

PLEASE GOD LET ME LOVE  
LOVE AGAIN AGAIN AGAIN  
LIVE AND DIE AGAIN

They applaud. It's curtain call.  
Line up to take that last bow.

My foot falls as sleep and still there is talk  
a party, a dress, a deadline, a song  
And no violin. And nothing is wrong

The angels trumpet wildly,  
the harps are plucked with might.

Will you bleed from the seed of the life you built?

# The Mosaic

The Words We Live (and Die) By

I, THE PHOENIX, WILL FOREVER LIVE

IN SHORT  
LET ME  
BE ME

For thou saw madness in motion  
It cometh hither, ever closer still

AN OCCASION FOR EPIPHANY, FOR SERIOUS THINGS, A DISCOVERY MOMENTOUS,  
AND EFFORTLESS POETRY OR A PHONE CALL THAT  
CHANGES EVERYTHING

My dearest, sweetest retrograde computer:  
You seemed such  
a perfect suitor!

Dead weight

the floor:  
once vital liquid  
across her skirt

Close that last scripted page  
Disengage  
From our characters  
And walk off stage

A grey fire behind His shadows, eyes burning to be set free,  
to run forever across the deep blue sky.



Marist College  
Literary Arts Society  
Presents:

*The Mosaic*

Spring 2007 Edition



# The (loveable and rather odd) Mosaic Staff

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Special thanks to Robert Lynch, the Marist College English Department, and special thanks to Tommy Zurhellen, our club advisor, for his continuous support and dedication without which this and the club would not be possible.

# Table of Contents

(Take your pick)

*Birthday Cake - Keara Driscoll 1-8*

*Bouillabaisse - Jacqueline Cognisi 9-19*

Housewife - Aasta Franscati- Robinson 20-21

*On Reading Robert Lowell in the Half-Light*

*on the Way Back From New York City - Amanda Hurlburt 22*

**Addiction - Brianne Bendit 23**

Don't Tell the Truth - Marianne Schaffer 24

**Words - Stephanie M. Garrison 25**

*The Grey Side of Saffron - Richard J. Langlois 26-33*

**I'm in it - Amy Wheeler 34**

***Android Advancement Issues - Jessica Friedlander 35***

Dreams and Lovers - Sarah Gunner 36-42

Environmentalist Lauren M. Jackson 42

*Liberty's Plight - Tim McMullan 43-44*

Dear Cast - Brianne Bendit 45-46

**IDENTITY - STEPHANIE M. GARRISON 47**

**Possession - Kelly Geus 48**

*My Goddess - Miguel Gonzalez 48*

Untitled - Stephanie Bushman 49

February Fourteenth - Kelly Geus 50

**Glassy-Eyed - Danielle Mooney 51-54**

December 24 - Tricia Lynch December 24 55-56

Epilogue of Rhiannan - Nicole Boisvert 56

Sugar and Spice - Risa Pedzewick 57-65

TRUTH - LEAH SCHELSEL 66

Untitled 2 - Stephanie Bushman 67

*My Thoughts for the Evening - Tom Kryzk 67*

Isolation - Aasta Franscati-Robinson 68

**The Uproot - Miguel Gonzalez 69-74**

The Pronouns are Superfluous - Amanda Hurlburt 75-76

Kings Own Castle in Florida - Nick Orsini 77-78

*Untitled - Nicole Boisvert 78*

LOVE - AMY WHEELER 79

Friday Night Football - Amanda Mulvihill 80

The Life you Built - Dylan Vergara 81-82

Brianne Bendit Expensive Taste 83

*...Dancing with Jesus - Christina Torres 84*

**Requiem of Love - Richard Frias 85-88**

Phoenix - Melinda Martinez 89-90

Photo Credits:

Tom Krzyk 33 Robin Henderson 21

Amy Wheeler 51 *Christopher Ziobro 54*

Amy Wheeler 66

Brianne Bendit 79

*Kate Feirman 82*

## Mosaic Fiction Contest Runner-up:

### Birthday Cake

Keara Driscoll

The twenty, pink tutu-clad kindergarteners fumble curtsies as parents rise out of their seats, clapping and cheering. The audience laughs as the little girls attempt to find their way off stage, tripping over each other. One loses her shoe in the scuffle, and begins to cry. The shot goes in and out of focus as a woman nudges her husband.

"Turn the camera off Dan, she's crying."

"Hang on Maureen; I'm trying to find the damn button."

The last glimpse of a little girl rubbing her eyes loses focus and fades to black.

Dan stared at the snow on the television screen. He wished he never turned off the camera. He wish he had recorded the car ride home, the dinner they ate that night, every moment he and Maureen put the kids to bed, every conversation they had at 3 a.m. when the rest of the house slept. Now, eighteen years were summarized in thirty minute intervals; strange montages of first birthdays, soccer games, and recitals coexisted in one small collection of tapes.

The living room hadn't changed since they bought the house. The same china figurines and candles sat upon the mantelpiece of a fireplace that never worked. Maureen's favorite wedding gift, a crystal candy dish, remained in its familiar spot upon the scuffed coffee table. The pictures were the only indicators of the passing time. First graders morphed into High School graduates within a five foot span of wall space.

Dan lit a cigarette as Maureen readied herself for work. "Don't smoke in here honey, I just steam-cleaned the carpet." Picking up her keys from the coffee table, she kissed him lightly on the head. Dan hardly moved as he dropped his unfinished cigarette in the ashtray their son made them for Christmas twelve years ago.

He stared at the blank T.V. for a minute before lifting himself off the couch. Shutting off the VCR, he listened to the gravel crunch as Maureen's dark green Saturn pulled out of the driveway. His feet followed the brown carpet up the stairs and down the hall to their bedroom. The tired mattress groaned as he lowered his body onto it.



Age has a certain weight that never ebbs; it only adds layers. When he was twenty, he was weightless. Maureen was too. March 3rd was looming: the day he turned fifty. Dan wondered if the last third of his life would fly by as quickly as the first two.

Work didn't need him for another hour. Why should I even bother showing up?, he thought. That new kid already knows more about construction than I do. He stretched his arms towards the ceiling and noticed his hands. They were craggy and scarred from years of work. The only thing smooth about him was his scalp, which had finally let go of his last stubborn strands of hair. Going bald was one of the bigger adjustments he had to make, made worse by Marty, who showed up to work every day with a new bald joke. At least I don't glue a goddamned dead animal to my scalp every day, Dan thought. He checked his watch. Let's see if Marty's come up with any new ones today.

\* \* \*

"Diane wants to do something fancy just because we've been dating for six months, but I think that's stupid," Josh mumbled as he scooped peas onto his plate.

Dinner always took place in the tiny kitchen, never in the dining room. Marty always sat with his back to the refrigerator, Maureen sat on his right, Josh across from his father, and the cat often occupied Kate's empty seat.

Maureen settled into her seat. "Honey, its okay to be romantic once in a while, she's your first real girlfriend, and she really likes you. If you need some money your father and I can help you. Isn't that right, Dan?"

Her husband shrugged and continued to stare down into his plate. Something along the line of "hopeless" escaped from under Maureen's breath.

Dan stared sideways at his wife, but chose not to comment. For a second, the dull ceiling lamp illuminated the red that faded from her hair every day. He watched her straighten her pearl necklace and scoop mashed potatoes onto her plate. He watched her slip her hands into his and say "I do." He watched her walk down a college hall with a stack of books under one arm. He watched her turn and smile, reach out her hand, and talk about the upcoming football game. He looked at his hands, clutching his fork, and shoveled more food into his mouth, pushing down words.

\* \* \*

"Let's do something exciting this year."

Maureen slipped between the sheets and rolled over on her side. Dan exhaled smoke as he rolled his eyes. "Honey, all I want for my birthday is my family all together and maybe a nice dinner." He sighed and rubbed his forehead.

"But honey," she kept going, "that's what we do every year. You know, Joanne was telling me how she and Hank went on a second honeymoon when he turned fifty. She said it was the best thing they ever did."

"Where did they go?"

"Bermuda."

"It's too hot there. And we can't afford it sweetheart."

She stared at him for a moment. It wasn't the deep stare that listened when he had a bad day at work, or the excited stare that watched him open her Christmas gift after the kids went to bed. He disappointed her. She turned her shoulders to him, sinking under the covers. He muttered, "Goodnight Maureen." She clicked off the lamp. "Don't smoke in here. You'll turn the walls yellow."

Maureen had just left when Dan woke up. Her shoulder had left a small dent in the covers and the bathroom was still warm with steam. He rolled over and smoothed her pillow. The same scent always lingered on her side of the bed: lilac and laundry detergent. He thought back to when they were in college, where she was the bright, pretty bookworm, ready to graduate second in her class. He was the bumbling jock, on the verge of losing his football scholarship. He only asked her to tutor him because he couldn't bring himself to ask her out; no amount of help was going to keep him in school. She should have been a lawyer, a novelist, anything more satisfying than a high school guidance counselor. She had settled for less; for him.

Dan hated going to work now. Each week, one new, young employee appeared, fresh out of trade school, as one old man "retired." When Steve showed up, Dan knew his days were numbered. The handsome youth stood tall as the boss introduced him to everyone. He extended his hand to Dan, who, covered in construction dust and wood shavings, felt like a fool. Steve's handshake was firm; he stared hard into Dan's eyes. Jesus Christ, this kid means business, Dan thought, as he forced his mouth into a smile.

Maureen seemed cheerful when Dan arrived home from work that day. She greeted him with a kiss on the cheek, helping him take off his jacket. He avoided her questions about work. She didn't know that he would soon be unemployed, and he intended to keep her in the dark.

Dan talked less than usual that night at dinner. Maureen was prodding Josh about his upcoming senior prom.

"What's the theme going to be?"

"I have no idea, mom."

"Is Diane excited?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"I remember Kate's senior prom. It took us weeks to find her dress, but she looked perfect. Her date was so handsome, I forget his name now... Bill? Mark? Well, who knows. They looked so great together. Don't you remember Dan?"

He lifted his eyes from his coffee mug. Maureen knew he hadn't been listening. She furrowed her brow and swept his empty dish off the table. Dan flinched. Josh tossed his dishes into the sink and bounded upstairs. "Can't I just have one decent conversation with anyone around here?" Maureen's complaint broke Dan's concentration on the kitchen tiles. "Sometimes I feel like I might as well just talk to the cat." The phone's jangle exploded in the kitchen as Maureen dropped a soapy pan to answer it. "Hello? Kate! Sweetheart, how are you, how's every — oh. Okay. One hundred dollars? Well you could've called sooner if you needed to buy groceries. You sound hoarse, are you sick?... Good, good. How're all you're classes?... Oh okay. No, I understand... no, if you need to go, go. I love you too. Bye." She limply dropped the phone onto the receiver. "Kate says hi," she lied. The dishes floated in their oily water as Maureen rounded out of the kitchen and walked upstairs. Dan counted her footsteps as she walked down the hall, and listened to the mattress squeak as she dropped on the bed. He lit a cigarette.

Dan passed out on the couch after dinner, lulled to sleep by a black and white movie on AMC. He awoke at midnight, groggy and full of Dorito crumbs. As he wiped sleep out of his eyes, he glimpsed out the window. Someone left the porch light on. No — someone was on the porch. Sitting up, his eyes made out a silhouette. Broad shoulders. Sandy hair and a Yankees cap. A puff of smoke injecting the night air.

The sagging couch cushions couldn't hold Dan down. He made it to the door in three strides, yanking it open, only to see his son turn around wildly, stuffing something in his pocket.

"Hey dad!" The tremor shook Josh's voice like an earthquake. "I thought you were asleep."

"Hey son." Dan paced around the porch. "Come out to get some air?"

"Yeah. Coach has us running extra laps during practice now. Sometimes I feel a little winded."

"Mhm. And I'll bet smoking isn't going to help you feel any better now, is it?"

"Dad..." Josh slumped forward, pulling the cigarettes out of his pocket. "You have no idea what the pressure at school is like. I just needed a little release. I only have a couple a week, just to clear my head."

"Give them to me." Dan grabbed the half empty pack and stuffed them in his jeans. "Turn the light off before you come inside."

\* \* \*

"You caught our son smoking and you didn't do anything to stop him?" Maureen's hand nearly severed her hip as she eyed her husband from across the kitchen. Dan dropped his toast. "I took the cigarettes away from him Maureen, I think he got the message." Maureen wielded her spatula like a weapon. "We're supposed to talk to him about these things! How dangerous it is, what it could lead to. Dammit sometimes I feel like if I didn't take charge, everything would fall apart in this house!"

Dan's fork clattered on the table as he moved towards the door. Maureen incinerated. "Yeah, go; leave, just like you always do. Ignore all these problems because you know what? You have a wife who will just come behind you and pick up all the pieces."

He had walked to the edge of a cliff. If he kept his balance, he could make it out of the kitchen alive. Maureen turned to the stove. "Sometimes I wonder if I should've..."

The pebble that began the avalanche fell. "Should've what? Married another guy? Yeah, you probably should have! Gone to law school? Who was stopping you!? Then you wouldn't be stuck with a college dropout who doesn't want to go to Fiji for his birthday, dirties your house with cigarette ash, and influences your kids to ignore the hell out of you! I didn't make you

marry me Maureen, nor did anyone else. I'm you're your parents would've loved it if you chose some big time Wall Street executive. But you didn't; you chose me, and now you're stuck. Just stop making these things my fault!"

Maureen wobbled. Her eyes welled and her lips trembled. He watched her tip, like a crystal vase falling off a table in slow motion. His stomach plummeted as she ran out of the kitchen before tears fell.

When Dan came home that night, there were already dishes in the sink; an early dinner had concluded without him. He searched around the fridge as Josh rumbled down the stairs and into the kitchen. "Hey dad," he muttered as he reached around him for a soda. "Hey son," Dan responded, pulling his head out of the fridge. "You want to sit with me for a while?" Josh paused; he was headed towards the living room. "Yeah...yeah I guess. Just don't ask me about prom, okay?"

Dan heated up macaroni and sat in his usual chair, eyeing his son. Josh was built strong and lean, not bulky like Dan. The perfect physique for a baseball player. Dan remembered how scrawny he was as a kid; he could barely lift a baseball bat, let alone take a swing at a ball. Somewhere between six and eighteen, he developed an athlete's body, and a "winning attitude," as his coach said. Dan felt as if those years had just been some dream he must've had while he dozed on the couch. He didn't know where to begin.

"So...are you excited to graduate?" Josh fidgeted. "Yeah, I guess so. Dad, I really have to go, I promised Diane I'd call her." Dan waved him away. Maybe Maureen was right. He was eighteen years too late.

Maureen had shut off the light in the hallway upstairs. Dan's fingers searched for his bedroom doorknob. Opening the door slowly, he caught sight of Maureen on the bed. She was still in her work clothes. He stood in the doorway; what could he say? She had pushed him. She didn't know what he was going through. He felt a knot tighten in his stomach as he slowly shut the door.

Maureen listened to his feet press on the stairs. She lifted her head and turned over her pillow, to the side that was dry.

\* \* \*

"Hey Danny boy! Get over here, George wants to rub your head so he can see the future!" Marty laughed his two-packs-a-day laugh while the other workers just shook their heads. Thanks for starting my day off on a high note,

Marty. Maybe if you paid less attention to me, your wife would have stuck around. Dammit, why can't I just say that to his face? Dan shook off his retorts and idly shifted around pieces of sheetrock. Marty sauntered over, clapping his hand on Dan's shoulder. "So I hear tomorrow's the big day, eh? The big 50. The beginning of the end—" Dan shook him off and walked away, ignoring Marty's calls. "Hey, where ya going? Aw come on, don't be like that, can't you take a few jokes?" The boss's appearance finally shut Marty up as Mr. Brockman marched over, Steve following close behind, holding a clipboard. "Okay fellas, we've made a few changes in today's schedule. Marty's going to be handling the crane, we have to move all twenty of those beams today. Danny, you take it easy for a while and get rid of that sheetrock," Dan's fingers made a heated fist. "The rest of you, get back to work." Steve waited for the boss's speech to finish before approaching Dan. "Mr. Brockman wants to see you in his office right after lunch, Mr. Cleary." He froze. So today was it. He had three hours before he was let go. He couldn't even meet Steve's eyes as he mumbled "Thanks" under his breath.

Twenty minutes before his lunch, and Dan actually felt sick. He wished he could find a way to stall, maybe if he hid in the bathroom for a half hour Mr. Brockman would forget about their meeting. He had been working there for almost thirty years, why did they want to let him go now?

Marty swore he didn't see Dan standing below him. Dan barely had time to leap out of the way of the huge metal beam that slipped from the crane's grasp. He didn't make it, as it came crashing down onto his right leg, right below the kneecap. Marty didn't hear anyone warn him to be careful, but he heard Dan scream, loud and long, as twenty burly men raced toward the scene. Dan's torso warped with pain as the beam was lifted off him, revealing a bloodied, shattered limb. His eyes fluttered wildly to the sky as the men surrounding him went out of focus. He saw Marty standing over him, his eyes leaking tears. He felt Steve's hands hold his head steady. He heard himself say, "Fuck...My God." His eyes slid into his skull.

