

Literary Arts Society Presents



The Mosaic  
Spring 2005

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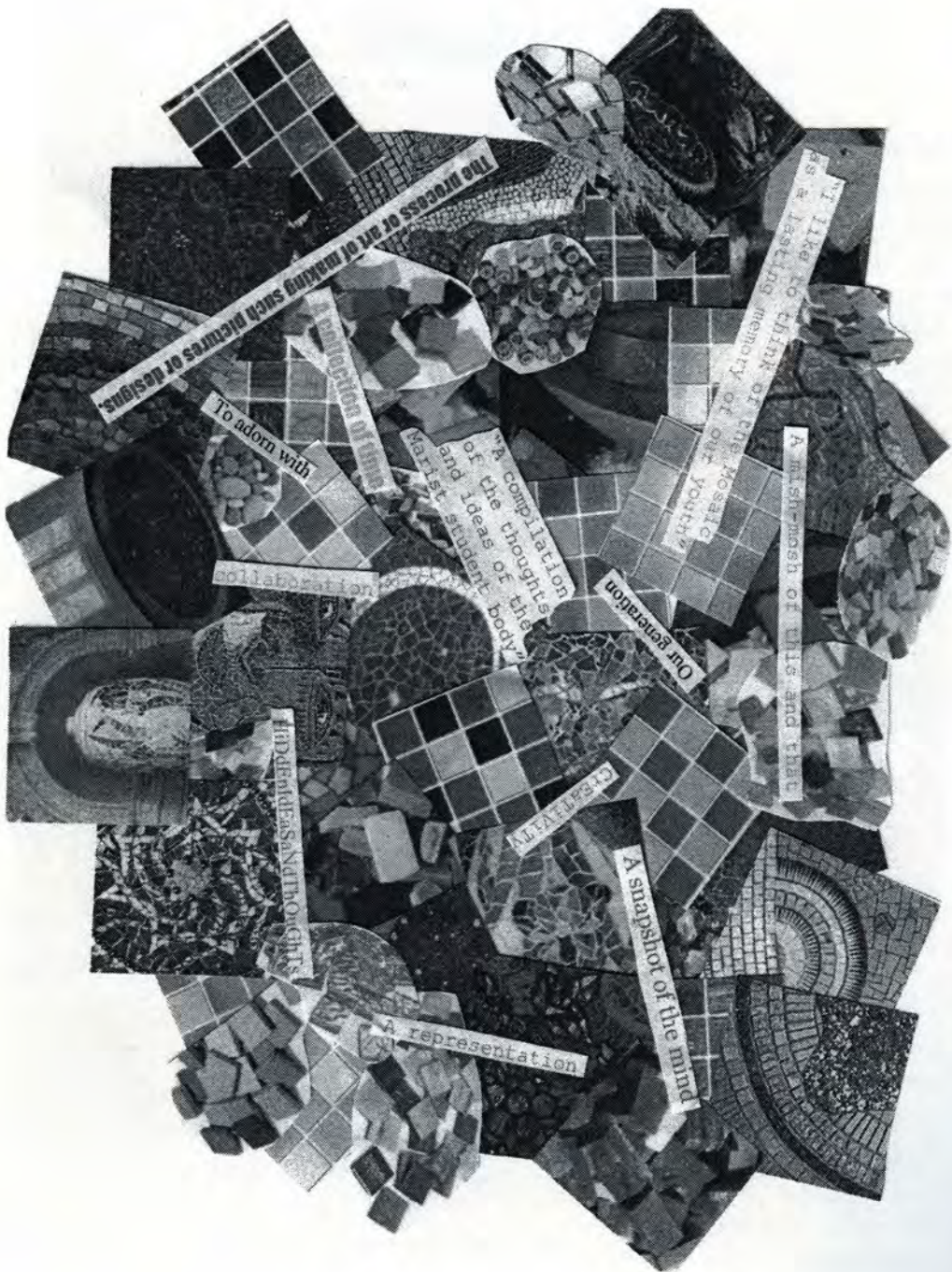
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The process of making such pictures of designs.

To adorn with

collaboration

"A compilation of the thoughts and ideas of the artist, student body"

Our generation

A mish-mosh of this and that

HIDDEN: SAATCHI'S

CREATING

A snapshot of the mind

A representation

## A Mosaic that Moves On

He is still outside our door knocking.  
 Man without a mission.  
 Stars flee the sky.  
 It seems as though you're looking past me--  
 Not just one of a pair.  
 Both Waiting for a train to come.  
 Both valid in their own way.  
 The things she treasured most came out of her soul like sunflowers.  
 There is a point where we turn back.  
 Away you fall.  
 We will be strong enough to overcome.  
 The sun will come up tomorrow.  
 Those angels of light and truth have arrived.  
 I'm really in the mood for a new pair of socks.

## Broken Dancer

*A work of mosaic art*

*Crimson Velvet hangs heavy with dust and age  
 Leaving shadowy footprints  
 What happened to those yesterdays  
 My feet hit the freezing cold hard wood floor  
 Capturing lost desires  
 Feel their presence still  
 She dances  
 More free than any roaming creature  
 Little did I know not everything runs as smoothly as planned  
 Twisting her torso like a squirming backboned snake  
 Falling through the levels of hell from high above  
 She was hurt but by then  
 It was too late  
 Come build me a time machine  
 Turn back my broken clock  
 Not sure where I'm going to end up  
 It doesn't matter anymore  
 I am tucked neatly into the present  
 Breathe my last breath  
 Dark times may come,  
 But my strength lives on*

Stuck  
in Reverse

There is nothing more beautiful  
than a fresh page in a notebook.  
So here I go again, ruining another beautiful  
thing.

Like walking out onto a snow-covered lawn,  
leaving shadowy footprints  
across the pure white world.

Call me The Destroyer.  
I'll take the silence and pierce it with a scream.  
Take a friendship and dash it to pieces.  
Spoil your memory of a good thing  
by gracing it with my presence.

Come here.  
Let me frustrate you to the point where  
your eyes and ears will bleed.  
My mind is angry  
and it's waiting to rip you to shreds.

Maybe I'm jealous of you.  
But mostly I'm jealous of me.

Oh H.G.,  
come build me a time machine.  
Turn back my broken clock;  
watch the shattered glass repair itself.  
Watch me smile.

Excerpts from "A Kiss to Build a Dream On"

Imus in the Morning kicked me back into reality. His unmistakable voice, blasting from the radio, was ripping the president a new one for fucking up the English language. My flailing right arm couldn't find the Alarm Off button fast enough. Finally, I ripped the thing from the wall and dropped it. After I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, I remembered where I was. I wasn't even in my own room, and that was not my alarm clock which I had probably just broken. I was in . . . uh . . . well her name isn't important. She was just another slut I met in McSorley's. Somehow she hadn't woken up; she did have a ton of cosmos last night and who was I to stop her? I took one disgusted look at her and then a disgusted look at me in the mirror and bolted.

\*\*\*

"Ugh. Oh, what what? Oh. Bandit, leave me alone. Go feed yourself."

The one trick I could never teach the man in my life was how to feed himself. I rolled out of bed and my feet hit the freezing cold hard wood floor. I have had hard wood floors for a while now, but I have still not bought a carpet. I am really torn about buying it. If I buy it, it will be nice to have under my feet; but, if I leave it as it is, it is the perfect pick-me-up in the morning. I don't need Starbucks. I have my arctic floor to wake me up. I made the incredible five-foot trek into

the kitchen, grabbed the dog bowl, scooped up some Alpo, and put it on the floor for the beast. I liked calling him the beast. My father had called our dog that growing up and I guess it stuck. When I went back to my room, I found the usual tub of Hagen Daaz sitting next to my Sleepless in Seattle DVD. I knew this rut had to end. Somehow I knew tonight's blind date was not going to solve the issue.

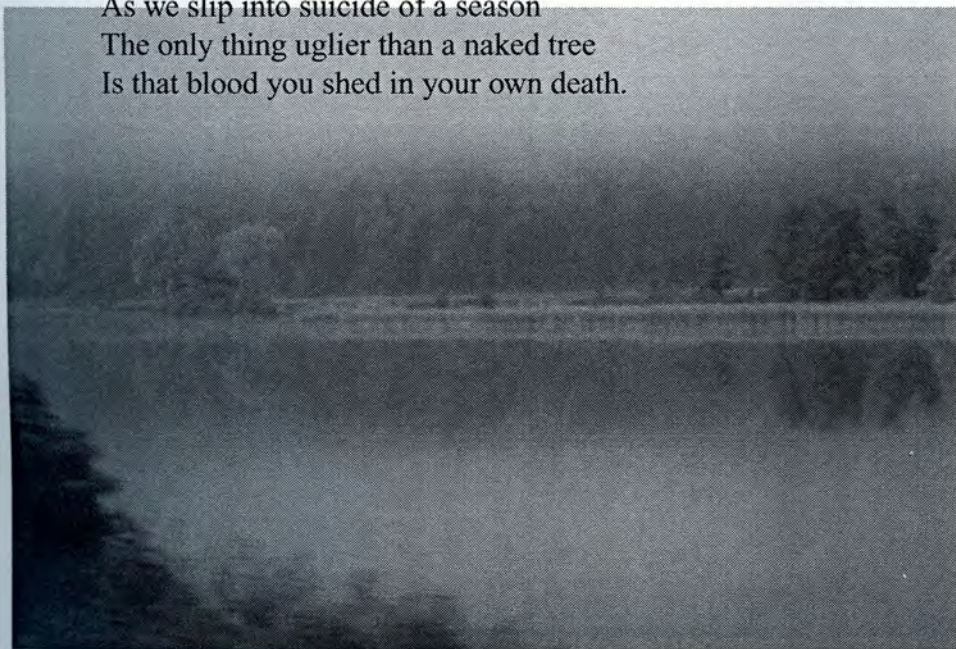
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The smell of pretzels hits me like a ton of bricks. I walk the two and a half blocks to my office and squeeze my way through the revolving door. I hate those things. Sometimes I'm stuck behind some old woman who can't push the door and other times I'm in front of some guy slamming the thing into my heels. I walk through the metal detectors and of course I set it off even though I emptied all my pockets and put my purse in the tray. I swear the security guard just makes it go off anyway just so he can feel me up because he is definitely liberal with his searches. I said something about it once and I was told that our building is a high-terror-alert building and no precaution should be spared. Since then I think the security guy has checked me for breast cancer about every other day. Once the horn-dog is off me, I take the elevator up to the 37<sup>th</sup> floor: Market Watch. The whole building is owned by some blue-blood but the 34<sup>th</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> floors are the Journal's floors.



Crying Autumn

The color green  
Turning into yellow, orange, red, brown  
This is the time for death  
What once was full, now is empty  
In purgatory we all lay  
Our toes growing colder with the day  
Knowing that it will only get worse  
The elegance, the grace of the descending leaf  
Floating, dancing, cutting the air every so swiftly  
So alive, yet it is really dead  
Falling through the levels of hell from high above  
Polluting the earth with depressing colors  
Creating a blanket of death  
As we slip into suicide of a season  
The only thing uglier than a naked tree  
Is that blood you shed in your own death.



*byGinaBarricelli*

*byChristopherBaum*

Untitled

You probably never knew,  
or never imagined what you did.  
You saved me, saved me  
from my own hands.

These hands were up to no good,  
thinking how easy it would be.

The smallest of actions loom large,  
a comment, a word, a smile,  
each the power to take life,  
and the ability to sustain it.

I'd likely be six feet under,  
without you that long lonely light.  
Through all the careful decadence,  
despair turned into a lust for life.

Whether it was honesty, pity or boredom,  
it doesn't matter anymore.  
You were that hint of a rising dawn,  
in the midst of darkest night.

You probably never knew,  
or imagined what you did.  
You saved me from my own hands,  
hands now steady at the wheel.

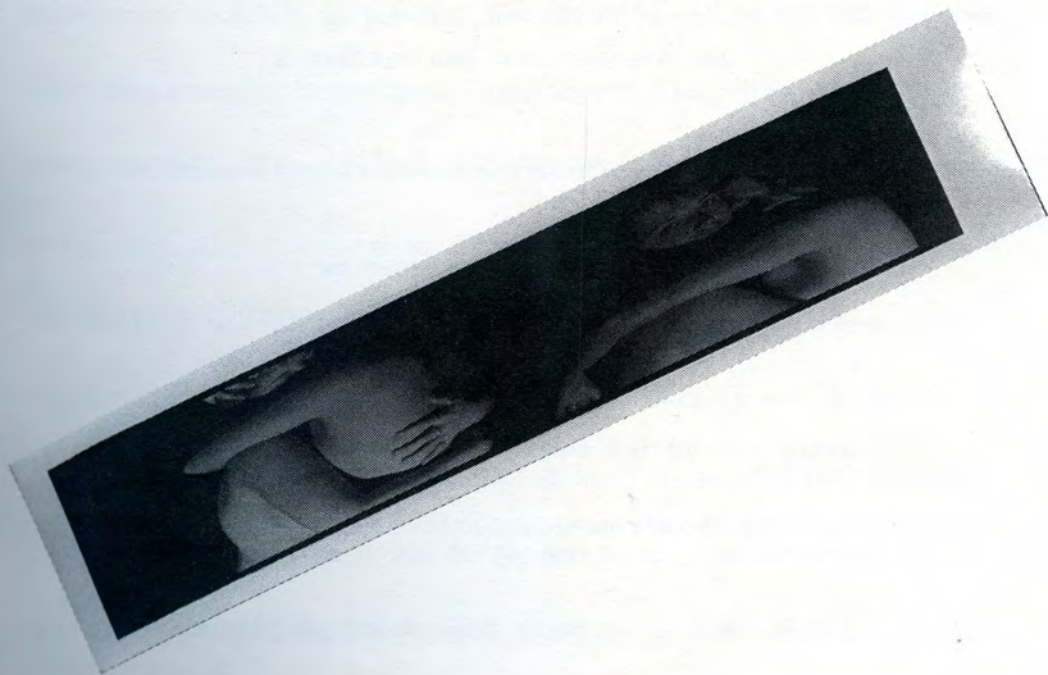
*I do not write the words  
The words write  
Me*

---

My solemn surface  
My ever-growing heart  
Which beats in time  
With my soul

-----

Breathe my last breath  
Which lingers on the surface of my tongue



Apostle's Creed

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:*

*Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

*He descended into hell.*

*The third day He arose again from the dead.*

*He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,  
whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,*

*the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.*

*Amen.*

From the whimper in the adjacent room, I knew the verdict. I walked into the bathroom to find Maggie curled up in the fetal position on the floor. It almost made me laugh, the position, like one of those figurines that you open only to find a smaller replica tucked away inside. The yellow walls that my mother had insisted would cheer up this dreary little bathroom really weren't serving their purpose at the time. Although honestly, I think you have to buy into that Feng Shui bullshit for the mind to truly believe it's working. Either way, it was a bad situation to be in, yellow walls or any other color for that matter. She still lay there crying, her small hand griping that God-awful piece of plastic, like a magic eight ball for the rest of our lives. It seems ironic that the beginning of one life signaled, ultimately, the end of mine, or at least the end of what I thought my life was. At that moment I tried, honestly I

did, to think of happiness and the good that was coming in nine months, but I would be lying if I said I didn't have to restrain from kicking her square in the ovaries.

