



Janus

2005-2006



*The Literary Journal of
Westminster College
Fulton, Mo*

Cover Photo
"Bird in Flight" by Kelly Pittman

Janus

2005-2006



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Entry Winners

2005-2006



Prose

1st Place

“Killing Game” by Matthew Loudon

2nd Place

“Model of Humanity” by Ashley B. Nelson

3rd Place

“The Story” by Kristin Crowe

Poetry

1st Place

“A Love Song of My Own” by Amy Barclay

2nd Place

“A House on Sand” by Travis Figg

3rd Place

“Wonderland” by Kati Nilges

Graphics

1st Place

“Bedouin Shabab” by Danielle Becknell

2nd Place

“New Orleans Grave” by Liz Blood

3rd Place

“Venetian Canal” by Colin Kerr



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Twentieth Hymn of the Book of Treason



Travis Figg



Have you ever felt like you didn't belong here? I have, and there are times I've considered leaving. There's a hint of an oasis in the desert if I look hard enough in between the lines, but I am not so sure it's not just my own face staring back at me through a mirror, like water you can't see through. The air is so thick it's hard to breathe, with everything rushing past and dragging you along, and there are no sure rocks to cling to. Some people say dive in, some people say fight the current, some people say stop wasting your breath talking.

The beginning of a conversation is always awkward, and by beginning I mean before anything is said. The first words are the easiest once they come out, but it gets harder from there. Some people talk like music if you listen closely, some people talk like rain; if you can speak the language of the wind you'll never go hungry. Language is a vehicle for something higher, you can say just as much with a lingering look, sometimes words get in the way. The true poet is the master of silence. People are afraid of silence, I'm afraid of people, maybe that explains something.

The light from the lamp posts illuminates the wetness of the pavement as I walk down the street, hands stuffed into my pockets holding a secret. Homo Religioso means everyone has their own Djinni, if you don't believe me look at the houses and consider the fraternal mythos. In the beginning were the Greeks, and we upheld the letters. I'm laughing now, in case you didn't notice.

Make a wish, the stars are waiting. Perhaps it's true what they say that everything you desire will come true one day, but the stars are so distant it takes a very long time to

Travis Figg

get there and even longer to come back. Everything comes back around again, little children become old men. If I find happiness in my latter years I do not think I will be too much better served than if I never do at all, but that is the lesson of Abraham I think, and Abraham is better than I.

Where do you find that shining light? If I wave a lantern beneath the moon you'll think I've lost my way, but I know a road lit with emerald flame. See the smoke rise from the fire like a song, hands thumping against your knees, add your voice and keep the beat. How long before the sparks reach heaven and can they carry a wish? If they can then this is mine, to live so bold and thusly die. This will be known by the wise and also the reasoned, another note in desperate chimes rings out against the season.



"Bedouin Shabab" by Danielle Becknell
1st Place Graphics Winner

Past, Present, Future



Alex Myers



I can't recount
How long ago
I lost the peace
And settled for the hell
That I grapple with now
The claws that rip apart
My insides and the venomous worry
That constricts my body.
How do you cool down from a cold sweat?
Or do you warm up?
Wandering around in the dark
Feeling the walls for the knob
Of the doorway that could take me
From this mess into an atmosphere
Filled with clarity where illusions
Are fleeting and reality
is sobering
a moment of unadulterated consciousness
could prove overwhelming to a mind
gagging on a black cotton of madness
swallowed some time ago
back when nonsense was prescribed
but available over the counter
my head clouds with wander as I sit
watching the glowing box and surrender all
consciousness to its words and pictures
how well it envelopes the mind
with its irrelevancy
without it, there would be nothing to print
nothing to talk about it
am I watching it or is it watching me

Alex Myers

who created who?
Does it mirror me or do I mirror it?
No answer exists to this query
So its no wonder at all
Why my head feels leached of its adequacy.
Think of where we started then wonder where we are going.
We're wrapped up in ourselves-so much so we'll soon
Suffocate.
Our elitism is undeserved.
We will be outlasted.
Think of where we are now-where were we going?
Are we so far off the path that we've lost ourselves?
We've starved our conscience to where its become
superfluous
Like our appendix or our tail bone
If it could be physically removed, we'd have done it a long
time ago.
All things must end.



"Ascent" by Brian Dye

Quietus



Brad Dowling



She could never feel alone with all the voices in her head
Enchanted now by those unseen, we all tremble, misled
I will not listen for your whispered last breath
As you're ravaged and raped of peace and sweet death

So softly rest your head, please don't open your eyes
I don't want you to see what's become of our lives
I can feel you as you scream, though you make not a sound
Through sweet, sweet stillness of a heart that is broken and bound

And true as truth in life can be
Time's impatiently waiting
With angels ripping off their wings
Again

We're wrought with sin, not feeling all the prayers we send
Just touch me and I'll trust you again
We can make it together
With starlit eyes, I'm yours and you're mine, but not for long
I know our hands will soon grow cold
Forever and ever



The Ninja-Pirate Convention



Amy Barclay



There is a place somewhere beside the sea
Where all the ninja-pirates love to be.
The day I stumbled on these motley hordes,
With brag and bluff, they were comparing swords.

Old Peg-leg Pete claimed his was oh-so-fine:
"Yours is no longer than the hilt of mine!"
Another ninja-pirate sagely mused,
"It's not the size, it's all in how it's used."

Insulted, Pete pulled off his wooden leg
And fashioned nun chucks from his piney peg.
He tried a flying kicking ninja pass,
But with just one leg, he landed on his ass.

then old Pete really didn't have a hope;
The other sliced him like a canteloupe.
The rest joined in with knives and throwing stars;
The air was filled with their "hii-yah!"s and "arrrr!"s

When finally the air cleared, none were left,
All victims of their need for swordly heft.
So if you ever go to this convention,
Try not to bring your sword size to attention.



Killing Game



Matthew Loudon



1st Place Prose Winner



In the summer of 2003 I was selected to systematically kill off all my coworkers, some of whom were my closest friends. I had known some of these people for years, and probably would've given my life to save theirs. And now I had been specifically chosen to assassinate them all.

I was overjoyed.

It began at a Boy Scout summer camp, known as Camp Hohn. Those that worked there as counselors had changed this name to the more apt, Camp Rock. You couldn't go three feet without kicking a stone. And having taught Geology, I could tell you exactly what type of rock you were kicking: chert. Everywhere you looked you saw that pathetic white rock. There were more rocks than bugs, plants, and people combined.

Perfect place to go around killing people.

Perhaps I should explain something. I'm not a mass-murderer. What I'm describing is a game, and the feelings that came with it. This game is called the assassin game, and it involved going around "killing" all the other people in camp. The only way to stop the killer was to get two people together and accuse someone. If you got it right, the killer died. Get it wrong, and both accusers died. Mix in about twenty men varying in ages from 12 to 60 and you had lots of fun.

I knew right away who to make my first kill. I needed someone to discuss my plans with, someone who wouldn't give me away. My roommate, Sam, was out of the question, that would be too obvious. My next closest friend was Chris, and he would be my first victim.

Matthew Loudon

I killed him by a watering spout, and he was very upset with me. Apparently, he too had been selected to kill folks, and he was upset that I had gotten him before he got somebody else. I was sorry for it, and said so.

It got worse from there.

I can't remember all the people I killed, it started blurring together. I do remember making certain to kill particular people. I got one guy, a friend of mine called Spot, because he had a big mouth. Big mouths meant trouble in this business. So, he went.

And his death made the perfect cover.

My roommate Sam was entirely too intelligent for his own good. He was the same age as me, and was often identified as the "intellectual Jew." Which was exactly how he wanted to be known. He loved his heritage, and loved his mind. The latter was what got him killed.

We'd been sitting at table eating lunch together. We being Sam, myself, Chris, a friend we called Mini-Bear, and a few other friends. That's when he announced his plan.

"I know who the killer is," he told us. I stopped eating. My heart thumped loud enough to be heard across the table. My palms started sweating. Cautiously I looked at Chris, who looked as confused as me.

"Who is it?" I asked, trying to be nonchalant. I needed to feed him someone, anyone...

"It's William," he insisted, naming another staffer. He then went on to explain his reasoning for proclaiming Mini-Bear's brother a killer. I didn't care at the time, relief had overwhelmed me. I hadn't been caught. Better yet, I was now able to take care of my trickiest kill.

"Yeah, you know what, I think you're right. He was the only one to see Spot earlier today," I insisted, deliberately lying. I never lied.

"Exactly, Mini-Bear, don't you agree?" Sam looked at the younger staffer.

Mini-Bear was twelve. This is unusual because the minimum age for becoming a counselor is fourteen. Goofier than a cartoon character, he had been known for childish pranks, and looking exactly like a chipmunk. The comparison had earned him his nickname, something I never really grasped. What was important now was this: he hated his brother. Every time the two of them were together, they fought.

He was the perfect foil to Sam's downfall.

I almost laughed when they accused William. The look on Sam's face when William told him now was priceless. I had fooled my roommate, and best friend. It was wonderful.

I had to gloat.

"Sam, would you like to know who actually killed Spot?" I asked him, having gathered only my victims around me. He didn't care, but I wanted to rub it in. "It was me."

"But... you couldn't deceive a fly! You never lie!" he insisted. "Damn, I should've seen it, though..."

I just laughed. It was wonderful, this feeling. I had tricked my best friend, and loved every moment of it. I had this power over them. It started to corrupt me.

People weren't people anymore, they were targets. I would set them up for a fall, and kill them. Nobody could outsmart me, I was better than all of them. I knew how to kill them, and would do it. I was invincible.

At supper the evening the game started, only a handful of people were left alive. A few of them were suspicious of me, but nobody suspected good ole' Matt of slaughtering people. Besides, the killer had gotten all my friends, and I had often said that was stupid.

Stupid like a fox.

By the time night fell, there were two people left. One was a young man named Blake, who ran the Waterfront, which is where people swim and boat. He was alive because I never went down there. Never saw Blake. I couldn't kill what wasn't there.

The other guy was the other Matt.

We called him Brinkman. If you were younger than someone else, and shared a first name, we called you by your last name. Brinkman was two years younger than me, and three years less experienced at the job. So, he got called Brinkman, instead of Matt. Kept him in his place, the little worm.

He spent that night running from me.

My friends at this point were all dead, and they all wanted me to live. We hated Brinkman, and couldn't wait for him to die. It would be a sweet death that we would relish. Yet the fool kept running away from me.

We kept trying to trap him, and he'd attack us. Being a worm, he couldn't actually outsmart us. Especially not me. I mean, I had outsmarted Sam, and he was the smartest guy in camp. So, he had to fight his way out of every trap.

Finally, he ran off into the woods.

At night.

By himself.

Without a flashlight.

That's when it hit me.

It was a game.