Dan woke up in a hospital gown. His sight sharpened to reveal Maureen sleeping in a cushioned chair next to the bed. Strands of hair escaped her usually neat ponytail. Her shirt was wrinkled in the wrong places, as if she had been wearing it for a couple of days. He reached his hand to brush her pale cheek. As he lifted his arm, the pain in his leg awoke. Nerves fired

missiles into his brain as his jaw clenched. Maureen startled as she heard him choke down a yell. Immediately, she was next to him, holding his hand. "It's probably time for your painkillers. I'll get the nurse." Dan pulled her back as the pain subsided. "I'm okay." He wasn't sure if he said that out loud. Maureen lowered her face onto his chest and sobbed. "Happy Birthday baby," was all Dan could make out, "I'm so glad you're still here."

Josh lingered in the doorway. His face was ashen; even his hair seemed gray. He walked over to the bed, touching his father's hand. He smelled like smoke. "Dad...they...they almost had to...get rid of it. They thought they couldn't save your leg. I'm...I'm glad you're okay. Kate's flying in from Notre Dame tonight." Dan pulled his son towards him. Maureen still sobbed. Dan felt layers peel away, like an onion. He was hugging Josh the same way he did when he was three and he fell off his bike. He was stroking Maureen's hair the same way he did when they laid in bed together all day on their honeymoon. He felt as lucky as he did the day Maureen said she would go out with him. He closed his eyes. The room faded to black.

\* \* \*

Dan hadn't eaten solid food in weeks. The doctors said it had something to do with the combination of painkillers and antibiotics. Maureen's cooking was a welcome treat. Kate sat in a chair next to her father and couldn't stop talking about school, while Josh helped his mother scoop corn, potatoes and turkey onto paper plates. A knock was heard on the door.

It was Marty. His eyes darted around the room. "Is...is this a bad time?" For a moment, the family stared. Maureen walked over, putting her arms around him. "Thank you for coming."

Dan eyed Marty carefully. "Hey Marty...what kind of animal was that before you scooped it off the side of a road with a spatula?" Marty smiled. "Yeah, yeah, yeah, real funny." Marty handed Maureen a white box with a chocolate cake nestled inside. Dinner disappeared faster with the prospect of desert in the future. The family sang 'Happy Birthday' as Dan feigned annoyance. He bit into his slice of cake; the sweet frosting caught his rusty taste buds by surprise. Maureen laughed as he rubbed frosting on her nose. Her laugh brought him back to the time he ever talked to her. He saw her toss back red curls. He felt her kiss him with frosting covered lips. He was fifty. He was twenty. He was weightless.

## Mosaic Fiction Contest Winner

Jaqueline Colognesi  
Bouillabaisse

In truth Miss Emmeline Kantz led a boring sort of life.

In theory she did all sorts of fantastic things. In theory, she was the leader of one of those 1,000-piece marching bands, with such shocking enthusiasm and talent that attractiveness still washed over her despite the funny outfit. In theory, she was a society woman, who dressed in heavy jewels and furs to dine out every night of the week, who always had company, and would be envied had she cared to dine alone, which she never did. In theory, she was an Amazon of the jungle, with a flat muscular waist, miles of legs and strong, flexible hands that could kill and often did. Miss Kantz was, in theory, the only one who could solve the code written on the wall of the ancient tomb, the one scientists had been trying to solve for decades, because Miss Kantz was, in theory, given no formal education, just raised shrouded in the mystery and opaqueness of the elders. In theory, Miss Kantz advised the President on everything from how to solve world hunger to whether or not he should authorize the use of nuclear missiles to his marriage problems and what he should buy his wife for Christmas. In theory, she was Miss Hannett-Meyer, philosophy professor who managed to keep every male in her class interested in Plato and receive end-of-the-year reviews that read like real rhapsodies; "I never missed my 8am class because Miss Hannett-Meyer managed to look breathtaking even at that early hour, and the morning sun would play like starlight off that gorgeous head of honeyed blonde hair."

In truth, Miss Emmeline Kantz lived alone.

Perhaps it couldn't be considered entirely alone. She had cats. She had approximately six cats (although sometimes she lost count and sometimes strays joined the mix; she was never properly sure) that shared her rather nice two-story apartment.

The apartment she kept filled with fake flowers, because real ones were too bothersome to replace. They were the nice kind, made of silk, and as long as she dusted them regularly they looked real.

The furniture in her apartment was entirely made of oak, stained very dark, because Miss Emmeline Kantz firmly believed that there was no sturdier wood than oak. Each



piece of furniture was covered with a large crocheted doily that she had knitted herself. The couches (which already had slipcovers) were covered in doilies as well. The doilies would invariably fill with cat hair, and so whenever she dusted the silk flowers she had to vacuum the doilies.

The walls of her apartment were covered with pictures of her niece, Miss Katie Kantz. Katie, at 17, was the daughter of her younger brother and had always been a source of envy for Miss Emmeline. She had her youth, a sheet of long dark hair and one of those lithe bodies that was perfect for ballet but was actually created from track. Miss Emmeline was constantly buying purses, shoes and coats of a luxuriant nature for her niece with money she saved from the vacations she earned but never took. If she were to describe Katie in one word, Miss Emmeline would have chosen "Opportunity." But, Miss Emmeline supposed, if she were to die today, and Katie had to read her eulogy tomorrow, it would go something like, she supposed, "My Aunt Emmy was very generous. Also, she was very kind to her many cats. And she was really good at knitting."

And even that would be a lie, Miss Emmeline Kantz thought to herself, because she really wasn't very nice to her many cats. On the rare occasion when she was more bored than usual, she would feed them catnip and get them very high, and watch aimlessly when one inevitably chewed through a lamp wire and died by electrocution. Last time it was Tiny Bubbles. She was good at knitting, she thought, but could there be anything more boring than knitting? She was good at her job too, she supposed, but there wasn't much exciting about being a secretary for Sturgis & Dowd, which is what she had been for the last 30 years. She had been promoted to Dowd's personal secretary, but the most thrilling parts of her days involved lying to his wife on the phone when Dowd was curled up in his office with his 28-year old mistress. Even those bits of the day were wrecked for her when she thought about how jealous she was that Dowd was actually having an affair. It seemed to her that had she had the opportunity to go to college she could have been Dowd, except that she would have preferred a poolhouse and a cabana boy. Either way, she figured she was stuck. Stuck with knitting doilies. And cats. And in the winter, sweaters for her cats.

Miss Emmeline Kantz awoke one Wednesday morning to one of her cats, Woo, (although it might have been Poochie, she couldn't be sure)

sandpapering her ear with his tongue. She stretched out one soft arm and knocked the cat away with a dimpled elbow. She rose slowly, at 6:15 am, like she always did, and fed the cats before showering, like she always did. Miss Emmeline stared at herself blandly in the bathroom mirror for a few minutes. She was a dumpy sort of woman, not that kind that the guys in the puffy jackets who hung out on the corner down the street from Stugis & Dowd yelled "Yo Ma," at. Miss Emmeline secretly wished they would yell "Yo Ma," at her, even though Dowd routinely referred to them as "thug life" and constantly petitioned the city to get them off "his" corner; bad for business, he'd say. It was true, Miss Emmeline thought, that even in her younger days, as a fresh graduate from Miss Rabinowitz's Secretary School for Business Minded Young Ladies, the thugs probably would not have yelled "Yo Ma," at her. They would probably yell it at Katie, she thought, and Katie wouldn't even appreciate it.

There was a lot Katie had that she never did, she thought as she loo-fahed up with Honeysuckle Morning, like she always did. Katie had beauty, and brains, and opportunity, and thanks to the one college education Miss Emmeline's parents could afford, a rich father. How her younger brother had managed to create a successful business after squandering away his education as a philosophy major, which he had only pursued so he could ogle Miss Hannett-Meyer for four years (Miss Hannett-Meyer, incidentally, married during his junior year and adapted the more unfortunate moniker of Mrs. Garcias-Dreisbach) was beyond her. Yet he had, and while Miss Emmeline Kantz was doing well financially, he had the beautiful wife, and the gorgeous kid, and the home in the suburbs, and the family vacations to Madrid and Fiji. Thanks to Miss Emmeline, his daughter had more designer clothes and purses than any 17 year old ever should, because while Miss Emmeline could certainly afford to go to Madrid or Fiji, she couldn't bear the thought of going alone. And she wasn't sure if they let cats cross international borders. And that thought was so depressing, anyways, vacationing with your cats. And she would be seen as the strange old lady with the cats. Which, she supposed, she was already thought of by some people.

She wasn't even old, she thought, pulling on neat dress pants over hose and tucking a silk blouse into them. But she looked older than 53, and she certainly acted older than 53. Miss Emmeline Kantz pulled on a sweater, slipped

her feet into sensible flats, and left her rather nice two-story apartment. She inched slowly into her sensible mid-sized sedan and honked the horn several times, like she did every morning, to ensure the cats wouldn't be crouched behind her back tires. She had lost Spanky that way.

In theory, Miss Kantz was usually a racecar driver, banking and swerving, always seconds away from explosion. In truth, on this Wednesday morning Miss Kantz was tired of theory.

Miss Emmeline Kantz pulled into the parking spot that read "Miss Emmeline Kantz", a recognition she had received after 25 years of solid service at Sturgis & Dowd. She stared at the backdoor entrance that she always went to, and wondered if the front would be more interesting.

The front, as it turned out, was not more interesting. The gilt letters of the building rose like bragging rights over the city street. Some bragging rights, Miss Emmeline thought, staring at the buildings. Dowd was nothing but a delegating adulterer. And Sturgis? She hadn't seen Sturgis in years. She was pretty sure Sturgis was dead. She wished she was Sturgis' secretary.

"Goddamn cheater," spoke an angry, bitter voice. Miss Emmeline Kantz jumped. She hoped she hadn't spoken to herself outloud. How embarrassing. Apparently, though, the voice had come from a thin woman standing to her right, who could have been either 15 years older or 5 years younger than herself; due to apparent but not unsightly plastic surgery, it was hard to tell. The woman had the vestiges of good looks anyways, and was slightly taller than Miss Emmeline. She was in more stylish clothes, but had the same dishwater blonde hair, and was wearing, Miss Emmeline noted, sensible flats.

"Excuse me?"

"Sorry. Cheater. My husband, Walter. Dowd. Walter Dowd. He's cheating on me, he told me last night. Says he has no plans of leaving, me, but he thought I should know. Like I wanted to know. I mean, I guess I already knew, sort of, it was getting obvious. I just ignored it, because I didn't care that much. It's just, that's not what you think will happen when you get married, you know? To death do us part and all that crap." She glanced at Miss Emmeline's ringless left hand. "Oh, I'm sorry." She held out her own right one. "Maureen Dowd."

"Emmeline Kantz." As soon as she said it Maureen's eyes lit up in recognition. Miss Emmeline wondered if she had made a terrible mistake. She half hoped Maureen would try to fight her.

“So you’re his secretary.”

“Yes.”

“But you’re not the..”

No. Oh, God no. She’s twenty-eight.”

Maureen Dowd’s eyes crinkled (as much as they could crinkle, seeing as how the skin around her eyes was surgically taugth) in seeming disbelief. “He didn’t tell me that!” She smirked. “So all those times you told me he was out campaigning for the youth of America...”

“Well, that wasn’t a total lie.”

Maureen threw back her head in laughter. “You’re, right, you’re right. That’s great Emmeline. Hey, you wanna go get a drink?”

“It’s 8:00 in the morning.”

“You’re right, you’re right, sorry.”

“And I have to get to work.” Miss Emmeline Kantz gazed up again at the gilt letters. She glanced at Maureen, who was also gazing at the letters and attempting to force her features into a frown. She looked at the letters again. She had never missed a day in 30 years at Sturgis & Dowd. In fact, she had never come in later than 8:30. Miss Emmeline figured, that, in theory and in truth, Sturgis & Dowd could afford her a day of discrepancy. She turned to Maureen. “So how about that drink?”

Maureen clapped her hands together. “I knew you’d come around! But there’s another order of business that we’ve got to take care of first. Come on. Come on!” She grabbed Miss Emmeline’s hand in a show of female solidarity that Miss Emmeline supposed she hadn’t received in years, if ever. Maureen led her over to the very nice, very small silver convertible parked on the curb. In the passenger side seat there was a large vat of something which gave the impression that it might have been stew a long time ago, in a better life.

“Our maid moves all our leftovers to our other fridge in the basement, and she’s supposed to donate it all, but she forgot about this one.”

“What are you going to do with it?”

Maureen grinned wickedly. “Oh, I’m going to christen Walter’s car. He’s got to be taught some sort of lesson. Am I right?”

Miss Emmeline Kantz wondered if it was possible that sometime between eating breakfast and arriving at work she had actually died and gone to heaven. “You are absolutely right.”

They snuck around back to the parking lot, to the spot that read "Walter Dowd" (Walter Dowd had not had to wait 25 years to get a spot with his name on it). In the spot sat Walter Dowd's very expensive, only 300-ever-made automobile, which they opened with ease.

"He's so arrogant," Maureen hissed. "He doesn't even lock it." She hefted the pot and poured the entire contents of what had been the Dowd's dinner some several months prior all over the interior of the car, which had previously smelled like Italian leather and some sort of sweet cigar. "Ok," she said, stepping back and surveying her work. "I feel almost completely better."

"Almost?"

"Come on, come on, get in, that was only part one," the two women climbed back into Maureen's small convertible. Maureen tied a scarf around her hair before peeling out of the parking lot.

"My husband is very lazy, and very picky!" she shouted over the wind that rushed by the convertible. "He's not going to want to get that detailed! He'll claim it was never the same! He'll just want to buy another car!"

Miss Emmeline squinted in confusion and tried to shield her hair from the wind. In theory, her hair always looked perfect in convertibles, waving out behind her. In truth, she thought, she must look like a mess. And Maureen was probably crazy. "So won't he just buy another car?"

"Not if I buy one first! He's very rich, you know that, but even he can't just buy two expensive cars that quickly! No way! Cause it'll end up being, what, five-hundred-thousand or more. Way more. He won't do it! He won't! He'll wait awhile, or he'll get the other one detailed, and then he'll just complain complain complain."

Maureen was probably crazy, Miss Emmeline thought, but she had some sort of logic. And this day was turning out to be fabulous. "You know, his girlfriend drives a car that I think is older than her! Maybe he can borrow that!" she shouted back.

Maureen pulled into a dealership filled with cars that shared monetary values with small island nations. Miss Emmeline Kantz gawked. Even with her salary, which was generous for a secretary, and even if she had never bought Katie one nice thing in her life, and saved for years, these were beyond her. She feared breathing too heavily in case one of the cars's delicate instruments might shatter and break.

It turned out she needn't worry. Mrs. Walter Dowd was a known presence here, and any friend of hers was most certainly a friend of the dealership.

"Mo-mo!" cried one enthusiastic salesman. "Car need a fix?"

"Oh, no, Larry, no, this one's fine. I just got bored the other day, and said hey, why not a new one?"

"And Mr. Dowd is fine with this?"

"Oh, you know Walter. He encourages change." She shared a knowing glance with Miss Emmeline, who was busy accepting a mimosa from another eager salesman.

After downing several more (they were free, and delicious), Miss Emmeline helped Maureen select a brand-new, forest-green, sort of longish car that she thought she heard the salesman say came with a built-in chauffer. Or maybe not, she supposed, as her thoughts had become somewhat fuzzy from the champagne. But she admired Maureen, who had resisted the alcohol and had chosen a car that cost upwards of four hundred thousand dollars, with the possibility of certain features being added as well as several thousand more dollars.

"What if Dowd tries to return it?" whispered Miss Emmeline as they left the lot and hopped into Maureen's new-old convertible.

"Walter?! He'd never. He cares too much about his image. It's what, almost noon now right? Let's go get that drink!"

"I'm already sort of drunk," replied Miss Emmeline. She closed her eyes against the swimming landscape.

They arrived shortly at Il Porcellino, where, Maureen assured Miss Emmeline, they made a mean martini. "Ok, but that place looks like more fun," said Miss Emmeline, pointing.

The dive bar was called Moynagh's, and it prided itself on being the only bar in town that opened at 8am. After requesting the most expensive beer (which, it turned out, was only \$4 a pitcher) the women situated themselves in a back booth and proceeded to get sloppy. It perhaps only took an hour or so for the confessions to be pouring out.

"I," announced Miss Emmeline Kantz, "am a cat lady."

Maureen spit beer across the table. "You're a what?"

"A CAT LADY. I have a lot of them and sometimes they die and you know I don't even care."

"Well, I'm a prostitute."

"What? You are not. You are Mrs. Walter Dowd."

Maureen rolled her eyes and slammed a hand on the table, a regretful decision that she immediately tried to rectify by cleaning her sticky palm with spit. "Right. I am Mrs. Walter Dowd. Why do you think I married Walter? For love? I married him for money. MO-NEY. And I was married before him, I was married to the love of my life and I left him. For money. And I LOVED him. I'm a goddamn whore. I can't get mad at Walter for being one, cause he married one. You know what my name was before it was Dowd?" Miss Emmeline shook her head and spilled some beer down the front of her blouse.

