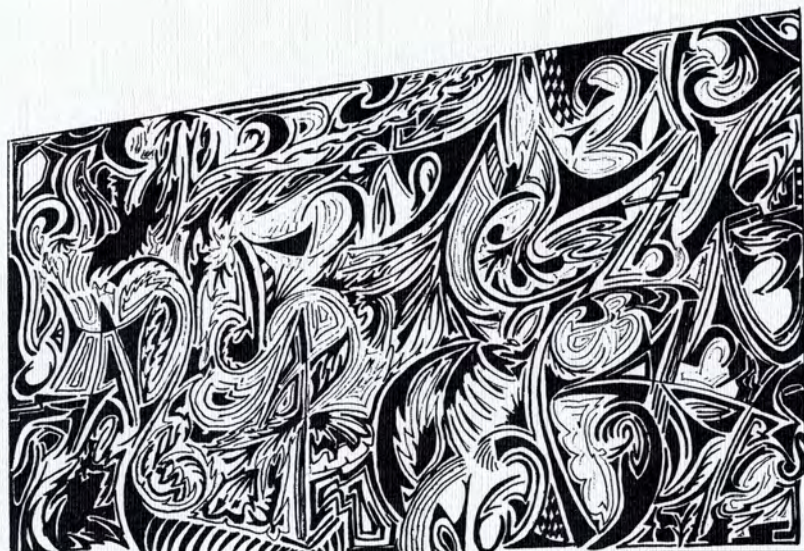


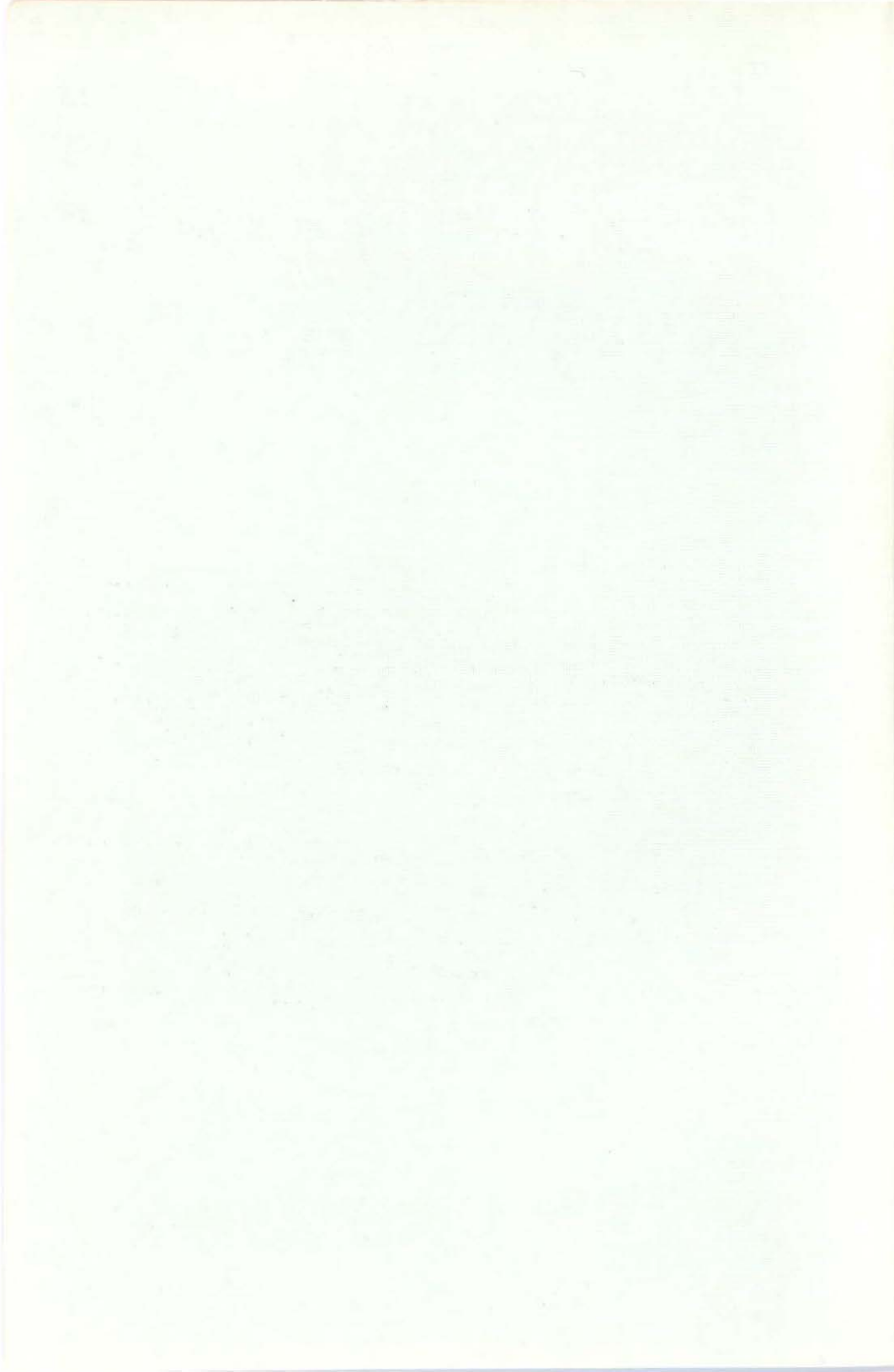
The

THE MARIST COLLEGE LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

Mosaic



Spring 1988



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The Mosaic was designed with the notion of allowing the student the opportunity to express themselves in an artistic manner. It is expressly for the Marist community to share their life experiences through poems, essays, short stories and art work. I would like to personally thank all those who contributed willingly to this magazine, for without the support of the students, this would not be in existence. Many thanks to the editorial board, who were extremely patient, especially Amy Ansin.

Enjoy!

Congratulations to Keli Dougherty,
the winner of this school year's Short Story contest!

Lone

There was no one out there but him. He was a tall slight young man, about twenty-six or twenty-seven, and his blond hair and beard were short yet a little shaggy. Compared to the vast green emptiness of the hospital lawn, he was like a dot on a blank piece of large paper.

No one seemed to notice him sitting out there, and at first he didn't do much to attract anyone's attention. He just sat there eating a sandwich, and drinking out of a liter sized bottle of Seven-Up. He watched the people go by for a short time, and after he saw that several people had stared at him while they passed, he picked up a placard that had been lying face down in the grass beside him, and implanted the sharpened wooden end into the grass so it stood upright.

