

# Salmon Creek Journal

2011

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Washington State University Vancouver

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In addition, thank you to all the students, faculty, and alumni of the Washington State University Vancouver community who submitted their works to the journal this year. This publication would not be possible without your contributions.



## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the 2011 edition of the Salmon Creek Journal. This year's design is partly inspired by the constantly changing society we live in. We wanted to go back to basics and create a journal that looks and feels personal, like something special from your past.

There is no doubt that the world is changing. The visual arts field is becoming widely digitized. Books are increasingly read on handheld computers rather than by turning pages. Communication is now more instantaneous than it has ever been. While many of these technological and societal developments are exciting, they can oftentimes make life feel disorienting and unstable.

A previous editor warned me that every year a commonality would arise in the artwork, prose, and poetry sent to the journal and that these themes change each year. We were surprised that a large majority of the pieces this year dealt with death, looming monsters, and terminal disease. Many times, these tales are reflective and nostalgic of the past, such as remembering a lost loved one, neighbor, or a special moment. However, the common thread in all these pieces is the deep internal conflict that often arises from sudden change. While many of these works deal with tragic issues, there is still a significant presence of hope.

This edition of the journal took a lot of time and dedication, but was made with a lot of love. Our staff truly had an amazing time bringing this journal to life and we hope that you are as happy with the final product as we are. The works that fill the pages of this book are truly indicative of the immense creativity at the heart of this campus. We sincerely hope that you will look at each piece as a unique and beautiful work of art, as we do. The world may change, but humanity will always have the desire to create, and that is what we are celebrating today through this journal.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan', written in a cursive style.

Megan Trevarthen

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# *Marlboro Reds*

by Jessica Gipe



Consider the young grandmother puffing ignorantly on her Marlboro Red.  
In a smelly orange armchair watching ER reruns alone.  
The Reaper waits fervently outside her window;  
Masked in the black of night, shielded by fake potted plants.  
The moment is unknown.  
The snap of a noose.  
The last patter of an aging heart.  
The words, “three months at best.”  
The stray bullet piercing the skull of an unsuspecting grandmother,  
While a Hollywood doctor dissects a rubber brain.  
Chocolate sauce and lighting.  
The daughter would wake to a 3 AM phone call,  
Under an intricate painting,  
Tobacco soaked fingers had brought to life.  
The granddaughter would become obsessed with jade elephants and painted  
peacocks.  
One nightmare about a vampire bat.  
One Cinderella dress sketch lost, but never forgotten.  
One break down eleven years later in an intoxicated rage.  
The first and the only since her mother’s cracked whisper,  
“Something bad happened.”  
Eleven  
Too young to understand.  
Thirty-four  
Too young to watch her mother die in a hospital bed.  
Twenty-Two  
Staring at the unfinished painting on an easel in her kitchen,  
Collecting dust.  
Wishing her grandmother could answer;  
Why peacocks?

*Evening, St. Lawrence*



by Louise Wynn

# *Last Moments*

by Christina Arnold



The heavy rainfall splashed a messy design across my jacket, clear droplets seeping into the black cotton fabric. The thin wheels of my bicycle sliced through the growing lakes of rainwater that pooled in the streets, kicking up a wet shower that soaked the bottom half of my jeans. My shoes pumped the bicycle pedals, propelling the bike forward. Everything in my head felt blurred, fuzzy. My entire body felt numb and my skin ice cold. I was glad for the rain.

*“He’s in a lot of pain now.”*

That was what the doctor told us. For the past year Lukas, my best friend in the entire world, had struggled with a lethal form of cancer. Lymphoma. Three hundred and sixty-five days, Lukas put up a valiant fight. He suffered through agonizing treatments without a word of complaint. It was the type of shit you like to believe happens to others—not to the ones you care about. And now, I was losing him.

The streets turned familiar, and my apartment complex materialized into view. My hand squeezed the brakes and the wheels of my bike hissed as it skidded to a halt. The complex I lived in had no bike rack, and so I was forced to heave the dead weight up the stairs to my apartment. Twice, distracted, I almost missed a step.

Earlier, my girlfriend Kaylee had taken Lukas to the doctor. Within the past week his symptoms had gotten worse, and he’d been groaning in pain. Once the doctor had given her his dismal prognosis, Kaylee had called my cell phone and cried. After that, the clock at my work had taken ages to strike five o’clock, and my bike wouldn’t ride fast enough home.

Inside my apartment, a small group of friends had gathered to say their goodbyes. The air in here was stifling, a mixture of body heat and emotions. This was Lukas’ usual hangout, and sure enough he was sitting patiently on our old couch. It was obvious by the expression on his face that he was happy to see me, even if he was busy. My bike landed with a thud on the kitchen tile as I set it down, and the gears ticked as it was rolled to its resting place on my humble deck outside. One by one, each friend moved forward, in turn, and wrapped their arms around his shoulders. They buried their face in his neck and murmured in his ear about how much they will miss him, how much they already miss him. He took it all in good humor, silent, a familiar grin on his face. The hurt, however, was clear in his expression. It pained me

that I could do nothing to ease it.

When my turn finally came, all I did is sit next to him, wordless.

I didn't want to forget that feeling, ever.

Time passed too quickly. The hum of the air conditioner droned in my ears, and the raindrops on my cold skin began to dry. After a good minute, Kaylee sat next to me and tried her best not to look in my direction. Her slender hands were buried in the folds of her dress, visibly shaking. I understood what the signal meant, but pretended for a moment that I didn't. This forced her to speak: "It's time to go."

The group—his extended family of friends—lingered at the threshold of my apartment. The hospital would not allow more than a couple visitors, and so they are all forced to stay and wait for our return. The three of us wound our way down the damp staircase to where Kaylee's car was parked, silent.

The trip over to the hospital was surreal. Lukas sat in the passenger side seat, looking as though nothing was wrong, or even different. The car lights in front of me were smeared across the windshield, a hazy swirl of strawberry reds and fruity oranges, and the windshield wipers smacked back and forth across the glass, swiping streams of water to both sides. My muscles blundered through the same old motions: *Turn* here, *stop* here, *go* here. Driving became instinctual, thoughtless. My mind, my vision, was focused on the seat next to me. A couple jokers on the radio chattered tirelessly into the silent car, and some distant part of me heard it, and didn't care. In the rear view mirror, Kaylee's face was stained with black mascara.

Once we reached the hospital, the rain let up. The air had begun to dry and the bright sun started to peek out between the dark clouds in small bursts. The hospital building itself was plain, like any other office building in the block. It was painted an off-white color and had wide- clear windows built into its face. Beyond the windows, I could now see people and counters and chairs. Kaylee and Lukas stepped ahead of me, swallowed up by the sliding front doors. I took a moment to hesitate outside, sucking in oxygen from the soggy air and feeling a numbness creep over my body.

Only a couple people sat with their pets inside the hospital building. The distinct odor of wet dog and rubbing alcohol saturated the cozy room, and the quiet sounds of people talking were broken by the occasional bark. Kaylee slid up to the counter to sign us in, and I slumped into one of the nearby chairs, avoiding other the people. Lukas settled next to me, looking comfortable and calm. He was used to the hospital by now; for him, there is nothing to fear from this place. The thought made my insides feel shredded to a pulp, and I rested my hand against the back of his neck.

Time pushed us unwillingly forward, once again.

The door next to the counter swung open, and a nurse stood in the

entry. The woman balanced a clipboard on her hip and scanned the waiting room. “Lukas?”

The vet’s room was bathed in a bright, fluorescent light that consumed all color and caused Kaylee to appear very pale. The walls were painted a dull pastel brown and a paper border, complete with drawings of happy cats and dogs, encircled the entire room. We were seated in a couple hard-backed chairs, and the nurse introduced herself before she disappeared from the room. Lukas moved to sit in front of us both and rested his head, affectionately, over both our knees. Kaylee hiccupped a cry, and then turned to bury her face into my shoulder. I mustered every ounce of my last remaining energy to put on a brave face for her. Even so, my stomach twisted and my heart thudded heavily in my chest; I could only breathe in shuddered breaths. These were the last moments we had with him.

“It—it’ll be okay, it’ll be okay. He’s not going to feel it anymore; there’ll be no more pain. He’ll feel no more pain, Kaylee, he’ll be okay.” I could barely speak, and each syllable seemed to be caught in my throat. Sensing our distress, Lukas let out a low, pained whine and moved his lidded eyes between us. My hand found his head once again, just as the door clicked open. The same nurse, dressed in pale blue scrubs, entered the room with a silver tray full of supplies. When her gaze met ours, her expression turned sorrowful.

“This is Lukas?” As she spoke, she placed the tray on the counter. I managed a nod, and protectively looped my fingers around his collar. The nurse shuffled over to us and knelt down, rubbing her hands beneath his chin and around his ears. Lukas adored the attention, and his tail wagged with all the enthusiasm he could muster. “He’s a beautiful dog.” I acknowledged the compliment with a weak smile. The nurse held eye contact with me, her eyebrows drawn upwards, and then turned to pick up her tray of supplies. When she returned, her gaze flickered between the two of us. “Do you need more time?”

The question produced a tingling sensation that prickled along the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet. My eyes felt dry and raw. I wanted to say ‘*yes, we need more time*’, but I ended up shaking my head. Pain radiated from Lukas’ body, and I couldn’t imagine leaving him to suffer more. The feeling was distant, though. Unbelievable. As if I was watching this happen on TV, on some movie, to somebody else. As if in the next few moments, this one life—this tiny life, one that I could hold in one hand when he was only a puppy—wouldn’t be extinguished. As if I would wake up tomorrow, and he’d still be there, sleeping at the foot of my bed.

Lukas stared up at me with bloodshot eyes, his tail still wagging. As the nurse prepared the solution, I slipped down to the ground with Kaylee and

Lukas. His head moved to rest in my lap, as if he was ready to take a nap—just as if I was sitting on the couch on any normal day and watching TV. The nurse reached forward and gently stretched out one of Lukas’ front legs, and then rubbed a wet wipe in a neat circle. The acrid aroma of rubbing alcohol filled my nostrils and stung my eyes, but I didn’t dare to blink the sensation away. Kaylee leaned over and whispered tenderly into Lukas’ ear, her arms wrapped in an iron grip around his collared neck. Though her voice was low, I could still hear it.

“I’m so sorry, baby. We love you so much.”

With all the power in me, I wished that I could talk. The words that I wanted to speak to him were stuck in my throat, and the most I could do was produce fresh tears. He looked up at me with a silent understanding, and then blinked once when the needle slipped in. The nurse emptied the syringe with careful precision, and then set the needle and bottle back on the metal tray. Silently, she stood to leave. The sound of the door clicking closed didn’t even register to my ears this time, and I barely noticed the woman’s absence.

The clock above ticked by the time, counting down the last seconds that Lukas lived. He struggled to keep his eyes open, fought to keep me in his failing sight. The muscles of his legs and arms relaxed, and more of his weight came to rest against the tiled floor. His breaths became shallow, smaller, until I could barely see the rise of his chest. Then, his eyes unfocused.

He was gone.

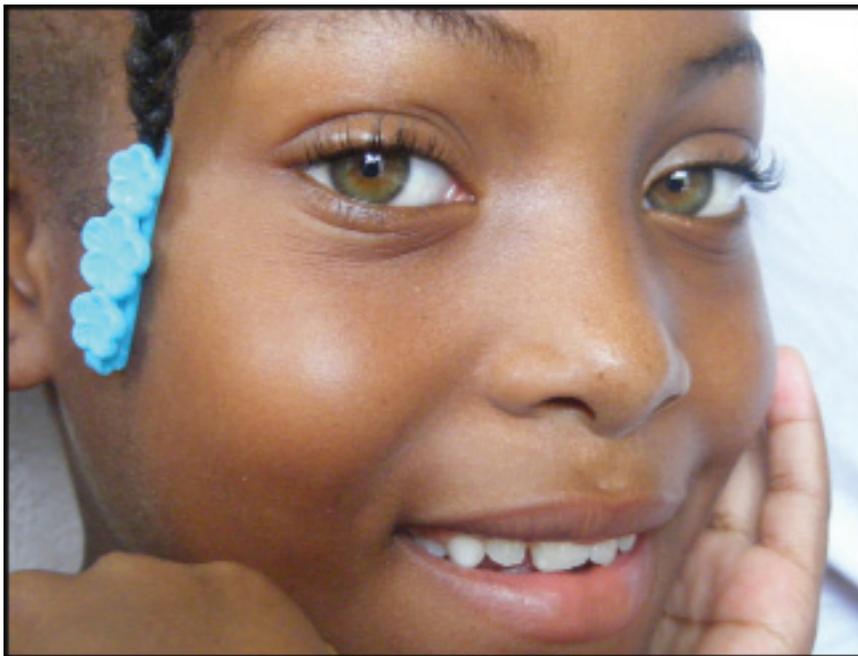
# *Daisy*

by Jenelle Rose

There's a dried out  
    daisy on  
    the dash  
He loves me,  
he loves me not  
the petals crackle, yellow  
    twisted, wrinkle  
    in the heat  
he loves me, he loves me not  
Happy golden center  
now sprinkled brown  
    Crumbly  
He loves me not  
Condemned back to the dust  
    With the petals still attached  
He loves me?  
    Never save a daisy

# *Lovely Haitian Girl With Beautiful Eyes*

Jacmel, Haiti August 2010



by Charvel Nelson

# *Stalking*

by Kandy Robertson

Nolan sat on the edge of the bed. He'd taken off his shoes when he let himself into her apartment, more to keep from making a mess than any worry about noise. So much for "cutting edge security"—he'd opened the door with a Sears card. He knew she was out for the evening. He ran his calloused hands across the smooth, white linen. Her room was a gentle gray made more solemn by the dense shades that blocked any light that might steal its way into her sanctuary.

