit to anyone at school that she watched this stuff. It just seemed to her that there was a place in the world for happy endings, even in the direst circumstances. She picked up the phone.

“Hello?”

“Emily? This is Aunt Jenny.” Aunt Jenny was the sister Emily’s father, the sister who now lived in Austin, and Emily’s favorite person in the whole world. “Emily, I know I told you this over the summer, but every week or so I come home to the messages on my answering machine. Crying, asking for money, talking about Dale. It breaks my heart, Em. I’m not saying your mother can’t handle things, but…if you want to, you can come out here.”

Emily, unsure, looked over at her mother, who was giving a silent round of applause for the girl exiting the Mayo Clinic. “I appreciate that Aunt Jenny, but I can’t talk about that right now. I’ve got so much on my plate right now—everybody’s depending on me.”

“Hello?”

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“I know, I know—you told me all this before. I just thought I’d make sure you know that you’re welcome here.”

The raw, pink meat was popping and sizzling on the grease-stained griddle, but was also attended very carefully by Emily. At least, it was until the phone rang. Emily sidestepped across the very small kitchen of the restaurant to answer the phone. She was expecting a take-out order; so, she didn’t even put the spatula down.

“Cap’n Geech’s Shrimp Shack, how may we satisfy your seafood dining needs today?” Emily recited.

“Yes, um, I’d like two dozen orders of cheesy shrimp shooters…nine baskets of crab claws…and if you don’t mind, I’d like all this delivered to Birmingham.” It was Emily’s best friend, Jack DePalma. “Actually, I’m getting off work at 4:00. Can I count on you to be at the beach at 4:15?”

After a considerable pause, Emily answered, “Jack, I just don’t know how much time I have to kill this afternoon. I’ve got hours of studying for
“All work and no play make Jill a dull girl.” Jack whined.
“I may be dull, but I...” Emily didn’t get the chance to finish her sentence. In the corner of her eye, she caught growing wisps of smoke emanating from the burgers she had been cooking. It was in this unfortunate moment that Emily’s boss, Jim Martin, walked in.

Jim Martin would have been a strange character; had he chosen any job but restaurant manager, high school science teacher, or pastor for an off-brand denominational church. He had the set uniform for any of the three: short-sleeve dress shirt; skinny tie; thick, black glasses; and hair slicked back and virtually overflowing with pomade. He also had a nervous chuckle, at which Emily often had to bite her tongue to keep from laughing. Nobody was laughing now, however.

“Emily, what happened here? These burgers are toasted.” Jim questioned as he grabbed the spatula from Emily and frantically plied the charred burgers from the stove.

“Well, I just went to the phone to take an order,” Emily started. This was partly true, because, after all, it had been her intention. “And then things became more complicated than I anticipated. I just sort of forgot…I’m sorry.”

“I know you’re having a rough time at home, kiddo, but these last few weeks, you’ve become a less than ideal worker. This isn’t exactly the first time you’ve let the kitchen get out of hand on your watch. But I’ll tell you what—I’ll hold you job while you take a break and study for exams. Starting now. I’ll see you next week.” Jim Martin wore an expression that was anything but kidding.

“Thank you, Mr. Martin.” Emily stumbled out of the store, feeling like a scolded child. She fumbled for the pack of cigarettes she kept hidden in the newspaper stand outside the Shrimp Shack. Emily was cracking a little bit under the pressure of having to take care of Jack, her mother, and herself.

Emily has lovely blue eyes, her mother used to say, blue as sapphires just taken from the mine. But lately she had begun to cover her eyes with her ash-blonde bangs. Her eyes already showed signs of aging of the soul, if not the body. Her small frame showed frailty, but that was deceiving. Many girls would have folded long before Emily Cain. Her face was angular, and her lopsided showed most of her gums. The smile was becoming rarer all the time.

Emily crossed Bienville Boulevard, walked across the parking lot, and climbed the stairs of one of the several abandoned observational decks that dotted the beach at Dauphin Island. Going to the beach always made her a little sad; it made her remember how much fun she used to have with her dad there—before the accident. He had been an expert hunter of shells, of which this particular beach had many, if the hunter could avoid the mounds of washed up seaweed and the occasional dead fish. He would spend hours helping her find just the right conchs and sand dollars to help her construct
exquisite palisades for her sand castles. Her mother used to be the type of matriarch that would pack a picnic every couple of Saturdays for these excursions to the beach and would bring an umbrella and maybe a book, which she would always ignore after she began to watch her husband and child work together on all fours in the sand.

But that all changed one October when Emily was nine, and her father had sailed out one last, red morning. Emily’s father was a shrimper from a long lineage of shrimpers, and, by all accounts, was one of the best. That day her father and his partner, Jim McClaxton, had just been too far out at sea when the storm hit. The boat should have held up better, but the Coast Guard called it a freak accident.

People handle grief in different ways. Some people fold it up into neat squares and tuck into the back of the sock drawer with the rest of life’s little disappointments. Some people, like Emily, let it rage like a hurricane until it passes unto somewhere else and only came back every once and a while. But others—others wear it like a scar on their faces, ugly and bleeding and held up for all the world to see, because, even after all the years pass, those people are just too tired and too trampled to care about the people who can no longer look at them. Emily’s mother wore that scar.

“Whoooooo wants a candy cane???” Jack DePalma belted, as he reached into his jacket for his stash of free candy canes, which he had lifted from his part-time job at the register of the Ship and Shore. Jack’s long black hair was tied back as usual; his Southern drawl was without twang.

“Thank you,” Emily mumbled feebly, as she took a long, last drag on her cigarette before extinguishing it and reaching out to receive her peppermint treat. The two social renegades were alone on top of one of the decks. It had been abandoned in longer days and slightly warmer temperatures.

“So, how are you getting along?” Jack said as he lit his cigarette. Jack always used a match, because he felt lighters lacked the inherent destructive symbolism of the whole process; a match lets a fire burn wild. Emily often argued that Jack was very serious about being a flake.

“I was almost fired today. As it is…I’m on probation or something. He called it an exam study break. I think it’s a warning.”

“So what? Jobs are overrated. The Island isn’t overrun with teenagers—stores always need grunts.”

“Yeah, but I’ve been at the Shrimp Shack for a while now. I have responsibilities; I have good pay. If I start over, me and Mom would have to cancel Christmas. It’s just that, what little she makes keeps going toward frivolities, like food and utilities and health insurance. And...you know.”

“Ah, yes, health insurance.” Jack deliberately avoided the last comment. “I believe that was exactly the type of decadence that marked the fall of the
Roman Empire, long before the Goths finished it in 476.”

Jack fiddled with his guitar for a few minutes as he let the moment marinate. Emily stared out into the grey, December water. “The Gulf—it’s the loneliest thing, most beautiful thing, I’ve ever seen in my life,” Emily said, even though the sun was breaking out from the clouds and turning the silver sea gold. The sun sank as it turned the sky pink giving it the appearance of a pearl in the middle of an oyster. Neither Jack nor Emily said anything for fifteen minutes as they watched the last of the sunset. The purple dusk stretched across the sky, lighting up the oil rigs in the distance like Sodoms and Gomorrah’s on-the-sea.

“Well, Candy…” Jack broke the silence.

“Candy? Candy Cane? God, you’re as bad as Jim.”

“Well, Candy, you know, it is almost Christmas break and you’re out here on a beach without a current bacteria warning, in your tank top and flip-flops with a hot guy…”

“A HOT guy,” Emily concurred, laughing.

“And most of the structures on the Island are still standing from hurricane season. There could be worse, situations, you know? Actually, I wouldn’t worry about Christmas. You see, I’m planning to host a magnificent Christmas gala at my home just a week from now. I’m thinking it will have a roaring fire, a gleaming, tinsel tree, and lavish presents for all those in attendance…”

“Jack, you live at the Gulf Breeze Motel.”

“Well, don’t tell Mr. Tafra, then. There’s no need to be such a dream-killer.”

Emily always wondered aloud why she had to be the pragmatic one when Jack was six years her senior. Jack’s usual defense was that was what she got for hanging around with a vagabond musician.

“Jack, I have to go. It’s already past five.”

“Alright. Maybe I’ll see you Friday night?”

“Maybe. Try to take care of yourself until then.”

Emily and her mother lived in a different sort of house than most people envision when they think of Dauphin Island. As opposed to the multi-story architectural wonders favored by the tourists and snowbirds supported by pillars to protect the structure from storm surges, the Cains’ house was a humble one-story brick structure in the middle of the island that had been in the family for years. Emily came home in a cold sweat from pedaling her bike several miles in the dead of winter—even a Gulf winter.

“Mom? I’m back!” Emily yelled at the top of her voice. She yelled not for her mother to hear, but there was such a silence, as thick as the salt-air outside, that ruled over the house. She couldn’t think of anything better to
do to challenge it. Emily turned the corner around to reach her mother’s bedroom. Her mother was curled up in her bed, blankets piled up, staring, expressionless, at *Wheel of Fortune*, which cast a sick, blue light over the dark.

“Emily...you’re home.” her mother stated obviously.

“Yeah, Mom. How are you? How was work today?”

“Everybody was very happy. All the teachers, all the kids out for the semester...smiling, waiting to get back to their...little...homes, families...” Emily’s mother drifted off. She worked as a receptionist at a local middle school.

Emily could see that even their pleasantries were dying in the grey world of the work week. The line of communication between her and her mother was straining over what her mother considered to be the overwhelming burden of existence. Emily turned to walk out of the room.

“Emily?” her mother called softly.

“Yes?” Emily concealed her joy at her mother having more to say.

“Could you turn off the television? I’m pretty tired.”

“Oh...okay.” Emily’s heart sank.

“You’re a jewel, Emily, you’re a dear...” her mother sleepily mumbled.

