

# HOWL

2011  
Volume XV

A Literary Magazine Produced By the Students of Copper Mountain College



## **Acknowledgements:**

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**Faculty Co-Advisor:** Richard Sanchez

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Crystal Langer

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## Faculty Advisor Letter

(A Brief History of *Howl*)

Fifteen editions of *Howl* is a personal cause for celebration as I prepare to retire this June. What a debt of gratitude I feel to all of those who have made this magazine possible! *Howl* has been a labor of volunteerism. From the first meetings in 1995 when CMC's Librarian, Carolyn Hopkins, named the magazine and Dena Gast agreed to be its first student editor, ably assisted by student Cathy Enscoe (then Cathy Baker). Their first cover, a human figure howling against a full moon, by artist Djuana Patterson, set a tone of eye catching originality for our covers.

After the runaway triumph of our first issue, Dena and Cathy decided to do it again and oversaw the completion of the second *Howl*. The third *Howl* was the responsibility of Charlene Naylor, who now lives, writes, and works with indigenous populations in Australia. Steve Rilley took the helm for the next three editions. Sadly, Steve recently passed away, but his humility and dedication to CMC and *Howl* enriched all of our lives. Donald Wyatt served as editor in 2003, 2004, and 2006 and oversaw a redesign of the magazine to pocketbook size. Donald and his wife, Cathy, reside today on a farm in Idaho where, never one to allow his wheelchair to limit his mobility, Donald tends an acre of garden and repairs John Deere tractors – when he's not writing or putting up preserves. In 2005, Cyndera Quackenbush took the top spot. In her student editor letter she thanked her late father, Jim Quackenbush, whose scientific endeavors included a study of rare and ancient stones. An image from one of his 1.7 billion year old stones graced the magazine's cover. Today, Cyndera has a graduate degree from Pacifica, her thesis: *The Imaginal Stone: Stories of Self and World*. In 2007 and 2008, *Howl* was a communal effort whose teams were comprised of Gloria White, Katherine Roberts, Savya Lee, Carolyn Eads, Tracey Smart and Trent Taylor. In 2009 our editor was Ivone Alexandre, presently earning her degree in film studies at UC Irvine. And in 2010 our editor was Tunisia Dorionne, a writer and illustrator whose work was selected for the 2010 *Howl* cover.

This year, my thanks go to *Howl's* Co-Advisor. For two years in a row, Richard Sanchez, a writer and teacher, has played a vital role in the formation of our magazine. Thank you also to our Student Editor, Joseph Briggs, for his insightful readings, to Emlee Lotspeich for a wonderful cover, and to our production staff for all of the editing, late nights, Saturdays, and good humor: Kristin Goldsborough, Crystal Langer, Alexandra Sherman, and Eddie Whitaker.

I think of those individuals with whom I've worked over the years, of those who have passed away, like Steven Rilley, Marilyn Spiller, and Donald Sachs, and those who are still with us and have earned additional degrees and, in some

instances, become published writers, like Nathan McClain – and those who are now teachers, like Richard Sanchez, my co-advisor, and I am humbled that people such as these have stopped along the way to lend their talents to our magazine.

I also want to take note of our *Howl* Writing Challenge winners: David Falossi, Jyoti Jennings, Joanna Montano, Cyndera Quackenbush, James Darin Rich, Tracey Smart, Lauren Yanofchick, Lisa Murphy, Nathan McClain, Shannon Bryce Rumsey, Angelica Stoddard, Sean Blau, Tunisia Dorionne (Pi D-vo), Mandilyn McGowen, Ivone Alexandre, Reilly Powell, Adam Petke, and Michael Tabor. Recipients for 2010 appear later in this edition. Congratulations to all!

The collegiate experience transcends that of the classroom. It is an amalgamation of classes, homework, and campus life – the clubs, honor societies, and even the pages of a little literary magazine all lend themselves to a fuller sense of what is possible. For all of the years of reading, editing, selecting, formatting, publishing, and celebrating, thank you all! And thank you, in particular, to the Copper Mountain College Foundation for providing *Howl* as a gift to our community for a decade-and-a-half. Thank you for financing the *Howl* Writing Challenge awards and all of the readings and celebrations.

Sincerely,  
Greg Gilbert

## **Student Editor Letter**

Dear Reader:

The following publication represents both the greatest desire and greatest fear of any aspiring writer, author, or poet: To have one's work actually published.

Likely, all of the works written for this edition of *Howl* were done under the premise that writers write so that readers read. However, it takes a leap of faith in order to take a poem or short story out from its place, buried in a hard drive or written in a notebook and allow it to see the light of day, that it'll be written in black and white for anybody to scrutinize or criticize. It is hoped, though, that seeing his or her work and name printed in a publication will give writers or poets the confidence and courage to continue to find their own voice and perfect their talents.

Much work has gone into the preparation of this book by both authors and editors. The student staff as a whole hopes that all will enjoy.

Joseph Briggs

## Faculty Co-Advisor Letter

This issue marks a very impressive milestone. For fifteen years, *Howl* has provided a community for desert writers, poets, artists, students, faculty, alumni, and those who have no direct connection to our institution yet are nonetheless part of our collective, such as non-local writers and artists, and of course our readers—those who simply appreciate the written word. *Howl* provides artists with an audience, and that is a great gift; what are writers without readers, after all? What is art without an eye to behold it? Every year, those who have helped create the magazine in one form or another gather at the *Howl* party and reading, to see the finished product for the first time, and to hear its authors read their work. These events are a source of pride and fond memories for me as I look back, recalling those I attended as contributor and those I attend now as advisor.

A decade-and-a-half of uninterrupted publishing is an impressive run for any literary magazine, but especially for one of such humble origins. The magazine you hold in your hands – and the fourteen volumes that came before it – is a work of constant reinvention. *Howl* is reborn with every issue compiled, edited, and designed by an ever-changing yet steadfast group of passionate students, each of whom believe their role as caretaker of the written word is an endeavor worthy of their tireless efforts. The fruits of those labors may have never come to be, however, if not for the hard work and dedication of Professor Greg Gilbert. *Howl* is his brainchild, his passion, and the community that has emerged from it, the creative outlet it has provided, and the opportunities bestowed upon both its writers and its readers are his gifts to us.

Over the years, the magazine has evolved in terms of scope and theme, but its missions of community, creativity and opportunity have never wavered. These are things worth investing in, and things worth fighting for. *Howl* should not be allowed to flounder on the basis of financial concerns or changes in establishment. It is now an institution, fifteen years strong, and its endurance is crucial to the life of the community it has created. I am immoderately grateful to the Copper Mountain College Foundation for their contributions that have made this all possible, and I look to the future with hope that they continue to view *Howl* as worth their investment. There are those within this CMC community, myself included, who would appreciate nothing more than the chance to carry on this fine tradition.

Here's to fifteen more years, and fifteen more issues.

Sincerely,  
Richard Sanchez

# HOWL'S

## 2010 Writing Challenge Winners

- **Nicole Sanchez**, Poetry 1<sup>st</sup> Prize:  
“(For Lee)”
- **Shannon B. Rumsey**, Poetry 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize  
“Iceland”
- **Rebekah Douglas**, Short Story 1<sup>st</sup> Prize  
“The Homework Battle”
- **Dustin Kronemeyer**, Short Story 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize  
“While I Think”

## Congratulations to you all!

### Sponsorship

*Howl* Writing Challenges Awards and Publication are a result of the generous financial support of the Copper Mountain College Foundation/Alumni Association

## Japanese Haiku

by Lexy Sherman

初に晩  
 花火の海や  
 生きる空

初に晩  
 ha-tsu-ni-ba-n  
 The first night,

花火の海や  
 ha-na-bi-no-u-ma-ya  
 a sea of fire flowers.

生きる空  
 i-ki-ru-so-ra  
 The sky is alive.

*Translation/Haiku Notes:*

*Japanese is a pictorial language, meaning it uses representative symbols to convey sounds. Due to this, Haikus are fun to read and write in Japanese because you can draw a picture with the words you use as well as their meanings. An example of this can be found in the combined meanings of 花 and 火. By themselves they mean fire and flower, but combined they mean fireworks. Other subtleties can be found in the characters themselves. One example is 海, which means sea, but if broken down the “radicals” or picture bases of it are “water,” and “mother.” A great haiku writer is aware of both the literal and pictorial elements of their writings, so they create art on many different levels.*

## All the Star-Sown Sky

by Angelica Stoddard

If you were to search the university of Berkeley's website in the year 2079, you would find pages listing the traditional academic disciplines, among them English, Math, Biology, History and Rhetoric. The site would sing and sigh and smell faintly of cool sea breezes to you, thanks to the neural-connective technology embedded in all modern web browsers. Faculty and photogenic undergraduates in school sweaters would move—smiling, waving, chatting amongst themselves as they bask in the carefully orchestrated idyll of enriching campus life the school would like to create for prospective students—reminding you of the moving photographs in Harry Potter. In 2079, Harry Potter is taught by the English department in all seriousness as a classic fantasy. Professors have made careers out of scholarship on the symbolism of the killing curse and *wingardium leviosa!*

If you look further, you'll find a neat little website for the Department of Temporal Anthropology. Thoughtful moving staff images greet you as you enter, and the scent of the place is something like sage. Standing astride the fields of Temporal Mechanics and Anthropology, this new discipline developed soon after the first recording instruments were successfully sent into the distant past and retrieved. The website's content is created by enthusiastic grad students. Tim Makutsi is doing his master's thesis work on myths of pre-history from a period thirty-five thousand years ago. Aided by sophisticated translation equipment, he painstakingly listens to recordings taken of hunter-gatherer groups. He listens to many hours of lovemaking, arguments, inane chit-chat and vain boasting before he finds the stories that are so precious to him. He has posted a translation of his favorite story on the website for free.

"[The constellation] Laekame lies high in the western sky," his translation begins. "It is a miraculous tree which is forever producing rich, sweet fruit." Here the text is accented by the scent of apples and pears through the neural-connective circuits. "There's no need to wait for it to mature; it grows overnight. Each star shining in the branches is a ripe fruit, so large and so perfect that one piece can satisfy a man so he is not hungry for days, and a single slice can feed a child for a whole day. The sun rises and shines on the branches of the tree every day and by the evening, as the stars come out, the fruit has grown anew."

"Laekame is farther away than any person can walk. You have to have wings to get there, and even the smaller birds grow tired if they try to fly so far. The people who live there don't know the blessings they have; they've never seen a tree that didn't produce new fruit every night. They are never hungry; they don't even know what hunger is. They are so fat and so fearless that sometimes they climb up into the Great Tree and toss some of the fruit down

in a game. When you see stars falling from the sky, they're playing this game amongst themselves."

"It is lucky for us that they do. Each time they throw a piece of fruit, it falls upon the earth and its seeds become the trees where we get our food. Laekame's children on earth don't grow as strong as she, or produce as much fruit, because they are not as close to the sun. They have to wait months to have enough light inside of them to make food for us, and even then the fruit is not the same. It does not shine out in the darkness; a single piece is not enough to satisfy a little child all day, let alone a grown man for many days."

"Long ago, there were birds big enough to fly all the way out to Laekame. They made their way back and forth between our home and the home of the people there. They were strong from eating from Laekame's branches. The best hunters would make names for themselves by killing these great birds and giving their flesh to their people. As time went on, less and less of the birds were found. As they became more rare the best hunters vied ever more fiercely to kill one and make a name while there were any left to kill."

"One young hunter was wiser than all the others. He knew the stories of Laekame and he thought that it was a waste to kill the only birds strong enough to reach the Great Tree. He watched the birds for many months, but did not kill even one. People thought he was very foolish and perhaps not one of the best hunters after all. He smiled at them and kept watching the birds. Then, during the days before winter when the birds migrated from their home here to their home in the stars, he laid out a clever trap he had designed and captured one of the enormous animals."

"He held it for many days, feeding it and keeping it until it would let him ride on its back. He had to give it most of his food, so he was very hungry, and the bird pecked at him fiercely in revenge for its captivity. Finally, after he had proved himself to the bird, it let him rest against its powerful back. He thanked it and gave it the rest of his food. He waited until the tree Laekame had appeared in the sky with all its fruit upon it, and then climbed up on its back with four large sacks made of animal skins and cut the bindings he had been keeping the bird with. The bird shook itself, flexed its wings, and rose with a powerful thrust up into the sky. The brave hunter held on tightly as it swooped and spun, glorying in its freedom and excited by the chance to join its family."

"It was a long, tiring journey. The brave young hunter nearly fell off several times, and he felt very sick and afraid when he looked down at his home below him. But he held on, and the bird understood well enough to be thankful that he had not killed it for its meat, and was more gentle with him than it might have been. When the bird reached its sky home, the brave hunter leapt off and raced for Laekame. His first taste of the Great Tree's fruit nearly made him swoon with pleasure. It was richer and sweeter and more beautiful than anything he had imagined."

“He lived in the sky for many months, waiting for the return migration of the birds. He put aside fruit from Laekame's branches in the four large sacks he had brought with him. When the season of winter was ending on earth, the birds began returning. He again captured one of the large birds and cared for it until it would carry him home. It was a very hard flight, and one of the sacks of Laekame's fruit slipped from his hand as he held on to the bird. He brought the remaining three sacks of fruit to his people and the honor he was given for his bravery was greater than all the honors brave hunters had received for killing the birds. The fruits were used sparingly during long winters and droughts. They did not rot or grow mold like earth fruits; they shined and gave energy to anyone who ate them. He he married and had many children and because of the fruits none of his people went hungry as long as he lived.”

In 2079, it's impossible to send anything organic into the past. Arguments rage about sending even the smallest machines disguised as insects and animals. Like the Large Hadron Collider of so many years ago, everyone is keenly aware of the chance that we might, by poking our noses in the wrong place, wipe ourselves out of existence. What if foreign bacteria somehow got through the stringent cleaning process and wiped out our ancestors? What if someone vital to human development was killed by a freak accident?

Tim listens politely to these arguments when he hears them around campus. He nods and replies thoughtfully. Then he goes to listen to hours upon hours of field recordings. He takes meticulous notes, and eats at his desk. It's a very niche interest, he knows. Many people don't understand what he hears inside the tedium. He lives for the moments when he hears elder women tell stories he can use in his thesis, or girls sang about gods no one believes in. In those moments, he feels solid in his mind the raw materials he could shape into *knowledge*. He hears the shining notes familiar to all humanity. The sound of our endless striving to create meaning where there may—philosophers disagree—be none at all.

*Stars, I have seen them fall,  
But when they drop and die  
No star is lost at all  
From all the star-sown sky.  
--A.E. Housman*



## He Was A Cowboy

by Carolyn Eads

*Stockton Record* Obituary, 10/13/2000

The morning's obit read  
'He was a cowboy'

I wondered what his old eye had seen,  
how the world had changed.  
How his world had changed in  
that 91 years. He was local, the  
range he rode was this valley.  
All his years he worked for  
one company,  
loyalty few know today.

I envisioned a leathery face,  
grizzled chin, watery eyes.  
I wondered what he had seen?  
How many horses had he broken?  
How many cattle had he branded?  
How many miles of rope had he tied?

I didn't know him,  
can only say his name  
**Peter Stella**  
Cowboy



\* \* \* \*

bodies pierced by plunging stars  
    snowfalls through the eye  
each heart a white and silent mask  
each breath clogged wet with fallen leaves  
each love exhausted before our lives

\* \* \* \*

my heart begins to bend like the band saw  
    around the knotty pine  
watch your fingers son  
last time you nearly lost a thumb

\* \* \* \*

your eyes hard now like the peach pit  
    that cracks the tooth  
shine with nothing  
mirror only  
not the sky  
nor sea  
but anger of an unsaid word

## 13,000,000,000,000,000,000

by Greg Gilbert

“There’s this women who lives in Palm Springs, Jacqueline Gagne; she retired from Microsoft, took up golf, and in five months, so the story goes, made 14 holes-in-one.”

“You believe that story?”

“I don’t know, the claim is that the holes were legally witnessed and verified.”

“So was witchcraft in the 1600’s.”

“Let’s just go along for a moment. Suspend disbelief. If true, the odds are really off the charts. Some mathematician calculated them at 13 septillion-to-one. A septillion is beyond vast. Written as a trillion-billion, a one followed by 24 zeros, a septillion is such a high number as to be considered artificial. I did a little math of my own, and if we compare Gagne’s accomplishment . . .”

“Alleged accomplishment!”

“Alleged accomplishment. If we compare her alleged accomplishment to being hit by lightning, 576,000-to-one, within that 13 septillion figure an individual could be struck by lightning 22.5 million-trillion times.”

“Ouch!”

“Look, I made a little list. With Gagne’s odds, a person could win the California lottery one trillion-trillion times, get dealt a royal flush in poker 20 million-trillion times, or have the family home hit by meteors a mere 71 billion times. It would also allow for one to bowl a 300 game one trillion-trillion times.”

“I get it. Mathematically, Ms Gagne’s claim involves face-of-God odds.”

“No, not really, I mean that’s my whole point.”

“Go ahead.”

“What’s so wonderful about Gagne’s claim is that it can be computed. The odds are long to point of seeming magical, but they are mathematical none-the-less, and any god who is calculable is *not* God.”

“Sort of a divine Heisenberg Principle.”

“You could say that.”

“I just did.”

“My point, though, is that if Gagne’s claim is true, then almost anything that we can imagine within the world of calculable odds is up for grabs. I read recently that the odds of writing a New York Times bestseller are a mere 220-1. When we think of what’s possible, thanks to Ms. Gagne, short odds seem less daunting. I was on this airplane recently, looking down on Yosemite Valley, and I thought of John Muir and how he fought the odds.”

“But Muir lost Hetch Hetchy. It broke his heart.”

“We should all be heartbroken over that, but his life contributed to the preservation of Yosemite Valley and the establishment of our system of

national parks. This is where long odds come into play. A young Scotsman arrives in the US and heads into the wilderness. Some years pass and he's got Teddy Roosevelt on a back packing trip and is haranguing him about the need to protect wilderness places – and he prevails. What are the odds?"

"Well, that's the thing about odds, they have to be recalculated at each step of the journey. While the odds are vast that an off-the-boat kid from Scotland is going to change the world, not so much if you calculate the chances of a well known naturalist having an effect."

"Again, my point exactly. With every inch rolled toward the hole, the chances improve that Ms. Gagne's ball will fall into the cup. In a sense, it's the butterfly effect where a small event can result in major changes. Because Muir influenced Teddy Roosevelt in 1903, the odds improved for Minerva Hoyt to influence Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s, which resulted in our own national park, and Hoyt's work in turn improved the chances that a group of concerned citizens could *Stop the Green Path* this past year. In fact, when you think about it, what are the odds that several women raffling off a quilt could actually lead to a community raising millions of dollars and building its own college? Whether Gagne really sunk those holes or not, the mere act of thinking that it might have happened is enough to make us feel less intimidated by long odds."