I wasn't an actual killer. I was a teenager who had been given power, and it had corrupted me. My friends were all "dead." To make things worse, I had lied to them. To me, lying was the worse thing a person could do, and I did it every second of the day. My life had become a deception, where I thrived on my power over others.

I walked over to where the people in charge stayed. The common counselor got a tent. If you were higher up, you got to live in an air-conditioned cabin. I stepped into the building, and felt the cool air freeze the rain that hung on my clothes.

Blake sat at a computer.

I killed him.

Then, I walked over to where the person who had started this sat. He was playing a computer game, and looked

Killing Game

up at me.

“Brinkman ran into the woods. He’s alone, didn’t take a light, and is dumb as a rock,” I wanted to say. It ran through my head. That and a string of expletives better left unsaid.

“I want to quit.”

That’s all I said, and it startled him.

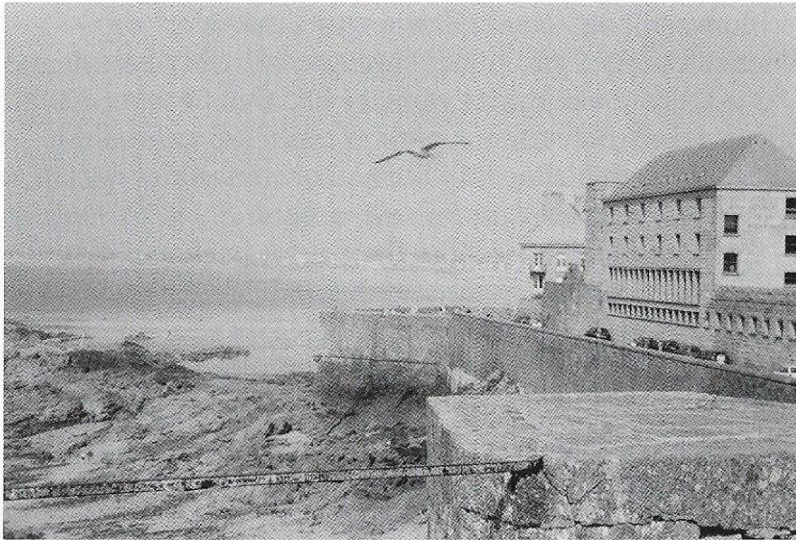
“But you were the one who really wanted to do this. You wanted to be the assassin,” he argued.

“It went too far. This game is stupid, it only drives people apart. I’m never playing again. Next round, just kill me,” I said. I turned and left, leaving a stunned director.

I walked outside. The cool rain pounded into my flesh. It stung my cheeks as I turned skyward.

The best assassin the camp had ever seen. The only one who had killed everybody. He’d even gotten his best friend.

And there he stood. In the rain, without a poncho.
Crying.



“Bird in Flight” by Kelly Pittman

A House on Sand



Travis Figg



2nd Place Poetry Winner



Lend me the sea in a glass bottle
So we can watch the waves crash against
The shore between our fingers entwined, your
Eyes distorted through the glass
Are bent into something
Beautiful like water ever
Moving and I think I'm about to
Drown. The wind blows
Salty and the gulls catch
The current as it cycles
Up and up, Icarus
Does not scare me anymore.
If only I had wings, but until then I'll
Settle for the sea.



Rock Mesmerism



Courtney Richter



Bass flows through my body
overpowers the rhythm of my
fast-beating heart drums
set my feet in a trance of
bounce and tap steel strings
amplify the singer's breathy
cries riffs and picks that
collide above the crowd
pull my hands up to grab
the sparks the moment
Pause.

My ears sing in response
to the sporadic silence
and in pours the hoarse
yells that surround me-
a chorus of praising disciples.

Bass again drowns out
the ringing, slow strum
of strings relax my jumpy
nerves and throbbing temple,
drums adopt a foreign beat
and I dissolve into
the thousand bodies swaying
to the tide of a distant
ocean that exists only in
the chords will the gleaming
hips shake only in the
dark notes will nature
whisper its name only in the

Courtney Richter

symbol's crash will the cold
water fall to the commands
of this god on the stage
in black as night is the time
and my voice is the place
and this crowd is
the only person who matters.



“Dark Lily Burst” by Colin Kerr

Model of Humanity



Ashley B. Nelson



2nd Place Prose Winner



Mr. Shizmon unveiled his eyeballs, blinked exactly three times and promptly frowned.

What had provoked this great personage to such a strenuous muscular exercise? His eagle eyes had mechanically honed to his alarm clock. 5:58. He had woken up precisely two minutes early. This naturally meant that he had to assume the burden of laying in bed for two lagging minutes while waiting for his mundane scheduled wakeup call. This great colossus frowned deeper on hearing the esteemed ring. If his faithful alarm had ever displayed a sensitivity of nature, it surely would have quailed at the furrowed eyebrows and smart reprimand of its lord and master.

Emerging from bed, this giant of intellect slipped into slippers, wrapped in a robe, plumped his pillow and smoothed the sheets. Rhythmically, he reached for his toes. This toned Hercules was well aware of the multiple benefits of a strenuous morning wakeup routine.

For the second time that morning, this monument of stoutness frowned. He had noticed that his left slipper, that is to say left from his point of view, was a bit frayed around the toes. It was promptly decided to buy a new pair when he left his hearth and haven to venture into the wilderness of the grocery store. He could stop at the shoe department of...Oh, what was the store's name? They never had reliable service and they probably wouldn't have the same style or color of slipper. The most solid of war wearied soldiers would

Ashley B. Nelson

have felt pity for this figure of greatness. Alas, poor Mr. Shizmon. But this renowned dignitary was not a soul to be vexed with trifles. He resigned himself to his fate and bravely reconciled wounded sensibilities. This truly was a magnificent specimen of forbearance.

Mr. Shizmon plodded steadily down his carpeted stairs with a regulated thwap-thwap of slippers. Exactly on the fourteenth stair, as was his custom, he stretched his lungs farther than habitual. His intellect ruminated pleasantly on what awaited him downstairs: the prospect of a cup of coffee and a thorough reading of the newspaper. This connoisseur always read the entire newspaper. That is of course, minus the frivolous trappings. Frivolous trappings were listed crisply out by Mr. Shizmon. The entertainment content, editorials, personals, ads, travel, dinning, contrary points of view or opinions, lengthy articles, articles on foreign affairs and any local news that wasn't earth-shattering. To tell the truth, Mr. Shizmon only read the front-page of the newspaper, unless of course it contained any of the aforementioned content. Overall, his guidelines helped this master of cogitative powers limit his coffee break to a reasonably short time.

Mr. Shizmon extracted an emaciated looking spoon from a polished drawer. Scrutinizing it carefully, this fearless adventurer pursed his lips together. There was a spot on the spoon. Heaping shame on the miserable wretch of silverware, Mr. Shizmon set it back down on the counter. He scanned the room for...

This model of humanity frowned for the third time that day. His list of grievous wounds that day had included being woken up too early, his slipper deciding to become worn, and, to force even more grief on this pillar of perfection, there was now a knocking on his door. But this was not just an ordinary knock. He critiqued their style with his noble mind and shapely ears. What were they thinking? Knocks should be firm, but not loud, regular, like a

metronome, calm, a necessity, and planned out, a must. To knock haphazardly would bring an evil and ominous omen that hailed interruptions and disorder. Mr. Shizmon's purely analytical mind had brilliantly concluded beyond any reasonable doubt that some frenzied person was trying to overpower his stoutly solid door.

This knocking of an evil-omen did not possess a shred of politeness, for it failed to cease. It had no respect for the sanctity of human thought which resided studiously laboring in Mr. Shizmon's head.

Should he answer the door? This pinnacle of curiosity mulled the matter over. He was entirely put out. The day had not ordered itself to his standards and had behaved most imprudently. No, Mr. Shizmon decided that he would definitely not answer the door that was being so rudely accosted. It would be entirely undignified to grant his auspicious audience to such an unruly summons. This Saint of modesty decided to cloister himself away and continued to look for. . .

Mr. Shizmon was indignant. Was he really hearing this? The knock, which had been so unruly to begin with, had now metamorphosed into a series of screams. His finely-attuned ears identified the screams as belonging to a member of the female species. This really was unacceptable. What was this impudent wench's meaning for this display? Something had to be done about it, of course. She had to be silenced and explained to that she was disturbing his peace and throwing his day into a befuddled state of chaos.

The guardian of sanctity and silence pattered over to his faithful door and peered perceptively through the glass paneling. His conservative sensibilities were shocked and his high ideals were shattered. This was simply intolerable. This person, for even the most plebian and shocking can be styled in that manner, was in a state of disarray. This King of forgiveness held disarray as the one cardinal and unforgivable sin.

Mr. Shizmon's benevolent being could find not a jot of justification for this person's torn clothing and bloody clothes. The world must be run according to his specifications, and this display of bad-breeding was not in his good-grace. This Solomon curled his lips in disdain and turned away in disgust for the fallen state of humanity.

The female's incoherent screams immediately altered into words, unpleasant ones, ones that are not considered proper dinner-conversation. And, furthermore, she had the audacity to scream out demands upon Mr. Shizmon's mode of communication with the outside world. Mr. Shizmon promptly tuned back and looked through the glass. This pope of promptitude instantly opened the door. He realized something had to be done.

"You are disturbing my peace. Go away. You are not wanted here. You are intruding on me."

The Shakespeare with words firmly closed the door on her unacceptable state of hysteria and frowned for the fourth time that day out on the wretch of a girl. Mr. Shizmon now expected her to stop being a nuisance and to leave him alone. He felt that his morning was in ruins and sighed philosophically as he started his coffee. The uncouth screams and unwelcome knocking suddenly were halted by a loud burst of metallic noise. The morning was quiet and orderly once more. He was once again lord and master of his time. This model of humanity smiled pleasantly and stirred his coffee.



Wonderland



Kati Nilges



3rd Place Poetry Winner



Come on everybody, let's get fucked up-
I'll drink from the bottle; I don't need the cup.
Give me some vodka, some Pucker, some Jack-
I'll drink 'til I pee and my vomit is black.
The world may be spinnin', that's just how it goes,
So make me your bitch, your drunk little ho.
Come play with my pussy and give me your dick-
Hell no I can't deep throat, that shit makes me sick.
I'm far from a virgin; I'll fuck you right here.
Maybe later? Okay. Go finish your beer.
I'll chug a Bacardi and label the walls,
I'll piss in the driveway and try not to fall.
My body is sweating; I can't see for shit,
Let's go outside for awhile, let's go get ripped.
We'll sit on the porch, chat it up, smoke a bowl,
Don't worry about it, trade Satan your soul
For a reason to live, and open your eyes-
We're too young for trouble; we're too young to die.
So light it for me, and allow me to breathe,
Now take it yourself, and take it in deep.
I choke when I hit it and pass it along-
My life doesn't matter and everything's wrong.
I live for these moments, when my thoughts slip away,
And nothing can hurt me. I'm finally okay.
Welcome to Wonderland, welcome to life-
Lie down for a while; we've got all damn night.
Now give me your body and give me your soul,

Kati Nilges

Satan can fuck himself; I need to feel whole.
I'll hold you and keep you and grow more attached,
You'll kiss me and fuck me, stay cold and detached.
You never go easy; it hurts every time,
You tell me you love it; I'm so goddamned tight.
When you finish it's magic and I look to the sky,
I may not have been ready, but I'm so fucking high.
The kisses are over; we dress and we go,
We don't say a word, but of course they all know.
Sitting quiet in a corner, I'm no longer numb,
I hear all their whispers. "How was it? You cum?"
So welcome to Wonderland, and welcome to hell
I started out whole, but I tripped and I fell.