The placard was simple. It was a three foot square with a white background, and in large black block letters it said "ABORTION IS PREMEDITATED MURDER. THE NEXT BABY YOU KILL COULD'VE SAVED THE WORLD." As he finished his sandwich, he watched people stare at him. When it began to get dark, he removed his sign, picked up a duffel bag, and left. Before he left, he smoothed the grass back over the hole that he had made, and walked off into the darkness.

The next day he was back. Only this time he walked back and forth on the sidewalk with his sign. When he stopped to eat, he sat in the same place that he had occupied the day before, and stuck the sign into the ground next to him. Not many people paid any attention to him, but that didn't stop him from talking to them.

"I guess you never thought of abortion as premeditated murder did you, he asked while walking along beside one man.

Well, it's planned, so that makes it premeditated, and you're killing something that has life, so it's murder. Makes sense, doesn't it?" The man just stared at him for a few seconds and quickly walked away. Some people ignored him and just kept walking. Whenever someone did that he just yelled "A baby isn't just like a houseplant you know."

One person yelled back at him. "I suppose killing a houseplant is a type of murder too."

"How would I know, I don't have any, and if I did, I wouldn't kill them." He'd have to be more careful in the future, he didn't want anyone to catch him with his guard down. He couldn't afford to look weak and vulnerable. I can't let them get to me, he said to himself.

The next day was the same, only he was more vocal. The only time when he wasn't yelling, was when he was eating, with his sign stuck in the grass beside him. Even then he yelled at people between bites of his sandwich. He didn't yell with his mouth full, he told himself to keep his composure no matter what. If anyone insulted him, and he couldn't think of a snappy stinging comeback, he simply ignored them and started yelling at someone else.

On the fourth day of his one man protest, while he was eating, two police cars pulled up at the curb, and four policemen got out and came strolling across the lawn to where he was sitting.

"Abortion is premeditated murder, the public has a right to know," he said. "Maybe," said one of the policeman, a tough looking middleaged man with a wiry gray mustache, "but you have no right to be here. There are more peaceful ways of spreading information."

"Action must be taken to correct the situation here and now," he said, "before innocent hundreds more die at the hands of an ignorant public."

"Whatever you say sir," said one. The four policemen hauled him to his feet, and handcuffed him.

"You're under arrest," said the wiry mustache.

"I know my rights," he grumbled, "you don't need to read them." "Good, then we can get this 'action' underway," said the wiry mustache.

One policeman picked up the garbage from his sandwich, and another picked up the duffel bag, and yanked the sign out of the ground. The wiry mustache took the handcuffed man to one of the police cruisers, and shoved him into the back seat. The fourth policeman who had been following behind, got into the back seat with his handcuffed charge. The other two policemen got into their cars, and drove away.

"Those folks at the hospital got sick of being harassed by you. They gave you a chance to leave, but after four days, you had to go." The wiry mustache glanced back at him in the rearview mirror. The handcuffed man in the back seat only glared back at him.

"I was getting the message through to them. I needed more time." That was all that he had to say. They'll understand later he thought to himself.

At the police station he was allowed his customary phone call. Hastily he dialed a number, and waited impatiently while it rang. After what seemed like an eternity, someone answered.

"Hello." The tired voice on the other end was barely discernable to someone sitting nearby.

"Hi, Rob?"

"Oh, hi Pete, what's new?"

"Rob? You've got to help me out, please?"

"Sure," said the voice on the other end of the line, "what did you have in mind?"

"Bail."

"Pete, you got arrested?!"

"Yea, and I think I was beginning to change some people's minds."

"I'll be right down. Stay cool."

"Rob?"

"Yeah."

"Don't tell Norman. Please, not until I can get this straightened out."

"Sure Pete, anything you say. Now stay cool."

"I will, there's nothing else to do. They stripped me clean. I haven't even got a pen."

There was a click, and he held the phone out in front of his face and looked at it for a few seconds, then he slowly replaced it in its cradle.

The wiry mustache had just come back in. "Peter John Wright?"

He nodded his head. "That's me."

"Come with me," he ordered

Pete reluctantly got up and followed him to a holding cell.

"Get in there," the cop growled in a tired way.

"I'm moving, don't get so uptight," he said to the cop.

The holding cell was small, and its three walls were lined with benches. There were only three people in the cell besides himself, and all of them acted like they didn't see him come in. Pete sat on a bench, in a corner of the holding cell, his knees up against his chest, and his head resting on his bent knees.

He had been in that position for about fifteen minutes when one of the other men in the cell came over and sat down on the bench next to him. Pete pretended not to notice, and he didn't move until the man began to speak.

"What didja get picked up for?"

"Demonstrating against abortion in front of Claiborne Memorial." Pete lifted his head to look at the man.

"Were you the only one arrested?"

"Yeah, because I was the only one there." The man looked shocked.

"You were the only one demonstrating?"

"Yeah. I felt it had to be done, and I still do, but I got picked up before I could begin to make an impression on people's minds."

"That's the irony of it?"

"Yeah, and don't I know it." Pete began to chuckle. The other man began to smile and nod.

"What's your name?" The other man looked serious for a second.

"Pete, Pete Wright, and yours?"

"Larry Mc Laughlin," replied the other man.

"What did you get picked up for?"

"Assault. I was drunk, and don't even remember doing it, but they say that they have a lot of witnesses."

"Wow, sounds like a tough situation."

"My lawyer says that I could just get fined, or some time in jail, but some of those witnesses say that the other guy struck me first, so they may go easier on me. At least I hope so."

"I've been in a few fights in my time, but I only got arrested once. All the other times I was cut up pretty bad, and ended up in the hospital. They go easier on you if you've gotten the short end of the stick. Nobody can argue with scars."

Larry looked pensive. "I can see your point."

"I've seen a lot of fights, and you learn after a while, what goes and what doesn't." Pete leaned back against the wall. He focused his eyes on Larry and knitted his eyebrows. "And sometimes, I've even seen people get killed. Just remember one thing Larry, death is forever, and it's needless. Life is just too good to waste."

Larry began to look uncomfortably at Pete, and drew back. Just then an officer came down the corridor next to the holding pen. "Wright?"

"That's me," Pete said getting up, "take care Larry, and if there's anything that I can do for you, let me know." From the front of his shirt, he withdrew a small light blue business card with black inked lettering. Handing the card to Larry, he gave him a half salute, and turned on this heel, and left. Larry could hear him chatting amiably with the police officer as they headed toward the squad room.

