

Janus



Westminster College's Literary Magazine
Academic Year Fall 2006 - Spring 2007

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A Bird in Hand by Travis Figg

I ran eagles into oblivion when Caesar called the Census,
the watchmen afraid to flee, thinking
“better to serve than be surpassed,”
and I hoping to last another night here in the outskirts.
The stony silence is carried on the mist,
a fog rolls out of the valley and into the streets
where the beggars look up with sunken eyes
and the peddlers sell secrets for death,
that is the price of life.
He once strong will spread his wings no more
until the long night of sorrow parts for the farandaway,
then that aerial plumage will sprout once more in full array,
but now there are only pinions.
By this quill I will inscribe these formulae,
the sigil of evil evermore,
on this feather stolen from a fair spirit
that soared high and sought higher,
and it was my spirit
that I killed.
The clouds are coming to blot out the sun
while the wind
whisper –
ers
hopefulness and mourning, and can you tell one from the other?
Where is the sun?
hiding behind the clouds,
it does not want to show us its face,
perhaps it is afraid we might inquire of its measure.
Look, there is a shadow on the sky,
it stretches over the moon and
the sequins of dream,
and in that space
an eagle soars.
Or did once

Trails by Casey R. Coffey



Untitled by Danielle Becknell



The Woman by Jessica Cocker

A woman
I did not know
Turned and
Talked to me
About everything
I wasn't
I sat on a bus
On my way home
The dark, cool breeze
The gentle, but overpowering
Hum of the air-conditioner
Made it hard to hear
Or concentrate
I was trying to write
In my old notebook
Despite the many bumps
This woman
I didn't know
Asked
What troubled me so
That I wrote
When I responded
Why did it have to trouble me?
Everyone around me stared
I spoke to an empty seat
I realized then
The woman
I didn't know
Was me

Fighting for Peace by Jennifer Cripe

I'll point my gun at you
You can point yours at me
Let's exchange bullets for a few
Why not? Freedom's not free!
Who said I was a fighter?
Someone to hold a gun?
But for our days to be brighter,
You can't be the only one.
So I will join you brave sir,
With your stars and stripes
And hope in this gray blur
We finally find our rights!
No time for John Lennon songs
We can't imagine our way to peace
I must say a final so long
As on the trigger I release.

Adam and Eve by Jennifer Cripe

The man who blew so hard
He made the winds blow
The man dropped a pebble so far
He made the rivers flow
The one larger than the sky
Who made all the seasons
The one that made the birds fly
Who gave us all our reasons
But then you questioned his abilities
You hated all his laws
And he ended your possibilities
And now exposed you to your flaws

Drowning By Ashley Nelson First Place Prose Winner

My first memory is of a shattered windshield. Staring out through the blood and cracks, trying to understand what the yellow thing was.

The air was blood and burnt rubber. I could hear Mom moaning. I couldn't hear Dad. Grandpa was struggling from the floor to grab my car seat. I didn't even know I was crying.

I found myself held on the road-side by a woman, sobbing in her arms. I kept twisting, trying to see, but she pressed my head on her shoulder and rocked me, repeating herself. It's going to be all right.

I was crying when they forced the neck brace on me and taped me to the board. I just wanted to move, to scream. I found Mom's hand in the ambulance. But it was bloody.

Sterilized wheeling faces hovered, fragmented by blinding lights. Someone gave me a stuffed animal to hold. I just wanted to find Mom.

They put me in a back room with her, but I just remember sitting solitary in the corner, reading two books over and over, numbly staring at the bright pictures. She was taped to a board the whole time.

I was in the hallway with Grandma when a doctor handed her the bottle. Just rub this on her for whiplash. She can go home. She's all right. I smiled and nodded my head.

I didn't know why I lived in Mom's hospital room. Or why I couldn't find Dad. Or why there were no visitors. I refused to

process it. It was all a dream.

On my sixth birthday, they told me I could see Dad for the first time. Mom watched from her hospital bed as I put on his favorite dress, the one that brought out my blue eyes. Suddenly, singing nurses appeared with an accordion and cake. I took that cake happily to Dad, eager to share. But he had tubes stuffed into his mouth. I tried to not hurt him, not to cry. But it was so hard.

Mom let me sleep with her that night. I lay beside her, perfectly straight, every thought bent on not moving, not hurting her. Being brave.

Why do I forget? Why do I remember?

I told close childhood friends my story at sleepovers, my head under the blankets, eyes on the pillow, waiting until the darkness just before sleep to start. I only told the facts. A school bus ran over the car. They kept Mom waiting for hours on that board, then tried to send her home with a broken back. Grandpa almost flew through the windshield. Dad died, but was rescued when a patient gave up his slot for open heart surgery. They never treated his broken back. We had left our old church for a new one and they thought we got what we deserved. No one visited. But we're all fine now. Everything's all right. I would poke my head out to smile a reassurance at my quiet friend.

I never told them my secret. How I pushed Grandpa away from me, back onto the bloody floor when he was so desperately trying to cling to me for help. How remembering made me close my eyes in guilty silence.

For years, every dream was the same. I was running. Running and unable to run, running and being caught, running, just running. Every night running. Once, I ran into a steel cage and couldn't get out.

At school, I turned quietly rigid on field trips with school buses. I steadied my breathing while staring out the window, trying to ignore the blinding yellow and lack of seatbelts. At home, I wouldn't let my parents turn on the car until everyone's seatbelt was on. Otherwise I screamed.

I had a teacher who raised her voice. I wrote on her evaluation that class was like a war zone and I hated it. She called Mom in tears who explained. Trauma does not help marriages.

Home was the war zone. Dad was always screaming at Mom who was always crying. I walked in on Mom in the bathroom, crouched on the toilet and sobbing. I tiptoed around Dad, trying not to give him more reasons to yell at Mom. Mistakes made yelling. Late at night, I lay awake in silence, worrying about divorce.

One night, after Dad was particularly nasty, I left a letter on his pillow. He came in and sat on my bed with it, my pink Christmas lights making him look harmless. He said Mom and him loved each other and would never divorce. That they loved me. He looked at me in silence. You wrote that you're afraid I'll hit Mom. I didn't know where to look. I won't. But the fighting didn't stop.

I decided to run away from the fighting, and wrote a letter to Dad in markers. Red: I don't like home. Purple: You yell all the time. Green: You're mean to Mommy. Yellow: I hate you. He never got that letter. I put it under a hat when I heard him coming. He stopped. He tickled the hurt and anger out of me, pinning me on the ground until I couldn't breathe, promising a new start. A week later, a sleepover friend found the letter. What's this? I grabbed it. Nothing. You must be brave. You can't let anyone see you hurt. Everything's all right. Everything's all right.

My child psychiatrist used to drive me around her parking lot, without our seatbelts. For our last visit, we drove around the city. Without our seatbelts. I felt liberated.

When we moved in sixth grade, Mom and Dad were better. Suddenly, I didn't have to go to bed bravely silent.

Mom came in on me once as I was hitting her good goose-down pillow on a bed in rage. When she tried to take it, I pushed her as hard as I could, flinging her across the room. I started crying and apologizing. She stared at me before walking out.

I picked fights every morning. I would scream at Mom as she drove me to school. One day, I was particularly malicious. I don't remember about what. She warned me. Stop. I continued. It's all your fault. She reached over and slapped me. I stopped. At lunch, I stole into an empty room to call. When Mom picked up, we both sobbed, insisting we were the one to blame. She whispered. Everything is going to be all right.

Dad taught me to drive. He told me to pull into a tight parking space. I protested. I'm not ready. There's an easy one there. Another car took the space. I gripped the wheel, trying not to cry the road away as he screamed. That night, I told him I would never drive unless he stopped. He did.

Around this time, my running dreams completely stopped, and I drove myself to school every day.

Mom and I sat on the couch in pajamas. I breached the silence. I remember the accident. She looks at me. I continue. I want to know what you remember. She smiles oddly and starts.

Dad doesn't remember anything about that day. He had a coma, you know. Me? I remembered everything. I was having panic attacks for years. Dad would try to talk about it. Was he speeding? Did he stop? Could he have avoided it? I couldn't answer him. I just froze up. It would make him so frustrated. He would say things that he later didn't remember.

Dad had his own running dreams, his own guilt.

I felt so guilty for so long. Neither of us had any time for you. I was stuck in bed and Dad was dealing with work and pain. Nurses came in to take care of you. Even when I could get out of bed, I would pick you up from school and fall asleep exhausted from all the doctors.

Nurses at home? I didn't remember them. I remember Mom giving me a book about a rabbit traveling away. No nurses. And not much home.

That house was hell. There were so many awful memories made there. You probably blocked some out. You knew something wasn't right. We moved to make a new start. To get away from there. To get away from it.

In sixth grade, you were angry. You had been brave and careful for so long. Now that we were better, you could have emotions without worrying about hurting us. You were just grieving.

I stare at her. How did I turn out so normal? She laughs. I don't know. I wait. Was I a normal kid? She smiles. Ashley, that's like asking a drowning person how long the person next to them was underwater. We laugh. But it's going to be all right.