"Believe" by Brian Dye

Irresistibly Unobtainable



Nathaniel Weber

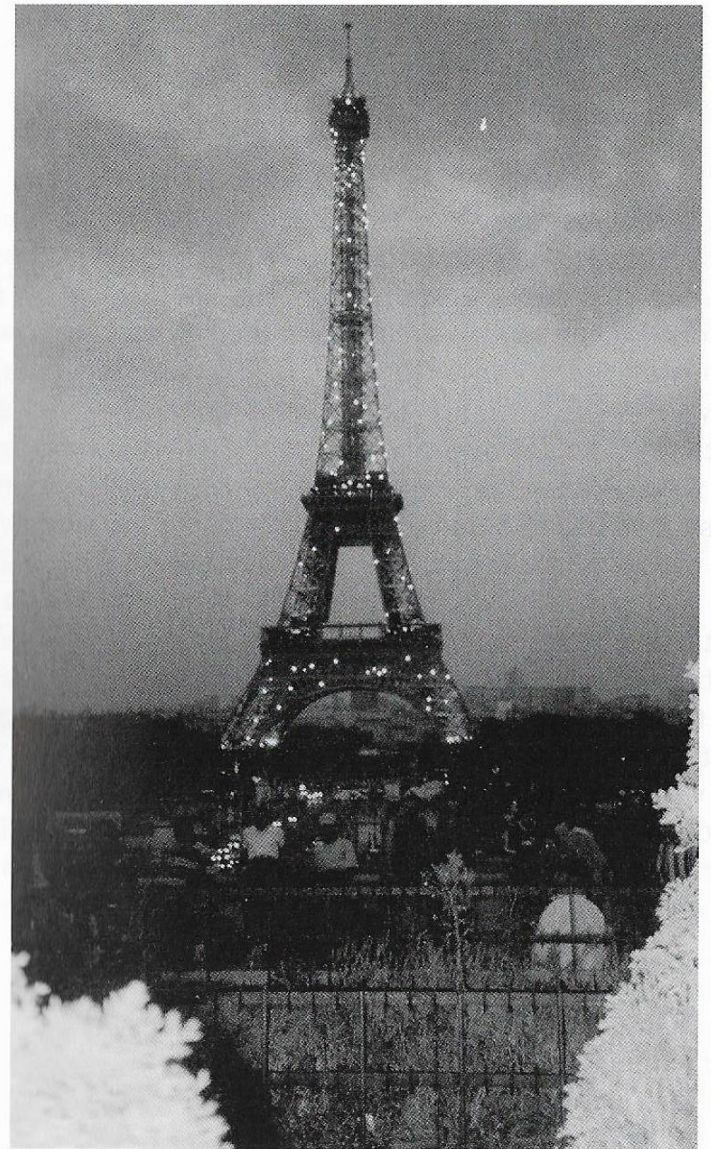


Often reason vanishes without a trace
like a soft promise made in the presence
of a long legged effigy of grace;
a fine showing of a lack of good sense.

Perhaps it's the thought of aspirations
or the mere possibility of success
falling torrents without cessation
to settle on the ground with all the rest.

The warning's there against going too far,
yelling and pleading to ignore the heart,
like a mechanic's thoughts on an old car
which after a long winter's night won't start.

But all the capable mind and logic
fizzles and fades in her charm so tragic.



"Paris at Dusk" by Kelly Pittman

What is This That I See



Rickey McBride



What is this that I see
What is this they want me to be
A farmer
A laborer
A captive
A slave
One that works day by day
They took us from our Motherland
And stripped us of our gold
They took everything very new and very old

What is this that I see
What is this they want me to be
Now they put us on a ship that never turns back
Just to make us fill them cotton sacks
Now we are in the land that is of the feather
And they make them move like they are better
What and Why are we to them
Why do they take and they no work
Why
Why

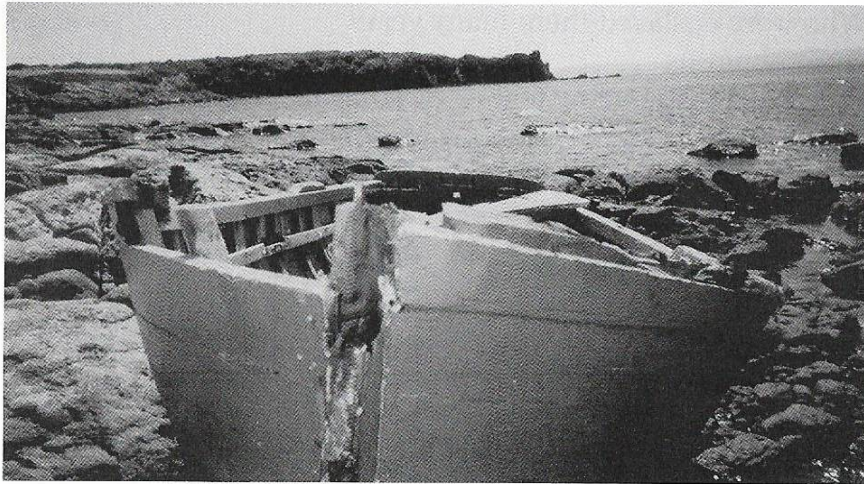
What is this that I see
What is this they want me to be
Now today they say we are free
They work us to death and not to thee
They deny us of our culture
And take our money and they say
It's to help you, but is that so
I say no

Rickey McBride

What is this that I see
What is this they want me to be
Why do they down grade us
Is it we cause a fuss
No we just want our rights
But we do not cause the fight
That is between us and they
Who turn their heads in shame when we say
"What about us
Who were enslaved them many years
What about us
Who cried those many tears
What about us
Who were denied the right of human ship
What about us
Who died in those fury days
What about us
Who felt the ways of they
What about us
Who gave their life for us today"

So now I say
What is this that I see
What is this they still won't let me be
Maybe someday our people will truly be free so
What is this that I see





Untitled by Jake Marsh



“Pioggia sul Piazza San Marco” by Colin Kerr

Monday Morning Quarterback



Mary Poletti



I always know just what to say
in hindsight
I always know just what to do
after the fact
I always chase my dreams
once they've drifted away
as if somehow I might just
tempt the past to stay



Eight Seconds to Glory

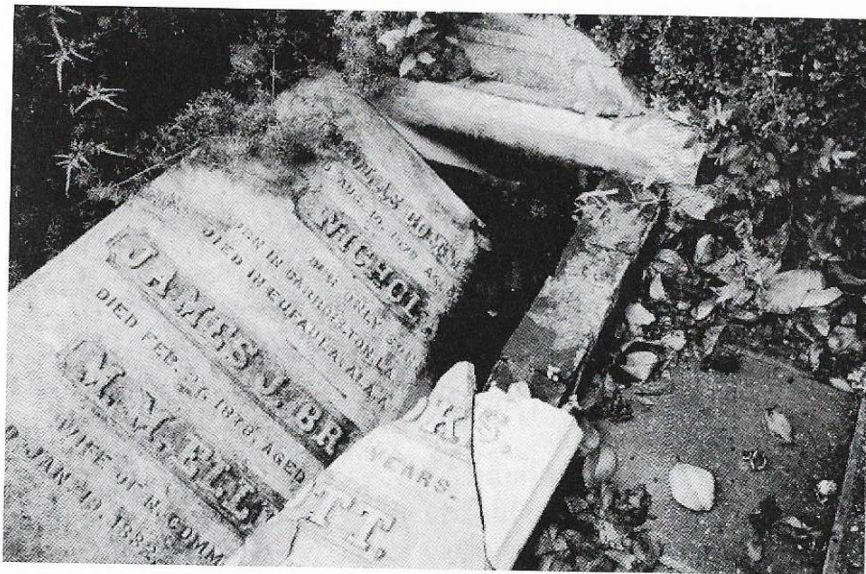


Joseph Flaughter



He sits in the chutes
on the back of a beast.
A beast that could kill him
or hurt him at least.
Things run through his mind,
like the rides of past years.
But nothing seems to soothe
all of his present fears.
He tightens up the ropes,
and slides towards the bull's head.
He thinks about his father,
and the wise words that he said.
All the love he ever needed,
and how to deal with all the fans.
But now back to his life,
and the task that lay at hand.
Eight seconds to change his life.
Eight seconds to hear the yells.
Eight seconds seems so short.
Eight seconds of pure hell.
Eight seconds to become a legend,
and be known across the land.
It only takes eight seconds,
to make or break a man.