About half of the lights in the house were still on, which wasn’t hard because, besides her mother’s bed room, the house consisted of one big room. To the left was the kitchen, where from came the light. Ahead lay a large area containing a futon on which Emily slept when it was too cold for the hammock in the backyard and a dining table where the family used to sit and eat its dinner. Mostly Emily just brought home take-out which she ate shortly after she got home, and which her mother would wake in the middle of the night to find and pick over. To the right was a room not much bigger than a closet, where her father had once laid down his charts to prepare the next day of fishing. Emily had taken it as her study, for homework or reading or listening to music given to her by her Aunt Jenny.

Emily walked over to the counter were she saw a half-empty open fifth of Jack Daniel’s. She had noticed her mother was even more reserved tonight that usual: her mother wasn’t an angry drunk or a fun drunk; she was a quiet one. Emily put up the dishes with a robotical proficiency as she softly sung “Come Monday,” a song her mother used to sing for her as a lullaby, to once again fight the silence.

After she was done with trigonometry, checkbook-balancing, and vacuuming, Emily walked over the faded flower-upholstered couch, rolled out the mattress, and laid down the teddy bear she had been with which she had been sleeping since childhood. She pulled the black rotary phone and punched her index finger phone through each of the holes. Her mother had gotten the phone several years ago; Emily loved it because it reminded her of the flippant way mother could go about things, sometimes. She then dialed the number for the Gulf Breeze.

“Hello, may I speak to Jack DePalma, please?” she politely inquired.
“Yes, you may. Hold please.” She held. “I’m sorry; Mr. DePalma seems to have gone out for the evening. May I leave a message?”

“Yes, ma’am. Just tell him Candy called,” Emily sighed as she picked up the remote and turned on the television news coming in from Pensacola.

That Friday night, Emily was sitting in a plastic lawn chair next to the counter at the Ship and Shore, Dauphin Island’s grocery store, video rental, and bait shop. It was distinctively Gulf Coast: it smelled like worms and beer. It had, like all filling stations in the South, mesh hats emblazoned with messages like “If heaven ain’t a lot like Dixie, I don’t want to go” for sale. It had plenty of cheap souvenirs for any tourists just coming or just leaving the island and all the celebrity gossip magazines.

“Well, what are your plans for tonight? You’re a free girl, now.” Jack said from behind the counter.

“Technically. Technically I’m a free girl. But I was going to go the Shrimp Shack tomorrow and see if Jim will let me start working again.”

“But I’m off at nine and I want to know what to do with the rest of the night.”

“I don’t know Jack. Where does the LeBaron feel like going tonight?” Emily asked with a sly smile.

Jack’s car, which he inherited from his grandmother in Coden who was now too aged and infirmed to drive it, was what would have been a gloriously dull Chrysler LeBaron, except for the electric purple paint job Jack had given it.

“I’m thinking it knows about a rockin’ little honky-tonk up around Mobile.”

A half-hour later, Jack passed his shift off to the next employee. They both sprinted out into the parking lot and raced to his car. In less than a minute they were off the island and gently ascending into the heavens as the curve of the bridge lifted them away and upward until the apex, and the child in both of them could not resist lifting the brake and speeding to the end of the slope by their own velocity. Jack howled at the moon. Emily did too. They arrived at the bar, somewhat unfortunately christened the Shipwreck Lounge, a half-hour later. It was full of college-aged kids from Spring Hill. It was a license-plates-on-the-wall kind of place, complete with peanuts scattered about the boundaries on the soft, wooden dance floor.

“Jack, I don’t think this is our scene. All these college kids.”

“Nonsense, girl. We are invincible, in our element everywhere we go.”

Jack put four quarters in the jukebox and selected an old Sam Cooke song. He swaggered back toward the middle of the dance floor and put his arm around Emily. She put her head on his shoulder and they began to make small, choppy circles. It was a slow song, but it was all Emily could do
because she never learned to dance. Jack, of course, was a natural. They split up after the ceremonial first dance. Jack took less than a minute to find a new partner, but Emily just went to the bar and ordered a Coca-cola.

A fellow with a square jaw and a square head came up to Emily said, “Hey there. How are you doing tonight?”

“Oh...you know...” Emily was being coy. She wasn’t used to being coy. She could feel the scarlet creep up her face.

“Who’s Fred Astaire over there?”

“That’s just Jack.”

“Just Jack, huh? Is he your boyfriend?”

“He’s really more like a big brother, really.”

“Your brother is flirting with disaster.”

“That girl’s name is disaster?” Emily asked dreamily.

Emily could see well enough that it was. All the while she had been watching a guy three times Jack’s size tap him on the shoulder and turn him around. There were some words being said. Angry words. Jack was being imprudent, as usual. The girl was backing up.

Emily hopped off her barstool but was too late. She watched, horrified, in slow motion as she saw the behemoth pound Jack’s face and flatten his nose. Blood was slithering down Jack’s clothes and on to the floor. Emily stood silent and stunned. After a few more punches, when Jack had no more will to resist, the monster left him alone, feeling his point proved. The fight was over. Everybody resumed their business. Emily knelt beside Jack.

“Oh, Jack. Give me the keys. I’ll get you to the hospital.”

“What can I say, Em?” Jack managed between bloody coughs. “I’m a lover, not a fighter.”

It was a long night at the South Alabama Medical Center Emergency Room. Emily did have some time to think, though. She tried to calculate how much of her life she had spent cleaning up messes. She was sad to say she was not even stranger to emergency rooms. But then, she saw the strangest thing on the waiting room table—a copy of Texas Music Monthly. It was out of place, because these places only ever seemed to stock Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, and Us Weekly—regular magazines. It didn’t have an address on it, so it was probably left behind from a distracted soul. Emily wasn’t searching for explanations, though. She knew what it really was—a sign from God.

Emily dropped off Jack, but not the LeBaron, at Jack’s aunt in Coden. Jack told Emily to keep it for a while, because he had to sober up and recover. That, and he was kind of out of money. He gave her a two hundred dollar
bills to pay Mr. Tafra at the Gulf Breeze.

Her mother was at the dinner table when Emily walked into the house in the pink and gray light of dawn. Emily knew she was part of the reason her mother was up, but mostly it was just insomnia. Emily saw she would have to be the first to speak.

“Well?”

“Well, what?”

“Well, didn’t you wonder where I was?”

“I knew you were with Jack. You’re a big girl.”

“No, Mom, I’m not! I’m seventeen. I’ve been trying to be an adult for eight years, but…but…” Emily sat down. She looked at her mother, who had the saddest look in the world. It was the look of a little girl lost. “Mom, you need to get some help.”

“But…well…okay.” She bowed her head. There was a pause in her words, a hesitation of daring. “But what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to Aunt Jenny’s.”

“Dale’s sister?” The words sat on the kitchen table like a time bomb.

“You don’t want me to go, do you?” Emily quickly recovered and brushed it off.

“No…I mean, yes. I know you should. I just fall apart sometimes, but I feel like I should be able to handle this. You. Raising you.”

“You’re not a bad mother, Mom.”

“When will you be back?”

“I don’t know. Maybe in a year and a half I’ll head back for junior college. Maybe I’ll get into a college over there.”

“There really isn’t anything I can do now, is there?”

“Get help, Mom. And tell Jack that I’m gone the next time he’s here.”

“What about…Jack?”

“When he heals up, tell him…tell him…he was a great big brother. But I have to see if I can take care of myself, for once. Instead of everybody else.”

“That’s how you feel about Jack, too?”

“I spent last night in the emergency room after he hit on somebody else’s girlfriend. He’s as much of a mess as either of us.”

“Do you need some money?”

“I know where to find it, Mom; I always handle the money, anyway.”

“So this is goodbye, then?”

Emily got up from the table, and kissed her mother on the cheek.

After a quick shower, Emily switched the keys from the LeBaron to the grey Mazda they owned. The Purple Rose of Coden would be waiting for Jack when he got back. Emily packed her bear, all the clothing she could fit in a trash bag, her last pack of cigarettes, some
school books, a few photos of her family (the ones with her dad in them, too), and a few tapes of Jimmy Buffett and Jerry Jeff Walker.

The sun shone brightly the day she left Dauphin Island. The sea was gold again for the second time that week. It was just one more reason she wished she didn’t have to leave. But the sea could take as well as give—this Emily knew well. She didn’t think about it. She was off the island in the blink of an eye, speeding past the casinos and creosote plants of the Mississippi coast, pushing westward, westward.
Midnight at Carmel St. Vincent

Thanksgiving Day 2006

STEPHANIE EVANS

With eyes rimmed red
Like full moons hanging
Heavy in late October
My dad sits by her side
Holding her hand—cold, sapless
Waiting to be pierced
By any grey wind that registers
As “Positive.”

Across the room
Near the nurses stand
Her daughter tries not to look
But reads desperately
Biology Seventh Ed-
-Ition. Black print twists
Through tears as she learns that the ozone
Is full of crap.

In the morning,
Life will wipe away
The dust and gleam pink and fresh.
Limbs tired of being
Poked and limbs tired of sit-
Ting on a hard chair
At midnight in the ER will go
Home. But right now

A CAT scan creeps
Inside and mimics
Every cliff and ditch of her
Interior. It’s a
Test worth two thousand dollars
Because it tells them
That they are flat broke or almost dead
With a smile.
Analysis of a Rope
MARTHA KRYSTAPONIS

A heap of twisted nylon threads lay on my dad's workshop floor like molting snakes—fraying, kinked, dusty.
I never imagined I could hate a rope so much—

I never knew the potential energy woven in it.
Egyptians fabricated cords from water reed fibers, but how could they be strong with just fibers of water?

Ropewalkers at a New Jersey circus stop my breath mid-air—
their daring flips and risks create a suspense resolved only when the tightrope is empty.