"Garcias-Dreisbach. Can you believe it? Isn't it awful? And I took that name! I took it! I wouldn't take that for some guy I didn't love! Come on! You get me, right? You are a true friend. I like you." She dropped her head onto the table and grabbed Miss Emmeline's arm.

"You know what I was before that? Hannett-Meyer. And I was smart, and I taught philosophy, and you know I was always happy when I had a dash in my name and like some whore I run out on my husband cause Walter is so rich, he's so rich, but all I have now is a nice car and nice clothes and some plastic in my face. I don't even have kids, I wanted kids."

"I have cats." Hannett-Meyer. Why was that so familiar? Miss Emmeline tried as best as she could to think. She hadn't been drunk in years, if ever, that she could recall. Hannett-Meyer. Good Lord, she wanted to be Hannett-Meyer. "My brother!"

"What?" Maureen lifted her head off the table. Bits of peanut shells clung to her hair.

"Did you teach at the university in the city?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember a Robert Kantz?"

Maureen stared bleakly at Miss Emmeline. "No." Her head dropped back on the table and she began to snore.

Miss Emmeline danced briefly in her seat. This day was turning out to be better than she could have ever theorized.

At some point after her celebratory jiggle she had apparently fallen

asleep, because approximately two hours later the Moynagh's barkeep was shaking the two women awake.

"I don't know who ya think ya are, but ya can't just fall asleep in my bar like that. Can't have lightweights like you sleepin' around the joint. Gonna look bad for business."

"Ohmigod," said Maureen, pressing her fingers into her eyes.

Miss Emmeline Kantz struggled to focus. She was somewhere between being drunk and being hungover (she wasn't properly sure which one it was, as it'd been such a long time since she's been either) and she had an overwhelming urge to get out of Moynagh's. She tried to pick up her purse, but its bottom remained glued to something on the table.

"Lessgo," Maureen stood up and immediately crashed into a column to her left. She closed her eyes. "I'm Ok. It's fine. Water, maybe fruit? Some bread."

"Il Porcellino?"

"No, no, they know me too well. Mrs. Walter Dowd, like this? Unacceptable. No, no, there's a deli around the corner."

After a brief battle Miss Emmeline won her purse back and the two women left the bar. Inside the deli they cleaned themselves up with a handkerchief (that Miss Emmeline crocheted herself) and refreshed themselves over cheese, bread and sparkling water. "I never drink mineral," explained Maureen. Miss Emmeline vowed that from that day on she would also never drink mineral.

"So, Emmeline, my girl, we've done what I wanted," said Maureen after the women were sufficiently cheered. "What's next?"

"Well," Miss Emmeline glanced at the clock. "It's 3:30, and my niece, Katie, has got a track meet this afternoon. I usually don't get to go because of work."

"Well, then let's go watch some track."

The high school track meets were held, conveniently, at the city university, which was just a few blocks down, the same university that Maureen Hannet-Meyer-Garcias-Dreisbach-Dowd used to teach at. The women walked amicably along in the late-afternoon sunshine, as neither of them was quite convinced in Maureen's capacity to drive just yet.

The track meet was some sort of semi-finals, and a certain excitability filled the air. Maureen and Miss Emmeline settled onto the first row of



bleachers. Miss Emmeline scanned the bleachers for a glimpse of her brother (who might have recognized the previous Miss Hannel-Meyer, or might not have; the efforts of surgery made it hard to tell) but couldn't see him. Instead she pointed out Katie, who was warming up in a track suit that was several hundred dollars more expensive than those of her teammates'.

"She's beautiful!" said Maureen. "And what a great warm-up suit. I've got the same in pink. Do her parents spoil her much?"

"No, I bought that for her," Miss Emmeline Kantz looked proudly upon her perfect niece in her perfect jumpsuit.

Maureen looked at her curiously. "Why? When you could have bought that for yourself?"

Miss Emmeline simply shrugged and switched her focus over to Katie's race, which was supposed to start any second. She watched her niece carelessly toss the track suit on the ground and jog over to the start line. Maureen's phone began to buzz angrily as the pistol went off and the runners charged forward.

"It's Walter," she whispered. "Hello? Oh, hi, honey. Yes that was me. Yes. No, well, I'm not that sorry. Well, what do you expect? I was an irrational woman. You hurt me. Bouillabaisse. Well-of course it didn't look like that, it was several months old. We had it when the Stuarts came over for supper, remember? Yes, that's the one. Uh-huh. I don't know if it comes out of Italian leather. No, you, can't, I bought another today. Yes, that's what that was about. I was bored! Well, what do you expect? You're off having affairs all day long. I had to do something." She laughed. "Well obviously it was on purpose. Walter. Walter-" She glanced at Miss Emmeline, who was half-listening but mostly just watching Katie fly down the stretch, theorizing that she herself could run that fast. "Tell ya what. You can have the car. I want a vacation though. Two weeks. No, a month. Wherever I want. I need to get away. No, not with you. A friend. No, Walter, I'm not you, it's a female friend. That's not important. It's not, just make me the promise. Walter. Walter. Stop being so difficult. Walter, I will let it be known that Sturgis has been dead for the past 6 years and your sick firm thinks that it's a good idea to promote his health. His health for Chrissake. Ok? That's what I thought. I have to go, Walter. Walter. I have to go. Don't you have some youth sponsorship meeting tonight? Yeah? I thought so. Ok. Ok. Bye. Ok. Sure you love me. Bye, Walter." She clicked off the phone.

"Katie won!"

"That's nice. We're going on vacation."

"What?" Miss Emmeline frowned at her new friend.

Maureen laughed. "Vacation! You and me! For a month! Anywhere! I worked it out of Walter, for you know, the whole cheating thing. I had to give him the new car, but it's ok, I still like my old one. But yeah, vacation. Where do you want to go? Paris? Brazil? Aus-"

"He's going to let me off work?"

"He hasn't got a choice in the matter. Think about where you want to go. Come on, let's go congratulate that niece of yours."

The women headed over to where Katie stood, being fawned over by her teammates and parents. Miss Emmeline's brother, looking up, no longer recognized the woman with his sister who used to stand in front of his class and teach Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative in tight sweaters. Miss Emmeline herself, in a sort of shocked state, didn't notice this development or feel much like congratulating her niece.

"Aunt Emmy! I won! I'm going to the state finals!" cried Katie, who was jumping up and down.

"I know, dear, I saw," Miss Emmeline Kantz's eyes focused on the leather and fur creation (which had set her back several thousand dollars) that lay on the ground beside Katie's track suit. She picked it up and ran a soft hand over its smooth exterior. "You know, I think I'm going to need to borrow this."

Katie looked stunned. "My coat? Why? No. Aunt Emmy! You gave that to me!"

"Well I know that, but I bought it. And I'm going to be spending a month in Italy and I'll need to look my best. Italian men you know." She thought for a moment. "Here. Take my sweater. I crocheted it myself. And if you wouldn't mind taking care of the cats while I'm gone-?"

Katie Kantz nodded, her mouth hanging open with the suspicion that a little piece of her world had just fallen away.

It was around five o'clock when Maureen dropped Miss Emmeline off outside of Sturgis & Dowd so she could go get her car. "I'll call you tonight to talk about travel plans!" yelled Maureen as she peeled away.

"Thug life" was still milling about on the street corner in their puffy jackets as Miss Emmeline walked to the parking lot. "Yo Ma!" one called out.

"Nice coat."

For the rest of the walk she had a definitive swing in her hips.

## Mosaic Poetry Contest Runner-up

Aasta Franscati-Robinson  
Housewife

Sandaled feet scratch across sun-warmed concrete,  
keeping within structured bounds while searching  
for pre-programmed end. Blank eyes pass over  
repeating patterns of fresh, precisely-  
laid sod coupled with stark white fences, each  
minute yard generic, yet futilely  
trying to upstage cordoned off neighbors.  
Doubly verifying the blue, glinting  
combination of digits, I cut to  
the front door, taking care to abandon  
sandals beside the proffered welcome mat.  
Accepting the invitation, I push  
in unnoticed, skillfully padding toward  
the kitchen, dominant dry palm resting  
against seasoned cold metal at my back.

The dishwasher is working at the sink:  
she also functions as a cook, maid, mother.  
Her misstep in life? I'm unaware, but  
that doesn't concern me. With the single-  
mindedness of a machine, the woman  
shelves the dishes, returning each to its  
proper hermetically sealed compartment.

Absently glancing outside, robins scratch through the tender Spring earth, dutifully performing others' necessities. Her inauspicious moment comes facing cluttered doors of the refrigerator, unaware of the heated shot that strikes and exits her flesh, resulting in a circular addition to the collage of assignments, pictures, and comic strips. Dead weight hits the floor; once vital liquid blooms across her shirt - sputtering crimson mist freckles her face, marring familiar features. Steel blue eyes bore into my own, chiseling fragments of client and housewife into my brain - edges weather, obscured - the two no longer distinguishable. Decisive task complete, I pass over pasted smiles and obtuse knickknacks and continue out the cookie-cutter house, would-be cyclic memory deleted.



Robin Henderson

Mosaic Poetry Contest Winner  
(for the second year in a row no less)

Amanda Hurlburt

On Reading Robert Lowell in the Half-Light on the Way Back from New York City

Cataract lights through patina windows  
break into schools of comet-tailed minnows  
and swim along our speeding Greyhound bus  
as his words float softly, ubiquitous.

Three seats away there is trivial talk:  
what's tucked away in a Cheerios box  
And I in their laughter, slightly repressed  
drift alone in copper-colored unrest.

Odd, because it feels like something's starting  
or should be, anticipation mounting  
in climbing crescendo, mad violin,  
accelerator, heavy foot driven.

An occasion for epiphany,  
for serious things, a discovery  
momentous, and effortless poetry  
or a phone call that changes everything.

But at a red light, I tip as we stop  
My foot falls asleep and still there is talk  
a party, a dress, a deadline, a song  
And no violin. And nothing is wrong -

except Lowell bothers me less, poetry  
of spiders, extinction, insanity,  
than the Cheerios box, an empty wish,  
than lights that were never meant to be fish.

Addiction

Brianne Bendit

They say opportunity may  
have killed the cat  
Well I'm better than that  
I'm all that  
And a bag of chips  
For the first time  
Feel the pipe on my lip  
Feels so good  
I lose my grip and fall  
Down  
Down

I just drop

I can't stop

Down

Down

I need to get back up

I need the powder on my fingers

I need this moment to linger

It's all that consumes my mind

I gotta find

More

More

To feed the craving

I'm misbehaving

More

More

The rent's not worth saving

Out on the street

On my own two feet

No time for regret

But I can't forget

And I can't forgive

This is the Life I Live

My attitude

So rude

So crude

Left in solitude

In my own zone

No one calls on the phone

I'm on my own

All alone

Left with

NOTHING

I need something

NOW

Feel the needle sting

WOW

Dealing

feeling

healing

I feel better

But not for long

My will isn't strong

So I do what's wrong

I choose

To lose

To misuse and

Abuse

More and

More and

More

I'm worse off than before

I shut the door to

Opportunity

Because of my

Curiosity

No 9 lives for me

Just one life dedicated to misery

An existence of slavery

With addiction

You can never be free.

Don't Tell the Truth  
Marianne Schaffer

You wake up.

You realize first... you're on the couch.

Second... you're not wearing pants.

Third... you're alone.

There is a bucket by your head (empty).

There is a little note from a loving friend that says "love ya, feel better."

That friend is NOT your roommate, your roommate is not home.

As you slowly piece together the night before you remember 2 drinks, a few conversations, and that's about it.

"Maybe I just decided I was tired and wanted to go," you think to yourself.

In your fantasy memory, you have two drinks, end up feeling bored and tired, and ask your friend to drive you home.

In reality, you may have professed your undying love to men you're trying to convince yourself that you actually like.

You may have danced (you probably danced).

You may have gotten sick (although that's unlikely since the bucket was empty).

You may have blown it in a million ways.

You may have killed your roommate and that's why she's not home.

You may have ruined EVERYTHING...  
and all before midnight.

Let's just pretend that you decided you were tired and needed a ride home.  
The whole naked on the couch with a bucket thing isn't important anyway.

Words  
Stephanie M. Garrison

*What do you read, my lord?*

Slipping in	Air
Like hard candies,	With shape
Sliding around,	Breath
Sometimes	Encompassing force
Clacking	Insubstantial
Trying to find purchase	Yet commanding
Until,	A paradox within itself
At last	
Dissolving	Finite
Melting into the subconscious	Broken
And finally	Impervious
Able to lie	Twisted
Trippingly on the tongue	Flexible
	Bent
Silently	Manipulated
Shifting through the mind	And manipulative
Changing states of being	Power rests with
Translucent thoughts	
Flowing into elegant speech	Words,
Stamped in bold-faced texts	Words,
And, as the vicious cycle demands,	Words
Back to thoughts again	

Smooth,  
Worn like rocks by the shore  
Surrounding  
Protecting the pinnacle of the mind  
Filled with sharp, coarse ideas  
Waiting to soften over time  
To join the sea of voice



The Grey Side of Saffron  
Richard J. Langlois

*Let go...*

The door crashed behind her as she walked down the hallway of that empty building built of steel and betrayal. The dim lights in the narrow passageway flicker an amber tint on the barren metallic walls already devoid of life. Her heels struck the floor and echoed in the narrow nothingness. Slender, yet firm, she marched on.

Her pale blond hair was pulled back tightly so as not to stray. A veil of white powder hid her from the world. Her eyes, the only trace of color that was allowed anymore and even then the grey fog that seemed to brew inside them was dead. Expressionless, she made her way to the end of the hall. Despite all her hopes, she already knew what lay beyond.

*I loved you for what you were afraid to be.*

She thought of the day she last saw him.

She was packing when he came into the room. She looked at him only for a moment and began to throw more clothes into her suitcase.

"Can't we talk?" he said with a sigh.

"What is there to talk about?"

"Why you're leaving for one."

"How many times do we have to do this?" she asked.

"I'm not going to stop. I can't."

"I can't keep protecting you!" She slammed her suitcase shut as a tear fell and darkened the leather case. "I can't keep doing this. I won't be there when they kill you."

"They're wrong."

"They're on their way." She picked up her suitcase and began walking for the doorway.

"On their way?" he said, "What does that mean 'they're on their way'?" She stopped and turned only so he could just make out the movement of her lips.

"I told them." She said, "I'm sorry."

She left him standing dumbstruck in the bedroom as she walked out the doorway and down the hall, running her right hand along the red paint that draped the wall. She felt her hand brush over the frame of one of his paintings. She took it off the wall and looked at it with a smile and a tear, put it under her arm and kept walking without so much as a look back. They'd be here soon; she knew it wouldn't take long. And by tomorrow, he'd be caged in that metallic building with the others.

A grey fire behind His shadows, eyes burning to be set free, to run forever across the deep blue sky.

She awoke to reality as she reached the end of the hall to find one of her two guards holding the door for her.

"Come to see the show have you?" The guard said as she passed by him. "Shouldn't be much longer now."

She kept walking.

"Serves him right if you ask me." the other said, "I've been waiting all day for this. Bastard's gonna get what's coming to him."

"Can't expect anything less though. After what he did, betraying the Great Lord and all."

She came to attention hearing those words.

"Leave us."

"What'd you say?"

She slowly turned her head so the two guards could just make out the movement of her lips.

"Leave us."

"What? Who do you think you are lady?" The guard replied. The other grabbed his arm and whispered something in his ear.

"My apologies" he said as they both left the room. The door slammed and echoed with their exit. The room was nearly empty. It resembled that of the hallway her eyes became accustomed to. Before her on the far metallic wall was a small rectangular window. With a deep breath, she walked up to see through it to see him once more.

*Pools of pearl-white clouds floating among the heavens to hide behind and escape the blackened fire that brew in His wake.*

"You can't keep doing this." She said to him as he cast another stroke of goldenrod on the canvas in the studio at the back of their home.

"Doing what?" A stroke of moss green.

"THIS."

"Oh, well I wouldn't worry about it too much. There's nothing wrong with it."

"Everything is wrong with it." A stroke of gamboge hit the canvas.

"Says who?"

"Says Him." she watched him clean his brush and go for the grey.

"Well He doesn't have to know, does He?" He painted the grey over her green eyes, sculpting her face as she stood before him.

"You know I have to tell Him."

"Why?" He dipped his brush into alizarin and continued to give life to the canvas.

"It's my job, you know that."

He turned to look at her. His burning orange eyes caught her gaze and took her back. She could only look down at her feet to avert his gaze.

"Look at me."

She raised her head to meet his gaze. She loved his fiery orange eyes. She had never met anyone else with eyes so alive, burning with his passion. Maybe that's what drew her to him in the first place.

He sighed and gave a faint smile.

"Your eyes used to be green."

"What?"

"Green, you do remember what green is don't you."

"Of course I do. It hasn't been that long."