“New Orleans Grave” by Liz Blood
2nd Place Graphics Winner

A Prisoner's Cry



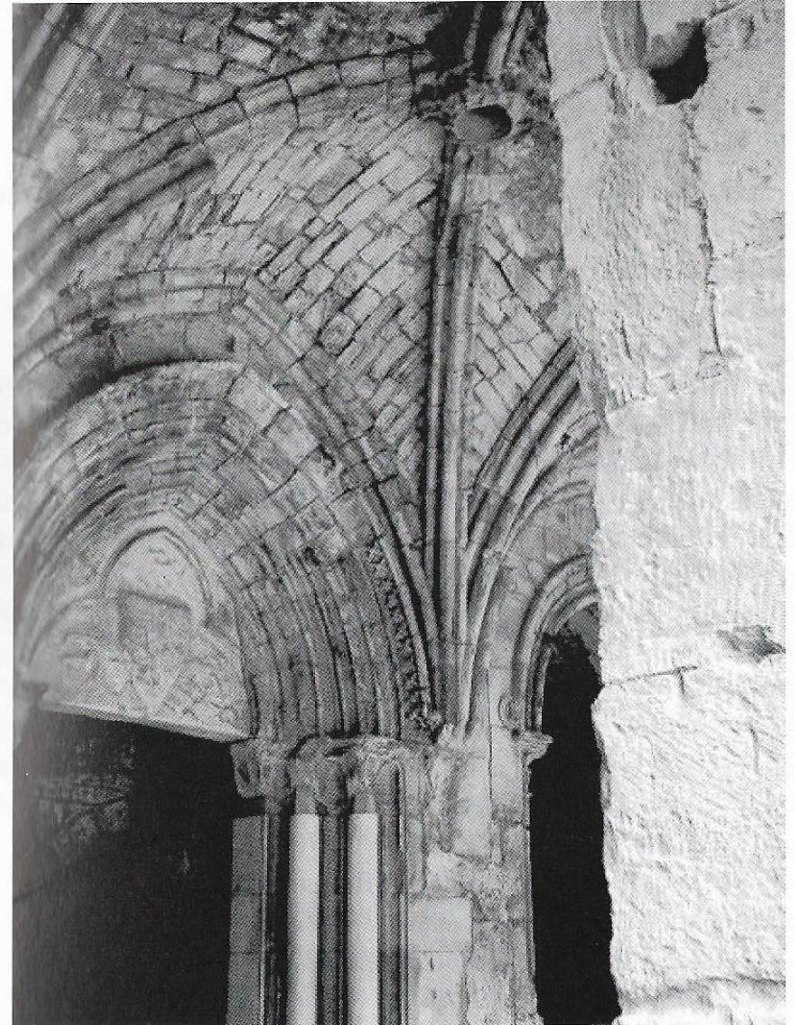
Patrick Lee Clark



Time has gone by
 On my back
 My ceiling represents my sky
 In my kingdom
 On the hierarchy, I'm ranked high
 But have you ever heard
 Associated with me as well
 SO compassionate
 Echoing above me, is what I call, "A Prisoner's Cry"
 Decadence has occurred
 Enslavement has been banished
 During the time
 Hatred was Hatred
 Flesh, sweat, and blood aromas fill the air
 It's like déjà vu
 It reminds of you
 My people's songs
 Are still so sacred
 To be informed
 Those were my ancestors
 Think of that as, "A Prisoner's Cry"
 Tick-tock
 Tick-tock
 Two seconds have ticked away
 I still have 525, 598 seconds left in my days
 I'm still going through wars
 Against self
 Against human
 Against the world
 So I'm asking, "Should I be in fear?"

A Prisoner's Cry

"YES, BUT ONLY OF YOUR LORD."
Many times
My mouth
Begins to get salty
"Is that the sign of fear?"
"Will I see my next birthday?"
"Will I make it to the next year?"
Because
The battle between
SELF vs. the Vicious World
I'm dwelling on, "SHOULD I STAY!"
But whispers inside of my head
Are telling me, "Why not take your life away?"
The solution to this is simple
Look at what you've done
Someone doesn't want you to go any way
Before this was revealed
You have just heard, "A Prisoner's Cry
Don't be scared
The cry isn't scary
The voice takes the place of an alarm clock
That isn't imaginary
The sound is known to many
The cry is made by any
How much more?
The cry is heard by plenty
When life says, "Good-bye!"
Only get ready
You will be exposed
Probably to your own Prisoner's Cry
Be thankful
It's rare to hear
One's Prisoner's Cry



"Krak des Chevalier" by Danielle Becknell

I'm not Big-Boned, I'm Fat



Jim Backes



It was my sophomore year of college. It was a time marked by long walks to classes, lots of overdue papers, and lots and lots of stress—stress that I would attempt to alleviate by consoling myself with food. Cookies. Chips. Snacks. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. I would never be far from some kind of foodstuff, to calm me and take away my fears. Thus, my memory of my time at Westminster College's dining hall is a prominent (and also recent) one in my mind.

It was that magical time between 11 and 12 o'clock – that time when I could become absorbed into something that didn't involve droning text books and taking down a long and complicated list of notes. Not to say my time away from classes was full of nothing but studying. Far from it, in fact! Like any college student, I would waste my time on distracting and ultimately worthless tasks, but it was different from mealtime; to me, eating was an act of pure desire. With breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I could “consume” myself with the pure task of devouring as much as I wanted to without consequence.

At least, without a consequence that ended up stopping me.

As I said, it was lunchtime. And oh, happy day, they were serving fried chicken! What's more, it would be an hour and a half before I had to be getting to my Biology class. I could indulge my love for chicken (and the gravy-soaked potatoes that were also being offered) as much as I wanted! It was like being a kid in the candy store, where everything was free.

Jim Backes

And indulge I did. It's no large task to remember the specifics of that particular meal, as I've had over a hundred like it. I loaded my tray with gravy and potatoes, and of course my favorite pieces of the hallowed bird, and chose a place to eat alone. I remember sucking in the greasy, salty skin of the chicken, as well as rolling the blander white meat through the excess gravy to enhance the taste. I would pour on and mix salt with my potatoes, and then let its gravy-soaked goodness ooze through and into my mouth with each bite. And I would keep going back for extra portions until I finally felt like it was enough.

It was more than enough. They say that when you eat, you don't feel full for some time, thus leading some people stuffing themselves while under the impression that they have “more than enough room.” My belly was full beyond capacity, and for a short while, it felt like a warm pillow resting at the front of my body. But that would quickly disappear, as I rose, lurching back to my room, overcome with the feeling of nausea.

I had had myself feel ill, and I was content to sit it off before I went to class. In that sense, I'm grateful that I took myself out of a public setting, because of what happened next.

It struck me like a bullet. I was feeling nauseous, but the feeling that I was about to hurl rose up so quickly, I barely had time to react. I ran for the bathroom, my body lurching in the early convulsions of vomiting. Before I made it to the toilet, the disgusting bile rose up, splashing against the back of my hand. I finally made it though, letting it spill out into the stool.

I kneeled there, my body shuddering violently each time I heaved out the offending bile. Half digested food poured into the stool, but I had no time to be disgusted – the act had clenched my eyes shut. I clenched my stomach in agony, but the bile-ous content continued to flood out. I

groaned – it was cut short by another violent ejection of mush.

When it was all over, I felt like collapsing. My whole body ached, and my stomach felt like it had been beaten with a crowbar. My mouth was full of the salty-sour-tangy taste that added up to rotten. Vomit dribbled down my chin, and I had gotten some all over my shirt.

Disgusting.

I would call my Biology teacher and tell her what had happened, and that I would be late for class. I had to get cleaned up, after all. But it wasn't just that. My heart was weary, in more ways than one. I would tell myself that it was just a side effect of getting sick, and that my stomach was doing it all against my will.

But reality doesn't lie. I was the one who had inflicted this upon myself.

My name is Jim Backes, and I have a problem.

The matter of obesity is by no means an alien subject to the world today. People who suffer from obesity are on the rise. On the news, we've heard of lawsuits leveled against restaurants for supposedly contributing to the problem. It has been discovered that sometimes, obesity can be tied to genetics, and that people who are obese are at a higher risk of health problems such as heart attack, diabetes, clogged arteries, and stomach problems. We constantly hear of diets like Atkins', exercise programs like Tae Bo, and even pharmaceutical aids like Jenny Craig's diet pills. All of these are designed to combat the problem of being overweight. And as our insight into the "problem" has grown, so has the public perception of it.

The fact of the matter is that obesity is not a desirable body image to have in our society. Very few people actually WANT to be overweight, and the aforementioned tools in the "war on the gut" are encouraged and used by many. The well-to-do of our society desperately try to cling to the

accepted body image, and if you ever actually see an obese celebrity, he or she is treated as a sort of novelty. Someone, they say, that has managed to succeed despite his or her girth, like the late Chris Farley, or that woman-I-forget-her-name on the earlier seasons of "The Practice." And usually, if people are obese, they're thought to have some sort of problem, a problem that must be overcome.

The thing is, people see obesity as a lifestyle choice. The obese are mocked and ridiculed by the more juvenile members of society, and the way of thinking is that no sane person would want to be fat, so naturally, a person who is overweight must be some kind of lazy deviant, a person who doesn't care about their body, a person who cares more about leisure and the taste of good food than being healthy.

There's some truth to that, despite the hollow and callous nature of that assessment. At least, it is in my case. Even then, though, I don't really think it's that simple. I won't deny that I, someone who has struggled with obesity all his life, didn't help to create my own problem, due to my own lack of indiscretion. But to simply consider it a lifestyle choice is not recognizing the true nature of the problem. For me, obesity has been a long time struggle, a struggle that I desperately want to be free from. It's a problem, a problem that I've quite literally been feeding for years.

I don't need celebrities or teasing to tell me that my being overweight is a problem. It's not a lifestyle choice, because if I had a choice, I'd manage to drop it. To me, obesity has always been a curse, an addiction; an addiction that I've never been able to bring myself to stop.

I don't remember how old I was; ten or twelve, perhaps, maybe even younger. The fog of memory has long since muddled the specific events of my childhood. But specifics are less important than the essence of an experience, and the essence of my time as a member of a PAL-league soccer team is prominent in my mind.

When I was younger, I hated playing sports, but I did it anyway. I joined the grade school baseball and basketball teams, out of some obligation to my parents. It was a rural community, and it seemed like it was expected for young boys to spend time this way. But I never really enjoyed it. I was never good at any of those games, and they always felt like some sort of task that HAD to be endured – like Hercules' twelve labors, only I had absolutely nothing to gain.

But soccer, soccer was different. I loved soccer. I loved watching it on TV, and I desperately wanted to play. And so, for one year, my parents signed me onto a PAL-league team, and thus, I got to play a sport I ENJOYED for a change. I would show up, for every game and practice with an eager smile and wearing my ensemble of gym shorts and a pretty-much-fit-largest-size-out-of-all-available green and white uniform.

Of course, just because I enjoyed it more than baseball and basketball, didn't mean that I was actually any good at it.

It could have been any game, and in some ways, it actually was. I was never someone who played very often, and I remember watching most of the game from the bench. But I knew that for there would come a time where I'd be allowed to step into the game and get my chance to play. They had to put everyone in for a little bit, after all. It was some kind of rule.

So, eventually, the coach – I don't even remember his name – decided to put me in. Like a good soldier, I stepped in with enthusiasm. I assumed my long forgotten position, and before long, I was in the game. Technically.

I was slow. I didn't run so much as shuffle, desperately trying to keep up with the direction the ball was going. Each breath I took was long and heavy, as I tried to suck in as much oxygen as possible. My stomach bounced with each step, and in no time at all, my skin was sticky and covered with sweat.

The other boys? They were the exact opposite. On both sides, the smaller, skinny, more nimble children danced after the ball, while I made an effort to just make sure I was on the same side of the field as they were. After a couple minutes, I had gone from shuffling to lumbering, and was stomping after the ball like some sort of adolescent Sasquatch. I felt the muscles tighten around my lungs and ribs, causing a sharp, stinging pain – the cost of exertion – a cost I still pay today.

But wait! The ball was coming my way! I nearly tripped over myself, and went for the black and white treasure. I quickly reminded myself how to kick the ball just right; to make sure it didn't get away from me. Perhaps I might be able to make a play! Perhaps I might score! Perhaps I might....

