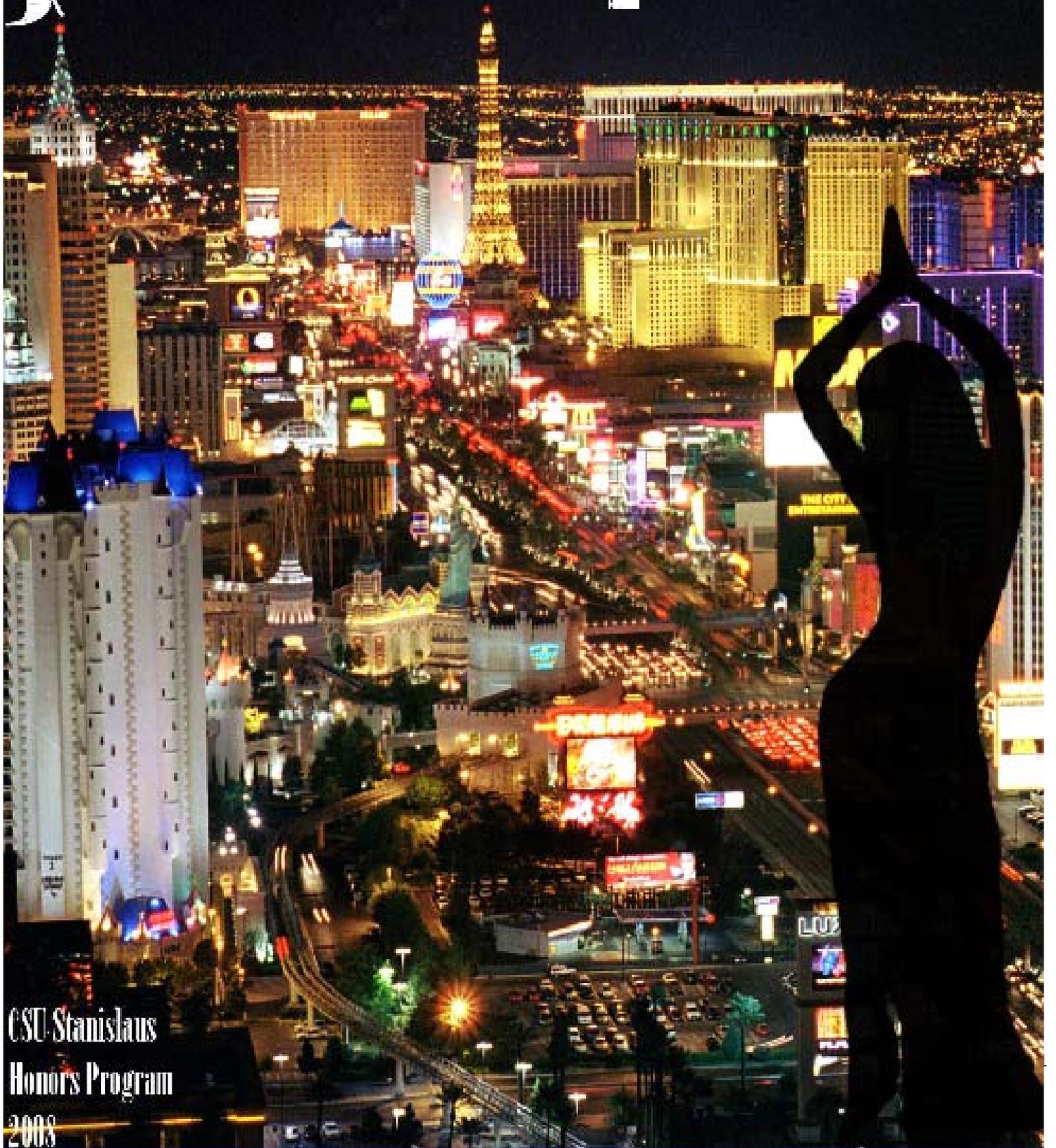


just a quickie



CSU Stanislaus
Honors Program
2008



MATURE
AUDIENCES
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worth your while...*

2008 | Honors Composition
Short Shorts

For Mr. Webb,

We all know how much you like your *Quickies*

Even though you had nothing to do with the creation of
this Magazine

2008 "Justa Quickie" Staff

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Heather Crume

CO-EDITORS: Christina Mudrick, Meaghan Kingsley-Teem, Tracy Selfridge, Hillary Lucas,
Heather Allison, Kristen Lee, Johana Shea, Danielle Jespersen

WRITERS: Heather Crume, Meaghan Kingsley-Teem, Christina Mudrick, Hillary Lucas, Tracy
Selfridge, Kristen Lee, Johana Shea, Danielle Jespersen, Heather Allison, Nelson Vazquez,
Marissa Dunaway, Russell Peck, Kenny Sarisky, Nikki Young, Erik Engvall, Jawsem Al-
Hashash, Brittney Woods, Richard Gilbert, Stephanie Wright, Jessica Geiss, Christa Brooks,
Katie Eng

ART/PHOTOGRAPH CONTRIBUTIONS BY: Kristen Lee, Meaghan Kingsley-Teem, Nikki Young,
Danielle Jespersen, Hillary Lucas, Heather Allison, Tracy Selfridge, Danny Mao

POETRY BY: Meaghan Kingsley-Teem, Zander Andrus

COVER BY: Heather Allison

INSIDE COVER BY: Heather Crume

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Jack's OFFENSE

Heather Crume

"Jack! Jack! What are you doing in there? Dinner is ready!
Your mother made your favorite."