She had a sleek, white dresser. Neat little white tables on either side of the bed, each sporting a stylish, silver lamp. The sea of neutral continued in the small, tailored pillows that rested in determined confusion against her glossy white headboard. One fussy pink bolster stood out as her tribute to femininity.

Urban chic. Nolan thought about the pussies on HGTV who informed people their houses looked like crap. He didn't give a shit about furniture or paint or art, but he had worked construction one summer and Mike Holmes was a kick in the ass.

He was left to his own devices while she slept the day away. She came from old money. No need to work. He envisioned her old bastard ancestor who had worked his ass into the ground so that she could spend her evenings out on the town and her days in bed.

He rose and diligently removed his ass-print from the duvet. He would leave no sign of his presence. No hint that would spook her before it was time.

Nolan moved silently through the apartment, assessing, deciding where he would wait. Planning in his head how he would make himself known. He would wait until she felt safe. Until she moved comfortably within her space.

The waiting wouldn't be easy. He was eager. His control just about shot by weeks of strain. He rolled his shoulders to loosen them up. His thick muscles would be his weapon. He worked out for hours each day, pumping, sweating, getting ready for her.

He thought about how she carried herself as she traversed the dark streets. Cool arrogant reserve. He looked forward to shaking that reserve. He fantasized about that moment of hesitation between rage and fear when she realized his control. He could feel the glisten of sweat on his body. Anticipation was hitting him hard. He focused on controlling his breathing.

Long, slow pulls. In-2-3. Out-2-3. He wouldn't allow a loss of control to spoil this. Not now.

She would come in the door to darkness. She never left a light on. She would toss her keys on the sleek, black lacquer table in the entry with its swash of flawless sliver Nambe resting on glossy ebony. He wouldn't be in the living room. Too quick. Sloppy. Cliché.

He wanted to watch her for a while. He wanted to see the play of muscles in her elegant body as she reached to switch on the track lights, the cool gas fireplace. He might let her cook a little dinner, pour a glass of wine. Comfortable. Easy.

He looked down at his rough hands as they moved just above the surface of her furniture. Not touching, but feeling her things in his head. He could feel his arousal build as he breathed in the remnants of her spicy, rich scent. He could almost feel the soft, cool of her throat as his fingers smoothed, tightened.

He imagined the dusky blue of her eyes churning deep, violent gray as he drew her close and she realized he owned her. Because he would own her.

He'd worked hard for this. Weeks of following, watching, staying aloof in the evening shadows. He'd brushed up against her once, just to see what she would do. To feel her against him. Her glance was cold and disinterested. She'd looked at him, he could still feel her stare, but she refused to acknowledge the electricity that had passed between them. She looked casually away, an insolent smile on her lips, her hair swinging obediently into place.

He could wait in the shower, but he wasn't Norman and this swank apartment was a far fucking cry from the Bates Motel. He would wait in the bedroom.

He carried his shoes to a comfortable spot in a dark corner of her walk-in closet. Behind a row of evening gowns entombed in rich burgundy garment bags. The black was his favorite. The back dipped low to expose her graceful spine. He loved the way it moved with her as she walked. Always hinting, but never revealing the velvet skin below her waist. Teasing.

He closed his eyes and imagined her soft body under his hands. Imagined her moaning and gasping. Imagined the look in her beautiful eyes as the last breath of life left her.

He waited.

Erica knew he was in her apartment the moment her Jimmy Choo's tap-tapped across the marble lobby in the steel and chrome high-rise. She'd seen him. Always in the shadows watching her. Outside her building. Outside restaurants where she dined with her friends. For weeks he'd been her shadow, carefully avoiding the harsh street lights and glaring storefronts.

Once he'd even brushed against her. He smelled of lust and bravado. He was an amateur.

She stepped into the elegantly mirrored elevator, pressed 22, and looked at her reflection. Her eyes gleamed in the soft light. She shook her head so that her long, black hair framed her face, resting softly on her shoulders. She was looking a little pale. She was tired. Maybe it was time to take a vacation. A few weeks in a warm climate. Cool evening breezes off the ocean were just what she needed.

Her keys jingled in her hand. She left the elevator, pressed the key in the lock and dropped her keys on the black lacquer table next to her front door. She threw her heavy coat across the back of her black leather couch and stopped to massage the back of her neck.

Erica flipped on the hall light and began to slip the buttons of her red silk blouse as she made her way down the hall to her bedroom. That's where he would wait. A sly smile graced her mouth as she shrugged the smooth crimson off of her shoulders leaving it in a heap on the floor and pushed open the closet door as long, delicate fangs pricked tiny rosettes on her full lower lip.

# *Faces*



by Faun Scurlock

# *Look to the Ground, You Blind*

by Alexandra Mackey

*“What do they seek in heaven, all those blind?”*

“Les Aveugles” Charles Baudelaire

Ulysses must have had one of those moments  
in Polyphemus’s cave, those fetid caverns,  
where each glass of wine played flame.  
Imagine cutting fleece from flesh  
and finding salvation  
in Neptune’s saltwater kiss.

Baudelaire’s kiss  
In the moments  
after seeking salvation  
they emerge, those blind, from the caverns,  
veils torn from flesh,  
the earth appears before them like a match-stick flame.

But then, it was only ever a flame,  
and a kiss  
never leaves traces on flesh,  
just a singe of the eyelashes, and in those moments  
reality floods in, like saltwater caverns,  
the simplest kind of salvation.

A silent salvation,  
a quelled flame.  
They will lay to rest, those blind, in obit caverns,  
lips blue from death’s kiss  
and spend a God’s moment  
in waxed flesh.

Bones cradled in deep water, paper flesh  
inked down and returned to the sea, a salvation  
of Nature's vast sort of printing press, a moments  
Atlantis, lost and forgotten, where no flame  
Can light it, like a kiss  
on dead cheeks, or bare caverns,

then the eyes, those seekers, enter those caverns  
as Neptune's back turns, and flesh  
the smooth stone bones, and kiss  
life into Nature's most elusive obsession; salvation  
in the promise of heaven's flame,  
those lost moments

as if entering Christ's caverns to press the walls for salvation,  
a transmutation of flesh, or a baptism in blind flame.  
Those seekers would give up their eyes for heaven's flame, for a moments  
ennui.

# *6 Hours Straight*

by Triana Collins

I once read a movie star interview in a teen magazine:

“What would be your ideal date?”

the interviewer asked the starlet.

“Oh, I would want nothing more than to hold hands and kiss for 6 hours straight.”

I stopped, re-read the answer again.

For 6 hours straight, do nothing more  
than hold hands and kiss?

How boring! This is totally incredulous.

I dismissed and with a wave of the hand

the magazine fell to the floor

where it stayed lonely and frayed

while I walked out the door.

And for the next 10 years my life filled with colors shapes sounds smells taste  
this smoke that climb higher and higher fall from the sky into the deepest  
canyons the rockiest ravines from ocean to desert to ocean again but my body  
won't break and my soul bounces so I try again and again while the clock  
ticks and time runs out and I continue to hear the calling paging something is  
texting my cellular nuclei its long distance and the connection is fuzzy but my  
pineal gland gets the email just as my mitochondria are about to call it quits.

i wake up

blue grey sky

blue grey water

blue grey eyes looking into mine

side profile of grey speckles against dark brown hair

the world begins to slow its incessant spinning  
pauses  
stops  
the beeping  
the ringing  
all fade to mute

until it's just me and you

kissing for 6 hours straight

# *Elephant*

by Kimberley Lauman

In the mirror she sees  
A child so scared and odd  
A round little face dimples here and there  
Standing, looking in the mirror she sees  
A slow awkward elephant plowing  
Through a field of tears  
The elephant so pretty, or so she's told  
But what she sees and knows is  
Elephant

*Cello*



by Kimberly Lawrence

# *A Matter of Chance*

by Carly Rogers

HEY DAD!” smack “FAW-thurr!” smack “NEE-ull!”

I’ll let the little voice carry on for another minute or so. NEE-ull is probably passed out in the back bedroom and will have to wake up and let the kid in before too long.

Smack.....smack.....smack.....“DAAAADDDEEEEEEEEEEE!”

*Bartleby can wait, I guess.* I fold the corner of a rice paper page and let the anthology fall from my lap. *Not like either of us was doing much anyway.* Outside the door is my part-time neighbor Chance, or CHANCE GODDAMMIT, as he is sometimes called. He doesn’t notice that I’ve joined him in the hallway that smells like vomit and Febreeze, as he is hard at work swinging a bag loaded with Dollar Tree goods at the door that says 203. Neil’s white van is not in the parking lot.

“I wonder if your Dad’s not home, honey,” I say, trying to sound as unlike a scary kidnapper as possible. But Chance isn’t afraid of me.

“I got THITH!” he says, smiling brightly and thrusting a pudgy hand in my face. A whiff of my childhood escapes the happy gap between his two front teeth, and now, thanks to Chance, this hallway smells like a vomit, Febreeze, and artificial strawberry stir fry. His mouth opens wide to show me the bright wad of gum that I know accompanied his sweet tattoo as a bonus. Zebra Stripes.

I squint at the blue-green smudge, but it remains only a blue-green smudge. “Ith a horth on a thurfboard,” he tells me, jabbing a stubby pointer at the fist he has offered.

“Very cool,” I say. Chance’s index finger, its work now done, takes up residence in his runny nose.

“Did your mom go to work?” I ask, looking the other way as the kid appraises a nose treasure, then introduces it to his fat wad of chewing gum.

“Dropped me off,” he says in a singsong, and withdraws a shiny finger from his mouth. He holds it up for me, with three others, and tells me he is “thith many.”

“Four!” I say, “I would have guessed thirty!” His head goes side to side, but Chance’s wide earnest eyes stay focused on me as though he is concerned for my mental health. Tough crowd. I invite the kid into my apartment, fully prepared to explain the conditional nature of the “don’t-go-anywhere-with-strangers” rule that is supposed to be built-into this

generation. But such an explanation is wholly unnecessary for Chance, who skips through my open door as if he thought I'd never ask.

"Hey! My dad goth a TV holder like thith!" he announces. Soon every disc and tape in my entertainment center is spread out on the carpet and after much deliberation (two rounds of eenie-meenie-miney-moe), All Dogs Go to Heaven is selected as the afternoon's entertainment. We love the alligator part best, and when Anne Marie has found some parents and the credits roll, I am the only one of us still concerned with where *Chance's* parents are.

"Did your mom go to work, Chance?" I ask again. But he has now become passionately interested in the contents of his yellow plastic bag, the handles of which are still twisted so tightly around his wrist that his little mitt is turning white. For the first time since I moved in two months ago, my young neighbor is at a loss for words. At last, a grubby hand pulls out the brightly colored pack of gum, and adds what is probably a sixth piece to the sticky mass dying his tongue bright pink. Chance's face falls and his shoulders deflate. A mature sigh escapes his four year old lungs. He is about to tell me something I don't want to know.

"She doethn't work. Sheethe jutht my mom. She jutht thmoketh pot." Chance looks up at me, now liberated, and continues, "Tho her mom and dad called Thee-Pee-Eth on her!" This is as much as I can handle, but a weight has been lifted from Chance's tiny chest, and now he cannot stop telling the nameless neighbor across the hall all the things he can't tell anyone else.

He sometimes puts rocks in the mailbox even though he knows it's for mail, but don't tell his dad, he'd be *SO* mad. He once stole a shiny heart bead from preschool even though he knew it wasn't his, but don't tell his dad, he'd be *SO* mad. *I won't, but no more rocks in the mailbox and no more stealing.* He couldn't reach the toilet paper roll in my bathroom so he didn't use any. He didn't clean his room. His mom isn't allowed to drive but she sometimes takes Grandma's car when she isn't looking.