"So what do you want to do?"

"It says here on my list that the odds of dating a super model are 88,000-to-one."

"Good for you, Einstein. You wouldn't want to squander all these new found possibilities on something vacuous."

"Right. Maybe I should begin by purchasing a decent camera and moving to the beach."



## Pears

by Melody Blake

Such a pear! So round and firm.  
So fleshy and juicy. So eternal.  
Perfectly harmonious.  
And not just for partridges.

Two are always better than one.  
Seek out the blushing ones.  
Place them in a beautiful blue bowl.  
Enjoy their lusciousness with  
your eyes and nose.

Wait a day or two.  
Gratification hovers on the horizon.

So few things are certain in life,  
but there they are, waiting in the bowl,  
when you come home at night.  
Fresh and full in the morning,  
like the rising sun.  
Golden and mellow in late afternoon.  
The last objects to lose light and fragrance  
in the evening.

Catch them unawares!  
Bite into one and feel the juices flow.  
Roll each bite on your tongue.  
Lick your fingers.  
Think of whatever comes to mind.  
And tell no one!

## One August Night

by Susan Grigsby

I can't remember his name. It is driving me crazy that I can't remember his name because I can remember so many other things about him. I can still see him, standing over six feet tall, gangly, with long limbs and big feet, and fine blond hair dropping down over his broad forehead onto the top of his horn-rimmed glasses. In his early twenties, he was wearing light green surgical scrubs that night. I can still feel his hand on my back and hear his voice, calm and sure, in my ear. But I can't remember his name.

I thought of him last week when I heard that a Los Angeles Police Department officer allegedly shot an allegedly knife-wielding Columbian man in Westlake Village. I think about him whenever I see video of a police officer kicking a prostrate, hand-cuffed suspect in the head, or a group of officers kicking and beating a man on the ground who is only trying to gain a fetal position to protect himself, or any one of the many other video clips of officer assaults on civilians. And I can never remember his name.

I think he was married; it seems there was a tall brown-haired girl with him the few times that we ran into each other at the bookstore. But she wasn't with us that night. It was just the two of us walking up North Clark, he in his scrubs, me in my nursing uniform, on that particular August night. We walked past the small crowd that the police had cleared out of nearby Lincoln Park. Beyond the cones of light cast by the street lamps, it was very dark. I don't recall any traffic on Clark Street, which was unusual. I do remember two busses pulling up alongside us mid-block, where they clearly didn't belong. I had barely enough time to register how odd it was that there were no lights on inside the busses when all of the doors flew open and a seemingly endless stream of black-uniformed, helmeted men came pouring out of all of the doors, cursing and growling. Feeling like a boulder in a river, I stood embedded on the sidewalk as the police swirled around us and charged into the crowd standing in front of the auto showroom windows.

I felt his hand on the small of my back and heard him whisper in my ear, "Keep walking. No matter what happens, don't run. Just keep walking." I don't know why I trusted him the way I did. I was young, only nineteen, and I was frightened. His words made me feel that somehow, I could walk out of this nightmare, unharmed.

I tried to remember his name while watching the endless replays of the Rodney King beating in 1991. That video always brought tears to my eyes because it looked so much like the scene on North Clark Street that dark August night in Chicago, during the Democratic Convention of 1968. In one of the islands of light, a circle of uniformed officers were kicking and swinging clubs at a young man who didn't have the sense to stay down on the ground.

That is when the man, whose name I can't remember, said, "Go ahead, Sue, I'll meet you at the church," and pushed his way into the circle armed only with his red first-aid kit to help the boy.

I wish I knew his name. The last time I saw him, a cop was bringing a club down across his shoulders as he knelt to help the boy. I continued to walk, fighting to keep an even pace, trying so hard not to surrender to my body's adrenaline-fueled demand and run just as fast as I could. Three cops approached me, one with a raised can of mace aimed at my face. Another grabbed the arm with the mace and pulled it down as he briefly nodded to me. Perhaps it was my white uniform that stopped them. Or perhaps, it was that I didn't run, but that I just kept walking that kept me safe. Or perhaps, it was my prayers. I don't know. I never will.

Today, when I see or read about police brutality, I wonder, as so many others do, what the victim did to provoke the attack. Born and raised in a law abiding society, where we are taught that obeying the rules will keep us safe, we tend to believe that only rule-breakers get hurt. Surely, they must have done something to cause the police to react the way they did. They must have done something that the video doesn't show or the story doesn't tell.

But then I remember that night. No one provoked those policemen. They came out of those busses swearing and swinging clubs. There were no taunts from the crowd; there were only screams of fear and pain. These men were supposed to protect us. They were supposed to keep us safe. When those whose job it is to protect attack, where do we turn for help?

I remember so much from that night. I remember what he did, what he said, how safe I felt when I was walking with him—and how terrified I became when he left my side. I remember how brave he was. I remember the look of the concrete sidewalk at my feet, the smell of the tear gas in the air, and the feel of the cool night breeze across my face. I remember the fear, and I remember the horror.

I wish I could remember his name.

*"During the week of the Democratic National Convention, the Chicago police were the targets of mounting provocation by both word and act. It took the form of obscene epithets, and of rocks, sticks, bathroom tiles and even human feces hurled at police by demonstrators. Furthermore, the police had been put on edge by widely published threats of attempts to disrupt both the city and the Convention.*

*"That was the nature of the provocation. The nature of the response was unrestrained and indiscriminate police violence on many occasions, particularly at night.*

*“That violence was made all the more shocking by the fact that it was often inflicted upon persons who had broken no law, disobeyed no order, made no threat. These included peaceful demonstrators, onlookers, and large numbers of residents who were simply passing through, or happened to live in, the areas where confrontations were occurring.”*

*Rights in Conflict. Convention Week in Chicago, August 25–29, 1968. A Report submitted by Daniel Walker, Director of the Chicago Study Team, to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Introduction by Max Frankel. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968. pp. 1, 10–11.*



### 3 Haiku

by AnDrea Jensen

#### A tree

Supple yet mighty  
Alone in the desert stands  
The Joshua tree

#### A sunrise

Awaking with glee  
The bright lord rises to chase  
His pale lady home

#### A lamppost

Shining in cold light  
Proud over a blanket white  
He guides the lost home.

## Champagne

by Evelyn Dockery

Analogies like honey,  
Heady like champagne,  
They aren't fitting enough  
to describe the way I feel today.  
Running across the street with you,  
hair blown back by wind,  
Back pressed up against a wall,  
Anticipating your kiss,  
Singing out loud by light of sun,  
The rays upon your face,  
Snow in my hands and by my feet  
As gloveless you give chase,  
Sharing this fruit inside your room,  
your lips upon my fingers,  
Anime plays in the background  
as I can hear you whisper,  
Sleep with me tonight,  
Just spend the night inside my arms,  
Bad dreams cannot assault you here,  
I'd never let you come to harm.  
Buried inside your chest,  
A strong sweet masculine scent,  
I feel something stir inside of me,  
A longing to be more than friends.  
In sleep I call your name out,  
and wake to find you surprised.  
This desire's always been here,  
You would have seen it if you tried.  
Smoothe back the hair upon my brow,  
As your fingers linger over me,  
Light and giddy inside  
however no analogy,  
could ever fit this moment...  
There's more to now than saying,  
You're sweet like candy to my soul.  
I'm drunk off you just like champagne.

## Stench

by Dustin Kronemeyer

The South Street bends to my feet,  
Contoured perfectly with nightly desires  
Of city lights put out by dripping sweats  
That flow from the river west.

The buildings denser as I leave the old,  
Coming into marriage of brick and steel.  
O how magnificent the brick and steel!  
That beckons the night, the sun . . . abhor!

In windows are well-to-dos, drowsy children  
And bedtime rhymes. Blue-eyed, red-eyed,  
High-rise stupor, friends and family too,  
But they will shuffle into the blackness soon.

West onto the holey draperies, lights dim  
Cracked panes, crackling the plastering ice.  
They sit awhile and watch the wall  
In reverie – all imbued with innocence.

The Thinker asks me where I go tonight.  
I tell him “nowhere,” and he shrinks in silence.  
A thought like mine, cast in stone – still  
I long to cast into the street – my alarm.

I feel creepier. I know the stench.  
It stalks me down the avenues.  
It lurks in the alleys.  
It pervades my soul.

## On an Absinthe Laced Dream

by Joseph Briggs

The snare drum,  
The haze, the crowd.  
Clock strikes ten and the apostles march.  
The noise rising in the crowd applauds and the veil is lifted,  
The pall is parted and smoke stings the eyes of an absinthe laced dream.  
The trumpet blows and the march begins  
As the jokers and the monsters dance in the crowing tones of Czech lullabies.  
A dungeon beneath our feet, the secrets and the tunnels. A burning spotlight  
shining ten past ten. The reek of sausage and sweet apples and crystal and grog.  
Torches in the night and martyrs burned on a pyre and bells and chimes and  
the skeleton pulling the cord as the coquettes whinny and the flash flickers on.  
The trees are bare and the leaves are gone as winter whips about through the  
canyons and beggars stooping low; the merchants hawking shit, No! I don't  
want to buy a smoke.  
Down the abandoned cobblestones. Headlights flashing eyes. The harmonica  
bellows out.  
Train cars hold the crack and whip by the snow and the black and green dog  
shit sinks in ice.  
No moon. And the stars hide in the haze and fog of night and steam surround.  
Sand paper leg and hard stone. Hand caught in the mousetrap knee and  
covered by flowers under the monochrome streetlight. Dragon on your back  
and the smoke in your nostrils and fire of the pupils. Piercing taste and  
menthol aroma, the green fairy flies from your tongue of the peppered kiss.  
Magic spirits open the door and the world is abandoned in the mirror and  
marble glass reflected floor. The steel walled coffin to the sky  
And the mirror wrapped in the smoke  
And the haze marked smeared kisses  
And lamps fall dark and the chime of bells  
And birds  
And the hallmark cistern shimmers, rattles, rolls, and rocks.  
Lights illuminate every step and keep pace. Steamship whistle the door as the  
blue moon floods and the moonlight pink wall flared white sheets of an  
absinthe laced dream.

## Mother

by Crystal Langer

Little child.  
Blinded eyes.  
Soaked in denial.  
Choking on lies.

To omit,  
you betray.  
I commit,  
but not today.

Drive your car.  
Float your boat.  
Take off far.  
Sugarcoat.

I look into that  
hollow space.

That sorry, used up,  
once a face.

You are not there.  
You cannot care.

Oh what can I do  
with this speaking truth?

For,  
your ears hear no sound  
and your breath is weak.

Your eyes wander round,  
you barely can speak.

Ambivalence contorts me.  
I am lost, I cry.

Does truth say to  
stay and be?

Or turn and simply  
wave goodbye?

## Status Report

by Andrew Dieleman

**A**s Sam walked down the street, he muttered in an almost inaudible voice. “I can’t believe I have to do this. This is so unfair.” As he rounded the corner, he saw Paul Thompson, or Old Man Thompson as he was called. Paul was sweeping the sidewalk in front of his General Store, as he did every morning. Sam was not in the mood for a conversation, especially one with boring Old Man Thompson, so he zipped up his hoodie, pulled up his hood, and put his hands in his pockets. He quickly made his way across the side walk in front of the General Store, hoping that he would not be recognized. Sam’s optimism was quickly dashed as a familiar voice called out.

“Good morning, Sam.”

Sam froze in his tracks. Only four feet away from Old Man Thompson, Sam wasn’t far enough away to play the “I didn’t hear you” card if he saw Paul later. At that point, he knew that he was doomed to have that boring conversation. Sam didn’t dread the conversation as much as he dreaded looking at the old man. That old prosthetic leg just grossed him out. Sam closed his eyes and sighed heavily. He then slowly turned towards Old Man Thompson, took his hands out of his pockets, and pulled down his hood.

“Good morning, Mr. Thompson.”

Paul looked at Sam with a somewhat baffled look.

“You’re in an awful hurry son, is everything all right?”

Despite his urge to say “none of your business,” Sam answered the question as respectfully as he could.

“No, I’m just headed to the library.”

Paul set his broom in front of his feet and set both hands on top of the worn, wooden handle.

“The library, huh?”

Sam answered quickly. “Yup, the library.”

Paul took one hand off the broom and raised it in the air, pulling his sleeve off of his watch. His eye sight not what it used to be, it took him a second to line up the minute hand with the hour hand. “Why, it’s only 10:07 in the morning; the library doesn’t close ‘til five.

“I know, but I have a lot of work to do.”

Paul was now more curious than ever. “What kind of work?”

Sam answered with a somewhat annoyed tone to his voice. “I have to write a stupid report for history class and it’s going to take me all day.” Sam let out another heavy sigh. “I can’t believe I have to waste an entire Saturday on this report; it’s just not fair!”

Paul had a baffled look on his face as he walked closer to Sam. Paul stood as straight as his leg would permit him. “Well, this sounds like quite an assignment. I must say, I had some fairly difficult teachers in my days as a student, but none of them saw fit to extend an all-day assignment, and on a Saturday of all days. It doesn’t give the student nearly enough time to reflect on their subject. You really should have been given more time, don’t you think?”

Sam didn’t say a word, attempting to hide the embarrassing truth. Yet, despite his best efforts, his body sold him out. Sam’s blank face looking down at his shoes and his bare hand rubbing the back of his neck told the entire story.

With a smile on his face, Paul spoke up. “Tell me something, Sam, exactly how much time have you had to complete this assignment?”

Sam continued to look at his shoes and rub the back of his neck. After a few seconds, he muttered an answer. “Four weeks.”

Paul leaned back in surprise. “Four weeks? And you’re just starting now?”

Sam quickly looked up from his shoes directly into the old man’s face. “Yes, I’m just starting it now! You got a problem with that?”

Paul maintained perfect composure as he stared into Sam’s angry eyes. “Of course not, Sam, it’s your assignment; you will complete it as you wish.” Sam began to walk away. He only got two steps out before Paul interrupted him yet again. “If you wouldn’t mind me asking, Sam, what exactly are you doing this report about anyway?”

Sam let out yet another heavy sigh. “I have to write a report about World War Two, happy now?”

Paul leaned back on his broom. “Yes, yes I am.”

Relieved that the conversation was over, Sam began to walk away again. Two steps later, Sam was stopped yet again by Old Man Thompson.

“Sam!”

At this point, he didn’t know why he kept stopping. Why doesn’t he just keep going? Despite his urge to keep walking, Sam once again acknowledged the old man. “What now?”

Paul began to wave Sam into the store. “Come inside; I have something to show you.”

Thinking of any excuse to leave, Sam gave it his best shot. “Look, Mr. Thompson, if I don’t get to the library soon, I might...” Before he could finish, Paul interrupted.

“That library’s been in the same place for forty-one years, Sam. If it didn’t like where it was, it would have grown legs and walked off years ago.”

Sam just looked at the old man, clueless at what to say to a comment like that. Before he could even think to say a word, Paul once again waved him inside the General Store. His entire Saturday was wasted anyway; he may as well

entertain the old man for a few more minutes. Sam reluctantly joined Paul at the front door of the General Store. As the two of them walked in, Paul set the broom in the corner and looked Sam in the face.

“Follow me to the back room.”

Sam followed the old man, trying to walk slowly enough that the old man wouldn't hurt himself with his old prosthetic leg. Paul opened the door to the back room and walked as quickly as he could to the back shelf. He grabbed a chair from the break table, leaned it up against the shelf, and spoke to Sam.

“At the top of the shelf in the right hand corner is a big book. Can you climb up and grab it for me?”

Sam slowly looked from the old man to the top of the shelf.

“I'd get it myself, but this darn leg of mine won't let me climb up anything fun anymore.”

Sam nodded, stepped up on the chair and felt around the dusty top shelf for the old book. He soon found it and pulled it towards him. It was much heavier than he had expected. He looked back at Paul, both hands clasping the book. “Is this it?”

“Yup, that's the one.”

Sam slowly pulled the book off the shelf, stepped down off the chair, and set the book on the table. Paul walked up to the book, blew the dust off the cover, and began to turn the pages. Sam leaned over the old man's shoulder, looking at the pages as they turned. Sam's curiosity soon got the better of him as he looked at Paul. “What is this?”

Without looking up from the book, Paul answered. “Have you ever gone to bed, not knowing if you will ever wake up?”

Sam didn't answer.

“Have you ever held a dying friend in your arms?”

Again, Sam didn't answer. Paul continued to turn the pages, stopping abruptly at a page approximately one quarter of the way through the book. He pointed to the page. “Read.”

Sam pulled the chair back to the table, sat down, and began to read. The pages were old and worn, yet the words seemed to jump from the page into his mind. After the first paragraph, Sam looked up from the book. “This is a journal page.” He looked at Paul, who had a smile on his face and a tear on his cheek. Sam turned the page and read another entry, this time reading the entire page. He quickly turned the page and read the next entry, then the next entry, and the next. After the sixth page, Sam looked back at Paul.

“Where did these come from?”

Paul walked up to the book and turned multiple pages at a time until he reached a page full of photos. One of the photos, featuring twelve men in uniform, stood out among the rest. Sam took a closer look at the photo and suddenly realized what he was looking at.

“This is you.”

Paul nodded his head.

“Who are the others”?

Paul raised his finger to the photo, sweeping it from face to face.

“John Patterson, Mark Norris, Phil Brown, Jack Butcher, Jordan McEllin, Adam Chase, Billy Byron, Ronnie Frost, Richard Ellis, Corry Hart, and Chris Hawkins.”

Sam turned the pages of the book, reading more and more entries as he went. Finally, the silence was broken as Paul once again began to speak.

“These eleven men and I were all drafted into World War Two. Believe me, kid, no one cared if you got drafted, and you sure as hell didn’t complain about it.”

Paul paused for a second. “I didn’t know a single one of those eleven boys, yet somehow, we became sort of a family. Complete strangers who formed an impenetrable bond through the book that sits in front of you right now.”

Sam looked back at the book. “You see, we all had families that we loved: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and so on. So we all agreed to keep a journal, each day writing down what had happened, who we’d lost, and who we missed most.”

Sam again flipped through the pages, blurring one set of hand writing with another as he went. He stopped turning the pages as one entry caught his eye.

“This entry isn’t very long.”

Paul looked at the book for what seemed like minutes. He then lifted his head and wiped a tear from his cheek.