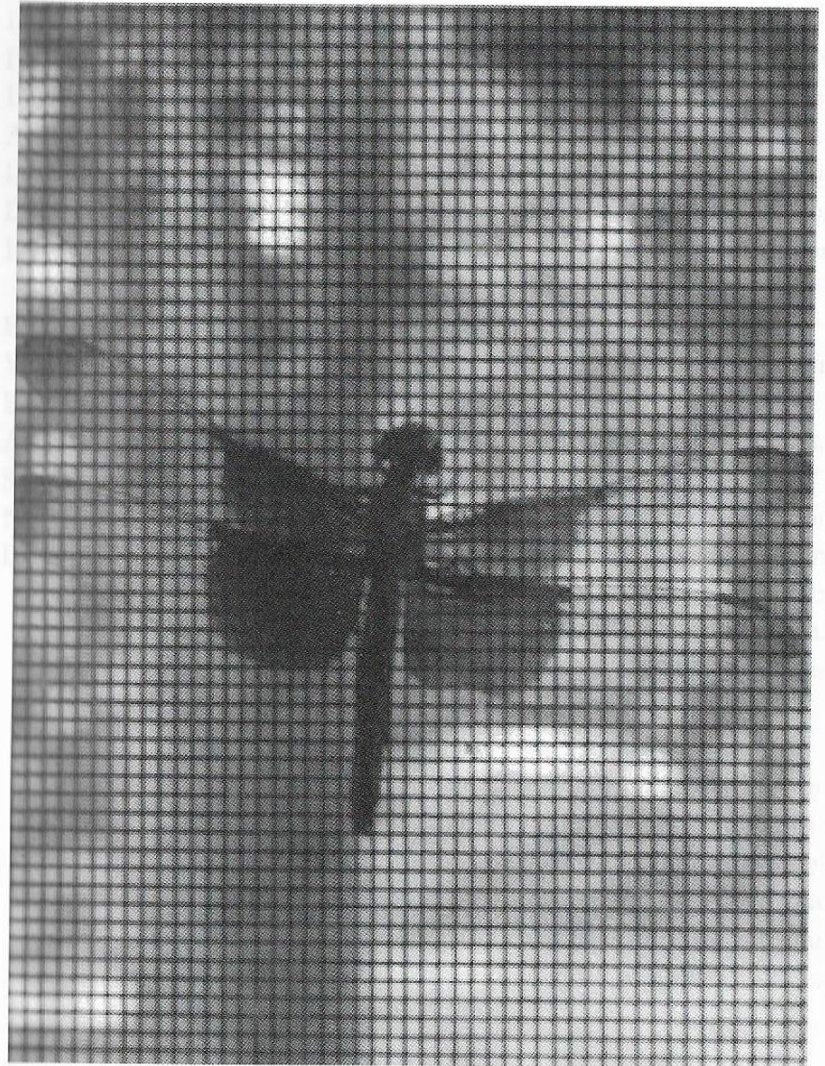
I believe her.

What Matters by Jessica Cocker

Beyond the gospel
You spill about
As though innocent blood
Cleansed your heart
You are so easily abandoned
You more than anyone
Should remember all of that
I am comfortable becoming me again

After you took joy in insulting
Who I am in the center
I disregard the wicked beliefs
Everyone surrounding me
Appears to hold before them
And see straight to
What matters

Untitled by Danielle Becknell



Anomaly by Rhiannon Clause

You're quite the anomaly
You've never meant so much to me
Before
All I had was a tissue and a sore
Sore heart
Nothing falls apart
Like love

Slowly growing, growing up
Growing out and apart
Growing farther away than we are
You've never been so far away from me
Than you are right now
And the distance to you is forever

I'll wait right here for your return
Wait right here and feel the churn
I'll be waiting right here on my own
Yeah, I'll wait right here with my heart of stone

And when your pieces hit the ground
I'm the one who'll hear the sound
Picking them up
Putting them back
Just like that- like they were

I'll put them down
And I'll put them away
Just like every other goddamn day
(please won't you stay?)
I haven't got any better things to do
Than stay around here waiting for you
Waiting for time to stop.

You're quite the anomaly
You've never meant so much to me
Before
All I had was a tissue and a sore
Sore heart
Nothing falls apart
Like love

Holding on to you is like
Holding on to water
It's like I can't keep you
From slipping away
I can't make you stay
And all the good ones leave anyway
I don't care what they say
Love's not like wine
It doesn't get better with time

But you're quite the anomaly
You've never meant so much to me
Before
All I had was a tissue and a sore
Sore heart
Nothing falls apart
Like love

I'm Nothing by Jacob Jackson

I'm nothing,

I have no real importance.
It's a simple fact that I've come to accept.
I mean nothing, and represent nothing,
But to her I'm everything...

I am empty,
Nothing but a shell.
I have no purpose, no meaning.
But to her I mean more than that.

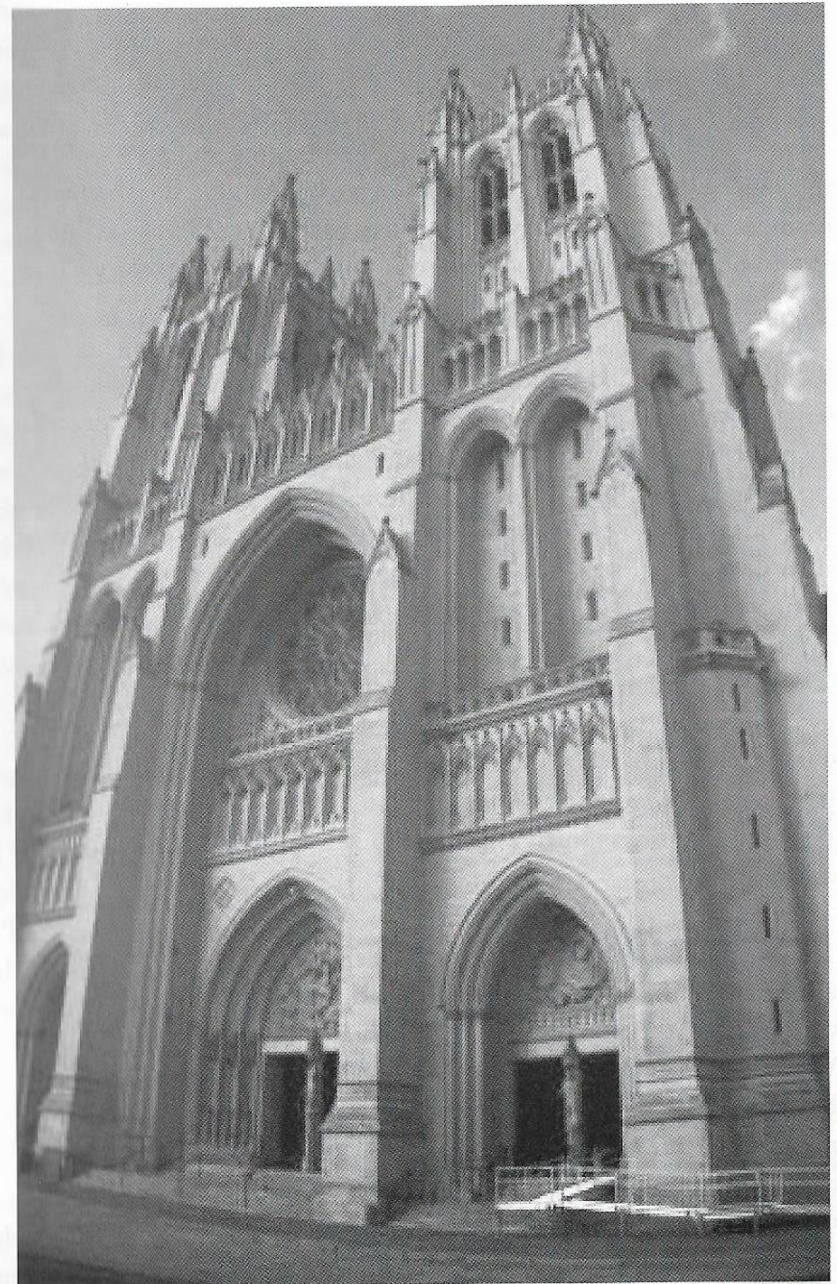
I want nothing,
I have no desire, no fantasy,
I want nothing more out of life,
Than to make her happy...

I don't need anything,
I don't need light,
I don't need air,
She's all I need to survive...

She's my love,
My one true someone.
And I wouldn't trade her for the world.
Because without her...

I'm nothing...

Camden Yards by James Kienker



Anniversary by Jessica Chase 2nd Place Prose Winner

I looked over to Denise. God, she was so beautiful even after all these years. I still loved to wrap my arms around her and playfully grab at her bottom as she looked up into my eyes with a smirk. The ebbing in and out in front of our sanded beach chairs reminded me of our honeymoon thirty years ago. We had come here to St. Barth's again to renew our vows and relive what we had so long ago.

Denise stretched beside me in her chair like a cat, slipped off her tinted aviator glasses, and said, "Care for a quick swim, dear?" My heart began to flutter with the anticipation of what would come soon...but now was not the time. I gave her a toothy grin, "No, not quite yet. It isn't time." Her green eyes had a moment of confusion, but it passed as she shrugged and rose from her chair, dusting off the sand. "All right then, I'll go by myself."

I willed myself not to look at her with the wanting that I had in my mind. It had to wait. Now was not the time. The sun wasn't in the right place. An hour more when everyone was gone from the beach. She wouldn't remember the time of the day when our special moment was thirty years ago, but I did. I remembered all too well.

I watched her swim out with strong strokes. She was already tanned even though we had only been here for a few days. We were staying at the Seclusion On The Beach Hotel, just like before. Arrived here on January 18 same as before. I even managed to get the same room that we had before, although the sheets and tacky pictures on the walls had changed. I doubt that Denise had noticed all of these things, but I have always been the one with the good memory. I would have had the same priest that we had before, but I was told he died three years ago while jaywalking. Whoops.

As Denise started to swim back in, I began to feel antsy. My hands started twitching in part delight, part nervousness. I felt as edgy as a high school prom date with his father's car. I couldn't let her see; she saw into me closely already. All would be lost if she found out what I had planned for our anniversary. I sat up, casually got out of my chair and knelt in front of it, playing in the sand like a child. The digging hid my hands from her glance as she came out of the water, wringing her hair and watching me try to rescue my growing pile of sand from the surf. I told myself to relax. The right time would come and she had no idea.

My castle was shitty. I had never been good with artistic things. I stood and looked down at the finished product with its sloping walls and the egg-shaped moat. Denise shot a look over the top of her bodice-ripper novel and giggled at my creation. I tossed some wet sand good-naturedly at her feet. "If it's that bad, come help me destroy the damn thing and we can forget it ever existed!" She put the marker in her book and stood. We killed my castle. Stomping feet and keeping balance until it was a smooshed mound of wet, sandy nothing, the waves coming in to help. I grasped her wrist and with a smile, pulled her to me. Against me. It was time now.

I looked over her shoulder down the beach and then mischievously twirled us around to look the other way. Perfectly clear. No one in sight and the hotel was half a mile down the beach. I whispered in her ear, "I have an anniversary surprise for you." She pulled back slightly with a smile on her face and a frown in her eyes. "Really? What kind of surprise is it?" she asked me. My god, does she know? I put on my most convincing smile. "If I told you, I'd have to kill you."