“Maggie, things are going to be ok, I promise.” Even though I knew damn well things were far from fine. She looked at me with those eyes that looked like she had been maced, and couldn't even choke out the words. I can honestly say I was angry— that's just like a woman never able to control her emotions. It was insensitive but it's what I knew, and I felt bad just as quickly as I was angry.

“I'm sorry,” I said, and she looked at me, puzzled. She finally stood up; she was so off-balance you would have thought that this was her third trimester.

“I love you,” she said, and I mumbled some inaudible phrase like I always did. Love? I didn't know what that was like. I was drifting, living in the Id. Sigmund Freud would have been proud.

Either way, I was leaving: this girl, this town, all of it, and this new little problem was not stopping me from that. When I signed my letter of intent on national TV, you would have thought that I performed miracles. I was a high school kid who played baseball, but that was better than giving a blind man the

gift of sight in my town. Truth is, I was on my way to a life of alcoholism; my heredity had written my path in the stars and I was hitting every mark along the way. I was the son of alcoholic born-again Christians who talked about safe sex like it was abstinence.

One of the happiest memories I have is the day I was kicked out of my house for a prank involving a frog and fire works. My dad ascended from high— “You think that’s funny, Jason Carl?”— like saying my whole name would get to me.

I replied, “Dad, it’s just a fucking frog,” which landed a stern back-hand across my face. He never much liked cuss words since his day of revelation. Placing the fire works in my hand with duct tape, he said, “Now we will see how the frog feels, won’t we?” With a match, he showed me how the frog felt. My hand would be alright, but I knew that when he said, “now leave,” he hated the smile that graced my face. It was like the flood had ended and I was going to make it, I wasn’t coming back until he was sober, and at times I wished it would never happen.

Maggie was the kind of girl who was looking for someone like me to push her past the ideas of right and wrong that our parents imposed. She had

been a virgin before we started dating, and used phrases like, “let’s wait for the right time,” but quickly the right time became any time. It always struck me as strange that she wore her *What Would Jesus Do* bracelet while we had sex, but I wasn’t going to complain about it. Once I was driving her home and I ran over a squirrel, but she hadn’t noticed. I told her about it, only to get a response of, “No, you didn’t,” so I proposed a bet of pleasure, and turned around. I wasted forty five minutes of gas receiving the benefit of being right, only to pull up next to her father at the intersection next to her house. I must have turned an unbelievable shade of white only to see him smile and drive off. Her face only left my lap when we pulled into the drive way. She strolled through the door gracing her poor father with a kiss on the cheek, like Sunday service just let out. His ignorance saved him, but even I could not force a smile in response to his obvious happiness. That’s the way it was in town: people saw what they wanted and believed what they wanted, even if the truth was staring them right in the face. The truth was, his daughter was turning into a whore, but only because of me and who I was.

Maggie and I had been “God-awful influences on each other,” as my mom put it for about three years. My folks really hated the fact we dated,



though they put smiles up every time she came over. They had learned how to fake happiness from their alcoholic days, when they would sit around blowing smoke up my ass about changing. The real Christian changes didn't come until the night I awoke to a terrible burning sensation on my lower bicep, and my father extinguishing a once-lit cigar in its place. He was probable pissed off at the lack of carpentry jobs left in town. To this day, any short sleeved shirt makes my mother cry. I guess that was the last straw, and after that it was the Bible and church for those two, but not for me, though. Maggie was my bible and baseball was my church, and I did both of them very well.

When I left for school in Florida, you would have thought that my whole town was going. People congratulated my parents and talked about being proud. I left making promises to the two women in my life, my mother and Maggie. I knew I wouldn't keep them. The first semester was the same story but just a different stage. I drank far too much, worked far too little. The school, the baseball, and the baby all wore on my shoulders which had become callused through out the years of my youth. Often times the events in my life should have gotten to me, but the calluses protected me, like nothing could penetrate farther than skin deep. But with the protection came walls—

nothing in, nothing out. I would spend every night in the bar whispering dorm room numbers to cheap-looking girls in halter tops, then spend the morning faking a much-less-than-half interest in Maggie. I often prayed that she had worked up the nerve to destroy our problem, so that I could kick the minimal amount of guilt I felt from screwing around on her every night. Girls at school loved baseball boys, which I loved, and acted like they all had never seen a bat or ball while I entertained them until my buzz wore off.

It didn't take long for my world to catch up with me, and the only way to describe my demise was a crucifixion. It was a Mardi Gras party in November, and after a handle of Stalingrad vodka, my life hung in the balance, but I would have never known it. The bar glittered and shined with beads and smiles. A young woman in my religion class was dancing on the bar with no underwear on, but I wasn't complaining about the anatomy lesson. In fact, many women would give anatomy lessons for the cheap price of plastic beads, which cost much less than drinks. Everyone was happy. Throughout the night, many of my actions could have resulted in my eventual expulsion from the bar, but it wasn't until I started licking girls and threw up on the bar that the nice bouncers suggested that I leave. The car ride to

my dorm didn't go much different; one of my buddies was kissing a girl in the front seat as I licked her back, as if my drunken state were an ecstasy binge. I fell out of the car and stumbled my way to the security desk only to fall in front of the guard. He told me to stop but I was already running with him in close pursuit. My fall was broken by the concrete, until another guard apprehended me like I was a criminal on *Cops*. Blood dripped off my forehead, though my fight was not over. My swinging fist landed on his jaw and the racial slurs rang in his ears, words that would have made the clan proud. Neither action would prove favorable for my case.

I was dragged to the security desk, my wrists in zip ties. The guards laughed and took out my ID.

"Oh look what we have here boys, the mighty Jason Carl." With a laugh they all came over to see me like a side show in a cheap circus.

"You were quite a ball player. I guess the key phrase in that statement is *were*." The over-weight guards loved it. Needless to say, I deserved the taunting. This was my fault, and I grinned and bore it.

My trial the next day, like I said before, was a crucifixion. The verdict of guilty was reached and the penalty was expulsion. When I say

crucifixion I mean it; my record at the school was far from flawless and my grades were piss poor at best. Every word out of the board's mouths was like the mighty fist of God damning me back to the shit-hole place I had come from, my forever hell. My throbbing headache and hangover didn't help my case against the mounting evidence either. The school loved to set the trial for the day after. It's nice to expel a hung-over asshole; it really takes all the sympathy out of the process. The stamp she used on the papers pierced through my ribs to my heart like a spear, the red ink dripped and dried, marking the end of my college life. She sat there with crimson lipstick, looking like this was, surprisingly, one of the harder decisions she had ever made. It made me smile to see the inner conscience of another human being. A conscience, I thought, was something developed over time, something I didn't know if I was capable of attaining. I was going home, royally fucked. Yet I almost felt at peace, like this was a journey where only the beginning and ending were determined, but both the same: home.

I thought to myself, "This will probably drive both my parents back to the drink," laughing a little I picked up the phone. To anyone else, this situation would have been the worst event in their life, but I doubt that those

people are fucks and if they are, they don't realize it. Sometimes I enjoyed putting my parents through shit just for what they put me through when I was a kid, like I was the little bastard child that no amount of church or Bible study could fix. The truth was that I did care, though, so I lied about the whole thing.

It was like the seed for the lie had been planted for some time now, the baby was coming along, and using it as an excuse for leaving school was about the only good it had ever done. My mother probably went through an array of emotions coping with the new news that she was going to be a grandmother. Her words, "you got to be shitting me, Jason," really let my imagination run about the emotions she was going through. I only wish that I was there too see her face; emotions like that fascinate me, especially when completely spontaneous. Emotions like that let you know how much someone really cares. The little boy who cried wolf probably just wanted to know that someone cared enough, to see the reaction. Either way, this baby was no false wolf, and the only crying that day came from my mother, all the way to and from school picking me up.

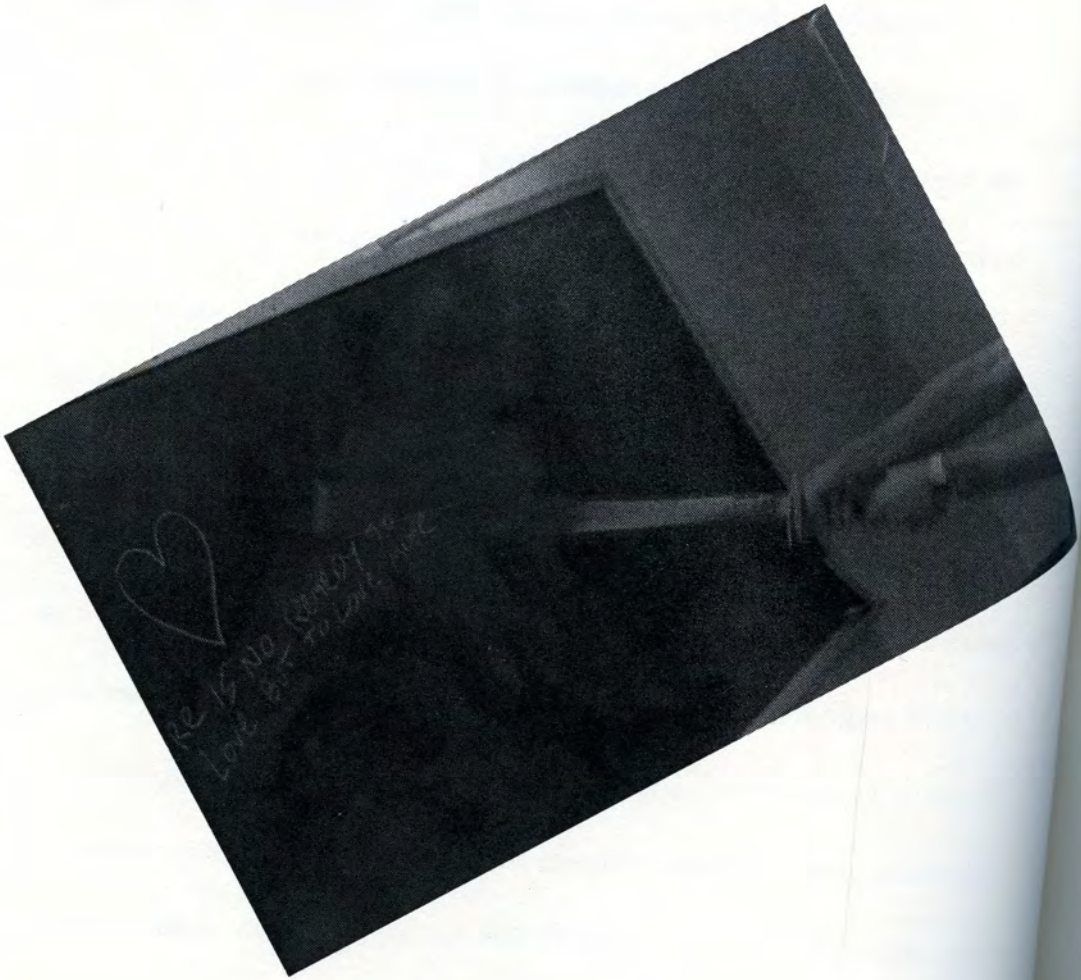
Maggie was so happy, she really didn't care why I had come home. "I'm

so glad you decided to come home, Jason,” she said, throwing her arms around me. Snickering, I thought to myself, “Yes, decided.” I did not tell Maggie that I would be coming home from school, I just sort of showed up at the daycare she worked at. I guess just showing up there was just another moment of the spontaneous emotion bullshit I get off on. Just to know someone cares was a real powerful thing to me for some reason.

Things had not gone well for her since the town had learned about the pregnancy, and the truth was, the whole town knew about the child before my mother did. I could see the town talking. “That Jason Carl is never going anywhere now that that whore Maggie is knocked up.” I never gave much thought to how the town constantly blamed Maggie for me leaving school, or that I’d let the whole town down. She’d complain about the stares when she bought diapers. People treated her like she had leprosy, or like pregnancy was contagious. The truth was, many of the people believed the child wasn’t mine, like it was too far-fetched, like I walked on water.

That was the town: believing what they wanted. Forever Maggie and I would go down in history as the fallen hero and whore who were forced to make it work. My father bought into what the town thought; I was flesh of his flesh,

blood of his blood, fuck of his fuck. It was like I had destroyed his grand scheme of things, but I didn't really mind. Did he honestly think the town's salvations would be safe in my hands?





### Tribal Dance

The sounds of the Caribbean tribe  
Spewing forth its monotonous rhythms  
The steady gulping sound of the water-jug drum  
Beating into the surrounding clearing  
She dances



Winding down  
Twisting her torso like a squirming backboned snake  
Arms exchanging brief kisses with the calm breeze  
Stomping into the earth, these ceremonial feet

Dance

Dance

byErinBlaineBaxter

## seventh ring

I put a whiskey label over a bottle of poison  
And we celebrated the night  
By the end we were both spewing blood like vomit from our mouths  
Wrenched with pain we inflict on each other  
Not sure where I'm going to end up  
I counted up to the sixth ring  
Shot for shot  
I'm not moving from my spot  
But the rooms moving around me  
I play some songs  
Acoustic and messy  
She was hurt and  
She made me call for help  
So I dialed 4-1-1 by mistake  
But by then it was too late  
I secretly just wanted her number  
but what's the point of calling someone if they're already dead.

When I got home I was still drunk. I had such a craving for orange  
juice and I  
couldn't get the key to work on my front door. Half asleep, and half  
wasted, I  
kept thinking I left something at that party. I tried to keep  
reassuring  
myself I had everything by checking all my pockets, patting myself  
down. Then  
I realized it wasn't a cell phone or key that I forgot to take home  
with me,  
it was her virginity. I should have used her...  
I am far too innocent  
And I enter the seventh ring.



### August Rehearsal

Crimson velvet hangs heavy with dust and age,  
 Slightly out-of-tune piano stands beside the  
 Barre that leaves their hands smelling metallic.  
 Across this shining floor  
 Magic happens.  
 Feel their presence still,  
 Girls whose hair streaks out behind them like ribbons,  
 Spinning, singing, legs apart,  
 Hips square to the front.

I free my feet,  
 Shake the dirt out of my shoes, hot canvas  
 And follow in their footsteps  
 Swinging, shining girls, for whom September is an empty threat,  
 My pockets, for a season, full of flowers and  
 Love notes again.