“That’s Jack Butcher’s entry; we just called him ‘Butch.’ He got shot through the neck his fifth day out.”

Sam didn’t say a word.

“He was the first of us to go. As they took his body, I reached into his pocket and grabbed his entries, a process that would be repeated six more times to six more men. When the war ended, the five of us that were left made a pact that we would visit each other every year to remember our brothers that were lost during the war.”

Sam looked at Paul, then glanced down at Paul’s prosthetic leg. Before he could ask, Paul answered.

“It’s the funny things in life that get you, I suppose. I made it through three fire fights during that war without as much as a scratch to show for it. Then, on the way back to the ship, I stepped on a roadside mortar. It took the darn thing clean off. I miss my leg sometimes, but mostly I wish that my darn toe would stop itching.”

Sam laughed.

“When do you guys meet again? I would love to meet the rest of them.”

Paul looked down at his shoes as another tear rolled down his face. “The last time the five of us met was in 1974. The next year, Adam Chase was killed in a car crash. The four of us left met until 1986. The next year, Richard Ellis and Chris Hawkins both passed away from cancer. After that, it was just me and Ronnie Frost. We met for another eighteen years before old Ronnie died of a stroke.”

Sam sat in his chair, unable to conjure even the simplest if words.

“I’m the only one left, kid; the lonely soul responsible for the safe keeping of this book. I guarantee you that I’ll be watching this book until the day I die.”

Sam looked at his watch, it was now 10:30.

“Well, I suppose you had better be off to the library now, huh?”

Sam nodded his head. “Yes sir, I believe I should.”

Paul leaned towards Sam.

“You can call me Paul.”

Sam smiled. “Okay, Paul.”

Sam walked out of the general store towards the library once more, soon followed by Paul who called out to him once more.

“Hey, Sam.”

This time, Sam didn’t sigh or shrug his shoulders or rub his neck, he just turned around. “What is it Paul?”

Paul yelled back to him. “Next weekend is the anniversary of our meeting day. I always have a little party in their honor. You wouldn’t care to join me, would you?”

Sam smiled as big as he had ever smiled before. “Of course, I’d love to come!”

Paul smiled at Sam, grabbed his broom and began to sweep the side walk again.

Sam watched Paul sweep for a few seconds, then turned and walked towards the library. Somehow, that old prosthetic leg didn’t seem so gross any more.



## Sacred Stones

Lisa Rosati

Nature waits  
In our forgotten corner of the universe.  
As cultures perish.  
As towers crumble.  
As the aloof and forbidding moon  
Casts long shadows on the forest floor  
Illuminating the ancient, unseemly and Decadent vines.  
Twisting  
In cracked stones and  
In broken foundations.  
Where banyan writhes.

Amid the forested glow  
Gods, demons and celestial maidens Cavort through dreamscapes  
And dance away the long-dead eternities in stone.

Crowned and perfect warriors march into battle, wrestle with demonic figures  
And churn the cosmic milk.  
Dreamless under the stars.

Bare breasted dancers smile and  
Step in time to some forgotten drum.  
And await the return of their heroes  
In the sleepy shadows.

Beyond resurrection  
Heedless of tropical rains and scorching sun.  
Waiting  
In their ordered universe.

Here in this green and shady place.  
The timeless and the dead-cojoin with men in the inevitable goal of all.  
Awaiting-as we all do-the arrival of  
Another race  
Come down-too late-from the stars.

Stars whirl in the night sky  
The Great Bear chases the dragon.

The king and queen look impassively  
Down the long centuries.  
As moon and stone and prying root.  
Secretly await  
The strange lights  
Of the 'Knowledge Seekers'

## Night Rain

by Aubrey Leahy

At 4.30 this morning  
it rained. not much  
But enough to jog the mind  
Into remembering a town  
in Australia where rain  
fell for the first time  
in seven years. We took  
off our few clothes and Danced  
and Shrieked in the not so  
Dusty Street.  
A gift from God.  
A week later the desert was a carpet  
of multibright flowers  
further than the eye could see.

At 4.30 this morning  
in the Mojave  
it rained. not much  
but for the third or fourth time this year.  
Still a gift  
yet nobody  
took off their clothes,  
nor Danced,  
just Shrieked  
Oh dear,  
it's raining.

## Faded

by Priscilla Holloway

Her Face just looked so faded  
As he stared at her from across the room.  
He did not know what she was thinking,  
Who knows if he cared?

Her heart was sinking;  
It was like she knew her life was doomed.  
From across the room, he stared.

She just stood there, sick of drinking.  
He was sorry that she cared.  
She felt so alone in that room.  
All the hate in her was sinking.

She felt so low,  
And she was spinning.

He was ashamed that she cared.

## Life Lights

by Emlee Lotspeich

We are all just little specks of light  
glinting in the darkness, shining out  
in search of warmth in each other's glow.

## Armistice Day

by  
Gloria White

Throughout the land on Armistice Day,  
November eleventh, at eleven a.m.,  
Sirens rang, bells reverberated,  
As we, of the Greatest Generation,  
Faced East in a minute of quiet respect  
For the end of World War One,  
The war fought to end all wars.

We of the Greatest Generation  
Were children of the Great Depression,  
Innocent of worldly matters,  
Trusting our leader's words that  
The dead of the war to end all wars,  
Had not died in vain.  
So each November eleventh, at eleven a.m.,  
On Armistice Day,  
We faced East, for a minute of quiet respect,  
To honor their sacrifice.

We of the Greatest Generation,  
Are now the oldest generation.  
Five wars later we no longer face East,  
On November eleventh, at eleven a.m.,  
In a minute of quiet respect,  
For the war fought to end all wars.  
Armistice Day is just a memory,  
And November eleventh,  
Is now celebrated as Veterans' Day.

## To My Poet: A Lover's Lament

by Kristin Goldsborough

“I like how mean you are to her.”

“All of the characters are fictional... Thank you.”- *The Darjeeling Limited*

**Y**ou say, “Let me read it,” like it’s nothing. In my head I can hear the emphasis on the word “read.” You don’t really mean, “Let me READ it.” You mean, “Let me read YOU.” You think by putting emphasis on the wrong word that I won’t understand, but I do. I have always been smarter than you. Maybe not when it comes to pre-contemporary literary criticisms or 17<sup>th</sup> century French poetry, but when it comes to life, I am abundantly more intelligent than you will ever be. (I think.)

“Let me read it,” you say again.

“It isn’t good.”

“Just send it to me.”

I always give in with you. I don’t know what you hold over me, but it’s there. The constant nagging in the back of our relationship- our relationship that really doesn’t exist. Not to you, anyway. It’s as real as daylight to me, though. It hurts. You hurt me, over and over again.

I push the send button and immediately disengage from our instant message chat. Instant message seems like such a silly way to have a conversation, especially for two people who are as obsessed with the written word as you and I are. Or maybe that is the appeal. In our day and age, there is no romantic notion of the United States Postal System. Letters get lost. It takes too long. Ours is a generation of instant gratification. You and I are as much victims of our times as everyone else is. We like to think that by reading “Leaves of Grass” and by devoting our time to *Grand Siècle* we can be rid of this technological obsession that imprisons those of our age demographic. Unfortunately, we both own Macs and iPods- did I mention our touch screen cell phones? The very same ones we use to text one another every few days. “Hi,” is always the way our conversations begin. Such a loaded word. “Hi, I still love you,” or “Hi, I was never in love with you but I want you.” (The reality those two letters convey.)

“Hey!” my Literature teacher practically yells. I had heard the door to my classroom open and close, but had mistakenly assumed it was someone removing themselves to the toilet. I see you, in your green sweater, walking towards the front of the classroom. I try to immerse myself in Melville. I try to understand what Herman was telling me with every single adverb and noun, I stare intently at the words “Billy Budd, Billy Budd” leaping at me from the paper, because I know when I hear “I brought you three poems,” that it is you and not in fact someone with a small bladder. I try to keep myself grounded.

You had given me fair warning. You had said, “I can’t wait to see you later.” You had asked what classroom I was in and what time we normally ended, but as usual, I consider you a ghost. An entity that does not really exist, so when I hear “I have a workshop tomorrow,” my stomach immediately ties into knots and Melville cannot keep my attention for any longer than it takes me to close the book.

I stand around for a few minutes while you talk to the professor. He is delighted to see you: his star pupil. I am a close second, though. High marks on my papers, always interacting with the class, raising my hand and offering some insight into the words of Poe, Thoreau, Bradstreet or whichever early American writer we are studying this week. I know I should run. When it comes to you and I, one of us is always running. Usually you, although I have been known to bolt from time to time. (It’s been two years at this point.) Ours is not a love story, more a story of two people with a common interest who can’t seem to get far enough away from one another.

You told me once that our appeal was in our passion. I responded with, “you just like to push me up against things.” (The summation of our relationship.) I can see you looking at me out of the corner of your eye, looking at my clothes, at my body. You continue conversing with my professor, but I can feel your eyes on me and you’re giving us away. (The best part is the secrecy.) We accidentally meet at the bar and you whisper in my ear when you think no one is looking, “I need ice.” A famous quote from a famous movie—a movie in which the ingénue is desperately in love with a man who will never love her back. You whisper these three words and I follow you outside, traipsing into the cold of fall, and looking into the back of your red, on this evening, sweater. This was back when I believed you did love me. When I believed you and I would move together, possibly to Iowa, where you were looking at graduate schools. I would sit up reading my contemporary authors, analyzing, feeling the words, and you would read to me (in French of course) a bit from a poem beached in classical culture. Then the words still abreast in our bed would wash over us and we would make love. Passionate, from the movies love.

“I didn’t think you would actually show,” I say, holding my binder close to my chest. Without the shield of battle, you are likely to tear my heart out.

“Well, I did.”

“Mr. Gray must be thrilled to see you.”

“I am not here for him.”

With these words I push away from you. The more distance I can put between us the better. We walk, in mostly silence, to my next class. Math. You are the last thing I need before I attempt to tackle numbers. Words are easier for me. They speak a personal truth that I find so appealing. Numbers speak a

universal truth, one I just can't seem to grasp. We hug and part ways at my classroom door. You rub my back, intertwine your fingers in my hair, and whisper, "Have a good class."

I watch you walk away and all I can think is "God damn you." If you had only given me your heart when I was so willing. It wasn't supposed to be like this. We were supposed to stay up late, lying in front of a fire, some soft music on a record player, reading each other's poetry. But it isn't. (I blame you.)

I try to focus on numbers when you text me. Text. Words via cell phone. Impersonal. Easy. "You look... fantastic." I reply with the colloquial response: "Thanks." During the course of my math class something hits me. A feeling. If you can fuck with me, why can't I fuck with you? I wait until the professor's back is turned and I find you in my phone book: "No goodbye kiss?"

You don't take teasing as well as I do. (You never have.) "You seemed distant." You know I was distant. I have to be. It maintains my sanity. The word distant launches us into a debate about our future. You telling me that I don't belong with a man who isn't you, me telling you it's none of your business. Finally when I answer you with what you want to hear ("What if I left him? What then?"), you answer me the way I would expect: "I think you would move too fast with us." You are the first person to ever complain about the quickness of my movement. Usually, it is too slow for men; they get bored and move on. Other men are no threat. If anyone is able to conquer my lands it is you.

"Let's have a drink tonight. I will meet you at the saloon," you say. I know what drinks lead to. They lead to what happened last time: to you walking me to my car, me trying to say goodbye. You pushing me against my car, lifting my leg so it sits around your hip. You kissing me until my lips are raw and my tongue is bleeding from hitting your teeth.

"I can't," I tell you even though every bone in my body is yelling, "Go! Go you fool!" My heart breaks thinking of you, sitting in your room alone (your books keeping you company) but I know what happens. I know how we operate. "I'm not going to sleep with you," I say.

"Okay," you respond. You're always so calm, so collected. You pretend I can't get to you. You pretend I am nothing. Maybe that is why I desperately want to be something: I can't read your mind and it kills me.

"What do you even want with me?"

"To talk. And make out." I know what making out leads to. I know the night you told me "I just want to kiss you," you pushed me against the wall of the coffee shop you were closing. You told me you didn't care when I said I had nothing to add to the conversation. And you didn't care because for those brief moments, we were lovers in our personal tryst. Why can't I be your Bright

Star? I dream of being a character in your great story. A poem you write someday.

Sometimes with you, it's best just to stop. To leave things be and reflect on our love, our passion, or rather, mine. I understand that I am nothing more than a tool you use to combat loneliness, and that's okay. It's my lot in life to be your tool. But I have to stop. (For my sake- even yours.) Someday you will find your "one." The great and inevitable "one" that much of the poetry and prose you and I hold so dear regales. I wish poetry were real life. Then you and I would be folded together beneath the stars discussing the Joshua Tree Man and his murderous methods, you growing more and more squeamish with every teenaged victim while I laugh and kiss your face, your cheeks, your shoulders. Someday you will find her, the one you are looking for- your love story, your epic poem, your ingénue. Until then, I will be right here, hoping that she is me.



## My New Ride

by elise kost

I've learned to allow a certain amount of wax to build up in my ears before a road trip, so the earplugs suction better and make a stronger seal against the unbearable whistling turbo. I overheard someone in the DMV line talking about how driving an old military deuce was like driving a lawn mower. At first I felt defensive, but the next time I drove it, I thought it was more like being in a tunnel with a train.

Desperate for something that would make me enjoy the experience, I thought of Pavlov's training techniques. This is what brought me to purchase a nice variety of chocolate bars to keep in the cab. Upon stepping into the driver's seat, I would immediately think of chocolate and it was remarkable how much the anticipation and the savoring of it distracted from noise. I made a mental note for next time to break the chocolate into pieces, so as not to have to drive one-handed or with my knee as I try to unwrap the foil and keep the crumbs from melting into the seat by the desert sun. Since I have no power steering on this 14,000 pound machine, driving with my knee is not advised, as when a wheel hits a rock the wrong way, the wheel suddenly jerks with tremendous brute force, enough to take the massive truck fast in its own direction if I'm not aware – and one must be, aware, at all times.

I've had a lot of time to think as we drive, since the noise of the turbo, the exhaust, and the engine vibrations through the firewall are louder than any music I could blast, or the phone, or even my own voice when I'm screaming. One thing that has crossed my mind is how I seem used to being in a hurry. Driving this slowly has me feeling nervous and convinced that we're late for something. I try to relax and act like I am free, rather than chained to some sort of time machine that has me feeling too old, too young, or like I'm wasting the time if I'm not doing at least three things at once.

I also think about when I lived on the road so many years ago and how he would have loved me more then, how calm I was..., how truly patient, aware, present, and ever so grateful for my life. I was also strictly vegetarian, had my head shaved and was barefoot most of the time, none of which he has sounded enthusiastic about, but I was smarter and more capable somehow, less domesticated, right out of college, feeling strong and clear, invincible, inspired, and as though I deserved a break. Free of guilt, full of power, and centered, due to much time in silence, natural world purity, and absorbing texts of a variety of Sufi poets, Bob Dylan lyrics, and having survived countless experiences of utter despair and inconceivable beauty. Now, after another decade of life, I wear boots, leather, and a blade in my pocket. I eat like a mountain lion, I have silver strands in my braid, ink under my skin, and much more to be forgiven for.

I find it rather charming how he has the willingness to repeat the same answers over and over to redneck after redneck. He treats each one as though they were the first whoever asked, answering warmly and welcoming the conversation, sure that he'll learn something from the experience. I love witnessing that. It takes a humble person to be that patient. I am not so generous, anymore. I see one of them approaching – a guy in a mechanics body suit on a four-wheeler; a seemingly retired military man with a camouflage baseball cap; a bright-eyed marine or wanna-be-tough guy, and I walk the other way, go inside the truck, or somehow manage to drive away before they speak. I can't wait until it's warm enough to wear my short black dress again – I sure love driving this rig when I'm wearing that. It makes it a lot easier not to deal with people, it takes them a while to come up with something appropriate to say and by then, I'm gone.

My engine stalls at the border patrol check point after six hours of driving 10-20mph through beautiful desert with blooming ocotillos, saguaros, red-purple cliffs, and not a vehicle or person in sight in any direction ~ just us, ahhhhh..., and our crazy monster machines which eat up the silence as they crawl along. The patrol officers eagerly inquire about my truck, but quickly ask me to continue forth when I tell them that the engine has been surging, a possible reaction to the waste motor oil we poured into the fuel tank (multi-fuel engine). They seem to sense how frustrated I am and how I just want to

complain about the noise, surely sounding like another wife, not like the tough warrior goddess I might appear to be.

As I follow him and his truck down the most non-road road I've ever experienced, with my six-wheel drive activated, and praying I don't tip the truck on its side, my new mantra has become: "Don't be scared, don't be scared. You are a brave, confident, joyful creature: trust yourself. Everything will be fine... ..if you die, it won't matter anyway."

After nine days of traveling across what would normally take less than a day's drive, we finally make it to the outskirts of the city by the time we need our headlights. His headlights don't really work, they shut off spontaneously and sometimes come back on. I'm driving with my hazard lights blinking, still lurching in the shoulder of the road and he is following me with his on-off headlights in the dark. After several stops to let the fuel settle (it drives better after letting it rest for a few minutes every 20 miles or so), we finally make it to our turn into the city, only eight miles from where our friends live. We consider the traffic and our lurching/stalling and headlights/no headlights situation and decide to "camp" in the Food City parking lot for the night. Although this is not quite what I envisioned my vacation to be, simply being alive and having both trucks still with us feels like a tremendous accomplishment and I smile, in gratitude, to be on the road again.



## Defeated—Shatter, Glass Heart

by T.J. Dorian

Scared to kiss—your cigarette might burn my lips.  
 Take a drag and draw it out,  
 let smoke linger and cloud.  
 Pulse, pulse, you're leaning so close.  
 I thought embers were hot, but I was wrong.  
 My fever would make that lit cherry  
 crack like ice,  
 billow steam,  
 and sizzle.

Shatter, glass heart—that gaze is too much for you.  
 Walk away,  
 never say

...

## For My Daughter Who Crochets

by Savya Lee

She makes me potholders--  
 For birthdays, for Mother's Day,  
 For Christmases  
 Down the years they come  
 In colors of rainbows  
 Patterns of geometry  
 Squares, triangles, circles  
 Some embossed and overlaid  
 Often too beautiful  
 To be functional  
 Yet I dutifully  
 Grasp the sides of a pan  
 Sliding it out of the oven  
 Carefully  
 Trying not to scorch these works of art.  
 And as they curl around the edges  
 Like small hugs  
 I feel the love  
 Of a thing created  
 By her ingenious hands.