They increase slack to relax and lose tension.
Cars leave the parking lot like breath escapes lungs, but my shoulder muscles cannot let go.

It wasn’t worth it to see my sister dislocate her elbow for me to climb first up the rope ladder. The tree fort was less fun without her yanking our signal rope.

At work, someone who knows the ropes will teach, but they will rope you in. No strings attached.
Thick strands of hemp can tie knots around and around, to hold a ship at dock or to keep a cellar door shut. Rope cages a golden retriever to a tree in entwining twists. Am I a dog? I wonder if dogs always know when they are imprisoned at the end of their rope.
A rope can bring buckets from a well or steal the energetic life of a teenage boy seeking a thrill.

I know ropes.
Richness, (Pencil Drawing)
BY HOSIK KIM
My Sister, the Little Mermaid
CHRISTINA MILES

My sister is a fool and a bad judge
Of character. She saw a rugged face,
And pretty eyes and she was gone. Did
Anything rattle around inside his head? Who
Cares. Was it love this time? I doubt it.

The potion she got from an old friend,
The sea witch, who used to be the sitter.
Daddy fired her when he that realized witches
 Aren’t good influences. She’s only part mer, and
Never forgave him. She’ll be bitter all her

Life. Ariel wanted advice from
That hag, not us. Trusting a witch
Instead of her sisters, Ariel left us for
Her brown-eyed beau. And then
He preferred some human chick.

I knew it would never work. Ariel picked
Him up at some shipwreck. They spent
One night together, and she knew he
Was the one. But he never mentioned his
Fiancé, that is until she showed up at his door.

It serves her right. He left her stranded,
Nowhere to go, nothing to eat. He
Didn’t care; he had his girl. We tried
To help, but she wouldn’t have it. She
Just threw herself to the waves. As

Though that would solve all the “crises”
In her life. Daddy was distraught. The poor
Guy, he was beside himself. After all his
Baby girl did abandon her family for
Some guy. Like I said, My sister’s a fool.
Cleaning Out My Grandmother’s Attic

_Berlin: December 10, 1905_  
ADDIE LEAK

The faded script and yellowed card,  
its gray and black, the texture thick  
between my fingertips, recall  
another girl whose face I do  
not know and more adventures far

from steaming Louisiana stoves—  
from crawfish, cocoon cookies,  
from jambalaya hot with spice  
and sausage. I can almost see  
the candles blush through glass,

through snow-encrusted windows, bright  
as marzipan in lemon shapes.  
Her tresses fall into her eyes;  
by candle’s gleam, she sits and writes  
another postcard home to tell

of strolling down the narrow streets,  
Berlin, the suckling pig they’ve planned  
for Christmas Eve. It’s quite the thrill—  
but cold, and what’s a Christmas with  
no sweet potato pie?
The school play was going to be the highlight of my year whether it wanted to or not. I was determined. Seven years of watching Judy Garland, Ann Miller, Lena Horne, and all the rest had instilled in me the desire for nothing less than stardom. I would be a diva, and *Cinderella* was my ticket to success. I’ve never since pinned so many hopes on such a worthless play. My mother, of course, was very supportive.

“Angela, don’t get your hopes up too high, dear. You may not get to be Cinderella.” I laughed at her, thinking what an absurd idea it was that I, of all people, wouldn’t get the role. My mother was always very nice: somewhat plump, with thin auburn hair until it all faded into gray and rosy cheeks that never faded. She still has them, though she is nearing sixty years old, and probably will until the day she dies. But she was always heartlessly practical. She just said things in a pleasant, welcoming tone of voice that made you think you just got a cookie instead of having all of your hopes smashed up against the rocks.

She was right, though. I didn’t get the part. I took voice lessons, dance classes, drama camp in the summer, and I still didn’t get the part. No, it went to Kayleigh Ferguson. I hated Kayleigh Ferguson. Initially it was something about the horde of excess silent letters that pop up in her name, but it grew the more I got to know her. She was the thin girl with blonde, curly hair, a perfect smile, big blue eyes, and the mindset that she could do everything. The kind of girl whose parents entered her in beauty pageants, who had an agent before fourth grade, and who had every part, honor, gift, and boy handed to her on a gilded cafeteria tray. I still maintain that her voice was too nasal and she couldn’t grapevine to save her life, but the drama teacher, Miss Lindsay Franklin, obviously disagreed with me. So Kayleigh Ferguson, who looked more like Barbie than the doll did, was Cinderella.

I was cast as the Fairy Godmother. Second best part, true, and still better than an ugly stepsister, but not what I wanted. Of course, I was the girl with a little more meat on her, the one with the stringy hair, the dull brown eyes, and braces from fifth grade to ninth with a retainer after that. I had no beauty pageants, no first place prizes, no gilded cafeteria trays, and no boys. Of course, I have all that now… but I can still be bitter about Kayleigh Ferguson if I want to.

Learning, as I had, from Ethel Merman that there’s no business like show business, so the show must go on, I decided to be the best Fairy Godmother Golden Meadows Elementary School would ever see. Then they’d wish they cast me as Cinderella. Of course, I’d just take all my applause, roses, and contract offers with grace and a smile, while Kayleigh Ferguson would just get makeup behind her ears.
Rehearsals were after school until four o’clock, and I was having the time of my life. I had a talent for ignoring the incompetence of certain people even then. Our drama teacher had hired her boyfriend Marcus as the stage manager, and they seemed to like spending more time together locked in a classroom than with us, but at the time I merely thought they were planning great new things for the play. Our music teacher, Ms. Arbuthnot, was usually okay, but she liked to keep a bottle in her purse that she would take a drink from whenever she thought nobody was looking. It was a strange habit… why would she be ashamed of being thirsty? I asked my mom about it, since she was the fount of all human knowledge as far as I was concerned.

“Well, the PTA has suspected for some time that she was more than a social drinker. I’ve been working to get her replaced for some time, but she’s the superintendent’s sister.”

“But Mom, why does it matter if she talks to drinks?”

“That’s not what social drinker means, Angela. It means someone who only drinks with other people. If you can’t stop drinking, you’re not a social drinker.”

“Am I a social drinker?” I asked, remembering the juice box I drank that afternoon when I got home from school.

“No, dear, you’re below the legal drinking age.” Now I was really in trouble. I was breaking the law. “At any rate, we have nothing to worry about from you. I won’t stand for any alcohol in this house.” I assumed alcohol was a special juice box for people who were social drinkers and chalked it up to Silly Adult Nonsense, a well-known library of things that didn’t make sense. Most of them still don’t. “We’ll see what we can do about her now. The mothers of the PTA won’t tolerate her teaching our kids any longer.”

Mom really didn’t need to worry, since Ms. Arbuthnot, along with the rest of the staff, seemed fully capable of ruining her own career. Basically, none of the adults seemed to care about what happened to the play, and that made me rather sad. So I became the director in every way that really counts. For some reason, though, no one would ever accept it on my résumé. I spent hours going over lines, making sure I knew everything I needed to, and I helped everyone else. Especially Diego Jimenez, who played the prince. He was a great guy, really nice, and told me I should’ve played Cinderella (Mainly because Kayleigh Ferguson’s dad said he was a dirty immigrant and almost got him kicked out of the play. Neither Diego nor I had any clue what that meant at the time. But the school board was under pressure for not being ethnically inclusive, so Diego stayed.), but his memorization skills were on par with Kayleigh Ferguson’s talent, which put him at about a line a week.

I didn’t stop there. I made posters with magical print shop
computer programs (God’s gift to seven year-olds that color outside the lines) and hung them up everywhere. I stood on tables in the cafeteria and made speeches on why the students should come. I invited everyone at my church, Diego’s church, my mother’s favorite supermarket, the bank, and the mall, and, for some reason, my mom didn’t take me on any errands for three days before the performance. She did, however, take me to the park, where I invited all the families, pigeons, and homeless people I could find. When we got back in the car, Mom said she’d never take me anywhere again. Looking back, I don’t really blame her.

So, on Friday, November 14, I was ready. My Mom, being a parent volunteer, had made my dress, a glittering array of sequins, frills, and fairy wings that was the best dress I decided I had ever seen. I put it on and felt like belting out “I Could Have Danced All Night,” but had to resign myself to singing some corny number called “Dreams Come True” halfway through the show and a reprise at the end. No, there was no Rodgers and Hammerstein in my school: just dinky plays you got off the back of a cereal box.

Diego and I were waiting backstage, giggling and anxious to go on when places were called. We were so thrilled. He peeked out from behind the set (after I told him not to) and told me our mothers were sitting next to each other. Then I smelled something funny that made me cough. I turned around to see Marcus the stage manager smoking in the back. At the time, all I knew about smoking was that you held something in your mouth with two fingers, and it made you shrivel up like a prune and die, which is what our health teacher showed us pictures of. I just filed it away under more Silly Adult Nonsense and continued fretting about the play.

My time came. I glided out onto the stage like a fairy, spoke my lines flawlessly, projected to the back of the cafeteria (since they wouldn’t even let us perform in the gym), and waved my wand. I was having the time of my life. And upstaging Kayleigh Ferguson while doing so, I might add… not that that was a real challenge. My big number came up, and the intro…didn’t start. I looked to the orchestra and saw Ms. Arbuthnot asleep on the piano, her drink spilling out of her hand onto her music. My nightmares had come true. I wasn’t going to be able to do my big number. But then I remembered all of my heroines once again, and thought to myself… ‘Would Julie Andrews let a social-drinking, sleeping pianist get her down? Would Judy Garland stop just because she had no music?’ The answer, in my head, was a resounding NO! So I began to sing. Somehow, remarkably, I think I managed to stay mostly on key.