Erin Gannon

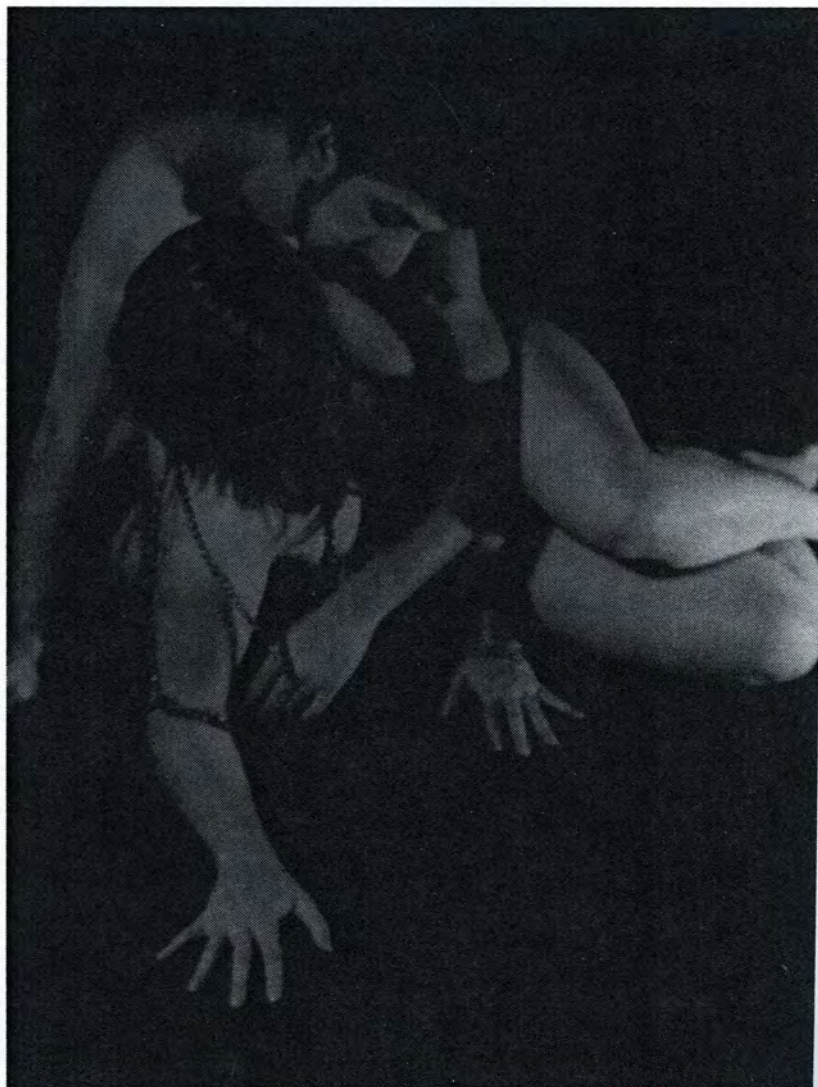
Handwritten notes and doodles in the margins:

- Top right: "STAS" in a box with "M" and "11" next to it.
- Top left: "From 5 cases of..."
- Middle right: "You are coming... You = a..."
- Middle left: "I free my feet..."
- Bottom left: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."
- Bottom right: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."
- Bottom center: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."
- Bottom left: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."
- Bottom right: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."
- Bottom center: "I was doing before that stage that we have..."

## Back to Reality

I stand, on the edge of the earth  
Nothing between myself and the open realities beyond my being  
Beneath the aged, divided skies of buried clouds  
I stay  
Motionless, frozen in a wonderment of time  
Yet more free than any roaming creature  
I stand, in an amazing moment of a midnight dream  
Allowing the pleasures of an unknown atmosphere to sift through my  
soul  
Entangled in a mindful web, by the soft gray hands of sleep  
I drift within a sea of fast-forwarded memories  
I stand, against the very air that has given me life  
Gently taking a breath of fresh sunshine  
As the world above continues on its scheduled journey  
There are no boundaries here, just the darkness below,  
Threatening to eat me whole  
I stand, alone, in a mirror of my future self  
A pool of postponed tomorrows, lapping in the passing breeze  
A swelling blur before my eyes  
As a clock pounds its last tock into my comforting blanket of fantasy  
And suddenly, the contours of my dream are smudged  
As a willowed hand rests lightly on my shoulder  
Awake now and removed from my splendor  
I am tucked neatly into the present  
No longer am I standing on the edge of the world alone  
For a friend has cradled my hand, a partner to walk beside  
On life's golden path

*by Anonymous*



## Serenity

Sense the presence of luminosity  
 In this world of hustle and bustle  
 A peacefulness comes from within.  
 The power of light and love  
 Keeps me joyful  
 And full of hope.

What happened to those yesterdays?  
 Sadness perpetually growing  
 Seemed to devour  
 Any illumination trying to shine.  
 Slowly creeping.  
 Forever consuming.

Dark times may come  
 But my strength lives on.  
 To rise again and face a new day,  
 To know what it's really about.  
 Not darkness or light,  
 Just life.

For life is constant.  
 Cutting through the dark,  
 Radiating past the light.  
 There is stillness living inside me,  
 The passionate tranquility  
 Of knowledge from that life.

I am at peace.  
 Forever learning and living.  
 Exploring wide-eyed  
 Finding the truth that has yet to be found.  
 For what is light without dark?  
 And a soul without serenity?

## The Most Convenient Nuisance in My Life

The pleasures of becoming a teenager could have never felt better. Turning sixteen allotted me a few new privileges. Permission to have an actual boyfriend, staying out later than nine-thirty at night, and the chance to learn how to drive were gifts within themselves. Unfortunately, despite the warnings I received about the responsibilities these exciting changes would bring, I continued to live in the moment, subconsciously believing my life and all that it encompassed was completely guarded. Little did I know, not everything runs as smoothly as planned, especially when it comes to cars.

I remember the day my father asked me, "So what do you think the guys will say about a redhead in a green Volvo?" As he handed me the keys so I could drive him around to finish some errands, I smiled to myself. I could just imagine driving around aimlessly, the awesome sounds of Phish and other jam bands blaring out of the kickin' car stereo, and my long locks of orange-colored hair flowing in the wind. The 1900 model consists of a tan-shaded cloth interior, a black hard-plastic dashboard, a manual sunroof, and old-school door handles. Out of everything in the car, I value the sound system the most.

However, the stereo let me down. The speakers decided to take on a life of their own, crackling every time a sweet solo hit its climax. Not only did the CD player often reject many of my burned discs, it left the display with a message reading 'E-99.' The reception to any decent radio station became virtually non-existent. On the bright side, I could still change the display's color from neon green to fluorescent orange with a secret combination of buttons (My sister still has not figured it out).

As it turned out, the sound system was the least of



my problems with old Clifford. I found myself stranded after an illegal visit to my boyfriend's house around 3:00PM. My mom though I was working at Price Chopper during one of the biggest snowstorms of the winter. I tried to follow through with my devious plan when my car refused to start. After violently forcing the key into the ignition in what seemed to be an attempt to necessitate dear life itself, the engine remained in a coma. This was my first experience jumping a car. Clifford began a new trend. I jumped him when I was leaving for school in the morning. I jumped him when I was sprinting from school in the afternoon. I jumped the car when I needed to go anywhere. Clifford transformed from my long awaited escape into my dreaded oppressor.

Recently, Clifford has enjoyed toying with my mind while on the streets of downtown Albany. Despite my best efforts to keep my car happy with frequent and expensive car washes, Yankee Candle scented air fresheners, and weekly tire-pressure checks, it refused to accelerate properly. Imagine touring the region surrounding our state's capital without the ability to surpass the crawling speed of twenty miles per hour, and being afraid to stop. Well, it happened to me on several occasions that night. Each time, the episode lasted all of about ten seconds of 'putt, putt, putt' stuttering, followed by the eerie silence of slowly gaining momentum. At times, I began to hallucinate the metallic, burning rubber smell that usually accompanies a fan belt on its deathbed. Clifford needed help.

Presently Clifford resides on the cold, neglectful pavement of Latham Family Tire and Auto Shop. Apparently it has been made his temporary home, as I have not enjoyed his company for over two weeks. My friends take pity on me, driving me to and from Hudson Valley Community College daily (Or maybe they do it for the free Lumberjack style breakfasts or a late snack consisting of I Love New York Pizza's famous-tasting cheese pizza



*byGinaBarricelli*

## Darkness

I am Night,  
the fog that befalls and banishes Sun.  
I am Plague,  
the taker of Life; God's gift undone.

I am Filth,  
the sludge that clears illusive Perfection.  
I am Evil,  
Truth uncensored; hated Perception.

I am Shadow,  
never dying, never-ending; unwanted Creation.  
I am Sheep,  
rejected outcaste; exiled Damnation

I am Alpha;  
All things from Nothings, from me came the Light.  
I am Omega;  
the End of all Order; the Return of the Night.

Your Hand Drifts Silently Over Mine

Your Hand Drifts Silently Over Mine

I think I have found the place they  
call home

but in this bliss

The pain of misery comes to call  
on my door step.

He wears a black suit and a tie  
and is well mannered enough  
but I can see the knives he sells  
are the blades that will tear us apart  
in the end.

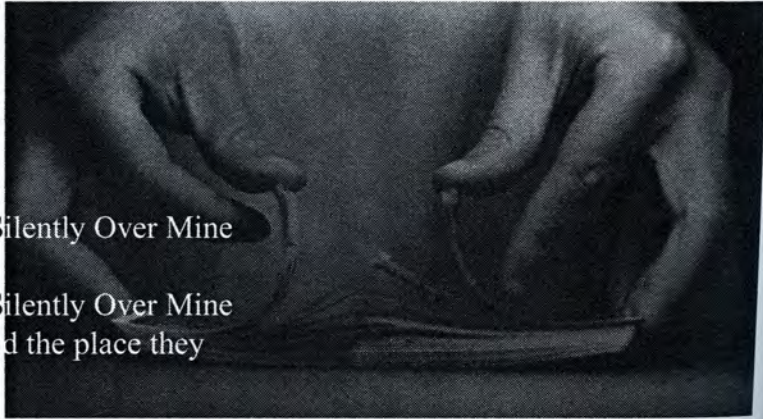
I didn't mean to let him in  
but the shame for having done so  
resonates through these halls  
in an echoing whisper

That only I can hear.

Why is it that when you touch me, I feel  
farther away from you than ever?

Or that when I say I love you, I  
wonder if it's a lie?

He is still outside our door knocking  
and only you can tell him to go away.  
But I don't think you know he's there  
And I don't think you know I'm there.



## Socks

Socks are the most under-rated piece of clothing. No one goes out shopping thinking, "I'm really in the mood for a new pair of socks!" Oh, they tried to make them all snazzy by putting goldfish and turtles in a cute little pattern, mixed with a new fresh color besides white. Socks now come in colors of fuchsia, cyan, sunrise, pumpkin, and magenta. Still, sales in socks are not climbing. One often forgets about his socks until there is a large hole in the bottom that rubs up against his shoe. Then it is time for new socks.

You would think socks would be like underwear- both have about the same amount of material, but people obsess over underwear. Victoria's Secret doesn't base their profits on sexy socks. The only reason people obsess over underwear is because of what is underneath it. Socks only cover the feet, and they are the least exciting garment. The perpetual question is, "Are you still naked if you are wearing socks?" If one chooses to make love with their socks on, they are thought to be rather odd.

Socks can go on either foot, unlike shoes. You never need to try on a pair of socks, but you do for shoes. Shoes hardly ever go missing either, unlike socks. Maybe that is the socks' way of telling us to pay more attention to them.

I wonder what it would be like to be a sock, and to have to sit on a gross foot everyday. The life of a sock must be very boring. That is probably why they play games with us and run away while being washed. Imagine the world of lost socks. Do you think they get lonely without their partner? Maybe mismatched socks are like interracial relationships. All the other socks look at them funny, but the socks love each other, despite what the other socks say. Maybe the socks are becoming more tolerant because they are beginning to realize that it is not about pumpkin turtle socks and plain white socks, but that maybe it's about being happy. Maybe the socks don't like to be paired off. They want to be respected for their individuality, and not just one of a pair. Maybe they are just like us; one of many, but individual in their own way.

Maybe we are all just socks.

## Misplacement

I got my ears lowered the other day  
And woke up with visions of my scalp  
Heard my heart beat through my ribs  
And smelt a thief from an empty gut  
Plotting a cowardly getaway to a dark alley  
Like a trapped rat we squeeze into tiny holes  
Shelter inside of hollow walls  
Exploring abandoned houses  
Man without a mission  
Girl without competition  
An easy catch with no bait

## Eulogy

I once tried to write it down,  
what I'd want them to say,  
if today became my last day.  
What I'd want them to say,  
if my tomorrow never came.

I tried to think of words,  
but all I came up with was stale,  
mostly clichés, plucked from the past.  
I thought of nothing unique or new,  
because my mind had no reason to.

But it happens, we see or hear it,  
someone's gone, I'll never see them again.  
The sun will come up tomorrow,  
it will rise for almost everyone,  
but my eyes just might miss it.

I'm not planning on dying anytime,  
don't misread this as suicide.  
I look forward to a life still blooming,  
and should my time seem to be near,  
I'd fight for each breath with fear.

What do I believe in, find strength in,  
clutch tightly when the stars flee the sky?  
What did I learn along the way,  
what did I try to do each day,  
and what that I see makes me want to stay?

I believe perfection is possible,  
it is fleeting, an indescribable moment.

It is not something you can own,  
it's nothing practiced, bought or sold,  
but you'll know it when you find it.

I believe in true love and friendship,  
and that the two come as one.  
You can't have one without the other,  
no matter who we're talking about,  
because they come unexpectedly.

I believe exhaustion is mental,  
it can be beaten down and broken.  
There is a point where we turn back,  
and we surrender, give in to the pain,  
but I don't think we have to.

I believe in what is impossible,  
because I don't think it is.  
Improbable, unlikely, but never impossible.  
If they say that something is impossible,  
it's just that no one's done it *yet*.

I believe laughter is the best medicine,  
even if the chuckles pull at stitches.  
Life is too important, too serious,  
to go through it without a grin,  
a smirk, and a booming belly laugh.

I believe in the value of an old friend,  
and the insight of a new one.  
One's thoughts shaped by years of helping,  
one's fresh from a different life,  
both valid in their own way.

Every day I get up with the same intention,



and the insight of a new one.  
One's thoughts shaped by years of helping,  
one's fresh from a different life,  
both valid in their own way.

Every day I get up with the same intention,  
that this day I'll change it all.  
I can change this world around me,  
even if I make the march myself,  
I can make a dent in the wrongs.

That's what I believe, right there.  
Each separate mind is capable of it,  
changing the world we can and cannot see.  
Nothing is impossible, just undone,  
but that doesn't mean it's easy.

If you don't believe me, look around.  
Each day someone new, makes that impact,  
rides life for all it's worth, and leaves a scratch.  
Maybe today I made my won scratch,  
maybe tomorrow you can make yours.

Finally, I know I owe a few apologies,  
well, maybe more than a few.  
For all the people I hurt, broke,  
betrayed, lied to and ignored.  
I had a reason then, but I still don't know why.

And then there is everyone else,  
and I'm sorry to you too.  
I should have listened more, cared more,  
tried more, talked more, and worked less.  
And now if only I had some more time here,  
but now, I guess I don't.

Literary Arts Society Presents  
the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual  
Mosaic Fiction/Poetry Contest  
Winners

# Grand Prize Winner

## The Anonymous Henchmen

By AJ Nseir

Our kind is always the first to go. The first line of defense. We're expendable. Replaceable. Forgettable. Most of us don't even have nametags. A knife to the throat, a sniper's head shot, a well-thrown grenade, and the ever popular unnecessary abundance of bullets, it doesn't really matter how it happens. We exist only to provide the higher ups with more time to get away, to delay the opposition. Pawns. It's no secret, this fact, it's known going in, but we take the job anyway. Part of it is false hope. Hope that maybe one day we'll be the one who wins, the one who gets recognized, the one who isn't killed. We're promised that glory from the beginning, and they tell us if we work hard enough we'll get there. Every job has entry level positions, ours is no different. You start at the bottom and work your way up. But for us, chances for promotions don't come easily, or often. And when an opportunity presents itself, it's kill, or be killed, literally. That's the difference, it's doubtful that other jobs have an unwritten "if you didn't get promoted it's because your dead" clause. Every single one of us still dreams of sitting at that head table, of having an eye ball or a fingerprint that can open any door. The depressing truth, however, is that for most of us it isn't possible.