"Let's go for a walk!" I say, partly because I hope we'll miraculously bump into Chance's dad, but mostly because I don't want to know anything else. The little boy in my living room has purged himself of all worries, and begins to sing the alligator's theme song and kick his feet against the leg rest in rhythm. I run a hand under the confessional my couch has become.

"Leth make myoo-thic together, baybee." I push aside the tower of anthologies on my floor. "Leth make thweet hm-hm-hmmm." *Sweet harmony.* They are not between the cushions either.

"Chance, where are your shoes?"

We begin our long and directionless scoot around the parking lot, stopping frequently so that Chance can slip back into my sandals.

“Do you want me to carry them?” I ask. “You can walk on the sidewalk over there.”

“No thankth. My dad would be *tho* mad if I got my thockth dirty.” I stop to look at Chance’s feet and recognize this particular shade of grey as “once-white.” Holes in each sock expose a few of his toes. *This would be hilarious...if it wasn’t so damn sad.*

“Hi Chance!” A red Little Rascal hums across the parking lot toward us. Scooter Woman asks how his mom and Chloe are doing.

“Do you have her number?” I ask. “His dad isn’t home and I’d like to get in touch with her.” Why on earth would I call her, Scooter Woman wants to know. Mary lives in a studio apartment on the other side of the property. Now Chance wants to watch Dogs in Heaven again.

Chance’s mother smokes in a plastic chair by the sliding door, nudging a baby girl in a bouncer with a big toe. She pulls her bathrobe closed as we approach and taps out her cigarette.

“What’re *you* doin’ here?” she demands of Chance, who dismounts from my back with no help from anyone. One last lungful of smoke pours from Mary’s mouth, hovering above the scene for awhile, then dissipates. Wistfully, she watches it go, and pockets what’s left of her cigarette. Chance looks at his feet. His dad’s not home, I tell her. She curses aloud, then mutters something about *his turn*.

“Did you *knock*?” she asks, looking me in the face for the first time.

“He’s not *home*,” I repeat.

Mary looks as though Jersey Shore’s been cancelled. Her livid glare darts from me, to Chance, to me again, then, “FUCK!” The four letter reply rings in the air. She stares at me expectantly, as if it is my job to come up with a solution to this problem we are having...this problem of Chance.

“Who’s going to take care of me?” the little boy suddenly asks his feet. I hear something—my own heart breaking maybe. A dog barks on Sixth Avenue. Baby Chloe whines in her bouncer. A squirrel scampers up a tree behind me and a whistling neighbor turns a key in the mass of mailboxes twenty feet away. Judge Judy questions someone’s intelligence in the living room/kitchen/dining room, but Mary has no answer for her son. All she can manage is an aggravated sigh as she flips open her phone and emphatically punches numbers.

“He’d *better* have his cell on him, ’cause, you know, I gotta...I mean, I have things to...” She trails off, and not because Neil has answered. Mary stands with one hip thrust out to the side. Her left hand presses the

phone hard against her head. Her right has taken up an end of the cloth bathrobe tie, which now swings around and around, cutting through the air like a plaid windmill blade. Her bare foot is even tapping. We have clearly inconvenienced this woman, Chance and I. Finally the phone is snapped shut and one more “FUCK!” shakes the leaves from the trees.

“I guess you can stay here,” she says finally. But Chance has already started to walk away from the apartment. He would rather be at “Daddeethe howth.”

My heart breaks, the dog barks, the squirrel scampers, the baby whines, Judge Judy roars. Chance is all the way across the parking lot by now and his mother can't say a word. Not even “fuck.”

“You have to stay with your mom, honey,” I call after him, realizing the absurdity in my words even as I utter them. “Your daddy isn't home.” He kicks off my sandals and walks faster, past the mailboxes, past the trees, to the street. “Chance, please!” He stops, turns to face me.

“Then can I thpend the night at your howth and watch Dogth in Heaven again?”

I glance back at the apartment, but Mary's returned to Judge Judy's L.A. courtroom.

If I could, I'd leave everything up to Chance.

# *Winter on the Mountain*

by Linda Augustine

Now comes the season of crystalline truth.  
The base nature of this world lays bare,  
With sparse and spiny bones, imitating their dead,  
still reaching toward the heavens.

Life, stripped of excess, is exposed. Reality shows.  
What was once blurred by tangles of vegetation along the path  
is now completely revealed: meager and scrubby.

The heady camouflage days of decoration and deception are no more.  
That which prospered by subterfuge has fled to more favored grounds.  
From skeletal heights a regal raptor surveys its options.  
Only a few year-round residents know where and when to hide.

As each storm passes, running rain cuts deep wrinkles  
into the face of the forest floor.  
Autumn's gilding, now cast off,  
Covers the ground, a mush of slimy decay.

Some things remain unchanged.  
The steady of character are unabashedly so,  
ever green, albeit with bristly prongs.

But where one becomes legion,  
beware the mountain's daytime dark places.  
Even in the season of disclosure, some things remain hidden.

In the deep recesses where no light filters in  
There waits a vigilant entity,  
Watching and wondering at its own safety,  
Unrecognizable, until it is close enough to bite.

# *Shanghai*



by Pin-Wei Wang

# *We Are Awetistic*

by Shasti McLaughlin

Awetism gives to Us  
The tools We need to share  
With others who are not like Us  
A world to which none can compare

Our gifts are Awesome, they're multiplying through and through  
They're getting to you  
You Ones without  
The troubled and the blue

We did not come here to make trouble,  
But rather to improve  
The nature of this Earth we live on  
And give you another groove

Another groove in which to move  
To walk upon and wonder  
Why the difference in Us versus You  
Should cause You Ones to blunder

You flounder and then confess  
Hey we just don't know what to do  
When really, truly there is no answer  
Misunderstanding is within each individual You.

Acceptance here and now is the only step that's vital  
We can do it, us called Awetistic  
Trust that we are entitled

To have this difference  
Within our Selves  
Our hearts,  
And our souls are devout

The storm is over, ended long ago,  
When holding on its hard to see  
You've asked for us  
To teach you well  
And yes, quite thoroughly

We've entered the world to give you hope  
Not aches and sadness and pain  
We've come here to show the gifts we bring  
Of love and joy and gain

The gifts we have are opening up  
Right before your eyes  
Pay attention now  
Greet this time  
Our difference with whoops and hollers and cries  
Of happiness and hope and love

In that which what we are  
We are the change that is needed  
To grow and to go far

You will understand as time goes on of the joy to behold  
The truth is coming out  
You will see  
It's worth its weight in gold

Our minds are free to wander, to work and not to judge  
We don't have it within us  
The cynicism, the heartache, the frustration  
That isn't learned until we're taught and get our education  
That we are different and that difference is feared  
It is something for which shame should be a part  
And taken and disappeared

When we are taught to be like you  
It snuffs out all tradition  
Of finding new and sweet and calm  
In treasuring a chosen few

You cannot understand this now  
Not while you're trying to fix  
The "problems" that you see  
The "detriments"  
You're focused on your fear and your needs

This "new" and "different" and how they are the same  
How they go together  
How the pathways in our brains  
Make us all the better.

Not just those Awetistic,  
But everyone  
Benefits from our gifts  
Every person paying attention or not  
Can be given hope and feel the uplift

Of hearts and knowledge in leaps and bounds  
Of successes and not failures  
Of understanding this human life

And carry all the reminders  
The time is now  
To understand  
Open up and allow yourselves to see

That we are One  
All of us  
That this is not about a few

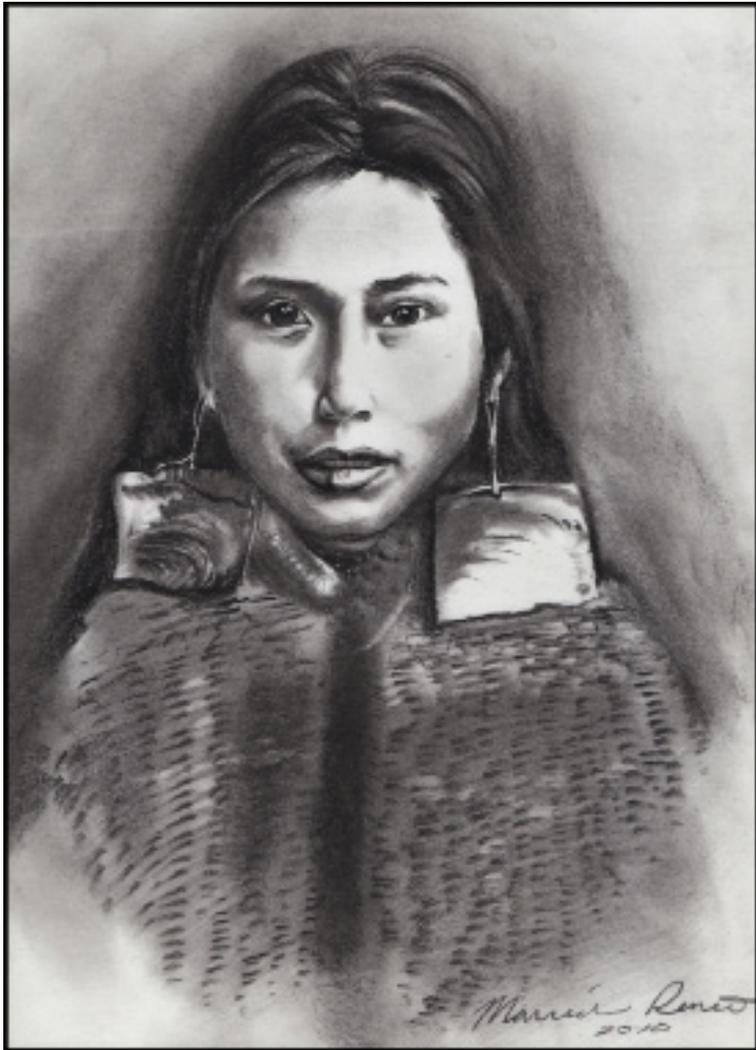
That every person everywhere is Magnificent  
If they only knew...

# *Tootsie*

by Alexandra Chaudoin

For some reason, every time he walked past her,  
she felt as if she was about to collapse;  
Almost as if her life force pulled itself  
away to be with him,  
as if her heartbeat relied on  
the rhythm of his feet.  
She can hear it-  
That mind of hers, cynic and formal ego centrist,  
that she must not walk up to him on a whim;  
That, out of doing so, he'd stare at her  
like an elk at an oncoming freight train.  
But, the railroad tracks never cease to run straight.  
And even if he'd turn the corner,  
there's such thing as a runaway train.  
So be it if she decides to jump the tracks  
and crash.

*American Indian Girl*



by Marriah Buhman

# Three Exemplary Stories

(With Regards to Aesop, Miguel de Unamuno, T.S. Eliot, and Helen Fielding)

by Louise Wynn

## I. The Empath and the Therapist (A Fable)

The girl, a very sensitive college student, was surprised by the campus counselor's first question: "What can we do for you today?"

"We?" The girl looked around. "Is there someone else here?"

"I meant that you and I would be working together."

The girl groaned. "I'm sick of working with other people."

She put air quotes around *working with*.

"I hate the way they want you to feel sorry for them, they want you to feel everything the way they're feeling it. I just need a place where I can feel the way I want to, without someone telling me how to feel. I'd like--"

The counselor drew back. "Don't worry. I don't tell my clients how to feel."

"Yeah? You just did. You just told me not to worry. Even though I never said I was worried. What I said was I don't want to feel what you're feeling."

"Also, you interrupted me when I was just going to say I'd like to finish a complete sentence for once instead of people filling in what they think I'm going to say."

"Also, you're feeling sorry for me, which means you, one, feel superior to me, two, think you know how I should feel, and, three, now you're going to tell me that wasn't what you meant, four, I misunderstood and I need to pay attention, and, five, you understand what I'm going through."

She ticked each item off on her fingers.

"I see you're a very body-centered type."

"Ah, so you understand me."

"I believe I do."

"Do you understand sarcasm?"

Long pause. "I do understand how you--"

The girl broke in. "I doubt it. I feel like what's his name, Atlas, who has to carry the Earth, like everybody wants me to carry all their feelings, and their feelings make me feel dirty, so I'm like Hercules cleaning out the stables. And they stink."

The therapist wrote a note on his yellow legal pad. *Delusional mythological*.

"I can read up-side-down, you know."

The therapist covered the note with his hand.

The girl got up and left. The therapist called the front desk. "Please see that the client who is leaving makes a return appointment."

Moral: Not everyone who wants to help knows how.

## II. Mike's Third Corollary (A Tragicomedy in Three Short Scenes)

*Scene I: Dinky basement apartment, Mike, Landlord, and Lab Chorus:*

Lab Chorus (Three men and three women wearing lab coats): I know it's not important to most people to live their lives by data. But I wonder: If you know there's something you can do to make your life easier or happier, to reduce your risk from ill health or accident, why wouldn't you want to do it? So I moved to a basement apartment near my job, close enough --- 1.27 miles --- so I can walk easily on nice days, and when I have to drive, I reduce my accident risk by approximately 30% by driving on side roads.