Larry looked at the card. In black letters it said "Peter J. Wright," below in smaller letters it said "Journalist." Below in a modern block type was written *The Massachusetts Modern Times*. There was a phone number in each of the two bottom corners. In the left corner was Pete's home phone number,

and in the right corner was the number of the paper, and his extension.

Larry carefully pocketed the card, and lay down on the bench, and put his hands behind his head. Once settled, he closed his eyes.

Rob had come, and now Pete was going to be free again, at least until he went to court. He wasn't afraid, he'd only been arrested once before, and then the charges against him had been dropped. He had a relatively clean record. After signing the receipt for his personal effects, he and Rob left. Once outside in the open air, they began to talk. Except for the civilities inside, they hadn't said anything to one another.

"Were they tough on you?" Rob had his hands in the pockets of his jeans as they walked along.

"No, not really. I guess they would've been a lot tougher if I had been some sort of murderer, but I went peacefully, and didn't object, so they didn't treat me too badly. I'm sorry that I woke you up, and thanks for coming and getting me out. I'll pay you the money that you posted for my bail as soon as I can."

"Okay Pete, you know, you're lucky that I don't charge interest."

"Oh yeah Rob, then I don't think that I could afford you as a friend and adversary." The two chuckled and then walked in silence the rest of the way to Rob's car.

Rob dropped Pete off at his apartment, then went home. Pete slung his duffel bag over his shoulder, and trudged up the stairs. Fishing for the key in this pocket, he pulled it out and put it in the keyhole. The door always stuck a little, so he had to push at the same time that he turned the key. The landlady always promised him — at least once a month — that she would have her brother-in-law the super fix it, but he never seemed to get around to it, and there was always a multitude of other things to fix in the old building. Pete always wondered whether or not the city building inspector knew that the old building existed, because it would almost certainly be condemned if it were ever inspected. Besides, he was used to the complicated means of opening his front door, and most important, the landlady liked him, and didn't charge him too much rent. Another plus were the hot meals that she sometimes fed him. No, he couldn't go wrong here.

The apartment was just the way that he had left it, the kitchen table was strewn with newspapers, and there were clippings taped to the refrigerator. There were so many of them that they moved like a tree's leaves in the wind whenever he opened the refrigerator door. It was only two rooms and a bathroom, and that suited him just fine. The combination living room/dining room/kitchen was the hub of all his activity anyway. The bedroom was almost no more than a closet with a bed in it. He used to put all of his clutter in there whenever his mother came to visit, but since she had died, the clutter stayed in the main room. Maybe it was all for the best, he thought to himself, she wouldn't like to see what I'm doing now for a living, and she so missed dad when he died. Pete sighed and dropping his duffel bag, fell into a threadbare chair.

He sat there for a few minutes in almost a daze. It felt so good to be home in his mess, and not in that bare holding cell. That guy Larry seemed sort of nice. I wonder if he'll ever call me, Pete sat staring out the window at the building across the street, watching the people who lived there walk back and forth in front of their windows. He tried to imagine what it was that they were saying to one another. It was like watching a silent movie and supplying your

own sound.

It was still pretty early, only about two o'clock, and Pete was bored. Being arrested threw his whole day out of synchronization. He had taken the week off, for personal reasons he had said, but he had been planning this protest for a very long time. Rob had known about it, but neither Pete nor Rob ever thought that he would be arrested for it. Rob had done some research on demonstrations from the legal standpoint. Pete had asked him to look into it, after all, Rob was going to law school. He should know about these things Pete thought to himself. Oh well, it would all come to pass.

The only thing that he could think of to occupy the rest of the afternoon would be to drop in at the paper and see if there was anything exciting going on. He felt like seeing what the rest of the world was doing for once.

Pete took a couple of deep breaths to clear his head, then got up out of the chair. He grabbed his jacket and a little shoulder bag that looked like it might have belonged to a photographer. With a great heave he pulled the stubborn door open, then once he was out in the hallway, he strained to pull it closed so it would lock on the first try. Pete grinned with satisfaction as it closed and locked on the first try. Maybe soon, he thought to himself, the landlady's brother-in-law the super will have the time to fix my door, but maybe that's just wishful thinking on my part. He shrugged at the door for no apparent reason other than the fact that it was there, and charged down the stairs and out the door.

He went down the driveway to the back of the building and opened the door to the rickety garage. Inside were the various things that the typical homeowner would have, but didn't like to use, like the lawn mower. Pete disappeared into the dank depths of the garage and reappeared wheeling his red Honda dirt bike. It was every inch an off-road machine, but he had installed turn signals and other lights to keep the cops happy, and himself from getting tickets. Securing the shoulder bag to the rack in back of the seat, he mounted, inserted the key in the ignition, turned it, and pumped the starter with his foot. It didn't start on the first try, but did so on the second. Taking his helmet off the handlebars, he put it on his head and adjusted the chin strap. He gunned the engine and rode down the driveway and off into the street.

Traffic wasn't too heavy, and he quickly found himself in the heart of the city. The *Free Press* was on the other side of the city, and the shortest route was through the middle of the city.

The air was brisk, but not too cold, and Pete kept the visor of his helmet up so that he could feel the air blowing on his face. The fatigue that he had felt before in the apartment had left him now, and he was ready for action. The air had revitalized him, and made him feel new. He often got a second wind like this when he was enjoying his ride through the city on his way to work.

Pete enjoyed watching the people when he went to work, and some of them he knew through his work for the paper. He had had a story on almost every major street corner in the city. He was proud of himself, doing what he wanted to do, and living a childhood dream. He was where he had always wanted to be, a journalist in the heart of the people who make the real news. He felt contempt for Reagan in the White House. How could he know the real America if all he did was stay in Washington D.C. making promises that he couldn't keep anyway? He had always wondered about politics, but he dreaded November when he had to interview all of those stuffy politicians. In his opinion

they all made promises that they couldn't keep. But all he could do was grin and bear it.

Normally he was excited when he went to the paper. He loved the challenges of his job, but today he would have to go tell his supervisory editor Norman, that he needed an afternoon off so he could go to court about his demonstration, and before anyone else told Norman. He didn't think that anyone else besides his immediate circle of acquaintances knew about his personal demonstration, and for the time being, he wanted to keep it that way. He didn't want any reporters calling Norman before he had a chance to talk to him himself. Him telling Norman might make things easier in the long run.

The "people" part of the *Free Press* was housed in a big old house on a fairly quiet main street. It was just on the edge of the business section, so there had been no zoning conflicts when they moved in. The actual printing was done by another company, due to the fact that one of the owners had to sell the printing equipment that the paper had once owned, to pay off some debts, and since then had not been able to buy a new printing press.