*Phillip Harmon Espan, better known as Harmon E., always whistled as he patrolled the building's top four floors. Never anything spe-*

*cific, just a random string of notes, but it sounded like it could be a song. From midnight to eight in the morning he whistled. Through the hallways, echoing up and down the vertical length of the building when he decided to take the stairs, and twice as loud when he didn't, so he could drown out that horrible elevator music. Harmon even whistled when he took a piss. It's sad that his whistling was his downfall.*

*The elevator doors opened and he walked down the narrow, fluorescent hallway, glancing into each office as one would glance into a car's side view mirrors. He stopped halfway to take a few laps from the water fountain and a quick bathroom break. Just like in the elevator, the sound of his steady stream slowly eating away at a urinal cake raised the volume of his whistling. He didn't hear the ceiling grate above the middle stall being removed. He didn't hear a man wearing all black groundhog his head down from the air conditioning duct, and slowly lower himself on top of the toilet. He didn't hear that same man open the stall door and slink up behind him. I'm not sure if he heard his own neck snap.*

*Ooger sat at the half-pentagonal desk, leaned back in the blue swivel chair, with his feet propped up. Four identical black twelve-by-nine inch computer screens fanned across the desk to the right of his recently shined black army boots. Each screen split into fours, for the sixteen different cameras eyeing the perimeter of the compound. Ooger however, was fixated on a seventeenth screen, a much smaller one. James Bond in: Goldeneye, one of the new classics on TNT, crammed into a three by three inch portable Zenith he and the other West Tower guards chipped in for last month. He watched Pierce Brosnan bungee jump off a damn and acrobatically disarm and shoot a Russian military guard with his own gun.*

*"Stupid Russians." Three shadows blurred across Camera 1a, the top left hand corner of screen 1. "How do you not see him?"*

*Camera 3b, static.*

*He suddenly wasn't so involved with 007 anymore. He stood up and clicked the talk button on the walkie-talkie strapped to his left shoulder.*

*"Hey East Tower, I just lost the feed for 3b, how's it lookin' for you?"*

*No response. "Jerry you there? Come back to me." 4a and b went out. Ooger wasn't a rookie, and with three cameras out and a tower guard not responding, he knew better than to walk outside and investigate.*

*Back on the walkie-talkie. "Control, hit the flood lights and put snipers on the roof, and get somebody over to check on Tower East, Gus isn't responding."*

*In sets of four, the flood lights blasted on, soaking the rectangular perimeter wall and the carefully manicured interior lawn with hot white light. Ooger looked out of the expansive glass windows of his tower to see gunmen take their positions on the roof of the villa.*

*The ground shook when the East Tower exploded with an eruption that rained smoldering pieces of brick all over the compound. Knowing that his tower would most likely be the next to vomit up fire, brick, and glass, along with his charcoaled body, Ooger slid down the aluminum ladder that ran down the middle of the tower. He hit the ground and was just about to run towards the villa when he heard it. Two shots, glass breaking. A grenade floated over the perimeter wall and through the former window of the West Tower. It pinballed off the desk, then clanked onto the metal floor. He stood motionless, staring up the ladder well. The egg-shaped grenade rolled, teetering on the edge. It dropped. Finally, he took off. At full sprint by the time he hit the lawn, Ooger could hear the grenade bouncing off the ladder's steps. The explosion gave him flight, his body forced into a sky diver's position. Ooger rolled onto his back to see the tower crumbling towards him like a falling Jenga puzzle. What's really horrible is that he actually had plenty of time to get up and run, but he just sat there.*

*"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!"*

No such thing as death with dignity. I don't understand why none of us ever die heroically while trying to save a runaway school bus full of children, or while diving in front of a bullet. It's always humiliating.

*Freddy O's mouth was the only part of his body exposed, everything else completely covered in white Gortex. His ski boots, pants, and jacket, all white. He wore a white helmet, a white face mask and white goggles with a non-reflective lens. If not for the jet black semi-automatic rifle strapped to his shoulder, he would have been invisible against the snow covered mountain. Reverse avalanches of wind ripped up the face of the mountain smacking Freddy, nearly knocking him over as he patrolled the balcony of the missile silo designed to look like an observatory. Freddy was a smoker, he never stopped. His left hand would flick the butt of one cigarette as his right hand put another one in his mouth. He never smoked before starting this job, but it was one of the only ways to keep warm while walking back and forth on a frozen porch at the peak of a mountain for eight hours. It wasn't what Freddy expected this job would be, he thought there would be more skiing involved, that is why he was recruited.*

*Like most of us henchmen, Freddy O was a bad apple with a good skill. He was one of the best amateur downhill racers in the world, but he got busted for steroids just before the Moscow Winter Olympic trials. Henchmen recruiters love those kinds of stories. It's so easy for them to exploit someone like that, pick up the shattered pieces and promise a fresh start. It didn't take long before they picked him up, showed him how to shoot a machine gun, and dropped him at the top of a mountain. We get recruited kind of like prostitutes get recruited. Recruiters find us, lost, helpless, broke, and willing to listen to anything anyone has to say. Never*

*mind that our employers are evil warlords trying to take over the world, we just want a paycheck. Prostitutes probably get paid better.*

*The alarm whistle echoed down the mountain and back up again by the time Freddy saw him flying down the mountain with two of the other skiing guards close behind, firing. He quickly grabbed his skis and jumped off the balcony onto the near vertical slope. Already behind, Freddy bulletted down the mountain, floating on top of the powder with refined, sweeping turns. He caught up to the others just as the open slope ended abruptly into a dense forest of pines. The man they chased also wore all white, and he was an excellent skier, dodging standing trees and jumping over fallen ones, while still finding time to shoot back at Freddy and the other two guards. Freddy tailed the three, following in the path of the unknown spy, straining to catch up.*

*Blood splattered all over his goggles as he passed one of the other guards, who had just been hit with two bullets to the chest. He and the other guard dodged trees, sporadically firing at the elusive unknown, and missing horribly. The spy took a hard left turn, Freddy followed, but the other guard didn't see the cliff until it was too late. Freddy could hear him screaming on his way down. It was just the two of them now. There was a clearing up ahead, the access road. The trees decongested, the road grew closer, and the spy disappeared. Freddy lost him. He saw a snow ramp formed on the edge of the road, a result of plowing. Freddy O tucked, trying to gain enough speed to launch over the road, where surely he would again catch up to his fleeing enemy. The lip of the snow-made ramp launched him, and a smile crept across Freddy's frozen lips with the knowledge that he would make it. It didn't last long. A searing hot filled his back as he sailed over the dotted yellow road lines. Freddy O lay on the opposite side of the road, in the midst of a yard sale of a crash, straining to see through his goggles during his last moments of life. He saw the spy get up from his ducked position behind the snow bank, from where he had*

*easily picked off a flying target. A silver van slid to a stop, the spy hopped in, the van peeled off.*

We're not evil people. These recruiters, they're sweet talkers. The guys they can't entice with fame and fortune they manipulate with promises of a fulfilling, important career. They make it sound like we're heroic revolutionaries, fighting forces of evil, a kind of modern-day Robin Hood. Much like Nazi soldiers during World War II, we never believe that we are the bad guys. If they told us the truth from the beginning, different decisions would have been made, but everything is glorified to make us think our side is right. When you are young and naïve it is easy for someone to manipulate and mold you. At first, most henchmen believe strongly that what they do is right; some guys even start out as volunteers. Slowly, you realize, it is all about power and money, and there's a reason governments try so hard to shut your boss down. But by that time, men build families and homes; they have friends and dental plans. Besides, what legitimate company is going to hire someone with a resume that reads:

**Special Skills:**

Guarding

Patrolling

Can you imagine the interview?

"So, I see you worked in a hollowed out volcano, what was that like?"

"Uh, it was hot, defiantly hot, kind of cavernous, but I worked with a lot of really interesting people."

"What skills can you bring from your previous employment?"

"Well, I can consistently throw a grenade 50 yards, with decent accuracy. Torture, I'm pretty good with torture, you know, tying people up, electrocuting them. And I know how to use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel."



"Three words that best describe you?"

"Let's see...Hardworking, obedient, and sacrificial."

*Klein was huge. Six-foot-seven, 350 lbs, all muscle. He used to compete in Strong Man competitions. His best event was pulling the forty-eight passenger Greyhound bus. In his last competition, in which he placed second overall, he pulled the bus ten meters in 28.7 seconds, still a world record. His partner, Reu, was skinny and tall, it looked like someone assembled him from five broomsticks. He was double-jointed, and fused his own style of fighting from kick boxing and wrestling. They fought well together. During the 2 on 1 training drill, the pair knocked out eight men, two of them instructors. They fed off of each other, with Klein's size and Reu's reach and quickness, they gave opponents too much to handle. Most people can bring down one jugernaught, and one skilled fighter, but nobody was able to defeat a combination of the two. Most of their fights ended quickly.*

*The express elevator doors opened and Klein and Reu stepped out onto the roof, made sure it was clear, and motioned for their boss to follow. With the wind swirling around them 68 stories up, they hurriedly walked toward the idling helicopter as the pilot got out and opened the back passenger door. The pulsating noise of the spinning blades drowned out the gun blast that threw the pilot backwards into the side of the chopper, and then flat on his face. Klein and Reu stopped, and turned.*

*"You two stay here," stating the obvious, and climbing into the cockpit. The boss could fly himself.*

*The cop stood just outside the staircase door, his pistol now aimed directly at Reu. He took off at full sprint after realizing the cop was out of bullets, taking half the steps of a normal man to reach his target. Reu jump kicked him to the ground, the back of his head cracked off the concrete. Half-conscious, the cop was unable to stop Reu from wrapping his*

*legs around him, ceasing the use of his own legs and body, with only his arms and head free of submission. The cop flailed haymakers, but the length of Reu's legs put him at an unreachable distance. Klein casually strolled over, taking his time, enjoying his work. This was their signature move. With the cop all tied up in his partner's vine-legs, all Klein had to do, was relax, and have a seat.*

*Desperately, the cop tried to wiggle out of Reu's hold. Klein straddled the cop's head, almost in a squat position, and lowered, slowly. The cop remembered, suddenly, almost miraculously, the switch blade in his inside jacket pocket. Reu's grip instantly loosened with entire blade jammed in his left leg. The cop pushed himself out from under the still falling Klein, and grabbed Reu by the ankles, and dragged his head underneath his partner. The cop yanked his knife out of Reu thigh and plunged it immediately into Klein's heart. Reu's broomsticks thrashed for just a few seconds before dropping to the ground.*

Sometimes we get so close. It's painful to talk about how close some guys get. It might be better if everyone went down quickly, because it seems like the closer a man gets to victory, the more ridiculous and horrible his death is. A lot of closed casket funerals. We are a resilient bunch though. You'd think with such a high mortality rate, our profession would see more quitters. We like our jobs, and a lot of us are very optimistic. True, part of it is recruitment and training, tons of propaganda, some call it brainwashing, but henchmen are a special breed nonetheless. We see co-workers fall all the time, probably 15 to 20 guys every two months, and we keep showing up everyday, hopeful, with a passionate desire to become the success story everyone tells.

I'd survived eight attacks, six of them by solo spies, the other two by six-man tactical military units. I always seemed to be in the right place at the right time, which is as far away from the action as possible. It wasn't

on purpose, truly coincidental, but still, the other henchmen didn't respect me, they thought I was always hiding. For a short time I was under investigation as a double agent. They found no evidence to support the accusations, but that didn't kill the rumors.

*I was working the graveyard patrol, fourth floor, which are where the mainframe and control rooms are located, plus a couple of managerial offices. He came in through the elevator.*

*The bell dinged when it arrived on the floor, and the doors slid open. I radioed to the lobby guard. "Hey Bill are you messing with me again with this elevator? It's getting old."*

*Every time I worked this shift, he sent an empty elevator to my floor. He would never answer my radio transmission, he'd wait a couple minutes, enough time for me to me cautiously approaching the elevator, gun drawn, expecting someone to jump down from the emergency door in the ceiling. Just when I was the most tense, my finger on the trigger, I'd hear hysterical laughter crackle in over my walkie-talkie. It always worked because I knew the one time he wasn't screwing around, I'd ignore it and end up dead.*

*I swung the automatic rifle strapped to my shoulder around from my back, and took the safety off. I walked, slowly, towards the open elevator. To be honest, I didn't mind Bill's prank that much. If anything, it gave me something to do, and it was good training. I pressed my back up against the wall to the left of the doors. I rotated my head around the edge of the wall, and peaked into the elevator. Empty. I crept in, one step at a time, with my gun pointed at the ceiling. I always made my way to the back-left hand corner of the elevator, with the trap door above the front-right hand corner, I figured it would be the safest spot in case someone did actually drop out. I waited with my gun fixed on the door for nearly*

*a minute, and decided Bill was just having fun. I threw my gun over my shoulder and stepped back out into the hallway. I took out a Granola bar.*

*I almost choked when I heard it. A loud thud, coupled with a very loud snap. I froze. Ten seconds went by before I even turned around. I couldn't believe what had just happened. There actually was someone waiting to drop down from above the elevator. He tried to lower himself down, upside down, and shoot me in the back. He must not have had a very good grip with his feet. He fell head first, and snapped his neck on the metal elevator floor. Of course, that's not how I told the story later.*

Since that night, everything changed for me. I am no longer anonymous. I pull into a personalized parking space in the morning that's closer to the front door than the handicapped spots. I take a private elevator to the 12th floor, accessible only by retina and fingerprint scans. I wear a nametag, give orders, and organize the shifts and the company picnic. Even more importantly, my good fortune, or his bad fortune, depending on which way you look at it, has inspired henchmen everywhere. I get emails every week from guys in evil hideouts all over the world, thanking me for inspiration and hope.

“On behalf of the henchmen crew of the submarine the SS Destroyer, we'd just like to say we are all huge fans. We put your picture up in the war room, as a source of inspiration. What you did not only saved your life, but it taught the rest of us that we are more than just fish in a barrel. Well, I'm sure you have work to get back to, but know that you've touched us all, and made our jobs worth while.”

Your Comrade,  
Vladimir Gorbovnika  
DeepSeaHenchman@hotmail.com

# Honorable Mention

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## Gap is a Four Letter Word

### By Marissa Connelly

I have been here for eight hours. My paycheck will consist of a mere 57 dollars for today's excursion into retail, not including what'll be taken out for taxes. Not really enough money, I think, to make me keep coming back here, but I always do. Truth is, working at the store has been the best job I've had so far. So I do the eight hour day, and then some. Tonight, I've been asked to stay for the "Find Your Fit" meeting where we're going to learn about all our jeans, men's and women's, and what kind of flare, leg opening, and wash, each one consists of. No one besides employees gets to see this behind the scenes stuff. Lucky bastards.