Mike: Could you please replace the gas stove with an electric stove?

Landlord: You kiddin? No way.

Mike: Did you know that electric stoves cost less, have less danger from fire, and electric power around here comes from Bonneville, so it costs less than gas?

Landlord: I know one thing, buddy. You're gonna be outta here soon as your lease is up.

Mike: As if I'd want to stay in this dump anyway.

*Scene II: At work, in a lab, Mike, Cop, Rat Chorus, and Girl who works on the other side of the lab:*

Cop: You have the right to remain silent...[continues reading Miranda rights as...]

Rat Chorus (Three large rats with singed fur): Another thing I've learned though is that you can't predict how someone's going to take your words. Ten days later, his house blew up. A gas leak. He told the police it must have been me because I was talking about how dangerous gas is. So they came to get me. I was at work of course. I can't think of a better alibi than that, can you?

Girl: He didn't do it.

Cop: Do what? What do you think we're taking him in for?

Girl: I don't know, but you can tell by looking at him he didn't do anything.

*Scene III: Holding cell, Mike, girl, three tweekers, Cop Chorus:*

Chorus (Three tweekers): The cop handcuffed the girl, too. [pause] Another thing I've learned is that life is a lot like a story, except it just goes on

and on and on, until it actually gets a little boring.

Mike: Did you know that Vancouver is one of the original places where meth was manufactured? Part of the I-5 corridor, Vancouver to San Diego, and across both borders.

Girl: I just made my one call.

First tweaker: Who'd you call?

Girl: My so-called therapist.

Second tweaker: And?

Girl: He thinks it will be good for me to absorb some of the real feelings of the people around me for a change.

Mike: What the hell does that mean, anyway?

Third tweaker: He's punishing her for not being a good client.

Girl: I have a name, you know. [pauses; no one replies]

Chorus (three cops): Mike, you are being released. Your landlord's car just blew up. He escaped with his life even though he was carrying a gasoline can and a bunch of rags, but we'll be arresting him shortly for arson and attempted murder. He said he was sorry you weren't at home when the building burned down. Girl, you are being released. Please do not sue the County of Clark or City of Vancouver for wrongful arrest. If you do, you may expect to be ticketed every time you drive on either Interstate or any of Washington's state routes.

Exeunt all.

### III. Girl Meets Boy (A Modern Romance)

It's only March, and already this year needs to be over: Bad weather, car breaking down all the time. Good news is I've found a part-time job in a lab where nobody bothers me except to check on my work. Sometimes I wish I could make friends, but usually I realize it's just too hard for me.

But I did find one friend: one of the guys. Funny thing is the first time we talked was while we were both being hauled off to jail.

His name is Mike. He's funny, though not always intentionally so.

I like being around him because he doesn't say very much and he doesn't expect me to carry on a big conversation either.

He likes science fiction, apparently because the plots involve machines and rockets and planets, and the characters' emotions are so fake as to be unbelievable.

I'm starting to like it, too, for that last reason.

He likes popcorn without butter, diet Dr. Pepper, and he eats cold pizza for breakfast.

He likes the way I talk in lists. He does it too.

He says he has to wait until his divorce is final, which is okay with me.

*Flower Head*



by Nathan Skolrud

# *The Run-On Political Mid-Term Run-Off in Washington County*

by Nick Ferderer

Comparisons weigh heavy on the gavel  
hand of the Lieutenant Governor,  
sixty plus years old, the right  
words for the right agenda without leaving out  
what is left—  
like rhetoric from Plato to Jon Stewart. And  
if the old man knew  
where to place his left foot next,  
before picking up his right heel,  
the Up-and-Comer would have no need to sprint  
in six months, door to door  
searching for agreeable louts and lost souls  
to push him into a position  
to trip Second-in-Command,  
guilt free, a vote as recompense. But  
the bearded old man did the same to his political dad  
as his forefathers did to their monarch  
who did to his lord the same  
on a church door in Wittenberg. And  
the gavel pounds still,  
once more for equality,  
ring loud for liberty,  
echoes for war,  
echoes in war,  
echoes of war.

# *Isolated*

Jacmel, Haiti August 2010



by Charvel Nelson

# *Lost in the Wind*

by Melissa Boles & Shavenor Winters

*What is it about the night air that makes it so sweet? What is it about the cool caress cooing in my ear that makes inhibitions melt into the sunset? Oh please, tell me what is it about the damp night that makes even the dead come to life and the lost be found, if only for this short little while.*

She carves the three words in the sand. *What is it?* The singsong of the words has been playing over and over in her head for weeks, taunting her. *What is it?*

Her toes dig in to the sand as she moves down the beach, dragging the broken branch behind her. Wind blows bangs in to her face; salt coats her lips. It is still daylight, but the night rests in her bones, slipping gracefully in to her veins.

She makes it to the large rock resting in the ocean, just mere feet from the grains of sand when the tide is out. The air surrounding her is dark and heavy, and she aches. She aches to feel something; drags the stick over her foot. Nothing.

*The words fall so easy from my lips. Like the rain that burdens clouds they fall, rushing, swishing and pushing. They cascade over my tongue like water over smoothly eroded stones. They fall, quicker now, a downpour, the words fighting to fall. The lies come so easily; thrown carelessly to the wind.*

She is lost among the waves, hearing them lap against the rock as if they are thoughts slamming against the cool crevices of her mind. Lonely, lost; each wave a memory she wishes she could forget.

There is no telling what will happen next, she reminds herself, her toes dancing as the cold air blows over them. She said the words; told the lie. It is up to the world to decide. Where did she get the courage to say three one-syllable words that she's not sure she means?

She closes her eyes, leans against the rock; lets the salt of the sea coat her eyelashes. Will he find her in time; will he understand what she really meant?

*I stop. Breathe. Inhale the sweet night air. Tell me friend, what is it about the night air that lessens the inhibitions? What is it about the dark that engulfs ones soul, welcoming*

*it into the listless night? Something must lurk in the dark, eager and quick to swallow up the lost.*

*I hate you.* Three words so easily spoken that mean more than three words should. She thinks he gave the strength in her tone more credit than he should have.

*What is it in that sweet air that draws me in, and makes the senses lie? As if to think that the sins of the night will not revisit in the light of day? Such wishful thinking does not grow old with time, it finds the youth and lingers whispering its sweet nothings onto the night breeze; tickling the ears of all who hear.*

Down in the sand a man drags his feet, wet sand sticking to the bottom of his pant legs. The waves thrashing in his peripheral match the eyes he's searching for; grey and stormy, full of pain. He needs to see her, hear the words again. Is there really hate in the fingertips that last traced his skin; in the heart he last felt beat against his palm? He wants to know the truth – he knows that sometimes when she feels a certain way, she lies.

He passes the rock, eyes scanning the beach. He hears his name, but can't find her. It must have been the wind.

*Short seconds draw into long minutes which hike up to longer hours. Tick tock; my eyes glance, anxious to see the tale-tell red light flash. My ears scan the air, wishing to pick out the delicate beep. You make my life an eternity of waiting. Waiting for a look, a touch; a kiss.*

She calls for him; stands and her foot slips. Rock cuts in to her sole and she cries out, sliding further down the rock. Salt stings at the blood and she sits in a crevice, pressure on the opening to stop the bleeding. He shuffles past her; she tries to call his name again, but her voice is lost in the wind. Is he too far gone?

She can't breathe.

*When did you become a part of me? How did you become the air to my lungs, that every second without you reminds me of a faint craving, a faint burning for more, more than a want; a need so precious.*

Asleep. The pain in her two souls causes her to curl inside herself, hand still gripping her foot. She wakes to hear him calling her name, but she can't see him.

It must be the wind.

*Short seconds to longing hours. You did this to me; with hardly a backwards glance you've made me yours. With so much less than a word I come when called; far less than a touch and I remember your warmth.*

Night falls. Tide comes in. He returns home, praying she will be sitting on his porch. A seagull rests on the porch swing in her spot; he retreats inside the house, falling asleep on the couch with the coat she left behind clutched in his arms.

He wakes later, a sharp pain in his stomach; whispers of I love you ruminating in the living room. Was she there?

*The night drew me in, my thoughts carried away by brisk wind. Now night has gone and I fear the unknown; will you be here when the moon is gone?*

He shuffles through the sand every night for a month. Sometimes he can still hear her calling.

*Voices ride away on the wind; soon to be gone at the sight of a fast approaching dawn. A sigh escapes to join the night voices; it is searching, for the sigh knows that all is not lost when hope floats on the wings of night air.*

# *Alone Without My Friends*



by Christina Roberts

# *Things of Day and Dream*

by Dene Grigar

Sometimes when I wake up  
I can't believe  
those things that happened  
live outside my dream  
or these things of sleep aren't really there

But seldom I escape  
the waking things  
when I go to sleep

And lurking between day and dream  
things yet imagined just waiting for me

*Spacey Aquarelle*



by Christina Broussard-Pearson

# *On Cooper Mountain*

by Linda Augustine

Soft morning sunlight

Reveals tiny sparkling raindrops

Speeding toward the forest's embrace.

The gentle calming patter of each arrival

is trounced by the overhead

rumble of Horizon Flight 2154 to Seattle.

*Eilean Donan*



by Megan Trevarthen

# *A Sunny Sunday Story*

by Pavithra Narayanan

In god's own country\*, in the year of the dragon, when the celebrations went on all month because the monsoons had ensured a good harvest, a girl was born to a farming couple. She was named Lakshmi after the goddess of good fortune and prosperity. The second daughter, born a year later, was named Anandi, which means bringer of joy. But, when a third daughter was born in the third year of their marriage, the parents were unprepared to name her. They had wanted a boy child. So, enveloped in a wave of sorrow at the birth of yet another girl, they did not name the new baby. The little girl grew up being called 'Mol' (daughter), 'Penne' (girl), 'Kutti' (little one) or by any name that the caller fancied. For the two older girls, it became a game to name their youngest sister every week. The youngest was just happy to be part of the sisterhood. When she went to school for the first time, she was registered as Kutti Mol because that was what Lakshmi wrote down in the form. But, this isn't a story about these three sisters. This story is about their neighbor and her companions who lived in house number 142.

In house number 142, an 82-year-old woman lived alone with a rabbit, a fish, and a crow. Though they lived within the same compound, the four rarely encountered each other. However, every sunny Sunday afternoon when the woman went to sit by the pond, the crow would perch close by, and the rabbit would crouch near the water looking at its reflection and the fish alternatively. That was a foursome moment that usually extended to a few hours. Not a word passed in acknowledgement of each other's presence. The crow seemed to play statue during these sessions. It would just sit still with its head tilted to the left staring at nothing. For the fish, it was show time. It must have thought that the gathering was for its benefit, since they did congregate at the pond and nowhere else. The fish would thus whirl and swirl, jump high and dive deep, and gave an amazing performance for anyone who cared to watch. The rabbit was the only spectator, but it would only catch glimpses of the show because its own reflection interested it more. For the woman, it was reading time.

She would bring a small black bag, sit on the plastic chair permanently fixed by the pond, and take out a pile of letters bound neatly by a rubber

\* If you google the phrase, you will find that both New Zealand and the southern Indian State of Kerala, claim to be god's own country. Such claims are inconsequential. In this story, it refers to Kerala, a State to which I am partial, because that's where my life began, and more importantly, because it is the first place in the world to democratically elect a Communist government in 1957.

band. There were 111 letters. She would go through each one of them, and when she finished reading all the letters she would secure them in the band, close her eyes and be still for a while. Maybe she was picturing the individuals who had written the letters and when all the images had rolled by, she opened her eyes, put the pile of letters into her bag, got up and went back to the house. Only when the woman got up, did the other three wiggle, fly or scamper away. They say that when the woman died at the age of eighty-seven, there was no sign of the trio. Where they went is as mysterious as how they first came to inhabit her world. What is stranger is that they have been with her since she moved into the house twenty five years ago. Considering the lifespan of these creatures, it is more than just strange.

If the three sisters had ever looked across their wall into their neighbor's garden on sunny Sunday afternoons, they would have seen the little gathering. But they were busy choosing a name for the youngest, because it was every Sunday that Kutti Mol became whoever her sisters wanted her to be for the week. Engrossed in their game, the rendezvous in house number 142 went unnoticed and uninterrupted by the girl group.

What happened on rainy Sunday afternoons is quite another story.

# *Ritual*

by David Carney

Gleaming blades reflect the light, scattering it like raindrops splitting photons. Steam rises, gently curling around my foam covered cheeks and covering the mirror in condensation. Soft cotton rubs against steel edges, and hairs fall from my face as the razor makes its pass. Reveling in comfort as warm air brushes my now bare skin, wet cotton rubs against my skin to clean the last of the foam from my face. Inhaling moist air, deep breaths feel cleansing to my body and soul.