## Rollercoaster

by Krystina Mason

Living in the past  
 The rollercoaster car rises up the track  
 Memories come flooding back to my mind  
 Some hazy, fading  
 Others clear, almost tangible  
 Significant and insignificant events that shaped my life  
 Struggling to sum it all up  
 Running in the grass  
 Jumping into the piles of leaves  
 Trudging through the snow  
 A favorite stuffed animal, its stuffing flattened by innumerable hugs  
 Funerals freeze us in moments of grief  
 Births tell us we have no choice but to keep going  
 Grandma and Grandpa tell stories

Mommy holds me and sings  
Daddy looks upon me and smiles  
Wishing on shooting stars  
Everything ahead of me  
The sun sets and it's all in the past

Living in the present  
The rollercoaster car reaches the top of the track  
The present, today is a gift  
It seems so, and we forget that  
I speak what I believe  
People can hear, but are they listening?  
Today I can change, but routine persists  
I wonder how often I contradict myself  
Today is just another day  
And it slips by before I can remember to seize it.

Living in the future  
The rollercoaster car drops at an alarming speed  
Wrenching me in wild directions  
It's like trying to define the future  
Caught up in wondering, worrying, planning, anticipating  
What comes next?  
Questions spinning in circles  
Only answered by more questions  
Will I see the world?  
Can I change the world?  
Will I find love?  
Have I already?  
Will all the pain be worth it in the end?  
Do I learn from my mistakes?  
It's nothing I can know now  
I wait for the answers to show themselves  
Anticipating and excited  
Too curious to give up  
Guided by blind faith

Living until the end  
The rollercoaster car clanks into the station  
Go for another ride, or move on?  
Until it's decided, leave behind a legacy

## Niches

by Richard Lee

cold concrete cliff  
as far as the mind can see

wet in the morning light  
niches with burnished urns  
engraved with days and nights  
filled with the ashes of words  
we speak but do not understand

we make our promises  
to skies beyond the horizon

somnolent we return  
again and again

sun shines  
night arrives

we smile in a language  
known only to people  
we have never met

let me say it now, oh lord  
let me be this one last time  
in the rain that befalls us all

## Dos Mundos

by Ellen Baird

In the rush of this morning, I wear my shoes that I wore in your back yard.  
I leave my house, clean and empty; I see little piles of gravel:  
Horseshoe shapes of the heels only on the white tile.  
The part of me that touched the ground  
as we danced.

Look there now.  
Look in your yard.  
Look in the dirt where you live.  
Look for the imprints: little horseshoes.  
Find the spaces missing the rocks I took with me on the heels of my shoes.  
I have them here.  
They are with me.

## Dynamite

by Les Rogers

An Excerpt from *Chasing the Horizon*

“Need a crew with licensed drivers for a special project,”  
Frenchy said one morning. “If you guys don’t mind skipping  
cement today.”  
“I’m ready!” Dozer charged forward and stumbled, almost knocking  
the foreman over.  
“Okay.” Frenchy laughed, arms raised in defense. “Where’s Steve?”  
“Cement headache,” I said. “Went to the dispensary.” “You men  
ready?”  
“You bet,” Sven said. John nodded. I wondered what the job was,  
why it was special.  
“Bring both flat beds, and follow me,” Frenchy said.  
Dozer pulled his massive body up into the cab of the International  
and Sven climbed into the passenger side. I got behind the wheel of the six-by-  
six and John joined me. We followed the foreman across the base to a remote  
area and a fenced site we had not seen before.  
Dozer’s enthusiasm sank when he saw our task. Several tons of

dynamite had to be removed from a collapsing storage shed and hauled to an underground bunker on the slopes of Birch Hill. The explosives were packed in small boxes, stoutly made from one-inch lumber. I wondered how many sticks were in each box and how easily a box could explode.

“They tell me it’s good stuff, not old,” Frenchy said, “so it should be safe to handle. You could probably toss it around. But don’t. Treat it like it’s fragile.”

Dozer looked pale. “*Like* it’s fragile?” He groaned and turned around. I wondered if he were going to leave. We all stood there, looking at Frenchy, hesitant to approach those little crates.

“How fragile?” John asked.

“It’s nitroglycerin,” Frenchy said. “But it’s stabilized. I think they mix it with sawdust and something else.” He walked over and picked up a box. Moving slowly, he held it out from his body while he raised one end then the other, an easy rocking motion. He brought it back to his belly, shook it gently and carried it to Dozer’s truck, set it on the bed and shoved it toward the center. “Dynamite’s not as dangerous as most people think,” he said. “Just take your time, handle it carefully.”

Sven walked over and picked up a box, and I followed him. Dozer stayed back, watching. He looked as if he wanted to say something, but he didn’t.

“Don’t stack it much,” Frenchy said. “Maybe just two boxes high. And don’t go to the edge of the bed. Stay back a foot or more. We’ll make several trips if we need to. When you’re loaded, wait here. I’ll lead the way.” He drove off.

“Shit,” Dozer said.

Sven grinned. His posture said *let’s load it*. John watched Dozer, waiting for him to move.

“You think this might explode, Dozer?” he asked.

Dozer didn’t answer. He was normally relaxed, a slow-paced but steady worker, one of the few who accepted the long days and hazards of handling sacked cement with a smile, but now he was struggling.

I felt sympathetic. Maybe Dozer should go to the dispensary. *He’s sick* we would tell the foreman. I had felt nervous myself when I saw the dynamite, instinctive fear of handling dangerous material. But I trusted Frenchy’s judgment and saw our task as another adventure.

“It’s better than cement,” Sven said. “More healthy, I think.” He walked under the shed roof, and again I followed. We each carried a box to the International. When we came back for more, John joined us. The next time I went to the shed, Dozer held a crate in his arms. He studied the ground in front of him to be sure nothing lay in his path.

When both vehicles were loaded, we walked over to some large crates

of equipment and squatted in their shade. Frenchy was back in fifteen minutes. In the bed of his pickup, he had signs reading **DANGER - EXPLOSIVES**, and we fastened them to the front and rear of the trucks. Frenchy drove out of the storage site and waited for us to come up behind him.

“I’m not going,” Dozer said. “They’re crazy if they think I’m going to drive a load of dynamite up some damn hill.”

“The boxes look solid,” I said. “We can go real slow. I don’t think they’ll move around.”

“Shit! These old trucks, and the roads in this country. . . .”

“You go first, Dozer. I’ll be right behind, and we’ll watch your load. If we see any boxes move, I’ll blow the horn and we’ll stop.”

Dozer went to the doorless International and stepped up on the running board. He looked back at me. “Keep your eyes peeled,” he said. John and I nodded. I started the six-by-six and waited for Dozer to move.

He got out of his truck and signaled us to wait, then walked around it, looking at the tires. “They think they can make you do anything for a buck sixty-five,” he said, but he climbed up behind the wheel and the engine rumbled to life.

We crept out of the storage site, Dozer keeping us at a walking pace. When we reached the road, he increased his speed to 10, then 15 miles per hour to keep up with Frenchy. We left the base on Gaffney Road and turned on Cushman Street, driving right through the heart of Fairbanks.

Pedestrians stopped and stared, faces showing surprise, even shock. Automobiles behind us stayed back half a block. Up ahead, an approaching car slowed, and the driver rolled down his window. I heard him shouting at Dozer, and when I passed him, he was raging to himself. I read a classic four-letter word on his lips. Someone on base would hear complaints from a town official. The two lanes of the Chena River Bridge were narrow, and trucks had to straddle both lanes. We waited for oncoming traffic to clear, then drove across and out Illinois Street to the Steese Highway. Suddenly, I realized I’d forgotten my promise, and I think John had too. I’d been enjoying the attention we got from people along the way, including a couple of young women standing at the Second Avenue intersection. I had succumbed to a macho image. A guy who drives around with a truckload of explosives, calmly indifferent to danger, like someone delivering milk.

I saw Dozer in the International, straining to watch us in the cracked glass of his interior rearview mirror. The truck didn’t have an outside one. I thrust an arm out the window, reached up, and moved my hand slowly. *Looks good*, I was saying. Let him think we had not forgotten the only responsibility he cared about.

A car coming from the opposite direction stopped on the shoulder. Someone apparently thought it was the thing to do in the face of moving

explosives. I waved more encouragement to Dozer. The driver of the parked car was a woman, and she waved back, returning the gesture I'd aimed at Dozer. Her window was down, and I saw beautiful black hair and a smile. If there were not many women in Alaska, at least they were friendly. I waved to her. Then I waved at Dozer with exuberance. Life was good.

"He's slowed down," John said. "And I see Frenchy's stopped and waiting."

The road was climbing slightly and getting bumpy, and I felt a shudder in our truck body, but the dynamite ahead looked secure. When I glanced through my back window at our own load, it too was tight. But Dozer looked worried. He seemed to watch us more than the road ahead. Maybe my signals were too enthusiastic for trust. I waved with easy movements, trying to assure him, but he needed more. With one foot on the running board, he leaned out of the cab, trying to see his load. He looked back at us. John and I waved. We turned off the gravel of the Steese onto a dirt road that wound through the trees, carrying us up the lower slopes of Birch Hill. At the explosives bunker, Frenchy was already out of his pickup, showing us where to park.

"Well, we didn't blow up," John said. Dozer stared at him, a warning look.

"Let's go," Frenchy said. He grabbed a box and walked toward the bunker opening, where a small, wiry man in coveralls and a rakish fedora waited. We followed him into the gray light of a cave-like structure.

"You the one they call Watchdog?" Frenchy asked.

"Yep, that's me." He pointed to the right side of the facility, where I saw a row of identical boxes on the concrete floor. "Put it here."

"Damn place is full of dynamite," Dozer said, pointing behind us to neatly stacked cases. Beads of sweat hung on his forehead. His fear cast a restless shadow over us as we packed our cargo in, stepping from bright sun into the darkened atmosphere of this underground den. All those silent boxes, packed with destructive energy. I imagined someone dropping a box and the cave exploding. Would we know what happened? Would we hear the blast? Feel it?

Watchdog attended our progress like a doting parent. As each of us set a box in place, he studied it, often adjusting its position, sometimes just touching it.

"Are you here all the time?" John asked.

Watchdog bent over and squared a box precisely with the one under it. "Every day!" he said, standing up. His voice resonated in the bunker. "All of this has to explode someday. If it happens here, I'll go with it. What the hell, eh?"

He moved forward, his face close to John's, laughing as if they had just shared a hilarious experience. John stepped back in retreat.

"I'm done with this," Dozer said, when we got back to the base. He started to

walk away, then stopped and turned. “My brother and one of our neighbors was killed handling dynamite.” We stood in silence, each with our own image of the deaths he remembered.

“I’ll drive Dozer over to the main area and grab our water can,” Frenchy said. Sandwiches, too. I told the mess we’d need lunch on the job. You men load up.” He returned in half an hour, a grinning Steve in the pickup with him.

“Just what I thought,” Steve shouted in his drill sergeant voice. “I leave you guys alone for a few minutes and you’re goofing off.”

“We’ll finish this with one more trip,” Frenchy said. “Stack ’em three high in the center.”

Steve took Dozer’s place behind the wheel of the International, and back we went, through downtown Fairbanks, John and I again enjoying the public attention, hoping to see interest in the faces of young women.

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Dozer brought his usual outgoing personality to the cement warehouse the next morning. He had not shown up for dinner following the dynamite hauls, and he had not returned to the bunkhouse until eleven o’clock. Steve and I were the only ones awake at our end of the Quonset.

“Hey, Dozer,” I said. He nodded and sat on his cot, then lay on his side, eyes closed.

None of us ever spoke about his fear or the tragedy of his brother. It was as if he had not been present when we hauled the dynamite. But many words had passed through my mind that evening on a solitary hike in the woods. Words about fear and courage.

Only Dozer had needed courage that day. It carried him over his fear, until he recognized his right to back away. The rest of us may have felt uneasy when we saw the dynamite, but we charged ahead. Boldness? Ignorance? Perhaps both, but not courage.



## A Personal Sonnet

by Joseph Briggs

The growing of tedium and ennui  
Of shapeless existence that degrades  
An ego's self defense and vanity  
That through the grounds of graveyards walk parade.  
A torch of conflict and liberation  
The flame and conflagration reigns inside.  
Of a soul's schizophrenic partition  
No vein of calm surrender will abide.  
A revolution of a passive mind;  
The pulse of contradiction beats aloud,  
As the copper fetters no longer bind  
And the triumphal procession trots proud  
    That the trappings and possessions of worth  
    Are light aflame to rejoice in the warmth

## Winter Spores

by Cyndera Quakenbush

In dreams you grow from my wrists and shins  
Flowering like crustaceans from the sea  
Purple membranes, distinct unto yourself,  
Yet also expressions of my body, my skin.

The soil has turned black with the rain  
Redwood roots bleed out their colors.  
You flourish in this fecundity,  
Confident in a world beaten down.

Bursting with reds that rival  
Spring's brightest blossoms  
You promise poison or parasite  
As you stand, legions in darkness.

Though delicious, why with uneasy eyes  
Do we regard you as suspicious?  
Was it the blight of your brother,  
the elixir of your sister?

Organic umbrellas in the mist –  
You are silent and scary!  
You wait out the winters and rain  
You wait for us all!

You are growing from my body now,  
How could I not know,  
That I belong to you?

## Old Student

by Stephen M. Raines

I stare at him  
His weathered face hard as stone  
Yet soft  
His wrinkled eyes  
Full of doubt  
Nervous  
Calloused hand runs thru his hair  
More salt than pepper  
He asks "am I too old for school"  
"is it too late for me"  
Closely, I watch  
Questions arise  
He sees my stare, I turn away  
*tick tick tick*  
I turn back  
Rained it has not  
Yet his eyes wet  
I sigh  
A deep thought  
Reality strikes  
And my cheek tickles

## Tomorrow I Believe in You

by Darin W. Begnaud

Look ! it's there, not perfection,  
Yet something to share.  
That magic time, each new day finds.  
The sparks of life,  
Your child your wife.  
The sun, that never seems to set.  
You win, You lose,  
Yet always you bet.  
That tomorrow, will bring something new.  
Not always happy, some times blue.  
But Tomorrow, I believe in you.

## Imagine That

by Eddy Miller

I stand in the middle of the great Red Wood forest,  
You see me trying to climb your old oak tree.

I dive into the ocean to go deep sea treasure hunting,  
You see me splashing around in your back yard pool.

I take your hand and lead you down the Great Wall of China,  
You follow, holding my hand, wishing you could see through my eyes.

I turn to you with a braces filled smile,  
You smile back and lead me down the road. You once saw it in so many  
different ways.

You once battled pirates on Black Beard's ship.  
You hid from guards in your tree house when you played Robin  
Hood.  
So many years passed. You grew up, and learned life's harsh lessons.

You let go of my hand and I take off running down the road,  
letting my mind be free.

I leave you standing in the road envious of me,  
To be young and free once again.



## We All Have a Sacred Landscape Within

by Mike Green

How beautiful were those jars of peaches she had put up in August.  
“There’s a storm comin’,” gasped his uncle Raymond whipping the white caliche dust from his face.

The boy could still smell the sweetness and taste the clove she told him to hold under his tongue.

They were lined up in the pantry, two rows deep on the top shelf, above the green beans and the pickled okra; half quart mason jars with their gold rings over white wax.

Outside the dark rain had turned to hail, but she just sang louder as it battered down the soft green shoots of cotton.

“This’ll be the third time we’ll have to plant,” Raymond said, turning the sports page with a picture of Gil Hodges on the front.

She struck the old upright, shaking it to the floor boards with something only a little less than anger. Her voice contested with the rising wind. Not knowing the hymn, he followed; like some one lost, searching on the cold Panhandle for a melody. Leaning in to struggling with the lyrics, she still smelled of peaches and flour.

---Cobbler---

He saw the white skin below the tan line on her neck, still red from hoeing.

“You got to grub out this pig-weed or it’ll take over.”

The words about the Ole Rugged Cross, the lost melody, the hail battering the cotton, rang all night in his ears.

Who decides what’s good and bad, right and wrong?



## Me Time

by Eddie Whitaker

I have always enjoyed lying in some tall grass, looking up at the starry night sky. Maybe I'll have a friend or two with me, reminiscing about the good times and thinking about what the future holds, or just have the craziest debates over the most pointless topics. No matter what the situation, they're the times I usually don't forget, as well as being some of times that I look forward to the most.

Tonight's a bit different than those nights, however. No friends, no conversations, and no distractions. Just me, sitting in a lawn chair, accompanied by the clear night sky. With all that's been going on, it's good to get away from the excitement sometimes. You know, to take a look around and actually notice things for once. "Stop and smell the roses," that's what they always say. Mind you, "they" say a lot of things, but this little tidbit of information seems pretty smart if I do say so myself.

My brother got married in Korea awhile back. A kid is already on the way, talk about crazy stuff! Never been an uncle before. Uncle Ed, I think it's got a ring to it! Work's also become pretty nuts. There's only two of us left from the time when the store opened; everyone else is new. Not saying that that's a bad thing, however; heck, I'm glad to be one of the two. It just goes to show you things can change up when you least expect it. School's also wrapped up pretty nicely. It's looking like there's only one more semester to go before graduation! Then off to, well, that's the question of the night. The future holds a pretty wide variety of places one can go, but my calling, I can't say I've heard it yet. May as well stick to school for right now and cross that bridge when I get to it.

Tonight isn't about that, though. I'm going to relax, watch the stars for a bit, and not let the troubles of life get to me. Just me, a cool breeze, and... my little sister? Looks like that was a bit short-lived. Time for movie night with big bro I guess, complete with a Disney classic and a bowl of overly buttered popcorn. No complaints from me anymore, and at least the movie's good. "Don't sweat the small stuff," and "the little things are important" are what my mom has always told me. Completely contradicting one another, in this moment they make more sense than anything else. It seems like my night of relaxation just got a bit better. It's always good to grab a little bit of "me" time, even if it's the time that I share.



## Hacienda

by Crystal Langer

sunny place,  
corners that crumble.  
an ancient and crippled raisin  
full of dreadful melodies  
and annoying heartbeats.  
fools and queens roam  
this broken desolation  
and ignorantly stomp,  
stomp out the stars,

my tranquility.

## Never Forgotten

by Tracy Campese

I always loved you from the start  
From your first heart beat, to your first kick,  
From the first time you made me sick.

Filled with joy and excitement I couldn't wait for you.  
My little angel within; oh, how I couldn't wait to hold you;  
Oh, how I couldn't wait to kiss you.  
Days, weeks, months, I waited for you, my sweet little angel within.