A member of the opposing team quickly stepped up beside me, and stole the ball. He whizzed away like a bullet, leaving me to follow, in a stunned, slow silence.

I never got to play very long. Within minutes, I found myself back on the bench, clutching my enflamed chest, waiting for the pain to finally stop. The coach never said anything about my failure out on the field, and I had endured the fact that to him, this was part of the routine of having me on the team. Worst of all was the fact that I would have to go back to being content to watch.

Like I said, this could have been any soccer game. And it was.

Time passed. The chubby boy became the fat teenager became the immense young man. I watched as my two-hundred-plus pounds essentially doubled, all the while engaging in futile efforts to combat this "growing problem." After leaving high school, I enrolled in Westminster College, and I took my huge size with me.

It's not to say that I've never tried to change things. When I was just starting my freshman year, I was on this weight loss program sponsored by the Jefferson City Medical

Group. In addition to exercise, and meals with precise portions, part of it involved replacing two of those meals with a shake made out of a powdered mix. We had purchased it from the program. It came in a box filled with packets of the stuff, and was very costly.

I hated it. Not being able to eat what I wanted at dinner was bad enough, but replacing two of my meals with something so undesirable was almost intolerable. I remember it being a frothy mix of near taste drowned in water, like half-heartedly mixed hot cocoa left in the refrigerator. I called the experience "drinking dust."

I had actually begun the program at the tale end of my senior year at high school, and at that time, there was little I could do to escape this process. My mother and father would make sure that my meals met the conditions of this diet. All I could do was endure it. I told myself that, if I could just survive this temporary ordeal, it would pay off in the long run. That I would never have to endure this problem again, and that when it was finally over, the mountain that was me would finally no longer be a problem.

College destroyed that, and my resolve.

I remember when I first got the idea. Or rather, I cheated in that first week by going to the dining hall three times a day rather than just one. Mom and Dad would be arriving that weekend to pick up my laundry, and I knew they would check to see if I had been drinking my shakes.

I couldn't very well let them know that I hadn't. They had to be "disposed of."

I looked about, wondering what I could do. The box of drink mixes lay in front of me, the embodiment of my shame, taunting me, asking me what I was going to do, telling me there was no way out, that I would lose weight whether I liked it or not.

I conquered that box, by taking out the number of packets I WOULD have used, and tossing them into the dorm

suite's trashcan. They were out of view; in a place Mom and Dad would never check.

When they arrived, I told them that yes, I had been keeping up with my diet. I showed them the proof, and they were content to accept that. And so, time went on, and they continued buying the mixes and paying for the program. I continued throwing the packets out.

Of course, the results spoke for themselves – or rather, the lack there of. Part of the program involved showing up for biweekly checkups, and each time, I would be weighed. I never lost anything, and sometimes, I even seemed to have gained weight.

Before long, I could tell my parents knew that my "dedication" to this diet was a façade that fooled no one. These were the people who knew me better than anyone else, and parents know when their child is trying to get out of something he doesn't want to do.

It became a casually accepted lie, a realization that had no accusation, no punishment. I let everyone down, and ended up not paying the price for it. No, the price would be paid in the form of all that money we paid to the Medical Group – money that was ultimately worthless.

I had let them down.

Children cling to what's most comfortable to them. Addictions work the same way. Addicts are children.

One night, in sophomore year, I was determined to try again. Oh, it wasn't a big, dramatic effort, by any means. But for some reason, that night in the gym sticks out in my mind.

I've always been mildly fascinated with exercise equipment. At least, the kind of fascination that people have with something they always "mean to do" but ultimately only occasionally remind themselves, every now and then, that they thought about it. But one night, in a somewhat uncharacteristic move, I decided to go and make the attempt. Maybe this time I would have my epiphany!

My friend Matt came with me. Moral support, I called it. The reality was that I felt like I needed someone to hold my hand. Like the only way I could get anything done was if I had someone to push me, to encourage me, to force me to do what must be done.

Of course, when I arrived at Hunter Activity Center – the area designated for students to “work out” on their own time – I was taken aback. The air was hot and humid, as if I had stepped into some sort of bleach-white walled Hell. The basketball court lay before me like some sort of barren plain. The weight-training equipment looked like medieval torture devices – complex systems of steel designed to pull, crush, and strain the body until it broke.

I don't even remember the name of the kind of exercise machine I ended up using. I eagerly avoided the Basketball Fields of Death, and the Torture Rack, and meekly decided upon using the walking machines. Lord, I don't even remember the name of the machine I used. It wasn't a treadmill, but it looked like a Rube Goldberg device, or a piece of industrial equipment that required me to walk on pistoning components, that I learned later actually made it a bit more difficult to use than a treadmill. I mounted the device, and found that I had to push hard to even make the thing move.

I set the timer, and ended up going for two sessions. In no time at all, I was completely breathless. My chest was burning, a sensation that me back to my days on the soccer team. The sweat, the gulping desperate gasps for air, the pain in my legs and upper body – it was all like reliving those painful moments from my childhood when I attempted to “play” sports. Ultimately, I needed both Matt's encouragement and a distraction or a familiar theme song to occupy my mind so I wouldn't think of quitting. In the end, I succeeded not only in completing two 10-minute sessions; I ended up wearing my body down to the point that I was sore for a full day afterwards.

For some reason, amidst the feeling of being worn down, amidst the pain, amidst the screaming voice in my brain declaring, “YOU OVERDID IT YOU MORON!” I felt proud of myself. I had forced myself to break out of my pattern, to succeed at doing something that wasn't completely half-hearted. I had trouble along the way, but I had remained committed. I had done what was necessary.

At least, that's what I thought. I had won convinced myself that I'd won a war, when all I had really won was a battle. Nothing is ever that easy, even when the initial phase is that difficult. I never went back to follow up. I told myself “it won't hurt if I don't go for one more day. Just one more day.”

One more day turned into a week, turned into a month, and now, a year.

I recall a discussion that I had recently with my advisor, Hank Ottinger. We were discussing options that were out there for me, in regards to exercising. He jokingly told me that the best way to lose weight was sitting down in a chair and pushing something away. It was a joke he made in pantomime, he was pushing the plate away. Despite myself, I laughed, but deep down inside, it hurt a little bit. If only it was that easy, I told myself in the back of my mind.

If only anything was that easy.

On a whim, the other day, I decided to check out the “Wikipedia” article on “calories.” I was stunned by what I saw there. It wasn't the information that stuck out; it was the fact that I realized I didn't know ANY of it. It was all laid out before me, like some bizarre scientific text. Like calculus, which I had never taken. Like quantum mechanics. Like Einstein's Theory of Relativity. I had stepped into all of my diet “attempts” and exercise “efforts” without knowing something so basic to the entire concept of dieting!

The only thing I ever bothered with in regard to a diet was eating. Eating too much. Trying to find ways to look like

I'm Not Big-Boned, I'm Fat

I wasn't eating. Trying to justify eating. Trying to tell myself that eating was good.

As unattractive as the thought of working my weight off is, I hate my obesity even more. I feel as if it's been holding me back my entire life – a great weight on my shoulders, if you'll pardon the pun. As I eat, something eats away at me. I have to live with the knowledge that I'll continue to endure the cost of feeling heavy, day after day after day. My life and health are even at a greater risk because of my obesity. I could suffer a heart attack when I'm in my 20's, for God's sake!

All of this frightens me. The thought scares me more than anything. It burns me to my very core, taunting me and heckling me like the kids used to do back in grade school. I don't want to be fat, but the fact that I am just won't go away.

It makes me want to eat until I feel better.



Untitled by Walter Mickey

Untitled



Claudia Cerna



I put my childhood in a box
I put it all away
Forgotten was that box until
I found it there today

There inside my childish dreams
My hopes and dreams I'd store
The tears I cried o'er little things
The toys I did adore

Dusting off that precious box
I opened it and peered inside
Familiar objects met my eyes
So long did they there hide

Pulling things out- one by one
Visiting an endless memory
Examining each for minutes long
Remembering each one's history

Tears so slowly filled my eyes
As each toy passed on by
'Twas today I realized
How quickly time could fly

Holding there within my palm
My childhood innocence
The speed at which the year flew by
Now didn't make much sense

Untitled

Seemed like only yesterday
I'd sit to play a game
Yet my life had passed too fast
Now nothing was the same

Still reaching out to touch each toy
My tears the dust did clean
The joy in life I once possessed
Had lain within- unseen

Gently I put them away
Each one in its designated place
Closing yet those precious flaps
While tears streamed down my face

Heading for the shelf- I paused
Instead of packing them once more
I worked gently for an hour
To line them up like once before

There upon my desk they sit
To greet me everyday
Reminders that life may quickly fly
But memories always stay

I found my childhood in that box
Such inspiration did it give
Though many things in life may fade
The inner child will always live



Untitled by Kelly Hossenlopp

Hippopotamuses



Ashley B. Nelson



Bejeweled hippopotamuses singing opera in suspenders
Crocodiles tiptoeing through fields of caterpillars

Giraffes in high heels dancing the tango
Polka-dotted tigers chomping on mango

Ferocious crickets falling in swoons
Pigs building shrines to falling blue moons

Tattooed butterflies basking in blood
Skinny-dipping peacocks cannon-balling in mud

Albino gorillas humming dumb in the dark
Ant tribes roasting up vegan aardvark

Atkins termites forsaking diets of wood
And people discovering some inborn good



Two Goodbyes



Amy Barclay



I was two weeks short of twenty when my dog died.

In that little grave I buried dress-up clothes and hide-and-seek,
The secrets and giggles of slumber parties,
Races on saddled-up hay bales (I always won),
And a tree fort.

I suppose by that time I should have already grown up -
Maybe when I went off to college, or when I finally grewbreasts-
(But I hadn't
My first weekend home from school I found a saddle in the barn
And took another ride on my old straw horse)

But no more - I'm one of them now,
Those adults with fond memories of their childhood dogs
(She was the best dog in the whole world!)
I have to make something of myself now -
Create something or cure something or sell insurance -
Maybe I'll be famous.

(But I'll still climb trees when no one's around)



American Bubble



Eric Langland



At first glance the camp didn't look as dreadful as I imagined. The buildings were in good shape, the grounds seemed clean, and only the barbed wire reminded me of the atrocities that had taken place here. After perusing a few bunk houses and a firing wall, a tall smokestack piercing the grey sky cried out to me, "Take a closer look." I walked over and peeked my head in the door. Eerily barren grey concrete walls emblazoned with scratch marks appeared before me; it reeked of death. A heavy metal door hid the second room, which was occupied by two brick ovens, doors still open saying, "Take a closer look."