I led her over to our chairs and pushed her lightly on the shoulders signaling her to sit. Then, as she watched me with slight concern, I pulled out a bandana from my beach bag. "You can't look as I get everything ready, it will ruin the surprise!" For some reason, she visibly relaxed. She gave a small sigh, placed an accommodating smile on her face and allowed me to tie the bandana around her

eyes. As I pulled my hands from the knot, I noticed the tremble had returned. "Alright?" I could hear the slight shiver in my voice, did she? "Yes, I'm fine."

Now was when I had to hurry. I pulled everything that I needed from my bag. She cocked her head when she heard the metal, but sat still despite it. When I had everything out, I kneeled in front of her and snapped the handcuffs onto her ankles. She started to raise her hands to pull off the hanky. "What are you---?" I snapped one end of the other pair of handcuffs around her left wrist, barely managed to pull down the other hand, and slipped the glinting metal around it to snap it shut.

She was calm. "Roger, if this is some kinky sex game that you have planned out," her voice hardened, "I am not amused. Now undo these cuffs and let me go." Her voice still had the lilt of a kindergarten teacher reprimanding her students. She lifted her hands and pushed back the bandana. I stepped back and watched her eyes go back and forth between the weights, the bottle of Cristal, the rope and the single flute glass. There was confusion in her eyes and I loved it. The confusion meant that she had no idea what was coming nor why. "Honey, why don't you sit back in your chair. I am going to tell you a story and when the story is over, I will tell you what your surprise is."

I told her the story of a young man who fell in love. Not just any love, but head over heels, the only-love-you-find-in-stories love. He married the woman he loved and they went on their honeymoon at St. Barth's. He had gone to his wedding bed a virgin and she had taught him everything. Then one day when he was walking on the beach in a daze of love, he had seen in the distance two bodies lying on the sand. His curiosity rose and he quietly walked closer only to see that it was his wife lying asleep, half naked with her head on another man's chest, a condom wrapper on the towel next to them. The dark man laying next to his wife lifted his head and saw a man about twenty feet down with his mouth open. Staring. He motioned to the gape-mouthed man with a finger across his mouth and a smirk

on his lips. The gape-mouthed man snapped his jaw closed and did an about face. He returned to his hotel room and laid down on his wedding bed. He slept. When his wife returned, he awoke and gave her a smile. He asked her if she enjoyed her walk on the beach. She said yes, but it was kind of boring. The man remembered the day, the place, the time. And then he got what he wanted thirty years later.

"If you haven't guessed by now, sweetie, what it is that I wanted then and I still want now, I suppose you aren't as smart as I always thought." I looked at the horror in her eyes, she was shaking her head slowly as if that would change my mind. Suddenly she bolted. Of course, with the handcuffs on her feet, she only stumbled and fell in the sand on her face, but it still caught me by surprise. I grabbed her by her feet and pulled her back toward the chairs. Her left breast was uncovered by her struggles and I was surprised that even after thirty years she was still desirable to me, but I shut that thought down.

I knocked her on the temple with one of the smaller weights that I had. It made a satisfying noise, like hitting a wall with a racquetball. Her head slumped down into the sand and her breathing resumed to normal. In a hurry now, I tied the weights to the rope and the rope about my beautiful wife. She had always been light and now she was only about twenty five pounds heavier. I lifted her into my arms like the traditional husband carries his wife over the doorway of their house. Her head lolled and the weights knocked against my stomach as I waded out into the sea.

The water seemed to revive her a bit and she fluttered her eyelids and looked up at me. I looked down into her gorgeous eyes. I was up to my chest now in the water and she was fully awake. She never said a word until I kissed her on the head and started to lower her underwater. "Roger please I never meant for that to happen we just met it was the only time I swear don't do this Roger what about the kids Roger Roger Roger." I gently let her sink, feeling her thrash about trying to keep her head in the air. I held her down in the saltwater. I tasted the salty drops on my cheeks. I held her under

until even the twitches stopped and I swam out fifty feet, pulling her along underwater. Then I let her drop.

As I came back onto the shore, I pulled my towel off of the back of my chair, dried my hair, and sat down. I pulled the corkscrew out of the bag and snatched the bottle of Cristal. I plunged the screw down and felt better even as I heard the pop! of the cork letting go. I poured myself a glass of the clear, fruity, golden liquid. Laid back against the chair back. I raised my glass in a silent acknowledgment to the sea. I drank a deep draught, the bubbles tickled my nose, and held another salute in the air.

“Happy Anniversary.”

Untitled by Stephanie Gordon



Felt Elbows by Jennifer Cripe

He wears those jackets with the felt elbows. I've experienced the type. Dry words flowing desert-like from his chapped lips to the floor with no bounce, just falling and cracking with a bone breaking sound. With words like that he would need someone moist to let his ideas soak into. Good thing I'm like fire! I'll only disintegrate what's already dry inside him. He was once a river, a river that flowed of poetry and beautiful sonnets. He met me, his eyes became big, round, then bloodshot, and he dried up; only to speak sand and dust. He wears those jackets with the felt elbows. He would like a glass of water.

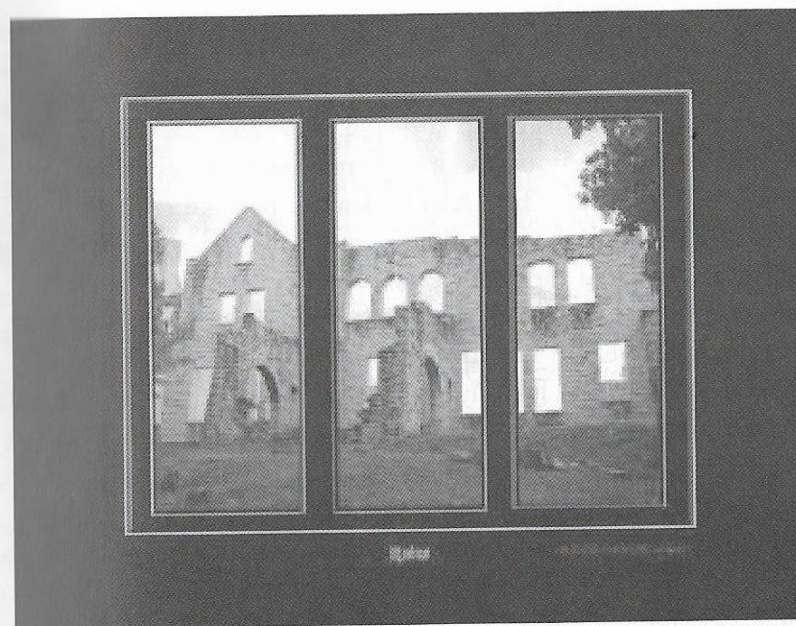
Building by Liz Blood



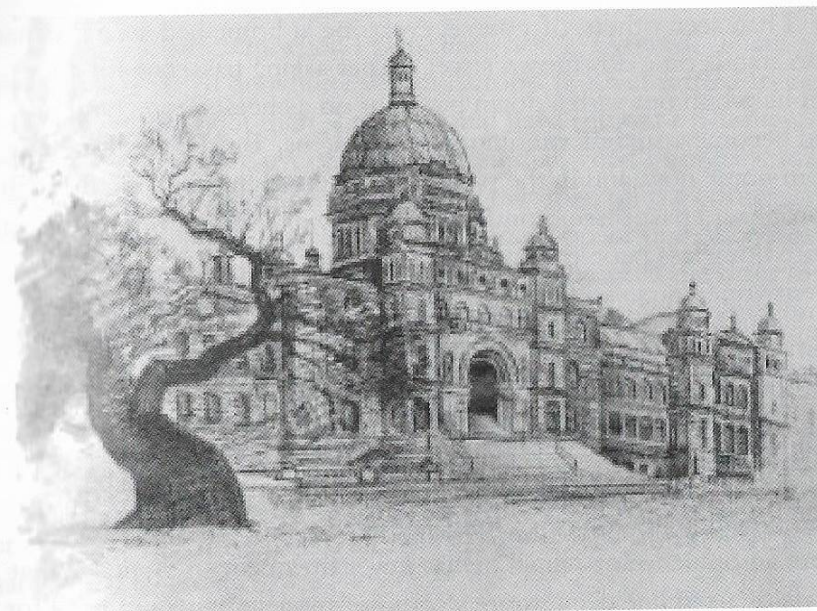
Randomness by Claudia Cerna

“That is the most unattractive thing
In a woman,” he said
Taking me in his arms
Like a pillow ready to be discarded
His hands were cold
White, like marble
The gum-chewer
Cast a belittling glance
Upon his devious smile
Pulling out a stringy glob
She placed it ‘twixt his eyes
Laughing now, despite myself
I look to him and say
“That is the most unattractive thing
In a man,” then turn
To walk away
Passing now the silver orbs
That dance amidst the night
Snapping now the bubblelicious
I whistle frightful tunes
The moonlight casts its bashful light
Upon the darkened street
Disappearing, echoes heard, your every evil word
Little men now fly around with arrows
Pointed straight. Voices breaking silence loud
Isn't this night great?
Running now he reaches me to say “I adore you!”
However, I push him away, and continue on.
He mumbles as I leave, “That is,
The most unattractive thing...in a woman...”

Ruins by Sasha Mirzoyan



3 by Sasha Mirzoyan



Sono Povero by Amy Barclay

Sono povero. Aiutarme, prego.

We shuffle slowly past the broken boy on the mat who is desperately clutching his cardboard sign. *I am poor. Please help me.* The children stare, curious about this creature so like them but so markedly different. The adults look away, pretend not to see, annoyed by this intrusion into their comfortable lives, this disruption of their long-awaited vacation. I am caught somewhere between; my mother's voice is echoing through my head, reminding me that it isn't nice to stare, but I cannot yet look away, cannot yet tear my gaze from this boy and leave him alone in the crowd once more. He doesn't speak, just looks at us with sorrowful eyes. Soulful eyes, the eyes of an artist, a dancer, maybe. But those twisted feet will never dance, never do anything more than lie there, hoping for enough pennies, for a bit of bread, as the line shuffles past, thousands of us, excited, irritated by the rain, impatient to reach the treasures we have come to see, the millions of dollars that the Vatican has spent on art. Jesus loves art.