Never thought I would hear those words that I've lost you.  
My little angel within; I no longer feel you or your kicks.  
Your heartbeat is no more and they took you from me.

No longer excited or filled with joy,  
But lost, broken, and filled with anger that I've lost you,  
My little angel within; how I hurt without you,  
So lost and confused without you, no longer do I wish to live.

Then, I felt you within,  
In my heart I felt you.  
Thoughts and memories of your kicks, and when you made me sick,  
Memories of you I will never forget.  
I'll always have you in my heart, my little angel within.

## The Man In The Black Suit

by Joy Johnson

The man in the black suit wanders down your lane.  
He meanders toward your car,  
Toward your house,  
Toward your door...  
His eyes stare at you,  
At your children,  
At your spouse...  
He wanders slowly closer;  
With eyes black of hunger,  
Black of darkness within a closed casket,  
They never stray.  
Never stray from you,  
From your children,  
From your spouse...  
With a slowly titled gate wavering this way and that,  
He slowly approaches,  
Pushing his black wheel chair;  
Trust that he still approaches.  
The wheel chair squeaks and squawks,  
It complains for all to hear,  
And still he approaches but no one to hear...  
And silently,  
One step,  
Then another,  
He draws nearer to one person or the other,  
Silently he is ignored,  
Silently he is repressed,  
Silently he is disregarded...  
Until his wheelchair draws silent as death to a lover's heart,  
Do you finally hear...  
The silence that you all fear,  
A silent passenger now in the wheelchair.  
The two of them now stare,  
And the man in the black suit pushes,  
Silently his passenger away.  
With his prize,  
A smile now in his black eyes,  
He pushes them away,  
While the rest turn to bray with sorrow in the worst way.

## Jessica Dubroff

by Annette Louise Dawson

One Perfect Dream,  
     Too late to forget.  
 A memory,  
     Is all that will ever be left.  
 A child,  
     Not yet past her seventh year.  
 Never to see,  
     Another year.  
 A dream to perfect,  
     Never to be fulfilled.  
 A mother,  
     Without her daughter.  
 A wife,  
     Without her husband.  
 To much faith,  
     In professionals  
 A small plane down,  
     Who will mourn.  
 It happened before,  
     A teacher instead.  
 An innocent,  
     With such a wonderful dream.  
 Never to be fulfilled,  
     In her life.  
 Nothing more than,  
     A memory.  
 A reason to try,  
     She was brave until the end.

*Note: Annette passed away on May 26, 2010. She was a CMC student and earned AA degrees in Psychology and English. While working toward her Baccalaureate degree in Psychology at CSUSB, she returned to CMC for a certificate in Early Childhood Development, which she had just completed at the time of her death. That Annette had found her calling in working with children was evidenced by her being on the President's List for 2010. Her parents, Anne and Randall Dawson, have also attended classes at CMC.*



## The Day the Music Lived

by Jennifer Reid

The lights shined down on the sea of people, so many people. To her young mind, there seemed to be millions of them moving around the huge arena. She followed closely behind her parents, holding their hands. She was only four years old and was probably the youngest person at this event. The crowd around her seemed very menacing, but she knew that nothing bad was going to happen to her. Her parents would see to that. They finally reached their seats as the butterflies in her stomach grew. The roar of the people, the smell of beer and the excitement made her head swim. She turned around and some woman had her foot propped up on the back of her chair. With a surge of confidence, the tiny girl swatted at the woman's foot and told her to "get off my chair!" Then she turned around in her seat and suddenly, the arena went black and the cheers of the crowd were thunderous.

From the enormous stage came the sound of electric guitars and drums. Her father lifted her up onto his shoulders, so she could see the magic that was happening on the stage...and that's where it all began...her obsession for music.

So, she sat down 24 years after that fateful night wondering where that obsession had gotten her. When she went to concerts, she didn't rock out like everyone around her did; instead, she studied the musicians. She was there to watch them play; she knew the songs, but to watch them be performed was much more intoxicating. Thanks to her father and his quick thinking and courage, she and her mother were able to meet some of their favorite idols. She wasn't in the music industry in any way, but she felt that helped her see what was meant to be seen. The shows still held their magic, even after all these years, but even idols fall if held too high.

So where *had* it gotten her? It had given her a lifetime of memories that no one, not even the cancer, could steal from her. She still went to see her idols, no matter how weak she was. They kept her going, the music kept her going. The music would last forever, even if she couldn't. She wanted to crawl up in the melody and stay there where nothing could ever hurt her.

Now here she was...lying in a bed; she could barely move, but thanks to the magic that flowed from her headphones, in her mind she was dancing. She was able to see her idols and watch them play her favorite songs thanks to her memories. Somewhere deep inside she knew that there had always been a reason why she studied their movements and how smoothly they played. This was the reason. She knew that one day she could no longer see them in person, although she never thought that it would be quite this soon in her life.

She still had so much life and love in her heart, but she was alone. Her only companion was the music. She trusted the music; it would never hurt or betray her. All this time she never really noticed how alone she was until she

had no choice but to face it, until she had to face her own mortality. Now her only “family” consisted of a team of doctors and a couple of nurses.

One of the nurses, Greta, would sit and talk with her. Greta understood her and the music. That’s all that mattered, that someone else understood the importance of the music. The music was magic. She didn’t know for certain if there was a higher power or even if she believed in one for that matter. She believed that she had been given a gift. She understood the healing powers of music and she knew it had kept her alive thus far.

However, she could feel herself getting weaker and knew that she was almost done here. The day that Greta came to visit there was something unsettling in the air and the menacing clouds put a cap on the world. She handed Greta her MP3 player and told her it was a gift and to remember her. The kind nurse sat with her until the light passed from her eyes and Greta started to cry.

The rain continued for the rest of the week as Greta tirelessly worked her shifts. Then one day after work she was digging in her purse for her car keys when she felt the MP3 player. Greta pulled the slick black device from her purse and smiled a little. She put on the headphones and turned it on. As the music started to play, Greta noticed that the clouds were breaking apart. Through the drizzling rain she saw the most brilliant rainbow and her smile grew bigger as she listened to the melody.



## Melancholy of Life

by Emlee Lotspeich

Why persist in a struggling effort with  
 No assurance that our ultimate goal  
 Will be attained? And is it not a myth,  
 This ever eluding wish of our soul,  
 That drives us toward many overwhelming  
 Losses and pains in this crude existence?  
 Furthermore, what exactly is this thing  
 For which we seem to desperately sense  
 Yet appears forever out of arm’s length?  
 How can a quest begin when the item  
 Is unknown to its seeker? How much strength  
 Must be mastered to win over fate’s whim?  
 And yet, we persist, choosing to live on,  
 Hoping to be remembered once we’re gone.

## Edvard Munch

by Carolyn Eads

In quiet, still air  
of the museum  
hope and struggle of  
Edvard Munch  
surrounds me.

So many blank faces,  
some filled with anger  
others pain, hold  
unseeing eyes, above  
anguished forms.

His depiction of life flows  
from obvious deep loss  
with his little sister's death  
through the beautiful  
vapid Madonna  
in the Panel of Life, to  
the painful stages of existence  
with the cast of characters in  
The Dance.

His life's loves  
losses  
distress  
loneliness  
search for . . . .

Viewing his work  
feeling his struggle  
for me  
it all culminates in soundless fury of  
The Scream.

## The Time Machine (But Not the One You're Thinking Of)

by Krystina Mason

Once upon a time (actually, it was more like a few months ago, but pretend you didn't hear that...) in a small town that no one has ever heard of, three young girls, Ronnie, Rosie, and Roxi discovered that the Phantom of the Opera really existed. They also discovered that time-travel is possible, and that if you throw tantrums and threaten people, you'll always get your own way. But for now, that's beside the point.

It all started when the aforementioned three girls discovered that they had two things in common: their love of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical classic "The Phantom of the Opera" and the so-called Punk Rock band, Green Day. Where does Green Day fit in with the concept of time-travel and Phantom, you ask? Well, stop asking stupid questions and you'll find out. The answer is simple. When the girls found out what they had in common, they decided that they wanted to meet their idols. There were, however, some problems. One being that their chances of meeting rock star celebrities through sheer luck were slim to none. The other being that if the Phantom ever really lived, well, the fact is that he lived in the late 1800's and would now be feeding worms.

Then one day, the answer to both predicaments hit them like a pimp with a cane. They composed a series of threatening, succinct letters for each member of Green Day, sent them along with a box of brownies for good measure, and sat back and waited. Now, how a parcel containing food got past Green Day's security and God knows who else is beyond reason, but it did get past. The band members ate the brownies, read the letters, and agreed to the three girls' terms. Common decency won't allow me to say exactly what the letters said, but the gist of it was that either Green Day builds a time machine, goes to the small town that no one has ever heard of to pick up the three girls, and acts as their escorts in the space-time continuum, or there would be "hell to pay".

As stated before, Green Day agreed (which leads one to wonder what was actually in those brownies), and after sitting around for some time, Mike the bassist finally stood up and got to work on the time machine. How a high school drop-out with absolutely no experience in the field of science was able to successfully discover and master the secrets of time-travel is unknown. The only sure fact is that he turned his band-mate's brand-new convertible into the time machine itself. Billie Joe, the lead singer/guitarist and band-mate in question, did not contribute to the construction whatsoever and was pretty pissed off when he found out. The scene went as follows:

"Guess what I did!" Mike yelled with school-girlish giddiness.

"I'd really rather not," Billie Joe replied, temporarily forgetting the terms he was now bound to.

"Well, I'm gonna tell you anyway. I built the time-machine!"

"You're finished already?" asked Tre' Cool, the band's drummer, who hadn't forgotten what he was supposed to be doing, but still sat around anyway.

"Yes, now come and see!" Mike said, running off to the garage/newly-added science lab before he could see if anyone was really following (and to save on dialogue, yes, they did follow promptly, if you were wondering).

\* \* \*

"My car!" Billie Joe shrieked as he laid eyes on the monstrosity that was once his sleek, blood red convertible.

"Yeah, isn't it great?" asked Mike, beaming with pride and not noticing Billie Joe's horror.

"My car!" Billie Joe repeated, his voice going up an octave.

"I know, it's great! And all I had to do was--"

"My CAR!?" Billie Joe interrupted, his voice louder and higher than ever.

"Yes, and all I had to--"

"I can't believe...my car!" Billie Joe continued on.

And on...and on...and on. Needless to say, they went on like this through the rest of the day and well into the night. But once Billie Joe stopped crying and Tre' was able to pry Billie Joe's hands from around Mike's neck, the band knew they had to be on their way.

It took them a while to get from Berkley, or Oakland...or wherever in the hell they live to the small town that no one had ever heard of (after all, no one had ever heard of it), but eventually they got there and knocked on a few doors until they found Ronnie, Rosie, and Roxi.

Ronnie opened the front door, took one look at Green Day standing before her, and promptly fainted. Rosie rushed from the other room to see what all the commotion was, only to see Green Day, yell, "Holy -censored-, it's them!" and faint as well. Roxi was the only one to keep her head. She politely invited them into the house, stepping over her fallen friends, and said, "It's about damn time."

Ronnie and Rosie came to, and all three girls gushed and threw questions a mile a minute at Green Day, barely giving them time to answer between the new questions, the shrieks, and the giggles. After a long while, they all realized that they were wasting time (apparently forgetting that an honest to goodness time machine was sitting in the driveway and they could do whatever they damn well wanted). Once this realization sank in, they set off on their journey.

The space-time continuum was all they had expected and more. There were swirling colors and flashy lights, accompanied by years arranged in chronological order. If you steered the time machine into any given year, you were hurtled into that time (which they found out the hard way when they ended up among the dinosaurs...how cliché). The added bonus was that the space-time continuum also included words flying through the air. They made no sense, and didn't even correspond with the year by which they flew. Some words included were squirrel, leprechauns, toothpaste, gazebo, and so on and so forth.

Finally, after going at full-speed to reach their destination after the dinosaur incident, the time travelers finally made it to 1870 - the year in which Andrew Lloyd Webber's version of the Phantom apparently lived.

\* \* \*

The Phantom was sitting at his organ, alone as always and waiting for his potential wife Christine (he wishes) to visit him. When he heard a knock at the door of his lair, he felt positively giddy with excitement, knowing that Christine was the only one who knew how to find his underground home. His excitement, however, began to fade as the knocking became more of a pounding and kicking sound. He worried that yet another angry mob was coming for him.

He took a shot of morphine for bravery and grabbed his famous lasso, preparing to whoop their sorry butts. He warily opened the door, only to be trampled by three girls in curious clothing and men wearing eye makeup and torn-up tuxedos. He noticed that the girls started giggling and talking amongst themselves, and it took a ridiculous amount of time for them to regain their composure. Finally, The Phantom decided he must speak up, completely forgetting about the weapon he still gripped in his skeletal hands.

"Who are you people? And why are you men wearing eye makeup?" The Phantom asked.

"It's called Punk Rock," Billie Joe answered, as if the answer was so simple and obvious.

"Which is?" asked The Phantom.

"Never mind," Ronnie said before Billie Joe could explain.

"Yeah, we've got bigger issues to deal with," said Rosie.

"Like the fact that, now that we know you really exist, we have to kidnap you and take you back home as the ultimate souvenir," Roxi explained.

"Pardon...?" asked a disbelieving Phantom, his eyes going wide.

"Wait, wait, wait, your letters never said anything about kidnapping!" Mike protested.

"Shut up and eat another brownie," Ronnie said, taking out a baggie and handing it to Mike, who obediently consumed its contents.

Well, it took some...persuasion (morphine and brownies, actually) to get The Phantom to come back to our time with the girls and for Green Day to go along with yet another term. The time travelers were lucky (a term used loosely) that they went to 1870 after the incident at the Opera which made The Phantom so infamous. Otherwise, some big paradoxal thing would have happened and the girls would have never been obsessed with “The Phantom of the Opera” because it would have never been written about in 1911, and so nearly a hundred years later the girls wouldn’t have thrown tantrums and freaked out Green Day to get their own ways, yada yada - the ins and outs aren’t clear. Point being, they timed their arrival perfectly, and were able to procure the most coveted souvenir in Broadway history: The Phantom in all of his skeletal, genius-y, masked, brooding goodness.

Once back in their own time period, the time travelers parted ways (meaning the guys in Green Day got a restraining order against the three girls, but not after a few memory-making laughs and good times). Green Day went on to produce their new CD and lived Punk Rockin’ ever after.

What became of The Phantom is unclear. Some say he went to Disneyland, freaked the fudge out at all the modern technological advances, and ran off into the sunset, never to be heard from again. Others say that Ronnie, Rosie, and Roxi - after being unable to come up with a custody agreement between the three of them - sold him to hookers in Vegas, where he began to work at the Venetian Hotel as a stage shifter - which would explain why Webber’s show is so popular there. No one knows for sure.

And as for Ronnie, Rosie, and Roxi themselves? Well, they left the small town that no one has ever heard of, got their grubby hands on the time machine (breaking the restraining order, but the case never went to trial), sold it to the Smithsonian Institute, and used their earnings to buy the state of California.

Some may not believe that any of this happened. Some think it’s just the imagination vomit of a really bored teenager, looking to get some points in her high school English class. But whether or not you choose to believe what you’ve just heard, you can be certain about a few things: don’t do drugs, do throw tantrums, and observe a moment of silence for Gaston Leroux, the author of the original “Phantom of the Opera”, who’s probably rolling in his grave by now.

Now, for a non-cliché closing...Screw it, for good measure, let’s just say they all lived happily ever after and be done with it.



## Haiku, Not Quite

by Emlee Lotspeich

I once found a star  
In the silver folds of my  
Slumberous blanket.

It twinkled as if  
Greeting its observer and  
Glowed in my palm.

Such gentle rays sank  
Deep within and flowed through streams  
That lead to my soul.

“Shine brightly as I,”  
It glimmered kindly, “and then,  
Come! Catch me again!”

Up, it streaked across  
The morning sky to rejoin  
The warm glow of dawn.

## Nerd Love

by T.J. Dorian

We stand out from the crowd,  
there's no denying it shows—  
I walk into walls,  
you put things up your nose.

Lab coats are white,  
the moon landing's a lie—  
I'm frightened of closets,  
you're phobic of heights.

Chessboards are checkered,  
motherboards are green—  
and I get a little crazy when  
I drink too much caffeine—

and you get very nervous,  
and start to pace and sigh  
when listing off computer parts  
you think you'd like to buy.

But surely you agree:  
check-mating can be erotic,  
especially when your foe can be  
so charmingly neurotic.

Yes, we're a little different,  
and we're silly in the brain,  
but dig deeper, and you'll find  
that nerd love's just the same.

## Requiem for an Ancestor

by Lisa Rosati

Twisted, brittle and aged bone  
Bearer of stories.  
Keeper of time  
Speak.  
From the Dreamtime of the Primitives.

Speak to me of sunlight and shadow.  
Of ages long past and mammoth hunters  
Outlined on the gray sky.  
Of mists and Pleistocene rains and Aeolian winds.  
Of white and sacred stones.

Old One. Relic! Grinning.  
Cave-wrested, the deep dust clinging.  
My hand-itself a fossil-to-be.  
The guise of living flesh.  
Its rotting life, grasping  
Beholden to she who decays no more.

Revered sister, address this Living Fossil.  
Whisper to me.  
From the shadows of dead campfires.  
Of the spear, the hide, the Dire Wolf  
Of the Great Ice Bear.  
Speak.  
This future dead awaits your reply.

## The Artist

by Evelyn Dockery

The artist inside harbors hatred,  
For the blood spilled from these veins,  
As black as ink it covers,  
Every single page.  
The woman inside misses her.  
She was all that she had left.  
The emptiness once filled by words  
Has left her so bereft.  
It was the artist who held her  
When you would not at night.  
And brought her tales of splendor,  
When there seemed to be no light.  
That was the other side you did not see,  
To her it was so much,  
The elegance of pen in hand,  
Caressed like lover's touch.  
In there she was not yours,  
In writing she was free,  
The artist may have passed but I-  
Keep her right here- with me.

## Fighting for Affection

by Priscilla Holloway

Feelings for you,  
Weigh heavy on my heart.

They make it hard to breath.

Suffocated by my own emotions.

There are knots in my stomach  
that only your affection could untie.

We both try to win at this game,  
when it should be a tie.

## Ascension

by Crystal Langer

Don't let what was done to you define you, my love.  
Be the thing you long to be.  
Don't try to force the glove;  
it will fit naturally.  
The passions external we pine for  
are the reflections of the innards we feel.  
Unexpressed words never breathed but born.  
Don't let what was done to you define you, my love.  
Stand on the cement and take the pain.  
Don't let your follies use you;  
use them to fuel the fire.  
The fire that you so desire.