No answer.

"Do not make me come up there!"

No answer.

"Honey, I hear a strange noise...maybe he's listening to music?
He must not be able to hear you. Just go up there and get him."

Twenty steps and six paces later Jack's father is at his door.

He opens the door, "Jack! Why didn't you answer me...?"

Jack is hunched over at his desk making repeated hand motions.
He is intently focused on his lap. Several pants as well as sounds of
immense pleasure are audible.

He yells, "Dad! Get out of here!" and scrambles to conceal
something.

Jack's father slams the door shut. The embarrassment is
evident on his face. He descends the stairs contemplating how to
discuss this discomfoting circumstance with his son.

Minutes later Jack is downstairs for dinner. He will not look his father in the eyes. He appears nervous, as if awaiting an impending castigation. The atmosphere is uncomfortable, the tension is felt. Finally, Jack's father breaks the painful silence.

"Son, it's um, a very natural desire to uh, well be curious or even rebellious."

"Dad, please. I'm sorry okay?"

"No, no I understand! It's all right, really."

"So...you're not mad? You don't want me to get rid of it?"

"Get rid of what? What's going on?" Jack's mother demands. She observes their anxious expressions and replays the situation. She suddenly has a terrible epiphany.

Then she hears the strange noise once more, but now she recognizes it as a whimper.

Once Jack finishes the awkward meal he returns to his room where he places hidden food into a little bowl in the corner. He is confused, yet thankful he escaped the seemingly inevitable repercussions of his deception.





Love Poems

I

Your voice

like rain

falling

upon

dried leaves

washes

the dust

away

Photo by: Kristen Lee

Murder Killed

Nelson Vazquez

I killed that boy and it was all my fault, the idiot I am. So why it is that no one puts me in jail? There should be a punishment. Everyone says it was an accident yet only I was there. I am responsible.

Truck driver

It had been a long night after traveling for ten hours and I am not responsible. There was no preventing what happened next after yawning out of lack of sleep. I do not think his lights were on and even if they were, he was blind not to see me. No one should blame me for this crash, I was doing my job and nothing good came of it. I lost my truck because of that kid. Biker

He just popped out of nowhere, that stupid kid. If only he did not land smack down in front of me. I was in the zone, going in the speed limit with my motorcycle. It was bad luck that I chose that road; it ruined my bike and gave me cuts and bruises. Luckily the kid was okay, seemed I did not hit him so hard for the doc said he was fine, that strange boy. Now I just hope no trouble comes of this, I never wanted to be involved.

Medic

I just was not expecting this to happen my first time. A call came of a crash while I was on duty. What I found near the crash was a biker and a lad sprawled under the light of the lamppost. Checking the boy's pulse first, I felt none. Looking towards the biker, I found him conscious. I asked how he felt; he only asked whom that kid was and if he was all right. Not wanting him to feel bad, I said he was fine. The biker wanted to leave, saying he felt fine and needed to go somewhere. Yet I told him to stay and found the truck driver to be fine. Only one person died.

Embalmer

A new body from a crash came to me to prepare for burial. It turned out to be alive! Never before has this happened to me. Unfortunately, I was unable to do anything but call for help, but by the time they came, it was too late. Man, I do not want anyone to blame me for this. The medic who brought me the body should have known.

Reporter

News today, last night a big truck crashed into a smaller car going the wrong way. Only one passenger was reported to be in the automobile. He managed to jump out in time only to crash with a motorcycle, leaving him unconscious. An emergency physician thought him dead, zipping him up, feeling no pulse on his fake arm. Finding him still alive, the embalmer tried getting help, but help was too late to come. He was the most wanted individual. This was...

This was the only person who I did not save throughout my career as a medic when I could have. It was a horrible mistake that I mistook that artificial arm as real. Yet nobody is bothered that it happened only because he was the one armed killer that has taken hundreds of lives throughout the country.





Marissa Dunaway

She sat on the curb waiting, waiting for hours, never knowing if he would show. She knows what this means, bad things are to come. Walking for miles, she finally reached home. She knew what inside would look like, in one hand the T.V. remote and in the other, an empty bottle of Jack Daniels. Hopefully she would be able to slip by without him noticing, that was always her wish, and it just never seemed to come true. It was always something different; she closed the door too loud, her hair was done wrong, her shoes were too

dirty. The man couldn't stand up without wobbling, but he would be damned if the kitchen was out of order, or the laundry not done. The Army had made an organized man, and a drunk. Screaming and waving the bottle he came towards her. She gave up on fighting long ago, she knew it was useless, it only made it worse. She became numb, and her only thought was, "I hope no one notices the bruises."

As she walked into school the next day she only hoped that she would be able to avoid the stares, the questions, and the whispers as

she walked by. The first day of high school already seemed to be nerve-wracking enough, but she had to come up with a lie. She thought maybe she could say she played a sport, the ball seemed to fly straight up, and that's how she got the black eye, yes, that was a great sounding story, and everyone would believe it. She made it through the day, just sliding between the people, being invisible to as many people as possible, telling her lie to every teacher and student who asked about her accident. She told the story with a smile on her face, "I guess I am just a

klutz!" and everyone would giggle along with her.