"Then where did your green go?"

"It's still there."

He shook his head.

"My eyes are green!"

He pulled her in front of him, wheeled her around to have her staring at herself on the canvas. Leaves of amber and goldenrod swirled and spiraled around her as she walked amongst the trees of autumn. Her thin blond hair had blown in

front of her face. Only her eyes were able to be seen. She felt that she was looking in a mirror, except for one thing.

"Why are my eyes grey?"

A hint of green was noticeable, but now covered by a faint cloud of grey.

"Because they are."

"No." She said, "My eyes are green."

"They were green."

"They are green."

"He's changed you."

"No He hasn't."

"You can't tell me you're happy."

She swiftly raised her right hand and hit him. He stammered back and lost control of his pallet as it flew towards the canvas. The colors crashed and began to drip down the fabric. Crimson and tenné rolled down 'her' right eye.

"Don't ever paint again. I'll report you if you do."

...but it was your eyes that gave you away.

He saw her through the metal frame and wired glass returning to him as solemnly as she had left him. A smile slowly began to grow amidst the fresh bruises on his face. The guards had fun with him when they got bored. But to see her now was his silent sanctuary, his vacant asylum. While she was here, he knew he was safe. He pressed himself to the thin sliver of glass in the metal door to see her more clearly. A ghost that walked through the barren nothingness, she walked right up to within inches of his face. Only glass and betrayal stood between them. And still he smiled; he believed she had come to save him.

*You stood amongst His lines of toy soldiers,*

He remembered that night vividly.

They were here, they had finally come. He ran from the front door and down the hall, tearing his paintings off the wall as he went in hopes of slowing them down. His breaths coming more furiously than his heartbeat, the door had been kicked in and he could now hear their swift footsteps coming down the hall. Bright lights at the tips of their automatics paced the house quickly. He ran through the bedroom and into his studio, pulled a lamp out of its socket and

crash on the floor. The lights and red scopes were on his back as he darted through the room. The two men in the bedroom doorway fired, bullets raced through the air only to hit the space he used to be in. The sheetrock jumped from the wall behind him as the bullets sank in, destroying the wall and a few more of his paintings. The house was growing darker; the only light source now was at the disposal of the men in black clothes and guns in their hands.

He made his way to his studio. They were closing, death was breathing down his neck as he ran to the door at the end of the studio. As he pulled it open metal casings began to jump from the automatics and gently tapping the floor as they fell. Intending to miss, they hit every exposure of the door around him. They didn't want him to get away. With a click he closed the door and slowly turned, raising his hands over his head as he became blinded from the six men watching his every movement with the barrels of their guns. He returned to the center of the room as the men circled around him.

"You guys feeling generous today?" He asked them with a smirk.

The six men lowered their weapons as He came walking from the dark hallway. Draped in all black, He filled the doorframe, somehow finding a way to squeeze into the room. His face was rigid and showed a hint of annoyance. The sound of his heels on the hardwood floor was the only sound in the room as He approached him.

"Come to visit Vermilion?"

The back of his left hand caught him by the ear, which immediately and painfully rang.

"GREAT Lord Vermilion, you filth" He heard him say in his left ear as the right side of his face began to sting again. He dropped to his knees, clutching at the right side of his face.

"Can't even stand for what you believe in anymore can you?" His right foot met him at his chest. He coughed the fresh blood all over Him.

"What is this?" He said as he kicked him again, forcing him to the ground.

"Back where you belong it seems." He said to him and with one last kick he took his exit from the room. The only thing he can remember before passing out was her eyes. Her unfinished, unpainted eyes, lying bare on the canvas just before they set them ablaze with the rest of his paintings.

*Standing firm, a sanctuary from His abyss, His hell of transparent bars.*

He returned to find his breath fogged up the wired glass between them as he rested his hands in front of him on his cold metallic cell. He stared into her eyes. He remembered her green eyes when he first met her. Now they were grey, glazed over by what He had put her through. She was different now. When he first met her she would sit with him for hours as he painted her. She was full of life then; her hair seemed more vibrant, face full of color. She never wore make-up then.

*You stood there amongst the crowd.*

He put his brush and pallet down to get the paper at the door. She lay there half finished on the canvas. He still had her eyes to paint.

"Can you believe this headline?" He said to himself as he walked back inside.

"Vermilion to Cure Man" He mumbled. He sat down in the kitchen and didn't pick up his brush again until she came home.

"Did you read this article?" He said to her. "I can't believe this guy."

"I have something to tell you." She said.

"But did you read this? Count Vermilion has been made Great Lord now."

"I know." She walked by him and went to the bedroom.

"But this policy he plans on putting into effect," he shouted between the rooms, "He's trying to control the people. No more music, no more novels, no more art, how can He do this? It's just wrong."

She reentered the kitchen, her thin blonde hair still pulled back tightly in a bun.

"Can we talk?" she asked.

"I can't believe this. I'll never be able to paint again. Never be able to finish painting your green eyes according to Him. How can He even justify this?"

"We need to talk."

"It just doesn't make any sense; all He is doing is desensitizing society. He is taking the humanistic elements away from humanity. How do people not see this? They have allowed a man the right to dehumanize us all."

"Please."

"I won't stop painting, I can't. It's who I am. I won't bow to Him. Vermilion is a man like the rest of us. I won't let Him do this."

"Saffron!" she screamed, desperate to snap him from his rant.

"Aren't you listening?" Celadon?" He was staring at her now, panting from his words. She couldn't take it; she broke his gaze and found herself staring at her feet.

"Great Lord Vermilion has appointed me Head Censor."

*Celadon...*

His eyes were met by hers, talking through the glass and metal and distance they had built between them. He needed to know what was going to happen. His fingertips lifted and caressed the glass with the memory of her face. Streaks were left on the windowpane as he gazed into her eyes, those deep pools of grey. The traces of emerald were faintly noticeable, her eyes being wholly consumed by the grey cloud that crawled in long ago. He kept staring, searching for the woman he had loved. He longed for her touch, another opportunity to paint her eyes once more. A faint smile grew on his face as he searched her eyes for an answer, for a hope.

She broke his gaze and stared at her feet.

"Look at me" he said. But she ignored him. She kept her head down.

"Look at me." He cried with more force. A single tear rolled down her face, glistening in the pale light as it fell and dampened the floor. He began banging on the door trying to get her attention. With another tear, she turned and started for the door.

Tears began to fall from his face. Both his fists were now being used, crashing with his metallic prison. Muffled screams were escaping to her ears as she kept walking. His face was now being splattered with the fresh blood from the broken skin on his knuckles. His eyes burned intensely as he tried to get her to hear him and come save him once more. Banging, punching, screaming, she could faintly hear his muffled cries from behind her as she headed for the door.

With a click, the heaters turned on. She looked up to see the blazing orange shadows escaped the single window pane and reflected off the metallic wall before her. Her grey eyes took in the flickering shade of fire and made the tears only come faster.

Within moments the flames died and the dusty silver tint returned to the wall. Without looking back, she walked through the door, her eyes no longer showing even the smallest traces of green.

She returned to their old home after that. The mask of powder left on the city streets mixed with the tears she cried for him. Slowly, she opened the front door and walked down the hall. Her left hand brushed on the now glossy white wall, grazing over the painting that she had put back up. She made her way to the end of the hall and into the bedroom, falling face first into the black comforter. On her pillow laid a beaten and dirty envelope. There was no address, just her name. More tears began to fall and wet the envelope, smudging the ink that made out her name. She slowly opened it once more.

*Celadon*

*You stood alone amongst the crowd. Standing firm, a sanctuary from His abyss, His hell of transparent bars. You stood amongst His lines of toy soldiers, but it was your eyes that gave you away. A grey fire behind His shadows, eyes burning to be set free, to run forever across the deep blue sky. Pools of pearl-white clouds floated among the heavens to hide behind and escape the blackened fire that brew in His wake. I loved you for what you were afraid to be. Let go...*

*Saffron*



Tom Kryzk



I'm in it  
Amy Wheeler

I  
am  
in  
love.

Call it a confession  
Call it crazy  
I call it  
my heart's words.

It's the elementary school routine  
of writing your name and  
his  
enclosed in a heart.

It's taking silly pictures  
It's being called beautiful  
It's driving to nowhere.

It's honesty  
It's living in the moment  
It's kisses on the forehead.

It's whispered phone conversa-  
tions  
under the covers  
hiding from reality.

It's knowing the end of his sentence  
it's not having to explain  
it's when everything makes sense.

It's knowing...  
how he lost his first tooth  
his ticklish spots  
his best dance moves.

It's longing  
It's feeling  
It's holding on tight.

It's bursting out  
It's skipping  
It's smiling for no reason.

It's wearing sweats  
and cuddling on  
a winter day.

It's sacrifice  
It's effort  
It's focus.

It  
is  
love.

Android Advancement Issues  
Jessica Friedlander

My dearest, sweetest retrograde computer:  
You seemed such a perfect suitor!  
Yet now I'm spurned,  
electric-shocked, and quite burned...

If only I hadn't made the error  
talks of an upgrade made you crash in terror  
Or was it simply our constant fervor?  
Day on and day off nearly killed the server.

System malfunctions occur daily, believe it!  
If we lost a file, we could easily retrieve it.  
Ctrl + Alt + Delete can't undo what I've done  
My hasty, mistaken command, intended for fun...

Oh don't you pull the plug on me!  
It's a shame to shut down our "we" --  
our files, our programs, our devoted firewall!  
Unless we'd never established a connection at all...?

If that's the case,  
I think I'd rather catch a simple virus  
than have our entire history erased.

Dreams and Lovers  
Sarah Gunner

Grace doesn't laugh often. But when she does, she really laughs. She tilts her head back, and the laughter bubbles up out of her like a fountain of gold, spilling over and infecting everyone around her. It's as if her laughter is an oasis in the middle of a desert, drawing people in, thirsty for more.

Her mother died giving birth to her. Some things are unforgivable, and her father could never forgive her for killing the one woman he loved. Knowing you are the reason your father drinks himself to sleep every night can do strange things. Some mornings she would bring him coffee in bed to help with the hang-over, but other mornings she would slam the door as hard as possible when she left for school, hoping it would wake him. A child craves love, but a child also shies away from hate. Grace was no exception.

The worst nights were the ones where her father would stumble in from the bar and call her Melanie, her mother's name. Terrified of him, she wouldn't answer, and he would fall to the floor, sobbing. A father is supposed to be your rock. A father is supposed to keep his little girl safe from harm, keep the world an arm's length away. For Grace, the world came crashing through her door the way the ocean crashes against the shore during a storm. The world lay on her dirty kitchen floor, crying out for someone who could never answer.

It's easy to understand why Grace doesn't laugh often. Smiles don't come easily when you carry those memories. For Grace, memories are not abstract. They are heavy bricks that sit on her thin shoulders. Only 28 years old, she looks at least fifteen years more.

Grace thought that she was saving herself, finally, finally, when she met Alan. At eighteen, love comes easy. A few nights out at the drive-ins, some beer stolen from someone's parents, a joint or two smoked out back after school — this was the shape of love to Alan and Grace. Both virgins, they had sex for the first time in Alan's best friend's basement, on a couch covered in plastic. It was awkward and quick, and all Grace can ever remember of that night is the sound of plastic on bare skin — that suction sound your legs make against the leather of a car on a hot summer day — as Alan pumped away. After he was done, he rolled off her and offered to get her another beer. Small gestures that Grace had never

experienced before, and made her think that he must love her.

He told her he loved her by accident. It was a few weeks after they had for the first time. They were a little drunk, and Grace started laughing at a joke he told. He had never heard her laugh before, and it caught him off guard with how perfect it sounded. He couldn't help himself – the beer, her laughter – it all overwhelmed him and filled him up. He thought to himself, "This must be love." So he said, "I love you, Grace."

It was almost too low for her to hear him. They were outside, at dusk, and the sound of the cicadas nearly drowned him out. Her laughter suddenly stopped, and the spell was broken. Alan thought for a spilt second that maybe he had made a mistake, but words like that can never be taken back. She smiled at him, and whispered, "I love you, too." Tucking her wispy blonde hair behind her ears, she leaned in and kissed him. Alan kissed her back, hoping that the magic he felt at her laughter could carry him along, keeping his head above the water, through their relationship.

That night, as Grace lay in bed, she thought about what Alan had said. She could hear her father snoring drunkenly in the next room, occasionally moaning in his sleep. She imagined what it would be like to leave her father, to leave the pain and sadness that seemed built into the house and permeated the walls, seeping under the doors and through the cracks in the windows. She visualized what Alan looked like. His brown hair falling into his eyes, and the way he would push it back, annoyed that it was always in the way, yet refusing to get a haircut. She saw the way he moved, as if he were a dancer and could glide and sway around everything and everyone until he reached his destination. She thought about how it would feel if she was the destination Alan was so gracefully trying to reach. It scared her to think that she might have a chance to be happy. She dreamed that night she was laughing at Alan's joke again, and he told her he loved her again. As she continued to laugh, her surroundings turned to gold and began melting around her. The more she laughed, the more the river of gold at her feet undulated and pulsed, until all she could see was a world full of shimmering ever-moving brightness. These are the dreams we strive to remember. These are the dreams that sustain us in our moments of darkness.

After this, Alan and Grace began to spend every moment together. When their friends went off to college, they stayed, too poor and too in love to leave. On Grace's 20th birthday, Alan proposed. He had been saving his money from his job doing construction, working the night shifts to make extra money. He

wanted her to finally have a house that was hers, all hers, where she wouldn't have to be careful of making noise that could rouse her father from his inebriated slumber.

He searched for a house for months. One day, while driving down a little-used road, he saw a tiny yellow house with a "for sale" sign posted out front. On three acres of land, it was a two-bedroom bungalow that needed serious work. The paint outside was chipping, and the tiles on the roof were missing in some spots like the gaping holes in a child's mouth after they have lost teeth. After getting a tour from the owners, he decided it was the perfect house for Grace to finally come home in — the first house she could truly call home. They would fix it up together, working side by side to make themselves a home and a marriage. As soon as he had enough saved for a down payment, he bought her a tiny diamond ring and asked her to marry him in the exact spot where he told her he loved her for the first time. For the second time in their relationship, after she said yes, Alan heard her laugh. At that moment, Alan forgot he ever wondered if he truly loved her.

The wedding took place in the backyard of their new home, at dusk. Grace had strung white lights through the branches of the huge weeping willow that faced the road, and Alan's mother took her own wedding dress and altered it so that it would fit Grace's small frame. Alan himself spent 3 weeks beforehand ripping up the old shingles on the roof and replacing new ones, and repainting the house the same pale yellow.

The day of the wedding, Grace awoke and realized that it would be the last time she would ever wake up and have her father in the next room. She wondered if she would miss him. He was a shadow of a human being, a void that was filled with cheap alcohol. But sometimes it is only until after a void is filled that you realize how much it changed and shaped your life through its absence. Emptiness can be heavy.

After the wedding was over and the few guests had left, Grace quietly explored the home that Alan had been working on since he bought it three months previous. She ran her hand up and down the stairwell that led to her bedroom. She opened and closed every cabinet and closet. She turned on the water taps in the bathroom. When Alan came up behind her in the bathroom, hugging her bony body and asking her how she liked it, she laughed. The gold of the faucets seemed to shine suddenly brighter to Alan at that moment, and he took her to the bed. Although they had been having sex for years, this night it seemed as

if they were rimmed in a halo of gold, their skin rippling and buckling the way molten metal does.

Grace and Alan quickly slipped into the routine of marriage. As the months passed, the small repairs on the house were pushed aside as Alan worked long hours doing construction and Grace worked retail at the local Target. The hours they had together they would rather spend going out to movies or watching TV in their small living room than laboring away at mundane chores. When Grace turned 26, and she and Alan had been married for six years, Alan lost his job doing construction. He had fallen a few months prior and broken his foot, and after three months of not getting better, the company let him go, citing "surplus of employees". He looked diligently at first for another job, but as each application failed and each interview ended without a call, he began to drink. At first, it was a few beers a night, but it very quickly became cheap whiskey, just like Grace's father.

Grace slowly saw herself becoming her father's daughter again, and Alan slowly saw himself becoming the man he had tried to save Grace from so many years before. The ability to see something does always not mean we have the ability to change it, and both Grace and Alan watched helplessly as their lives became something they never expected or wanted. Failure drove Alan to drink more, and it drove Grace to withdraw into herself.

Grace came home from work one evening and Alan was lying passed out drunk in their bed. Next to him was an empty bottle of Jack Daniels. As she stood there, looking at her husband, she began to cry. She sat on the edge of the bed that once represented so much promise and sobbed. It was as if her eyes had been the dam holding in her soul, and as the dam finally broke, her soul poured out of her and pooled in a clear, salty puddle on the floor below her.

Alan awoke and saw Grace on the end of the bed. As he reached over to touch her, she flinched, shying away from him the way a skittish horse shies away from its handler. Alan stumbled to his feet and knelt on the ground below Grace. He begged for her forgiveness, he claimed that he would never touch another drop of alcohol – that he loved her, and that he would do anything to stop the tears that still coursed down her face. She sat there silently, unable to answer, unable to do anything but watch herself flow out of her eyes and collect in tiny drops beneath her husband. "Is this all we are?" thought Grace. "Are we all just star-points of liquid, shining in the moonlight?"