## Faded Memories

by Monique Maldonado

It seems like a dream I awoke from —  
Like some distant memory.  
These past few months seem a blur  
As reality and dreams combine.  
My mind knows not what is real anymore.  
Is all I knew to be true a lie?  
What if reality were really a dream,  
And a dream — reality?  
Who determines what is real?  
I want nothing more than to be free —  
Free from life's captive weight.  
My mind is full of faded memories —  
Nothing more than faded memories.  
In the night I shed a tear,  
Wishing it had only been a dream,  
For now I am surrounded only —  
By these faded memories.

## Teaching Poetry Third Tri

by Candace Gilbert

Fourth period poetry, a journey unknown.  
 Metaphors spring from cookies crunched in the ground.  
 Sweet, bold, velvet, sour, loud,  
 Poetry tastes like community.  
 The principal wonders why we sit on the floor,  
 Yucca Valley High, L13.  
 He doesn't wonder. He knows.  
 We walk around peering through paper plates  
 Creating catacombs and craters  
 In teens who are ancient babies.  
 "You're obsessively weird," they say as they leave.  
 Broken lead pencils of symbol and simile  
 Litter the ground and wait.

Students enter, poetic as a classroom.  
 They merge with their desks and sink through the floor.  
 The poet master stands. "More poetry," she demands.  
 "Your personal deck, a universe unfolds.  
 Pretend portfolios are worthless gold.  
 They can't be read when you grow old."  
 Fling yourself on the floor, read a poem, eat a peach.  
*C'est Dulce et Decorum.*  
 The words creep up your spine and  
 Crawl out your mouth,  
 Dripping crumbs as they go.

## I Don't Care

by Heath McLaughlin

**S**o where do we begin? Let's begin at the beginning. Let's begin with a child only a few years old, yet old enough to recognize the absence of his mother and father. This leads that sponge to believe that he doesn't count, that he doesn't matter. His mother and father don't care *for* him, so how can they care *about* him? That's how black and white the world can be through a child's eyes. His first lesson in cynicism, with this in tow, he must now stagger through life. The strong foundation and fortified walls were higher than any

man's eye can see. The words tattooed across his cerebellum echoed through his mind: *I don't care!*

Let's refer back to the beginning for a moment. We have a child with *I don't care* as his mantra. This has mapped out a course for him. Withdrawn from life and the world, the sponge is placed in special ed. He then begins living a lie that's force-fed to him and reinforced daily by teachers that prefer to quit rather than to question. This enables the sponge to act the part and give them what they want. This is how special ed, in my experience, nurtured the negative.

Let's move ahead: June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1989, a day unlike any other, ready to cast aside the shackles and stigma that have covered this sponge over his whole adolescent life. I drape a shiny blue gown over myself, a square blue cap upon my head. A tassel hangs in my left periphery. I walk slowly in time with music, shake a man's hand that I had never met before. In my other hand, he places a rolled-up piece of paper, then congratulates me; I move the tassel from my left to my right periphery. At that moment, tears of joy swell up in my grandmother's eyes. Now I begin to run, run from what I was supposed to be. I remember muttering the words *don't look back*.

Twenty-two years later, I have a three-year-old sponge of my own. Long I've pondered what example I may lead by to benefit him: college, college, I thought, a college degree will be what he sees from his father. What better way I thought to best prepare him for the world that lies ahead of him. Therefore, in October of last year, I set forth on my quest. I had come to find, after taking my placement test, that I would need my high school transcripts. In the process of tracking them down, I'd found that I'd never graduated, another lie fed to me (that I believed).

Had this been before having my son, it would have broken me. I stand here today before my peers with a message. Life is too short to take for granted: your friends, your lover, the air you breathe, and - in my mind least of all - your commitment to yourself and education. Through my son's eyes I have found what I had lost when I was three. I get to be the example I was looking for, as well as myself. For conquering, what has been bestowed upon me? That sponge of mine will be proud to walk in his father's footsteps, the ugly cycle broken by the belief in one's own self. Let the inspiration in your life be yourself.



## Shaman Song

by Richard Lee

Eagle sits on my shoulder  
 Panther stalks in my shadow  
 Power animal nudges my heart,  
 Pushes me this way and that  
 Sees through my eyes and  
 Watches as I am left with no-  
 Thing to do but move as move-  
 Ment moves. I find nothing  
 To fear, nothing to change.  
 I move as fish move  
 I touch the pulse of animal  
 Heart, breathe the mystery  
 Of light and air, and come  
 To know this place of silence  
 In which, once and for all,  
 I AM. Wolves walk at my  
 Heels and I walk at theirs.

## My Winter Emotion

by Darin W. Begnaud

O' winter heart of sorrow.  
 Bring me to spring; take me to the month of May.  
 Shelter me from,  
 my winter emotion, from my dismay.  
 Keep me safe, till darkness goes away.  
 Till we walk, hand in hand,  
 through summer-time land.  
 Till we sleep, summers sweet slumber.  
 Till I know, no cares.  
 Till my troubles, I lay down.  
 Till I no longer, look on these days.  
 Till tomorrow, is clear, in my gaze.  
 Till my heart, no longer cries.  
 Till my mind, wipes away, the haze.  
 O' Winter Heart of Sorrow.

## From February to Arizona

by Ellen Baird

I standing here at my kitchen.  
During the day I wash out sippy-cup juice.  
At night, I don flowered panties which amuse you.

We whisper. He sleeps.

And I continually ask -- only to myself:  
do you notice the steam of the dishwasher  
that dampens my breast (once milk-bearing)?  
The dish soap bubbles, which fall childishly on my thigh,  
do they call you to play, as my thoughts of your skin  
do me?

While my child gently sleeps (my life creation),  
are you able -- am I --to appreciate my latex-gloved  
hand,  
my sleep-deprived sweat which falls behind my ear?

As James Brown sings, I wonder if my womanhood --  
my well seasoned, behind me now, reckless days of  
shouting and broken curfews --brings forth the adoration  
which was rightfully mine.  
Whence once before you first encountered this little diamond.

Oh, it shines. Oh still and anon.  
Bolder now for the blossom-birthered love which taught it.  
Faceted by the lyrics and illumination it has of late  
encountered.

And you: so seemingly unadorned  
in this desert landscape,  
luminous.  
Will you rise to embrace  
that which will savor?

For me, having borne it out alone --  
strenuous, yet uncomforted --  
I care not for your strength, but for  
your constancy.

And That One Moment After

“Hey Toots!” You were, I think, the first person I met when I came here.

The closest thing to Frank Sinatra, you seemed to me.

Speaking of “Mama.”

You offered to marry us, and in that one moment after I laughed in the courtyard. Absurd, yet convincing.

So new. My new family. Home, charm, and the sky. The kiss on the cheek; you smoked.

Later, I spoke in to your phone, and in that one moment after, you added “the bambino.”

Me and my son.

You and your mom.

Who needs whom?

Who takes care of whom?

Some woman created you, ears and all, with tiny perfect feet, and in that one moment after, she held you, as your wings disappeared.

(All these men leave their moms) mine will too, some day.

But will he do it with such courage? Will he be as brave as you have been? Will he too demand his wings back? Will he be as lavish as to trade his feet, his tiny, perfect feet?

How do you take those wide strides?

How do you know you are going out in the open air, and what for?

How do you not hide, crumple on the bathroom floor, the door locked, with a needle full of abandonment? And in that one moment after, it's left to your sister. Can you hear her knocking? Pounding?

Why do you get to choose? Who gave you the power? What did you use to pull the trigger, Toots?

And in that one moment after, before the birds fly, is the sound loud or blunt?

Now that you traded your feet, now that you cannot hear, do you find you have heightened your ability to fly?



# Ohhh Chemistry..... errr O-Chem!

by Robert Minchin

The Future.....

Thoughts of enjoying life,  
With sweet smelling Ester.  
But that's if I make it through,  
The remaining tests this semester.

Tales of unfaithful electrons,  
And their delocalization.  
Or worse- those partner sharing hydrogen,  
And their hyper conjugation.

Delirium.... Laughter,  
Madness and often tears.  
There are many ways,  
To deal with Organic Chemistry fears.

For my Nobel Prize,  
In Pharmacokinetics.  
I propose the use of,  
Organic Chemistry for anesthetics.

It's numbing affect,  
After an hour or two.  
Could be of use to surgeons,  
And dentists too.

One day I'm sure,  
It's possible I'll miss this class.  
Let me rephrase...  
That's if I pass.

## Looking For Joy

by Glorianna Joy Ruecker

Collie Too Flower, gazed through the chain link fence up at the A-Frame house sitting on top of the hill. This is where she once lived with Joy her blonde, blue eyed little girl. In a time when she could run free through the vast Trabuco Canyon hills chasing everything that moved...even cars.

Now Joy has left her behind in a new home, four acres surrounded by a chain link fence and people she has never known, even in the past two years she has lived there.

The shelties brown eyes sparkled with excitement when she saw a blue car driving down the dirt road from the A-frame house. *Maybe they are coming to pick me up.* Across the street the blue car came to a halt at the paved road with a cloud dust following close behind. Collie Too watched intently as the car turned right onto the paved road. She ran over to the corner of the chain link fence near the entrance with anticipation. Once again, as so many times before, the car had passed by the entrance without even slowing down. The little brown dog chased the car to the opposite side of the fence line with a bark of *wait for me...I am right here.* Motionless she stood staring out of the fence hoping the car would return. Only it did not.

The dinner whistle broke away her thoughts for a great escape to freedom. Before making this attempt she wanted to ease her growling stomach first. Anxiously, Collie crossed the rocky creek bed, past the small corral and ran up the embankment to the lawn. In the corner of her eye a flash of teeth snapped at Collie Too forcing her to side step out of the way. She escaped a bite from a rescued sheltie. Collie came to sit down upon the embedded dirt path she once formed on the lawn when she was able to run here. Now it was in Tuff's territory.

Collie Too took a stand staring deep into the wild look of Tuff's brown eyes. Tuff large size overshadowed Collie Too only her free spirit to not conform into his pack annoyed him. The black coated sheltie, Tuff quivering lips uplifted into a snarl revealing his yellow stained fangs. A deep throated growl came forth into Tuff's throat wanting Collie Too to role on her back in submission. . Collie Too tried to force the same sound deep within her throat but the only growl that came forth was from her stomach.

A human voice erupted in an alarm tone from the house breaking the intense moment. Both of the dogs looked over at the lady waving her hands at them. "David, come help me! Collie Too and Tuff are in a fighting stance! A blonde-haired woman rushed over to Collie Too, clipping the leash onto her collar. Close behind, a man clipped a leash onto Tuff's collar pulling the two dogs apart.

The married couple started walking towards the wooden fence where they keep the shelties at night but his wife came to an abrupt halt. "I think we should keep them apart...David."

Her husband faced her. "Melinda, we don't have time to play musical dogs." She looked over at the confined wooden pine fence. "Tuff will hurt Collie Too if they are together. Maybe we should bring Collie Too inside the house."

"Collie likes to chase anything that moves...even the cats. Remember last time?" Melinda went into a deep thought. "Well maybe we can hire a special trainer to help teach her not to chase anything?"

David chuckled laying a hand on her shoulder. "We cannot confine Collie's free spirit. Besides I already know the problem," he looked down at Collie Too "what we have seen here is that Tuff won't allow Collie to run around here freely. Tuff believes this is his territory now. She won't back down to him. So I have found Collie a new home."

"What a new home! You didn't even discuss this with me, David. We promised Joy that Collie Too would always have a home here." She placed her hands on her hips.

David began walking away toward the wooden fence. "Joy can go visit Collie at her new home.

"David...why are you walking away from me!" Melinda yelled across the lawn. "Can't we discuss this like adults?"

Her husband didn't turn around rather raised one arm up in his acknowledgement to her. "Only that Collie's new owner will be picking her up in the morning."

Before opening the latch of the wooden gate, her husband turned around to face her. "Her new home is in the best interest for Collie." He turned around, opened the latched gate and led Tuff inside to be fed with the other shelties.

The leash was unclipped from Collie's collar and she was led into an isolated chain link dog pen. She stroked the sheltie's brown silky fur. "Sorry, I did not have the opportunity to get know you better. We both know you always will be Joy's dog." Collie did not know how to react except her stomach grumbled once again.

"Oh you haven't been fed yet. Let me go get your dinner." Melinda left, closing the chain link fence behind her. Collie wished she had left the gate open because she saw a rabbit in the outside brush looking in at the grass lawn for dinner. A roadrunner jumped on the fence, flew down onto the paved drive way, looked both ways, and ran over to grass to scoop up some grubs.

When Melinda opened the gate, Collie sprinted out the door in fast pursuit of the roadrunner. It flew on top of the chain link and jumped down

into the brush. Collie eagerly wanted to follow the roadrunner, but the fence line prevented her freedom.

“I know you just want to run, girl, so I will leave your food right outside of the pen door.” Melinda went inside, leaving Collie alone with the chirping crickets, howling coyotes, and a full moonlit night sky.

Early in the morning Collie woke to hear a car crossing the old wooden bridge beneath the canopy of oak trees. The gate screeched opened as the sheltie peeked up from the embankment to see if Joy was coming to pick her up. The sheltie watched an older man step out of the old beat-up red truck. He walked over to the front door and gave the doorbell a ring.

David and Melinda opened the front door to speak to the old man. Melinda stepped onto the porch blowing the dog whistle. Collie Too came over to the doorstep.

“She is a good running dog,” Melinda told the old man.

“That is what we need,” guiding Collie into the crate and placing her in the front seat of the truck.

Collie Too remembered Joy leaving in a truck.

*Maybe she was going to find Joy.*



## Sheepwrack

by Aubrey Leahy

Drowned baby sheep  
cast ashore on sunlit strand.  
are wracks of lamb

## In Cold-Hearted December

by Savya Lee

I walk through winter's open window  
Step by step into a Pagan place of  
Mysteries. A stonehenge of parallels  
And desires.

Yes, it's cold hearted December  
The month of the winter solstice:  
The shortest day of the year  
The longest night--  
The month of celebrations and  
Light to combat the gloom.

There's a fire in the fireplace of my heart  
The kettle on the hearth sizzles.  
"No," I say, "No mint tea for me  
I'm traveling the road of the  
unconquered Sun,  
Joining the Pagan celebrations that pass for our own.  
Green trees and mistletoe, colored lights and gifts,  
The birthday of Yeshua, the child sent to us by God.  
The skies darken  
Lightning flashes  
The soft whisper of the desert wind  
Whips itself into a roar  
And I breathe in  
The joy of the season's passion  
Breathe out the mystery of Love.

## Ode to Yesterday

by Evelyn Dockery

Ode to the walls inside this house,  
how you have sheltered me,  
and to the people outside of it  
for having set me free.

Ode to the calls we heard at night,  
when there were two of us,  
and to the savagery of men,  
though I forget their lust.

Ode to the howls of the wolves,  
why they would rush this so,  
and to the feast that follows soon,  
and teeth that do not let go.

Ode to the tears that felled the sky,  
where then they hit the ground,  
ode to the silence until sleep,  
ode to the guitar's sound.

Ode to the few who understand,  
and to the one who knows the most...  
My best friend is that purest hand,  
that slays all of my ghosts.

## Misplaced Emotions

by Melody Blake

Nostalgia is not always for something personal  
experienced in the past.

At times it is a quality or a thing missed entirely,  
as though someone else's dream or a happenstance  
of another life.

I do miss the slow afternoons of the mid-1950's  
in a small California town, bees buzzing,  
the slam of a screen door in the kitchen,  
ripe fruit falling from the trees,  
plopping into the soft earth.

Yet, at times, pictures come into my mind of being on a trip in  
an old station wagon. Perhaps the man driving is Ansel Adams  
on a photographic expedition. We cross the deserts of  
California, Arizona and New Mexico. We rarely speak.

Another time I'm on a red car speeding along the tracks from  
San Berdoo to Los Angeles with Aunt Hazel. Just as she told me long  
afterward, we see hardly any automobiles on  
the road paralleling the tracks.

Often I have strong desires to go back before the bad decisions I made  
or the tragedies that were far ahead, both for me and worldwide.

I wish I would have had long, leisurely days and nights to appreciate  
my new husband and explore marriage at our own pace -- without all  
the interventions from family and events beyond our ken.

A very strong foundation could have been built.  
We deserved no less than this.

## The Decision

by Nell Sehestedt

Dan glanced at the clock on the wall and his eyes strayed to the calendar next to it. He cringed. That dreadful date was near again. He recalled a stupid blunder he had committed several years ago, and he knew that memory would follow him to the grave.

He sighed, recalling happier times. He and Brent had been roommates at college, and they had become fast friends. They had often double-dated two pretty coeds. Each had been the other's best man when they married after graduation. The two men found jobs near their homes, and their friendship continued. The couples often visited each other during weekends for cocktails and barbecues, and they had gone on several camping trips.

Then, just before Brent's wedding anniversary party, Dan happened to be across town on business, when he saw Brent's wife, Susan, leaving a bar with another man. Dan ducked out of sight and watched as the couple kissed ardently, repeatedly, in the parking lot, then they had left in separate cars.

Dan had been shocked---his best friend's wife was cheating on him! For hours he wondered what to do about the situation. Should he ignore the whole incident? Should he speak to Susan privately, warn her? What if he were in Brent's place --what would he want Dan to do? He decided he must tell Brent what he had witnessed.

A few days later, he and Brent met for a round of golf. As they ambled over the greens, Dan revealed what he had seen. Brent stopped, his face ashen, and faced Dan. "Are you sure it was Susan?" he demanded.

"Positive."

"Whom else have you told about this?"

"No one, Brent. Why would I tell anyone else?"

Brent's voice was harsh. "Well, don't! This concerns only me and my wife, so promise me that you won't repeat this!"

"Brent, I promise. Look, I'm no gossip. But I thought you should know---"

Brent took several deep breaths and wiped his brow. His jaw muscles twitched and his hands shook. He threw his clubs into his bag, saying, "I gotta get home." Then he stalked toward the clubhouse without another word. He never spoke to Dan again. Shortly after, Dan heard that Brent had filed for divorce.

Several times Dan's wife asked him, "What in the world went wrong between Brent and Susan? I could shake them both. We used to have such fun together."

Dan would shrug, feigning ignorance.