Auschwitz, an old Polish military base turned systematic extermination camp for 2 million Jews and others who didn't fit the mold was on the list of attractions for a group of American college students who'd come to Prague with the intention of experiencing Europe. Often, we would find ourselves drawn away from the list of attractions and seduced into seedy pubs, where thick Bavarian brew numbed our minds and put us in a state unique to ourselves; a table not quite in America and far from Central Europe. Cigarette smoke mixed with peach body splash and brut cologne formed a haze above the table that was in itself intoxicating. Liter mugs of beer were consumed at a pace that drew the attention from surrounding tables, but made us feel at home. Girls giggling, guys roaring, a beer spilled on the already sticky wooden table. A spontaneous rendition of "God Bless America" came billowing out of the mouths of those who know half of the words. When the Czech waitress asks us something in broken English we all laugh, point to our beers and hold up one finger.

Eric Langland

Dirty floors and thin sheets greeted us upon return to dormitory. Sleep; or rather that alcohol induced coma many students refer to as sleep was only seconds away.

At 7:00 a.m. an American hit from the 80s broke my slumber. A glass of opaque Czech water and a trip to the bathroom returned me to my senses. Clothes littered the room as I packed my bag for this weekend's attraction: Auschwitz. After cramming three days worth of underwear, socks and shirts it hit me that I'd left my passport at the bar. Without thinking too much longer I closed my eyes and drifted away.

That afternoon I was alone. The other 70 students in my program were gone and the already ugly and cold dorm felt more like a Russian gulag. The city even looked different, the people, the buildings, and the signs. Prague was different; there was no one to talk to, no one to eat lunch with and no one to ride the metro with. Wandering the city I found myself for the first time in a foreign place. I started to think about London, Vienna, and Munich. Did I go to these places? Then I thought about Auschwitz.

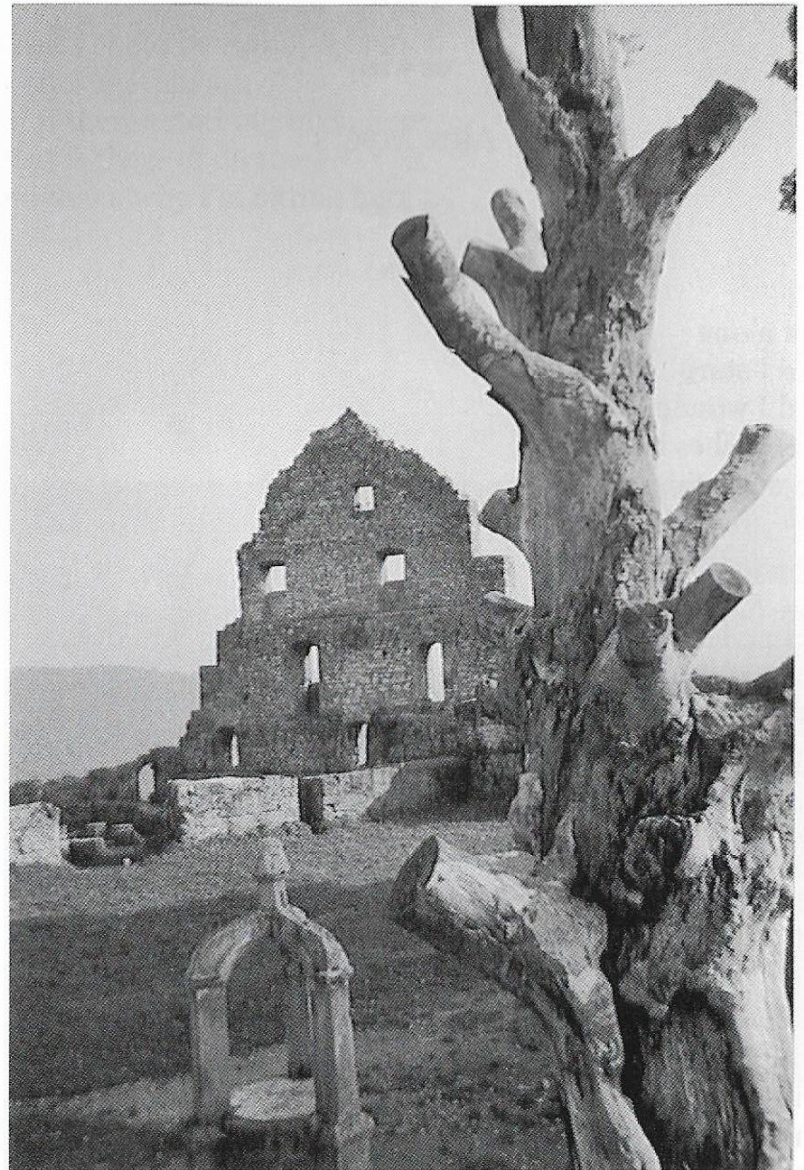
Czech bus stations in the winter are tough on a human's body and mind. Long lines outside expose your body to uncompromising elements, and frequent transfers and delays make you lower your head and refuse any eye contact for the fear that that voice inside will not keep quiet any longer. Desperately wanting to return to the now familiar dirty floors and thin sheets, that same voice inside my head screamed at me to continue. This bus ride came with a novelty, a feature movie, "Troy" starring Brad Pitt. The tape had been dubbed over in Czech, so I didn't have a clue what was being said, I didn't know what they were fighting for, and I didn't understand any of the characters, I only know who won the fight scenes.

Krakow was freezing cold when the bus arrived early in the morning. I walked the dimly lit streets for an hour looking for a hostel and some food to eat before I found a run

American Bubble

down apartment building where the old man behind the desk didn't speak any English. It didn't matter; I threw him 15 Polish zlotys and grabbed the key. Happy to be inside I looked around the room and felt completely alone for the first time since leaving the states. I could hear the old man talking on the phone, smell the dust on the bed sheets and feel the bed springs digging into my sides. I looked out the window and just stared at Poland.

The next morning a train carried me 30 minutes outside Krakow through cow pastures and one room farm houses to Auschwitz. I turned down a tour guide and found myself wandering the dirt paths alone. In building after building I witnessed scenes reminiscent of a History Channel special. Then I found myself in the room, starring at the open oven doors, and starring at the adjacent room with scratched walls. I walked out of the building, looked at the door leading into the first room, then the door leading into the crematorium and up at the mouth of the smoke stack. Enter here, Exit there. I stood there and thought about all of the victims of this heinous place and then I thought about my study abroad group and its list of attractions. How could we possibly experience Europe?



Untitled by Jake Marsh

I Sit



Alex Myers



I sit alone
And I stare
And I wonder.
No beaches behind me,
No mountains beside me,
Just grass all around me,
God damned grass!

I sit and I dream
And I try to forget
That humming sound...
But it keeps me warm
So I ignore it.

I sit and I ponder
What I'm gonna do
What is there to do
When your morning starts at 2:30 in the afternoon?

I sit and I stare
With nowhere all around me
And no one here to find me
But that's okay
because there's nothing to do anyway.

I sit and I query
Why this cold hole of earth
Is where I call home.

Alex Myers

When I could be eating up sun
Or sucking thin air,
But if there's nothing to do here
What is there to do there?
And that's why I'm sitting here.



Untitled by Walter Mickey

The Story



Kristin Crowe



3rd Place Prose Winner



Red-wing black birds nest in the cattails. The high-pitched song of tree frogs echo off the water, punctured by their larger cousins' mating call. The smooth, glassy surface breaks with a little ripple as a snapper takes a breath. Water bugs skim along the surface, hoping not to float too close to a frog. Dragonflies zoom by your ear. Hummingbirds and butterflies take turns frequenting the Lazy-Susans and Shasta daisies in the field behind you. A swarm of bees has taken up residence in a tree on the opposite bank. A dog flushes the black birds out; there were more than you thought. As they settle back in to their hidden nests, a pair of circling geese touch down and a fish pops the surface. A wind rustles the leaves on the trees to your right. You know if you sit here for several days, without moving, the family of kittens and the dog that followed you here would eventually go home. Butterflies and hummingbirds would land on your shoulder. Frogs would forget to be afraid and they and the turtle would come out of hiding. You would catch sight of deer as they came to drink, and watch the geese build a nest. If you stayed long enough, you might get to see the baby blackbirds' first flights. You might become a part of the scenery, a silent observer of the wonders of nature. Instead, you cast your fishing pole and hope for a story worth telling, for no one would believe you if you told them of the majesty you have already encountered.



“Serenity” by Brian Dye

Upbeat Beliefs of a Pessimist



Megan McCormack



Let me free
And let me be
In my little dark
Corner, reading happy poetry

Silly words!
It's so absurd.
Sad poetry
Is for the birds.

Sun's shining.
I'm still crying.
And clocks still tick,
And poetry keeps on rhyming.

Yet I read
Poems that mislead,
Those bright poems
That go against my creed.

I don't get
The Poet's words one bit.
I'm reading lies
Of an optimist hypocrite!

But still?

Let me free
And let me be
In my little dark
Corner, reading happy poetry.



Flicker and Fade



Brad Dowling



Verse 1:
Take extra care not to fray
The delicate edges of memory
We've taken every breath for granted
Our lives are thrown away by increments
Grains of sand, hours and minutes
If we'd only known it was fleeting...

Will there be nice things
Waiting in the wings?

Verse 2:
The stars look on with disappointment
Wondering where all their friends went
So lost in desolate decadence
Just touch and watch the life flicker and fade
Far from this twisted masquerade
And all the torment that we've made

Will there be nice things
Waiting in the wings?

Chorus:
As the sirens sing you to sleep, your last lullaby
No matter how hard I squeeze, your hand won't
squeeze mine
Never wake me up, I can't live without you
If you're going away...I will follow you

Flicker and Fade

Verse 3:

Things once thought indelible are erased
Even love can be misplaced
We cry so desperately, but for nothing
If I've just one message left to convey
You have to cherish every day
But you still won't, and you know it



“Upon Entering Winchester Cathedral” by Mollie Hicok

Cake and Stillness



Ashley B. Nelson



Nothing is planned for my sixth birthday. My parents do not have time for trivialities anymore. I know I will not get presents that have been carefully wrapped in festive paper, my name protected in a card. I know I will not have any guests to cater to my extravagant Birthday whims. But I can do without if my Birthday will only come.

I wiggle around the mattress in anticipation, accidentally kicking Aunt Bridget in the side. She groans sleepily and rolls over heavily. From the floor, I glance quickly up at Mom. She seems to be sleeping, but one never knows now. My bruises are hurting me a little as the blankets chafe my skin, but I take little note. My whole existence hangs expectantly on tomorrow, and I cannot wait for it to come.

My imagination runs rampant with images of balloon-filled rooms and crowds singing in time to the monitor's beeping. Outside, I hear the tireless nurses moving about and vaguely wonder if they know what tomorrow means. I keep twisting around in the covers, worrying them around the bed and bumping into Bridget. Will tomorrow never come?

The next morning, I catapult eagerly out of bed and haphazardly throw tussled covers to the floor in my glee. It is here! My birthday is here! My day is here! It came despite everything!