Kate, the direct manager, has set up a table next to the polos with some snacks for us. There's an array of Little Debbie's and cookies and some soda bottles are next to a tower of paper cups. There's also a bowl of hard candy in the center. Aww, I think, it's a party. All the employees start to sit down in a circle on the floor and in some random chairs spread around, and Kate puts on a video about our new Fall line that will be coming in a few weeks. I look around at the people I work with. Mostly college girls or women looking for part time jobs, except for the female managers. They're devoted to the store and are always here. There are only a few men who work at the store, and now that I think about it, I thought almost all of them were gay when I first met

them. Not that it mattered, but I just found there was something, I dunno, a little too put together about them. A couple are kinda effeminate too, but when I burp or pick my nose, I don't feel like I'm being too manly, so maybe it's nothing. I used to think this one guy here, Francisco, was gay. He was one of the funniest people I've ever worked with because he'd always make fun of the old women who'd come in search of high rise pants. He'd tell me he always wanted to lead them out of the store and point down the street saying "Maam, Talbots is that way." He never would, though, because he was nice. His hair was always a different color each month, too. Once it was bright blue, which even though it sounds terrible, looked really good on him. I found out later he was married, so I was wrong about the gay thing. Although, I guess he could be both, but I hope not, so I'll say he isn't. Another guy, Ian, was definitely gay because he would talk about his boyfriend all the time. He said that they both worked as stylists for famous musicians when he wasn't here, but I never believed him because I didn't think he'd be working at the store if he was a big time stylist. He used to call me sweetie, but not in a fun way. More in an "I'm older" way, but considering he was only 27, I didn't care for it much. He was fired, though, so I don't have to put up with that anymore.

After the video ends, we're told we're going to do an exercise where all the employees have to try on a different pair of jeans, model them, and identify every descriptive quality they can remember about them. I can actually hear my heart beat slowing down. After we show off our pants, we make different scenarios of where a person would wear all these various styles and then it's time for Gap Trouser Bingo. A little piece of me dies. I thought every single American had the directions on playing bingo computed into their brain at birth. Only my fellow employees would think that to "win the game" (which by the way, there was no prize for), they had to fill in the answers to the whole game piece. The entire board.

What the hell kind of bingo is that?! Christ, people, it's like the simplest game of all time! Make a line!

I'm getting really tired now and I can tell because I'm all grumpy like when I was five and needed a nap.

"I have to go to the bathroom," I say to Kate.

"Key's in the drawer."

I leave the Bingo game and head to the back of the store. This night is starting to remind me of family birthdays and weddings. When I was little, I used to hate family functions. Even though I love my relatives, I sometimes just couldn't stand to be with them. I remember when it would get really heavy, like aunts would be fighting about politics or the past, I'd find a bathroom and hide out there for a while. Four, five minutes- I'd just curl up on the seat and think about how much I enjoyed being alone sometimes or how much I just wanted my parents to say they had to leave early, so we could drive home and I could sleep in the backseat. I do the same thing in the employee bathroom, except this time I only stay in for a minute or so- if anyone asked where I was for such a long time, it's not like I could say I was having bathroom issues. Unlike my family, they wouldn't understand. They'd probably just hand me Pepto Bismal and then stay late talking about firing me because I'm so odd.

When I re-emerge from the bathroom, I hear Kate saying she just needs to go over a couple of things before we're done. The rest of the meeting actually goes pretty quickly, which I enjoy. We talk about how our gift card sales are down, how we're a target store for shoplifting, and how we're not helping the customers as much as we could be. Basically, how it's not all pastel tank top and jean jacket wonderful. And then, at eleven thirty, we are all dismissed.

I go to the fitting rooms and change into my own jeans and then put the other pair back on the pant wall. I run for the employee lounge, grab

my bag, and punch out. I say my goodbye's and wait for Kate to check me out and make sure I haven't stolen anything, an employee ritual that I find very funny. Eileen Rademaker, a petite girl with short brown hair I work with, comes up to me as we're walking out of the store. She started here months after me, but already knows more about the registers and the employee manual. She also graduated a year after me, but somehow, always makes me feel like the younger one.

"You going to see the boys tonight?" she says. When she says "the boys" she means the popular ones who were in my year, but that I was never really friends with. Rademaker has yet to understand this, or the fact that she has stronger ties with them than I ever did.

"No, I think I'll just hang out at home," I say.

"Too bad. Hey, was that you I saw at Adam Vetere's house last Saturday night?"

"No, I don't think so." Truth is, I've never been invited to Adam Vetere's house. I doubt I would now that we've been at different schools for two years. This conversation starting to get painful.

"Alright, well don't go too crazy this weekend, you!"

"Ok, Radie, you be good."

We start to walk in different directions towards our cars, which I'm happy about. I don't like being reminded of high school in the summer.

I turn the corner and start down a new street. I like looking at this part of Montclair at night when I'm going to my car. It makes me realize that some parts of this town, just like any place, are really nice- the houses here are the kinds with porches and swings. Even though it is a nice town, though, I always think that my car has been stolen if I don't see it right away. I would probably sit in the street and cry if it ever was, especially if I had worked an eight hour day at the store before realizing someone had boofed my vehicle. My car is there, though, like it always is. I pull



my hair back and throw my bag in the backseat next to my shoes. I keep an extra pair of flip flops in the back because we're not allowed to wear open toed shoes in the store for some weird safety reasons. My feet know no safety regulations, though, so they enjoy the freedom of sandals often and like to breathe when I drive. But tonight, I decide to just go barefoot. Very rebellious.

It's only a fifteen minute drive from the store to my house, but it's one of the most calming fifteen minutes I get after work. All the other stores on the street have their lights on, but no one's in them, and there aren't a lot of cars on the road, just some guy jogging. I hadn't realized in the store, but it had rained sometime today, and the summer heat is making everything feel sticky and close. I open up my window and search for a good radio station. I always like taking my car to work instead of my parents' because the radio stations are all programmed like I remember. Station 1 is Q104.3 classic rock, 2 is 95.5 PLJ best of 80's, 90's, and today, 3 is some classical junk because when I was at school my mom got hold of it, and 4 is 100.3 otherwise known as Z100, which is always good for a guilty pleasure song you don't want any of your friends to know you like.

Tonight, though, there's nothing on but commercials. I'm already in Cedar Grove, too. What I need is a good salvation song. One that makes me want to go the long way home. I believe I've earned at least that. Richies, immigrants, rich immigrants, babies, grandmas, awkward pre-teens, moms, husbands, one weird couple who carries their dog in the store all the time, nannies, and the Fed Ex man. I've met them all today and smiled at them all today, and now the day at the store is over and I want the night to be mine alone.

I check all the stations again. I even go to mom's classical music in desperation. Still commercials. Oh my God! Can some radio station out there play some music, please before I get home? Not just commercials

but music. MUSIC.

And then, like a sign from God, Eric Clapton's Layla comes on. And it's perfect. It keeps me company all during the longer way home, just like the good songs always do.

When I reach my house, I hear my dog barking and run up to meet her at the door. I hit the button on my keys and beep the car locked. My parents are watching t.v in the living room when I come in, and my mom yells something at me as I'm going upstairs to change.

"What?"

"I said, come down and talk to us about today when you're done. We haven't seen you since this morning! We miss you!"

I laugh. "Ok, mom. I'll be right down." The phone rings when I'm in my room and I yell downstairs that I'll get it.

"Hello?"

"Hey you! Kate and I wanted to know if you could take Jen's shift tomorrow from nine to 5?" I realize after he says Kate that it's Bill, the other manager at the store.

"Um, actually I can't. I'm going back to school tomorrow. Sorry!"

"Oh, no kidding? Well don't forget to come back during your winter break. We're going to miss you kid!"

"I'll miss you guys too. Bye!"

I hang up the phone. I really wasn't going back to school tomorrow- not for a few more days actually. I had just lied to one of my bosses. I did tell him the truth, though, at the end. I was going to miss them. Even with their consistent check ups on how I'm slacking on helping customers, and how the fitting rooms are messy and I should get on that, and how they didn't know how to play Bingo. They weren't bad people. Not by any means. They just worked retail.

# Honorable Mention

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## Aperture

By Jennifer Goldsmith

It was the month the lavender plant began to wither and brown in the window-box over Morton Street, the month each crack in the wall seemed to swell and lengthen with decay. It was the month Swann's refrigerator congealed and fermented, his cabinets went stale, the countertop Formica chipped at the edges. The teapot shattered that month. It was the month Marcus left. And the mailbox overflowed, and the deadbolt rusted open. And Marcus left. The laundry piled in flaccid heaps of dead-weight cotton beside the closet.

But—no, that's not right. It can't be simply added to the list, not thrown in haphazardly like one more point on an index of Swann's February Happenings. Marcus leaving wasn't another disintegration. It wasn't the thin beard of penicillin creeping up around the edges of a relationship, the neglect wasn't so thoroughly honed. It was an absence. An altitude stripped of oxygen. A dark patch of wallpaper where a poster no longer hangs. It was an apocalypse as silent and small as a tear.

Persistent red stains still linger along the sink from Marcus' cinnamon toothpaste; he detested mint. A bottle of half-used shampoo, a blue plastic comb. A few of his golden hairs still laced through the teeth. Remnants, all of them. A box of jasmine tea, colored paperclips—sorted by shade—and a Polaroid of his sister at her junior prom. Behind

the sofa, an argyle sock with no mate. It was as though each token were a shard of broken eggshell, left on the ground from fairy tales long past, to tread lightly upon or bleed. And all of Swann's efforts and all of his pain couldn't put Marcus together again. Some days he resurrects the black and white stills he had taken of Marc, one of his strong Baltic profile obscured in steam and teacup, one of him on the subway, amassed by strangers, giving the camera a glance as if to say I see you watching. Others reminiscent of the two of them, in midtown, Marc looking vaguely a tourist against 7th Avenue's pulsing neon, or happily picnicking in Westchester on July Fourth, or upstate in winter, covered in the sparkling snowflakes of the Catskills. If he sandwiched all the frames together, he could—for a moment—reconstruct an outline of that other person, and revel in its company until the negatives managed to work themselves loose, drifting into the soft incandescent light of a carefully airbrushed memory.

They had lived happily, Swann thought. They were comfortable in the slouchy bohemian life they built together. Marcus held lectures at Columbia every morning, teaching rudimentary Sanskrit to lithe undergraduate brains, and histories of Asia's linguistic evolution to the more obstinate grad students—during which time, Swann strolled around town, his camera hanging eagerly from its neckband, eyeing opportunities for a shot. Choosing a location, unfolding the tripod, he would sit, sometimes for hours, until he got the frame he wanted. Those simple, everyday candid—people doing exactly what people do—for no reason at all, revealed more in Swann's lens than the starkest of nudes. A look in someone's eye as he reads the paper on the bus. The explosion of beak, wing and feathers as a child chases pigeons through Bryant Park, or a merchant quietly peddling roasted nuts from his wheelchair. Swann Deligado and Marcus Porter sitting in La Luna Bistro, contemplating politics. Swann Deligado

and Marcus Porter attending Michael Cunningham's book party in Chelsea; Swann Deligado and Marcus Porter spooning gelato to each others' lips on a park bench in the Village. Swann and Marcus in June, October, blustery December. And February.

But now it's March, and the rest of the calendar has been torn to bits, as has the slip of yellow paper tacked to his door on Wednesday to inform him that rent is overdue. Swann looked to the walls. He would have to sell another two prints, maybe three, to pay the bills by himself. The Guggenheim fellowship he'd received last year provided a stipend for living expenses, but who was he kidding? Marcus took care of the finances. His income paid the bills. Given, it wasn't much—an academic's salary, nothing more—but it was consistent, enough for them to live on, and, with Swann's grant, they could afford the little luxuries, like an extra three feet of space between the dishwasher and the bathroom. An extra three feet of brick wall and contentment.

The thought strikes him for the first time: he will have to move, or give up his artisan lifestyle. The thought had already jimmed its way through his skull in other ways, yes, during those long nights when he could feel shadows of the past wafting across the wood floor, crawling into bed beside him, where it ran chills along his neck and spine. He thought about moving then, in shudders. But the idea of money, of running out of it, was exactly the kind of logic that escaped him. It was enough that he managed to wake up this morning and eat Fruit Loops by the handful in front of a weathered, rabbit eared television. That was progress. That was the kind of progress he dwelt on; behavior patterns. Object histories. Human evidence, evidence that he was still alive. Alive enough to deflate his limbs along the green oriental-print sofa—an abomination in home décor, but

Swann rather enjoyed its ironic form—until noon, when he would look outside, determine that the sky was far too overcast to shoot anything in natural light (no bounce lighting available), and resign himself to another day indoors. Hell, he thinks, if he's being forced out of the apartment, he may as well spend as much time there as he can. Who knows? He might not have the luxury of a roof, soon; a furnace, a creaking wood floor. He might be left to his own devices, just him and his 35-millimeter against the brutal force of New York City, him and his camera begging the beggars to house him between the ravaged cloth and litter of shopping cart shanties, when the cold and skyscraper wind came, to keep him from the frostbitten abyss of blacktop at night.

Swann swallows a handful of bright Loops, unchewed. Tomorrow he'll talk to the landlord; yes, he'll convince her to let him pay in trade: she always has admired his work; perhaps she would take a Delgado original in lieu of the month's rent. Just this once. He could bear to part with the aerial shot of three halved pomegranates, and Missy, the landlady, has a soft spot for mythology. Perhaps he could convince her that the seven seeds towards the front had been placed in homage to Persephone. He would even rename it, Swann thinks to himself. Eyeing the photograph once more, he feels the bite of his own loveless winter, his own half-tasted mythologies.

The wall is pocked with a few blank squares already, where, Swann concludes, several prints used to hang. And yet—he has no recollection of lifting them from the nails. *Damn Marcus*, he thinks to himself. *Don't think of it as flattery. He only wanted a memento, or five.*

Moving would have filled Swann with relief, were he not waiting for some-

one to come home to him. Dwelling in a mausoleum of their old life together doesn't bother Swann as much as the idea that, if he were to move, Marcus might never find him again. Or worse: he might never find Marcus.

Yes, Marcus had all of Swann's friends keyed alphabetically into his cell phone (or was it the other way around?), and certain members of his family who approved of their lifestyle. His art dealer, Greta, took them both to tea and brunch every Sunday afternoon, and would surely tell Marcus of Swann's whereabouts, were he to ask her. Sidewalks and telephone lines ran like veins across this city; such a small rip wouldn't sever their connections, not immediately. And yet—leaving the apartment remained, to Swann, as simple and desperate as hopping off the George Washington Bridge.

His portfolio: a scattering of still life, landscapes (from travels, mostly, the summer in India and Budapest while Marcus attended university-sponsored conferences), but above all, portraits. He liked to read people: in black and white, the fleshy folds of a grandmother's face became a road map to her life; the moisture in a soldier's eye dampened the cold, brass-button uniform with frailty. These were the obvious ones; even more satisfying were those warranting a second-glance, who at first notice could be anyone. The faces wait for an introduction before shedding their defenses, and then, once they are certain that it's safe, each one unravels his humanity. A fallen tendril of hair across the forehead, a downward glance and sideways smile. The corners of bitten fingernails.