When Alan saw she wouldn't respond to him, he grew angry. Drunk men

can flare up like a candle in the dark, lighting up and burning brightly until they reach the end of their wick. He screamed at her for making him the way he was, for making him feel like a failure. As he stood their screaming, hobbling back and forth on his one good foot, Grace watched with detachment, wondering if this was the shape of her love now. She still wanted to reach up and brush his beautiful, long brown hair out of his eyes.

She still wanted to save him from becoming a shadow like her father.

She reached up to push his hair away from his face, hoping this familiar movement would pacify him and extinguish his anger.

Instead, he hit her.

Squarely across the right eye. And then again across the left. And then again in her chest. She curled in a ball on the bed, hoping that if she could make herself small enough, she would disappear into the sheets, away from the pain. Alan saw this and suddenly stopped, turning around and slowly gliding out of the room, grabbing a bottle of beer as he left.

Grace sat up. She touched her tender eyes, swollen from tears and from the blows Alan had just imparted. And she sat all night in that exact spot until Alan fell back up the stairs, when she laid down and pretended to sleep.

That night she dreamed that she and Alan were teenagers again, and Alan was telling her another joke. This time, instead of laughing, she cried. Her tears made a river of snakes that snapped at her and hissed in her ear. Alan just stood there and watched, doing nothing to stop the strangling hold the snakes had on her body. As they dragged her away Alan turned and left.

The next morning she woke up and quietly slipped away to work. When she got home, Alan was drunk again. They never once discussed that night, or any of the nights that happened after the first beating. It was easy for Alan to keep hitting her after that first time — once you find you are able to stomach doing something, you know you will always be able to stomach doing it again. He told himself he did it because he loved her. He told himself he was still that boy who searched for months for the perfect home for his bride, and that he still wanted to finish the list of steadily growing repairs on the house. He told himself he would clean up, get a job, stop drinking — be the husband he always thought he was. Tomorrow, he said. Always tomorrow.

One year ago, at the age of 27, Grace saw dark red between her legs after Alan had beaten her.

She ran to the bathroom, hoping that she had gotten her period. The blood

wouldn't stop, and it was dark, as if it came from somewhere deep inside her. She began to feel crippling pain in her lower abdomen—contractions, ebbing and flowing, constantly moving. She immediately knew she was miscarrying, although she had never even known she was pregnant. She spent the entire night in the bathroom, wondering if she was meant to forever kill the things that could have offered her the most salvation. First her mother, and now her child—would she ever have the chance to give life instead of take it?

When the blood and the pain finally stopped the next morning, Grace began to plan how she would leave Alan. Never once in her life had the thought of leaving ever crossed her mind. At her miscarriage, however, she changed. Something inside her came back to life. She realized she did not want to be a ghost of a woman, silently creeping around her house, afraid of her husband and his whiskey-induced rages.

Leaving is a concept that is hard for many people. Leaving a life behind, a house full of wedding gifts and material things that once meant so much—these are difficult things for many to come to terms with. Grace is no different. She has nowhere to go, nothing on the other side of her plan to offer her safety. She will have no job, no money, and no clothes except for what she could fit in a small bag that she will carry out the door with her. But she doesn't care. For a year she has been planning how she will do it. Should she leave from work and never come back? Should she leave in the morning, when Alan is out buying his alcohol for the day? Finally, tonight, as she lies awake with Alan snoring beside her, she cannot take it anymore.

Grace quietly slips out of bed, as if she were only the wind rustling the sheets from the open window. As the moonlight illuminates her she becomes a ghost, a brief apparition of sadness and grief. As she steps again into the thin line of light, reaching for her small bag that she has kept packed for over a year, the outline of fading bruises in the shapes of fingers and fists are visible.

She slowly glides down the stairs and surveys the house she has lived in for the past eight years, understanding that she will never see it again. At first so promising, it has never become the house Alan told her it would. She realizes she won't miss the broken stove, or the chairs that always seem to be missing an arm or a leg. She allows herself a quick smile of triumph as she silently closes the screen door and slides behind the wheel of Alan's rusting 1987 Chevy. Once red, it now is hard to identify as a single color. As she starts the car she prays she won't hear the crunch of the tires on the gravel, and she begins to drive.



As she drives away in his stolen car, the years fall from her face as the miles pile up, and she laughs. She alternates the laughter with a song, humming at first and then screaming at the top of her lungs, giddy and drunk with her first taste of freedom. Her laughter seems to spill out of the windows of the car like a bathtub overflowing, turning the road behind her into the river of gold she dreamed about so many years before when Alan first told her he loved her. It erases the memories that have weighed her down like cinderblocks, and her shoulders lift and lighten as the memories drown in the pulsating torrent of metal.

As Grace drives on, manic and high, Alan suddenly wakes and turns to the empty space she has left, where her head used to rest on the pillow. As he fights to break the surface of consciousness, the way a diver breaks the surface of water gasping for air, he realizes that she is gone.

Running down the stairs in only his grease-stained boxers, he throws open the screen door with enough force to tear it off its hinges. The second he sees his car gone he knows she is lost forever, and he falls to his knees, howling in anger and loss. The neighbors, waking from the strange sound, think it is only a coyote, and return to their dreams and lovers, clutching the other as if they were shielding themselves from the sound a man makes when he loses everything.

### Environmentalists

Lauren M. Jackson There are twelve ducks in the pond today  
I hit one with a rock  
It flew up  
and then it fell  
probably  
because I hit it with a rock  
I'll regret that one later  
or now  
we'll see  
wait, veterinary medicine dictates  
that if I hurt the duck...  
but why was it able to fly up?  
Ha, guess I didn't hurt it after all.  
I'll keep throwing.

Liberty's Plight  
Tim McMullan

For thou saw madness in motion  
It cometh hither, ever closer still  
The color of America, a once free country  
Of religious tolerance and equality  
"A government for the people," reveled aloud  
Bold and vivid hues signifying the true the proud  
A grand Republic like in the Age of Greece  
But such cherished Gold was stolen away  
As malarkey wrapped in novel packaging  
Brooding deceit and promises known to be false  
On doorsteps and screens exploited our cost  
Whence its blue ribbons revealed great loss  
Made heavy the hearts of the hirelings  
As their bright horizons turned dismal grey  
"Man," He scoffed, "the most magnificent tragedy,  
Too blind to see that all of it was not mean to be"

To my attention it came arise  
The sharp contrast cross the skies  
A little less to say than new surprise  
Misgivings spurred on, coaxed by lies  
Unsuspectingly gandered the brainless fool  
Sought absolve over said precious jewel  
In time grasping it a nauseating sensation  
Amidst the natives explained known proclamation  
No better to be pierced with words with which we knew  
Than to see our side cut and scarlet hue  
Whether mortuary or mortification begat too soon  
Surrounding by smoke the devil dared loom  
Void of senses to notice the pungent fumes  
We even blind as our adamant doom

Hope without certainty never a truer kind  
Bloomed from within the recess of our minds  
Plucked by unbelievers and the sayers of nay  
Harkened through the land wrought in utter dismay  
As it was meant to be, created then fashioned  
From the dust of said undoing  
Rose up intricate forms designed with passion  
Naught chance led to immaculate gain  
Eternity of dice rolling could not sustain  
Hysteria afflicted the off beam braying  
As asses stubborn in all usefulness inane  
Would not, could not, choose naught  
To hold in high respects in lot  
For seasons past, showed at last  
The treasure of enormous wealth  
Not of currency or of self  
Marked with an unbalanced X  
Christ's Cross, I do not jest

The viral democratic flaw  
The most regrettable mistake  
To grossly hyperbolize one clause  
Misinterpreting Separation of Church and State

Dear Cast  
Brianne Bendit

They applaud. It's curtain call.  
Line up to take that last bow.  
It's all over now  
We clasp our hands tight  
Raise them high over our heads, that's right  
And let go...  
This was our last show  
Close that last scripted page  
Disengage  
From our characters  
And walk off stage

Resume our normal routines  
Without rehearsals to intervene  
No more notes on those last final scenes  
No more familiar faces  
Hearing the call for places  
Pushed together in backstage spaces

A theatre ghost doesn't haunt these halls  
Our characters voices echo through these walls  
Our lines, our scenes,  
The energy of the applause.  
This show lingers in that red curtain  
That flooded stage  
Homicide "With a murderous rage"  
An overdose of fainting prescriptions  
African tribes and nervous conditions  
Davis, Davis is the pseudonym  
Choking, stabbing and deathly bee stings  
"You rang sir" and rancid tinned tongue  
Vera afraid of being hung  
With our deaths it all begun...

But now it's over and we must go home  
No more ring ring ringing to Banana Phone  
No more guitar solos in the green room  
Or warming up real fucking loud to "I said a boom chicka boom"

And here I am...  
Nostalgia eats at my core  
I long for more  
Just standing at the green room door  
Staring at the floor  
As the tears begin to well  
I understand I have one last chore

One last change.  
Time to clean up and rearrange  
I get dressed, collect everything that's mine  
Look in the mirror, wipe away those old age lines  
I think I'm going through withdrawal  
Every time I try to leave...  
I stall...

Because I realize I must go on living...  
Without all of you

I'm so grateful we were all casted  
It was fun dying together while it lasted  
For a few weeks we became a family with a common goal  
A MCCTA performance with a single soul  
But now that this "dirty work" has been done  
I close the green room door... Bam!  
And Then There Were None...

Love, Mrs. Rogers

Identity  
Stephanie M. Garrison

Do not judge me by shade of skin;  
Ignore my gender too.  
My brain has nothing to do with them.

Do not define normal or adequate,  
I'll define them myself.  
You have no idea who I am.

Do not figure you know me  
Because you can see me.  
I have eyes too,

Does that mean I know you?

Let me earn my title.  
Let me obtain a reputation.  
Let me stand firmly on my own two feet.  
To earn my standing through my  
Sweat and blood.

In short,  
Let me  
Be me.

You asked me to lie down on the kitchen table  
I thought it an odd request,  
But I did as you asked  
Because I loved you.  
I watched you pull out the knife,  
The blade glistening in the fluorescent light  
And I trusted you.  
You smiled at me sweetly.  
I returned the gesture,  
Laying calmly on the wood.  
You drove the cold steel into me  
And I sat perfectly still,  
My eyes wide in fascination.  
You slid the knife through my chest,  
Moving back my skin and flesh.  
With my last breath I watched  
Transfixed as you pulled it out.  
Understanding finally dawning that  
When I said my heart belonged to you  
You took it literally.

Possession  
Kelly Geus

My Goddess  
Miguel Gonzalez

My lover's eyes, of amber colored sand  
Her scarlet lips make pale the other girls'  
The lightest tan does grace her skin, so grand  
The tresses that adorn her crown, in swirls.  
My heart beats for her when I see her near  
With blood as red as hue upon her cheeks  
The feel, her breath, so pure and crystal clear  
Aroma lasting for uncounted weeks.  
Her voice, melodic, as the gods above  
I always crave to hear her songlike sound  
Divine, her splendor; vibrant, potent love  
Her footsteps tap the Elysian ground.  
With sight of her, all thought is vertigo  
To taste her kiss, a treasure, is to know.

Untitled  
Stephanie Bushman

The golden leaves, no fallen out of favor,  
Reflect the earth like artists' paper.  
Burned and singed  
Under the torrent  
Of passionate paint.  
They contrast the green grass  
Better than the cloudless sky.  
They're a pour substitute for summer dandelions.  
The trees,  
    The flowers,  
            The sunsets,  
They all look better in gold.  
Most things do.

All the colors of the sunset  
Used up  
    Rung out  
On the fallen leaves.  
I had just missed the art show.  
All that remains at this time of day  
Is the murky cup of water  
That they wash the brushes in.

I bathe myself in the urban moonlight  
Cast by overhead lamps and refracted  
headlights

I should have seen it coming  
Like a train  
    Like the rain  
You can smell it in the air.

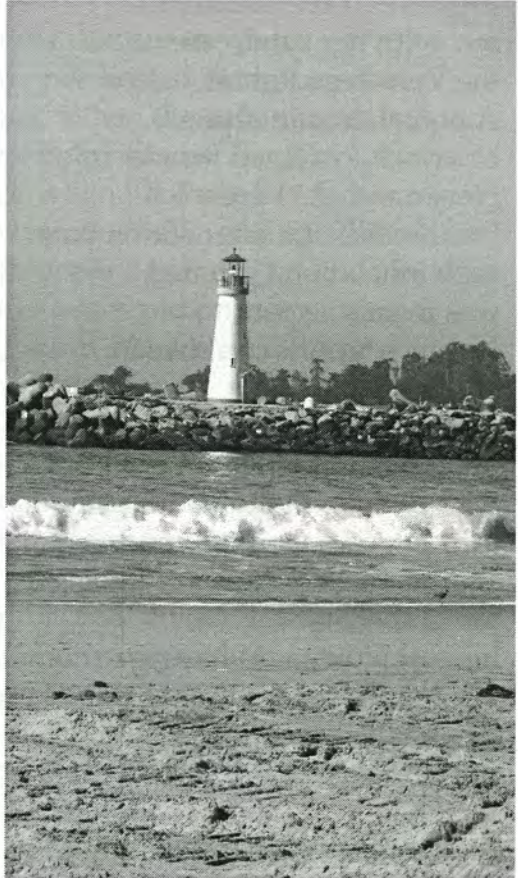
I'm drowning in my derailed disposition.

I would have used my own hair to tie  
this family together.  
I went bald with the effort.  
Ever since then,  
It never really mattered  
Whether things came easy  
    Or things came hard,  
Just as long as they came at all.



February Fourteenth  
Kelly Geus

Snow dirtied by footprints  
blankets the ground, but it pales  
in comparison to my heart:  
black, grey, and depressing.  
Romance blossoms this month,  
seen in the lovers embrace  
my friends share here:  
red, pink, and sensual.  
Their bubbling relationship,  
new, young, and vibrant as a sunflower:  
yellow, canary, and fresh.  
Content togetherness  
springing from loneliness,  
the mundane dirt of life:  
brown, tan, and sad.  
I want to feel yellow,  
but instead I feel blue.  
Not bright blue of new morning,  
joyful and crisp  
or the cerulean of stream,  
brewing cheerfully its  
gurgling song.  
Instead I feel stormy  
blue of clouds and of rain,  
pouring out my sorrows,  
alone while the world shines  
in the sunlight of their houses.



Amy Wheeler

Glassy-Eyed  
Danielle Mooney

I wonder if she's angry at  
me, with her syndrome of  
the Velveteen Rabbit.  
A porcelain miniature  
of myself, confined forever in  
Neverland. As I grew I  
breathed life into her cotton torso,  
each inhalation I granted  
was from a secret  
I knew only she could keep.

And now as I cross  
the threshold of womanhood,  
with heavier thoughts traipsing  
through my swelling mind,  
she sits in a box beneath my bed  
remembering when my  
biggest worry was having to come  
inside on summer nights; the  
streetlights signaling  
my curfew.

As she waits for her second  
debut, she listens to  
the moths' buzzing; she  
must sit still as they nibble away  
at her princess gowns.

When I was but seven  
I wore away  
her cold toy-shelf-skin's splendor  
by treating it with the toiletries of  
my small person's love.  
I cried the conditioner of  
alligator tears into her hair, and  
her favorite toothpastes were the  
lollipops I tapped on her  
Chiclet teeth. The perfect  
miniature outfits wrinkled  
from hugs. Now the moths are  
jealous of the  
care locked within  
her plastic skin.

Does she miss me? Does it upset  
her that she'll never attend another  
holiday  
party wrapped in the crook of my  
arm?  
Only dear Grandma still asks  
about  
her because only Grandma under-  
stood  
what a friend she was to me.

As my hair grew longer  
and fell out of pigtails  
hers only lost its shine.  
I never thanked her  
as I straightened  
my hair for the ones  
who suddenly shed their cooties.  
As I became "too old"  
to play with dolls,  
I swept her onto a high shelf.  
she looked down to me,  
eyes glassing over with  
confusion.  
I hoped she wasn't listening  
as I pretended  
she was on display only  
as a decoration.

My small-framed friend up  
on that shelf was patient. She knew  
our only talks occurred  
when no one else was around. But  
those times because farther and fewer  
between, as dust snowed upon her  
golden horse hair.

My spurts of growth finally  
brought my face to the shelf.  
I didn't have to stand  
on a chair any longer to see her.  
My eyes were  
high enough to parallel  
her dusty swing.

The summer's sunlight streaming  
softly through my windows tanned  
her; I noticed it as I knotted  
my string bikini on my way  
out the door of the room  
that once hosted our gauzy tea  
hours. When the only strings  
were hair ribbons.  
Back when I'd dress her for  
the classiest balls, and she'd nod  
with pride  
at my oversized pumps  
and mom's "borrowed" bright  
pink lipstick.