I soon infect Bridget with spontaneous giggles as I dance wildly around the room and let my hair sting my face. Mom lays on her bed as her smiling eyes follow me around.

“Ashley.” She calls me to her side and I sit gingerly on her bed as if she was an egg. “I have a special surprise for you!” I sit up eagerly. “You can see Dad today. Get all dressed up and go see him.”

This surprise is better than a hundred presents. No, a thousand presents. No, infinity presents. After all, I have not seen my dad since. . . for awhile now. I know exactly what to wear as I pirouette to my paper-bag dresser. Dramatically flourishing a blue flowered dress, my eyes trace the memory-worn collar ribbon. I run back to Mom with eager eyes.

“Mommy, Mommy, I’ll wear this. It is his favorite. He says it brings out my pretty blue eyes.”

Mom smiles sweetly. Infected by my mood, she tickles me and tells me to be quick. Bridget efficiently ushers me into the fluorescently gleaming bathroom. I can barely dress as I prance around. I prattle on and on about how happy Dad will be. When Bridget washes my face, water streams into my talking mouth and my laughter is muffled by the scratchy towel. She starts to brush my hair.

Bridget pauses her brush as she hears music in the hallway. I assure Bridget that it is only music for Sunday, and urge her to brush faster.

Suddenly the door bursts open and the music is overwhelmingly loud. My eyes become saucers as I am struck dumb and motionless with disbelief at what I see. There, at the doorway, is my birthday party.

Nurses in gleaming white crowd into the room warbling off-key accompanied by a man playing an accordion. Balloons hover brightly over their heads as they usher the precious prize to the front. There, in the very center, is a fiercely gleaming cake. It is garishly bright with my name spelled brashly out. Thickly iced flowers dance around my name and spill down the sides. Its intoxicatingly sweet smell mingles heavily with the sickly hospital air, struggling valiantly to overpower it.

I ache from the splendor and extravagance of it all. I did get presents! I did get guests! I have a Birthday party!

I bound around the nurses and thank them over and over, grinning wide grins until my mouth hurts. They smile impishly and wish me well before quickly scattering to their

duties. The music fades. I stand solitary, gripping the cake, my cake. I stare at it intently, wondering.

I gasp in glee. I will take it to Dad and share it with him! We can eat and talk and laugh together. We will be happy, and it will just be like old times, like before. . .like it was awhile ago. And then Mom will have a piece, and we will somehow be a family again. We will all be happy. The cake will make us all happy.

Bridget holds the door open as I carry the cake out, careful not to trip and splatter it on the scrubbed floor. As I look back, Mom is watching.

Bridget leads me to the elevator, steering us past all the familiar rooms and noises, turning corners we have turned time and time again. People stare at us from the depths of their beds. I smile and wave energetically. We come to the elevator and Bridget pushes the button that glows a dim yellow.

Why is it taking so long? I want to see my Dad. I want to see his smiling face and sit in his lap as he tells me he loves me. I want to be tickled until I can not breathe. I want to share the cake with him and have him comment on the piercing sweetness as it tickles his tongue.

I stand in front of his door, shifting from foot to foot in impatience while waiting for Bridget to open it. I look down at the cake and it is still as bright as ever. My name smiles up at me like a shared secret. I step in.

“I brought you a present, Daddy.”

I look up from the cake, and there he is, and there I am shattered. All I can see are the tubes stuffed down his gaping mouth. Many tubes, all defiling the throat I love, invading him, overrunning him, assaulting him, attacking him, consuming him. They are all I can see. My cake is worthless. He can’t have it now.

“Daddy?”

His eyes focus on me, battling the tubes for recognition. He smiles. I cry tears of memories.

Every night for as long as I remember, Dad would secure the house while Mom read to me. Dad had protected me. Mom had protected me. But they had not protected me from the bus. No one could have.

When everything went black and the windshield broke, no one was there to explain or stroke my hair. My parents were moaning and sobbing too loud for my quiet tears of fear to be heard falling to the bloodied leather. I could not even hear myself crying.

When I was held by the stranger, her hands pushed my face into her warm shoulder, refusing to let me see the crumpled car. At the smell of burning and the sound sirens, I struggled to see them. She heard my crying and rocked me gently as her frightened children peered at me.

I had been taped to a stiff board and my neck trapped in a collar even as I twisted in desperation to find them. I heard mom whisper my name when we were in the ambulance. I cried for her hand, her comfort. I found it sticky with blood and tears. It scared me.

Bright lights seared my tears as I was wheeled from person to person, clinging to the stuffed animal one had handed me. In a cramped back room, I sat with mom who was taped to her board in pain, forgotten for hours. Calloused, I read two books over and over, staring numbly at the bright pictures.

Back in Dad's room, I am still in tears, gripping the cake. He is looking at me expectantly, and I must make him happy. I must.

Blinking away the tears, I walk to his side and try to hide the shaming cake. He looks hungrily in my face and smiles again. It is very hard to keep tears from seeping out my scrunched up eyes and ruining the cake.

I end up eating a piece of the cake by myself and struggling not to look at the tubes. He watches me sitting at his bedside. Trying my best to cheer him up, I tell him all about my Birthday party. He smiles appreciatively and

thanks me for bringing the cake and coming myself. I fight back tears.

Bridget slips into the room and guides me to the door. As I look back, Dad is watching.

In the elevator, I stare at my cake. It only has one piece missing.

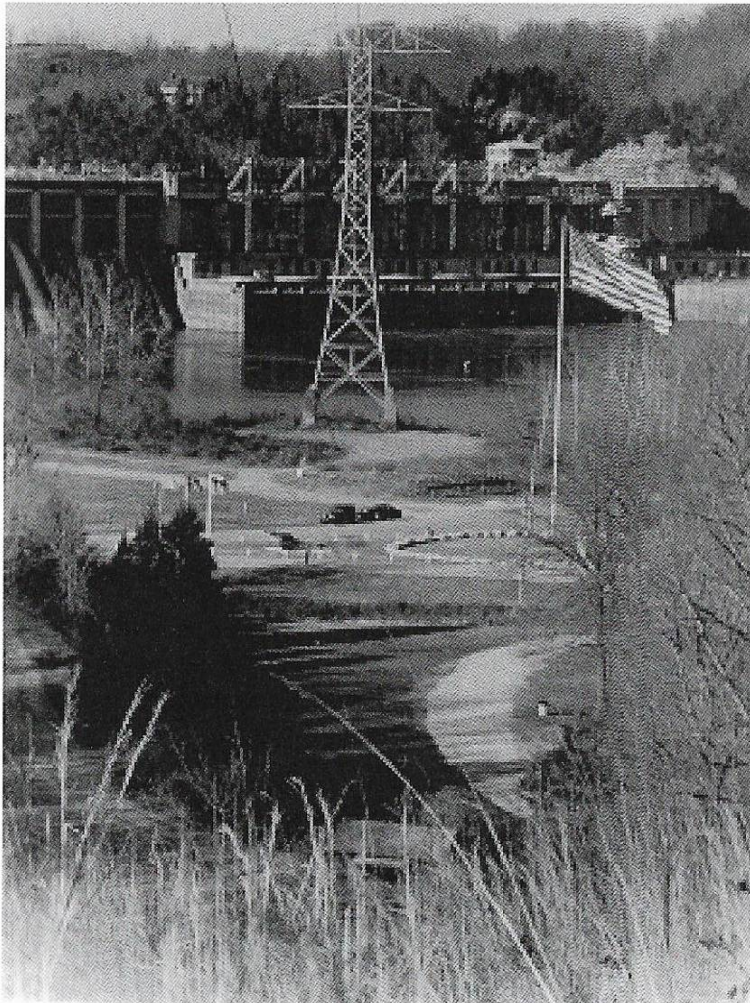
I traipse back to Mom's room and set the cake by her bed. She waits quietly as I carefully cut her a piece with the flimsy plastic butter-knife. My eyes still make things look blurry as I set the piece in front of her. She patiently picks up her plastic fork as I plunge into a comedic tale to make her smile at my gross exaggerations and contorted faces. I forget that she does not like cake, but she eats the whole piece to please me.

That night, Mom gives me another grand gift. She announces during my tooth-brushing that I get to sleep with her tonight. I carefully peel back the sheets and creep in her bed. I lie on my back, as straight as I can, careful not to nudge her.

The lights are flicked off, and worry abruptly obsesses me. What if I roll over in my sleep and hurt her? What if I kick her in my sleep and she gasps in pain?

I lie awake for a lengthy time focusing on perfect stillness, afraid to move or sleep. But the sleep comes, and I dream confused dreams of cake while lying perfectly still.





Untitled by Kelly Hossenlopp

Soldier



Courtney Richter



Sexy, sexy soldier,
with your peaceful defiance and witty silence,
You hold your cigarette like a wand.
I'm sure your mouth is magic, and your tongue-
lashings tickle my mind
and stir up fantasies.
I imagine touching you
like licking a 9-volt battery
that tastes of peach and caramel.
Your smell is what a cowboy's should be,
strong and spicy,
and it reminds me of sex in Spain,
or getting hot and sticky just before it rains.
Then the clouds relax and I melt into you.
It sends shivers down my weak spine
when you whisper-
your breath behind my ear.
The words you say flow like wine on Sunday.
If I were to die here, I'd be clean again.
Your sweat is like holy water to sinners like me
who fight to lick each drop off your pure body.



You Still Don't Understand



Travis Figg



Only look to see, an eye lost in the search to
Find epiphany is not so far removed
To the far and away and I
Lose myself wondering.

Numbers count down from high to low
Are you still beyond the veil?
Only time will kiss eternity, my
Symbols are too translucent.

Understand what it means to say
The world is trembling,
Truer words cannot be found in language
Meaning to speak is unto immolation.