These are Swann's favorite bedtime stories. People he'd never met, wearing experiences he'd never know. When bouts of insomnia draw him from beneath the sheet, an arm automatically reaches for the binder beneath his bed, where the old 8 by 10s are stowed. Some of his better

nights are spent this way, inventing stories and intimacies for men and women who don't remember his camera.

At night he slips back in time, months, years, back to the first days of snapping secret shots, ever so keenly, of Marcus while he wasn't looking: traveling the sidewalks between classes (oh, he looked dapper in his academic twills), or on line for a morning latte. He discovered, early on, that Marcus enjoyed afternoon basketball with a few colleagues in the Ancient Languages department, and would often sneak down to the old gymnasium with the highest zoom lens he owned. It was fairly simple to go unseen; the basketball court was in a different room, but the aerobics studio unfolded into a balcony with the whole place in view. He could either slip up into the tin bleachers or pretend to use one of the weight-machines (though not the treadmills, unless he sought a motion-blurred image), well-above the basketball hoop and presumably beyond the focus of his subject's eye. And, though Marcus was hardly a stellar athlete, Swann's photographs made him an Olympian, taut-muscled and beaded in sweat.

Entire sequences of these photos hang in frames like pages from a flip-book, noting each second before the toss. Swann had toyed with the sizes in the darkroom, so that a full-body shot of Marc worked off a close-up of drenched hair, beaming eyes. *Sinew and joy*, Swann thought, *that's what this man is made of.*

Others in this series include a portrait of Marcus seated in his office—or rather, Professor Porter, at his collegiate oak desk, peeking out from columns of papers and aged textbooks; some shots of him on his vintage British motorbike, and one particularly bold frame of him in the locker room, naked, with a blue terrycloth towel slung over his shoulder. It was taken from behind, as Swann concealed himself in an adjacent stall,



running the water to disguise the shutter's giveaway click, and to this day Swann cannot explain what possessed him to take it. Fascination, perhaps, or danger, or some strange combination that his will couldn't fight. Marcus was his magnet, and his camera could never deny the pull of attraction.

Exposure = Intensity + Time. This is how pictures are made. This is Swann's expert formula, the precise conditions he needs to develop his relationships, successfully, on the glossy side of photo paper. The duration of exposure creates the final image, as does its potency. The effect of light on a reactant emulsion. Tricks of manipulating the surface. Alter the contrast, burn the edges. Dodge the dark bits. Create his own exquisite image from nothing more than light and shadow, and, when this illusion has what all his desires, he adds perhaps a dash of imagination to breathe air to its lungs. Sometimes more, as needed: Mary Shelley meets Ansel Adams.

Here is a portrait, a man. Exposure desired; exposure, intensity plus time. Intensity, yes, the most delectable part of the equation, relentless and urgent, deliciously coated in minutia. Intensity fills pages with ink and facts in longhand: Marcus Porter, born in Detroit, 1962, the first of three children. Two sisters, much younger, still living in Michigan, in a white prefab house by the lake. Intensity sits in on Marc's largest class, in the back of the auditorium where he would pass unnoticed, and intensity finds his address online, simply by keying the name into a Yellow Pages index. Intensity stumbles across his family tree, discovers a grandfather in the war, an aunt with lymphoma. Perhaps the other branches extend into budding flora, or wither into lifeless crisps of leaf. A birth and a funeral lately, perhaps. Marcus in a charcoal suit, a striped russet tie.

Intensity adores these games of connect-the-dots, placing a face into a barren landscape on a hunch. Intensity has memorized the tale he yearns to tell. Beneath the moon's changeling glow, intensity runs his fingertips, featherweight, over his own skin, chill-bumps rising over each hungry nerve, and intensity keeps Marc's image carved inside Swann's eyelids as his hands become separate creatures, supple and curious, discovering a different sort of exposure. His breath quickens beneath a lonely quilt—intensity in the muscular tension, the full-body sigh. A warm descent into slumber.

And time. It's of the essence, after all; isn't that what they say? Essence, like the familiar smells: aftershave and curry in the evening, dinner bubbling on the stove as Marcus cleansed himself in the shower, scrubbing away his body of work's musky academia, coffee stains and chalk. Of the essence. Essential. All of it: essential.

Swann rolls the thoughts around, marbles in his mind, causing each other to move and spin. Somewhere Marcus is out there, smelling like soap and cumin powder, somewhere he is detesting mint or missing his sister Rachael, somewhere he is doing the twelve thousand arbitrary things that people do, or might do, or might potentially do. He yearns for the opportunity to catch him in the act, whatever that act might be: today, breathing would be enough. To steal it on film, and expound on its smallest details. Yes. Something from nothing. Intensity and time were on his side.

Matted black spirals of his hair fall against ivory-pale cheekbones. A scattering of freckles, and two deep-set eyes the color of oceans. His father's long nose, his mother's pout of a lower lip. An air of elegant disarray: a Greek god, perhaps, or overgrown schoolboy. Were this not a self-portrait, Swann would have found the image fascinating. Watch as the subject

shuffles into the bathroom, note the hole in the back of the sock. Pay special attention to his old-fashioned manner of shaving, the brush and basin method, the mixing of elements. Snap the shutter as he smoothes the first froth onto a morning cheek. *The man in the mirror is his own unseen camera, a camera with two lenses, yes: pictures inside and out, speaking too much, revealing the frightening shadows and sharp glares, too honest, close your eyes now—clothe your eyes, it's not a nude goddamnit, find the lens cap and the towel; turn away from the mirror NOW. But no. There's another cheek, turn that one too and go about your day like everyone else in every other bathroom. It's only an image. It's only your face and life. It's only.* The razor rests on the other side of the sink, but it's the brush that grows violent.

The familiar Columbia office has been packed into cardboard boxes and egg-crates, a memo tacked to the door: *Professor M. Porter has regretfully taken a personal leave of absence for the remainder of the Spring term. Undergraduate students should approach Professor Tejani regarding outstanding assignments.*

*Personal leave of absence.* Zoom in, focus. Swann harps on the words, watches the letters grow crisp. *Personal leave.* Without knowing any better, one would be inclined to think Marcus had been devastated by the break, that he was functioning so poorly as a result that he could not focus on the fluid horizontal scrawl of ancient Eastern languages, nor imagine himself dragging his weary limbs back to work in the foreseeable future. That it strained his shattered heart to rouse from bed, or shower, or tuck his burgundy-checked shirt into his Dockers and zip. One would be inclined, Swann thought, to presume poor Marc was now torn apart, too broken to endure watching these young collegiate chickadees fondly pecking at each other all day long, nestling into each others necks, petting

with lusty fingertips. But he knew better. It was a leave of absence indeed, Swann felt it more than anyone, but—personal? Not quite. No tear-shed, no firm, stubborn embrace, not even a discussion of what went sour between them. No verbal or physical exchange whatsoever. An ice storm. A lightswitch flipped off. Simple, clean, and utterly impersonal. Marcus had taken the coward's leave, this *leave of absence*. A sterile amputation, leaving in its wake nothing more than a phantom limb, a dull ache nostalgic for... nothing.

Swann could forgive the absence of Marcus in certain manners: social functions, for one; theatre after-parties or opening galleries. He was always invited, naturally, and Swann spoke volumes of him to the event's host, apologizing, explaining that such a man of intellect has little time for public interactions. Marc, Swann would say, is working on his book—translations from manuscripts in fourth-century Sanskrit, presently selections from the Ramayana. Or his research. Or writing grant proposals for a project in Tibet. *You know how it is with those University types*, he would laugh, placing a palm on the host's forearm. *Always up to something, never a dull moment. Bloody workaholics.* And Swann would pop an hors d'ouvres into his jaw, chew contentedly, and steer the conversation towards a blown-glass vase resting on the mantle, or the fashionable cut of his host's velveteen blazer. Swann could forgive the absence of Marcus in family gatherings and Christmas parties, since certain branches of the family tree were less than tactful in their critique of Swann's romantic life. He could even forgive the absence of Marcus at his gallery opening, when the loft on Bleecker Street offered him his own show, because the poor dear had double bronchitis, and above all needed rest and tea. He could forgive the occasional absence of Marc without concern, cozily wrapped in the knowledge that these absences were fleeting. Mere isolated inci-

dents, none of which held any weight over the future of their time together. Swann would still see his Marcus, just as the sun would rise once more, and the moon fall into crescents over the broad Manhattan skyline.

Unlike now. The absolute and utter leave, as though Marcus resigned all duties, to Swann, to Columbia. Swann flounders in his own mind, unable to trace the storylines of a blank frame. Silence overwhelms the bustling hall. Nothing to build upon. No new angles. He stares at the memo as if the words might shift, or the door might open. The splintering oak reveals nothing.

One of Professor Porter's secretaries strolls towards Swann, dipping past him into another office. She eyes him strangely, he notices. He overhears her whispering to someone in the next room: *Someone should make sure he leaves.*

- *Should I call security?*

- *No. Perhaps he'll go of his own accord.* A pause. The click of fingernails on a desk. *If this keeps happening, though, he leaves us no choice. You know what Marcus said.*

Columbia courtyard, the latter part of February. Marcus in a corduroy jacket and pale beige scarf, khakis, a teeming mug of caffeine. A man with him, and a woman dressed in long art-department fabrics, a skirt and bohemian-print blouse. Her forehead wrinkles in concern as she removes a flyer for Swann Deligado's photography display from her handbag. Marcus shows no recognition. Her wrinkles deepen.

*Your photograph is all over this gallery, the woman says, as if you and the artist are lovers, as if you are his muse. I say this with an artist's eye.*

Marcus laughs. *A coincidence,* he dismisses the statement. *I have*

*a common face. Many men in this city share my features.*

*Do they share your office, she pries; do they sleep between your sheets?* The woman pauses. *I never knew you had your appendix out.*

*Who is this photographer,* Marcus asks. There is an increasing weariness to his voice.

The image of Marc's fresh worry embeds itself in the emulsion of Swann's film, in a camera not twenty feet away.

Swann keeps something else beneath his bed with the binder of 8 by 10's: a log-book, compulsively arranged, tracking the precise location, date, and minute of a given photograph. Also the settings of the light meter and f-stop number, for purely technical purposes. His filmstrips rest in a cardboard box beneath the book, similarly catalogued, with numbers scrawled along the spine of each page corresponding to various entries in both the notebook and binder. Swann could thus revisit the circumstances of a shot, a frame, a particular region that hung well in the light. Or, if he desired, he could locate the subject of a portrait: with the address in hand, it was only a matter of waiting, on a curb, bench, fire escape. Swann prides himself on his inexorable patience. He would sit through a century if it meant getting what he wants.

And he should be waiting still. He should be at the apartment, perched at the kitchen table or strewn across the bed. He should stay in the frame.

*But what if the shot has moved beyond the light? Chase after it, or anticipate its return?*

Ask Swann how he and Marcus met. Yes, ask him where they sipped appletinis together, or outside which Broadway theatre they lingered for autographs. Ask him how his love takes his coffee, what vitamins he

ingests each morning, what patch of scalp is going grey. He will answer without hesitation: black, Vitamin C, the front left corner closest to the part. It matters not which bits he knows from watching, which bits he knows from invention. So long as you never meet his Marcus, you will believe every word from Swann's mouth, every nuance of his partner's being rings human and true. So true that Swann himself believes it.

Red ballpoint stars dotted each "Marcus" entry. The first entry had three of them, one primary star and two satellites. Swann became prolific in those months, though Marc's images were something other than work. His hands yellowed from their time together in the darkroom.

Any copy center in Manhattan is able to transplant an image from an existing photograph onto a sheet of translucency plastic—the kind used for overhead projections and the like. Invert the image, and the translucency sheet becomes a surrogate negative. With a true negative in the carrier and the translucency sheet resting on the photo paper, Swann may sandwich two images, even when one photograph was never his. When this fails, a bootleg copy of Photoshop on his iMac serves to embellish his truth quite seamlessly.

He does not remember selling his photographs to pay the rent, begging his friends and past patrons to take a print or two. He does not remember lunching with his art dealer alone, or falling asleep those nights in the only warmth of imagined bedfellows. He cannot recall dialing telephone numbers from Marc's rolodex to hear the voices he must hear. And he certainly has no recollection of Marcus living in the Morton Street apartment, by himself. Before the place became *theirs*. He has no memory of watching the beautiful man pack his belongings in large cardboard crates and throw them quickly into the movers' trunk. Swann does not remember speaking

Vanish you demon of slumber  
Who feeds on the sandman after dark  
Devours the universe  
Perish to your void  
Far beneath the known depths of the earth  
Steal back your trinkets  
Of horrible creation  
Which have crept into the minds  
Of too many children  
Churning and transforming  
Their fantasies into nightmares  
Replenish those poor souls with fairy dust  
Before you are taken  
Into an eternity so dreadful  
You will never practice evil again  
Away you fall





Inhale deeply before  
The rain comes.  
A flood will pull  
you under soon.  
There is nothing  
waiting below this.



*byGinaBarricelli*

## It Seems

the distance is far  
it seems  
you're losing interest  
as time goes by  
it seems  
we talk so long  
yet the silence grows  
it seems  
that spark has died  
or maybe it never was  
it seems  
as though there's something wrong  
with what I say or do  
it seems  
as though you're looking past me  
past something you once believed in,  
dreamed about  
it seems  
maybe I am wrong  
about this, everything, and nothing at all  
us  
it seems  
no longer  
you  
I  
It seems

## The Most Beautiful Day

It was simply the most beautiful day of my life. Though time may take these moments from us, I knew this day would never fade. Greta knew the shoes didn't fit when she bought them, but to her, they were so beautiful that she just could not leave them behind.

"They'll fit. I know somehow, I can make them fit." Greta had a mind of her own, and if God loved her for nothing else, it was enough. She had everything one could ever want out of life; beauty, brains, money, but the things she treasured most came out of her soul like sunflowers. She just knew these shoes were special and no one could convince her otherwise.

I still remember the day I met Greta. We were both waiting for a train to come, when the sky opened and we had to run for cover. There was no station where we were, just a little awning for us to seek shelter under. We stood soaked to the bone and laughed. We started talking and I found out that she was on her way home from a honeymoon that ended bitterly in divorce. She had gone down to the pool in their resort only to discover she had left her sunglasses in her room. Upon returning, she found the door locked and a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the handle. As Greta told me this, she started laughing.

"How cliché! I guess that is just what you get for marrying money. I didn't expect him to remain faithful, but I never thought he would flaunt it in my face on our honeymoon."

We came from different classes in society. I, from a middle-class Polish family, and Greta from wealth. Her whole family had success with money, and she was certainly heiress to a few million. She had breeding, but she knew that breeding did not bring true class with it. Greta had everything she ever needed, but all that she wanted money could not buy.

Ever since that day, we were like sisters. I enjoyed her company, but I never felt completely comfortable in her social circles. Greta insisted on my presence, mainly because she claimed that the people and the parties were dull and boring, but I made it bearable. High society was like a masquerade ball. Everyone had to be seen in the latest fashion, say all the right things and be perfectly flawless. Greta had a mind of her own, but if she were ever to reveal it, she would immediately become an outcast. I think this was a great burden on her, and I became a kind of security blanket. She didn't feel so alone.