Pete parked his motorcycle in the dirt and gravel parking lot next to the old house, hung his helmet on the handlebars, and ran his fingers through his hair. Taking his bag off the rack, he paused to compose himself and strolled across the lot and started to ascend the steep wooden stairs leading to the back door on the second floor.

The door was half open, and from inside he could hear people talking and laughing. Standing in the doorway he looked around the cluttered room. Desks were arranged in a cramped style, and scuffed plywood dividers cut the room up into tiny "offices." From somewhere in the depths of the mess he heard a familiar voice chattering away in a low tone.

"Anybody home?" His voice sounded more timid than he had intended.

"Pete?!" The unseen voice had stopped chattering, it was piercing now.

"Sheila? Yes, it's me." His voice sounded stronger this time.

A brunette head popped up behind a far piece of plywood. "Pete!" Her face looked shocked. "You're not in jail, what happened?" Pete looked confused. "We heard it on the police band. Eddie was monitoring it for stories and he heard them say that they had picked up a protestor at the hospital. We all knew that it was you."

"I'm okay." That was all that he said, then moved on to this own cubicle on the opposite side of the room. "I don't feel like talking about it. Okay?" His face was stern.

"Okay. But you'd better tell Norman, before he finds out from someone else." Her face was questioning.

"Well, I guess there's no better time than the present." He rose to go. "Wish me luck?" Pete's face softened. Sheila gave him a quick hug.

Norman's office was down the hall. He shared one with another editor, and their desks were opposite each other, perpendicular to parallel walls. The one thing that Norman liked about the arrangement was that his desk was the closest to the door, so he could keep the door open and yell at the reporters as they ran by on their various errands. He loved this, they didn't. One April Fool's Day when he wasn't paying attention, they locked him in his office. He never forgave them for that. Pete didn't like Norman. Norman was too pompous for his tastes, but he persevered, as did all the other reporters.

Norman was on the phone when Pete knocked on the open door. Norman waved him to a chair in front of the desk, and continued to talk on the phone.

Pete pulled out a pen and a small spiral notebook, deftly flipping open the notebook with a flick of his wrist. Norman began to look nervous and quickly muttered a hasty "goodbye" into the phone. The sight of Wright with his notebook open always had made him nervous.

"Norman, I just came to tell you that I got arrested for demonstrating against abortion in front of Claiborne Memorial. Just me, only me, nobody else, 'cause I was the only one there, it was a one man demonstration. "Pete stopped only long enough to catch his breath, and then leaning forward, he said "I have a court date in two weeks." Pete then got up and left.

Sheila was gone when Pete returned. Hastily he went over to his cubicle, grabbed his bag, and hurried out the door and down the stairs. When he reached the bottom he vaulted over the rail and ran towards the parking lot.

Once the gas was flowing through the bike's engine, he slammed on his helmet and was gone in a spray of gravel and dust.

Back in his office Norman was watching two Alka-Seltzer tablets fizz in a glass of water.

Pete was on the highway by the time that Norman was drinking his antacid. He had a full tank of gas, and a head full of steam. He was made. Something in him had snapped, and now he didn't know where he was going. All he knew was that he was on the highway, and the wind was blowing on his face, and it cooled him off a little bit. He didn't know where he was going, and now it didn't matter.

The scenery flew by as he rode along the highway, passing almost everybody. The needle on the speedometer alternated between 85 and 100 m.p.h., and the needle on the gas gauge was going steadily down, and noticing this, Pete slowed down to about 70. Luckily there weren't too many cars on the highway. Most people must still be in work he thought to himself.

Feeling thirsty from his outrage at the *Free Press*, he began to look for a place to get something to drink. The first place that he saw was a deli. Pulling in, he jumped off the bike and walked it up to the doorway.

The door was open, and Pete could hear a Bruce Springsteen song blaring from inside, ". . . took a wrong turn and I just kept goin' . . ." As the song continued, those words kept echoing in Pete's head, and instead of going over to the soda, he ended up in front of the beer. With new strength he grabbed a six pack off the display, and looked at it, then grabbed another one with the other hand. He looked at them and felt satisfied.

The cashier hardly glanced at Pete as he rang up the beer. Pete paid then dashed out with the beer. After fastening it to the rack, he mounted, started the engine and roared off. A quarter mile later it occurred to him that he had forgotten to put his helmet on, but the wind on his bare head made him feel good, so he decided to leave it off, at least for a little while longer.

The highway began to get boring, so he pulled off, and rode up a grassy hill to another, less traveled, road. He slowed down as he was enjoying the scenery. He was beginning to get tired, and the afternoon sun was beginning to bother him, so he rode off onto the grassy side of the road, and stopped.

It was very quiet, and he could hear the wind blowing through the trees behind him. A car whizzed by on the road beside him, and he quickly got up and pulled his motorcycle into the woods so he could not be seen from the road. He didn't feel like he wanted the whole road to be watching him. There was a small clearing about one hundred yards beyond the gate of the trees, and he stopped there and leaned the bike on its kickstand.

He had never been very much into beer. In high school it gave him strange hallucinations, all alcohol did that to him. I might be crazy he thought to himself, but at least I'm not a lush. He didn't know why he had bought the beer, a stronger force had been at work on his brain, and the Springsteen song was still echoing in his mind.

After unfastening the first six pack from the rack, he took it over to a sunny place under a large oak tree, and pulled off a can. It felt cool, even though it hadn't been in the refrigerated section of the deli's beer display. This puzzled him, he had a feeling that something big was going to happen, and that whatever it was, it didn't feel right.

With little effort he popped open the first can of beer. It tasted good to him, even though he hadn't had any beer since, he couldn't remember when it was that he last had a can of beer. But it didn't matter, he was alone, and that's all that mattered to him right then. Pete was happy, and he was beginning to feel good, and the beer seemed to be warming his soul from somewhere inside.

He drank the first six pack of beer without much trouble, and realized that it hadn't played any tricks on his mind yet. Everything around him seemed to look normal, the trees were all still there where they were when he had first come. Maybe I outgrew that hallucinations bit, he thought to himself. He reached for the other six pack, but his body seemed alien to him, it didn't move like his brain told it. I'm getting drunk he told himself.

Pete unfastened the second six pack with difficulty, and he fell over. As he was lying there on his side, he started to laugh. It was a drunken laugh that sounded more like a cackle, and in the middle, he was hiccuping. He straightened up slowly, and looked around. There was no one there but him, but he felt as if he were being watched. His mind wandered back to the one man demonstration he'd gotten arrested for.