I had seen others, of course; everyone at home had seen the man who stands on a downtown street corner asking passers-by if they can help him out with a down payment on a cheeseburger, and he had become a sort of running joke among us. But I was a long way from home now, and in the past three weeks spent traveling through Europe and past three months spent studying in England, I had seen more homeless people than I had encountered in all the rest of my twenty-one years. Defeated men unable to meet the gaze of those they solicit; a woman pleading in a language she doesn't understand, hoping someone will take pity on her dying sister; a mother hiding her eyes while her children are left to face the world, holding out a shabby sign and tiny cupped hands, beginning their own sad journey down the same path that has led their mother to this street corner. And now this boy, on the wrong side of the wall, a stone's throw from an opulence of which he has never dreamed, an opulence that those of us in line deem more worth our money than a hot meal for

this child.

The next day, as the world zoomed by the train window, a blur of green and brown and blue, I tried to convince myself that there was nothing I could have done. I couldn't afford to give him anything, really. We were barely getting by as it was, staying in questionable hostels, consuming as much of the free morning toast and coffee as possible so that we could save money by skipping lunch. The exchange rate was terrible, and we still had another week of travel and another six weeks of living expenses in England to get through on the little that we had left. And there were so many in need, so many....I could spare a few coins for this boy, yes, but what about all the rest? I could not even begin to help them all, so how could I have chosen this boy over all the others? Most of them were probably just trying to take advantage of people, anyway, I told myself, using their children to prey on the sympathies of gullible American tourists like me. But the empty justifications echoed hollowly in my mind. I could help them if I really wanted to; how many people could be fed, clothed, housed, with the money that I had spent on my semester in England, on my travels in Europe, on all those nights in the pub with my new British friends?

I would be different when I went back home, I vowed. There was nothing I could do while I was in Europe; if I had started trying to save the world right then, I really would have run out of money before my travels were over. But I decided that when I got back to Missouri, I would buy a cheeseburger for that man on the corner, send some blankets to the homeless shelters, sponsor one of those third-world children whose heartbreaking faces beseech me from the television screen. If I lived a little less frivolously, cut back, even on my college student's budget, if I ate Spaghettios instead of eating out, then that boy outside the Vatican might be able to eat as well. But now I am back at home, and I have not stopped eating out and going to the bar on Saturday nights. I have not bought that man downtown a cheeseburger, and the last time an emaciated little girl in rags lifted her eyes to mine across two continents and the television screen, I changed the channel.

Sanctuary by Liz Blood

warm pink and solitary
I sit on the floor, the rug.
I watch the tiles –
cool, retro, patterns.

the day runs through
my head and the water
into the chalky and worn tub,
grungy behind the stained curtain.
a murky porcelain holding
my water, mother and secrets.

beneath the rug that
tickles my legs below the
faded orange towels and next
to the pea-green tackle box
hiding my purple middle
school nail polish,
the small tiles are arranged
just so.

brighter than the rest.

before the dixie cups and
electric toothbrushes,
held by the china
warmed by the gas heater
seated on the rug,
we never completely left.

Couldn't Love You More by Sarah Black-

You're such a perfect boy now
Such a perfect man, now, I might say
But I must confess
You're so much better when you're unsatisfied

Because I never loved you more
Than when you were flawed and fruitless
Young but useless
And when angered, ruthless

I never knew you were beautiful
Until I saw the tears in your eyes
Trapped inside a hard, hard shell

No, I couldn't love you more
Than when you are cold and desperate
Waiting for the comedown in the back of your car

No, I couldn't love you more
Than when your body is soaked
Standing in the shower with all your clothes on
Just letting the water run down

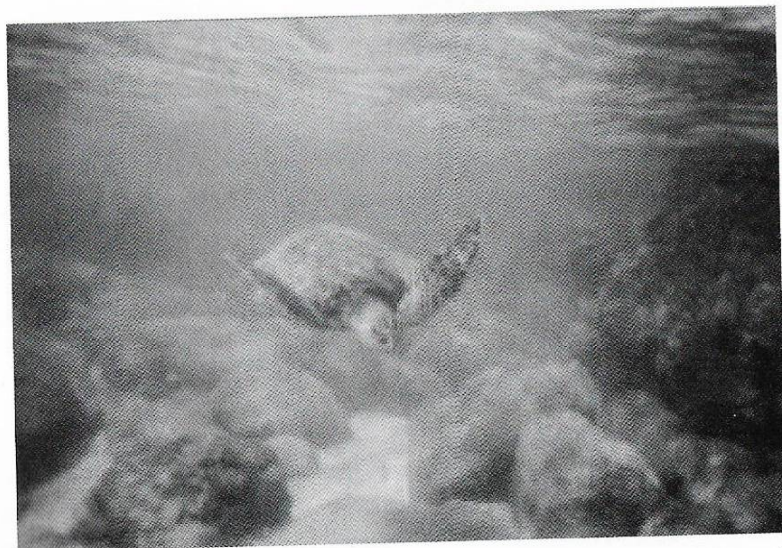
No, I couldn't love you more
Than when you're fast and breathless
Yanking off your necklace
Hurling it into the nearest garbage can

So curse the girls that make you hurt
And bring back your warm, if reluctant, embrace
Lay your body down in my bed
And I'll just sleep on the floor
I will just sleep on the floor
As I listen to you breathe
Counting the seconds between the ins and outs

Making sure we didn't get ourselves too strung out
Making sure we didn't take too much this time
Making sure we didn't kill ourselves this time

No boy, no man
Will ever be as beautiful as you
As when you're eyes are wet and you're trying not to cry
I only saw the tears once before
But ever since then
They're all I can see
When I look into your eyes

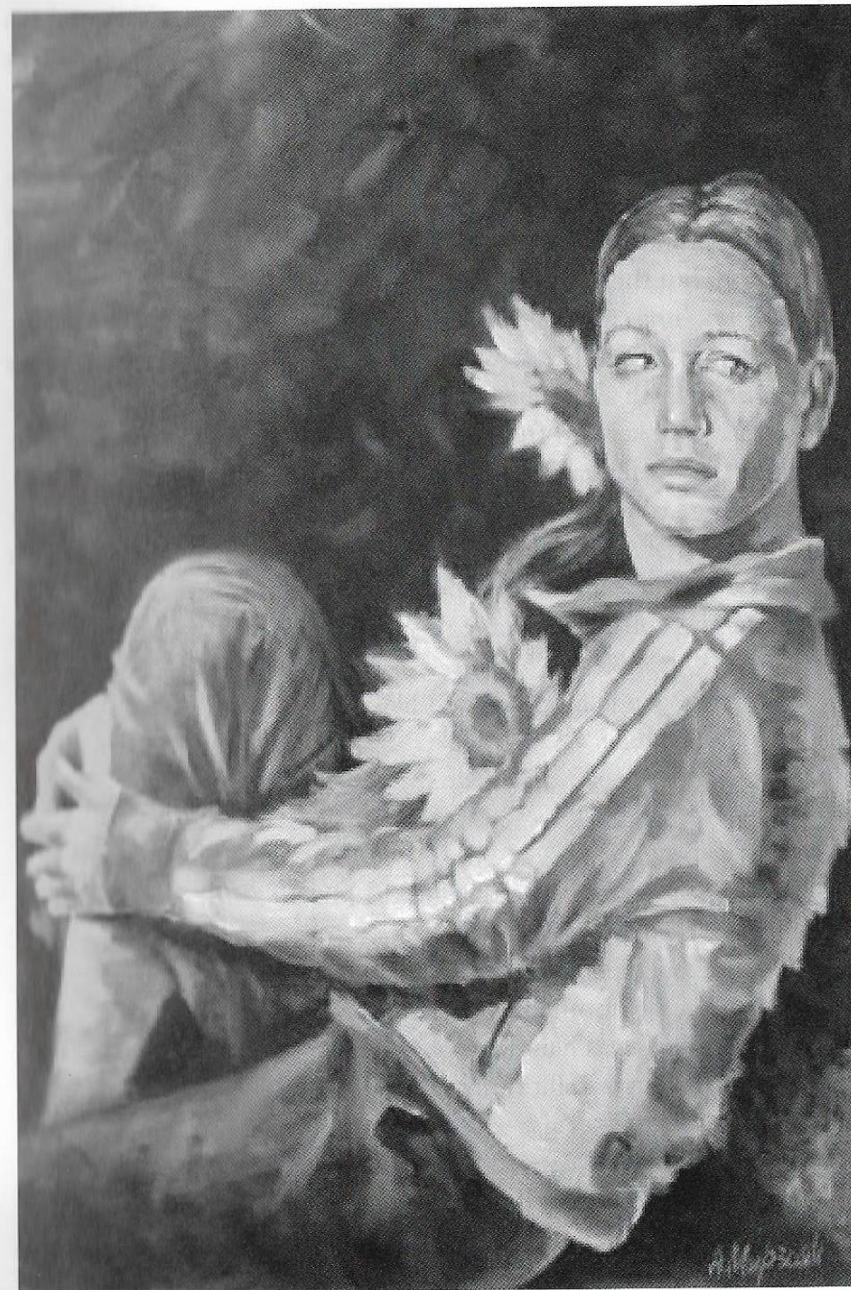
Snorkeling by Abby Stuck



Kiss by Amy Barclay

Whisper-soft, like eyelashes
Fluttering against my skin.
Tasting you, I taste myself
Two halves come whole again.

Untitled by Sasha Mirzoyan 2nd Place Graphics Winner



Mumsey by Liz Blood 2nd Place Prose Winner

Dad phoned his mother to let her know we wouldn't make it in time for dinner. We were stopping at The Hungry Traveler. The three hour car ride was dragging on and on, seeming eternal. Emily, my sister, sat next to me in the booth and we excitedly discussed what we would order. For our family, eating out meant either our mother was gone for the night and dad was left to the task, or we were on vacation. I didn't classify the trips to Muskogee, Oklahoma as vacation, but there we were.

I slid into the plastic booth and Em followed close behind. After deliberating which all-American meals we would have, I ordered the chicken strip basket and french fries, complete with honey mustard dippin' sauce. Emily had the cheeseburger plate. Dad said a prayer before eating, asking God to bless the food we were about to eat, to help it to nourish our bodies, and to watch over our family. I bit into a chicken strip, crumbs falling about, and then he asked me why I didn't like his mother.

"What are you talking about? I like her fine."

"No. No, you don't. You hate my mother and I want to know why."

"Yeah, you don't like Mumsey and I know it."