Things started happening behind me, but I paid them no mind, performing to the best of my ability. I only really paid attention when
Kayleigh Ferguson shrieked and ran offstage. Then I turned around and saw the background, a lovely painted house made of thin wood, looming towards me. I quickly ran as far downstage as I could. The scenery landed behind me, and after the sound it made had faded, I launched into the chorus, still smiling. This was my dream, and it was going to come true, scenery or not.

I sang my song better than I ever had before. But I was getting worried. Instead of everybody gazing rapturously at me, which was what I thought should happen, everybody was looking behind me with horrified faces. I heard something crackling and felt heat, so I snuck a quick glance behind me halfway through the last chorus. The cutout of the castle was definitely going up in flames. Diego told me later that Marcus had dropped his cigarette on it in his scramble to resurrect Cinderella’s house. Of course, the carelessly tossed object would land on the only readily flammable thing in the entire cafeteria. Still, I wasn’t going to let something as inconsequential as a fire ruin my moment, so I kept singing. Nothing short of divine intervention could have stopped me then.

Luckily, I had invited the entire fire department, who had come prepared. It was right in the middle of their shift, after all, and the chief, Mr. Gerald, only let them come because I reminded him of his little daughter who had gone off to college some years ago, and November was a slow month for fires. I belted out my final note right as Jake Houghton, the youngest fireman (and my favorite, since he liked Judy Garland almost as much as I did), grabbed me and ran with me out the door, where my mother hugged me and told me how amazing I was in spite of everything. I think she was happier someone got me out of there alive than the fact that I had just made the performance of my life. She always had such skewed priorities.

My elementary school never really shaped up, although they did fire Ms. Arbuthnot and the Miss Franklin. I didn’t get a big break until high school, as Miss Adelaide in Guys and Dolls. Now, close to (but definitely not yet) two decades later, I’m pretty big in regional theatre, although I’m looking to start my own repertory company with my husband, Diego. Last I heard of Kayleigh, she married a mechanic without going to college and moved out to the middle of nowhere. But now Isabel Jimenez, our daughter, is in her second-grade play as Sleeping Beauty, and their accompanist doesn’t drink. I wouldn’t miss it for the world.
Olivia, (B/W Photograph)
BY SUSANNAH NELSON
I sit pushing the blue buttons making Mario jump. My brother leans against me; I can feel his chest rising, breathing in red carnations.

Mutterings of relatives seep from the open doorway; I try not to listen, allowing my mind to be absorbed in monotony. jump.jump.jump.jump.jump.jump. I hear echoes of my mom’s whispered hymns.

I feel strangers’ eyes on my head; I want to look, to see, to cry, but I sit passively. Nathan smiles; so do I. We sit.

We are outcasts in the orange room, indulging fantasies built of pixels. Mario dies—death by lava—The music starts over, but I don’t want to play.

Carnations are melting into my skin, symbols of the unsaid truth. jump.jump.jump.jump.jump.jump.

Mario dies. I can’t escape: I am drowning in electric organ; Chords wash over my face, forming hymns. And then—

Silence.
The snake was crawling up the muddy lakeshore bank towards me when Paw—my granddad—bashed its head in with a stick. I don't think the snake was really going for me; it was just coming up for its suntan, as Paw said snakes and other cold-bloods did in the morning. Its eyes were whited over, but Paw said it didn't need eyes to see, that it saw with its tongue.

*I didn't know anybody could see with his tongue*, I said.

*Yes, snakes are like that,* he answered; still examining the snake and hitting it a few more times, his blows making it twitch. *They just need to smell you, or taste you rather.*

*Snakes smell with their tongues?*

*Yes,* he answered, looking up from the snake. Afraid to laugh, I just said *cool.*

We got in the boat, one of those wide flat metal ones you hate sitting in because the seat was too hot or your feet got wet from the water that seeped in through the holes that looked as though they came from a shotgun. Rumor was one of my cousins fished that way, with a shotgun; that's how he got struck by lightning that one time, when he was fishing by himself with a shotgun. A living lightning rod, that's what he became. He survived.

After pushing off from the shore, we dropped our hooks. Since I couldn't have been more than nine years old, I was using a cane rod; you didn't need those fancy wheeler kinds in this small pond, although Paw used one now. Our bait was usually crickets, which was easier for me to put on my hook, but as I don't remember baiting my own hook that day it might have been worm, in which case Paw would have done it. I remember staring at the ripples reverberating off the red-white bobber not quite two feet up the line from the hook. It was hypnotic, the way it pulsed on the water. If you stared long enough, the bobber's reflection made it look as though the whole thing sat on top of the water and not half-in.

The fish were clever in how they dealt with my hook. They only barely nibbled it, not disturbing the bobber much so as to keep me from yanking. Not unless it sank completely out of sight would I remember what I was doing there. Sometimes I randomly pulled it in to inspect, only to find the hook sparkling clean. No doubt sometimes it was the violence with which I swung the hook out that also launched the bait off like a stone from David's sling.

Paw chuckled often, and when I asked what he was laughing at, he usually answered something like oh I was remembering a funny story about your dad. I'd press him for more details, always wanting to know some dirt on my dad that I could use to defend my own stupidity, and he'd start to tell
me when he’d yell, *Look, your bobber’s gone*, at which time I usually yanked my cane rod so hard the bobber would land in the water on the opposite side of the boat. That set him to rocking the boat, so hard he laughed, and I’d laugh, too. That day was my day, though, as I proceeded to catch on my baitless hook nine perfect fish. Every time I caught one, though, I had to grab the net from Paw, so hard would he be laughing.

When we finished for the day and I told him I’d won, he answered, *Yes, Billy, you sure did*, then he’d bust out laughing.
Croissants
ADDIE LEAK

I—am talented,
or that’s the idea.
I sit on the floor in
front of the oven on
6:50 a.m. days, watching
my croissants turn
gold, near-delirious
with the scent of
sweetness and flaky butter
rolled into the dough.
I cook. I want a red
spatula for Christmas.
But it’s not a talent.
Hugo has a poem—
in English, “Boaz Asleep”—
that has a line
in French
about a different kind
of croissant that translates
to something about
the fine and clear
crescent of the moon
among the flowers
of shadow—

the stars. Flowers. I like it,
but I am not an astronomer, either—
not yet. I can find Cassiopeia, the
Pleiades, the Big (but not
Little) Dipper, Orion’s Belt.
I used to know where
Betelgeuse was.
I have a book.

I have a Joy of Cooking, too.
I used to paint and dance and
sing. Now, instead, I write,
creating with a pen instead of a
paintbrush and sending words
in pirouettes across the page—loves
living in memories and maybes
immortalized in print.
121, (Pencil Drawing)
BY STEVE DELATTE
Rocks lie hard-packed on either side of
the green hummock of the driveway’s center.

They are close-nestled. Each in the midst of others,
cuddled in sand and leaf-dust.

To take one away is the work of persistent fingers
with dirty nails that pry and loosen the edges of the stone
until it pulls free, leaving behind its perfect impression,
a unique dent in the driveway. Come again tomorrow.

The pocketed stone retains its shape: lines that match
those of the hole, perhaps some hole-dust still clinging.

The hole, though, won’t fit; it holds other things:
more dust, a pebble. The rock can’t be put back.
First Cold Spell

Addie Leak

The glow of the campfire in the wooded yard behind the house has faded out, and the soft pops of the dying embers provide background music as we lie snug in our sleeping bags, all in a row like four fat, round organ pipes.

The zipper caught when we fastened the tent flap to keep out the cold, and I wake at one to find our three cats nestled into the folds of our bedding, their differences forgotten as we breathe together rhythmically in a mass of nylon, wool, and fur.

The crickets outside sing passionately to keep warm, only pausing as if to draw breath—and the frogs pipe in from the pond on the other side of the new-budded camellias, adding their baritone voices to the October chorus.

The world was sung into being on a night like this. I wriggle carefully out of my sleeping bag and crawl out of the tent to stand slipper-shod in the grass, looking up at the stars through the clear-glass night.
Bear
JILL MATARAZZI

Where’s the bear?? he asks me as we sit on the porch,
And watch the morning traffic go by.
Up in the attic with all my other stuff, I reply
Oh ok. Do you remember why you have that bear?

I do remember.
The bear I had named Tracy,
Was my grandmother’s first and only teddy bear.
She received her well into her sixties.

Grandma, can I play with your teddy bear?
Yes.
My little feet barely touched the ground as I ran to her bedroom.
If you tell anyone I let you play with her,
I’ll kick your ass.

I never understood the reason for the secrecy,
but I obliged.

She died when I was six years old.

We ate dinner in silence.
He struggled to cut his meat,
While I stared out the window
towards the neighbor’s house.

Do you still have your grandmother’s bear?
Yes, Grandpa. I still have it.
Do you remember when I gave it to you?

My grandfather was moving out of their apartment;
All my cousins were there,
Picking out what stuff of hers they wanted.

Are you gonna keep the bear, Pop?
My cousin Bobbie-Jo asks.
No, I was given strict instructions.  
He looked at me and handed me the bear.  

What? Why does she get it?  
Their voices were everywhere.  

Grandpa and I knew why she was rightfully mine.  

We were watching Alex Trebek,  
And his flurry of questions.  