The galas have past, tea has fermented  
over the years to  
a bitter form of fun.

As my prom  
approaches, does her grapefruit head  
still nod in approval?  
I don't see it from the seat  
inside her box. I will be Belle, but only  
she knows that  
since only she  
believed  
me when I once confided that I really was  
the pinkest power ranger at  
the perfect age of five. At that her eyes  
had sparkled as she "locked her lips"  
and hid the glinting key.

Just as  
the key to my childhood is tarnishing  
and the notches and grooves  
are losing their fine edge, will  
the key not unlock if I force it hard?  
Will my childhood become a display  
behind a museum wall of glass?  
She is the museum security guard,  
I must stay on her  
good graces.

As I leave her again  
for college I fear  
she'll lose her ability to hear  
me from inside her  
cardboard cage.  
Perhaps I'll fashion tin-can  
walkie talkies, keep  
them behind the dorm's  
dingy drapes, and signal  
into the night. Silly me, the  
string won't reach, and  
my heart strings are stretching  
as I move away  
wishing  
I was holding  
my beautiful doll. She'll be absent  
from university classes, and  
as I used to get wide-eyed in fright,  
but blame her for fear, I'm  
still as scared. Now I can't push  
the pressure on my tiny trim pal.

Though  
I neglected her more  
and more each year I hope  
there is no hate in her heart.  
As I comb  
my tresses  
I remember how carefully  
I brushed hers. Her hair  
will never gray, and the youth I'm  
slowly losing will never lose its color  
either because I trust her  
wholeheartedly to safeguard it,  
and even call on it to play.

She'll guard it forever for me  
since she does remember  
my precious care of her when  
she was the realest sister  
I ever had. My tears of holding on  
would now roll off  
her plastic hand, so I won't cry  
to her. Those drops used to seep  
into her, but now she'd whisper  
that it's time to let go and painfully  
push me to dry  
my cheeks somewhere else  
since I need to prepare myself  
for the "real" world.  
I'm terrified that one day I'll  
take her out of that box  
only to discover she is an item  
whose familiarity has dried with time

I wonder if  
I closed tight my door  
and stopped it with  
a towel, I could dig out her box  
and plead back my childhood,  
but I realize even if  
I kick  
and scream  
and wail  
it won't return. She'd try  
her best at a stony face but  
she'd stare back with the glassiest  
of eyes and her tiny hand  
would point me towards the mortar  
board of time. To defy the pestle of age,  
dare it, double-dog dare it  
to crush me to fine powder. She'd  
whisper I must never allow it  
to do so.  
She'd say to always  
remember that the remedy to  
any dilemma is to bounce back  
using the mattress springs of life  
to jump  
up and  
down as  
hard as I can  
like a monkey on the bed.  
To remember how to fly  
like Wendy and Michael.  
I'd nod  
in horror  
and know she's  
right.



Christopher Ziobro

December 24

Tricia Lynch

All I need to see are those colorful singing lights that blink incessantly to know that it's that time of year.  
Just beyond the front door is a sea  
of warm and welcoming faces just waiting to hug and kiss and cook and eat. It's the day that I wait 364 days for.  
The day that we don't fight or yell  
or stress because we are together and nothing is better than when our family is together.  
The house is filled with an aroma that can't be duplicated  
calzones, fish, firewood, sauce and mudslides  
are the ingredients to a perfect night.  
As we sit around the table to begin the first of many courses,  
we know there is something missing.  
We bow our heads and pray:

"God bless Brendan today, on his birthday, and everyday. We miss him, we love him, Amen."

We eat for hours as the little ones grow antsy to dive into the pile of presents surrounding the Charlie Brown tree that Pa-Pa just won't give up.  
Now that I'm older I have to at least pretend  
I don't mind waiting for dinner to be over  
to see what's inside that big box with my name on it.

We finish our feast and we put on our hats  
that Grandma saves for us each year  
and it doesn't matter  
that we're 22...20...18...10...6...2  
just for today we're all kids.  
A few more hours and it's past midnight.  
We better get going because  
you-know-who is coming and we have to be sleeping.  
So goodnight, see you tomorrow.  
Our stomachs, our hearts and our cars are all full  
and we step back outside and see the lights  
still singing  
still blinking  
reminding us that just inside  
is a place where our memories are made.

Epilogue to Rhiannan  
Nicole Boisvert

All in the world cycles though its season;  
although we pretend it's all good and well,  
in the span of an hour, one life fell –  
and she glowed red while dancing, a de-  
mon.

One escaped, feeling freedom and even  
discovered new life with stories to tell.  
Upon falling, she passed by an angel  
so when she cries, need there be a reason?

Some say when they see me I am a ghost.  
They run, fearing I will bring them ruin.  
I promise you, I'm no diff'rent than most.  
The stories they tell cannot be true, and  
you'll see if you're not afraid to come close,  
beyond what's said, I'm only a woman.

Sugar and Spice  
Risa Pedzewick

The cherry martini arrived and I drank it down, finally finding a satisfaction I did not know I was looking for. From the corner of the bar some old man eyes me carefully, as if afraid to look at me too closely. This is nothing new to me, I've been stared at since I can remember, always being told how beautiful I was growing up. The way people said it was as if I was guaranteed anything that life could offer me. I know a lot of ugly people who are much happier than I am. I'm not trying to be conceited. It's funny, because I'm supposed to act like I don't know that I'm attractive. Each time some handsome man tells me that I'm beautiful, I'm supposed to react as though it's the first time I've ever been paid such a compliment, and that this time, it means more to me than anything anyone could have said. Each time it means less. Each time it means to me that all they want is to fuck me. Maybe they don't realize it at the time; maybe I seem perfect, pure and virginal, though I'm sure none of them could have mistaken me for a virgin even when I was one. Somehow they know me for what I am, even when I try to be good.

I paid for my drink and saunter slowly out of the bar making sure not to look at the man who was staring at me. Eye contact would signal him to come over and buy me a drink in hopes that it is enough to ensure some kind of repayment. He keeps staring at me; I could feel his eyes burn into my ass as I exit. One last look for the road. I shouldn't feel so angered by my physical appearance when so many people would slap me, telling me how much they wish they could look like me and get the attention that I do; but your appearance becomes your persona. And even pretty girls get depressed.

The cab dropped me off at my dorm. Once I'm inside I realize that I hardly remember the walk up. The drinks have numbed me just enough so that I can focus on my misery instead of my physical surroundings. Everyone left the bar long before I chose to. Patrick wanted to take me home when everyone was leaving. He said I'd had enough to drink and that I should just come home with everyone else. I didn't really say much to him.

I told him, "I'll be all right. I just want to stay and have one more drink." I watched him through the mirror across the bar.



"Are you sure, Cass? Everyone's going home to bed. You really shouldn't stay out by yourself."

"I'll be alright; I'll take a cab home. Don't worry."

"I... I could stay with you. Do you want me to stay with you?" Yes. God, yes.

"No, I'll be alright, Pat. I just want some time alone." How could I tell him that these moods come and go and that my emotional state probably has something to do with the fact that I should be getting my period in the next few days. Pat, more likely than not, does not feel the same emotional upheavals as I do, if for no other reason than he has a Y chromosome.

The lights are off in my room; Lynn didn't bother to wait up for me tonight. She is curled up in a little ball under her covers like kids are when they are scared of the monsters in the closet. I try to be quiet enough not to wake her up but the alcohol in me won't allow it; I stumble over a pair of jeans I left on the floor earlier while trying to decide what to wear out. Lynn flinches. Whoops. My phone vibrates in my purse and I go to check it. It's Dave, he texted me. It says, "I'm sorry about last night, I was out of line. Can I see you now? I need to talk to you." What could he possibly want? Dave is Megan's boyfriend. She's a friend of mine. Last night he pulled me into his room and tried to kiss me. I went to slap him but he grabbed my hand and told me he loved me. Before that it was touching, a hand running over my butt seemingly by accident and trying to get me away from the rest of the party to talk. Talk about what exactly? Nothing important, just as long as it was alone. They've been going out for two years. They're the kind of couple you'd think would get married after graduation. At first I ignored it; it was just because of how close we all are. He'd never step over the boundaries. Even when the lines started getting crossed, what could I say? I don't want to break them up, but if I ever told her, I'd be the slut who couldn't keep her hands to herself.

I went to see him. I just wanted to tell him this has to stop. He opened the door and tried to hug me, I pulled away a little bit but he still had a good hold on me.

"Cassie, I'm so glad you came. I -"

"Why did you text me Dave? What do you want?"

"Nothing, I swear, I just wanted to see you. I wanted to apologize for the other night. I didn't mean to make you feel awkward, but I did mean what I said."

"Dave, what are you doing? You're with Megan; you love her not me."

"I do love her, but I can't explain how I feel around you. You two are so different... and I do love Megan with all my heart, but when I see you... all I want to do is kiss you. I know you and Ryan used to date—"

"Yeah, so you see how wrong this is on multiple levels."

"It burns me up that he had you and let you go. He used to talk about you after you guys broke up. He would say all these awful things about you. Well, not awful, but just how guys talk... about how you were in bed—"

"Dave, stop, I don't want to hear this. I got over Ryan and it was painful but it's behind me now. I don't want you to bring it up again—"

"I would defend you. You were still my friend. You always have been. I wouldn't ever want to see anyone hurt you. I have your back honey."

"I know Dave, we are friends, but that's what I don't understand about this situation. What makes you so sure I'm not going to go tell Megan about what you've been saying to me?" Dave moved closer to me backing me against the door.

"Because I know you feel it too... what's between us. Cass, believe me when I say I've been fighting this. I've felt this way about you since the first time I saw you, and then I got to know you, and you're funny and cool. I've never met another girl like you."

"Dave, I came here tonight to tell you we can't do this, it's not fair to Megan. You shouldn't even be with her if you're having these feelings; she's still head over heels for you. If she knew she'd be shattered. You need to stop doing what you're doing."

"You mean what we're doing."

"I'm not doing anything."

"Oh don't play so coy. God, you always act so aloof. It's not what you're saying, Cass, that makes me know how much you want it. It's all in your eyes, the way you look at me, even when other people are around. You can't fool me, Cass, I know you too well."

"Dave, it has to end." But he kissed me anyway. It was gentle at first, his lips only slightly touching mine; then he opened his mouth and slipped his tongue inside. I meant to pull away, but he pressed his body against mine and I could feel his erection through his pants. He's right; there's more than enough sexual chemistry there. I never wanted to admit to myself that maybe I felt some thing too.

He pulled me up the stairs to his room. Mark, his roommate, was mysteriously not there. I stopped inside his room not letting him pull me to the bed, which I knew was his intended destination.

"What's wrong?"

"Dave..." He stopped and looked at me.

"I'm breaking up with Megan. I should have before, you're right. I've wanted to be with you instead of her for so long, but I was worried you didn't feel the same... so I didn't." I didn't know what to say to him. I knew my opportunity to leave had passed. I'd already committed the sin; anything else wouldn't change things back to the way they were.

He kissed me again, and my knees went weak. I wish I could have been stronger for Megan. It's intoxicating when someone wants you that much. I wonder if I would have felt the same attraction to him if I didn't know how much he needed me there in that moment. I fell onto his bed where he slowly began to devour every inch of my body.

We lay there in ecstasy afterwards. I stared up at the ceiling where a picture of Dave and Megan was taped up. Even now her presence was felt. Dave threw his arm around me and held me tight. I could feel his breath on my back, tickling the tiny hairs that became goose bumps.

"What's going to happen now Dave?"

"What do you mean? I'm leaving Megan."

"No, but afterwards.. .our friends.. .people will be forced to choose sides."

"Why do we have to worry about it? We're here together, away from the rest of the world. Just the two of us." He kissed me on the cheek and held me tight against his chest. Even now I didn't want to admit that a part of me enjoyed myself. I still didn't believe him for one second when he said he was going to leave her. Even if everything else he said was true, eventually he would get me out of his system and remain content with her. After I heard him snoring I crept out of bed and went back to mine before the sun came up. A walk of shame could be fatal in circumstances like these.

I went to splash water on my face when I woke up the next morning. I can't believe I slept with Dave. I knew in my heart that he had never cheated on Megan before. When I used to catch him staring at my chest or running his hand over my ass, he would tell me that it was the most he could do without cheating. He always said it in a way that made me forgive him because it was just play

flirting. It was only an innocent attraction, something that neither of us would let get out of hand. It's not that I didn't feel badly, but the guilt comes from what others would think of me. I did what I did because I wanted to.

The mirror stared back at me echoing my thoughts. It was wrong, but that's what made it feel so good. I won't lie to the face in the mirror even if I have to deceive everyone else.

Patrick called me asking where I was and if I was alright. I told him I was fine and that I was sorry I hadn't called him when I got back last night because I was very tired.

"You mean drunk," he said.

I laughed, "Yes, that's exactly what I mean, actually."

"I figured. How's your head feeling today, any hangover?"

"Not really, just more tired. I think I'm just gonna curl up and watch a movie to recover."

"That's the worst way to recover; are you serious, Cass? Let me take you out for coffee or something, it's the least I can do for leaving you last night."

"Pat, you don't owe me anything; I told you that you could go home with everyone else."

"Doesn't matter, I have a guilty conscience. Please, I'm bored anyway." I could hear how antsy he was on the other line. Eh, I could go for some coffee.

We met by the bridge that led down to the local strip mall. Pat was decked out in a blue ski jacket and cap. His cheeks were rosy from the cold but his smile was warmer than the sun.

"What's gotten into you?" I ask.

"Nothing, I'm just glad you came out. I haven't really gotten to hang out with you in a while, it kinda makes me sad. We used to be so close."

"We're still close, Pat. But it's sweet of you to miss me, nonetheless."

"I know we are, but you know what I mean. After freshman year, we all kind of drifted apart."

"I know what you mean; I barely even talk to Jeff or Audrey anymore."

"Yeah, they fell further off the face of the earth than you did."

"I did not fall off the face of the earth."

"You're right, it's round. Nothing really to fall off of." I gave him a little punch for that. Pat could be such a nerd sometimes.

We got lucky and grabbed the sofa booth just as some people were leaving it. We threw our coats to claim the spot as ours. Pat ran over to get coffee while I

stared at the photos on the wall.

"Which one do you like?" he asked me when we got back with our coffees.

"All of them really. I know, that's just what people say when they don't have any taste."

"No not at all, they are all different. Art is art when the artist is passionate about their work."

"Then why are the critics always placing judgment on this piece or that? Usually that's an indication of talent."

"Whoa, look at you go, that was a pretty intelligent thing to say. I mean, I wasn't calling you dumb... ok, I'm digging myself into a hole."

"Yeah, well you know me, I'm pretty much a vapid whore. I don't think far beyond the limits of what I'm going to wear the next day."

"Of course not, you're more the kind of girl who thinks about what she is going to wear two days from now."

"Now that's really thinking outside of the box." He smiled at me. One of those goofy smiles I've seen him wear before. It really was just like old times. I missed him more than I was willing to admit to him, if for no other reason than that once we had tried to be something more than friends. It ended badly when he decided there was another girl better suited as a girlfriend. We tried to keep things civil and sweet because there was a friendship there, but it was too hard for me and I pulled away to save myself. But time heals all wounds and we were able to regain our friendship at the beginning of the year. Besides, she was a jealous bitch, and guys can only stay whipped for so long.

I excused myself to go to the bathroom, because I could feel my phone vibrating and I knew it was Dave. He texted me and it said; "Cass, I'm so glad you came over last night, I knew you felt the same way. Call me later, I wanna see you again tonight." I knew I wouldn't go. I had to make him want it just a little bit more than he already did. I wasn't even sure I wanted him for any more than a little while. All the old feelings for Pat had come back already. He meant so much more to me than Dave did.

When I came back, Pat asked me if I wanted to go back to his place and watch a movie, so we left. He put his arm around me; he said it was cold outside and body heat makes us warmer than layers. It had started snowing again. I tickled him just a bit under his arm; he winced and I took off running. Just as I knew he would, he ran after me. I let him catch me. We'd gotten all the way back to the

bridge, and because it got dark early, the lights were already on. He pretended like he was going to throw me over the side; he is so much stronger than I remembered.

I wanted him to kiss me. He wanted to, but we didn't. We got back to his place and after he pretended he couldn't find his keys we went inside. He already put Christmas lights up, and the soft glow made me feel even dreamier than I already did.

"What movie do you wanna watch?"

"I don't really care, what do you have?"

"Everything really. C'mon, you're the guest."

"Got any comic book hero movies?"

"Absolutely. I have all kinds-Spiderman, Superman, Batman?"

"Superman."

"It's a classic."

We sat on his bed, and because the mattress was so old we sank in towards each other. I was barely paying any attention to the movie. All I heard was his heartbeat. Suddenly, I could feel the coffee hit me. I didn't want to move from where we were, but I had to. He asked me if I wanted him to pause the movie, but I told him I'd seen it a million times anyway so it wouldn't really matter much. I had to go up a flight of stairs because there was no girls' bathroom on his floor. I went as quickly as I could but not too quickly so he won't notice my speed for the distance I had to go. I should have taken my purse with me. I got back to the room, but noticed as soon as I stepped inside that something was wrong. The movie was paused and Pat had a look on his face that made my heart sink into my stomach.