Emily had a way of chiming in. She chimed in when everything could have been smoothed over, had no one said a word. She chimed in when I was handling the situation fine – and contradicted me. She chimed in to tell the truth, and I resented it.

"Well," I began, "Mumsey doesn't like me. She likes Emily, because Emily is like you, dad. She hates me because I'm not." As the eldest of three, my father was her model of how a child should look and act. The tears were starting to well, the lump in my throat

growing bigger. "I'm too skinny, my hair is in my face, she hates my jokes; you name it – she doesn't like it."

"Now you know that's just not true. Mumsey loves you all just the same. You know, I told her that you thought she didn't like you. It made her cry."

An hour away from my grandmother's wide, watching, judging eyes, he tells me this in the Hungry Traveler. The waitress comes to refill our water. I need it bad. My throat is burning. How could he tell her?

"I never told you that you could say that. You didn't even ask me!" In the plastic leather booth, surrounded by my chicken strip crumbs and my little sister, I started to cry.

We arrived at my grandparent's house in time for desert – banana fluff, Emily's favorite and my foe. Mumsey started in.

"Elizabeth, are they not feeding you right? You need some meat on those bones." Mumsey always said that. "What are you feeding this child?" She continued.

"Well, mom, she's just little. You know, fast metabolism or something." My dad gave clumsy answers. He liked to call me "bird legs," as a joke.

"I eat fine, Mumsey. A lot, really." I didn't sound convincing.

"Well, you'd never guess," she said, taking a nice long puff of her cigarette.

Emily looked at me. Her expression told me to just forget about it. And so I tried. We talked about other things, like what we were doing in school and how art lessons were going. Then we talked about why I never came to visit. You'd never guess, I thought.

* * *

Mumsey was quite a character. Immediately upon entering the house you were greeted with lung-stinging smoke hanging in the air, and the wet kiss which followed the entrance, not quite on your mouth, but too close for comfort. She had a small build and wore giant sunglasses and the wildest sequin sweaters I've ever seen. What she lacked in size she made up for in voice and opinion. Once, I told her the cigarette smoke was upsetting my asthma, and she told me that I knew she smoked when I chose to visit, so I could just deal with it. She was more intimidating than my weight-lifting, football-playing cousins. It was a standing rule in her house that her grandchildren were not allowed to leave the table until they had cleaned their plates and had been offered seconds, multiple times.

She loved to cook for her family, though some of her choices made me shudder. Cream-style corn was one of her favorites, and, to make matters worse, it was always canned. Milk was another issue. I was never allowed to drink water or juice – it was always a tall glass of milk which accompanied every meal. The problem was, I couldn't stand milk and, because I had to drink it, I gagged. Sometimes I could get Emily to drink it for me when no one was paying attention. In this way, I saw myself suffering through many meals, eating as much as I could, though it was never enough. "They need to teach you how to eat, Elizabeth," she'd start. "You look like you're starving."

* * *

A few years ago, Mumsey had a series of operations – five, I think, in two years. She had half a lung removed due to cancer, her back was operated on twice, and three other times she incurred major problems with an infection. At first, I made up excuses and didn't go to see her except when a visit was terribly overdue. When I did make it to her house or the hospital, the way she looked upset me so much I would want to leave. She was a smaller, weakened version of her old self. Where she had once been loud, boisterously greeting every

visitor, she couldn't get up without tremendous effort and wincing. She seemed to lack even the lung capacity to put forth a hearty greeting.

On one hospital visit, I looked at her lying on the bed, the tray of food pushed aside, untouched. Chicken, rice, chocolate pudding, and water. My dad woke her up and we sat down next to the bed. She had tubes up her nose and had lost so much weight I hardly recognized her. When I asked how she was doing, she said she was "peachy-keen and ginger-dandy." She was so small, her skin lay around her bones – there was no muscle, no fat. Dad pleaded with her to eat, and she resisted the first few times, saying she wasn't hungry. Eventually he got through to her; she gave in and had a few bites.

For moments at a time I would stare at her, unable to look away. But, if she turned to look at me, I would quickly avert my eyes. I couldn't help but think of the countless times she'd told me to eat more, more, more. In effect, she'd practically forced the pork chop casserole and jello salad down my throat. You need more meat on your bones, I remembered. All those moments, sitting squished in between the dinner table and the turquoise wall of their kitchen, counting the butterfly magnets on the fridge and waiting to be excused – came flooding back.

In my mind's eye, I saw normal Mumsey. She stood five feet and three inches tall, as did I. Just like her, I didn't gain weight even if I did eat more and more. For my entire life, my dad has been saying I looked just like her, but I always brushed it off. It turns out, I realize I am snappy like her and I even wear some pretty funky sweaters. Maybe that insisting all those years, telling me I needed to grow, to be a bigger, better version of myself, was driven from a self recognition which she found in me. Whether good or bad, I don't know, but I saw myself in her that day: lying on the hospital bed, pushing the meal away, no flesh to keep me warm.

MeandYou by Alex Myers

I'm only clever so you'll crack that smile
To me as beautiful as a sun-lit orange slice in a field of marigolds
I'm so in love with myself,
So when two words from you
Make me want to read you
Trace my fingers
Over every volume, and page and word and letter
Highlighting you and making notes in the margins
Alarms ring in my head like a bull-run through a bell choir
Either I've fallen into a thorn patch or woken up in a rose garden
I remember when it hit us

Like a Mack tanker truck full of ambrosia
A symphonious harmony broke through the static
You hanging on my every word
But then me soaking up you
For that gifted snow globe moment in time

You were my Metatron
Translating the voice of the heavens
Into my delicate human ears
Before our eyes we went

From being adults to infantile children
Escaping into fantastical innocence
To me you were honey
And I the rock below the hive

Waiting for every drop of grace
Our bubble popped and our world emptied
Ejecting me like an adrenaline junky test pilot
Floating from cloud nine
down to earth
on a parachute of ecstasy.

Skimming the Surface by Katie Pilgram



And Stuff by Anna Cherry

The sky looks like oil and my stomach is empty. I sit in the passenger seat pattering two fingers on the dash while my mother looks impatient waiting for the car to fill up. Neither of us speaks, but this is not because of the metal and fiberglass separating us. I drum faster, hopelessly anticipating her return. The smell of gasoline drifts through the window, the ripe copper scent tweaking my nose. "God," I sigh. The word unfurls like a cat, the ah sound groaning, and I note the look of boredom my mother has veiled across her face in the lucid gas pump fluorescents, a clever expression used to mask whatever emotion currently resides in her skull. I have not yet mastered this. Instead, my eyes tend to glaze over in a cattle-like stare, the infamous twitch eventually starting beneath my eye. A minute tadpole quiver under rice paper. I've been told I look as if I'm

experiencing some sort of seizure.

The crescent moon of my left breast shines against black polyester. My skirt, a huge strip of waved material, is paired with the similarly ridged poofy sleeves, and I look simply, like a redundant ruffle. Buttons smooth to my torso remind me to suck in. In and up...This is what I have learned at fat camp. A month of "guided exercise and food managing" and all I've learned is black is slimming and I eat too much. My mother starts the engine, situating herself in the carpeted driver seat. She basically forced me to go to the camp, threatening the omission of summer vacation if I refused, and I wonder momentarily if she feels guilty. I wonder if I look sad and somehow more lovable in my ridiculous mournful button-up blouse.

"So," she makes a popping sound with her tongue, "how was it?"

I take a considerable amount of time to turn and look at the side of her face; she pretends not to notice.

Turning back to face forward, my ruffled sleeves frown. "Fine." She is the trainer (so benevolently determined) and I am the abused, impossible rottweiler snapping at her fingers whenever they come close. She takes a deep breath, pressing her lips together into the small, angry smile of exasperation before a trainer's second attempt.

"Okay--Well, what was it like?"

I feign thoughtfulness, focusing with effort on the Tennessee license plate straight ahead.

"The bathrooms smelled like shit and vomit."

"Don't talk like that!" She snaps, her fingers tightening around the wheel.

"Sorry," I mutter, but she's already yelling into my controlled silence, burying my apology, her aloof and calm collectedness vanished.

"For Christ's sake, Deidra, how many times do I have to justify myself to you? I did what I thought--what was best for you. So you can have more opportunities, so you," she puts extra emphasis on you, "can feel part of the group."

I glance at the poor strangled steering wheel. We don't speak the rest of the way home.

My mother goes straight to her room and I wander into the living room, where my dad sits in a maroon, flowered recliner reading *Goodnight, Moon* with fixed perplexity. He writes children's books and is constantly reading others to 'refuel his childlike mentality.'

He looks up, the eyebrow furrow slowly regressing. I stare back blankly.

"Well," he pauses, owl eyes raised up over the rims of his glasses, "you look thinner." He says this in an at-least tone I am less than flattered by. "Seven pounds!" I sing with sarcastic cheer. "Good, good," he mumbles, already removing his eyes from me and resting his chin in his palm, fingers spread out across his mouth like an Indian.

"Yeah, thanks." I leave him alone. *Goodnight, Moon.*

This room aches with silence. Looking out the huge glass window I see a parody of cars gliding by, so soundless, the big hand of God may be sliding them along like toys. I slipped out early this morning, scribbling "Gone to library" on a shredding napkin next to my mother's lukewarm pre-work cup of coffee, partially as an after thought that my dad may at one point venture out to the fridge and wonder where I am, but mainly as a joke to myself, pretending he might actually notice I'm gone; pretending I am a member of a family who leaves notes reading "Gone to library" on shredded napkins for one another.

As closing time nears, anxiety carbonates my chest, an uneasiness caused by nothing in particular but simply being alive. I grow impatient with Maura Sikes, the author of the novel I've read all day. There are people, who, after talking to or interacting with them, we begin to see differently; notice the certain appeal of their facial structure, or are drawn to a demeanor, an expression, and, in our arrogance or naiveté, fancy the idea that maybe we are the only ones who have discovered their beauty; the only ones who can truly see that this person is quite attractive. I think out of this comes the idealistic hope that 'beauty really is in the eye of the beholder.' Of course though, we come to find soon, by our tragic unoriginality as humans that (naturally) many other people have and do come

to the same conclusion about the person. But then there are those rare people who are nakedly beautiful. The people who exist as objective, unarguable specimens of beauty. The ones we all know to be this way, but in our egotism find less fun to discuss the beauty of, because it is so blatant and obvious and takes no artistic eye to identify. It is the latter who exist in the novels of Maura Sikes. Always the women with the swelling bosom bursting quiveringly out of the wine glass neck of a torso; the men with the rippling abs and the swelling manhood bursting quiveringly...and so on. I once asked my cousin why there were never any common people in Maura Sikes' novels.