*Glass and Sun*



by Linda Zandi

# *American Flag*

by Melissa Boles

People thought they were mother and daughter.

And they could have been. One woman's hair was graying and wrinkles were appearing on her face. Their eyes, similar shades of blue, sparkled in the same way. They spoke the same, even.

Ten years of living together will do that to you.

They sat across from each other at dinner, maintaining a façade they had to keep up because the younger woman donned a military uniform, the forest green bringing out the red highlights in her blonde hair. The older woman thought that it made her look elegant.

The uniform would be pressed and put away when they arrived home, though, for it kept them from being who they were. It separated them, so they hid it, just like they had to hide their relationship when the uniform was out.

The worst moment comes when she has to leave again, and they stand at the airport and hug briefly. There is no kiss goodbye, no "I love you," no long embrace to last them the length of time apart or the distance between them. It's the same every time.

"Be safe," the older woman says, tucking a strand of gray hair behind her right ear. "I'm always safe."

"Be safer," she whispers, rubbing her thumb over the scar on the younger woman's inner forearm. One shotgun wound was more than enough.

"That was just a flesh wound, love. I'll be fine."

"Officer Williams..." Her captain catches her attention and gives her a one-minute warning. They'll be heading through security soon.

"Will you call me as soon as you can?" "Always."

A squeeze of the hand, a long glance, and she's gone; through security and off to a place that the older woman could never imagine going.

When asked, the younger woman tells her Captain that the woman who dropped her off is her mother, and even though she knows it has to be said, it hurts when she hears the words spill out of her soft lips. The woman with the graying hair and the beautiful skin is so far from her mother it's ridiculous. Her Captain would be embarrassed if he knew what they spent the night doing.

The older woman always spends the first night the blonde woman is gone fully awake, praying out loud and asking a God she doesn't even believe

in to make sure that her lover stays safe. She can't sleep until she gets the call telling her that they've arrived safely in one of the most dangerous places on earth.

The phone rings one night, earlier than anticipated, but it isn't her wife on the line, it is someone else. "Isabelle Morrison?" "Yes." "Officer Cadet Grayson had you listed as her emergency contact. There has been an accident."

Her stomach drops all the way to her feet. "Is she alright?"

"Their platoon was hit on the way to their camp. I'm sorry, but there were no survivors."

The funeral is the hardest. The young woman's father, an Army General, receives the flag, unaware his daughter was even in a relationship. The older woman stands off to the side, hugging her arms to her chest. She wants to storm the casket, tell the world that they were together, and say goodbye, but instead she leaves, stepping lightly to keep her heels from sinking in to the grass. The gunshots make her flinch as she walks away.

She is barely to the parking lot when the Captain catches up with her, a folded flag tucked under his arm.

"Ma'am?"

She turns, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "I thought – they said there were no survivors."

He looks down. "I wasn't with them. I stayed behind to finish paperwork. I was going to follow the next day." It is clear he feels responsible as he lets out a deep breath. "I know you aren't her mother."

The wrinkles on the woman's face deepen. "I'm sorry?" He holds out the flag, pressing it in to her hands. "I'm smarter than Angela thought." "Only family members get these," she whispers, staring down at the flag. It isn't enough, but at least it's something. "You were her family," he says, stepping closer to her. "And I know I would want my husband to have one."

Her eyes widen with surprise and he nods at her, turning around and walking back towards the burial site. She watches him go and then leaves for home, resting the flag on her mantle when she gets there. She receives some of Angela's belongings later in the month, and silently thanks the Captain for knowing what they couldn't tell.

When people that don't know the truth come over and ask about the flag, she tells them that it was for her daughter. Even years later, it's hard to let go of the façade.

# *Dreamscape*

by Bianca Santino

I am awakened by death  
Upon being outdoors  
I see what hit my window  
In the tarry night my eyes evaluate  
The textures  
Socks are wet; I didn't realize that it's raining  
Heavily  
A dead goose  
My eyes have adjusted and I can see it now  
A Canadian goose  
Still warm  
Still dead  
A glossy eye reflects the moonlight  
I choke, quietly before a tear rolls down my cheek  
So slowly, I can track its fluid contours  
As it chooses a sporadic path down my nose  
Even amongst the cold rain, pouring  
My tear is hot, reminding me that I'm alive  
Almost as warm as the goose  
It must have been lost, why would it be alone?  
We are all lost, some are alone  
Did it kill itself?  
Some of us do.  
Such a beautifully designed creature  
So successful evolutionarily  
But being alone, there are no defenses  
No defenses, no evolutionary fixes  
Blood flows from its beak  
As tears flow from my eyes

*Twin Horizons*



by Jake Kleinschmidt

# Drifter

by Tom Novak

A green-eyed man sits in the slovenly passenger seat of a pick-up truck of indeterminate make. The passenger had been dubious at first about accepting a lift when he had seen what a state it was in: battered and beaten as if by a gang of vengeful bikers, with a side door and a tail gate both foreign to the vehicle's original design. But beggars that turn down charity tempt fate, and the passenger had no wish to sneer at whatever lucky stars he had. Ultimately, it was the heat and humidity of the mid summer that made him scramble immediately toward the vehicle. Upon opening the battle-scarred door, a blast of chill air conditioning surprised the man as it instantly evaporated the sweat of the day.

"All aboard!"

It was an overtly cheerful invitation. Yet the passenger had noted the slightly hard edge to the old man's cheeriness, as if he was almost desperate for good spirit. Despite this, the hitchhiker had fallen in hastily before the driver could change his mind. Not that he looked especially likely to do so. The driver had seemed like he would have stopped to pick up Charlie Manson without a second thought.

The passenger begins to take stock. *What squalor*, he thinks. Old fast food bags lay about the seat and floor like crabs, shuffling from side to side as the mood takes them. A gash in the seat's leather has been repaired with duct tape, but not before some of its foam innards have escaped like those of a shipwreck victim, their body slammed and torn against a rocky coast. The whole cab smells – *reeks*, thinks the passenger – of a creeping mold and stale cigarillo smoke. Sticky bursts of AM tones perk up the dull rumbling rhythm of the engine, the volume turned down just low enough so that the truck's driver can hear himself speak.

He has just been relating to his lone passenger about how he reckons the Old Girl might be an International. It's hard to tell though, because any sort of distinguishing characteristics have long since been swapped out with junk parts. The FORD emblazoned on the battered blue tailgate does not seem like convincing evidence either. The driver had been hard up for cash when he bought her ("when ain't I?"), and since the Old Girl runs fairly well for all her miles, he couldn't very well find it in him to complain about the way she looks. "It just wouldn't be proper."

The passenger nods in a bland fashion as he stares out the cracked

side window, musing over cracked thoughts. For a time, the radio is the only thing that can be heard. Some piece of ancient Americana rises up ghost-like, intimating to the passenger cares and worries that haven't been embraced for decades. He tries to locate the time period but fails. The ethereal melody appears to him as a eulogy for the dead past.

A gruff voice tears through his meditations: "So you comin' or goin'?"

The passenger's intent gaze out the window is interrupted by a puzzled one as he asks, "Sir?"

"Sir nothin'!" A laugh with the power to frighten bears erupts from the driver's throat. It makes the passenger think of a giant crow, obese and crushing in its bleakness. He feels his flesh burst with goose pimples, although he is unsure whether it is a result of the laugh or the now-deathly cold air of the cab. "You just call me Vinny. And only Vinny. Christian name's Melvin but I never much liked the 'Mel' part."

"Vinny? Alright." The passenger tries to return his attention to the world outside the windows, a world which only moments before was a visceral part of his self. He reflects upon how quickly he has now separated his self from the burning land, and how surprisingly chilled he feels being apart from it. The Old Girl's velocity and the sun's flaming breath causes the wheat outside to pulsate. It becomes an ocean to the passenger. A golden ocean set aflame. His green eyes float among it, tossed about here and there by a line of fence or telephone pole, always resurfacing within its waves.

*Amber waves of grain, he remembers. America, America. God shed his grace for thee...*

"So how long you been hitchin' rides, son? Y'don't look like someone who does this sorta thing all too often. Y'know it can be pretty dangerous..."

"I guess you could call me an old-fashioned drifter. If you want to." As he spoke, he swore he could see his breath, warm and alive, escape into the cab.

"You just bumpin' around then? How was it you were out in the middle of the road? Seems mighty odd... I mean, I know this country right enough, but it can be fairly barren and treacherous unless you know where you're goin'."

"Yeah I'm not sure I do. It kinda feels like the middle of nowhere."

Vinny snorts. A shotgun blast of phlegm and tar-lined lungs. "Well nowhere's always somewhere to somebody. Don't forget there're folks around here who call this place home."

Weighty silence again takes the place of a response. The passenger nods in uncritical agreement and lets the truth of this comment fill up the interior of the Old Girl like helium gas. Soon he feels heady from the intake of it, lost in God's land without a thought to where the trucker is driving. He feels

almost frozen as the blazing brilliancy of the outside world crescendos, the truck turning off the highway.

Vinny hums along to a crackling, slowly jangling folk tune, the steel guitars crying in a way that no human voice can truly emulate, although the singer tries. Vinny's hum moves with the guitars, taking up their pitch with relative ease, sighing with barely-concealed sorrow. His voice becomes the song's anguish itself. The passenger observes how the deep furrowed lines of his face are formed in a jutting way that remind him of a rocky outcropping. Shadows hide themselves within the crevices of skin. Pockmarked features take on a darkness the passenger cannot believe he did not notice before. The cheerful mask he had first glanced at is replaced by glittering eyes that have seen gruesome things. It is at this point that the passenger realizes he can't see any of the driver's breath as he does with his own.

The Old Girl rumbles to a crunching stop.

The passenger is abruptly reminded of something he has not felt for years. There is an emotion welling up from deep inside him. Some fluttery something is attacking his chest, the space surrounding it getting tighter and tighter. The man realizes it is fear.

"Where are we?" he asks, and he notices how the sudden anxiety in his voice causes him to stutter. The blood pumping through his heart quickens, and a vein on his forehead starts to jump spasmodically. "Who are you?"

The driver turns to him, and the passenger feels his heart's rhythm falter entirely. Vinny smiles a grin of scum-covered teeth, and all cheer melts from his persona. As he pulls out a dirty Bowie knife from its sheath, he growls, "You've finally arrived, drifter. This is the end of the road."

Later, after he had done with the grisly business, Vinny reflected. The odd thing to him about the green-eyed man was that even though he had screamed in terror as the knife was thrust into his body, he made no attempt to escape it. He just sat there as his insides were carved out.

"Guess you gotta respect it. But then no decision is a decision same as the rest."

Vinny and the Old Girl rumbled on down the road.

*Self-Portrait*



by Kimberly Lawrence

# *She Lied to You*

by Erik Cummings

Three gunshots and the world screamed and ran. Another two, but Sandra's hands clamped over her ears, so they were muffled and. A sheet of molten metal shivered in her stomach, brought on by anxiety to partner with the tinny ringing in her ears. Sandra curled into a ball. She hummed to herself. Tunelessly at first. Then she thought of a song.

She peeked up. Everyone was either running or hiding. Except for those shot. Rolling to her hands and knees, she crawled along, humming "We'll Meet Again." Vera Lynn floated in her mind, an encouraging smile broadcasting teeth of white and rich notes from accompanying piano setting a steady tempo.

Then Queen appeared, Lynn stricken with laryngitis. *Is this real life? Is this only fantasy?* Her nylons ran by the first few feet, but still she crept on. *Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality.* Her hair had worked itself from the tentative bun and shaded her face. *Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see.* Dragging through the mud, her handbag then scraped over the asphalt. *I'm just a poor-*

Sandra collapsed behind a car a hundred feet from the scene. As she leaned back against the snow studs of the 1985 Mercedes Benz, she took off her glasses and wiped her eyes with her wrist, hands filthy. She forgot the next lines. In the distance, the soprano of police sirens intruded on any hope of remembering just then.

Peach-painted nails scratched against pavement as she pushed herself up. Why was she annoyed at the color all of a sudden? It didn't match her skin, she decided. Or maybe it almost did and made her skin appear fake. She stumbled off, catching herself on a forest-green light pole, then a news dispenser, holding her purse strap tighter. Thoughts disappeared again with the decline of ringing in her ears. Silence of mind gave way to the racket of the world again. Ahead, the wail of the approaching police cars increased.

She let them pass by. Enough witnesses at the scene, she figured. They wouldn't need her at all. She straightened, pleased to note her feet regaining surety. She turned the corner and walked into the other half of the world. Street vendors filled hot dog buns with sauerkraut, falafel sandwiches with tabbouleh, and their patrons' ears with the history of their genuine Waterford crystal vases marked \$10.