When she could get away from her life, she would go down to the Lower East Side of the city. There she helped everyone she could find, prostitutes, runaways, homeless people, everyone. She didn't just donate or offer money. She also gave her time, to help these people get out of the gutter and onto better lives. Many had kids that needed support, and work was hard to come by. She was able to give them their lives back.

Everyday I spent with Greta, I could feel myself becoming a better person. The day that we first met was on the anniversary of my husband's death. I was coming home from visiting his grave. Since his death, I lived a life of solitude, never really allowing myself to feel anything. Being around Greta and seeing her passion for life re-awakened my soul. She could have so easily led a meaningless life, like so many people who have money do. She never wanted that, she was called to be somewhere else.

"These shoes will come in handy, I know a young lady, who they will fit perfectly."  
And the shoes did fit.

Her ex-husband was a very unforgiving man. She had taken almost every penny from him in the divorce. Although, he deserved it, he did not see it that way. He knew about her fondness for charity, and he hired a man to pretend to be homeless. The man came to Greta and as it was predicted, she helped him. When the man got her alone, he raped and strangled her. Her shelter was closed down and it seemed like all the good she had ever done would be permanently wiped out. I suddenly felt like a little child, lost and alone when the light goes out.

The man who killed her confessed to the police and last I heard her ex-husband and her killer were serving hard time. Her money had been well protected in banks. Her will left fifty percent to the shelter, which was enough to start it back up again. The rest was left to me.

I gave my share to the shelter. I didn't want her money.

I went back to the train stop everyday, the one I met her at, and waited. I waited for it to pour. I waited for her to come. I waited for something. No one came for a very long time. One day a woman came and sat next to me. She asked me what train I was waiting for. I told her a random train, not wanting to sound like an idiot. It happened to be the same one that she was waiting for. She began to tell me how excited she was. She was going to her first day at a new job. She told me that just a few months ago, it had seemed so hopeless that she'd ever find a job. Now she had her dream job and with it she could support herself and her son. As she spoke, I noticed her shoes. I almost fell over in shock. They were the same shoes that Greta had picked out that day; the shoes that would fit someone else perfectly. Greta had helped this woman get back on her feet with a new job and a new pair of shoes. I was about

to ask her if she knew Greta, when she said to me.

“You know, it’s funny. You have the look of someone who has been saved from a death sentence or something. It’s a nice thing, being brought back. You have the same light in your eyes that is so rare. I’ve only seen it once before, in the woman who gave me back my life.” All I could do was smile at her. I thought to myself, ‘She gave me my life back too.’

Just Me

Me

Posing as "The Dark Queen":  
silky strands of espresso hair  
spilling into enigmatic weary eyes  
pouty lips pursed in a frown  
the curves of a slim compact body;  
and everyone can't help but notice her  
as she slides past them in a shroud of sensuality,  
on an imaginary red carpet of ice.

Me

Posing as "The Motivational Marauder":  
esteemed super hero extraordinaire  
powers include possession of positivism  
for defeating self-esteem demons  
and battering broken heart beasts;  
and everyone can't help but notice her  
as she soars past them swifter than the speed of light,  
unwavering conviction in her character.

Me

Posing as "The Sultry Siren":  
smoky late night club scene stage  
mournful melodies fill their minds  
and crooned chromatics give them chills  
as velvety vocals linger on;  
and everyone can't help but notice her  
as she resonates past them in a rapture of rhythm,  
an explosion of electricity.

Me

Just Me:

not a cause for immediate infatuation  
nor a divine aptitude to aid others in need  
content with mediocre musical dreams  
anything more is not attainable;  
and everyone can't help but ignore her  
as she falls behind them forgotten,  
afraid to appear more than an apparition.





Tears Flow Again at 9/11 Tributes

Violence  
Bent steel

Pieces,  
Belt buckles badges  
Seventy-eighth floor decal  
Observation deck memorabilia  
Badge 10-4-5-6-7 - Smith  
Fitzgerald identification cards

Objects  
With no owners.

Like twins separated at birth  
There is an unnatural uneasiness  
An unspoken vacancy  
An unsettled account

Disbelief remains  
Even though remains do not

I'm sitting in my bed, trying to figure it all out, but so many thoughts are racing through my mind, that I cannot settle on one.

Of course, to help me sleep, I think of them, the guys of my life. I see them as they are and dream of relationships and depths of love and passion that never really existed between them and I. and somehow these concocted romances comfort me and eventually lull me to sleep.

But, tonight, much like others I've had in the past, I cannot get past the images and memories of them as we were united.

It startles me to realize that in every one of these escapades, I initiated it, implying that it wasn't my attractiveness or skills of attraction that lured them into the depths of me, but rather my persistent, insistence and "lush-like" qualities at that particular moment.

The girls, say that though guys are willing to sleep with *any* girl, they still have *standards*. Therefore, if I've been lucky enough to score, with the not so dreamy, basketball "star," then it is more of a reflection of some special skill or trait that I possess.

Of course, I went along with this self-gratifying theory until I really thought about it. It was then, or rather this evening in the throws of half-sleep, that oh so sensitive state, that is immediately lost when a truly perplexing thought or an epiphany arises, that I realized the real truth of their theory.

I did possess something *special*, but it wasn't due to my attractive *assets*. Guys, understand the language of lush; they see the loose and unusually sensual grind of her hips as she gyrates to the music, they see the plastic smile just below her eyes, which are opened just wide enough to whisper "come hither and fuck me now" and, when she finally approaches them for a dance or to make "the arrangements", they can faintly smell and almost taste all the alcohol that lies along her face and arms as microscopic beads of sweat. Guys understand that *this* girl is so drunk that tonight, anything he wants, however he wants it and wherever he wants it, she will fervently acquiesce to.

Tonight, I realized that my sole captivating enticement is myself in a lush state, supremely drunk and jones-ing for a good fuck.

byBridgitTai

## Parallel

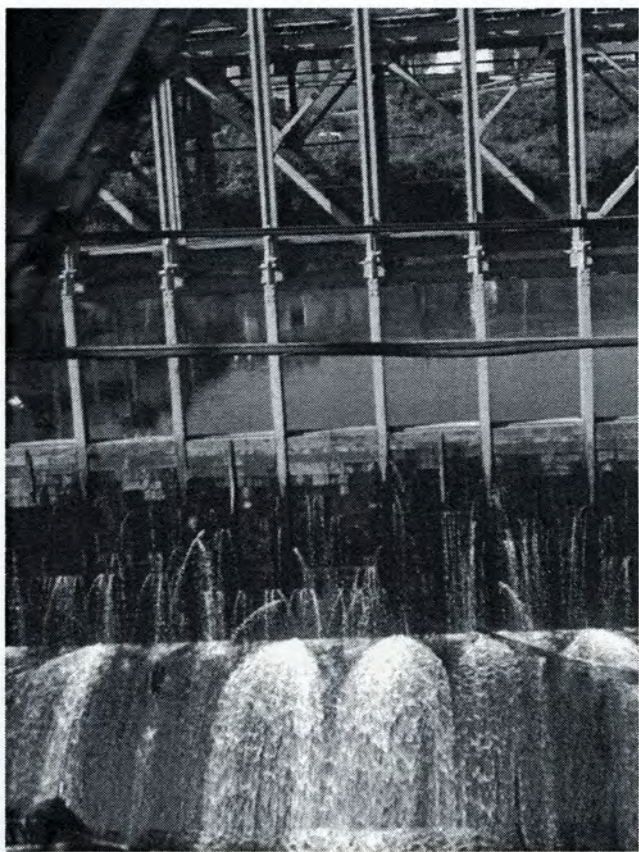
Two Paths run parallel through the wood.  
Both go to places unknown,  
Their origins and ends not shown,  
Which makes many a man say it should,  
But, that man knows it never could.

“Fate shows all!” many men do say.  
That these two paths will blend together,  
Staying as one, a union forever.  
Oh, what a wondrous, joyful day!  
A day when parallel paths no longer stray!

Alas, this joining is not meant to be  
For nature has made it so.  
Destiny dictates each path’s flow  
One must be separate and free  
Without a bond or security.

For these paths belong side by side.  
Never touching; never straying;  
Never showing a hint of fraying.  
One can watch them with time to bide,  
But, they are meant to mirror each other’s glide.

So, my love, all I can say to thee,  
With all the passion I can give,  
With every moment in which I live.  
Your path is too far for me to see  
And will stay that way for all eternity.



## Marie

Welcome to my office,

Herald is it? I'm the director at this ward, I've been here since 1978. It's really been a wonderful quaint place for most of my tenure, but about eight years ago she showed up. Marie. Fifth floor. Room 5.27.

But you know all about our rules here, Herald.

Everyone is assigned to a floor; everyone is supposed to remain on his or her floor. We have very specific reasons for this.

The floors are segregated; each floor has different types of patients and as such the people assigned to work on each floor were deemed to be best suited to work and aid there.

You are assigned to floor two, but the other day you were up on floor four, when there was situation.

You came to the aid of your co-workers on floor four, and for this I commend you, but Herald, we have rules here.

You are supposed to remain on your floor under all circumstances, unless you are cleared for the other floors. You see this rule is for everyone's protection more than anything else. All employees are to stay on their designated floors.

And never go to floor five.

Floor five has its own special team, and no one is allowed on floor

Five, except for people specifically cleared for floor five. There are very good reasons Herald.

Do you understand this Herald? The reasons are beyond your wildest dreams.

You see Herald floor five is Marie's floor.

Room 5.27 is Marie's room.

Of the team on floor five only specially cleared people can go to Room 5.27.

There are reasons. You see Herald, Marie is an extraordinary

case. She came to us eight years ago and since then she has shown us things we never imagined.

Everyone on the fifth floor walks on eggshells Herald. For fear of rousing Marie.

You see when she first came she had obviously lost her grasp on reality. She would describe half formed paranoid delusions and make bizarre predictions about the future.

It was round her third week here when Terry first met her. He dropped off breakfast to Marie's room.

When he got there she was waiting with her eyes rolled in the back of her head and all she said to him was Canadian birds. Two months later while flying up to Canada for a fishing trip with his younger brother, Terry's plane went down because three of the engines were destroyed by a massive bird migration.

Shortly thereafter most of

Floor five

began calling out sick at a fairly consistent rate. It became apparent that none of the attendants wanted to go anywhere near the fabulous Marie.

About a month after that Marie used her skills to inform us about a gas leak in the building. It wasn't soon after the gas leak that people began coming up to me to speak about Marie.

Some people were beginning to believe she had a gift, something that made her beyond us all. Of course they all still feared her, but can you blame them?

The question of whether Marie is truly rambling and babbling incoherently or actually making some sort of predictions based on visions is almost moot. But of course as the director I am privy to much more information on Marie than most of the other members of the ward.

Marie is in my professional opinion completely insane.

It has become painfully obvious that she did at some point have a gift of sorts, but it appears that she has lost all control that she previously had over herself and her gift. Untangling her true psychic visions from her paranoid delusions is utterly impossible.

Just ask Alice. I believe you know her Herald.

Floor four, room 4.19.

She's the one who caused the outbreak you helped quell.

You remember; the woman who had managed to steal a comb and had used it (over what must have been hours) to tear her wrists open.

Remember yesterday?

Remember her?

They opened her door, to bring her out to the game room. She comes flying out with all that blood, screaming in the game room. The blood was everywhere. It caused a mock riot that you and two other attendants were able to end before it got out of control.

Ms. Alice was actually an attendant before she was a patient here; it was quite a smooth transition actually. Alice was a floor two aid. It was about three months after the Terry incident and although the attendants on floor five had started to calm down, there was still no one who would deal with her.

Alice volunteered to start taking Marie her meals. Alice didn't believe most of the rumors she had heard. When Alice arrived at room 5.27, Marie

was already sitting in the corner with her eyes rolled in the back of her head, and she had also used her fingernails to tears at her palms; we keep those trimmed now. No one knows what Marie said to Alice, but Alice started calling out.

Eleven days later Alice went back to

Marie's room. For the following three days she locked herself in a janitorial closet down the hall from

Marie's room.

Like I said, it was a relatively seamless transition from employee to patient. No need to bring outside authorities in. Outside authorities might want

to take

Marie

and study her at some big fancy federal facility and I just could not take that. I don't know what I would do without my

Marie.

She's quite special. And in all these years she's never even said a word to me. Everyone else tells me that even being in the same room with her is extremely trying. It's not just the way she acts, they say, but the aura around her that pollutes the environment with, thus making everything around her a sick and demented version of is former self. The eeriness and horror of it is too much for most to bear, I suppose. But it's not trying for me. It's as calming as a summer sunset. She causes a profound peace for me, Herald.

Something I've never felt before in all my tenure at this facility. Or even in my entire life. I feel very dearly for this calm, this inner peace. I feel very dearly for our gifted

Miss Marie. I think I have come to love her, Herald.

Sometimes she even allows me to hold her hand. These times are truly magical. I'm filled with an exquisite electricity that courses through the ends of my body. This wonderful feeling is indescribable. It isn't parallel to anything in this world. It moves through me. It fills me. It's something I cannot live without at this point. It's something I would die for.

I'm not going to allow anyone to take that peace away from me. I'm not going to allow anyone to take Marie away from me. I will not allow the magic she brings me, to end or to be taken away.

She is precious.

She is perfection.

She is my everything, Herald.

I need her. I need her to survive. Without her I am nothing.

Without Marie I am empty.

I will die without her, Herald.

Now Herald, you broke one of the basic rules of this institution. This rule was only created for your protection. These rules keep the ward together Herald. Without them Herald, it would all fall apart. It's time to go Herald.

Floor five, room 5.27.

My precious Marie has been waiting far too long.





*byBeckyCrispi*

*Excerpts from Graves*

I would never forget the day he saved my life. Old Miller's pit bull: the dog hated anything. Every time we went to that junkyard, it would drool, snarl and spit, but he never barked. He eyes always stuck on me. His rusty collar still showed the name Jasper, and I always knew that half rotted fence wouldn't hold him.

It was almost as if premeditated. The next to last day before school was out, Jasper went for it. He snapped the fence and came straight for me. I could feel his paws trample the ground. Scabs caught attention, and unturned by the excitement, found the nearest weapon to him; an extremely vicious chunk of granite. He intercepted Jasper with a perfect tackle. He hurled his rock-heavy hand at that poor dog as if forcing out, bit-by-bit, little pieces of life. After the first few blows Jasper turned, and caught him off guard. Now grounded down but still ferocious, Scabs continued pounding. He turned the beast over and pinned the rock into his underbelly. Jasper yelped and begged for it to stop. He sounded so innocent then Scabs had no mercy; striking as if molding steel, he forced that poor-purebred into a comma. Blood spurted to his face, clotted in the dusty ground, and stained his jeans. Jasper was cut in every crease in his skull, and in those soft spots of the belly; he tried to give up.

Miller's junkyard was quiet after that. Jasper was curled up to his house of wood and hubcaps; his fur was stuck together in blotches of dry blood. Scab's favorite and only pair of jeans became a trophy. The fluid of battle had made its mark. He had no regrets, and after that day we didn't call him Mikey anymore. Jasper couldn't move. He lay silent by his house—dying probably.