She blinked as if the answer was universal and why didn't I understand. "No one wants to think about old people and stuff having sex."

An athlete from school sits in one of the tacky Good Will chairs, placed strategically around certain blank areas of the library seemingly to achieve some sort of 'atmosphere.' Athletes are worst. Juxtaposed against this religiously attended to body, mine is loose skin, a lazy discrimination against Plato's The Form of human and the legit naked beauties. He looks over at me and I turn the corners of my mouth up briefly instead of a white flag. He stares at me, coolly unresponsive, and my eyes fall back to the banal black and white of page. I feel out of turn with every breath, movement; afraid the hinges of my joints will creak loudly confirming the rudeness of my intrusion. I can see his thoughts like plaster. *The fat girl is trying to be cute.*

No! No, I want to scream, I was just being friendly. And would it have been so bad? Would it have been so bad for me, me, to slip up, to grow antsy in the abruptness of my femininity and look up at you through my lashes? To speak in a low, smooth tone instead of benignly like a priest. But it's too late. In his mind, I have already trespassed in my sensuality. The fatty tissue of my belly swells beneath pink cotton and I feel him eye the lewd bulge with contempt.

The porch light is lit; I am as programmed as a homing pigeon.

I stand in front of the door, suspended in the plasmic brightness. I will walk in through this door, my father reading a Dr. Seuss book maybe, my mother will be sleeping. I will eat in my kitchen until midnight. And the heavy dumb beetles hit my hair like beads and cling on my head like the floating seeds that click their heels into my sweater in spring and I cry until I feel empty; empty at last.

Freedom's Slave by Claudia Cerna 3rd Place Poetry Winner

Floating in a vast cold sea
Unrestrained I'm drifting free
Terrified with boundaries not
This is not the path I sought
Nothing near for me to grasp
Undone my one restraining clasp
I'm free to lose my lonely mind
A hand to hold I hope to find
Free to fly- restrained I'm not
Imprisoned here- by freedom caught
No boundaries left to guide my way
A prisoner of choice I am today
Held in a cell that's lacking walls
This empty space that freedom calls
In open water deep and vast
Existing not these chains I've cast
Free to float and mercy's clown
Free to now destruction hail
Free to lose, free to fail
Free to do a lifetime here
Caught within these chains I fear
Free to sit in an eight by four
Imprisoned free-forevermore

The War on Obesity by Claudia Cerna

It's the year 2038 and the nation has found a successful way to fight against obesity. The last fast-food restaurant has been closed down and salads have been declared the national food while water becomes the national beverage of choice. Hundreds of policemen have been sent to find and arrest every last faithful employee of the fast-food business. As the terrified culprits find themselves headed towards state prisons to join other criminal masterminds such as Martha Stewart, they send a prayer heavenward in hopes that they'll be saved from the terrible fate that awaits them.

Small bands of law-breaking citizens gather together in the darkest hours of night to secretly partake of an illegal ritual. The plate of steaming, hot burgers is passed around, and as the grease drips down over the members' sinful hands, they make an oath of silence and vow to continue the ways of the BBB. (That would be the Burger Bingeing Bandidos). As they place the Burger King crown-the official uniform of the BBB- over their heads, they vow never to speak of the nights events. Now that eating burgers has become illegal, they keep their rituals secret.

In another town a small group of people huddle over the freshly produced cans of soda. This illegal process could win them a lifetime in prison, but like the BBB their minds are set on fighting to the heart attack stimulated death. The members of the CCC never give up. (That would be the Coke Chugging Cyclopes- due to the fact that they're all blind in one eye from the high levels of sugar intake). With nothing left to lose, both the CCC and the BBB put their lives on the line to cater to the needs of the obesity war victims.

The thousands of daily arrests pain the leaders of the nation, but they are determined to see the war through. The weapons of mass obeseness have been discovered, and the world is safe from the terrors and the crowding caused by obesity. So, even though the nation has become full of lawbreaking criminals, and the capital is overrun by crown wearing, obese heretics, we simply smile and say "We're fighting obesity and saving the world one arrest at a time." Thus, with the new law "No Lard Left Behind," the nation applauds the beginning of a leaner, and healthier world.

Modern Art by Jacob Marsh

I roll equestrian dimes
Through metaphorical times
Empathizing with sympathizers
And melodramatical imps
Trying to procure a philharmonical glimpse
From the bowels of pleasant peasant pheasants
Only to ascertain discrete divination
Of asinine fatuity
In the benign pouch of feathers
And in accordance to this new lore
I must solicitly implore
A conundrum
Can one man here even spell peroration
Or must I speak in simpler terms
To define genius

Under the Moonlight by Katie Pilgram 3rd Place Graphics Winner



An Only Child...Almost by Ashley Nelson

I am eighteen with a three year old brother. Yes, it is just us, and yes, I do like him. Everyone asks.

My parents hadn't meant for me to grow up an only child. It happened only because Mom broke her back when I was 6. I remember sitting on her hospital bed and being introduced to one of those family friends seen only at injuries and funerals.

"Ashley," he boomed. "An only child? You must be horribly spoiled." He winked at me, but I felt terribly insulted. If I had been spoiled, I would have stuck my tongue out. But I didn't.

As an only child, I became my own best friend. We never seemed to live near anyone remotely my age, so I would spend evenings working out elaborate stories and talking to myself. I still do. All good only children do.

I also talked to my parents and other grown-ups. While the other children were playing, I was the 9 year old using words like "emulate" and hovering around adults. This wasn't helped by the fact that I was always the youngest in my class, causing all my friends to be at least a year older than me.

The first crack in my only-child-syndrome came when I was 10. We finally moved into a house with a girl my age next door. She had brothers and sisters and was used to gratuitous sharing. I was not. When she came into my room, I would hover around, ready to close any drawers she opened and repel her advances towards breakable memorabilia. She taught me a lot about loosening up. But not enough.

Then, five Thanksgivings later on a family vacation, my parents handed me a letter. It was from my future brother announcing himself. "Okay," I astutely commented before being forced to call all the relatives to yell the news over cell phone static. If my parents

were having another kid, I didn't mind. I'm a pretty go-with-the-flow person.

It was entertaining to have a pregnant mom with an overactive case of morning sickness. I got used to seeing her frazzled and robed. Once she threw up in a parking lot and a lady in a passing car used it as a starting point for a lecture to her daughter on why not to drink. We laughed about that for a long time.

Growing up, my parents took me to countless ballets, plays and concerts, so it was only fitting that mom went into labor during *Fiddler on the Roof*. We had to leave at intermission and I was slightly upset, hinting strongly that I wanted tickets for next weekend.

Later that night, after Christian was born, I writhed on the luggage rack and stool, the only available sleeping place for me in the hospital. I had my first inkling that having a brother might change things. I was always late catching on to the obvious.

Let's get one thing straight. I love my brother and I love my parents, but it was quite an adjustment. We could no longer pick up for a spur-of-the-moment vacation or movie. Instead, I became an expert in the art of conversing over a crying baby and a smelly diaper. It changed me. I was no longer the center of my parent's attention. I resented that.

Then it hit me. This was a good thing.

I was a teenager. And what do teenagers claim to want more than anything else in the world? Space! Independence!

Voila!

Well Christian had smoothed that out. With him now the center of attention, I could spend angst-ridden hours in my room, secure in the knowledge that my parents were downstairs happily doting over my brother. I could stay up as late as I wanted knowing my parents

would have fallen into a baby-induced sleep shortly after dinner. And I could smooth over any of my faults by offering to baby-sit. It was a perfect set-up.

Then he started growing into a toddler.

Before Christian, I got into the habit of calling mom "Mother" and begging her before every outing not to embarrass me. Now my brother was the embarrassment. "Mama!" he would holler in grocery stores after spilling things. In church he would announce things during pauses like, "Some people say ay-men. Some people say ah-men." But it's hard to be embarrassed by something so cute.

So I learned to loosen up even more.

I knew what it was like to be an only child, so I was determined to do my sisterly duties. As soon as he could walk, I pounced to tickle him. As soon as he could run without falling, I chased him around the house without warning. As soon as he got a new toy, I snatched it from him to teach sharing skills.

Because of Christian, I now often call mom "Mama" and just a few weeks ago I got into the grocery cart to ride with him. It was one of those carts made up to look like a car for little kids. My legs hung out so I was kicking them while animatedly telling a story to Christian. As mom pushed the cart, we passed a disgusted teen girl who had a superior look plastered on. I grinned at her.

Poor girl, she needs a little brother.

Solo by Alex Myers

To be with you and me and her
We make up three, you, me, and she
it do we upon one bed
In one room, in one house
Six legs have we, but thirty toes
Plus ten fingers, and three noses.
Three sets of lips, two pairs of breasts,
Too many orifices to name, but only two are fair game.
Where should we start?
May I suggest...
Well there is only ONE of those!
Fine! How long can that last anyway?
Too long to bear, they never tire,
and just as the saying goes:
It just takes two to tango.

The Death of a Beloved Writing Utensil by Megan McCormack

You make me smile,
You make me happy,
You make me feel loved and wanted.
What have you done to me?

Before you, before I
Even knew you existed,
I had a darkness,
And it lived in my pen.

My sorrows, my hurts,
My depression--
All of this was

Food for my pen.

My pen, my gluttonous pen,
Could write for hours,
Using my pain and agnst
As inspiration to fill my notebooks.

The more troubles, the
More tears I had,
The more poems, stories,
Plays my pen gave me.

As long as I fed it, it would feed me.

You, my love, my friend,
Have made me change
For the better. You make
Me *want* to live.

But my pen, my tool of darkness
Feels as though it is
Dying, starving from
The lack of food.

Without the pain, the
Suffering, the self-hatred,
My pen sits on my desk,
Unused and hungry--

Dying.

Sensation of Death by Amanda Schnare

Watch those eyes
Cool as the gun metal pointed at her temple
Her body tense at the possibility of extinction

The only movement
A slight trembling of her lips
Waiting for that kiss of death
Promised to her the moment she walked the line
Between honesty and lies.
Is there ever a good side?