He'd not always cared so much about abortion. He'd never thought of it until about five years ago. Angel and he had always worked out their problems, but this one had just been too big, and its solution split them forever.

Pete's mind wandered back to college. He had everything he wanted back then, a motorcycle, a place on the newspaper, and Angel. They'd met in a class. He wasn't as cynical back then, but no less a seeker of the truth. He'd always been a moral Catholic, but he knew that he wanted to marry Angel, and she was very much in love with him, so even the taboo things seemed right to them. They were inseparable, and life seemed so sweet when you were with someone that you loved. Pete loved Angel like he had never loved anyone else. Pete's mother nearly dropped her rump roast when he told her one day that he had slept with Angel.

She warned him that nothing good would come of it, but he didn't listen, he was too high on life to hear her, and too infatuated to think things through.

Everyone said that they made a good couple, the tall blonde young man with the Marine haircut and the trimmed neat mustache, and the darkly beautiful girl with the warm dark brown eyes, and soft auburn hair that caught the light.

Angel wanted to be a social worker, and help people. She was always helping someone, she seemed to thrive on her service to others, and that her life with Pete seemed to be the only things that mattered to her.

They planned to marry after they both graduated from college, and had been settled in the outside world for a year and a half. But they would still

see each other, just like they had done when they were dating in the early days of their relationship.

He had been with an area newspaper for six months when she came to tell him, and she had been a social worker in a local hospital. They were settling down in their respective careers, and putting together the arrangements for their marriage. Then their world, and their relationship shattered like a piece of fine crystal on a stone floor.

Pete had been working on a story when she came in, and she quietly sat down next to him and watched him type on his computer terminal. He had told her that he had two more paragraphs to type, and then he would talk to her. It came back to him as clear as day, and then he realized that he was hallucinating from the beer.

Again, she was sitting next to him, looking scared but determined. Again he heard the words whispered in his ear "Petey, I went to the doctor today, I'm pregnant." He remembered jabbering something about it being wonderful, then assuring her that everything would be all right, they would get married sooner than they had planned to, and not to worry. Everything would be all right. "You'll see" he said to her.

That was when she dropped the bomb on him. "I'm not ready to have a baby Petey" she told him, "I'm getting an abortion, and I can't marry you knowing that I aborted your baby, and I know that you could never forgive me for doing that, and what kind of a life can we build on that? It would never work Petey. I love you more than I have ever loved anyone else, but this would always come between us." She said it so slowly and calmly, that Pete could tell that she had thought it all out very carefully. He realized that she was right, but he had to persuade her to keep the baby, and to marry him, or he would lose them both, and he couldn't lose Angel, he couldn't live without her. He didn't believe in abortion, and he knew that he couldn't love her as deeply if she had an abortion, and they did get married, but abortion or no abortion, he couldn't lose her. They were in a no win situation, and they both knew it.

Angel stormed out of the office, and he didn't see her again until he went to her house and attempted to see her. She didn't want to see him, and called the police to have him removed. He called her, but it didn't work. He visited her at work, and the hospital security evicted him from the grounds with orders to never come back or they would have him arrested. Rob told him that he had no legal rights because he didn't even have documented proof that he was the father of Angel's baby.

She had the abortion anyway, and then she moved out of state. He knew that it was to get away from him. He didn't see her again until they brought her home for her funeral. Poor Angel, his Angel, she had been killed by a car while she was trying to free someone trapped in a car accident.

From then on Pete changed. He grew a beard and let his hair grow long. He quit his job, and joined the more radical newspaper. His mother had been right, but his pride wouldn't let him admit that, and he buried the hurt deep, but it still pained him.

By now he had finished the second six pack, and felt very drunk. He tried to get up, but his head was spinning from his intoxication. Pete felt helpless, and decided to wait until the feeling had passed. Five minutes later he passed out.

It was cold, the grass had grown cold. Pete rolled over. Through the trees he could see the clear sky. The stars shone brightly. There was an eerie glow

in the woods. Pete looked at his watch, it said three am. He lay back in the grass and dozed off.

The sun woke him. It was ten o'clock. His bike still sat there, shining in the sun. Pete had a terrible headache, he hadn't had a hangover in so long, he had almost forgotten what it felt like. He stood up and stretched. The woods seemed to sparkle in the morning sun.

It didn't take him long to start the bike's engine, he'd figured that it might need some warming after sitting outside all night. Pete collected all of his empty beer cans, put them back on the plastic things that had bound them together, and tied them to the rack. Then he put on his helmet, and roared off down the road back to the highway.

The highway was very busy. Probably all those people who are late to work he thought to himself. He was still on his vacation, just two days left in his week off, then back to the "hard-beat of the city." That was what he called it.

Far off he could hear the sirens, but they didn't really register in his mind, he was too busy thinking of his night in the woods. They registered when he saw the dense black smoke rising up slightly to his right. The natural reflex in his subconscious made him speed up, his mind raced with possible leads for the article. It always happened like this. When he was out chasing a story, or stumbling upon one by accident, his body gave itself a shot of adrenaline.

When he rounded the curve, he saw what was generating the smoke. A car had skidded out of control and had been broadsided by a tractor trailer rig, which had pushed the car down the highway a few yards and then into a wall of rock on the roadside. The smell of the gas fumes was strong, and Pete could see a man struggling in the cab of the rig. He was screaming for someone to get him out, and a more frantic voice was screaming "It's gonna blow, it's gonna blow." Pete quickly rode off the side of the road and laid down his bike as he dismounted. He ran up to the cab of the truck and started pulling on the door, but it was stuck. A piece of the hand rail next to the door had fallen off, and Pete grabbed it and started to pry open the door. He had almost gotten it open when the gas fumes got stronger, and the gas tank he was standing above was getting hotter. The door swung free and he grabbed the driver and pulled him out of the truck. The driver fell and Pete tried to jump. The driver started to crawl away from the accident and turned to see who had pulled him free.

Pete found that his jacket had gotten caught on a jagged piece of the hand-rail that was still bolted to the cab. He tried to break free, but he couldn't. The amazed driver watched as Pete made several futile attempts to free himself, then the gas tank exploded into a wall of orange, and then Pete's blood curdling scream could be heard from somewhere behind it. He screamed just one word, Angel.

A policeman was questioning the driver.

"Name?"

"Larry Mc Laughlin."

"Who was that guy?"

"I don't know, but he saved my life."