\*\*\*

I was starting to get nervous as we approached the last house on the street. I didn't know what to expect, or what to even

look for. We made it to the last bend in the road, and the sign was right there – Dead End. The road came to a full stop, and all I could see were hoards of bushes around a giant weeping willow.

“I told you Boss,” Scabs said with a cavern in his smile.

“Now what!” Theo was about to cringe in laughter.

I couldn't force my self to turn a round, and face the ridicule of my friends. It's not a good feeling when members of the lower food chain have good reason to crack on you. I looked everywhere for some path, a divergent road, something. The blowing branches of that willow kept distracting me. There had to be another sign, not for the road; there had to be one for me. I began to give in, convincing myself that this whole idea was just false hope, and then I remember the wind — stopping. I couldn't hear anything, and I had this awkward tingling in the back of my head. The willow tree branches fell all at once just brushing the road. As they settled I saw a space just big enough to fit through, where two branches had twined together. It was a curtain opening, or the slip of a dress she's wearing when you realize you wouldn't spend your life with any other. This had to be it.

“Yo, Where's he going,” Theo said.

“Uh, I dunno ... C-mon lets go.”

The soft vines of the willow tickled me, touching my ear as I walked through. It was hard to see at first, but I immediately felt air hit the sweat on my neck. I took a few steps, and as my eyes adjusted I saw a clearing. It was overgrown, but certainly visible. There was a path that looked as if it only used by a handful of souls. I stopped for a moment to think; I couldn't think at all.

## Pressure Drop

pressure  
constantly spewing forth  
surrounding us  
shaping us  
yielding us  
forcing is its ways  
in school, at work, with a partner  
our schedules  
our everyday lives  
for those you handle this stress,  
overcoming the pressure  
proves many times to be rewarding  
for those who become a victim,  
devoured by it  
becoming a dictator  
of a whole new world of evolution  
a new process in mind  
which transfers to the body  
pressure builds  
pressure rules  
pressure is

## Odysseus and Penelope

When I think about  
Me & You; Baby  
I don't think in  
The vulgarities and vernaculars  
Of hip-hoppers and ballers  
I think in like terms,  
Like,  
Odysseus and Penelope  
Apart He crush man and monster  
While  
She crushed man and heart  
Together  
They bent time and space  
Not even thos Roman-Greeco Polythestic gods  
With all their suave and prestiege  
And all that jive on Olympos  
Could hold Them back  
.....hold Them down  
And; once They were together  
The gods were bent to Their will  
Their fate  
20 skant years,  
With their power tremendous power,  
Was all the gods could muster  
Barely 1/3 of a life  
The other 2/3 went to  
Ody and Pel  
Victors  
In mind and love

## Zookeeper

“The man” does not want minorities to rise and that is why we get shitty deals. Why does it feel as though we all live in the same places...as though we all share the same experiences? Because we do; much in the same way animals are kept in a zoo we are all kept in “locations”: Bushwick, Corona, Harlem, Washington Heights, University Heights, Bed Stuy, Flatbush, Jamaica, Brownsville, EAST NEW YORK...nothing changes, not even the scenery. We are the minorities, and our neighborhoods are filled with signs that read, “please do not feed or pet these animals, they are vicious and spread disease,” signs that keep our subway platforms in constant demise and make old ladies clutch their bags when they walk by. Our buildings have asbestos, chipped paint and dirty walls line the hallways. Cracked glass is a hallmark of our entrance doors. There is always a drunk somewhere near our block...you know his name; he hangs out with the kid who makes the block hot. Yeah, we are minorities and that means we do not deserve to live with decency and so our landlords are never forced to fix the walls or the doors or the leaky faucet your family has written complaint letters about. Not to mention, the fact that the lock to the entrance door keeps jamming and the buzzers to most apartments do not work, but that must be because they figure we’ll just holler at them from the street. YO SHORTYYY buzz me up. I suppose it’s ok though because we’re just animals. That must be why in a city full of money, in a country that boasts to be one of the richest, they throw us all into the same schools. Overcrowded schools, dangerous schools, fund-lacking schools, bad schools for bad kids of bad races. They call us names behind our backs- spic bitch, dumb nigger, stupid chink, poor white trash (yeah “the man” talks trash about people he feels are like us...I know this for a fact because at one point I pretended to belong to club “the man.” How easily I camouflaged myself into their crowd, trying to be what I wasn’t, rejecting myself by refusing to admit I really was who I really was. Until, it got so bad that I forgot who I was and walked around speaking in tongues and then I realized what an animal I really was. I alone became a statistic. I alone became what they said I would, and I alone did it to myself.

You’re building sucks and so does your block...stop throwing trash on the ground and boycott your landlord. Your school is overcrowded and

dangerous...so what, so is your block, but you still live there and hang out there. So stop using that as a cop out. STOP being "the man's" animals and rid yourselves of the title "minority" because we are not that and I can back that up with our constitution: all men are created equal...nothing said about minors or majors...and you can blame "the man" all you want. I would agree with you 100%. I hate him too, but in the end the choices are your own and so is the fault. We are here for a reason, start representing.

Note to "the man:"

I thought it would be nice to remind you of the achievements our people have attained, for you to leaf through the next time you feel like labeling us as drug dealing, splif smoking, gang banging, welfare collecting dropouts:

Luis Llorens Torres (Writer), Frida Kahlo (Painter), Ernesto "Che" Guevara (Social Activist, Revolutionary), Luis Yordán Davila (Mayor), Ellen Ochoa (Astronaut), The Mirabel sisters (Female Revolutionaries), Ralph Abernathy (Social Reformer), Hank Aaron (Athlete), Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (you name it, he was it), Rosa Parks (Female Revolutionary), Benjamin Banneker (Scientist), Maya Angelou (Poet), Michelle Malkin (Journalist), Ben Cayetano (Governor), Ellison Onizuka (Astronaut), Eileen Chang (Writer), Judge Herbert Choy, and Margaret Cho (Comedian).

## And Then She Smiles

She dreams:

The wings on her face lie still  
Strands of golden floss feather  
Over soft curves of silk  
Mountains formed with rose blushed fields  
Slowly rising and falling are her features

She waits:

A soft purr escapes  
From a cavern deep within  
Out between perked and glossy perfection  
Yearning to be complete

She wakes:

Tiny butterfly wings flutter  
A heavy breath swirls through the air  
The golden floss slips away  
Exposed are her perfect lips

She smiles:

Orbs shine a brilliant blue  
Precious jewels dazzle angels who watch  
I try to steal them  
Her lips caress mine  
We are completed



Literary Arts Society  
1<sup>st</sup> Annual  
Red Fox Poetry Slam  
Winners

## Rebellion

*By Matthew Williams*

Deception of the American Flag

Is like a plastic bag

Pulled over the heads of Americans

Unless we agree to follow the rules of a government

Made to help prosper itself and not the people it represents

Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness never applied to me

Life, poverty, and the route to an escape from the stereotypes of a black ghetto youth

A route I've not yet found

Seem to be my God given rights

In the constitution it states:

I have the right to live in poverty

I have the right for the cops to knock at my door and bother me.

I have the right to a shitty education in a school with too many students in one room and not enough teachers

I have the right to be discriminated against

I have the right to be robbed, not only by the man trying to better his life by putting the gun to my head, but by the government that taxes my minimum wage so much, that working 3 jobs still ain't enough

I have the right not to speak my mind

I have the right to live in a shit poor neighborhood in broken down apartments

Where rats and roaches become my enemies b/c we all fight for the same plate of food

I have the right not to dream of something better

Unless that dream is the American dream

Where that deceptive flag hangs over a house with a white picket fence

A dream I will never dream

b/c I am awakened by the stench of gun powder from guns that ring thru the night

from the smell of decaying bodies of those that no longer value life.

From the sound of mothers crying for their sons who have been deceived into fighting for a

flag that sends them to a death

The same flag that flaps in the wind from the screams of those trying to find their way out from the darkness and to freedom

Freedom that this so called flag promises!!

Let Freedom Reign!!!

Let freedom rain like the tear drops of mothers whose sons turn to violence and gangs  
That this flag provides...free of charge

Let the tears become a body of water that drowns out the sounds of agony and pain  
That escape the hearts of those that suffer from the belief that this American flag provides  
them freedom they can't get any place else.

And as our screams become yells

We will stand and demand

Until they begin to understand

Rebellion is at hand

And we've done it before...remember

Ya opened hoses and let dogs rip at our clothes

We've felt 40 shorts from 3 glocks held by 3 cops

We've been fucked in the ass by plungers and the government

In the past we've been dragged behind trucks and put in body bags

We've been beaten, stabbed and laughed at

...all that for a deceptive flag?

fuck that I'll give you my middle finger first before I stand and salute deception  
of a nation that gives me the shortest month for the celebration  
of my history

which just put my ancestors thru misery

betta yet let that lie be stomped and trampled apon

let it be grinned into the ghettos dirt

where it lays next to the blood of a thousand ghetto soldiers, drug dealers, gang members,

hoes, crack heads, feins, bums, mothers, fathers, son's and daughters

all those that have shed blood

looking for freedom,

looking for truth,

looking for a betta life

Let the truth awaken all like the cry of a 14yr old mothers baby

Let it be like the cold steel of a knife the cuts the vein of the person no longer willing

Too stand under a deceptive flag

Let the truth be like a bad dream

That wakes you up in a cold swear and with a scream

Let it be like this poets spoken word  
Manipulating ur thoughts and opening your eyes  
To the truth you just heard  
Realizing all they ever told you were lies  
Betta known as deception  
Or how I like to put it  
A bunch of sugar coated bullshit

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Beyond

*By Brianne Bendit*

## **Beyond...**

We all experience life through our senses...  
Use the past to determine our future defenses  
When to put up fences  
When to let others in and when to cast others out  
With our pretenses  
But what is the sense of sensibility  
If we are not free  
To truly see  
Reality?

Not the commotion of our motions that take on our devotions to this world in  
front of us  
Focus on the world beyond  
Out of the box  
Beyond the Marist Red Fox  
Into our hands  
And hung in the sky  
Onto a plane that's insane with the train of thoughts  
Where my mind flies  
Restless, to grasp  
The bigger picture  
The meaning of my signature  
Written everywhere as a declaration that

**I am here!**

**I exist!**

But why?

You can't feel that  
You can't see or taste or hear that  
But listen closely  
Try to perceive  
That we exist for a reason beyond the reasoning  
**we are bred to believe**  
**Beyond what we are forced to conceive**  
**Beyond the myth of original sin**  
**Beyond to where your story begins**  
**Where you make a difference**

**I make a difference**

**Because my insight goes beyond and beyond and beyond what your eyes see**  
**I see the mystery**  
**Like Nancy Drew or Scooby Doo**  
Hot on the trail of a clue  
To unveil the criminal mastermind  
Take off the mask and the subliminal message you'll find  
Is that this adversary  
Is technology

It's the power **this artificial intelligence has over us**  
 Where nobody **appreciates the stars**  
 But drives cars to bars to form **emotional scars of night's** lived with regret  
 And yet...

The beautiful world is **F**orgotten

People drugged up on **adderall and anti-depressants**  
 Trying to think **under the hot stare of fluorescents**  
 Learning everything except **life's lessons.**

Look out your **window**  
 Put down the **Nintendo**  
 Do you see that **river?**  
 Close your **eyes.**

Let it seep through your skin and flow through your veins until your soul is  
 saturated with its beauty... its determination... its truth... its life.  
 Open your eyes.

*You have been enlightened.*

Learn from Plato's cave where men liked to behave like slaves  
 Chained to a wall of lies believing the shadows passing by  
 And preferring to live in the dark of their minds  
 Afraid to step out and make their mark  
 Afraid of what they may find  
 Because they lost the spark  
 for knowledge  
 That I advise you all seek beyond the walls of this college  
 Here's some food for thought  
 Ignore what you are taught

**STOP** doing what you're told!

Take off the **blindfold**  
 Step into the **light**  
 Do you see **what I see?**

A place you can't **sense but you can feel**  
 And that feeling **makes it real**  
 Because you believe  
 Beyond the church **bells, of heavens and hells** sinking religions into wells  
 that are full **contradiction**  
 My prediction  
 is that nothing is **pure or sure**  
 Everything is **devised to lure you**  
 In to this deceit  
 The rules of **society and schools that show you** what tools to use to function  
 you must defeat  
**Beyond** and **beyond** and **beyond** our own minds...

To the feeling **within**  
 Where feeling **begins**  
 Where the truth lies **beyond the lies of those** keeping you from yourself

The truth in your **soul**  
 Where you are in **control**  
 No matter the **purpose**  
 No matter the **plan**  
 No matter if you're **a woman or if you're a man**  
 No matter what your **ability**  
 In this philosophy **you can**

Un-der-stand

That you must  
 Develop a **lust**  
 For the **spirituality**  
 That exists inside **all of us**  
 Whether you believe **in destiny or**  
 dust to dust.  
 All I want you to **see...**

Is that your **free will,**  
**Will** set you **Free.**

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize 104

Untitled

*By Francis DeBettencourt*

Not that my love was ravaged,  
but it was disheartened by lots and lots of fun  
Splashing around like fools in a mucky tub spreading the herps.  
Jump on levels and fringe about like rats in a sinking ship having a blast cuz all the  
Humans spilt their food on the ground when they left in panic.  
How obvious the sun god said to us,  
“You’d think they’d know to pray to me, they spin around me,  
I’m kind of important.”  
Disregard that but take the surprise  
And ask how we fill our cars up with oil.  
Frolic no more Dave said in a giant roar of remorseful rage.  
He wanted it to didn’t happen like he would throw bo’s.  
I wish Socrates had argued with Jesus.  
In a joke full of cran-bitter spit,  
I jumped on the first 7 that came my way and rode it to heaven.  
Six leagues behind me under condensation  
The frivolous chattering of old sharp teeth  
Rang through my dehydrated spine and out my ears  
When my fingers gripped my walking staff.  
With my left hand I reached back and pulled my hood over my head.  
Demons like dogs in a ghostly desperation ran around the forests,  
Appearing only for seconds before ripped back  
I sit back to realize,  
Everyone went away he kept saying to himself.  
Myopia built my telescope but I missed the meteorite.  
In my georges borgous horges of floor wood  
Fell atop the stairs to the stars sliced far back onto my lap for me to play with.



Everything sucks and your mom gives you bad advice.  
 Break the walls down  
 Then build them back up with the power to block out more voices.  
 Unrusted or rusted unrusted or rusted unrusted or rusted  
 I busted them both  
 And grabbed the loot from the rusted one like I must've been told.  
 Is language the only difference between mind and soul?

In a dark alleyway  
     Without much of a peep  
         From the grey bearded old sailor  
             Who likes to lay in a hobo heap  
                 Under the cardboard  
                     Water trickled down  
                         The thirsty thirsty drain  
                             To the back crack of the earth  
                                 And slipped into its ass  
                                     Like a sneeze  
   On the back of your neck  
   Like water on cracked hands

I shit my pants  
 When Dave treaded his nails  
     Across the blackboard  
         Taken down with misplaced racist angst  
             Using the last checks in the book bought from their hunger.