Days and weeks seemed to pass by; she lied to her teachers, her peers, anyone she came into contact with. She couldn't hang out because she had softball practice after school, she was just too busy, and she always made sure to mention those bruises on her arms and legs were all from playing softball. As she kept going she knew that eventually someone would find out, someone wouldn't buy her lies, they would know what was really happening to her, but until then, she knew she could be a normal person at school.

Things had been calming down at home, and she thought maybe things would start to turn for the better, the lies could stop. It seemed instead the opposite effect happened. One night he burst into her room, scolding, screaming, and slurring his words. She lie in bed, not understanding why this was her fate, she did nothing to deserve this. She felt it, this night would be different than all the others, she knew she wouldn't have to lie anymore; instead she would just lie in bed and think of her favorite things, it eased the pain.

She finally got to stop lying, she didn't have to pretend to be something she wasn't. Her story was told, it was told to everyone around the school. She didn't lie in school, she didn't lie to her teachers, or any of her peers. Instead, she laid in front of all of them, more beautiful than before, the bruises, the cuts, the scraps were gone, she looked like an angel. As they closed the casket, they knew she wouldn't have to lie to any of anymore, because instead she would evermore lie in peace.



Painting By: Hillary Lucas

1941

Christina Mudrick

“Blah, blah, blah,” Joy seemed to say as she watched my lips as I spoke to her. “Agoraphobia, so that is what shrinks call it these days.” Joy was thinking now as she stared at the ceiling. Talking to Joy was like talking to a wall. Our sessions did not seem to help her, and I grew despondent. Joy was an interesting patient, she did not mind her fear. After a while I believed she had a

fear of recognizing she had a problem, but I do not think there is such a fear. In the United States, everyone was trying to piece their lives back together. I suppose Joy was piecing her life back together too considering she was in my presence.

She told me her irrational fear started one chilly morning around the end of October, 1929, as she walked hand in hand with

her father to what she thought was school.

“I was ten years old, but I remember this morning being very cold and Miss Frost, our nanny, dressed me into my heavy, warm clothes. This was the last time I would see Miss Frost. Daddy and I hustled out the front door quicker than usual. He seemed in a hurry as we crossed the busy streets. He did not talk or smile as usual. One of the

street crossings was so crowded I lost daddy's grip and I was carried away in the bustle of the crowd, I was lost like a glass bottle in a tide. Men in their suits hurried, shoved me, smoke billowed from their noses and mouths like angry bulls impatient to charge! The crowd was massive, and no one cared about me being lost or out of place. They just wanted to get out of it. Not even my father cared about me being lost. He was another bull waiting to charge and this "stock market crash" that everyone was talking about consumed him. I shivered with fear.

Where was daddy? Where were we going? Why does no one care? I feel so alone! This is what I feared, this is how it started. Then daddy scooped up my hand and we were on the run again, and kept running for twelve years!" While she spoke I realized I felt the same fear twelve years ago. I learned more after this first glimpse into her life. I learned she avoided crowds at all costs and hated them. She felt if her father had never let go of her hand she would never be this way. It was his fault she was lost in the crowd and she felt strongly that he cared of nothing but escaping from it.

They were always on the run.

I talked to her father, a sweet old man. He told me he loved her tremendously, and he wanted nothing more than to keep them both safe and alive.

"We had to stay on the move, to find food, and any work that was willing to pay. I could not give her all I wanted. I just wanted to make her happy. I love my daughter." A tear rolled down his wrinkled cheek.

"Joy's lover has come to me, and he asked my permission to..." his voice dwindled away.

I was silent, there seemed to be something else

he wished to tell me but I did not press the issue.

He grabbed my hand in desperation and gratitude, “I just want her to be ready, I know you can help me to see her happy again.” The tear had now dried on his cheek. I was positive his

I climbed the narrow stairs to my apartment, opened the door, tossed the mail on the table and made some tea. As I sipped my tea, the steam rushed into my face. To evade the hot steam, my eyes wondered over towards the mail. I proceeded to read it despite

daughter would never change.

That evening was chilly as I walked home from the subway; too chilly to go out of my way and check the mail, but I did anyway. I did not read it immediately since I was not feeling intuitive. I thought I pry into

my previous feelings. I chucked some of the mail back onto the table again, but then I came to a beautiful piece of stationary, ivory and white embossed with robust hydrangeas. I carefully opened it. I smirked as I read the letter’s contents. It began “You are

too many clients’ lives trying to figure them out and make things

better. I wanted to rest my questioning mind, but the old man’s word lingered in my head. He wants her to be ready, ready for what? Never mind I told myself.

cordially invited to our wedding ceremony”. I tore it up and threw it away. It would not be ethical to get involved with my patient.