You Think I'm Your Friend

I destroy families
I put lovers through hell
I end all friendships
I destroy the future
I step on people
I have no feelings
I never feel any guilt
I come in many forms
I come in many shapes
I have no real home
I harm all ages
I am clever
I am deadly
I am jealousy.

Karen Beth Haight

Ah, Autumn. Season of transformation:
The nights grow longer and the air colder.
Glorious change for all of Creation.
A pungent scent while burning leaves smolder,
Creating a line of blue smoke through light,
Clean air. Drifting above the scenery.
Atop the tall, fiery trees of bright
Scarlet, of gold, of rust and greenery.
But, oh, too fast, the splendor of the Fall
Is gone; the leaves are dead, the land is bare.
Wind will groan, snow will come: the stone-cold wall
Of Winter. Death in this bittersweet air?
After Autumn and Winter, snowstorms bring
Lush, rich life to be reborn in the Spring.

Laura C. Kuczma

A New Season

Winter, spring, summer, fall; I've opened up and seen them all.
Sunlight, moonlight, weary sky; all must flourish, all must die.
I've spent my moment in the sun, and lost the laughing lonely one.
The faulty four has left me weak; it's but another that I seek.

Rick Zamanti



Now You Know

What you see,
Well, it's not really there
Thought and visions —
Twirling eddies in the air,
A river of tears to flood your eyes
You're hungry, wake up to realize.
Softly patters —
Footsteps through the hall
Reaching a destination —
That's not there at all
Confined inside yourself —
You begin to see
What is there —
Will never reflect of me
Rules and regulations —
You can't think without them now.
Religion and society —
Always determine your life somehow.
Can you stop yourself —
Must you push so far
Stumble and fall —
And I'll laugh at you in the dark,
Wings of a dove —
May flutter softly to the ground.
Read their message —
See their truth —
Hear their sound —
Pray for the salvation of your soul —
Fool!
You'll never understand —
What burns dark as coal;
Tunnel vision is yours —
Entire worlds torn apart
Dream at day —
So now you think you know
As they circulate around you —
Theirs is only show
Dance in frenzy —
So you can belong to night
Claws that dig into the sheer illusion of your flight
Mist clings in shadows over your mind
Impair your vision —
Dreams you'll never find
They see through your screen —
And don't even wave goodbye as they go
You had it all —
Or so it seemed,
But do you honestly think that now you know?

Leigh Davison

Flight?

My mind is like a plane out of control. It's spinning wildly and its fate is uncertain. Can I get myself out of this tailspin, will I be able to pick up my nose and land myself safely in the world of reality and rational. What put me into this state was not a failure on my part to navigate. But an uncontrollable outside force, another human being. Not just any human being, but one that brought down my defenses. She was my auto pilot. It was this person who with a lash of the tongue and a reaction of the heart sent my reeling into a world I can't explain. Before her, nobody had ever captured so much of my love and trust, nobody. What was this? To the eye she was appealing, but to my heart she was essential. It was her blood corpsing through my veins and her skin wrapped to my bones. And that was unexplainable. What did she use to deceive my defenses, how could she take me over without me knowing? These and other questions may never get an answer, but they are not the answers I need. I need to know how to get back my control, how to get back me. As I fall into a clear, yet dark place, a place I have never seen and wish never to see again. Should I deny her existence, I would be denying that I ever lived. But to think of her only makes me want. Can someone tell me if there is a land, a land in between, where I can get control and finish the flight? If I eventually do find this medium, if I ever land, how can I get back to the sky, a place where I can be happy again? Will anyone ever be able to copy the feat of invading my system or will I fly solo? And what of her, will her presence invade me again or can I fight the desire, for it will only lead to a certain death. And what of those who want to fly with her, since she was I, how can they be here? Why must I engage them when a victory would certainly net a loss, why would I want to go back to a position where I can end up in another spin? The answer lies somewhere, maybe somewhere never to be found, but the search for it is called life. When I no longer wish to find this answer, I no longer wish to live. And no longer wish to find this answer, I no longer wish to live. And that answer, I suspect, lies somewhere in between life and death, a place called love.

James Cook



Karen Beth Haight

Friends of the Same Kind

It was Christmas Eve, the store would be open for only another hour, and still no one wanted me. I guess I really couldn't blame them, there were so many other more cuddly, newer bears to choose from. All of my bear friends would be spending their Christmases in someone's warm, cheerful home. I'd have to spend another Christmas in the lonely store. I think I'd spent two Christmases there already.

My hair, which used to be a fluffy golden brown, was now all messed up and soiled from all of the lollipops and chocolate kisses that had been smeared over me. Even my Christmas cap was half off, and my pom pom was now just a lump of glued yarn stuck together. To make matters worse, I had a red and green checkered patch over the place where my left eye used to be.

Not many people come in the store at this hour of the night. Only a mother and daughter came. Every time the girl said, "Mommy, I like that bear, buy it for me," her mother would pick me up. At first, I thought maybe she would buy me because she had so much money, but then she bought a beautiful stuffed lion sitting next to me instead. I don't really know who he was because he had been in the store for only a few days.

Just as despair and rejection overwhelmed me, a man and woman walked in. They didn't look rich like the other people had. They both wore faded jeans and jackets that looked older than they did. I overheard them talking about a little boy named David, and how he never had any friends because everyone always stayed away from him. I thought that David must be the biggest bully around. I sure hoped they wouldn't buy me! I almost died when the man picked me up. I thought that would be the end. He had such a mean looking face. I couldn't believe that he was taking me to the checkout counter. I was hoping that the manager would say the store was closed now, or maybe the man wouldn't have enough money. This was the first time I prayed that someone would not buy me.

The last thing I remember seeing was the cash register and hearing the man and woman saying, "David will love to . . .", and then I was shoved into a brown paper bag. All I kept thinking about was the man's mean face, and that David must be a bully who would love to use me as a punching bag. Oh, how I wished I was safely back at the store!

Soon I was in the stranger's home and placed under a tiny tree. I dozed then only to be awakened by the chiming of church bells, triumphant and glorious in the distance. The brilliance of a star shining through the window startled me; my eyes followed it and came to rest on the same man and woman who had bought me. But they didn't look the same. The man was holding a little boy very gently, and the man's face was very soft and kind. I told myself that the little boy couldn't be David, because David is a bully and no one goes near him. I could sense that this little boy was a special boy. The only thing I noticed as different about him was the frightening metal things around his legs. I thought maybe that's what bullies wore to make them look tough, but this little boy certainly didn't look tough. As a matter of fact, he looked like a little angel who had just finished playing in the mud.