Grandpa looks at me.  
Do you still have the bear?  
Yes, Grandpa. I still have the bear.
we startled a deer as we roar down the road.
I think she may have been looking for something—
she bolts so quickly; it was as though she knows
the route by heart.

late at night in madison, mississippi.
a ghost town, its spirits all safe in bed.
pharmacies like fortresses, gates drawn tight
loom monolithic to the side as we pass.

the winding strip of pavement lures us onward.
not sure of the way, we simply drive, unafraid.
the headlights are the last to notice a curve, and so
to our eyes it seems the wheels are following an
ambient cord of light.

any music is too loud.
I think of all that needs be done, and all
that I must do before I sleep.
you, behind the wheel, hold my hand across the seat.
surely God had this in mind when he
planted the idea of roads within man’s head.

three more deer, to the left side, take little notice of us.
these deer are jaded to our rudimentary civilization;
they turn up their noses at our machines and are
no longer startled by the noise.

it is late. I am fading, my yawns growing more frequent.
I think you noticed, or maybe you simply
gave up trying to find a place to hide. at any rate
we turn back towards home, and come out of the woods,
back into the glaring lights and stark sterility of modern life.

the sign calling ‘slow to 45’ means nothing to this truck,
and as the tires kiss the highway I compose.
I say with a laugh that I am going to write about Madison,
and it will be a Cathy and David type poem;
I-55 is ablaze in color, silent light.

I think it would be nice to be a deer...
or a wealthy Madisonite, living among them.
I Am a Shell: There Is No Answer
C H E R Y L  A L E X A N D E R

I huddle, encased in a shell of oblivious
turpitude—naked, cold, but unflinching—
holding my breath, talking to God,
shoring doubting beams, seeing no doorways;

I scramble for a syringe, its bitter metallic
the answer—sluicing insulin into starving arteries,
shoving pills into my gaping mouth—
the acidity of impending vomit choking...my

crimes useless junk, filching money—being
two-faced! I assess my pulse. Steady.
I follow the convolutions created by sterile
voices; there I find only dead-ends, play at life.

I take the shard of opaque glass, jagged,
ready to plow the next dermal pasture. My
heartbeat—I hyperventilate: not yet. I stroke
the cap of the insulin syringe; it gingerly hops off.

The needle, bare, beckons to me, the fatal
dose transfixes me. Yes, yes...thrumming
arteries raise their bellies in expectant
joy at the rush of sweetness.
Meowsa, (Penccil Drawing)
BY JAIME BOLTON
“You call that clean?” my mother asked me, referring to my bedroom.
“Yeah. What’s wrong with it?” I asked.
“It looks like you just moved your stuff into another corner.”
“Well, I had to move it so I could get the extra cot out from under my bed.”

I had been preparing all week for the arrival of Jamila, our Fresh Air Child. The Fresh Air Fund was a program that took inner-city children from New York City and placed them with families in the country for two weeks. The theory behind this was that inner-city kids could see what life there was beyond the tough settings of New York. My mom had been active in the program for awhile and even rode on the bus with the kids as they came to Pennsylvania.

I spent the week before cleaning my room and pulling out the bed and setting it up on the other side of my room, just under the window. I thought it would be a nice place to put the bed because the sun wouldn’t be too bright in the morning.

I waited impatiently for the bus to arrive in the parking lot of the Lebanon Temple, where we were picking her up. At last the rain had stopped. The only thing I knew about Jamila was that she was nine years old. I always wanted a younger sister, and now was my chance. I kept praying that we would get along. I wondered what she looked like.

Finally the bus arrived. My mom told me that Jamila was the only one who was being dropped off here. The rest of the kids were going to farms in Lancaster County, which was in the heart of Amish country. A young African-American girl stepped off the bus. Her hair was braided into cornrows, and she was wearing bright orange shorts and a white sleeveless top. My mom and I approached her, and my mom cheerily greeted her. I just stood there and smiled.

Our first plan was to take Jamila to see a Harrisburg Senators baseball game. The field was located on City Island, named because it was an island in the Susquehanna River. On City Island they had so many things to do. Not only did they have the baseball stadium, but a whole complex of games and kiddy rides, not to mention the petting zoo. Of course, nothing was open the night we took Jamila there, but she was quite content to jump in the large puddles that the rain had left behind.

The first night went by quickly. Jamila’s mom called and warned us that Jamila wasn’t used to dogs. At the time we had two, a keeshond, Webby, and a husky wolf mix, Astro. So we spent some time with her and tried to get her accustomed to the dogs. She fell in love with Webby instantly, which most people did. She and Astro stayed out of each other’s way. As the days went by, Jamila became very comfortable with her new surroundings in the
Matarazzi home.

One day I walked into my room and found her stuff all over the floor. I stepped over clothing and personal effects, trying to get my bed. “Looks like she made herself at home,” I thought to myself.

“Ahhhh, I can’t take anymore!” I yelled to my father while he was sitting at the computer desk paying bills.

“Let me guess,” he looked up at me briefly, “Jamila’s driving you crazy again.”

“Yes! She just slammed the bedroom door in my face and said it’s her room now.”

My dad just laughed.

“I’m glad you think this is funny! She just kicked me out of my own room! She thinks she owns the place! She even told me that now she’s the baby.”

Before my father could respond, I saw our black cat Rugby running for his life with something attached to his body that was streaming behind him. I ran out into the hall to see what was wrong. He ran back panting exhaustively. I quickly grabbed him and picked him up. He was still panting and his bright green eyes were bulging out of his head. Around his neck was a pair of my stockings that had been double knotted like a noose. Once I got him calmed down enough to untie the stockings, I went back into the room to my dad who was sitting there with an amused expression on his face.

“Dad, now look what she did! She tried to kill Rugby! That’s it, I can’t take anymore!”

I stormed down the hall to what would again be my room in a week, and opened the door. Jamila was sitting on the floor with her back to me. She sat up straight when she heard the door open.

“What did you do to Rugby?” I asked as calmly as I could.

“Nothing,” she said innocently. I saw her fiddle with something in her hands.

“What are you doing?” I asked suddenly suspicious.

She lifted up a bottle of her newly claimed nail polish. “I was just painting my nails.”

I thought that seemed too simple, so I walked over to where she was sitting on the floor and saw what she was really doing.

“I thought you said you were painting your nails?” I asked.

“I was.”

“Then why is there red nail polish on the carpet?”

“It spilled.”

I looked down at the nail polish arranged in various shapes on my carpet. Knowing that it was as accidental as the stockings around Rugby’s neck, I told her to help me clean it up. Afterwards she was content to find Webby and play fetch with her. While she was being entertained by the dog, I went to my sister’s room and knocked on the door.
“What?” I could tell I was the last person she wanted to see.
I opened the door slightly and ducked my head in. “I just wanted to say
I’m sorry.”
“For what?”
“For everything I’ve ever done to annoy you.”
She said nothing but smirked instead. I closed the door and went
downstairs to find Jamila.

The two weeks were over and we were standing in the same spot in the
Temple parking lot waiting for the bus to arrive. There was another family
this time with their Fresh Air child. Jamila’s arms were fastened around my
waist as we silently waited for
the bus. My mom just stood there and grinned. The night before she
had told me “You’ll probably be the one she misses the most, you know.”

As the bus approached, my mom gave Jamila one final hug. We
stood there as Jamila got on the bus. As soon as she found her seat
next to the window, she started waving both her hands at us. We waved
back just as enthusiastically, but with blurred vision.
Safe, Series, #1,  (B/W Photograph)
BY SAMANTHA MOBLEY
Farewell of the Sugarplum Fairy
L Y D I A  D I E R S

I delight in the nauseous flavor
of crayola-red lipstick
reapplied during intermission.

My sweaty fingertips nervously
rustle my frothy chiffon skirt
as I relevé—up and down—
to wake my chilly toes.

Backstage is an artificial night—
phantom fairies chassé past
with the swish-slap of slippered feet
hurrying to the curtain call.

Then silence—
I’m alone in limbo
behind the velvet curtains.

I breathe in briskly as
adrenaline tingles my body,
and I plunge from the wings
into the rainbow brilliance
of the stage.

Applause welcomes me
to my ethereal kingdom,
and with a flick of my hand
I summon Clara to her sleigh
while Snowflakes guide her home.

Cherry Bonbons in ruffled bonnets
and giddy wreathed Flowers wave
farewell to Clara as I smile,
present my arms and indulge
in a deep slow curtsey.
Green,  (Pencils Drawing)
B Y  K E N N Y  R I C H A R D S O N
The Jersey breeze chills my fingers, wet from saltwater, as I paint smiley faces at my feet. The open canvas of sand spreads to the sky, but I have to probe beneath to find the elusive sand crabs. Grainy hands clutch the bucket’s handle. The sun bores a hole into the distant waves.

One wave recedes, wiping the sand’s slate clean, but bubbles immediately mar the surface. I scrape my plastic shovel at the hard-packed grains as they burrow under my nails. “Faster!” I giggle as my dad’s blunt fingers scoop piles of sand out of my way. Our hands follow the path left in the soggy sand by miniature pockets of air escaping our prey.

Finally, my waiting fingers nab a wriggling creature, pale from living under many metric tons, hiding from the sun’s invasive light. It joins the others in my bucket, waiting to be released again—to tunnel underground and wait to be raised again.
House-Sitting at My Grandparents’
CHRISTINA MILES

There are fifteen clocks and a dog
Visible from my spot on the couch.
Five wood, six plastic, and four metal,
And every hour on the hour, they chime.

Visible from my spot on the couch,
They tick and tock in anticipation,
And every hour on the hour, they chime.
One starts, each follows an extra minute off.

They tick and tock in anticipation,
And I just lie there waiting. First
One starts, then each follows an extra minute off.
The clamor slowly dies, and then silence.

I just lie there waiting for the first
Clock’s chime, a Carpenter song.
The clamor dies, slowly, and then near-silence.
Only the TV’s buzz fills the air.

The clock chimes a Carpenter song, and
I listen as sleep comes to claim me.
Only the TV’s buzz fills the air, and
I realize why all the clocks chime so loud.

I listen as sleep tries to claim me;
My deaf grandfather can’t hear them ring.
I realize why all the clocks chime so long:
My blind grandma can’t see the television.