One Sunday afternoon two months later, I sat in a pew of the old cathedral. I could not believe I was here. I was accompanied by a full

audience of family, friends,
and friends of those friends.
I was a stranger here, but I
wanted to see the outcome
of this ceremony despite
ethics, and considering the
bride that was going to be
married. Suddenly, the
beautiful melody began to

play and I saw the angel
gliding down the aisle, her
face was peaceful and
happy. I was needless to say,
surprised! I could not
believe I was witnessing her
in front of this crowd,
walking down the aisle
alone, all eyes on her. I

realized what he wanted her
to be ready for. I saw
another tear roll down the
sweet old man's face as he
gave her away. In his mind
another depression was
over. I patted myself on the
back.



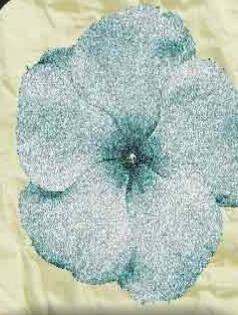
Wishing You Were Here

Love Poems

II

*I wish that I were he
whom you wanted
here beside you now,
that I were that face,
that supple form
that you embrace
so many times a day,
for whom your arms,
your lips, your thighs
like ripe pomegranates,
burst and fall open
with the fullness of
seed.*

*I wish that I were he
whom you wanted
here beside you now.*



A New Day

Meaghan Kingsley-Teem

I emerge from the black fogginess I've come to know as sleep. Gazing at the hospital room around me I'm not frightened. I do not recall being ill or injured, so I figure I am dreaming. Had I not learned to control my dreams years ago I may have been concerned to find myself in this hospital inside my head. I could change the setting, but I think I will not, this could be interesting.

A nebulously familiar doctor walks in. I must have got him from one of those medical dramas. "Hey Lucy, how are you feeling today?" he asks with too much familiarity. *This is getting interesting.*

"Fine,... do I know you?"

"Still no long term memory." he remarks to himself. "That is a difficult question to answer. I've gotten to know you quite well over the past eighteen months," he pinches my toes which I do not feel, "...but I would not say that you know me."

This dream has officially moved from interesting to bizarre!

"Tell me if you feel anything." He continues to poke and squeeze his way up my legs as I wait for him to transform into Ashton Kutcher telling me I've been "punked". Instead he continues in silence until he reaches the bottom of my ribs where I utter sensation. He mutters, "No change" as he scribbles on his charts. I try to change the dream, switch places with the doctor, but I can't.

“...and you better not poke any higher!” I joke to mask my mounting anxiety . The doctor only gives me a weary, mournful smile. *Why that look? My throat knots, but I manage choke out, “What’s wrong with me?”*

“There was an accident..”

My mind bolts up, but only my shoulders follow. Terror engulfs me as the doctor gently presses me back against the pillow and peppers me with an extensive list of injuries. He places special emphasis on damage to my hippocampus, *whatever that is*, and what he called a partial transaction between my fourteenth and fifteenth vertebrae. *Where am I getting this stuff?!* Then he calls “Judy!” and promises that he’s doing everything he can to make me well before bolting from the room.

“Doctor, wait! What does all of that mean? Wait! How long will it take for me to get better? WAIT! Please don’t go...”

A modern Mrs. Butterworth nurse rushes in to quiet me. She avoids my questions, but proceeds to tell me that I’ll have breakfast in a half hour, lunch at one , and dinner at seven. Yvonne will come by at ten a.m. to attend to my hygiene and my mother will visit around three this afternoon, as is her custom, according to Judy.

The day is passing just as Judy said it would. I keep trying to conjure up some kind of change, to free myself of this medical prison, but find myself impotent. I attempt to wake up only to find myself in the same place. Maybe I should just follow the dream. Though I know I have never done any of these things before, everything seems oddly routine. *Déjà vu?* I feel familiar with people I have never met and they talk like we are. That is not what truly bothers me though. My mother keeps looking at me hollowly, like I’m dead, she has never looked at me that way before. *Or has she? What am I thinking? This a dream! A horrid, stupid, twisted dream - that’s all!*

I know how to get out of this nightmare! I just need to fall asleep. If I fall asleep in a dream I should dream that I am dreaming another dream, *right?* It is worth a try.

I emerge from the black foginess I've come to know as sleep. I see a hospital room around me and a vaguely familiar doctor walking through the door. I must have got him from...



Someone once told me...

Take the stairs it's great for your heart!

Drink tea and orange juice - they'll boost your immune system

Plan for the future now

Remember where you came from

Celebrate diversity

Where high heeled shoes - the extra height will translate into authority

Keep your goals attainable

"Ignorance of certain subjects is a great part of wisdom"

Have a role model

Never go out after dark

Let the oyster roll down the back of your throat whole

Dream big!

Hold some kind of faith. Studies show that people with faith live longer

Thoroughly cook all of your food to kill bacteria

You should try everything once

Be mature enough to know when you are beaten

Carpe Diem!

Avoid acidic drinks like orange juice and lemonade, they weaken you're tooth enamel

Wear what makes you feel beautiful

Look before you leap

Don't take the stairs; empty stairwells are the perfect place for criminals to attack

If it starts before nine p.m. it's not a party

Tea and coffee will stain your teeth

Life is not about achievements

"Above all else to thine own self be true"

The past doesn't matter

Raw vegetables are most nutritious

Knowledge is power

High impact exercise helps strengthen bones

We must form an American culture

Live each day as if it was your last

Patience is a virtue

Don't force yourself to live by a set of rules they will only hold you back

Never give up

Good, better, best never let it rest, until your good is your better and your better your best

Chew each piece of food fifty times

High heels reek havoc on your feet

Look for low impact exercise because it is better for your joints

Don't worry about tomorrow

Never wear white after labor day

...Good advice is hard to find.