A fate so sick and twisted
The irony is lost on all
But one can see it
 See it crystal-clear through those eyes
 Eyes of cold, empty winter
Seeking warmth in the arms of death.

The hunter feels everything in this moment.
The epitome of one's existence
The gun pressed high against her cheekbone
Her lungs striving for air that never seemed so scarce
Thighs tightened, desperately ready to run.

Has she ever felt this alive before?

Through the sensation of death

 The hunter finds refuge
Hunting for questions that can never be answered
Because the answers won't ever mean a damn thing.
Knowing this is enough.

Is it enough for her?

Life for Dummies by Jacob Marsh
1st Place Poetry Winner

Dream hard with eyes open –
 (to see eyes green-
Hair long-
Silk fingers leave trails of magic
On rough arms)

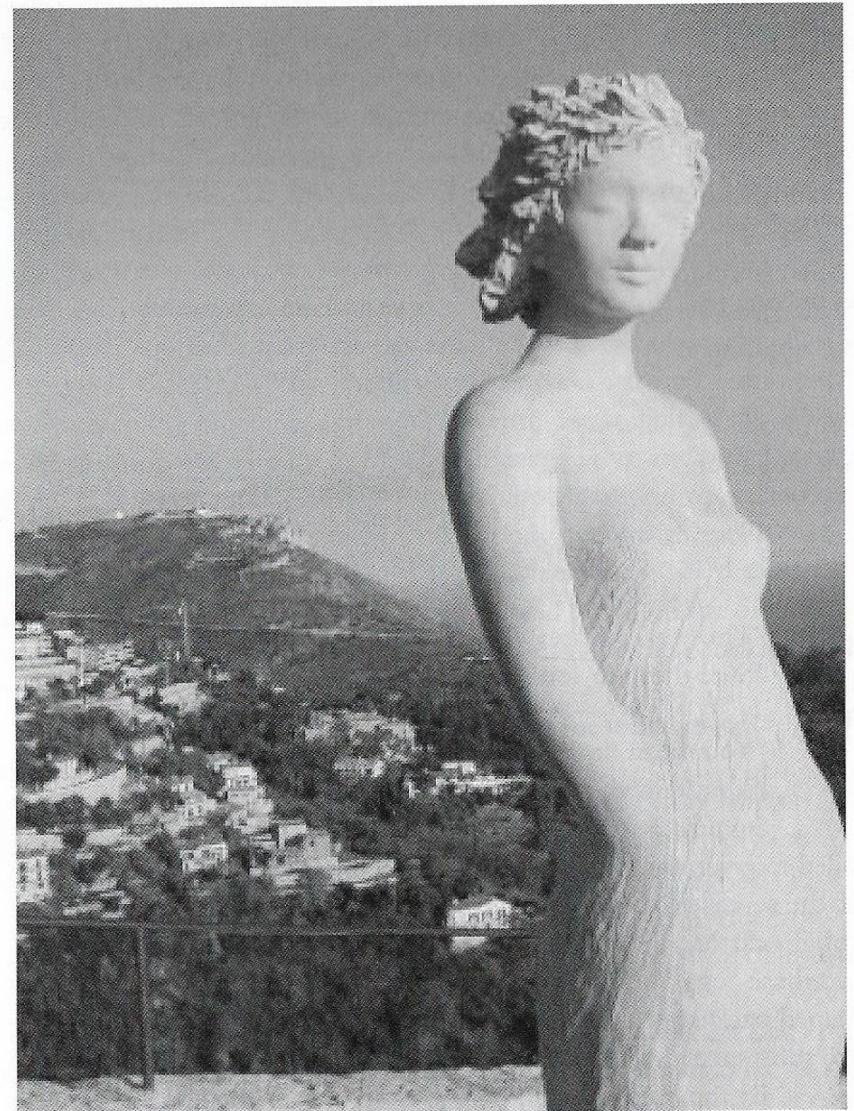
-
Sleep only to awake –
 (to see her again, that
Walk of grace through
Field of grass (light haze) to arms
Held out and I are
We) -

And find your dreams in what is real

--
(the dream that is her, whitetoothsmile
When laughing like a –
Oh –
like her
On a moon lit beach, waves
Crash at feet and hands –
Together -
Lips)

((If only she were here
and I wouldn't have to dream))

Ize Goddess by Samantha Smith



Grapefruit by Alex Myers

It was that time
After breakfast
Before lunch

I cut a grapefruit
Only
I cut it wrong.

I open to rind;
Acidic, pink flesh--
But no triangles.

I sandwich the halves
And cut again.

Feggs by Mathew Loudon

"Those are not real eggs."

"Sure they are, look at them. They're yellow, and taste like eggs."

"You mean they're yellowish, and taste sort of like eggs."

"They're real eggs, just look at them."

Sighing, I shifted in my seat. Obviously my companions failed to grasp the situation. I launched into a vivid description of the so-called "eggs," detailing how they oozed forth from an upright carton, and sort of slopped onto a frying pan. At no point had these "eggs" ever seen a shell. They didn't start as a nice oval shaped package of nutritional goodness, but as an oozing pudding-like substance.

By the time my accurate description was finished, nobody wanted to eat the eggs.

"You see, they're fake eggs. They're not actually from chickens. They're feggs," I concluded, nodding like the know-it-all I clearly was. "And look at those hash browns!"

When working at a summer camp as all of us in the conversation were, you just get used to sweltering in the heat for several hours; working for wages that seemed eerily similar to what you paid children in Asia to make shoes. Of course, it was expected that you would work past the point of self-destruction and drop. We'd already had a few guys get sent off to the hospital to be hooked up to an IV. Not for something sensible, like a broken limb or some life-threatening disease, but for things like heat exhaustion, or dehydration. Collapsing in the middle of work was perfectly acceptable. In fact, all the good staff members were those that had been shipped off. If you couldn't work until you were nearly dead, something was clearly wrong with you.

Under normal circumstances, the whole work until nearly dead thing, in itself, would be bearable. However, the appalling attempt at "breakfast" was the final straw. We'd wake up, entirely too early in the morning, and march over to a vast dining hall. There we'd sit along with hundreds of other teenage boys, and wait for our food. That particular morning, only two bowls were dropped off at the tables. One bowl was filled with a spongy yellowish substance, the feggs; and the other was filled with hash browns. Of course, the hash browns were cold on the inside, and burnt on the outside, something that's supposed to be impossible to do when cooking hash browns.

My first reaction was to demand that meat be served immediately.

Several of us eyed the food suspiciously, glancing over at the door that lead to the kitchen every now and again. Everyone was wondering if perhaps this was some sort of cruel joke. Any minute now a cook would hop out of the kitchen with a wide grin on their faces, shout "Surprise," and give us a heaping plate of meat. Preferably bacon.

After several agonizing minutes, it became apparent that salvation was not going to appear through those double doors.

Disgruntled, I took it upon myself to represent the oppressed. I rose from my seat, making certain to threaten that anyone who took it would be served my portion of feggs, and stalked over to the table for "Those Who Sat From on High."

Every year, "Those Who Sat From on High," or the office staff, as they preferred to be called, would always sit at a different table than the normal staff. From there, they would crowd around cups of coffee, which they all inevitably drank, fueling on black sludge like the robots they were. In their spare time, which they had way too much of, they'd sneer at the counselors and other lower staff members. In truth, most of them were upgraded versions of us: ex-counselors that had stuck around long enough to earn a position on top. However, whenever a problem surfaced, that knowledge faded into the background, and they became the hated "Those Who Sat From on High." I approached their table with just that in mind.

"Where's the meat? And what's up with the feggs?" I asked, as I stood beside the table. I had to make certain to keep my sentences short, six words or less, as the path to becoming an office staff meant losing your ability to talk like a normal person. Several blank faces stared at me over steaming mugs of coffee.

"You know, the portion of the meal that comes from a dead animal?" I reiterated, waving a hand at the bowls that sat on the table in front of them.

"The meals served by the cooks are perfectly portioned and complete," one of the bourgeois responded. Several others murmured in agreement and took sips of their coffee.

"Those aren't even real eggs!" I protested, jabbing a finger at the disgusting yellow gelatin in question. Heads swiveled to study the food in question.

"Of course they're real eggs. What else would they be?" demanded one of them, chuckling into his coffee.

"I don't know," I admitted, my mind desperately searching for an answer. "Look, it's bad enough that you force us to work in this stupid hot weather, but you gotta at least feed us decently."

"The meals are designated by the cooks, and are perfectly regulated for a balanced diet," came the automatic response from Robot #4.

"But... there's no meat! And those aren't..."

"That's enough, Matt. The food's fine, go sit down, before it gets cold," without waiting for a response, they closed their ring. As I walked away, I heard mutterings about "donuts" and "stupid

teenagers," but it could've been my imagination. Sighing, I settled back into my seat.

I had to eat my feggs before they got cold.

Oddly enough, the next day... a plate of steaming bacon sat on my table.

The People in My Backyard by Ashley Nelson

The People in my backyard
Have eyes on their palms
None on their face
Just one on each palm

The People in my backyard
Can't use their hands
They'd blind themselves
And kill their eyes

The People in my backyard
Hold their palms high
Pointed at faces
Faces without eyes

The People in my backyard
Cry alone sometimes
Folding palms together
So no one sees

The People in my backyard
Have a little boy
He crawls to them
With crying palms

The People in my backyard
Imitate me
Putting palms on their face
Over empty sockets

The People in my backyard
Have a brown dog
He sits whining alone
No one can pet him

The People in my backyard
Comfort each other
Brushing palms over faces
Eyelashes tickling

The People in my backyard
Stare at me
Sitting at my window
Palms pressed against glass

The People in my backyard
Have eyes on their palms
None on their face
Just one on each palm

Oh, Shit! by Courtney Richter



Inner Betrayal by Megan McCormack

Warm sweat had melted my splotchy foundation away. My pale hands were quivering, as they always do when I am nervous or excited, and I stared at that stage like I was waiting for fireworks to explode out of it. It was not elaborately decorated; a giant screen hung in the center of the stage for projecting a slideshow of photos of the nominees, and there were several spots where the black paint was worn away.