Synchronicity is correlation which
Means causal explanations for casual integrations,
It's a wonder we get anywhere at all in this
Uncertain mode of exchange



Live Now



Alex Myers



Breathe in and just relax...
It's not the time to worry
It's not the time to wonder why
Everything is spinning
Look around, just don't look down

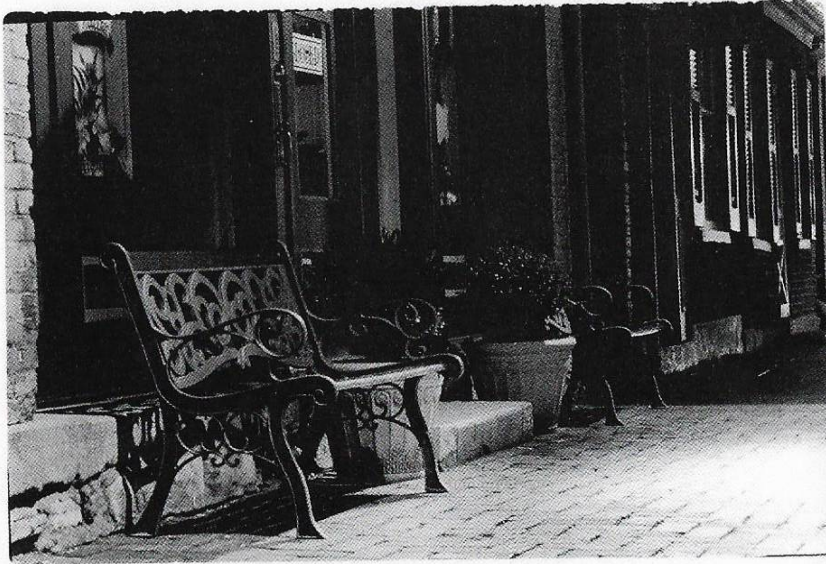
Take in the sights
Take in the sounds
Someday this will all be gone
Don't waste time wondering what was before
And what will never be

Take the time to forget
That which is not worth remembering
Enjoy the time as it winds down

Laughter floats away like butterflies
Pack them in a jar and twist it up tight

Forget the candy coated memories,
Now will never be again.





Untitled by Kelly Hossenlopp

Hope Chest



Laura Smith



White linen once bare,
In and out the needle goes,
Gently tugging the thread of a rose,
Now flowers grow there.

Quietly rocking in her chair,
Whiling away time and sorrows,
While in her lap a garden grows,
The young maiden sits sewing there.

Near her sits the cedar chest,
Hopes of love and tenderness,
Crafts of home and hearth prepared.

Now they are all laid to rest,
Dark in sleepy uselessness,
Lost in love despaired.



A Night in the City



Travis Figg



Preacher said the end is coming soon and I can hear a rumbling in the background. *The bright lights radiate from lamp posts and neon signs, the streets of the mind are full of food and women and music and wine.* The sky will open and the stars will fall, kingdoms of the world will be no more. *The singers extol the wonders of the flesh.* A lonely maiden waits in a room atop a winding stairwell, her prince is drawing near. *Glory be to the synthetic soul.*

World-wise liars surmount to faith in brazen idols, I can feel a hunger in my soul. *Dancer twirls upon a stage, green-bills in droves encourage the play.* The earth will open its ancient maw and swallow the kings of carving coals. *The night is only just born; we've got plenty of time before we must be home.* A lone castle sits degrading, its stones worn and covered with weeds and cobwebs. *Hallelujah to money, man and 'hoes.*

Astronomer points to far-bright omens, I can see a dragon in the darkness. *Swift as sound the hours pass, lightening fast the delectable acts.* The moon will run red with the blood of history; the lovers of war will taste the sword. *Tap the glass and sing the cheers, shiny eyed love of gold and gears.* The armory lies dusty and forlorn; the soldiers have all been called to go. *Thanks be to wild nights.*

The mourners look on in astonishment; I will leave them where they stand. *See the sun like the lit end of a match rising in the east.* The old and decrepit will fall into

Travis Figg

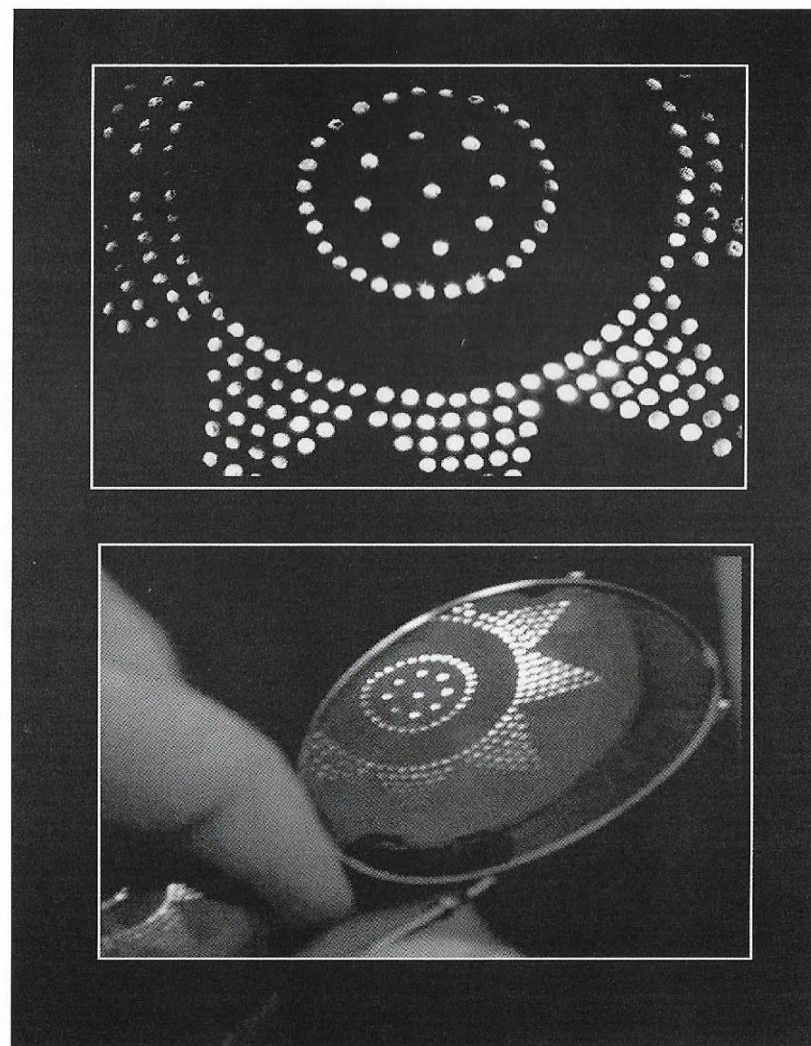
disrepair, a new day is risen. *Dawn is here and we must be on our way back home, night is over and there is no more time to roam.* Brick by brick the castle is thrown down, a new one takes its place. *Could we have done anymore before the coming of the Sun?*



"Venetian Canal" by Colin Kerr
3rd Place Graphics Winner



Untitled by Walter Mickey



“Hamam” by Danielle Becknell



Untitled by Jake Marsh

A Love Song of My Own



Amy Barclay



1st Place Poetry Winner



vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis!
soles occidere et redire possunt;
nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.

Let us go now, you and I,
As the dawn creeps softly nigh,
Before the sun has woke to burn away the mist.
Steal away down through the gloom
To where the wild roses bloom,
A fragrant ring amongst the wood
Where generations before us have stood,
Captivated by the wonders of youth,
Pondering questions of beauty and truth.
Shall our sweet whispers echo sounds of the same?
Do not distract us with such questions,
Or muddle our minds with vague suggestions.

The apple waits for us upon the tree;
Come taste the truth of its nectar with me.

The fields are full of buzzing bees,
Hiding in flowers, quick to sting.
I have encountered so many of these
That my hands become wary, ready to flee.

They long for the beauty, yet know it deceives.
Just give them one blossom, pure and true,
And in it forever will they believe.

Oh, sweet Blossom! I can hear the roar
Of a thousand lovers' bleeding hearts.
They send up desperate, remorseful pleas,
Warnings of what has transpired before
From that winged archer's darkest of arts.
I know their stories, and hesitate -
But it was not darts that joined us, but fate,
And I could not bear a life apart.

Free the apple from the sacred tree;
Taste the truth of its nectar with me.

Shall we follow the path of those gone before,
Those deceitful adulterers who fall to disgrace,
Or those who have fallen only in lust,
Or love that loves only a face?
But ours was not built upon feverish thrusts
Nor a volatile base of things left undiscussed,
And we shall not be broken by secrets and mistrust.

Our love shall start no epic wars
(I'm not so beautiful as that)
Nor shall we be two lovers for love wrapped in death's
embrace.
You shall not have to save me from Hades' reaches
Or perform glorious feats in a far-off land -
For that love is but a grain of sand,
And ours is a thousand worlds of beaches.

If beauty is the only truth we know here,
Come away with me to the edge of the universe
To where we first rose from the dust,

Where the ultimate truths of our lives become clear
(Although at first they may have been veiled by fear)
Lay with me beside the molten river,
As the shores slide one against the other,
Embarking into that virgin frontier.
The river swells and quickens its pace -
And the pulse of the earth begins to race -
Throbbing through mountains and gasping caves -
The river comes now in blazing waves -
Then stills, as the morning stars appear.
I gaze on you, sleepy-eyed and brown curls mussed,
And know that I shall never lay here with another.

Yet how can we resign ourselves to temporary bliss?
This can only end as all things do:
A pretty box, and pretty words, and pretty flowers.
Better to save ourselves the years and tears
Than to pour our souls into that which is in a moment gone.

Do not distract us with these questions and suggestions!
For we will not waste our lives in fear
Of losing things we hold most dear,
Those things that will be worth it after all.
When all the years have come and gone
I'll still remember that first dawn,
All dreamy-eyed and brown curls mussed,
And all the moments in between
When you were king and I was queen;
We'll feather our wings with happy tomorrows
And fly each other through the sorrows
And the gray shall be even sweeter than the brown.

And in the meanwhile, let us stay
And lay awhile on this peaceful naked shore
Embarking on the joys that lie in store -

A Love Song of My Own

Those moments that we shall forever keep:
Drifting off together into sleep,
Giving in to music's easy sway,
Soft, sultry glances across a flickering candle's flame,
Breathing deep your fragrance on the pillow where it lingers,
Dancing through the sunrise and the ocean's salty spray,
Wondering at the life grasped in the tiniest of fingers,
Loving you today,
And every day.

We can worry with our cares another day,
Though I think our troubles shall not run too deep;
For naught can separate two souls so same
And though we may be cast into the fire,
Or balanced on a thin and shaking wire,
Still, one person does in us two abide
So though you are not always by my side,
I shall not weep
For though the sun is gone and the sky is gray,
I know that you are there beyond my eyes
Loving me today,
And every day

We shall watch the leaves grow on the trees,
Life springing up from impossible places;
Tiny green tendrils showing hesitant faces
Will chase the last traces of chill from the world.
We shall see them blossom and fruit
Beneath the cloudless sapphire sky,
And the seeds they have sown shall begin to take root
When at last their banners of gold are unfurled.

And at the end of all the years
I'll see the worst of all my fears
And taste the sad sweet drip of tears.

Amy Barclay

I will cherish every one.

For each shining drop reflects a thousand memories,
Those times that only you and I recall;
Those things I know are worth it after all.

I have heard the mermaids' voices
As I explored these now-familiar shores -
They were yours.



A loose translation of the Latin:

I said to her, darling, I said
let's LIVE and
let's LOVE and
what do we care what those old
purveyors of joylessness say?
(they can go to hell, all of them)
the Sun dies every night
in the morning he's here again
you and I, now,
when our briefly tiny light flicks out,
it's night for us, one single
everlasting
Night.

(Frank Copley, 1957)