The man finally put the little boy down. I kept wondering where David, the bully was hiding. Then the little boy started walking, and I realized that the metal things around his legs helped him, to walk. He slowly came toward

me and picked me up. That little boy gave me the biggest hugs and kisses in the whole wide world. It was also the first time in my entire life that I had ever been loved. I heard the little boy say, "Thank you, Mommy and Daddy." Then they both said, "Merry Christmas, David."

I couldn't believe this was David. I remembered hearing the man and woman talking in the store and how they said no one ever played with David, and he had no friends. This was not because he was a bully, but because he was special and needed something to help him walk. I felt so ashamed that I had even thought this innocent little boy could ever do anything bad. My shame worsened when I realized, too, how selfish I had been in wishing to be placed in a very rich home, because here before me were riches beyond imagination — riches given only to the heart who truly loves and cares. David was only a little boy who had much love to give, and he made me the happiest and most loved bear of all.

Karen Beth Haight

Such is when
Cannot cry
So can sky black
And though to try
Such is how
Can touch to hand
So when grass green
Be promised land
Such yes is no
When smile erupt
Swing to and fro
Fill China cup
And sadly laugh
Earth under sand
Green book binding
Away from ran
That when such is
Will always be
Peace universal
And piece eternity.

Leigh Davison

I Know What Love Is

Oh, what honest and pure happiness I feel
After having met you.
What I have always dreamed of
And wished for
Have finally become a part of my life.
Hopefully we will last.
My feelings for you (and yours for me) are deeply-rooted. Sincere.
Not superficial.
Not shallow.
Oh, please let it remain like this.
For I can no longer endure the immense pressure and
Lonely solitude
Of rejection and infidelity,
Of lying and tears.
That have played such a big part of my life.
That have scarred my trust,
Hurt my pride. And made me afraid to ever love again.
It has been so hard to try again and again.
But now I know what I truly want:
Someone who I can honestly say that I love without fear of loss.
In this silly game we call Love.

Laura C. Kuczma

Sybilism

At times I wish I could die
And be reborn again into the person I want to be.
And not exist as the person I am.
To be reawakened into life with new found vibrancy
To be euphoric and empathetic to man and all that exists.
To become caring and compassionate and to overcome
all that hinders man.

As I speak I can see that my words can sometimes stab the ones
I care about most
As I speak I can see the sneering, the cutting, and the crimson red
of the incisions.
Yet I do not think twice to stop.
Yet I inside feel the pain of my deeds
Yet sometimes within my words I can show caring and compassion.
And reflect the true meanings of my feelings and thoughts.
Yet, why is it that the knives appear to hide what really exists?
As if a covert attempt to show what really is there.

My words echo like footsteps in that they begin at the door of reality
And they echo until they dissipate away.
Yet they can be heard as the door closes.
The echo rings as I speak
And the crowd laughs . . . and I laugh . . .
Yet as my audience fades and I am left alone again
I sit, I wonder, I think.
My words are sharp and cutting.
The crimson red scares me.
An audience is everything to a clown
Without an audience . . . a clown is nothing.
Yet as I sit alone I cry.
And as I weep a single trickle of a tear makes its way down my face . . .
Where the smile used to be.
Sometimes the laughter just isn't worth the pain.
And the redundancy of saying "I'm sorry" is sickening.
Why is it you always have to hurt those people you love the most?

Renee A. Hewitt



Ad van III

12

I will supply you the secret
If you will supply me an ear
I will tell of the pain
 and the happiness
Of many, many years
If only you will listen
If only you will hear.

Ben Fried

The Shell

I like to have a shell snugly wrapped around me,
So no one can see the hurt and pain gnawing deep inside me.
If I strike out first at those around me,
I won't be hurt or touched by him,
When I wear a long face, sad face, or mad face,
It's to keep me in and others out.
But nobody wants to hear because they all fear me,
So in reality, I am destroying myself and no one is there,
To stop me, to pick up the pieces, so I shall slowly die,
Leaving behind nothing but the hurt and pain I feel inside me,
And the broken heart that is irreparable,
Repairable by its maker, its creator, its destroyer,
My heart is only one heart to give,
You had it for a long time,
And now I give it to you forever,
But will you accept it?
And as I write this, I wrap the shell more tightly around me.

Renee A. Hewitt

Write-of-Way

Dark-skinned people workin' hard. Workin' to stay alive. The white man who stands up on a hill, watching them, yells, "You better start working a little harder." And they do. Ninety-eight people taking orders from one man standing on a hill. And this is the way it was. And this is the way it is.

At twelve a.m. the dark-skinned people are allowed to walk home which is twelve miles away. No, they can't live in the town. The white man left five hours ago, when another took his place. They live less than a mile away from where they "work." And this is the way it was. And this is the way it is.

A dark-skinned family is eating dirt. "Daddy, can you find another job?" "I'll try son." He knows he cannot. He takes only what he gets. That's not much. White man won't give it. He says if you want it, you gotta fight. So, dark man fights. And this is the way it was. And this is the way it is.

So, now they fight. Too many are getting killed. Dead women and children lay in the street. The white man looks at the destruction he has caused, but he feels no pain. Police come to question this one white man and he points to a group of young black men. Immediately these young men are struck down by one quick blow. "Get up, boy," the policeman yells. They are shoved in a crowded van and arrested. And this is the way it was. And this is the way it is.

A young black man's father is dead. His brother in jail. He can't get a job because of the color of his skin. His mother cries herself to sleep at night. And this is the way it was in America.

And this is the way it is in South Africa, and though you may not be able to see it so clearly, this is still the way it is in America.

Tara Parker

A drop. A single splatter fallen doesn't matter when one sees life not as a way of fun but soon to over and done when time surpasses all that we see and all that we be and circumscribes our hearts into revelations that bitterly reveal what's underneath the way we say we feel and the way we act is different approach that signals the youth to rise to the war and get bloody for only a few swelled heads who believe in God yet believe it's okay to kill thousands of babies that seems like only yesterday were born in sterile white rooms and die in cold grey tombs and in between cry that life isn't fair so they slit their wrists and shave their hair and the whole time never forget that rain makes the world go 'round and lends a hand to the ground so much that even you would call it a downpour.



10/12/10
Dag
8
12/12/10
10

The Alligator

One day, an alligator sat on the bank of a swamp with his mouth open as a bird gracefully cleaned his teeth. Presently, another alligator crawled up beside him and stared unblinkingly (for alligators cannot blink) at him for twenty minutes.