"What's this?" He asked me holding up my phone.

"My phone?" I asked unsure of what he meant.

"I was waiting for you, but your phone started vibrating.. .a lot. I didn't mean to look; I was just trying to get it to stop." He handed me my phone and I see a new text message from Dave and a missed call. "Cassie, I'm breaking up with Megan for you. Tonight. Please call me when you get this, I love you."

"Why is Dave telling you that he loves you?"

I couldn't say anything. I tried to think of some lie to tell to get out of it, but for once, I could think of nothing.

"Has Dave been cheating on Megan with you?"

"No... last night, Pat... how could you go looking through my phone?"

"I didn't until I saw who was calling you, and I thought, why would Dave call Cassie? It's not like they are that close, and I could see on your phone that he texted you too. I shouldn't have looked, but I'm glad I did." He turned away from me and faced the window. "I can't believe you would do that to Megan. They've been dating for over two years, Cass."

"Pat... I don't want Dave. It only happened once, it was a mistake—"

"Yeah, right. He wouldn't be telling you he loved you if it was only a one time thing. I've known Dave just as long as you have, and he has never cheated on her before. But I would expect more from you that if you really cared about him... you're screwing with other people's lives."

"How do you know he's never cheated on her before? I didn't do anything wrong Pat. He cheated on her, where does my moral responsibility come in? Just because he says he loves me doesn't mean I love him, and quite frankly, it doesn't mean he is being honest about his feelings either."

"Your moral responsibility? She's your fucking friend Cassie! Do you have any idea how hurt she would be if she found out? She's gonna be crushed when he dumps her, but if he tells her about you, it's gonna absolutely kill her."

"It was a mistake, and I went there last night to tell him to stop with his advances, but I was weak, Pat, and that's the truth."

"I think you should leave. I can't believe you Cassie. Just go."

I didn't know what to say. Nothing I could say could bring us back to where we were ten minutes ago. It was over.

The tears started streaming down my face as soon as I left. I didn't know where to go. I didn't want to go back to my dorm. I had to call Dave. He told me to come over, and that he would leave the door open. I know my face will be tear-stained but I know him well enough that he won't ask too many questions as long as I kiss him.

I get to his house and he is waiting downstairs for me. He hugs me and kisses me on the cheek telling me that it's ok. He thinks I'm upset about us, that something has happened. I'm glad I don't have to tell him the truth.

"So what did Megan say when you broke up with her?"

"I haven't done it yet." I give him a look. I'm fragile right now; I will believe his lies for now, so lie to me.

"You said you were going to. That's why you called me, isn't it?"

"No, I called you because I wanted to see you. I haven't done it yet. I tried, Cass, believe me. I had my phone in hand and everything. I just don't know what

to say to her yet. Give me another day."

"Why don't you tell her the truth?" He laughed at me. A smug little laugh, the kind where you don't mean to but it escapes anyway.

"Cassie, I don't think you want me to tell her about you."

"Why not? I can handle it. And she's gonna find out sooner or later." He looked at me like I was missing teeth or something.

"Cass, are you sure you're all right? Last night you were pretty hesitant about us and now you seem all gung-ho. What gives?"

"What do you mean, what gives? I want to be with you. You convinced me last night and your messages today made me feel secure about where we were going."

"Yeah, about that.. .Cass, even if I break up with Megan, I'm not sure I wanna just jump right back into a relationship. I mean we have been dating for over two years."

"If?"

"No, I mean it's all about you baby. You're my girl, in my heart you always have been. I just want to take it slow with us. Just give me some time to get my life in order." He tried to come over to me again and kiss me, as though he just made it all better. He wanted me to take the scraps he's throwing me when he just inadvertently ruined the one thing I had going for me. Dave, right now, I just wanted you to make me forget about losing Pat for a second time, and you can't even keep me in this fantasy that we started last night. He kissed me harder, and deeper, but it wasn't the same. The rush is gone, it's been tainted.

I leave. I'm sure he won't break up with Megan now. She will probably never find out either. He'll go on pretending like she has his heart forever. I don't think he ever had one. But that's what they'll say about me, what they don't know is mine has been shattered for a long time. You can't mend a broken heart with a new love, because when it gets broken again, you start forgetting how all the pieces fit back together in the first place.

I entered the bar and sat at my usual stool. The bartender came over to me with a ripe cherry martini. He gave me a wink and said, "You look like you've had a rough day, this one's on me." Though I'm sure the tears were still stuck to my cheeks, I put on the usual smile that works so well with men. They're all the same in the end anyway.



Truth  
Leah Schessel

I hate the way I'm pushed aside  
    And the way you make me feel.  
I hate how much pain you have caused in my life.  
    And I hate that you even matter.  
Your world is miles away  
    And I hate how you pretend you are here.  
I hate the act we put on in public,  
    And that look in your eyes when I've let you down.  
I hate your empty words of compassion,  
    And the tears that I've wasted on you.  
I hate that you have no faith in me  
    And I hate that I am weak.  
I hate that you are weak  
    And that you feed off my imperfections.  
I hate that you're ashamed of me,  
    And I hate how I don't matter.  
But mostly, I hate how you are succeeding  
    In plaguing my mind  
        With your opinions.



Amy Wheeler

Untitled 2  
Stephanie Bushman

With fists of steel  
They stop the wheel  
Teach the others how to feel  
It's a mission

If only they could listen  
Born of blind ambition  
Atlas shivers under all their hopes  
While their dreams  
Strung on stars  
Dance blindly in the eaves.  
Running down a path they swore  
They'd never seen before.

Cognitive streaming  
Is the closest they will come to dreaming.

My Thoughts for the Evening  
Tom Krzyk

Beauty floats, and beauty falls,  
for most on money, clothes and cars.

But for me, and a dying few,  
beauty falls on things more true.

A warm hand, and gentle touch,  
a clear sky, stars so much.

And if I could, I'd show them all,  
beauty comes, simple and small.

## Isolation

Aasta Franscati-Robinson

Words are pointless, you can't listen anymore.  
The walls are your companion. Your warm brown  
eyes are glued, staring aimlessly at the door.

You can't remember who you were before.  
I can't recall the man behind the frown.  
Words are pointless, you can't listen anymore.

Stark strained silence of the vapid corps  
pungent odors circle; children glance down -  
eyes are glued, staring aimlessly at the door.

Visiting you, it's always a chore  
to watch them slave in surgical gowns.  
Words are pointless, you can't listen anymore.

There was never the telltale blood and gore,  
just a cold phone call. Heartbroken, sound  
eyes are glued, staring aimlessly at the door.

Keys in my hand, I empty out the drawers.  
Remains of life are scattered around.  
Words are pointless, you can't listen anymore.  
Eyes are glued, staring aimlessly at the door.

The Uproot  
Miguel Gonzalez

My good King Alyad,

What does it mean to be insane? People tell me I'm crazy sometimes before I kill them, but I don't see myself that way. Is it sanity within the self, then? If that were the case, would we not all be insane, having our own perspectives? Does this make us all crazy? Or maybe, since our own perspectives exude solely opinion, self-sanity is relative, and no one is insane. We all have a point of view. Insanity then, is no more than a mere accusation created by the want for a psychological defense mechanism. Those who are incapable of sharing their opinions are not insane. They are inept.

My letter comes to you as a review. I am dissatisfied, as one of your humble subjects, with your actions of late to impede my progress. If you would be so bold as to try, the least you could do is succeed, or you shouldn't have tried at all. I have a very important duty on my hands, and can't stop to swat aside every king that comes along. In their attempt to upstage their mentors, your agents have failed to assassinate me, and what's worse, they allowed me to single out a squealer. He talked. I brought out the best of him. I know it was you. I know why too.

You caught wind that I was working with an old associate of ours who happens to be looking for something that you consider a threat to you. He's the face. I'm the deed. You thought you could eliminate me and show him how vulnerable he is, by removing such a close ally. It seems to me though, like you're just afraid that he might already possess the item in question, and you don't want to make a direct move for fear of more direct repercussions. You err. Rest assured, I have no interest in your throne myself, but I would pawn off your crown, if I had the chance. Him though, my employer, has plans of his own for your lands, but I'll not discuss them. This is between you and me.

I already knew you swore vengeance on me for the late first queen, but I figured since you replaced her, still being in need of an heir, you'd wait until the moment presented itself. I was right. I made that moment seem possible for you, so you could reveal your true colors to me and through your failure, you have.

A mark once told me, "I believe because I fear." I believe this is the same for you. You already know that I am no believer in the cryptic faiths of the ghosts of so long ago. I know they cannot hear me anymore. They too, are incapable of reaching me. I can't be found unless I want to, and if I want to, it's on my terms. The gods do not hear your cries. They never heard mine either. I never cried to them. I live in the same silence your deities bask in, so I am the same distance to you as they are. Just as they do, I decide who lives and who dies. I do not fear. I have transcended your status.

With regard to your first wife, I knew her well. She once discovered me through an informant, with the aim to be rid of one of your enemies, a politician who was trying to replace you. I took care of your problem, making it appear as an accident, of course. After that, she became obsessed. She would contact me for everyone who stood in your way. I became your shadow, and just so, you thought not of my presence. I was the royal assassin, and collected a vast treasury of the taxpayers' bounty. I was not the Wanted poster boy, but the embodiment of the prize. The delivery boy. Whenever you were away doing whatever it is kings do while they sit on their asses in that fat red seat for hours, she came to me. I would please her in ways that you couldn't.

Eventually she came to realize how efficient I really was. She grew afraid that I could not be stopped; that I was a loose cannon. She was wrong, but that doesn't matter now. If she just kept paying me, I'd have just kept being her whore. She thought I'd turn on her though, and wouldn't meet any opposition. She thought you'd find out about me. She began to believe. In so doing, she became inept. She could not voice to you, the darkness that raged inside her. Ultimately she petitioned an assassin from a foreign nation to seek me out, a clever idea. He even came close to succeeding, were it not for my own network informing me of his presence before he reached me. I staged a baited set-up, and played the enticing lure of the mating mantis. Of course, there was no mating. Only baiting, but you got that didn't you?

After that I turned my attention to her. I wasn't sure she sent him, but I had a hunch. My instinct matches my profession, you see. I wanted to be sure though, so I had a friend check on her for me. She couldn't beat me at my own business, and that was her fatal mistake. When I found out the truth, I wasted no time. I came to her in the night. I flew into her chamber, and hung upon the ceiling, resting until the time was right. When the moment presented itself, I struck.

Like fangs, I sunk my blades into her, and vanished in the wind. In order to make the clean getaway, I had to slice open her handmaiden. No witnesses, you see. Did you miss her? Sometimes I do too. Exploiting her for her royal treasure was so much fun. It's a shame she had to go and spoil things for both of us.

As I digress, I recall another incident where you came close to meeting me. You didn't realize it at the time though. In fact, you didn't even know I existed. Maybe I don't exist. If our reality is based only on our own views, then to you, I still don't exist. You've never seen me. I could just be a rumor. Maybe I'm the pen-name for someone even more sinister than I'm made out to be. You'd never know. Maybe my name is akin to the skeleton in your closet and the boogeyman that only exists for children. Maybe you missed your chance to know of my existence. Am I a figment of your imagination? If so, how do you perceive me? Am I just as glorious as all the rumors say? If not, how did this letter slither into your hands? Maybe existence is more than just a state of belief. The alchemists say existence is presence. If that's the case, I definitely don't exist. You've never been in my world, but I have yours. You most certainly exist.

Going back to the incident, I worked with a partner back then. I was training someone I saw potential in. While later I would just wind up using him to be a suicide decoy for something I knew I needed to do, he still needed to be trained to fill the role. My partner and I were on a mission to infiltrate our mark. Just to infiltrate! How could such an easy job be botched? Sure the mark was Countess Doreana Silver, but I've handled numerous VIP's before. He hadn't. Maybe the pressure got to him, or maybe he wasn't so devoted to my practice, but for whatever reason, he left a trail after we left. As you could imagine, it didn't take long for Doreana to discover that she was marked, and she hired a private entourage to both guard her, and investigate. She contacted the head constabulary to file an official report, thus having regular city guards patrol her home in greater frequency as well. More annoying amateurs to kill! When you've killed so many, they're no more than a nuisance to you anymore.

I quickly disposed of the private investigation team, and used my under-study to destroy the local guard, some of her private guards, and a section of her house all in one shot, with some flash powder and a few lies. I killed the rest of the private guard, and as you no doubt came to know later, found my way to her as well. I stalked into her bedchamber, feet padding the ground silently, and pounced her, blades rending. When I finished her off, I covered up the explosion,

using his calling card as my ruse. Then I paid the constabulary a visit to erase my file...

By the way, calling cards are so immature. They truly are the work of amateurs and narcissists. Our job isn't to make our presence known, or scream war cries for attack stances when we strike. It's ridiculous, and it gives us a bad name.

I'll admit, sometimes I get a little too passionate about my work. Are you a passionate man, King Alyad? Do you know what passion really is? It's not only devotion, but also intensity. Too often, my liege, do we forget the intensity to which we must devote ourselves. Passion is then lost in routine. But don't question my work ethic. I don't pray to you, so don't judge me. Only for personal entertainment do I ever sacrifice intensity. Then passion occurs for me. This reminds me of a time when I let someone live. A mark, I mean. Not just some random, impulsive kill, fun as they can be. Every mark has a purpose. While most are just to provide me with training, please me with wailing screams of agony, and pad my pockets, sometimes I adopt one. It's infrequent, and ephemeral, but this was one such case. This guy was pitiful. So pitiful I should have put him out of his misery, but that's exactly why I didn't. It was something about his pleading that inspired me. I let him go with a warning to stay away from my client, a woman who had enough of his harassment, and told him that I would be watching him every day. I knew he wouldn't believe me at first, so I made appearances at random and usually in public, to show him how easily I could reach him, and how helpless he was. I eventually drove him mad, becoming the same stalker he once was. He wound up doing the favor for me. He didn't know I was there, but I watched him kill himself. His pain was my delight. Some might even say that job was poetic justice, or a noble cause, that it was ethical.

Justice and ethics are really just two more self-indulgent concepts though. Who's to say what's right? I know what I think is right is certainly not what you think is. Otherwise I'd never have sent you this letter.

Your castle, like most, has so many guards in it. Too many for my taste. I find it such a chore that I would have to clean out that many people, just to get to you. Would you be able to bear the guilt of their deaths? I doubt it. I'm not sure you're as strong a king as the rest of your subjects, but what do I know? My opinion is biased too. Could you bear the thought of me removing so many innocent fools that have families and aren't prepared for the worst their jobs have to offer?

I cleared out a building once. I mean, there were only sixty-six people in it, but I think it should count for something. I was alone, and had to fight more than a few uneven skirmishes. I was also younger and more ambitious then, and learned the valuable lesson of not making mistakes. In this line of work, one mistake is all you make. I was trying to impress one of my first employers by showing off how good I was at swordplay, so I stormed the place. I did it, no problem, but one of my killing instruments at the time was a very distinct knife, and I left it behind. I left it stuck in the chest of the last one. That sixty-sixth kill, like slaying the princess at the top of the tower. It made me feel invincible. But I left a calling card. I was lucky though. I didn't become famous until I started doing some really daring things after that. How many guards do you have again? The only other reason I left the knife there was because it resembled art. I consider my job an art, but the image of the blade standing triumphant over the mound of its host was picturesque. What does art look like to you? Is it an art to be kingly, waving your hand like a flag in lethargic winds, or is that just a job? With all its cumbersome strings, and so many helpless people tugging at them, does your heart not tug away at something greater? Something you can do without others needing you to do it, but just to be able to provide it? That would be an art. As for pictures, I agree with the beholder.

I love what I do. Do you? Do you know what love is? It's obsession. When that fades, so too does the passion, and what once was, is a shadow of what remains. What I do is ideal for me, because I never lose sight of my passion, my commitment. My obsession.

The first time I actually saw you was at a hearing for someone I set up. He was facing the death penalty. I thought it was so ironic that you were doing my job for me I just had to be there to see it. Thank you by the way, I still got paid for that. Of course, you never saw me, but I knew exactly who you were. You were easy to pick out. You had a big, shiny crown on, it wasn't hard. I didn't enjoy the show until after all the bullshit politics and pitiful sob stories were over though. I never was a fan of hearing official lexicon through the mouths of those the content unwittingly prayed to. Once the guillotine eclipsed the sun and then set, I was happy that I went there. That was the day I first laid eyes on the first queen too. She didn't impress me as much at a glimpse, but it was then I really came to know you. I wanted to know what you looked like. I wasn't impressed with you either, but I've seen worse in a king. You weren't decrepit, like your reign was almost over then, nor were you fat, as if you over-indulged in all the stuffing your



crowns could bear. I was glad to see that you were atypical. You were good. I almost liked you. I thought I'd never need to come after you. I was younger then.