My deaf grandfather can’t hear the ring
Of the fifteen clocks or even the dog.
My blind grandma can’t see the television
Or clocks—five wood, six plastic, and four metal.
After-Party
ADDIE LEAK

Is it a horse? A dog?
Pinprick eyes shrink from the flashlight’s
glare, and Becky assures us that the
horses are put away for the night;
it’s only a cat
crouching in a clump of bushes
by the fence, watching the four of us
intently as I watch my feet and smile and
wonder what the boy
by my side is thinking.
I’ve changed out of my heels
and lace and into jeans,
removed the smear of crimson
from my lips, sexier
and shyer in my
t-shirt and his tux jacket
than in my dress.

We sit on damp logs
around the fire, toast
marshmallows for s’mores
until our fingers stick together,
and watch the inky sky
as clouds slink past the stars.
Cassiopeia surveys her realm,
topsy-turvy
from her vantage point
in space,
and finally we say goodnight.
My red-lipped confidence
is gone, but the impulse to kiss
him remains. I think
too long, I always do.
His blue eyes are wide, and
leaning in to hug him,
I catch the scent of sweetness,
sweat, and smoke.
Safe, Series, #2,  (B/W Photograph)
BY ADDIE LEAK
Alligators

LAUREN KLASKALA
High-School Poetry Prize

It’s a relief once when,
After all this hot weather,
We can lay our awkward growing bodies,
Husked like Mississippi corn, on your linen white bed.

Fans whirr; dry-skinned feet scratch sheets.
Bony hands, long fingers brush over;
Short hands smooth under—
Freckles and the smells of deodorant and sweat
Rich with the days’ adventures
Pickin’ paw-paws
And taking your dog swimming
In the last days of precious summer
On wild Loakafoama Lake.

We dipped our hands in the wet—
Our bony hands, stubby hands—
Where alligator teeth can snatch them away,
And learned what it means to be losing something.
Kevin, move your scrawny little butt, or I’m leaving you here!”
“You can’t do that! Mom would roast you when she found out!”
“You’ll be in the fire right along with me if you don’t move it, runt!”

Eve paused in running her fingers through her rusty brown hair, waited for her little brother to respond. She was pleased to hear no rebuttal to her last threat. Her parents had told her to meet them in Houston, Texas, for a nice “family get-together,” but if she and Kevin didn’t leave now, the bus would be gone. Only two buses ran between Silsbee and Houston on Sundays, and the other one didn’t leave until one in the afternoon. The very thought of her mother’s wrath if they missed opening mass at church made Eve cringe. She loved her little brother, but there was no way she was going to make that kind of sacrifice for him.

Kevin’s presence was hailed by his heavy boots slamming down the staircase. Eve leaned against the refrigerator, which gave her a perfect view of the end of the staircase and the foyer, and waited for the inevitable. Kevin hit the last five stairs at a lethal speed and stumbled on his loose shoelace. He barely managed to recover but still slammed into the wall opposite the staircase in his haste. He landed in a heap on the floor and moaned theatrically, head buried under his arms. Eve pushed herself off the refrigerator and delicately prodded the black mass on the floor with her high heel.

“Move it, runt. If you get blood or guts on the carpet, Dad will kill you.”
“Eve, I’m laying here dying, and that’s all you say!”
“Yep.”

Kevin heaved himself to his feet, muttering abuse the entire time. He shuffled into the kitchen while Eve checked the floor for anything staining the pristine white carpet, just in case. After all, her father had thrown a terrible hissy fit when Eve had shoved down a piece of toast while going out the door one day. She had gotten crumbs on the carpet, and her father had kept her back until he had finished his scolding. Never mind that she had been late for school. She didn’t want her little brother going through that kind of stress for nearly killing himself on the stairs.

“Kevin, stop stuffing your face and move it!”
She cared a lot about her little brother, but she’d never tell him.

Shrugging on her jacket, Eve couldn’t help but look over her little brother. Kevin had his hoodie drawn up around his thick brown curls, forcing them down around his thin features. Being all of twelve, Kevin hadn’t quite grown into himself yet and looked more like a six-year-old girl who found the largest clothes she could find in the bottom of a Salvation Army box. It was a rather cute picture to Eve’s mind, but her parents couldn’t agree less. In fact, Eve could see exactly how they were going to react when she and Kevin
strolled into church; they would take one look at Kevin’s torn jeans, army boots, black hoodie with its heavy metal emblems, and eye liner and have him sit as far from them as possible while still being in the church. Kevin understood this and knew Eve understood it, too. He also knew it went without saying that she would sit with him. She would always sit with him.

“You look like a girl. You know that, right?” Eve spat at Kevin, taking in her brother’s delicate features and shoulder-length curly hair. Kevin glared at her over a bottle of Mountain Dew but was too intent on sucking it dry to respond.

Eve took a closer look at Kevin’s face, more specifically at his pale blue eyes. Gripping his chin, she carefully tilted his face toward the white light of the kitchen.

“Is that my eyeliner?” she demanded.

“Yes,” Kevin replied, making no attempt to hide it. “I lost mine, and yours was just sitting there on your dresser. You never use it anyway.”

Part of Eve’s brain was caught up in disbelief, but another part wasn’t at all surprised by his answer. She may be five years older then Kevin, but that didn’t stop him from the occasional raid in her room for this and that. She would never admit it, but she had done the same thing to him in the past.

Eve sighed and released her brother’s chin, noticing the time on the clock next to the door.

“Oh, God, we’re going to be late!”

Without further hesitation, Eve grabbed Kevin and shoved him out the door, ignoring his protests as only an older sister could.

=E=

Eve slumped into her bus seat and shut her eyes, determined to catch her breath after their mad dash across town. Kevin had complained, continuously and bitterly, that he was still hungry, but Eve had blocked him out long ago. It was unfair, but Eve was more intent on getting them to Houston on time; then she would worry about actually feeding her brother.

“This sucks, Eve! I’m starving, and it’s two hours to Houston. Two hours!” Kevin repeated, as if Eve had not understood the severity of his words the first eight times. Eve twitched, slowly opened her eyes, and turned to Kevin. Her face was devoid of all emotion.

“If you’re that hungry,” she whispered in a deadly voice, “gnaw your arm off and eat that.” Kevin paled considerably and held up his hands in defeat.

“Okay, okay! I’ll leave you alone. You should have warned me it was that time of the month,” he said. Eve briefly entertained the urge to bash her brother’s head into the seat in front of them but decided against it. She was tired, and the seats were too well-padded to do any real damage and make the effort worthwhile. The comfortable padding made up for the horrible upholstery color, which fell somewhere between pear green and faded gold;
it was not a very flattering color, overall.

The bus driver at least had the sense to turn on the heat, so by the time Eve and Kevin had rushed onto the vehicle, it was warm and pleasant. All in all, she was content to lay back and sleep for the next three days. But Eve knew she couldn’t afford to relax. She still had to watch over Kevin, who had the nasty habit of causing trouble when left to his own devices. So she rested her head on the broad window, careful to not get her hair tangled in the emergency latch, and worked to stay awake.

Kevin wasn’t a bad little brother—annoying as a yapping puppy at times but never cruel or embarrassing. In fact, he was a remarkable younger sibling. When he would come home bruised and bloodied because some kid at school had called him “girly,” “pansy,” or the worst, “cute,” it wasn’t Mom to whom he went with bandages and Neosporin in hand—it was Eve. When she would lock herself in her room after arguing with Dad, Kevin would be the one to paw at the door with chocolate and a six pack of Mountain Dew.

“Excuse me, sweetie, may I ask you something?” A soft voice called Eve from her walk down memory lane. The voice was kind, with the tone of a former mother. Pulling herself from her thoughts, Eve looked up to see an older woman with delicate features, thin wire-framed bifocals dangling uselessly around her neck, and a blue power wig. The older woman was smiling down kindly at them, squinting her hazel eyes slightly.

“Yes, ma’am?” Eve spoke politely. Her parents were both true southerners at heart, manners and all. Kevin, by now immune to such manners, merely snorted and eyed the woman with a menacing glint in his eyes.

“Excuse me, young lady. Is that your little girl?” the older woman asked, pointing to Kevin. Eve regarded the older woman with a sweet smile on her lips. She really couldn’t help it.

“No ma’am. She’s my little sister.”

The look on her little brother’s face more than made up for the hard punch he landed on her shoulder.
The Mississippi sun was merciless by midday; I was frustrated that I had not started working earlier. In the summer before my senior year, I loaded my small un-air-conditioned Toyota with shovels, hoes, and old Kroger bags and traveled to work in the Organic Vegetable Garden (OVG). As I pulled into the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science campus, my home during the school year, it resembled something of a ghost town. Over the railroad tracks and adjacent to the art and history buildings lay the garden. I found that the rows which had been so carefully pruned by my classmates and me before school let out had been invaded by little green patches. Grass had sprung up everywhere, and because it was an organic garden, my only choice was either to cover the 35m x 30 m plot with mulch or to make like the "good ole days" and get to work chopping and cutting. With a rough wooden hoe grasped in my hands, I began the day's labor in the garden by severing the grassy fiber roots apart, carefully minding squash leaves and some new bean sprouts that only recently seemed to stretch and yawn, as if awakening from sleep.

The hard part of the work passed quicker in a good humor, so I reminded myself that I was saving a "majestic chicken hawk, soaring through the air, threatened by the dangers of biological magnification." As I straightened the crick in my back and wiped beads of sweat from my lip, I realized the satirical remark had been a lot funnier when I was working with others.

The OVG was a new endeavor at my school, begun by a friend of mine and entirely student-operated, but when I had volunteered to help take care of it during its producing time in the summer, I had no idea of the amount of effort which I would be putting into it. Everyone involved, including the creator, lived something like three hours away, so I found myself alone in the garden quite often.