EMPTY

Russell Peck

Joe takes a bite from his sandwich. A turkey club in the diner at the Flying J, north of

Bakersfield. Joe has just filled his tank and this is the first meal he's had all day.

Looking

around from his booth he notices that the place was a lot quieter than the time of day and

location would suggest. It was evening off one of the busiest trucking routes in the West. Joe

knew from experience this wasn't an isolated incident; all across the nation truck stops and rest

stations were emptying at a frightening rate of their most important customers. Joe thinks back to

just months ago, when most diners at most stops

were filled with people, laughter, and stories.

Now the atmosphere was bleak, just a few slumped figures sitting along the counter, not a

conversation in the whole room. But what was there to discuss? The glory days, the way things

used to be?

Another bite. Joe thinks of the many trips he had over the years across the whole of

the United States. He'd been from Portland, Oregon to Portland, Maine, and everywhere in

between. Joe thinks of his trips through the Rockies, through the Plains, through the swamps of

the South, the forests of the Northwest. He

remembers the load of bottles he drove from Los

Angeles to Atlanta, and the record time in which he accomplished the feat. To Joe, that seems

like ancient history, in this climate. Now he can only get short haul contracts, and he's lucky

even to get these.

A sip from his Coke. Joe thinks of the job he's on right now. This will be his last trip in a

dozen years of reliable service to his employers, whoever and wherever they were. A career

which began trucking goods across the nation in one trip now ends with a short haul from San

Diego to Redding. He simply can't afford to stay in

business anymore, not with these cheap

contracts, not with these diesel prices. With the money from these runs Joe can barely afford to

fill his tank, let alone anything else. He thought back to the diesel prices when he first began in

the mid-90s, prices so low they hardly needed to be taken into consideration. Even last year they

were tolerable, but its completely changed now. He's the last of his friends to survive this

change, most of them had to call it quits months ago, but Joe held on, barely. Now even his time

has come.

Another bite. Joe thinks of the huge trains, a mile long, which he passed on his way

north. A mile of shipping containers, straight from the harbors of China to railyards across the

nation. A hundred times more efficient, how could Joe and other independents compete

with this kind of technology?

Another sip. Joe remembers all the corporate-owned rigs he passed by on the highway,

the only ones who can survive this mess. Joe thinks of his own rig, an '05 Peterbilt which he

bought brand new, the third truck of his career. What would be the future of this vehicle now?

Joe was lucky, he paid it off last year, others weren't as fortunate. He remembers Bill Atwood

and how he came home from one desperate run to find the repo man waiting in his driveway.

There are thousands of stories like that all across the country.

Joe finishes up his fries. He wonders what he is going to do after the completion of this

final run. He can't believe he's even pondering the question. His father was a trucker; that was

his career for over thirty years. Joe himself has been an owner-operator for a dozen years, and

figured he'd be doing just that for another dozen. Joe thinks of his brother's dairy farm, but he

was never much for those, he'd smelled enough of them on the highway for a lifetime. Joe's

friend Dan Meyers got a good job driving a 400-ton dump truck up at the tar sands pits in

Alberta. He had actually been pondering this for awhile, all the reports state that a driver can get

\$60,000 starting, more than he can get here that was for sure. But for now Joe's focus is on the

task at hand.

Joe pays the bill and leaves the diner. He reaches

his vehicle and its load,
heavily coated

in dust from the Central
Valley. Not that dust matters
at this point. While stepping
into his

vehicle, Joe notices the
pavement is wet underneath
his fuel tank. This was
definitely not a good

sign in these times.
Frantically, he jumps down
and looks around the large
parking lot, but not a

soul is in sight.
Panicked, he turns on the
engine. His mind racing, Joe
checks the fuel gauge.

Empty.



Kenny Sarisky

Phoebe, like most people, had never experienced a bank robbery before. But that changed on a sunny Friday morning inside of Winchester National Bank. Two robbers walked in brandishing Glock 17C's and ordered everyone to the ground.

Gabriel's SWAT unit was deployed to Winchester National Bank to deal with yet another robbery. The last few had ended peacefully, so he was ready for some action. He loaded his M107 and climbed into the back of the armored truck with his squad mates.

The bank security guard hadn't stood a chance against a pair of nine-millimeter bullets. Phoebe, along with the others in the bank, watched as the guard's lifeless body crumpled to the floor. She froze for a moment to look at the guard's face as one of the thieves made his way to the nearest teller.

The armored truck slowed to a stop near a group of police cars at the front of the bank. Grabbing his sniper rifle, Gabriel stepped out of the truck and looked around. He went to the roof of the barbershop on the other side of the street to set up his equipment. The recon team made their way around back to try to get a visual inside the bank.

With the semi-automatic pistol fixed on her head, the teller nervously pointed out the bank manager. The manager walked to the nearby safe just as the robber had told him to do. While the manager opened the safe, Phoebe stared at all of the cops outside. They sure had responded quickly. The bank phone rang, but it went unanswered. The thieves knew it was the police.