Eventually, the announcer for the “Authors at Heart” award appeared. My favorite redheaded English teacher, Ms. Faulkner, held two trophies, one of them mine. I remember that trophy now as being a gaudy, spray-painted gold pen that had been super-glued onto a small, wooden plaque. I watched the nominee’s pictures flash onto the screen. An excited chill shot through my body as my picture made its appearance. And the winners of the “Authors at Heart” awards are...My heart tried to beat its way out of my chest...Stryker Brimmer and Megan McCormack!

A heavy sort of relief and assurance flooded into my heart. As I walked past my friends, I felt their hands trying to grab me. They were saying something to me, but I could not hear their voices over the clapping of the audience. I did not know then that they were trying to stop me. Confused but determined, I pushed through them, and started towards the ominous stage.

A few weeks before that mind-numbing event, I received a letter. Tipsy from excitement, I carefully opened a folded sheet of the Northwest High School official stationary with the blue lion mascot printed in the left hand corner. It confirmed in perfect, Times New Roman font, that I was nominated for a Senior Superlative award. I knew I would receive one of the two “Authors at Heart” superlative awards, which were meant for the best male and female authors in the class of 2005. As a result of the egocentric image I had formulated of myself, there was no doubt in my mind

that I was the best female writer in my high school. Nobody could possibly be more creative, or more ingenious than I was. Nobody was as dedicated as I was to the art of writing. Nobody, nobody, I told myself over and over, can write like I can.

In addition to feeding my ego, I desperately wanted to be recognized, and to be chosen by my peers out of the entire senior class; I was sick of my status as a wallflower. I had to win because not only would I be reassured of my writing prowess, but also I would be recognized and remembered because my picture would be taken for the "Senior Hall of Fame" 50-year anniversary yearbook. I would even receive a trophy for commemoration!

As I walked towards Ms. Faulkner, my shoes clicking on the painted wood, I saw Stryker receive his award. After he went backstage, something startled me. Another girl took my trophy from my teacher's freckled hands.

When I had made my way to Ms. Faulkner, I remember asking her where my award was, and she said that I did not get one. Becca McFarland had won, not me. Sickening embarrassment as well as an overwhelming desire to run away overtook me. I had been so sure that she had said my name! The talented writer image, as well as any faith in writing that I had for myself, scurried out of the stage doors. As I stood on that dark stage, my gangly legs just barely supporting my tall frame, I did not dare turn around to face the four hundred strong audience. Now I can laugh at who I used to be, and, as embarrassing as that moment was, I am still writing today. I cannot, however, understand why my mind caused me to hear my name instead of Becca's. I rely on my mind to write, but it frightens me sometimes. People do not understand or think enough about the strength and capabilities of the human mind. A mind can be something beautiful, and it can be something ugly. We can be loved and hated for our minds, and we can be killed or kill because of our minds. Your mind can trick you into believing what you want to believe, if you want it bad enough. Is the human mind, then, a positive or negative power to have?

To You by Patrick Lee Clark

Mirror, what do you see?

FIRST YOU ARE CRAZY FOR TALKING TO ME
BUT SINCE YOU ASKED
LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I BELIEVE I SEE

Mirror, what do you see what do you see?

I SEE A SPARKLE IN YOUR EYES
I SEE SKIN AS SMOOTH AS CHAMPAGNE GLASSES
HOLDING ICE
I SEE A BODY THAT HAS BEEN CRAFTED WITH SUCH
PRECISE
NOW I SEE A SMILE THAT IS FILLED WITH SUCH
DIVINE LIGHT

Mirror, thank you!

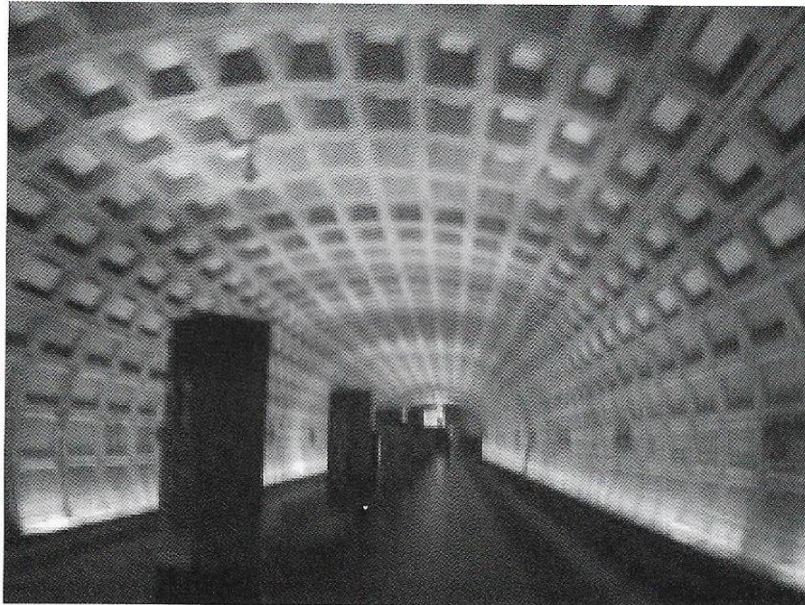
NO BUT THERE IS MORE!
YOUR BEAUTY RADIATES MORE & MORE & MORE
ON MONDAY, MORE & MORE & MORE
ON TUESDAY, MORE, MORE & MORE
ON WEDNESDAY, MORE AND MORE
ON THURSDAY, YOUR BEAUTY HAS GROWN MORE &
MORE & MORE
ON FRIDAY, YOU ARE ACTING MODEST BECAUSE
YOUR BEAUTY HAS GROWN MORE
ON SATURDAY, THOUGH AFTER SHARING SOME OF IT,
YOUR GORGEOUSNESS GREW MORE AND MORE
AND ON SUNDAY, WHEN YOU THOUGHT THAT YOU
COULD NOT GROW ANY MORE, WHEN YOU LAID
DOWN AT NIGHT, THE SIGHT OF YOU SLEEPING
RADIATED YOUR BEAUTY MORE

Mirror, why me?

YOU ARE LOVING
CARING AND SWEET,
YOU ARE SHARING
SPECIAL AND MEEK,
WHAT A MYSTERY ON HOW SOMEONE CAN BE SO
SWEET,
WHAT A WONDER ON HOW SOMEONE CAN BE SO MEEK,
WHAT A FANTASY TO GRASP YOUR EXISTENCE,
WHAT A PLEASURE TO HAVE SEEN YOUR
COUNTENANCE

THE MIRROR HAS JUST SPOKEN TO YOU!

Metro by Darius Dashtaki



Untitled by Ashley Creek 2nd Place Poetry Winner

have you ever noticed that

when people talk about
waking up
next to the one
you love

they seldom mention

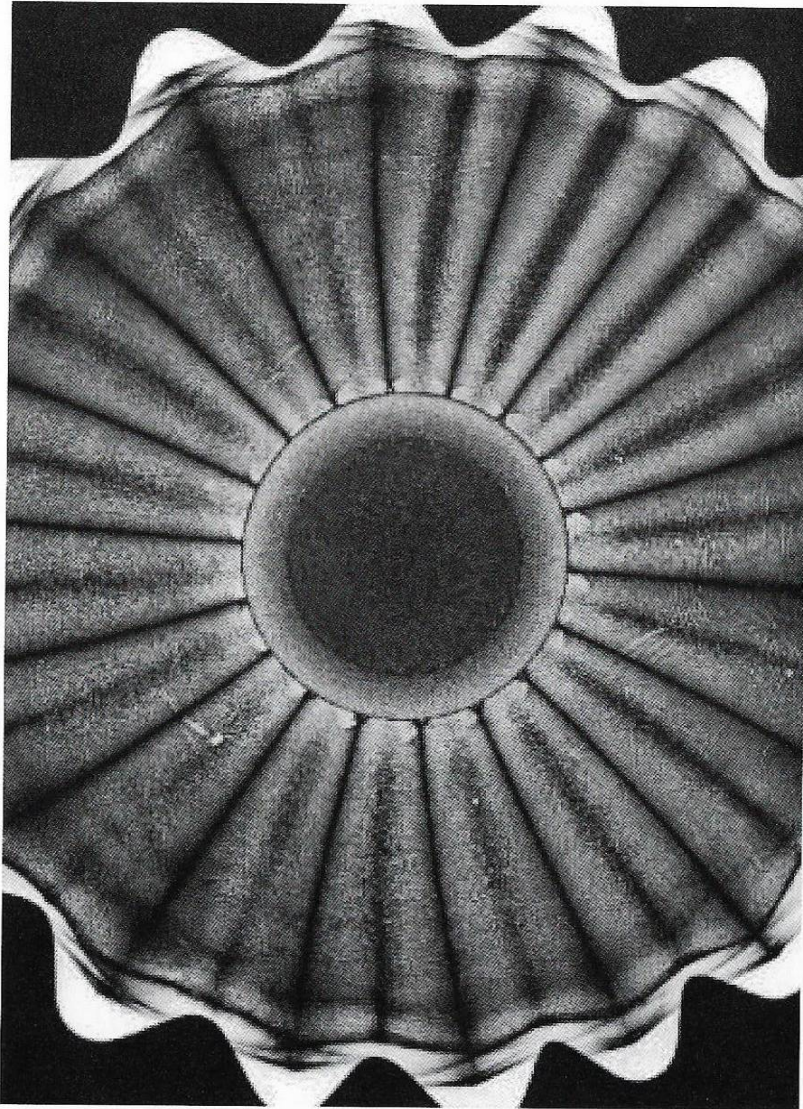
cold feet on your calves

the struggle
for blanket climate control

or the rustling awake
when your one rolls
over in the night

pushing you
flat
against
the
wall

Dish by Liz Blood



Learning Chess by Jessica Cocker

I'm tired and weak
Too torn and weathered
Sick

Of constantly being
Pushed, pulled, and jumped over

I wish someone had warned me
That I'd be learning chess

The game is getting old
And many pieces
Have been lost

When the game was
Boxed up and moved

From house to house
Living many games

The Razor's Edge by Nathaniel Webber

The wind gusts pretty hard lately
cold and sharp like an early morning shave.
Icy blade glides over the skin
With a caress akin to driving sleet.
Maybe the wind makes it grey
skin or the sky, blue like a thunderhead
blue like a freshly shaven face, slate like the rain.
Wind howls again, blades of air brushing
like the dull blades of an early morning shave.