"What do you think?" she asked him.

"I do not think, for I am an alligator, and alligators are not supposed to think," he replied with a degree of un-alligator-like intelligence.

"We don't," she said tentatively, "have to be alligators."

"Don't be silly," he snarled, "we will always be alligators."

She thought about this for a while. The other alligator slithered back into the water with the ease of one who thinks he has won an argument before has been started.

She thought, "Well . . . , maybe"

And so she sauntered up the bank of the swamp to try and find the world. Presently she came upon a bird sitting low in a bush.

"Please, bird," the alligator pleaded, "please take me to see the world."

"Oh, no, I couldn't," replied the bird, "for you would probably eat me."

"Why would I eat you?" asked the alligator in consternation.

"Because," explained the bird logically, "I am a bird . . . , and you are an alligator."

"Oh"

"And besides," trilled the bird, "I couldn't wait for you who are slow. Ask a snail!"

So, the alligator plodded on, looking desperately for someone who could show her the world.

The rabbit said the same thing as the bird, and the turtle didn't care that there was a world. The deer explained that it would take many days going out of the way to find the edge of the world.

"Go ask a man," said an old owl, "to show you the world, because only men know much about the world, but even they do not know all. There is much of the world beyond the world itself which a man cannot see. . . ."

and on, and on went the owl.

Well, the alligator finally found a man. He was sitting on a stump, smoking.

"Hello," said the alligator.

"Hello, said the man, "what are you doing here?"

"I am trying to find a man so he can tell me about the world."

"And am I the man?"

"Yes, I think that you are a man."

And the man sat, and puffed on his stick-thing, and coughed, and puffed, and thought. "Yes, I suppose I am a man. You look like an alligator."

"No, I don't think I am really an alligator, for alligators are dumb, and eat birds and rabbits, and they don't care about the world."

"But you look like an alligator."

"Yes, I suppose I do."

"So"

"So, please, oh please, could you take me to the world?"

"Yes," he answered, and promptly made her into a travel bag, because, of course, he was a man, and she was an alligator.

As he did it, he cried . . . Crocodile tears.

I For YOU

I have finally come to realize that I am not the most important thing in the world, that I am rather insignificant, and I have found that YOU are the most important thing that I know, but I have cast YOU away from me by being myself.

That is why I hold this knife now, not that I shall hold it long, for its poison is fast, though its venom is slow.

There.

I have done it, and the pain is great, but I am so numb that I do not think I can feel it.

Still, nothing seems different.

I still see, I still write, I still bleed.

Now, things are beginning to swim before me, to lose shape, form, distance, reality melts away like a teardrop, leaving only the burnt end of a wick.

I feel sick, so I have to close my eyes, but even with my eyes closed, I can still see, though only in a dream I think.

Is this death?

Do I dream in death forever.

I don't want to dream forever, I never did . . .

GOD . . .

I don't want to die!

Oh, but the dream blossoms, silvery petals of nothing flaking away from the corners of my mind.

The dream is torn from end to end by fiery white shards.

And I see . . .

The End

Ben Fried

The Whale

The whale is beached—

 a black speck on an endless shore.
And in the deep blue waters can be eyed
 Five black fins circling each other.
From one another they seek help.
 To help their life long friend in need.
The magnificent animals push toward the shore
 In an instinctive effort to save one of their kind.
 A kind that is so few.
And the closer they get, the more impossible it is for them to
 return,
And the tide goes down
 To reveal
Six black specks on an endless shore.
All this, because they love.

Danielle Berger

My dreams become nightmares
When I remember the news.
The horror is fresh in my mind.
The trembling still hasn't left my body.
The tears still threaten to flow.
Looking back, I don't know how I survived.
Yes, I do.
I survived because I had no choice.
I'm living.
And the living move on.

Anu Ailawadhi

Of Bitter Sweet Tears

He sees you there, he looks away.

You notice him,

A tear,

A small, salty tear.

A tear that to him means nothing.

But to you, it is as precious as gold.

It glides down your powdered cheek

Leaving behind a bitter sweet stream

That approaches an end and stops.

The fear can go no more, so it waits to drip from your chin.

Content to be waiting —

It will soon be gone, lost forever

A tear shed for him.

Here comes another, down that bitter sweet stream.

The two tears fuse at the end and coast to the ground - together

When they reach the cold hard pavement, they splatter,

No longer as one, but as multitudes of tiny droplets

Droplets which are soon joined by many more,

And the bitter sweet stream overflows.

You sigh a sigh, and be on your way.

Following him at a distance.

Your head hanging low.

And you see as you pass where he once walked

Brilliant shimmers at your feet

Forever conserved

In his own pool of bitter sweet tears.

Danielle Berger



Danielle Berger
1976

I'll be your dreamer
Whenever you awake
I'll be a keychain
If you need a keepsake
I can be anything you want
If you should have the need
I'll be your tears
If ever you should grieve.

If you need a little time
I can be eternity
If you need a word to rhyme
You can just ask me
I will be the thing you want
A pond, a pool, a lake.
And I'll be an excuse
should you make a mistake.

If you want a smile
I'll be right here.
Should you need something warm
I will always stay near.
If you need a hand to hold
Somebody to talk with you.
Yes, I'll be your dreamer
Will you be mine too.

Ben Fried



Death is a scary thought.
Or is the end of life scary?
Living without someone is what
frightens me.
When we die, our pain is gone.
But what do we leave those
left behind?
Sorrow, tears and lonely memories.
Memories are more fun when shared.
And after death the sharing is gone.
Forever.

Anu Ailawadhi

Alone

Deep in the darkness
there are no walls
I travel alone.
Silent with voices
crowded with tears
unforgiven
pasts, presents, and
choking with possibilities
too heavy to grasp
I run in darkness
alone
trying to outrun my shadow
hoping to get there before me
I see
deep in the darkness
wallowing in blindness.
Hoping sometimes
to forget.

Jossette Geronimo

Drive Train Blues

The car drives slowly,
Wary of its existence,
Unable to move,
Despite its persistence.

Showing its power,
Under resistance,
Letting it go,
At drivers instance.

The power it holds,
Keeps it in place,
Giving it more,
leads to distaste.

5 years of life,
is all too quick,
Having a few more would be quite slick.

But in the end,
You paid the price,
You went too fast on that thin sheet of ice.

You saw your life,
How quick it went,
The things you did,
The time you spent.

You joined a club,
You entered a fad,
And in the end it wasn't that bad.

It went so quick,
The life you had,
So you owned a car,
Weren't you glad???



The Mosaic

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