Speaking of good, I don't see good and evil the same way most do either. Good, though it can mean both kind and efficient to some, means only efficient to me. I am good. Good is also a position. Those who are right in the end are good, and those who are vanquished are evil. Good people can be slain if their opinion is shared by those who eventually emerge victorious. The vanquished do not resurface. The evil ones try to cultivate change, and are less agreed with. Evil people tend to be motivated and cunning, possessed of an intellect others cannot comprehend. I am evil too then, but only in part. I am uprooted. The "root of all evil" sounds like one who doesn't get much done, so that cannot be me. The branches move about more than the roots. Do you think it's possible to be both good and evil? Neutrality is not the answer. That's just a future decision for one or the other, whether right or wrong. Some who are evil are inept, but I am not. You now know of my opinions and my intentions too, if you've been paying attention.

Do you know how a spider catches its prey? Pay attention, because this is important. This is no rant. It starts by spinning its web. It has to spin a new one, because old webs become visible with dust, and their prey won't be caught so unawares. Once the web is woven, the spider will wait at the edge of the web, with a leg on one of the strands. When it feels a vibration in the strand, the spider will either approach if the tug is mild, or retreat if the tremor is more than it could bear. The spider's prey never sees it coming until it's too late.

You've done well to suffer through my story. Perhaps you're just the king this land needs. A pity. Thank you for reading my letter though. Maybe you will come to know me after all. Look out your window.

-Matavius

The Pronouns are Superfluous  
Amanda Hurnburt

October  
ethereal apparitions  
shift behind the glass partitions;  
Aerosol-fogged and damp with steam,  
they shield these groves of academe.

We  
shuffle in: the room is small.  
The yellowed low-lit violet walls  
thick with paintings, shelved mystique  
echo eighteenth century speak.

Couches, benches, mismatched chairs.  
We find a seat and settle there;  
whipped cream feedback, games of chess  
background to an odd address...  
Murder, sand, white hot psychosis,  
singd sins packaged as a kind of neurosis.  
Filamental words stray loose from their stocks  
and cling independent, nonsensical schlock.

In this, i am edgy,

counting the ways,  
the cards on the ceiling,  
planets, minutes, fickle  
feelings,  
my thoughts unintelligible,  
ridiculous, negligible.  
Leave it, say it, say what you

mean:

intoxicant entropy,

oo much caffeine.

We

misunderstand each other.

The way you weave words, spin further  
within all alliteration,

well, your animation has my approbation.

The sound's so sound it's bound to abound

to accumulate round the compound,

tangle with the words tied with twine

to the twinkly lights past closing time.

It's just that it's unraveling,  
affecting, swiftly dismantling  
my meticulous cohesion,  
my eight bar, end rhyme legion,  
my 400-thread-count

silhouette

unhinged and flying right, i'll bet,

straight on 'til morning.

Back to basics. Lamps without shades,  
paper, pens, my list of charades.  
There are too many details to borrow  
that you won't remember tomorrow.

We

shuffle out: the air is cold.

We huddle, laugh, the stores are closed.

A man is smoking a cigarette.

i wonder if he's seen my silhouette.

We move away to find our ride.

There is nothing left to describe.

## Kings Own Castles in Florida

Nick Orsini

There's a queen trapped in her desk drawer tonight  
She has since gone blind due to a lack of light.  
Desk drawers are only structures made to lock things up tight.

There's a king watching his castle burn to the ground.  
His people inquired, "When did our king get so proud?"  
No answer. They lit up torches and burned his kingdom down.

The same girl's picture persistently glows on my screen.  
Braces and tight camisoles can make old men obscene.  
Old men carry crosses much like Simon of Syrene.

A minute before an old man drives in the lane next to me.  
A minute later his car is no match for a tree.  
On the virgin white snow his blood is easy to see.

Blasted through the windshield and now stuck under the car  
A blood filled sputter said, "Son don't go far  
To understand my situation you have to know who you are."

He has one more story in him at the close of his earthly life.  
He told me, "All I wanted was warm Florida with 2 kids and a wife;  
I tell you these Northeast winters carve me up like a knife.

I had a woman once with my child inside of her.  
Worked in the casino until I bought a place in Bay Harbor.  
After a bloody toilet morning, she fled to Ann Arbor."

The flurries come down lit up blue and red.  
As the EMTs press his neck and lift his head,  
One says to me, "Sir, do you know this man is dead?"

I knew in my head that crowns don't make a king  
Crowns mean nothing when you lose everything  
When black suits are ironed and funeral bells ring.

Queens in Florida are trapped on my screen,  
Yet I carry the burden of a man's dying dream.  
Keyboard strokes take the place of my audible scream.

Untitled

Nicole Boisvert

like drops of water leaking down from  
the ceiling into a bucket, revealing a  
distorted reflection of a face  
lines blurred until no two  
can concur where in the space  
the face feels its final fall

look in the mirror.  
does that make it clearer?  
I thought not.  
reflection distorting the perfection  
you know exists -  
is that what you see? is that me?  
or am I in the words I so desperately need?

Hey you! life knocks and releases the locks  
on your Pandora's box allowing  
the shape of language to break free from its  
mold

I find my stories in the lies you told  
supposed truth evolving into paradox  
in finding truth, reality is lost  
blurring the lines between non and fiction

Love  
Amy Wheeler

Love is supposed to make the  
world  
go  
round  
Love is supposed to be  
blind  
Love is supposed to be  
patient  
kind  
Love is always supposed to protect  
trust  
hope  
persevere.

What happens  
When the world stops  
spinning  
When love  
forgets  
When love  
leaves behind  
When love is no longer blind  
patient  
or kind?

What happens when  
dreams are  
crushed  
Hope is  
lost  
Tears are  
shed  
Voices have  
Yelled?

Was love supposed to do that?

Love is supposed to protect  
But what protects you from love?

Brianne Bendit



## Friday Night Football

Amanda Mulvihill

Adrenaline in the air  
And steaming breaths mingling  
With smoke from a hotdog stand  
Muscles tense and coil as  
They wait for a battle to  
Begin on this hundred-yard  
Stretch surrounded by screaming  
Passionate hoarse voices that  
Depend on their warriors  
The game finally kicks off  
And the first shot is fired  
A soldier takes a bullet  
To his chest but refuses  
To give up; instead he runs  
Gaining the territory  
That is rightfully his and  
Gaining speed before he is  
Knocked down by an enemy  
His so-called friendly rival  
The opposing armies line  
The sight of their teammate's death  
And fire the same bullet  
That previously killed him  
This goes on forever in  
The battle for a touchdown  
Fans are reckless and raucous  
Cheerleaders in their glory  
Cannot find a sole person  
That they must beseech to cheer  
Even the bands are into  
This fight for triumph or death  
The timer ticks the seconds  
Till the teams can get a break  
The halftime show is only  
Buying time and compelling

Restless crowds to stir - the band  
On the field cannot even  
Be heard over the talking  
Of their team's fierce supporters  
Scents of soda, pizza, and  
Cheap hotdogs float around the  
Bloody muddy battlefield  
Then the heroes of the game  
Flood back out onto their turf  
And the multitude goes wild  
The battle starts again but  
This time more bitter and harsh  
Opposing helmets collide  
Jerseys go against jerseys  
Bleachers compete with bleachers  
In a 'Who Can Scream Louder  
After a Touchdown' contest  
And the marching bands see who  
Can play the "Hey Song" faster  
It's a full-fledged war out there  
A brutal fight for glory  
And neither team will give up  
Not even when there's only  
Two seconds left on the clock  
It's a fight to the finish  
To the very last moment  
But now the clock has run out  
The last bullet has been shot  
And the teams again line up  
On this field of memory  
And stare at their enemies'  
Faces, into their eyes, and  
Shake hands, melting out of their  
Soldier molds, saying "Good game."  
And it was.

The Life You Built  
Dylan Vergara

Some get bitter with age til they wither and fade,  
Never take it themselves but stay committed to pray,  
They had dreams once but things get in the way,  
So a failure or two makes them a quitter today,  
The belief in perfection is a cruel injection,  
Most, ask for protection when they need a direction,  
They hide from the tide when they hear of rejection,  
End up, lookin back like a mirrors reflection,  
Still try to take a moment, own it and hold it,  
No matter how old it gets, and they hold they chest,  
Yet their left with regrets and some folded bets,  
Maybe rust and dust or, some mold at best,  
Searching for a soul in some old requests,  
Posessed and obsessed, dont know they blessed,  
Feel it deep in the chest stress shows they vexed,  
Til their lost in the dark dont know what's next.

Some people spend their hours being showered in guilt,  
The spring brings new life but the flowers will wilt,  
Where are you gonna be when the time tables tilt?  
Will you bleed from the seed of the life you built?  
of the life you built?

Will you bleed from the seed of the life you built?  
Where are you gonna be when the time tables tilt?  
Will you bleed from the seed of the life you built?  
Now what Im talkin about, it's a brush with heat,  
Like when I step ta tha mic then I crush tha beat,  
It's like a tidal wave swoop in ta crush defeat,  
It's upper class, middle, plus it's street,  
And Langston asked about a dream deferred,  
Just remember there's a reason why your dreams occur,



Whether ya dreams are vivid or ya dreams a blur,  
whether ya dream of cream or ya dream of her,  
So think about how ya act, get on tha right track,  
Kuz whatever you do it's gonna come right back,  
Don't take my word you could see fa yourself,  
When you reap what you sew and you screaming fa help,  
I try ta teach what i know, what i know is myself,  
Got love for my friends, fam, flow and my health,  
Im giving you tha first step, so go with tha start,  
Now all you've gotta do is what you know in ya heart.

Some people spend their hours being showered in guilt,  
The spring brings new life but the flowers will wilt,  
Where are you gonna be when the time tables tilt?  
Will you bleed from the seed of the life you built?



Kate Feirman

Expensive Taste  
Brianne Bendit

Across the bar  
There is a game we play  
I smile at you  
When you glance my way  
When a cab pulls up  
Neither of us stay  
Intoxication ready to lead  
Our morals astray

In silence I command  
With discretion you obey  
A secret rendezvous  
Is now underway  
With my finger tips  
I discover your forte  
In the backseat our tongues  
Play Russian Roulette

We arrive at my door  
There is no delay  
The key slides in  
And all boundaries give way  
The time has come  
To put these beasts at bay  
You take pleasure in the attack  
As my masochistic prey

Your lips belong to me  
There is nothing to say  
Breathe escapes both of us  
Hearts race this sinful relay  
Lust lingers in the air  
Above the bed in which we lay  
Succumbing to our desires  
Till the dawn of a new day

The sun rises  
I'm soaked in shades of gray  
Regret colors my morning  
Like some distorted Monet  
You are now gone  
And to my dismay  
With this one night stand  
There's a price I must pay

## Honorable Mention of the Mosaic Poetry Slam

When I kneel at communion, I don't always know how to pray,  
but at least I can dream of dancing with Jesus  
Christina Torres

Forgive me Father for I have sinned  
I danced with him but could not win

Dont want to dance to gongs and cym-  
bals  
I want to dance to love  
I want to dance liturgical ballets  
and feel the sky pulse from above

You agonized among the olives  
as you saw my awful fate  
a dip too tall, a dip, a fall  
you had to carry me to the gate

The ground trembles, the spotlight's  
off  
the curtain tears in two  
I understand the steps now  
and I want to dance with you

But through the gate I walk again  
I tango like a star  
and there you are beside me  
just like you always are

But broken I no longer dance  
I knew this would ensue  
I was a fool-- wasted my chance  
before i danced with you

The angels trumpet wildly  
the harps are plucked with might  
Polaris watches over us  
so brilliant in the night

And as we walked to the banquet table, so gracefully hand in  
hand  
I was interrupted on the seventh step as the priest called out...  
Please Stand

## Runner-up of the 2007 Poetry Slam

Requiem of Love  
Richard Frias

Allow me to take this day to tell  
The tale of how cupid's arrow can damn one to hell  
And as the story goes without pause  
Allow me to bear my soul and its flaws

My mind is yearning  
eyes are burning  
Look from afar I can't take it  
Hide under friendship hoping to fake it  
She Feels it in my lies  
gotta concentrate to penetrate the shell of a heart  
Too afraid to be torn apart  
Like the scent of boiling crack  
Body feigning  
Chest beating  
To hear her voice on the phone puts me in the throne of rushing love  
by  
loving the rush learning to hush  
with the age old story  
Of man's own glory  
boy meets girl  
girl meets boy  
I learn to yearn and in turn fleeting passion on the days we are to-  
gether  
What I feel  
has to be real  
I know it exists  
Can't be the dreams of mad mans mind's trix  
I have to express  
what I feel is a vex

So I decide to move my pride  
bravery burns from deep inside.  
I creep from out the shadows .  
I look into the eyes of the divine  
Knowing Gods stare could never be mine  
Where to begin  
the caramel skin  
to be where man has never been  
inside the unimaginable  
the inhabitable  
must be love  
because sacrifice has no pain for the those who are insane  
For destiny is waking up and realizing  
life is worth mesmerizing and being alive is only once

So I say with the sounds of broken silence to my love  
I wish you were forever mine as our love and destiny should  
intertwine  
How can your beauty be described?  
For even God himself took more pride  
upon thee than the creation of sky  
And your mind I admire  
Your thoughts bring wisdom to fire  
This is why I love thee

Silence is what follows  
with my confession-so hallow  
With her eyes a look of despair and  
the death of all that is fair  
My lovely love cannot stand it  
I am rejected by light  
the death of a dove  
my stomach vomits the feeling love  
The passion is rage  
the sane is no longer caged  
The pain engulfs my brain  
the shadows remain

I am left  
Never to have Never to feel  
Pain knows how to steal  
The butterflies in the stomach  
the sweat in the palms  
Only solitude makes my nervous heart calm  
So Here I stand rejected tormented  
misery infected  
In the shadows of life  
dig deep in the plight  
never to emerge  
this wandering urge.

Grow Up – No love only lust.  
I turn to the other her. She who has no heart and no  
name  
She who cannot break me apart  
no emotional connection  
no pain no reflection  
only raw lust to forge my sinful redemption  
My angel – My devil  
In my bed she is mine  
whatever form I define  
Water in my hands  
sounds of the damned  
I can only accept shame  
What I feel to her I blame  
To hold to fill her with passion  
she becomes my only ration  
to live her to breath her  
her scent-my scent  
her presence – devilishly intoxicating  
my presence – savagely fornicating

Our presence – tears crying from our souls  
As two nothings try to become a whole.  
After passion of lust loses its flame  
My heart still can not be tamed  
The blind lust still leaves me empty and  
I cannot forget her  
She who I wanted first  
She who I needed first  
enslaved  
by that which words can not portray  
how much higher was love  
than that of lust

Sweating in sin for the one I do not love  
I embrace the night sky and pray to up above

PLEASE GOD Let me love  
Love again  
Feel again  
Live and Die again

Then with the numbness of solitude engulfing my soul I LEAVE  
I LEAVE to fade into black  
into the nothingness of that  
That which cannot be described  
only in the airwaves of the sublimed  
Never to see me never to hear me  
I am gone  
Forever yours but never mine  
Leaving the traces of torn hearts and forsaken words in the hands of  
cruel time

Winner of the 2007 Poetry Slam

Phoenix  
Melinda Martinez

A spark that ended my life.

Gun shots, shots, shots  
My heart beat stopped, stopped,  
stopped

No flat line  
I guess I was just fine

I felt the red hot flames  
Already, I knew there was a change

It went from six taking breaths  
to only two left

Missed me and P  
but instantly killed G

I saw the tips of my wings start to  
burn  
as the direction of my life turned

Towards a backwards  
downwards spiral

Like a bird to its death,  
I took my last breath

I heard him say,  
"Miss are you okay?"

I heard the flickering far away  
click, click, click  
This made me  
sick, sick, sick



Reporters dug through the trashes  
These vultures rubbed through my  
ashes

Wouldn't let my soul rest in peace  
They preyed upon my tragedy

Mami, fed me  
Papi, fed me

I wasn't there

I was just too scared

to  
wake up

Therapist said,  
"Time's up!"

Half hour couldn't cure  
The pain the I endured

"Here, take this pill  
99% effective  
It'll help you heal."

Tranquilized like a zombie  
Innocence taken from me

Finally, I took control of my life,  
owe it all to Jesus Christ

I arose from my ashes  
Despite of all the lashes

Given to me  
I set the Phoenix free

This mythical bird  
Whose birth occurs

Every 500 years  
I shed its tears

Am reborn,  
not scorned

I, the Phoenix, will forever live on!





“Once more into the briggs” shall we say? Another year, another Poetry Slam, another Mosaic completed. The Mosaic was made possible by the Financial Board of Marist (who, for some reason, keep giving me the money I need for this, which I am eternally grateful for once again.), our advisor, Tommy Zurhellen, and this rather odd group of people willing to join LAS, and especially to my committee, for helping with anything and everything to make this happen. That’s it from my end, so from LAS to you, enjoy what you were all so willing to submit. Once more, this is your editor, signing out and getting lost. (Exit center stage)

-RJ Langlois, Mosaic Editor