Two grey-haired ladies in purple head scarves and exploding-yellow

boots knelt by sidewalk flowerboxes. They chattered, blissful in their own little world as Sandra and the rest of Boston bustled around. One dropped her trowel. The clatter caused Sandra to start. She avoided the eyes of a teenaged skateboarder who whooshed past, ears stuffed with iPod and Indie rock, and pushed further into the market crowd.

At last she reached the bottom of her apartment building stairs at the other side of the booth herds. Letting herself in, she nodded to the cleaning lady and her new blue and white flowered apron and stepped the creaking flight to the fourth floor. Along the walls of tan and brown, portraits of grey and white regarded her. In each hollow eye, on every drawn face, tightening all the thin lips was accusation.

Sandra fumbled with the lock and practically slammed open the door to her apartment, the eyes pushing at her mind and pressing at the back of her neck. Before the echoes could reach her, she closed it once inside. A long sigh escaped her. It helped a little.

Her legs carried her to her bed and bent, sitting her down on the crocheted cover her great aunt made for her. *Sleep*, her muscles suggested, particularly her legs and arms, and Sandra agreed. Before lying back, she reached into her purse and removed the dully shining object within. Her fingers slid around the grip in reflex while her other hand released the chamber.

The remaining bullet seemed so alone among the five empty chambers.

# *The Beauty Lost in the World*

by Tyler Tugaw

When we are born, we are given the world. There is no real ceremony to it, it is just placed into our arms and hands, as we are held by those of our mother. For the time being those arms and hands of our parents are our world. We chew on the world, scarring it, using it to our advantage, when we should be taking care of it.

Then, as we age and grow older and more foolish, we are fitted with rose tinted glasses. Glasses that will show us a world that does not exist, a world of bliss and pleasure as we have not a care, and that world we were given rests long forgotten in our pocket, next to the lint and loose change.

Older, and none the wiser, blinders are added to those rose tinted glasses that are now held together with tape from years of careless behavior. Blinders are needed to hide the world from us, even though we have it hanging from a string, we are too selfish to pay it mind. We are too busy. We are too human.

A few more years go by, and we keep on those rose petal lenses and blinders, and go about our business, but the world is growing too loud. Too loud not to take notice of. So, we put it on a shelf. One high out of reach of other people, because we are still selfish and still human. Then, we put in a pair of ear plugs and go on about our lives, because that is all that concerns us.

It is not till our bones are dusty, our heart weak, and our minds soft. It is not until our eyes are cloudy with age, and our ears have been overworked that we rediscover what we put on the shelf all those years back. No longer are rose tinted lenses needed, blinders, and ear plugs. We are old and forgotten ourselves.

We blow the dust off, gaze hard through prescription glasses, and we listen intently through ears aided by technology. The world, once again held within our hands, is glowing. It is wonderful. And all those trivial aspects of life that were important in the past are forgotten as your stare into true beauty. A beauty you have longed for, a beauty you must share and explore.

*Colors of Fall*



by Michelle McIlvoy

# *Wisdom's Children*

by Lori Taylor

Listen children with your two ears,  
your gibbering tongue silenced!  
The Almighty Giver of Knowledge  
has only one mouth bestowed upon you.  
Steadfast is the Supreme Teachers reasoning;  
food feeder silence your feast!

May wisdom from my tale take  
of how the squabbling squandering siblings,  
Wisdom's errant children,  
their power corrupted, reason exploited.  
We have their legend learned  
through their folly we have heard  
How their pompous demeanor  
deprived daughters and sons of mother earth,  
Their precious life treasure stolen.

Proud and strong, flexing mighty muscles,  
Logic likened himself a deity  
Determining he was the better man,  
His pretentious vanity only matched  
By Creativity's certainty in her prowess.  
She preened her feathers, prancing,  
A muse and magician, the sky she painted,  
her bright colors a sharp contrast  
To Logic's black and white rigidity.  
For him there were only absolutes,  
As a scholar of numbers and calculations  
no compromises were allowed.  
With each accomplishment, and hero's deed,

their self-importance grew  
Their inflated heads the universe crowded  
until the inevitable clash began.

Whilst they bickered and bellowed  
for the highest honor competed,  
Each attempting to the other outmatch  
the Dream Devourer advantage grasped.  
Within these hallowed walls  
The Enemy crawled and lurked  
The Slithering Serpent coiled to strike  
Ignorance- its webs of soothing charms spin  
As deceit from his two-pronged tongue drips.  
In his claws clutched  
Humanity's life blood and soul  
The Scales of Peace  
Precious Harmony stolen.

Death's doom over the highlands hovered  
murmurs of murder in the air whispered  
Evil's war weapons of destruction revealed  
Chaos and gibberish through the air ravage  
And Fate's flames flourished  
in Despair's dastardly claws.  
Humanity like sheep herded  
into the slammer cage of slaughter  
Dreams that day died.

Yet a light from clouds so dark blinded  
a beacon of hope in storm tossed seas  
Wisdom's fair form ascending  
the sacred text her hands holding  
Sharp-eyed owl, her wings she spread  
The Shield of Learning the children guarded

Whilst Wisdom's melody commanded,  
Creativity and Logic reprimanded.  
In her tempered talons of Justice  
her children Wisdom clutched  
To the highest cliff climbing,  
Evil's devastation the children viewed.  
Humanity's heaven was in havoc  
and Ignorance's poison the garden infected.  
Flowers of thought choked with weeds  
to ash and dust crumbling,  
Smoke and flame the air filled;  
without Harmony, Eden is no more.  
The book of learning opened  
and the Teacher's lesson learned,  
Logic and Creativity their heads bowed  
for their childish behavior shamed.

"What have we done, what can we do?"  
The children in anguish cried.  
Their corruption unveiled and errors laid bare  
like beggars naked and cowering,  
The broken heroes to Wisdom turned,  
and repentance their hearts filled.  
The Wise One her children comforted  
under the protection of her wing;  
With words of council Wisdom instructed,  
"Harmony will renew if together you learn."

Sacred Text the Giver of Knowledge opened,  
before Logic and Creativity placed,  
The first book of songs created  
a composition seraphic and blessed.  
Logic his calculations used  
and Creativity her muse inspired,  
Music to the world was born,

in a peaceful melody, the world sighed  
Ignorance to the dark place banished  
clawing, kicking, in pain writhing,  
Dream Devourer, in chains helplessly trapped,  
when Creativity and Logic together work.  
The sound of song's melody rang true,  
The Scales of Peace restored  
Harmony from the ashes arisen  
like the fire bird Phoenix reborn.

*A la memoria de mi abuelo*  
*("In Memory of My Grandfather")*

by Jacqueline Lopez

En un pedazo de la tierra  
Vive un árbol viejo  
Con las ramas muy fuertes  
Con las hojas muy verdes

Pero eventualmente  
Las hojas se convierte en amarillas  
Y una por una, se caen al suelo  
El árbol que una vez estaba llena de vida  
Ahora parece desnudo y muerto

¿Entonces, que pasa de aquí?  
¿Qué va a ser de él?  
Sus hojas volverá a crecer?  
O sólo lo recordamos a él como lo que solía ser?

Entonces es cuando Dios dice, "No pierda la fe  
Porque todos los que yo he creado nunca mueren  
Ellos continúan vivienda como una parte de la tierra,  
Una parte de mí, y una parte de todos lo que viven"

En un pedazo de la tierra  
Hay un cambio de estación  
Y continúa la vida de un árbol viejo  
Con las ramas todavía fuertes  
Y con las hojas que ahora crecen verdes.

\* "A la memoria de mi abuelo" was written as one of my course composiciones for Maria Lee-López's Spanish 308 class (Intermediate Grammar & Writing) in the fall semester of 2010. This poema was inspired by "Un pedazo de tierra (A Piece of Land)," a cortometraje or short film that we watched in class two weeks following the death of my grandfather. We miss and love you Tatay. \*

*WSU Vancouver the Fog and the Trees*



by Marites Castro

# *Fake*

by Evelyn Feaster

Plastic Faced

Movie Stars

Show Me

That As Long As

I'm Not Me

I'm Perfect.

# *Keeping up Appearances*

By Carly Rogers

Heron and Fifth Lady  
Asks for the time,  
Dragging two tired feet and  
One cardboard sign  
Through Golden Arches.  
I tell her it's two and she nods,  
Pleased, staggers to the counter,  
Dumps her cup of coins.  
The sundae's for me and the nuts is for birds!  
She announces to anyone who cares.  
Nobody does, but she doesn't mind,  
There are real estate issues to settle  
On her way to her seat she stops to grab  
A handful of ketchups and salts (for the road)  
A dozen deeds the size of stamps  
Tumble out of her Ziploc bag.  
She examines each with a jeweler's attention,  
Then sticks them on the map one by one.  
I give her mine and she asks for the time,  
Trading a smile for Baltic and Park.  
I tell her again and ask where she's going.  
Nowhere in particular, she says,  
But my mother raised me to be prompt.

# *Fate*

by Josh Erdahl

The pull into silence awakened him. Still sleep drugged, responses slow, heart languished in the slow morning rhythm. The ticking silence surrounded him, a blanket of intense uncertainty. And the pull. The call, familiar yet each time different. This morning, in the dark the call felt insistent. The import was movement. The momentary repast in the warm comfort of drowsy revel must give way to work.

The call was his life's work.

When he heard it he responded.

There had been a time when the call had been unfamiliar. The pressing necessity of the intangible urge not yet known. Then he almost met untimely death. Yet, even in that meeting, a lesson about himself exploded outward and drove him.

Those early youthful experiences. He wondered at his own black past. He knew that his survival was part of the call now. But that did not stop his reflection.

This dalliance must end.

The call demanded movement today.

Rolling into the darkness, fingers fumble and find the light switch. The flare of yellow light dawns in the early morning. The room once comforting dark is now filled with the brightening electric glow. Clothes, kitchen, food. Coffee. Shoes. Jacket against the rail sharp cold of the rising day.

Into the dark.

His familiar pack mounted faithfully on his back.

The pull; that direction.

Looking into the sky, still dark but clear revealed a lengthening strip of light at the horizon. In the direction he headed the bright figure of a planet hung in the dark. Omen?

As the thought flitted it happened.

The crushing intrusion. His mind filled with a dream vision. The pain of it a water balloon filled at a fire hydrant. Each time he expected his head to explode. The visions so powerful, the images a dream-like and distorted record on the wrinkled grey fold of his brain. Hours of movement compressed into one hyper-tangible crushing flood.

Collapsing to his knees he let the experience drown him. Resisting only made it worse.

The image recorded, he wobbled weak, his form gelatin not yet set. Nausea filled him. Surprise too this time. Nausea was not a good sign. Not good at all. The last time he had been nauseous things had not gone well.

Surprising him further, when he tried to stand he simply collapsed to the ground.

Spinning stars above danced.

Strange. This was new.

Frighteningly new.

His body drained of heat. The earth leeched him of warmth.

And the vision he had just received played in his mind, the theatre screen filled with the picture book images scrolling from one event to the next. He saw each act, each meaningful, purposeful second. Here was the revelation.

He saw his figure stand up from the dark ground and move forward. He walked to the bus stop. Got on the bus. Went to the store. On and on. It played, a moment of mind time replaying his whole day. The call showing him the purpose of his movement. He knew everything that would happen to him today. As with each day of his life.

He woke every day pulled by this curse. This blessing. He saw each and every second of his existence drawn out in explicit detail. It had to be a blessing. Otherwise his life would be hell. Knowing every action before it ever happened. Knowing and unable to do anything to change it.

Those dark times. Yes.

He remembered the fight.

But today. Now. He knew better. He accepted the call.

He accepted his life.

But today. Today was much different.

It dawned in his mind.

During the playback, the absorption, he had seen it. Something completely different.

Something wonderfully unfamiliar.

The day ended much differently than other days.

Usually his film ended with him crawling into bed.

Today in his vision he saw himself die.

He died.

And he smiled.

# *Dispatched*

by John Wolf

Rockford Police Department  
20043 S Main Street  
Rockford, IN  
21 January 2010

To: Officer Jacobs, Internal Affairs Division

From: Lieutenant Porter, Rockford Police Department

Subject: 1-2 November 2009

This memo is in regards to File 1088-N1-2. As no other officer or department has been able to make headway in the investigation of said incident, I have been ordered to turn over what findings exist to internal affairs.

All formalities aside, I must say that no one in the Rockford department is happy to turn this matter over to your division. However, if there is some possibility of any light being shed on what happened that night I am more than willing to turn over the investigation to you. They were my men, despite what other theories exist around this case I can vouch for my men. You may not know how that is given your position, but I know that whatever happened that night was no case of corruption or runaways. A lot of families are asking questions. Do what you have to, and make of it what you will.