I did not mind being alone so much after the hard work was done. I wandered between the rows barefoot, the moist dirt squishing between my toes as I inspected the day's produce. Organic farming requires constant care. I lifted the fragrant tomato leaves to find tiny aphids clinging underneath. The price of not using pesticides. Still, I did not regret the care that was put into the garden's overall success. Finally, I could participate in a high school organization that actually accomplished something monumental. The fact that the garden was operated by organic standards made the endeavor environmentally friendly. It was also good for the economy because produce required little outside transport to its final destination. But most of all, the garden helped the community: all the produce from the OVG was given directly to Salvation Army Headquarters downtown, where it could be sent out in food baskets everyday to the needy of Columbus, Mississippi.
Tender tomato plant branches were so laden with red and orange fruit that they dipped to the ground; I could imagine those who would enjoy today’s harvest.

Other vegetables were ripe for the picking. I tugged at the tiny green fingers hanging from the string bean bushes—the numerous skinny pods made it tedious work. I began a new sack and filled it to the brim with the cucumbers. They produced exponentially; I would often find ones that I had not seen from my last visit hiding under their sunning leaves, overgrown to the size of my arm. My hands itched with a thousand tiny needles from fuzzy squash leaves, and my wrists ached from yanking plump ears of corn from their woody stalks. I continued slowly making my rounds through the peppers, onions, lettuce, and finally to a very tempting, green-striped bulge of a watermelon.

By now, my t-shirt was dripping with sweat, yet I was happy to be just surveying my nature kingdom. I usually had my own fun when I would go to the garden—I had a long love affair with the outside world and growing things.

When you grow up in rural Mississippi, you cannot resist spending time outside, even in the unrelenting summer sun. Ever since I can remember, my passion for the outside world merited nicknames from my family. My mother has called me her “little nature girl” for as long as I can remember, and less affectionately, my younger siblings would complain that I was being a “hippie” when I would sit cross-legged on old tree stumps or study frogs and crickets as a child. As I grew older, I became more interested in studying my nature world scientifically. I evolved from going through hundreds of kid bug kits and aquarium visits to coming up with original and winning high school science projects, which ranged from the best methods to clean up oil spills to the importance of coral reefs in preventing beach erosion. My passion for the earth, though, has become something more than a favorite pastime. My experience with the garden has motivated me to pursue a degree in an environmental field that will facilitate me with the knowledge and tools to create more real change in my local community and the world.

Temporarily satiated with my desire to “save the world,” I packed the weighted bags of vegetables in my car for delivery. Looking through my back window, I saw the garden—picked and pruned neatly once again.
The Brogue Awards

Poetry

First Place
Martha Krystaponis, “Tessie: Lithuania, 1896”

Honorable Mentions
Lydia Diers, “Remnants of the Oregon Trail”
Lauren Klaskala, “Alligators”
Addie Leak, “Lullaby of Leaves”
Christina Miles, “My Sister, the Little Mermaid”
Stacy Nott, “Return to Salem: My Former Home”

Fiction

First Place
Cathy Karlak, “Duskiya”

Honorable Mentions
Andrew Hedglin, “The Grey and Endless Gulf”
Brandon Whitlock, “I Was a Second Grade Julie Andrews”

Nonfiction

First Place
Jill Matarazzi, “What Goes Around Comes Around”

Artwork

First Place
Steve Delatte, “121”

Cover Art
Samantha Mobley, “Safe (Series, #2)”
Honorable Mentions
Susannah Davenport, “Self Portrait”
Erica Goforth, “Forgotten”
Kelsey McNamee, “Shaving”

High-School Contest Winners

Poetry

First Place
Lauren Klaskala, “Alligators”

Honorable Mention
Ian Barclay, “How to Make Your Eyes Blue”

Fiction

First Place
Rachel Wiley, “Sibling Ties”

Honorable Mention
Harrison To, “Broccoli Bear”

Non-Fiction

First Place
Lauren Klaskala, “The Organic Vegetable Garden”

Honorable Mention
Madhavi Gavini, “Ammachan”
Belhaven Writing Program
Student Awards and Publications
2003 to 2007

Academic Year 2006-2007

Awards

Addie Leak Second Place, Poetry: “Lullaby of Leaves Southern Literary Festival

Martha Krystaponis Fifth Place, Poetry: “Tessie: Examinations of Belonging” National Federation of State Poetry Societies

Publications

Sarah Bolton “Cornbread Connection,” Food Article Jackson Free Press (August 17, 2006)

Stacy Nott “Letter to the Editor” Ruminate (Spring 2007)

Academic Year 2005-2006

Awards

Nickie Albert Third Place, One-Act Play: “How Biddy Saved Gillian from the Hurricane” Southern Literary Festival

Nickie Albert Second Place, Creative Nonfiction “A Tattler’s Tale” Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Andrew Hedglin Second Place, Fiction: “Under the Name of Saunders” Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers
Cathy Karlak  
Third Place, Poetry: “Outages”  
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Publications

Sarah Bolton  
“Nana’s House,” Fiction  
*Cedarville Review* (Cedarville University)

Andrew Hedglin  
“Matinee Mantra of H. G. Edgar Degas,”  
Poetry  
*The Albion Review* (Albion College)

David Rahaim  
“Belhaven’s Creative Writing Program: One Year Strong,”  
Feature Article, *Belhaven Tartan* (Belhaven College)

Academic Year 2004-2005

Awards

Ian Bennett  
First Place, Fiction: “The Sable”  
*Arrowhead* (Mississippi College)

Ian Bennett  
Second Place, Nonfiction Essay: “Black Tuesday”  
*Arrowhead* (Mississippi College)

Skip Davis  
Second Place, One-Act Play: “Mr. Holloway’s Toy Company”  
Southern Literary Festival

Sharmeisha Jordan  
Second Place, Poetry  
Belhaven Award, Mississippi Poetry Society

David Rahaim  
First Place, Poetry: “Scottish Baptism” and “2:42 A.M.”  
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Jennifer Wells  
First Place, Creative Nonfiction Essay: “Near Death Valley”  
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Publications

Ian Bennett  
“Black Tuesday,” Creative Nonfiction Essay
The Brogue

Arrowhead (Mississippi College)
Ian Bennett
“The Sable,” Fiction

Arrowhead (Mississippi College)
Sarah Bolton
“The House of Bread,” Fiction
Spring Hill Review (Washington)

Academic Year 2003-2004

Awards

Philip Bassett
First Place, Fiction
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Sarah Bolton
First Place, Poetry: “Security”
Belhaven Award, Mississippi Poetry Society

Jennifer Chajon
First Place, Creative Nonfiction Essay
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers

Roman Merry
Honorable Mention, Poetry: “Purloined Creeps Creole”
Southern Literary Festival

Publications

Trey Bruce
“A Man and His Tusk,” Poetry
The Creative Spirit (Belhaven College)

Jennifer Chajon
“Illusion,” Creative Nonfiction Essay
The Creative Spirit (Belhaven College)

Jeremiah Maeda
“Gods Without Earthly Desires,” Poetry
The Creative Spirit (Belhaven College)
Contributor Biographies

Shio Akiho is a senior art major from Yamagata, Japan. Her parents were art teachers who taught at junior high schools. They encouraged her in the field of art at a very young age. Shio came to the U.S. when she was seventeen years old as an exchange student. Her host family told her about the Lord, and she got saved one week before she went back to Japan. Japan doesn’t have Christian schools, and she wanted to learn in a Christian environment. She then decided to come to Belhaven College. She really enjoys doing photography, especially when she is working in the dark room. She learns a lot of things from her photography friends.

Cheryl Ann Alexander is a freshman creative writing and communications double major from Winona, MS. Cheryl earned her B.S.N. from the University of Mississippi School of Nursing in 1997. She is employed by Central Mississippi Medical Center as an emergency room nurse. She has earned certifications in emergency nursing, critical care, and cardiac care. She has wanted to write a book since the fourth grade. In addition to plans to work in the publications business, she anticipates working on plays, novels, screenplays, and perhaps a little more poetry. Alexander lives with her dad, two sons, six dogs and two cats. She enjoys playing music and is her church’s pianist. She paints watercolors and reads extensively.

Sarah Bannerman is a 2006 alumnus of Belhaven College with a degree in English from Pass Christian, MS. She is currently attending MC to earn a Master’s degree in the same field, after which she hopes to teach English. Sarah’s hope is that she will be half as good an English teacher as her teachers at Belhaven.

Jaimie Bolton is a sophomore art major from Sierra Vista, AZ. She likes to sing Beauty and the Beast songs enthusiastically with her sister (but doesn’t care much for singing besides that). She met her true love because Hurricane Katrina blew her to LeTourneau University for a few days. She loves creating art with mixed media. Kaleidoscopes and Mexican food are two of her favorite things. God is the most exciting thing in her life. She had no idea where she would be without Him and is excited about the rest of her life. She hopes to visit India someday and maybe see a scarlet macaw in the Amazon.
Kimberly Brown is a freshman dance major and elementary education minor from Portland, OR. She is dedicated to the color pink, enjoys watching “Scrubs,” and adores Moonstruck chocolate. Her hobbies include dancing, singing, ice skating, and recording favorite memories with her friends in photographs or movies. One of her long-term goals is to be a preschool teacher in France. Starbucks, antique shopping at the beach, musicals, and her Sheltie, Oreo, are just a few of the things that make her happy.

Susanna Davenport is junior art major from French Camp, MS.

Stephen Delatte is a sophomore art major from LaPlace, LA. Steve returned to college to continue his art studies after a thirty-year break. He and his wife, Trina, have three grown children who are all pursuing careers in the arts. Belhaven has become somewhat of a family affair since 1991 when his daughter, Lindsay, began attending Ballet Magnificat’s summer workshops held on the campus. His son, Joel, is a music major here and Joel’s wife Dawn is also an art major. Charis, a Belhaven bookstore employee, is married to son, Justin, a professional photographer. Stephen says, “In my life there are few things I have been truly passionate about; these are serving God, my family, and art.”