Dan and his wife had lost two cherished friendships, and he had borne the pain of that loss in silence ever since. He knew that he had hurt Brent with his foolish interference. He guessed, based on his friend's reaction, that Brent had no idea about his wife's dalliance. Perhaps if he had not interfered, Susan might have come to her senses and have ended the fling in time, and the marriage might have survived. And if Brent had suspicions about his wife's intrigue, he might have been hoping that the whole thing would blow over without major damage. However, by making Brent aware that he (and perhaps others knew), he had forced the husband to take drastic action to alleviate his injured pride.

Now that the anniversary date approached, an oppressive cloud of guilt descended on Dan, making him feel like a dirty snitch, treacherous and vile. For days he had a bitter metallic taste in his mouth. His wife noticed that he was withdrawn, distracted, and she tried to cheer him without success. At work his colleagues, used to his quiet ways, left him alone in his corner.

Dan was alone in his misery. The lesson had been hard. Dan realized that he had meddled in matters that required help from beings much wiser than he. He had set into motion actions whose consequences he had not foreseen, and had no right to determine. In the process, he had hurt others beside himself, and he prayed that someday Someone would forgive him.



## Texas Hold 'Em

by Joseph Briggs

The drumbeat shuffling  
Of Aces, sevens, and nines  
Over a hand without appeal  
John Thomas waits and pines

As chips clatter loudly  
Will a dealer rules define  
And with foolish competition  
He leaves the world behind

So with the two and six  
Thomas jumped onto the flop  
And when it showed a four and five  
His betting couldn't stop

When he entered the turn  
Disappointment did he reap  
Though his betting did continue  
The odds against were steep

The river sank his boat  
His sorrows he sank in booze  
And when his debts were all called in  
He died in concrete shoes

## Who Am I?

by Richard Lee

oh, bright bishop  
of day and of night  
celebrant of worlds  
vaguely guessed at,  
mirror me as self alone  
when I say I am  
and no one hears.  
Oh, invisible shield  
and light  
let me say true  
what can never be said.

In a geography  
where there can be  
no maps,  
I need not want.  
May all be collapsed  
into alert senses  
that know they are  
but invisible fingertips  
touching horizon  
after horizon  
with song.

May I know myself  
disappearing down  
the vault of emptiness  
in motion.

May I truly fall  
into what has  
befallen me.

Who am I?  
And this  
all of this,  
may be  
an answer.

## A Fairy Godmother Tale

by Mari Collier

**A**shley giggled as she emptied the fourth wine bottle into Heather's glass. "Maybe I should have bought more." She eased her slender body onto the ottoman and raised her glass.

"To us!" The five friends toasted each other.

Heather, Susan, and Meagan, were seated on the sofa. All three carefully clad in California casual as befitted their rank. Linda was in the overstuffed chair nearest the sofa, her golden hair beauty-parlor perfect, but her outfit was a mishmash of definitely not designer abused \$269.99 jeans, but authentic faded, frayed jeans that clung to every bump and curve, a designer blouse, and flip flops completed her outfit.

This was their semi-annual gathering to discuss their lives, joys, aspirations, politics, family, irks and irritations, employment, and significant others. They had thoroughly debated those subjects and were cautiously dancing around spirituality.

"What precisely does that mean?" asked Meagan, the confirmed atheist. "It sounds like a new word for religion, except you don't offend anyone by mentioning a specific religion or beliefs." Like the rest, her nails gleamed, carefully applied makeup enhanced her features.

"Oh, no," the rest were quick to chorus.

"It means that you are on a search for your inner self to connect with the life force of the universe."

"And what, Susan, is 'life force' if not a euphemism for God?"

"Really, Meagan, you can't deny the benefits of meditation for health and inner growth." Ashley was horrified. "Why even doctors acknowledge the power of prayer for the very ill."

The others rushed in with their own explanations.

"What utter rot!" Meagan exploded.

The four stared at her in disbelief.

Heather stood. "Meagan, I have \$25,000.00 dollars that says you will notice a difference if you practice it." Heather had succeeded in the market place and had married an older, extremely wealthy ex-stockbroker who promptly had the good sense to drop dead when the SEC wanted to investigate his personal dealings with a well-known oilman.

"Do you mean I'm supposed to sit around for ten or twenty minutes a day thinking about some deity to achieve self-awareness and a feeling of peace?" Inwardly she gritted her teeth. She hadn't mentioned her company would be downsizing in six months. If she didn't find employment right away, she'd lose her house and car.

"If I did try it," and she stressed did, "and reported that nothing happened,

would you renege?”

“No, I wouldn’t. You must meditate at least fifteen minutes a day upon a spiritual entity for six months. You can report the results when we’re together again. I’ll be prepared to write you a check.”

“Are you dictating the entity?”

“No, you pick the spiritual guide or entity, but you do have to name the entity of mediation.”

Meagan considered. \$25,000.00 would cover three months worth of living expenses with money left over. By that time she would have another place of employment. She racked her brains trying to think of something less offensive to her sensibilities.

“Well,” Heather challenged, “do you accept or do you concede that we are correct?”

“You’re wrong.” Meagan snapped.

“So prove it.” The rest applauded Heather’s response. “You may even choose yoga, Meagan, as long as it isn’t an inanimate object.”

The last glass of wine interfered with Meagan’s brain cells and nothing suitable seemed to surface. She needed a fairy godmother at a time like this. On the theory that more wine would be beneficial, she emptied the glass in one swallow. She needed someone equipped with a wand that could make things right. Meagan straightened, and sat primly like a little girl in a pew.

“Very well, I choose the Fairy Godmother, an appropriate mythical figure devised by a man.”

They looked at her stunned.

“But what spiritual values are embedded in a Fairy Godmother?” Ashley was horrified.

“The conditions are that I meditate on anything I wished except an inanimate object.” She controlled an effort to laugh. What an easy \$25,000.00 this would be. If she found employment immediately, she could afford a new luxury car and pay off some of those credit cards.

“Oh, I nearly forgot. How does one meditate? I know how to set the timer, but what do I do; sit with my hands folded, look upward, or what?”

“Meagan, you can sit, stand, jog, assume the lotus position, or recline. You should be wary about the latter as falling asleep doesn’t count.” Heather was becoming shrewish. “We’re taking your word on this as it is.”

“I can always sit up a video.” Meagan smiled at them. “Do I need incense or bells?”

“Yes, if that sets the mood; otherwise, no. Sometimes complete quiet is more beneficial. Crystals and scented oils are used to set the mood.” Ashley tried to interject a calm response.

Heather would have none of it. “You’re afraid we’re right. Either take the bet now or forget it.”

“I’ll take it. I’ll even set up the video and you can watch every minute of it. When I win, I’ll cater our next meeting.”

Everything that could possibly go wrong did. Meagan lost her job, but catered the next meeting as a way to celebrate and collect her \$25,000.00. She did not find another job. Her ARM mortgage reset and the payments were impossible to meet. The stock market tanked along with the housing market. She shunned her friends and tried selling her house, but no takers. Her 401K and stock purchases were worthless.

Within one year, she was reduced to a sleeping bag under a cement overpass and a cart filled with her possessions. Today, she’d eaten at a mission and pocketed a protein bar at a drugstore while paying for another one. The two bars were her dinner tonight and breakfast in the morning.

“It’s too damn bad there really isn’t a fairy godmother,” she muttered as she returned from the bushes after relieving herself.

“Here I am, dearie.”

Meagan looked at the woman who had materialized in front of her. Her graying blonde hair was long and flowing, the tiara on her head wobbled to one side, the satin, white gown clung to her figure and flowed to the ground to cover any footwear. The golden wand and huge jewels on her fingers did not look like fakes; neither did the huge, clear stone in her pendant. The large brown eyes were beginning to dim with age and there were wrinkles around her mouth and eyes. The neck was crisscrossed with diamond puckers of skin.

“Where were you when I needed you?”

“Tut, tut, my dear, tonight your prayers are answered. Tomorrow all will be as it is now, but tonight you’ll attend the academy awards and the dinner and dance afterward. Of course, you will have to leave at midnight.”

“In these clothes? They wouldn’t let me in the door.”

“Very easily taken care of, my dear, plus I supply the transportation, a nice Bentley or Mercedes. I won’t even make you catch the mice like dear Cinderella had to do.”

“One night? I need a house, a job, my clothes.”

“Don’t be silly, I’m the Fairy Godmother. I do balls, not jobs.”



## How My John Deere 140 Saved Christmas

by Don Wyatt

It was Christmas Eve in Emmett, Idaho and I was about to leave my little hobby shop and go in the house for dinner when, suddenly there was a noise that sounded like a herd of horses and metal scraping on pavement. I hurried to the door to see what it could possibly be. What a surprise, it was Santa Claus and all of his reindeer coming to a stop in front of my garage. I wondered why he would be stopping at my place, since all my kids had grown up.

I hurried over to see what was wrong. “Santa, what is going on? Ohhh, yuck! What happened to you?” I asked, noticing that the front of his suit was more green than red. I held my nose as he climbed down from a very dirty sleigh.

“My reindeer are all sick. I just can’t go any farther like this. I was wondering if you could help me.”

“Sure, Santa, I would be glad to help,” I said, still holding my nose. “What do you need?”

“At many of my stops kids will leave milk and cookies for me and sometimes they also leave some sweet feed and hay for my animals. Well, somewhere back east they ate some bad hay and now you can see and smell the result. I’m afraid I won’t be able to deliver the Christmas presents for the children who live west of here,” he said as he brushed some of the green stuff from his red suit. “That’s the whole west coast.”

“Santa, you have to finish your deliveries. If you don’t there will be a lot of disappointed children, and one of them is Cathy’s great grandson, Kekoa, in Oceanside. There must be something we can do to help. Perhaps we could start by having Cathy launder your suit while we try to figure out what to do,” I said as I punched Cathy’s number into my cell phone.

“Hello. What’s wrong now?” she asked.

“Hi, hon. Can you come out here? I think I need some help.”

“Oh, alright, I’ll be right out. Oh my God. What is this?” she said, exiting the now open garage door and hanging up the phone. “Santa, what is wrong?”

“Santa’s reindeer ate some bad hay and he needs some help from us. Can you wash his suit while we decide what to do next?” I said, pointing to the front of his suit. “I think I have some clothes that will fit him. We look about the same size. He needs a shower too, don’t you think?”

“Santa,” I said, pointing to the farm next door, “can I call my neighbor, Toni? She is a ‘laying on of the hands’ kind of a horse healer, and she might know what to do for the reindeer. I sure don’t know what to do.”

“Is she a veterinary?”

“No, but she’s good with horses. She always seems to know what to do when ours get sick,” I said.

“That would be great,” he said as he followed Cathy into the house. I opened my phone and scrolled down to Toni’s number and punched the ‘call’ button.

“Hi Don, this is Toni. What ya up to?”

“Hi Toni. I know its Christmas Eve and its dark, but could you come over? I need help with a problem.”

“What kind of problem?”

“I’ll tell you when you get here. I could tell you now but you wouldn’t believe me.”

“Sure, see you in a few.” At the end of my driveway she saw the reindeer and sleigh and began running.

“Where did you get this?”

“It’s Santa’s,” I said, and began telling her what had happened.

Before I had finished telling her the story, she was already checking the reindeer. “Let’s unhook them and put them in the corral. Gosh! I sure can’t fix their diarrhea any time soon. Uh! Santa must have looked awful.”

“Why don’t you go ahead and do what you can here. I have an idea.” I headed to the house just as Santa was coming out. I introduced them and began telling Santa my idea.

“How do you get the reindeer to fly?” I asked.

“I use this magic dust,” he said as he grabbed a bag from the sleigh. “Why?”

“Will that dust work on things besides reindeer or is it just for them?”

“Sure, it works on other things. Like I asked, why?”

“I know this will sound crazy but hear me out. Why don’t you use my John Deere lawn tractor to pull your sleigh until you finish up the west coast? That’s all you have left, right? Then you can come back here. By the time you finish, the reindeer should be healthy again.”

“Hmm, do you think it will pull the sleigh? The sleigh is rather heavy, and if that one there is the one you’re talking about, it looks old,” he said, pointing to my John Deere 140.

“It is old, but I have fixed it up as good as new. And, it is a 14 horsepower and you only have nine deer. Like they say, *Nothing runs like a Deere*. You should know that, you have a whole stable full of them. The city of Emmett is only two miles that way,” I said, pointing north. “You could try it out here, and if it works you can finish your deliveries before morning. Oh, here comes Cathy.”

“Good news. Your red suit is red again. Where you from, originally?”

“Ahhh, the North Pole,” he said looking puzzled.

“No, I mean, where are you from, originally?”

Still looking puzzled, he said, “Originally I’m from the Netherlands, but for many years now I’ve been at the North Pole. I used to share a place with Superman, but some of the elves liked to party when they finished with a big toy order and he claimed he couldn’t sleep, so he moved out. We needed more space for making toys anyway. Too bad, this year I had to lay off some of the elves. It’s a bad economy, ya know. I need to get dressed and get on my way.”

“While you are getting dressed I will hook the John Deere to the sleigh. I’ll make sure it is full of gas too.”

A few minutes later Santa was back. I gave him some final instructions on how to operate the John Deere. He marked my address in ‘favorites’ in his GPS unit, programmed my phone number in his cell, fastened the seat belt, and with a quiet roar from the engine, he was off, “HO HO HO HO!”

“How are you doing, Toni?” I asked, stopping at the corral.

“I gave them some of your good hay and washed them all down. I think they will be alright in the morning.”

“Aw geez! I just thought of something.”

“What?”

“I wonder if he will remember to let NORAD know that he is using the tractor and not the reindeer. That John Deere will be a bigger signature on their radar than the reindeer.”

“What’s NORAD?”

That is the North American Air Defense Command. They track everything in the air, including Santa. I hope they don’t think he is a UFO.”

Toni began walking away, “I’ll see you tomorrow. I’m going to bed. Merry Christmas.”

“Thanks for the help Toni. Merry Christmas.”

At 7 AM my phone rang, “Hello,” I said, half awake.

“This is Santa; I’ll be there in about an hour. Boy, I sure like this tractor. How are my reindeer doing?”

“I haven’t been out there this morning, but I checked them before I went to bed, they seemed to be doing fine.”

I was just barely up and dressed when I heard the tractor and sleigh touchdown in the driveway. I hurried out into the still dark morning to greet Santa. He was at the corral looking after his fleet of reindeer, “Good morning, Santa.”

“Good morning. They look much better than when I left last night. I really, really have to thank you for your help. I hate that this had to happen, but I’m sure glad it happened here in Idaho rather than back east somewhere, like Rhode Island. Back there I probably would have been verbally abused and kicked aside.”

“The reindeer look fine and I still have some time before daylight, so I think I will hitch up and go home,” he said, while throwing a harness on Blitzen. “Oh, do I owe Toni anything?”

“No, I’m sure Toni was more than glad to help out. So, don’t worry about it. Are you going to get a John Deere tractor when you get home?”

“I’ve sure thought about it. The elves are always complaining about shoveling snow so I think I will get one with a snow blower and no mower deck, don’t have to cut grass up there, ha ha ,” he bellowed as he tightened the harness on the last deer. “Well, I’m off, its vacation time for me.”

With that he was gone.



## A Monologue of Orpheus In The Underworld

A Performance Piece by Savya Lee

Ticka dum, ticka ticka dum ticka dum

Tahla zha zuum-m-m.

They say they know me-- hah!

Call me Spider Woman,

Black widow of the underworld.

They say I sit in my labyrinth

Collecting ghosts. They whisper

Behind my back, but

Do they know that I am Death?

Ticka dum, ticka ticka dum ticka dum

I move between the land of the living

And the land of the dead.

Soon I will follow Orpheus, the singer.

Yes, I heard his song

And it’s true, I was seduced

When I heard him sing. Ticka dum!

Now he must do the journey alone..

Passing in darkness through

Decaying webs of silk and spiders,  
 Through tapestries shredded by wind  
 And wet, through cries of terror and fear.  
 As he moves, always singing  
 Pale hands reach out to touch him.  
 Soft sweet ghost hands belonging to  
 The dead world. "Orpheus--" they call,  
 "Orpheus, touch us with your sound."

Orpheus  
 Their stories intertwine, are timeless  
 They know there is no future here  
 Only a combination of past and present.  
 Oh, yes, they sing, "touch us, touch us--  
 Touch us with your sound."

Orpheus, touch Me with your sound.

When we met  
 At the window of illusion,  
 You said: Ticka dum! "Even though it is  
 not  
 My time to die,  
 I want to stay here with you.  
 I have no one now.  
 Eurydice was my love, my life.  
 I came to rescue her but I failed.  
 I looked back and lost her forever.  
 She is like a dream now, distant  
 In my thoughts. And I--  
 I am alone, afraid.  
 You have become my reality.  
 You are my death, my doom."

As you are mine, Orpheus,  
 I am caught--even as you.  
 We are the disembodied  
 Lovers of Hades. Ticka dum!  
 Since the beginning of time  
 I have taken people into the shadow world.  
 I have taken them  
 Without comment, without compassion,

My heart impassive as a stone.  
Orpheus

But your song, your longing  
Moved me as I have never  
Been moved before.  
Together we betray the underworld.  
Betray? Betray?

(SINGS) Ah was thinkin' about  
What a friend had said,  
"Orpheus don't belong  
In the land of the dead.  
Let him go!" Ticka dum, ticka ticka dum,  
Ticka dum--"Let -- him -- go!"

Oh, Orpheus, Orpheus, You know you  
Cannot stay--You must leave! . . .  
Gone? Gone ---  
In an instant I saw him go crashing  
Through the veil  
Into the land of the living  
Without his lyre.  
He is trying to sing.  
There is no sound, but --  
I hear you, I hear you, I hear you!

Ticka dum, ticka ticka dum  
Ticka dum --  
Fahla za zoom!

## The Paths We Take, the Price We Pay Part III

by Don J. De Los Rios

I was 19 years old when I found myself at 35,000 feet on a commercial airliner. I was considerably drunk, and so were all of my newfound friends. Because our transportation had turned out not to be a military plane, we joked about the possibility of arriving at an alternate destination.

“Let’s go to Vegas,” someone shouted.

We all laughed and shouted in agreement. The flight attendants did not seem to like us very much at first. I suppose throwing the panties I had acquired earlier that evening around the cabin was not working in our favor. As we began to sober up, and the panties became neatly tucked away in my pocket, the attitudes of the flight crew improved.

When we arrived in Vietnam, it was mid morning. It was the beginning of the southwest monsoon season, but there was little rain that day. The airfield we were to land on was under siege from a rocket attack. The rocket attack forced the plane to circle the landing field for some time. We could see the explosions from the windows as they dotted the airfield once or twice, but focused mainly on the buildings nearby.