Recon had reported two suspects, a male and a female, each with a handgun. There were approximately twenty hostages inside. After repeated attempts of trying to get in contact with the robbers with no success, Gabriel had been given the go-ahead to shoot if he had a clear shot. The man was still at the counter waiting for the safe to open. He was getting very anxious, waving his gun in the air. Gabriel steadied himself, looked through the eyepiece, and exhaled.

A bullet ripped through the window, sending shattered glass flying everywhere. While most people screamed,

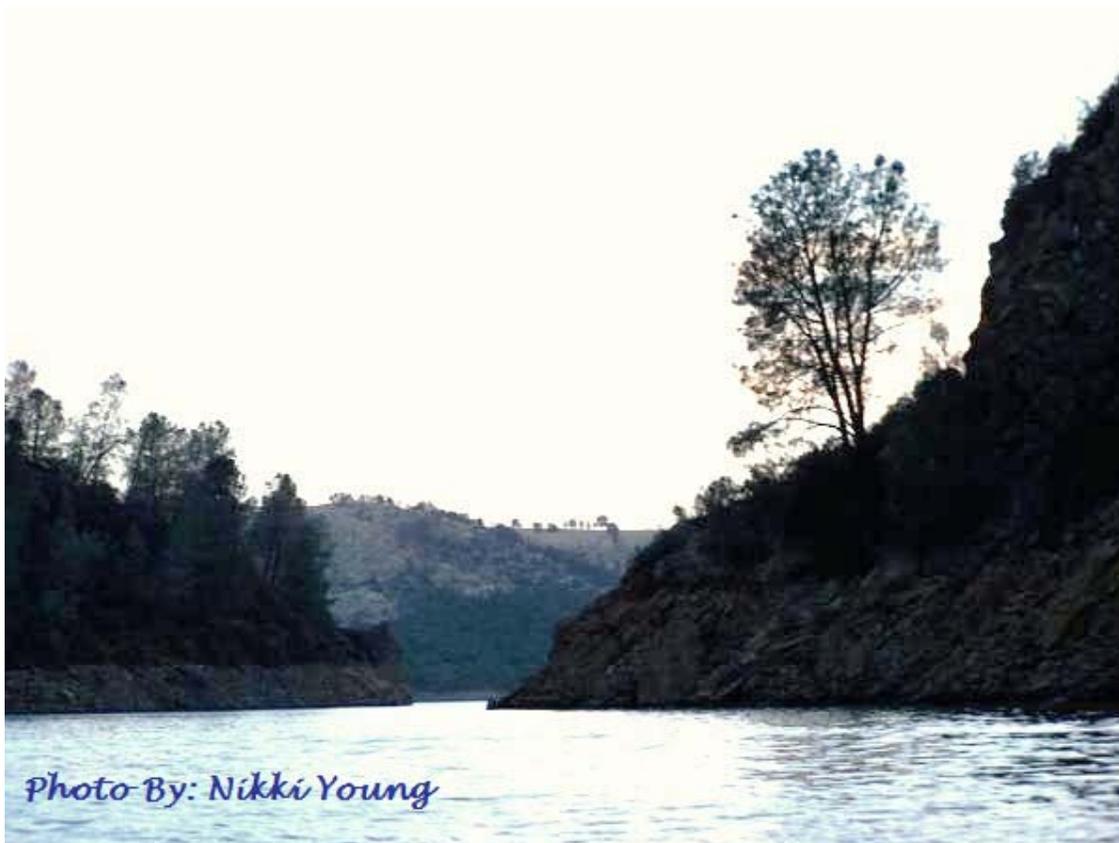
Phoebe looked toward the robber at the counter, and saw him sprawled on the ground with a pool of blood around a gaping hole in his forehead. She grimaced and swiftly turned away.

Gabriel took a deep breath and tried to steady himself. He was shaking with adrenaline, but knew his job wasn't finished. There was still one robber left to deal with. He adjusted his rifle to the right and took aim at the other thief. He was going for another headshot, but couldn't get one due to his position. Placing his finger lightly on the trigger, he found the robber's chest instead and said, "I have the shot."

Phoebe was crying a little now. She knew it was a mistake to have come to the bank this morning. Suddenly, another section of glass was blown to pieces, and Phoebe felt an excruciating pain in her chest. The Glock in her hand tumbled out and bounced a few times on the ground as she was pushed back by a strong force.

Satisfied with his work, Gabriel took one last look at his target. He had hit her square in the chest, an excellent shot. The rest of the SWAT team stormed into the bank as Gabriel packed up his equipment.

She heard the yells of the people entering the bank, saw them kick the pistol away from her side, saw as they went over to her accomplice's body. Phoebe looked up at the bank lights, and watched as they disappeared into darkness.



Graziella's Visitor

Heather Allison

"You say he's here every day?"

"Yeah. Comes in right at four, sits his expensive Italian suit down, and goes back through the metal detector at four forty-five, rain or shine."

"Well, maybe he's casing the place, you know? Looking for weak spots."

"In just one painting? I don't think so. Besides, who takes three years to figure out how to steal something, anyway? No, this is different."