#### Attachments:

One standard issue service pistol licensed to Sergeant Hardy of the Rockford Police Department, fired three times. Three lead cartridges removed from the window of Sergeant Hardy's patrol car, cartridges from above weapon. One radio call sheet dated November 1 to November 2.

Lieutenant Porter

Radio Call Transcript Sheet  
Rockford Police Department  
Transcriptionist: Melanie Boles

*Sergeant Ray Hardy, Rockford Police Department, 23:28 November 1:* Dispatch this is X-ray five, eleven fifty-four parked on Mill and Second. Over.

*Dispatch Officer Harriet Turner:* Come back on that unit five, you say eleven fifty-four? Over.

*Sergeant Hardy:* Affirmative. Plates...uh...no plates. Model Ford truck, sixty-five Mercury, color yellow. No sign of driver. Over.

*Dispatch:* Confirmed Unit five.

*Officer Kenneth Alder, Rockford Police Department:* Unit five, Henry two here. Are you in need of assistance? Over.

*Sergeant Hardy:* Negative on that Unit two. Thanks anyway.

*Dispatch:* Awaiting report Unit five.

*Dispatch Officer Harriet Turner, Rockford Police Department, 23:34 November 1:* Unit five come in. Over. (Delay) Unit five, respond. Over. (Delay) X-ray five, this is Dispatch. You have not checked in with your Code four. Over. (Delay)

*Lieutenant Jack Porter, Rockford Police Department:* This is Adam one. Dispatch confirm, X-ray Hardy has not called in with his Code four? Over.

*Dispatch:* Affirmative Adam one.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Henry two? Over.

*Officer Alder:* Henry two here, what's the status on X-ray five's eleven fifty-four? Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Eleven fifty-four was X-ray's last call; X-ray has not called in his Code four. Henry two, rendezvous at...give me that street again Dispatch? Over.

*Dispatch:* Mill and Second, Adam one.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Henry two, rendezvous at Mill and Second, proceed with caution. Radio alert upon arrival. Over.

*Officer Alder:* Affirmative, Henry two out.

*Officer Kenneth Alder, Rockford Police Department 23:37 November 1:* Adam one, Henry two on site. Come in. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Henry two-

*Officer Alder:* Got you on visual.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Alright. Dispatch this is Adam one, X-ray five's vehicle is in sight. Lights on, no sign of that Mercury. Anything on your end? Over.

*Dispatch:* Negative on that Adam one. No units report seeing a Yellow sixty-five Ford Mercury. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Alright, Henry two and I are going to check the area. Report back with the next Code four. Over.

*Dispatch:* Understood Adam one.

*Officer Kenneth Alder, Rockford Police Department 23:43 November 1:* Dispatch, Dispatch! This is Alder-. Henry two. We need assistance-

*Lieutenant Porter:* Steady Henry two. Dispatch, Adam one. We have a possible officer down, repeat officer down. A ten-ten-eight. Definitely shots fired, X-ray five's car has taken three rounds in the windshield. Put out an all points bulletin on that Mercury.

*Officer Alder (off radio):* Jesus of Nazareth, Porter it's a dead dog. It's (Words indistinguishable)

*Lieutenant Porter:* -that shit. Dispatch, we also have an eleven-twelve. Looks like it's been cut with a knife, add to APB. Suspect driver of Ford Mercury presumed armed and dangerous. Over.

*Dispatch:* Understood Adam one. Highway authorities notified. Over.

*Officer Kenneth Alder, Rockford Police Department 23:51 November 1:* Dispatch, Alder-Henry two here. Any word on Hardy?

*Lieutenant Porter:* X-ray five, Henry two. If there had been word we would have gotten it.

*Dispatch:* Do have something there Adam one, got a call on an eleven seven out by the Tobolski residence at fifteen eleven three Crest Drive. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Sighting of Mercury? Over?

*Dispatch:* Negative Adam one, but Crest isn't far from Mill. Mrs. Tobolski reported something in her rabbit hutch. Over.

*Officer Alder:* Adam one, I can be there in less than five. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Dispatch what's the ETA on the state help? Over.

*Dispatch:* State help says...ten more to secure a net on the highways. APB on Mercury out, no confirmed reports. ETA fifteen minutes.

*Officer Alder:* I'm almost there Adam one. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Keep your finger off the CB Henry two. Dispatch, get back on any new reports on our Mercury. Henry two, keep going to the Tobolskis. Radio when you arrive. Over.

*Officer Alder:* Understood. Henry two out.

*Officer Kenneth Alder, Rockford Police Department 23:55 November 1:* Dispatch! Dispatch! Eleven seventy-one! Tobolski residence is on fire, repeat Tobolski residence on fire. Holy shit!

*Dispatch:* Alder calm down, acknowledge. Tobolski residence at fifteen eleven three Crest Drive is on fire. Firefighters are already called. Await-

*Officer Alder:* See him, see him!

*Dispatch:* See who Alder? Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Hold Henry two! Hold Alder!

*Officer Alder:* He's making off for the back yard, it's him I know it!

*Lieutenant Porter:* Alder! Do not pursue! Dispatch, ETA on scene one, two minutes. Where are the fire trucks? Where is my state help?

*Dispatch:* Henry two come back. Over. Alder come back! Adam one I have no report from Henry two. State help on their way. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Arriving on scene. Residence still on fire, Christ almighty.

*Dispatch:* Come back on that Adam one?

*Lieutenant Porter:* Henry two is gone. Repeat, Alder is missing. Following!

*Dispatch:* Affirmative Adam one! Henry two come in!

*Officer Alder:* Lieutenant, come in. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Alder, where are you? Speak up. Over.

*Officer Alder:* I got to stay quiet, sir. I don't know where I am, somewhere behind the Tobolski place. I got that Mercury. Over.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Say again, Alder. The Yellow Ford?

*Officer Alder:* Yeah, parked back on the road past the Tobolski place. Hey, that's uh, Upas right?

*Lieutenant Porter:* Correct. Alder stay low, fire departments putting out the house, stay low and quiet. State and local units on our-

*Officer Alder:* Oh shit! (Static) (Words indistinguishable)

*Lieutenant Porter:* Alder! All units respond to South Upas Street! We have an officer down!

*Lieutenant Porter, Rockford Police Department 24:15 November 1:* Dispatch, this is Adam one. Oh Jesus, Harriet, Alder's down. Officer, officer down. Something behind the house, in the woods, big swipe out of his chest. Like the dog. Bleeding. Paramedics on scene, house is still burning down. No sign of the Tobolskis. Over. (Delay) Harriet, over. (Delay) Harriet, Dispatch,

come in. Over.

*Male Voice:* -so out of hand. So out of hand.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Who is this? Identify yourself! Where's Harriet?

*Male Voice:* Oh, she's with the rest now. It's a shame really, it being my fault and all. But (Static) –the Devil's leash.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Harriet, I'm on my way! Backup, I repeat backup, all available units in the area converge on Rockford Police Department Headquarters. Fifteenth and Main. Intruder armed and dangerous!

*Male Voice:* I wish I could tell you sorry, I know your kind is partial to such things. I won't though, nope never will. Too much of a fall to want to apologize anymore. I'll admit it though, never should have let the hell bitch out of the truck like I did. You have no idea how grating her wailing can get though. Then she wants a bite to eat, and then she wants this and that. Damn nuisance sometimes.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Whoever you are, you'd be better off giving up my officers and coming clean. Now.

*Male Voice:* One way minds your kind. (Laughter) Well, I bet you'd just love to meet me face to face. My hell bitch too I reckon, but we got to get moving on now.

*Lieutenant Porter:* Wait!

*Male Voice:* Don't try nothing else, boy. Human suffering and hollering and pleading stopped doing any kind of good years ago. You hardly care much for it yourself.

Call report note, supplemental: Unknown male voice still unidentified, radio frequency unknown/non-existent.

# *Great Grandma's Funeral*

by Nick Ferderer

On evenings preceded by daytime downpour  
he sips chardonnay from cheap crystal glasses,  
to wet lashes with intuitive drizzle,  
three liberal tips later the dams topple,  
familial reality recedes further  
into familiar chameleon colored recesses.

Heroic hardbacks by modern mystics  
prime ducts, dried early in youth,  
his Baby Boom mother meant well, but  
learning to read in war torn Silence is gone,  
grandpa grew blind with gunmetal  
spectacles, a Great creation left nearsighted.

Hipster songs eulogize urn ashes  
bought and sold in bone-dry wind,  
lyrics Echo between oversize headphones,  
lucid brain waves wash fate  
beyond flaxen locked shores, safe  
until rosy red stars dilate back to black hole pupils.

An inherited straight-back slouch,  
every corner couch a sturdy throne,  
his floor lamp halo with hollow light overhead  
cast upon dogface subjects bound and  
discarded within whisper request range,  
verbal language forgiven by blue eyes.

# *The Space Between Us*



by Rup Brar

# Mermaid

by Jessica Gipe

A little girl of six sat quietly in the backseat of her father's old Taurus: chin resting on her palm, and elbow resting on the window seal. Her usual chatter had ceased as she watched the cars whiz by in streams of shimmering reds, dull greens and the occasional rusty yellow. She twirled a limp golden curl in her finger, flattened by the jungle gyms and swing sets of the day. The sun had slowly moved in the direction of her gaze, and she squinted her eyes, and scrunched up her nose until her purple rimmed glasses were almost parallel with her eyebrows.

Familiar words melodically streamed from the front speakers "*...she's a good girl. Loves her mamma. Loves Jesus and America too...*" as she listened to her dad's hands slowly tap the steering wheel to the beat; she couldn't help but realize that it was a marvelous hour to daydream. She had always been rather attentive to detail. Often, when her mother was trying to come up with the name of that actress, that played in that movie, with that guy from "Sleepless in Seattle," she would roll her eyes and reluctantly answer, "Daryl Hannah." As her mother looked at her in astonishment. She picked at the little corner of her pale pink nail polish that was beginning to lift and peel. There was a grey hair on her dad's head that was nestled in the sandy brown that he insisted was, "dark blonde." Who was he fooling? It was brown.

"*She's a good girl, crazy 'bout Elvis...*" She really did love horses. There was that white one with grey spots that her auntie let her ride. The smell of manure wafted her nose as the breeze swiftly blew and the golden sun warmed her cheeks. Her pig-tails would bounce as the white horse trotted. Rat-a-tat-rat-a-tat. Sometimes on Sundays, mommy and daddy would take her and her younger sisters to the carousal at the mall. Daddy would hand the little girl a golden token to give to the weathered woman at the gate. The woman would pause, look around as if at any moment a heard of snotty screaming children would stampede towards the gate—and reluctantly take her token. The little girl would frantically run to find the white horse with the wild mane, and purple and green jeweled flowers. That was her horse—she was sure of it.

Her dad ran his fingers through his hair and patted the top of his head the way he always did. It amazed her that his hair always managed to lie in the same direction. The shoulder-grazing, messy waves of blonde that flowed from her head were always sticking out this way or that. And right smack in

the middle of her forehead was an unpleasant cowlick— there was just no combing that thing.

The song played on. She cracked her window. The crisp wind swirled through the car, blowing a gum wrapper and crumpled teddy-bear sticker into the front seat.

“Jessica,” her dad bellowed, stressing the “i” in her name as an “e” like he always did. The little girl sighed and rolled up her window.

*“...I’m a bad boy cuz I don’t even miss her. I’m a bad boy for breaking her heart.”* The girl had always wondered what the man in the song had done to be such a bad boy. If he realized that he was such a bad boy, then why didn’t he just say sorry to the girl? Why write such a sad song instead? The little girl wondered if a boy would ever break her heart.

The car gently thumped as it began rolling over the big green bridge. Resuming her gaze out the window, she stared at the chartreuse waters beneath the bridge. The sun glittered off the surface of the water—the most beautiful image in nature her young eyes had beheld. Wonderful and mysterious things must lurk underneath that sheet of diamonds. As sure as she knew what was beyond the clouds, she knew there must be something under that water. But just to be really sure...

“Daddy?”

“What Jessie?” Her father answered while turning down the radio. She took a deep breath—contemplating the best way to phrase her question.

“Do mermaids live in that water?” she finally blurted out. Her father smiled at her through the rear-view mirror. He cocked his head to side, and glanced out the window.

“I don’t think so sweetie.” The little girl looked down at her Salt-Water sandals; she noticed a little smudge of dirt on her big toe. She wiggled it. Her dad knew the way home from Grandma’s, he knew how to tinker around in the hood of a car until it stopped running funny, and he knew how to tell time on a clock with no numbers. Something sank inside her chest. She slid her elbow off of the window and let her hand fall into her lap.

Something dawned on her. She couldn’t understand why it hadn’t occurred to her before.

“Daddy!”

“What honey?”

“...that’s freshwater!” she shouted. Her dad looked at her in the rear-view mirror with a puzzled expression on his face.