Lydia Diers is a junior English major and dance minor from Hood River, OR. She is the senior editor for Belhaven’s student newspaper, The Quarter Tone. She loves tabby cats, chocolate chip cookies, drizzly mornings, and mountains. Narnia and Middle-earth are her favorite hideaways. In her spare time she plays the piano, laughs with friends, and experiments successfully with red hair dyes.

Stephanie Evans is a junior international studies major and dance minor from Westfield, IN. As a girl, she spent many flashlight nights traveling west with Laura Ingalls, sneaking through the Shire with Frodo, and sprinting through Narnia with Aslan. She still loves to be on the move, having toured forty-eight states and twelve countries as a missionary and professional dancer. Some of her favorite travel memories include square-dancing with surprisingly jolly priests in Italy, and listening to the giggles of Thai village children, with their little fingers squeezing and pointing at her comparatively gigantic nose. Stephanie plans to attend law school and wishes to spend her life helping those who are oppressed and in need.
Haylee Franklin is a sophomore psychology major from Maitland, FL. Some of her hobbies include graphic design, creative writing, and trying to learn Japanese.

Erica Goforth is a sophomore history major and art minor from Williamsburg, VA. She is addicted to “Lost” and enjoys getting hopelessly depressed by a good Hemingway or Solzhenitsyn novel. She also loves photography, and her favorite subjects are Colonial Williamsburg and her younger siblings.

Andrew Hedglin is a sophomore creative writing major and history minor from Madison, MS. He would like to thank his family for their support in both his growth in God’s grace and his descent into the life of the artist. He enjoys reading, ambling, watching old movies, and listening to Jimmy Buffett. His secret ambition is one day to quarterback the New Orleans Saints, or raise his family by the sea while he poses for tough but sensitive dust jacket portraits for volumes of warmly humorous short fiction. He has also considered the possibility of attempting both.

Andrew Hilleke, a 2006 alumnus of Belhaven College with a degree in history, lived in Alexandria, LA. He worked as a librarian in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. Some of his interests included history, theology, literature, languages, and genealogy. Some of his favorite books were the Bible, the Middle-Earth works of J. R. R. Tolkein, Through New Eyes by James B. Jordan, and Undaunted Courage by Stephen Ambrose. Andrew went to be with the Lord on April 9, 2007. This issue of the Brogue is dedicated to Andrew.

James Humphries is a junior English major from Pocatello, ID. He grew up in a family that encouraged artistic, as well as athletic, achievement. His ability on the football field is what first drew him to Belhaven, but as time wore on he found his true passion to be in written expression. After spending three years struggling through academics, he has been put on academic probation and was not allowed to enroll in the spring semester of 2007. This has not been a crushing defeat, as one may see it; instead, through this he has re-kindled and re-focused his life on Christ. Of late, he has been using his writing ability for God’s glory and hopes that he may continue to do so in years to come.
Catherine Karlak is a 2006 alumnus of Belhaven College from Seattle, WA. After four grueling years of studying both biology and creative writing, she decided to do something completely unrelated and moved to France to teach. When not matching wits with French children, she can be found watching dubbed versions of bad 80’s television shows or wandering around the country (and continent) taking photos and butchering the language. Besides shoestring travel, she enjoys reading, the ocean, cooking, cozy pubs, a good cuppa (tea), and camping. Olympic National Park is one of her favorite places to go backpacking despite an unnerving night spent in the wilderness with some particularly inquisitive wildlife. If she ever gets around to writing about it, the story will be called “Go Away, Bear!”

Rupa Kern is a senior art major from Jackson, MS.

Hosik Kim is a junior art major from Seoul, South Korea.

Lauren Klaskala is a senior at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science from Starkville, MS. She dances on the East Indian Dance Team and plays for the Lady Waves soccer team. She likes to cook, and try new recipes and international cuisines because she likes to eat. When she has time, she enjoys reading classic works, especially beat literature. On the weekends she makes clothes and hangs out with her friends. She is the daughter of Charles and Melody Klaskala, and is the second oldest of five brothers and sisters who live happily in Starkville, Mississippi. Her future college plans are a bit undecided, but she intends to study environmental science, and perhaps politics.

Martha Krystaponis is a sophomore creative writing major from Louisville, KY. She was born in her beloved New Jersey, however, and still likes to claim her northern roots. Despite popular belief, her last name is Lithuanian, not Greek, and it means “Christ is king.” She enjoys reading modern literature, swinging in hammocks, playing on her laptop, drinking all kinds of teas and coffees, and hanging out with her crazy but amazing friends. She dreams of coming face-to-face with the Loch Ness monster, but she’s not sure if he’s ready for her.

Addie Leak is a sophomore creative writing major from Woodville, MS. She is madly in love with words and thus with Dylan Thomas, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and foreign languages (including Welsh—
and biology). Her family is miraculously and beautifully supportive of her major, and she intends to be either a very well-educated and well-traveled bum who lives in a garage somewhere and writes or a writer with an established career, a Ph.D. in something, a degree from culinary school, and trilingual children. She is not at all ambitious. Addie is one of the editors of this year’s Brogue.

Elyse Marcellino is a junior humanities major and music minor from Laurel, MS. The key, for her at least, is to wait for random inspiration, so it is excellent that she does not plan to make a career out of creative writing. There is always something prodding her to write as she stays busy with several school activities and jobs, an internship, family and friends, the constant misfortune of entering into awkward situations (not creating them, mind you), and ongoing shady endeavors to help her towards the status of world traveler. She likes to remember and relate real-life anecdotes, purposing to always keep in mind Gilbert’s advice to Anne to “write what you know.”

Jill Matarazzi is a senior creative writing major from Hershey, PA. In her spare time she enjoys reading for Dr. Hubele’s classes, asking stupid questions, stressing about writing her final work, and selling dresses that she will never be able to afford. After she graduates in May, she is planning on moving back to Chocolateville in order to contemplate why she will never write as well as Cathy Karlak. Jill is co-editor of this year’s Brogue.

Kelsey McNamee is a junior art major from Brookhaven, MS.

Lucy McPhail is a freshman undeclared major and undeclared minor from Star, Ms.

Christina Miles is a sophomore creative writing major and mathematics minor from Pinellas Park, FL. She generally likes to read, write, eat, and sleep, and not necessarily in that order. Sometimes she will pull out a coloring book and go at it with vigor. When she needs amusement, a tube of bubbles works nicely, and she really likes Asian food. Although she has not currently found a favorite author, Christina likes to read fairytale spoofs, comic books, fiction in general, and classical literature. Currently both Robert Louis Stevenson and G. K. Chesterton have gotten thumbs up from her, but that is not to say they get the top spot on her book list just yet. After college, she hopes to travel a lot and earn a living.
Samantha Mobley is a senior art major from Grapeland, TX.

Susannah Nelson is a sophomore English major from Kansas City, MO. Colorado born, she is the second oldest of eight children and loves being part of a big family. She dreams of someday traveling around and photographing Europe, but mainly Great Britain. In addition to photography, she enjoys reading, creative writing, music, videography, and being in the mountains. In the future, she hopes to get married and have a family while writing and photographing on the side.

Stacy Nott is sophomore creative writing major and music minor from Bentonia, MS. She struggles to divide her time among the various demands of people, pen, and piano. Lacking a hometown, she currently considers herself to be “from” Bentonia, where her parents and two brothers have lived for the past few years. In her free time, she enjoys staring at unseen things, thinking thoughts too big for her mind, and, occasionally, trying to verbalize those thoughts.

David Nathaniel Rahaim is a senior creative writing major from Jackson, MS. He is nothing but that which he believes himself to be. He can be kinda funny sometimes, too.

Kenny Richardson is a junior art major from Jackson, MS.

Lea Schumacher is a freshman creative writing major from Essex Junction, VT. Her main interests include being a Yankee, chopping wood like a true Vermont woman, and milking cows when cows are available. When she has extra time on her hands she enjoys being outside, herbal tea with too much sugar, and over-thinking. After graduation, she has no idea what she is going to do with her life. But that’s why she believes in the sovereignty of God.

Adie Smith is a freshman English and art double major from Las Cruces, NM. She loves the spontaneity of jazz, the smell of turpentine, and waking up with the morning sun on her face. Her after-college plans are uncertain, but for now being famous sounds good. If she had to be marooned on a desert island with only three books, she would choose Joy Kogawa’s Obasan (a novel that reads like poetry), Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (because if she weren’t a Christian, she’d be an existentialist), and Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha (after all, she would have to
have a non-pretentious book).

**Brandon Whitlock** is a sophomore theater major and creative writing minor from Dallas, TX. He pretends to have hobbies, but really he just does theater, writes, and reads all the time, which are technically his job. His favorite writers include (but are not limited to) William Goldman, Jennifer Fallon, Patricia C. Wrede, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Wendy Wasserstein, and the incomparable Terry Pratchett. He’d also like to thank Dr. Smith, Joseph Frost, the students from Advanced Fiction Writing, his family, his friends, and the characters in his head who write all his stories for him.

**Rachel Wiley** is a senior at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Sciences from Long Beach, MS. The inspiration for her story came from a family member’s story about her childhood experience. Rachel hopes to write for a living.
Belhaven College Information

If you would like to learn more about the BFA Degree in Creative Writing at Belhaven College, please contact the Director of Creative Writing at the following address:

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Visit the creative writing program on the web at http://www.belhaven.edu/Academics/Divisions/Humanities/Creative_writing

If you would like to learn more about Belhaven College in general, please contact the Admission Department at the following address:

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