"He do anything other than sit there and stare at her? I mean, she's beautiful and all, but how long can a guy stare at a fully clothed girl just sitting on a rock?"

"Tell me about it! I used to walk by him, pretend I was checking the bathrooms or something, just to see what was up, but that's all he ever does. Sits there, gawking."

"Kind of creepy, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Think he's married?"

"Can't tell; trash can's in the way."

"What?"

"It's in front of his hand."

"Oh."

"I've worked here too long."

"I can tell."

"Hear that? It's the metal detector. I'd better go see what's going on. Stay here, alright?"

"Well, I was thinking about making sure the bathrooms were okay."

"Fine, but then come back here. This will only take a minute."

"Sure."

"What took you so long? I've been waiting for ten minutes!"

"I was trying to see his ring finger."

"Oh."

"What was wrong with the metal detector?"

"Nothing."

"Huh."

"Yeah, it happens."

"So, when do I get to go on a break?"

"You just had lunch."

"Four hours ago!"

"Well, can't you wait? It's almost four forty-five. I always go on break at five."

"Come on, it's your last day! You're retiring! Let's just go out twenty minutes early. Jack will cover for us. What could it hurt?"

"I don't know..."

"Look, the guy's going to sit there same as every day. He doesn't know you're going on break early, and even if he did, what would it matter?"

"I guess you're right..."

"I know I am. It's happy hour around the corner. I'll even pick up the tab."

"Ok, you've got a deal. I'll get my coat."

"You were right. That was fun. A good way to cap off my last day."

"Yeah, it was worth the eight bucks, old man."

"Oh, wipe that grin off your face..."

"Why? I'm having a good...Uh, sir?"

"What, offend you?"

"No... But, tell me, was she always wearing that necklace?"

"Doggone it. Get me the security chief on line two."



Love Poems

III



*Naked at the night window
waiting for the bed to cool,
seem not to belong to anything,
belong to nothing?*

*Wandering
shadow through shadows,
watching
cat eyes track
passions: hunger, heat, the leap.*

“Before The Red Light Changes”

A Short Short By

Erik Engvall



This all started at a red light. Maybe it is because red carries the strongest reaction of all the colors, or because it is a color of warning, or maybe it was simply a coincidence. It was at this red light, on this night, at this time, that it happened. Without any forewarning or hint of his possible action it happened. It was at this red light, on this street, where he made that decision. It was a decision some still speculate about. It was here, that he pressed down the pedal with just enough force to send him into the intersection, the very same intersection that Mack truck happened to be traveling through.

It was hot and dry all summer, but that night, that night it was pouring down rain. It seemed darker also, darker than any night so far that year. But it wasn't the rain, or the darkness. It was a thought, lingering in the back of his mind. It wasn't his fault; it was something he was born with. He had the ability to be multiple people, one a lonely dark person, the other a loud eccentric person. Sometimes he would stay one for long stretches of time, sometimes he would change rapidly. This was something his family had to learn to cope with.

It was this thought that caused so much grief. The same thought that had been haunting him for quite some time. He knew it wasn't his own thought, it was a thought born of something else. It was created in the recesses of his mind, a place the doctors said he shouldn't go. That's why he took the pills after all, to keep him away from there. The only problem is he hadn't been taking the pills lately, he thought he would be fine without them. He was wrong, and in the last few days it had been starting to show. His mind was constantly racing, back and forth. It was all becoming too much for him.

Constantly he pictured himself far out in the ocean with his family on the beach looking back at him. His family saw him waving and kindly waved back with smiles on their faces. What they didn't realize was that he wasn't waving, he was too far out. He was swinging his arms violently to stay afloat. It was that night that he finally gave up and finally stopped swinging his arms. It was that night, and that red light that he finally stopped resisting the water's pull. He finally let go.

Aischune

Tracy Selfridge

"You mean the world to me," he said.

"I know," Aischune replied. "You mean everything to me, too."

They walked slowly, hand in hand, hoping that time would stand still and they could be together forever. That was all they wanted in this world. Aischune was hoping to stay away from home as long as she possibly could, and be with him for just a bit longer. She had a feeling he was thinking the same thing.

"Well... I guess I should let you go home before it gets too late," he said.

She knew the last thing he wanted was to keep her out too late, her parents would be angry if she did not come home soon.

"Alright, if I must, but first..." she leaned towards him.

He kissed her gently. There was so much passion between the two of them, but they were still young. She was barely eighteen and he was hardly older than she. They walked together to her truck and he kissed her again, but on the forehead this time.

She was disappointed they could not be together for longer, but she knew that she would see him again soon.

"I love you," Aischune said.

"I love you, too."

On her way home, Aischune was reminiscing of her day with him. She had never been happier in her life and the thought of being away from him was horrifying, but they had to go back to their separate homes.

She slowly pulled up to the curb in front of her house, careful not to hit the curb, but knowing she more than likely would. Aischune got out of the truck and made her way to the front door, realizing that she would probably be thinking about the blissful afternoon the rest of the day.

After opening the front door, she was greeted by a pair of glaring eyes and a second pair of eyes filled with disapproval. The happiness she had felt just moments before was torn away and she was left with just the memory of her time with him.