“Welcome to Vietnam,” someone shouted. We all laughed, but it was over quickly, and a long silence followed.

We were finally able to land several minutes later. As soon as the plane stopped we were hustled outside. The pilot was in a hurry to take off again.

“Get your asses moving if you want to live!” a large man dressed in a stiffly starched, camouflage uniform yelled.

We ran as fast as we could to a building that seemed to be undamaged. From here, we were quickly segregated into groups based on our assignments, and trucked off to our destinations. None of us knew what would be next.

I was housed in a barracks, filled with a large number of metal bunk beds, or racks as they were called. I learned that there was a simple rule in the barracks regarding where you slept. If you were new “in country,” you slept in a top rack. After that, seniority decided who would get a bottom rack whenever someone left.

We worked days for a month, then nights the next month, switching off with the opposite crew. The night shifts were the most exciting, in a morbid sort of way. That was when the enemy (who we referred to as Charlie) would launch rockets at US military positions and locations. It was a sight similar to a fireworks display on the Fourth of July, when they got lucky and hit something that contained either fuel or ammunition. They were not very accurate most of the time, and there was some comfort in this we thought, so long as they were missing on the nights they chose our location. There was a rule about rockets,

too: if you heard one coming in and it sounded like a freight train, say your prayers because there was no escape. You were going to be blown to kingdom come or blown to hell, one or the other. We could not do anything about our chances, so for sanity's sake we quit worrying about it.

I had a rate, or job description, as a storekeeper, a clerk who kept track of details. I was in charge of a section termed Area 7. Anything off-loaded from the ships at the docks, on tracks (like tanks, bulldozers, and such) or wheels (jeeps, trucks, motorcycles, etc.), was my responsibility to inventory and stage in Area 7. The area had a large capacity in terms of storage space, at least a quarter mile square.

One time, a Navy fighter jet was off-loaded. It had arrived by ship instead of being flown over to one of the Marine installations. It was ghostly; all wrapped up in a white plastic shroud, like the covering you see today on new boats as they are being towed down the highway to their destinations.

It was not very long after it was off-loaded that a detachment of Marines arrived. They climbed all over the plane, taking up positions anywhere they could find purchase. They were armed to the teeth, weapons at the ready, and perched on the jet as it was towed away to its destination. I did not even get a chance to stage that beautiful bird. What fun it could have been to drive that jet plane around for awhile, I remember thinking.

I had been there for just under a month when I started working the night shift. We had gotten a shipment of large trucks destined for the Army. They were coming to pick them up that night. The batteries were dry, and we needed to fill them with electrolyte and get the trucks started to charge them up. With diesel-fueled engines, we could pull them, pop the clutch, and get them running to accomplish that goal.

I was towing them using a short steel cable about two inches thick and six feet long. Each end of the cable had a large loop formed in it, creating a simple tow line with a loop on each end. Each truck had a hook on the front bumper and another hook a couple of feet inside the rear bumper, on the rear axle. This made things a bit tight, but it worked.

It was early evening. The monsoon weather had let up a bit, and only a light rain was falling. There was a new man riding with me that shift. He was from Mississippi and liked to chew tobacco all the time. I can still see his fat, round face to this day, with dark brown drool occasionally seeping out of the corner of his nearly toothless mouth, but I cannot remember his name. I remember wondering what his girlfriend must have experienced every time she kissed him.

I was pulling the second truck for the night. Once it started, both trucks stopped. I set the brakes on my truck and jumped out to run back and unhook the cable. I had to squat down to reach under the truck and release that end of the cable. Reaching the large latch and freeing the loop in the cable did

not take much longer once I got to the latch. I had already released the loop on the truck behind me. While I was doing this, the new man slid over into my seat and took control of the truck. I am sure he was just trying to help when he began to edge the truck backward. The noise from the truck's exhaust and the engine noise from the truck immediately behind me drowned out any other sounds.

Just as I turned shoulder to shoulder between the two truck's bumpers, I was pinned between them, caught in a trap like an animal in the wild. I yelled for him to move the truck up and let me out, but he could not hear me over the truck's engine noise. I do not think I initially realized the danger I was in.

As the truck continued to move backward, my annoyance turned to fear. The truck noise was so loud that no one could hear me. No one knew I was in trouble. The pressure against my shoulders was beginning to squeeze me so tightly that no matter what I did I could not free myself from its ever-tightening grip on me.

"Help!" I shouted fruitlessly. "Someone help me."

I squirmed, twisting my body almost completely around while pinned at the shoulders, in an effort to escape the vice that continued to crush me. I could not free myself.

I heard a loud snap. My bones were breaking under the intense pressure against my shoulders as the truck continued to move backward, ever so slowly. My left shoulder had begun to buckle forward and inward under the pressure of the two truck's coming together. Seconds seemed to take minutes to pass, and I lost awareness of time. It would not be much longer before I would be dead, I thought. I screamed in terror, hoping someone would hear me, see me, save me.

Then Marcus appeared. I could see him in the shrinking opening between the two trucks. He turned decidedly pale, but took action immediately.

"Move the truck forward!" he shouted. He waved a backward hand signal to the rear truck, and ran and jumped up to the front truck's cab.

I was close to losing consciousness. When the trucks parted, I had no control over my body. I fell back onto the asphalt and thanked God. I hurt badly, but I was breathing and I was alive.

"MediVac," I was muttering. "MediVac." To soldiers, MediVac meant a free ticket home. I thought for sure that was where I'd be headed after the doctors saw to me.

After about fifteen minutes, during which time the other men nearby surrounded me and all talked at once, the corpsman arrived.

"How are you feeling?" the corpsman said, as he began to examine me.

"It hurts! I heard a fucking bone snap inside me," I snarled at him.

He pressed hard on the spot where the bone was broken. It hurt even more as he did that. "You've got a bad bruise," he said to me, continuing to press down.

"I heard it fucking break," I shouted.

"You probably just heard truck noise," he said, ignoring my diagnosis.

I took the rest of the night off and hitched a ride back to camp. The pain would not let me climb into my top rack, so with my right arm I pulled the mattress down to the floor and dozed off to sleep, still dressed in my work clothes.

The next morning, I was awakened by a kick to the bottom of my boots. It jarred me awake, and reignited the pain surrounding my left shoulder.

"What are you doing sleeping on the floor?" the master-at-arms yelled.

As I tried to explain, he ordered me to shut up, get up, and come to the office. I complied. He told me to sit on a bench outside his office.

"I'll get to you later," he snapped. "Just sit there for now." He stepped back inside his office and went about his business.

I thought about just sneaking away so I could get to sick bay, but I was not sure what he'd do if he found out I was gone. I stayed there on the bench, in an agony that no one could see. Why was I the only one who knew I needed to go to sickbay?

After several hours, he came out of his office to scold me about the mattress on the floor, citing indigenous insects that might get inside the barracks. "It's a safety issue," he said. "Don't let it happen again."

He finally let me leave, and I went immediately to sickbay to get medical treatment for my injuries. It had been nearly twenty-four hours since the accident. After the X-Rays were taken, the doctor was shocked to find my collarbone had exploded from the lateral pressure I had undergone. Even worse, it had already knitted together in an abnormal way, making any repairs pointless. All he could do was wrap an ace bandage in a figure eight around my shoulders, to try to keep things in place while it continued to heal.

Before I knew it, my tour was over, and I was on the 'freedom Bird,' headed back to the world, on my way home again.

After my time in Vietnam, my attitude changed. I was no longer the cheerful, hope filled youth I had been in high school only a few years earlier. The emotional pain I was feeling after I returned home clouded my dreams of the future. Vietnam was hell for almost everyone who went there. The phrase, 'back to the world' meant anywhere that was not Vietnam.



## The Hawk

by Aubrey Leahy

I don't have a television. I prefer the theatre of the wild. In my morning room I have a large clear window suitable for viewing the desert world outside. I have drawn buttons on the wall underneath the window. Buttons marked: Channel. Volume. Mute, etc. Gives it more of a giant screen, playroom feel, a den look. Outside the window I have put a square aluminium table, No legs. Just a fat center column. A very ugly table but the price was right. Acquired from the dumpster catalogue. The table top height is just right for easy avian viewing. It's flat top supports the bird bath, and is very useful for putting bird seed on early every morning. Lots of visitors. Every morning. Rain or Shine or Wind or Snow or rarely, all four at once.

The bird bath is made of dark green plastic, about two feet wide, four inches deep and has several different sized quartz and granite rocks standing in the water. The birds love it, I love it and the squirrel would love it too if only he could find a way to conquer the tables overhang. Or learn to fly. Above the birdbath is the hummingbird feeder, used mostly by woodpeckers. Twenty yards away is a wooden pole. Property of P.G.&E. The electric company. About 25 feet high the pole is adorned with porcelain conductors, zined hardware and braided black and silver wire that carries electricity into the house. The pole has its own number on a little shiny plaque. Number 240465. Two other tin markers indicate when workers visited. They came, they saw, they struck the pole with sledgehammers. They left.

The pole gets human visitors every ten years and the whacks are to find out if termites have moved in during the previous decade. Human visitors just once a decade may seem a little dull to some but there are a lot of dramas. Daily. Nightly. On, around, close to and up and down the pole. The suspended wire provides a perfect squatting place for mourning doves to wait for both sunrise and the seedman. Swaying trapeze artists all on windy days. Patient waiters when calm airs reign.

Diners include Robins, Sparrows, the odd Thresher and once in a while a couple of non-native Starlings. (well over 100 years ago some bright spark had the idea of introducing into New York's Central Park examples of every plant and bird mentioned by Shakespeare.)

As a high point in the area the Ravens will stand atop the pole to see what can be readily scavenged from the desert floor. When not on his summer peregrinations a very beautiful Coopers Hawk uses the pole's crown as both a resting base and an observation platform. Last year, after the hawk had ventured north, the area, as usual, became alive with spring birdsong and new entertainers. My viewing time increased to all hours of the day as chicks were hatched, reared, given foraging, tumbling and survival lessons. Any threat parentally perceived or imagined would result in an eruption of birds of all ages, hues and types fleeing the area. Quail, Sparrows of many species: Brewers,

rufous, black chinned, crowned, chipper, and house amongst many other families. Roadrunners, Jays, Choughs, Orioles and Phoebes came and went. As the summer progressed the numbers diminished as only the smart, the blessed, the lucky and the strong survived or stayed. The survival of the fittest rule ruled.

On a Sunday morning during the week before Thanksgiving I saw the hawk had returned and was sitting atop the pole. Reacquainting himself with his winter domain. There were no other birds to be seen when, as if in silent slow-mo there flew into the picture a young mourning dove who was born, but not fledged, before the hawk hied away for the season. Young dove landed on the wire no more than six feet from the perching Coopers Hawk. What followed next is an image I shall take to my grave and perhaps even beyond. It was as though the young inexperienced dove had been taught by his parents to be polite to strangers. And so nodded his hello. Then, in return, even though with an immobile hardened beak it is impossible to convey human facial expressions or emotions the hawk did just that.

He grinned.

The hawk's smirk was one of unimagined disbelief. A look worthy of a rapacious third term congressman upon learning he would unjustly escape well deserved impeachment or even censure. Hawk then slowly turned his head as if to reply. And then, I swear, he turned his head back and around once more. A searching gaze as if trying to spot the hiding place of the Candid Camera Show film crew. Then he slowly turned back to the dove at hand. The young dove smiled again. This time instead of a return salutation there was just a blur and half a dozen tiny powder-down feathers seesawed sideways and down until two of them landed and settled in amongst the bird bath rocks. The sun rose and Mourning Doves parents lived up to their name.

I don't have a television. I prefer the theatre of the wild.



## Contributor's Notes

**Ellen e Baird** My mother and father have the same birthday. The same exact birthday. They were both English majors. We were all born under the constellation Taurus. My father told the stories and the jokes. I started writing stories for my grandmother as gifts.

My stories come in scraps and spurts. I stuff them in between the pages of books. I wrote my first scene for Al Landwher. It came in one continuous flush. He told me I have talent. I think I like to tell the stories and the jokes.

I always get a first line or a title, and I'm ferocious over it. People really have to pry to get me to give up a first line or a title. This too, is like the box.

**Joseph Briggs** Please submit all questions in writing.

**Evelyn Christensen**, now named **Evelyn Dockery**, attends CMC. She has earned her AA in Liberal Arts with an emphasis in Social and Behavioral Sciences and is continuing at CMC to earn her degree in English. She has a husband, Keith Dockery, and a daughter named Keira.

**Sarah Case** drives fast on rainy roads to feel dangerous. She currently resides in the village of Joshua Tree, but longs to venture out and call elsewhere her home. She loves reading more than breathing and has always loved the family she's met through the novels she's read.

**Mari Collier:** A stint as an Advanced Super Agent for Nintendo of America helped hone my writing skills. My short stories have appeared in print and electronically. I'm Coordinator for the Desert Writers Guild of Twentynine Palms, write two columns for the Schoolhouse Journal, and one published novel, *Gather the Children* is available.

**T.J. Dorian** is lost in a dream.

**Carolyn Eads** writes poetry and short stories and is working on a novel. A number of her poems have been published, in print and online. She is a graduate of the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA; a member of the National League Of American Pen Woman; The Ina Coolbrith Circle; and the International Women's Writing Guild. Eads is retired and lives in Yucca Valley, CA with her husband and four dogs.

**Candace Gilbert** is an Independent Study teacher for the Morongo Unified School District and adjunct professor for CMC. She formerly taught English and poetry for Yucca Valley High School.

**Greg Gilbert** is.

**Kristin Goldsborough** was born and raised in 29 Palms. She loves the desert and is an avid hiker, walker, writer, and reader. She also enjoys crocheting. She is capable of making a full beard out of yarn. Her favorite poet is Walt Whitman, thanks to Professor Mike Green.

**Mike Green**, born Michael James Green, Chicago, Illinois, (South Side), 1946. Father, auto-mechanic; mother, musician, poet, painter, secretary (104 wpm manual Remington). Education: El Rancho HS, Merchant Marine, USMC, CSULA, St. Catherine's College, Oxford. Married: Nancy (39 years). Children: Molly & Hank. Teacher, poet, carpenter, gardener. The father is father to the man, also the mother.

**Susan Grigsby** was born and raised in Chicago during the 50s and 60s and moved to San Francisco in 1973, Irvine in 1979, married and began traveling full time in 1982, and finally settled in Twentynine Palms in 1994. An unreconstructed hippie, she has been happily married to a retired Marine for 29 years and finds life to be a constantly changing and wondrous adventure

**Priscilla Holloway** is a student at CMC and Mother to the cutest Yorkie in the world, Piper.

**Joy F. Johnson** is a Marine Corps Veteran who has come to this college to attain an AA degree in English Literature. Over the years she has developed a longing to express on paper all of the beautiful characters that she has encountered and dreamed up in her life.

**elise kost-** It is the natural world elements and the Truth, pain, harmony, rage, yearnings for Life awareness which are the inherent voice of elise kost's poetry and spoken word performance art. Her five self-published books can be found in Joshua Tree shops.

**Dustin Kronmeyer:** Cannot remain still, hates monotony, that's why I stay on my feet.

**Aubrey Leahy** is what is in kind circles referred to as a "Mature Student" and in less kinder rings as a "Late Bloomer." Born in England at The Jarvis Maternity Hospital, in Guildford, Surrey. A county of England. On a recent visit to his birthplace Aubrey was astonished to find the site remains, as yet, utterly bereft of any symbols of sanctification, impending beatification, consecration, equine statuary, plaques or memorial bronzes. Aubrey is currently studying life.

**Richard and Savya Lee:** Savya Lee, originally from New York, lived and wrote in Greenwich Village in the 1940s. She has published her memoir of that time, *The Sky Through the Hole in the Bone*, which includes her memories of a summer working with Georgia O'Keeffe. Savya's husband, Richard Lee, originally from Ohio, taught English at Penn State and Creative writing at Cal State, Long Beach. Together with Manon Robertshaw, a classically trained cellist, they formed a trio of percussionists called Ceremonial Sounds. Richard was also a poet and published in many small literary journals. He also painted. He and Savya celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a concert in the rocks several months before he passed away in 2001. Richard had many students and friends and was a remarkable man. Today Savya continues her writing and practices vocal harmonics.

**Emlee Lotspeich** is an intellectual, whimsical wanderer who believes in comedy and aims to inspire smiles.

**Monique Maldonado** loves to write so that she may express what she cannot speak. What she writes is the true meaning of her heart.

**Eddy Miller** lives his life from a quote of the smartest turtle "Yesterday is history... Tomorrow is a mystery... but today is a gift, that is why it is called the present.

**Jennifer Reid:** While most people write forward, I write backwards. It's easy to write about things that might happen, but it's more difficult to write about things that already have.

**Lourdes Rivera** is known on campus as “Lolly.” I am an English/Communications major. This is my 4<sup>th</sup> semester. I enjoy working at and attending CMC as a student fulltime. I am one of the first students to be published on the new CMC website; *The Coyote Informer* 2009. I help edit/advise the on campus newsletter “The Voice”; serve on the ASCMC as Public Information Officer 2009, Cal-works student worker; and a TEP, EOPS participant for all 4 semesters.

**Glorianna Ruecker’s** migration to the Morongo Basin has been a life journey and is furthering her studies at CMC to become a seasoned writer for her love of animals and nature.

**Nicole Sanchez:** I write to portray the honesty and emotions in my life. With my writings, I hope to enlighten one reader, at the very least, with a provoking thought, a hidden emotion, or a smile.

**Nell Sehestedt** is an educator and has a weekly column in the *Hi-Desert Star* that has been very complimentary of HOWL.

**Martin Schmid:** I’m 19 years old, a student at CMC for the fall ’09 semester and is attending COD for spring 2010. I like writing and reading poetry and classical English literature is pretty cool too.

**Lexy Sherman**, also called midget claws by her friends, because she is short and has freakishly small hands. She likes long walks on the beach, blueberry coffee from 7/11 (seriously, its like a blueberry pie in a cup), and burning out her eyes reading poetry all night. She has also recently taken to studying the Japanese language, because being a book loving linguistics major wasn’t nerdy enough.

**Eddie Whitaker** is a definite all-around gaming nerd. Currently working at Gamestop, and taking classes with a focus on Journalism. And yes, you did see me in *How to Train Your Dragon*.

**Gloria White** is primarily a graphic artist. She also enjoys self-publishing small booklets of her art work accompanied by text, stories or poems of her own creation.

**Donald Wyatt** is a graduate of CMC, a multi-year editor of HOWL who now submits his writings from a beautiful piece of land in rural Idaho.

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