Yup. That’s the Columbia,” he answered. She slid her elbow back up on the window seal and rested her chin in her palm. Smiling, and staring intently out the window she whispered,

“They need saltwater.”

# *Smear*

by Jenelle Rose

Mirror, mirror, on the wall  
Brought a garage sale  
Exactly like the one used  
By the evil stepmother  
Am I the fairest?  
I'll settle for fair.  
Passable?  
Visually inoffensive?

A talking mirror  
Someone's grandmother's  
Priced at ten  
Sold for seven  
Not to the antique shop  
Collecting dust until appreciated  
By a dusty owner  
Or to the dump  
To rot in oblivion  
No.  
Home with a college student  
To be admired  
Or loathed  
New furniture for a new life  
It's so gaudy  
All gold and white  
But a perfect oval  
Only one dark spot  
A flaw on the glass  
I can't clean away

# *Falling*



by Marriah Buhman

# *Cheat*

by Sherri Hoffman

Amanda saw him first, on the cramped stage like he had never left. His voice was wide and grainy like she remembered. In the middle of a bridge, he looked up, dropped a chord. The guitar swung out of his embrace.

“Oh, I need a drink,” he said. A woman up front laughed. He did his best Elvis. “*Thankyouverymuch.*” The swagger was familiar after all these years. Ten? He circled a finger in the air at the bartender. Canned music flipped on overhead. Janis Joplin.

Amanda’s voice was thin. “Clement.”

Gray streaked his long hair. He wore wire-rimmed glasses, but his mouth was that same lopsided smirk.

“Green-eyed lady. Lovely lady,” he said. “Where have you been?”

“Been married.”

The waitress slid a beer towards Amanda. “Three dollars.”

Clement touched Amanda’s fingers to his lips. “I’ll get it. Darcy, honey. Bring me a vodka. Neat.” The thick lids of his eyes were half-closed. Fine lines splayed out from the corners.

Amanda fumbled in her purse for the pack of Marlboros bought from the machine by the door where she’d almost convinced herself it didn’t mean anything. As if she’d had a good reason to be there that simply escaped her.

Clement gave her a light. His thick, acrylic fingernails were yellow, worn smooth along the tips where he picked his guitar. He lit his own cigarette.

“Filters,” Amanda said. “How health conscious.”

“Nine out of ten smokers who try Camels prefer women.”

“Says the connoisseur.”

“I have standards.” His eyes were unwavering.

Amanda sipped her beer.

“But where to start?” he said. “Not from the beginning. Tell me about being married.”

The ring flashed on her left hand.

“Is it good?” he said.

“What constitutes ‘good?’”

His smile widened, his eyes dark slits. “Ah.”

“You’re a cad,” she said.

“How Victorian of you to say so. All pomp and sexual indiscretion.”

“Right up your alley. Or down it. Exactly why we didn’t stay together

before.”

He breathed in a wisp of smoke behind the curl of his lip. “You left me,” he said.

The tabletop was smooth dark wood. Her finger traced the grain. The tightness in her throat was unexpected. And the nervous flutter low in her belly.

They had worked in the same university lab, traded verbal jousts, rising innuendos, a secret brushing up in the hallway, his hands roaming into her blouse pulled loose.

“I didn’t just leave, you know. I came here to say goodbye. You were singing.”

“You left before the last set.”

She stamped out her cigarette. “Dammit,” she said. “You don’t have to make this so hard. I wanted to say I’m sorry.”

The waitress brought his drink. Clement held out a creased bill.

“Here, sweetness. This is for you. Put the drinks on my tab.” He nodded after her short skirt. “She’s new.”

“They’re all new,” Amanda said.

His face was thicker across the jaw. The gray was new, but she recalled how the long curls fell into her face when he moved over her in his bed. The flutter somersaulted into something warmer.

“Kids?” he said.

“Me? Two.” She sat straight to lengthen the soft bulges over her belt.

“Two! Good lord.”

“They’re good. It’s good. Girls. My mother watches them.” A glance at her watch. “I’m back in school. My job changed. My husband. . . .” Heat spread in her face. “It just seemed like the right time. To come back.”

He finished his drink. “Why are you here.” It was not a question.

Amanda marveled at the rising buoyancy in her head. From the beer, or Clement’s closeness. At her own daring. She did not cheat. Not even when her husband had. She had tried to leave. Wrote a note, but took it back from the bed pillows before he found it. Twice.

“I was in the neighborhood,” she said.

Clement tapped the matchbook with the long nail of his index finger. Dylan’s *Tired Horses* overhead. He leaned forward, kissed her cheek.

“Wait for me,” he said. “After the last set.”

She breathed him in, musk of hair and skin, the cigarettes he smoked. A hint of patchouli.

A group of students took up the long table by the wall. Their chatter ticked and spun around her. They ordered hot wings and a pitcher of dark beer. A girl in a denim jacket with fur trim sat at the end and ate beer nuts.

Beer nuts. Her husband's favorite. He would be tipped back in the La-Z-Boy, the wide-screen TV too loud. He had taken down all her bookshelves for the home theater system, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *Fear Factor* in surround sound.

Clement's guitar thumped through the smoky haze. Amanda doodled on her cocktail napkin, black ink leaves and vines curling off the edges.

The ponytailed waitress wiped the long table, collected some sticky change. "Can I get you anything else?"

Amanda shook her head. "No. Thanks. How long you been working here?"

"It's that apparent, huh?"

"Oh, no," Amanda said. "Clement said something."

"Clement. He's kind of creepy." She straightened, blushed. "Sorry. I didn't mean it like that."

Amanda smiled. "It's okay. I suppose he's a little creepy."

The waitress laughed and lifted the tray of dishes. "I'll bring you another beer. He's got a few more to go." The kitchen doors clacked behind her like bones.

Clement carried his guitar to her table. "I didn't know what to expect," he said. "Like a re-run movie. Or baby, you can drive my car."

"God. You're like walking lyrics."

"I'm parked out front."

Clement put the guitar in the trunk. The girls would be asleep. In the morning, her mother would make them waffles. Her car was parked down the block. She could be home in an hour. Take back the note on her husband's pillow.

"Wait," Clement said. "The lock's jammed." He slid behind the wheel. The door swung open on her side.

She stepped down off the curb.

*Mask*



by Jackie Wilushewski

# *Coffin Nail*

by Alexandra Chaudoin

I hear sirens  
    off in the distance;  
        I'm here on the corner.  
    I pulled out  
a long, paper message  
    from a carton  
        with a caution  
        from a faceless surgeon.  
    I light  
the only light  
    to bring her out-  
        pluming hair curtaining  
            her grave gaze-  
        the shadow of my tutelary angel.  
    She slid out,  
    face away from me,  
a bitten apple in her grip,  
    a sickle pressed to her breast;  
        and she was murmuring up a dirge.  
        Parts of her  
        were up in smoke,  
scattered and hackneyed,  
    like the severed Future.  
        Like me,  
        she lives life  
    breath by interrupted breath-  
coughing breaks the ice  
    between us-  
        but she takes my breath away.

Slowly, but surely,  
while her wispy lips  
drag on my heart,  
my feet will rise up and  
trail her into the stricken sky;  
and she'll sing her empty hymn for me,  
gazing into my hollow eyes.

# *Haul Yourself Onward*

by Erik Cummings

Turn the dial on the toaster just so. Don't settle for punching the lever down twice because you have to dash out in five minutes. Open the closet and take out your Philadelphia Eagles jacket. Put it over your button-up and tie. Graze your fingers on the tie with flying Pelican before zipping. Picture the half-amused, half-mischievous expression on Lori's face when she gave it to you. Hate the dumb bird tie. Love the tie-giver because she cried and was so human when you gave her the ring. Wear the tie because you love her so much.

Wear the ring to remember she is gone.

Break out of the memory paralysis by the sound of the toaster giving birth. Curl numb fingers around the edge of the crust and arrange the toast to receive jam. Taste strawberries and sugar and savory wheat. Decide that a piece of white bread toast might be nice once in awhile. Forget to pour yourself coffee and pull a face as you drink cream and sugar.

Grab your briefcase. Exit. Close door. Lock door. Turn and smile at the janitor. Ask about his kids. Consider his invitation to dine with his family tonight. Surprise yourself by accepting. Head down the hallway toward the stairs.

Catch the door at the bottom. Make sure it closes quietly. Wince at the memory of the cold look Ms. Hughes gave you the last time it slammed. Step out of the thin glass doors. Feel the smell of the city stomp up your nostrils and burn in a wash of cigarette fumes, hot dogs with sweet onion, and the damp odor of a passing Alsatian, soaked with his owner in the earlier rain. Half-snickering when you catch a phrase of conversation between two passing joggers. Take it out of context and build upon it in your mind while your hand rises to catch a taxi. Almost share the story with the cabby after you slam the door and give him the address. Decide to save it for Lori.

Curse.

Stare out the window. Reply noncommittally to the cabby's excitement over the latest Celtic-reggae group. Wonder how bagpipes and steel drums sound together. Imagine. Hide your smile at the thought of Mel Gibson giving the Braveheart speech in a Jamaican accent. Tell that to the cabby. Share a good chuckle for a few seconds, then a full laugh from him as the complete hilarity hits, and smile at his guffaw. Feel a bit better.

Arrive, pay, and get out. Push the polished brass to open the oak door

into City Hall. Listen as your footsteps clack, almost lost in the hubbub of the lobby. Apologize as the toe of your shoe catches the heel of another. Accept the clap on the shoulder from the good-natured victim. Feel nervous. Undo the left clasp on the briefcase as you approach the main reception desk. Smile at the secretary. Unclasp the second latch and pull out the stapled forms and long list of signatures. Hesitate before handing them to her.

Eye the name at the top of the list. Wish again she stood beside you at that moment. Grit your teeth. Feel small flames prick at your eyes. Shove your glasses higher on the bridge of your nose to cover wiping away the pre-tears. Hand over the papers. Watch as her name leaves with the receptionist.

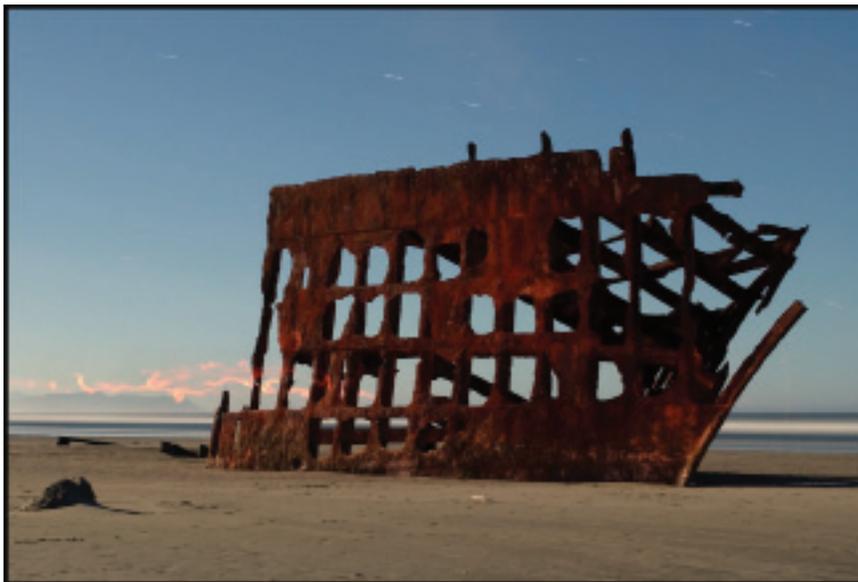
Watch as another piece of Lori disappears.

# *Long Beach*

by Josh Erdahl

Seagulls cry as the sun drowns in crashing purpled waves. Damp sand sucks at my chilled grey feet. Kelp, salty and fetid lies along the surf line, dead and rotting. Sand flies pepper my ankles and the dogs bark on and on. Marching lines of clouds absorb the last of the day, soaking up the blood as it drains in the west. The breeze lined with fine grey sand batters my windbreaker and pelts the beach drawing tumbling scraps of flotsam along. My nose, cold and rimmed draws no warming breaths, as my mind remembers nothing of the living.

# *Regrets*



by Tim Zielke

*And now a word from our sponsors...*

by James P. Hays

Everything you want, nothing you don't,  
Bringing good things to life.  
Think different.

Between love and madness lies obsession.  
Taste it again for the first time.  
Everything you want, nothing you don't.

What's in your wallet? Are you in good hands?  
Can you hear me now? Don't you wish everybody did?  
Do you think differently?

A diamond is forever in the Citi that never sleeps.  
Wear it and be wonderful.  
Everything you want, nothing you don't.

Got milk? How do you spell relief?  
Where do you want to go today? Where's the beef?  
Are you thinking differently?

It's not just a job. It's an adventure.  
It's everywhere you want to be.  
Everything you want, nothing you don't.  
Can you think differently?

# *Regal Hawk*



by Jake Kleinschmidt