"We had dinner while you were gone, there is some left in the fridge," Aischune's mom said.

"Oh my gosh! We have mountain dew!" Aischune exclaimed.

"Well, you would have *known* that if you were *home*," her mother explained in a snide manner.

Yeah, life was right back to the way it was for Aischune. Her parents disapproved of her way of doing things, her study habits, and the way she acted in general. It seemed as if she could never please them. They expected her to fail, hoping that if she was knocked down, she would be forced to grow up and become a responsible young adult. Aischune hoped to prove them wrong, but she could not seem to stop thinking about her blissful afternoon with him...

She walked back to her room and found a package waiting for her. She opened it, confused as to why she received a package. As she looked inside, she realized far too late what the package contained. A wave of heat was thrust at her, throwing her backwards into her door. She lay there motionlessly, dreaming of her afternoon, never to wake again.



Photo By: Meaghan Kingsley-Teem

Control

Jawsem Al-Hashash

I remember when I died. It was a Monday night, or a Tuesday morning. I think it was early November, maybe late October. Yes, it was late October. I remember the little fake graveyards and jack-o-lanterns at every other house in my neighborhood. I decided to go to the liquor store and pick up some cigarettes.

I parked behind the store and as soon as I left the car, cool air trickled down my spine and the loneliness of the dark enveloped me. I hurried cowardly away from the creepy vicinity of my vehicle around to the well-lit front of the store. As I entered the store, the clerk looked at me angrily and as I walked over to the

counter, she smirked and said, "Hello sir, how may I help you?" "Could I get two packs of Marlboro lights, please?" I asked politely. As she was getting the packs I asked, "What happened to the lights behind the—," but before I could finish the entire question, the store darkened and all I could see was blackness.

At that moment I was gone, something inside of me had changed. I had lost all control. Images flashed among the blackness, blood splattered on the wall, the bloody knife in my hands. I felt the warm red liquid trickling down my fingers. The blood settled in the wrinkles of my hands. It was a nightmare.

When my head cleared I started to understand what was going on. I was myself again, in my car driving home. I thought hopefully to myself, "Maybe it was just a dream." I arrived home and got out of the car. I opened my trunk to find gallon of gasoline. What am I planning? I went into my home and started to pour it all over the house. I tried to stop myself, but could not. As I walked out the door I lit a match and threw it into the house. The house where my family lived, my sweet daughter, my loving wife. I could smell the smoke, see the fire, hear my house burn to the ground but I could not do anything to stop it. I was not in control, I knew what had happened at the liquor store

was real, I was gone, I was not myself anymore.

This went on for years. I watched myself commit hundreds of unspeakable crimes, and kill dozens of innocent people. I felt it, heard it, and experienced it all, but I couldn't stop it. I started to become numb to it all.

One morning I woke up in a shabby motel room in a small town. I got out of bed thinking of who I would watch myself kill next. Then I realized I was myself again. I started jumping on my bed like a child. Then, as I floated happily above my bed, I thought maybe this is just a trick. I walked out of my room and wandered over to the liquor store on the

corner. It was a place similar to where it all began. I asked the clerk, "May I have a pack of cigarettes, please?"

"What kind?" she responded politely.

"Oh yeah, I'll have Marlboro lights, please," I answered happily. She handed them over and I walked out the door. I lit one of my cigarettes on the way back to my room and as I smoked it I felt the joy of freedom float through my body. I was going to make a new life for myself.

As I sat in my motel room thinking of where I would go and what I would do with my new life, I heard sirens. I looked out my

window to see several cop cars waiting outside my door. I heard a loud knock and someone said "Open up, you're under arrest!" I was arrested and tried for the murder of forty people.

Months later I sit in my jail cell on death row and think about what my life has become. I think about the murders I couldn't control, the reasons I rot in prison. I think about why I was freed from my murderous self just to be imprisoned. Then I say to myself "If only I didn't buy those packs of cigarettes."

Punishment

Danielle Jespersen

“Why did I do it?” he whispers desperately in between sobs. Tears trace a serpentine path along his tortured face as he remembers it all too clearly.

An imposing dark sky had delivered a pelting rain. There was no sun in sight. The staff at St. Mercy Hospital was working overtime again, a commonplace occurrence during the bustling holiday season. Rich was working as a receptionist at the front desk, a position he viewed as a symbolic leg iron restricting his adventurous pursuit of

freedom from the confines of a hospital he viewed as his psychological prison. And a location situated, ironically, to face the ubiquitous oversized double doors that routinely usher in life and death situations. Rich was supporting his family of three: himself, his wife, and his young daughter. He dreaded working late during Christmastime, but knew his debt-saddled family desperately needed the money.

On this particularly gloomy day, a seemingly cheerful man clad in a light-

colored, but drenched raincoat, carrying a dark briefcase, confidently entered through the oversized double doors and greeted Rich at the front desk. At first Rich thought he must have nodded off into a dream for rarely does a person entering the hospital appear this gleeful or bright. The beguiling stranger shook Rich’s hand and said he had something to donate to the hospital.

“You see, I recently read in the newspaper about how St. Mercy is in dire need of

additional funding to support the building of its new organ transplant wing, especially in light of the recent economic hard times. The article tugged directly upon my heart because I am living proof of the miraculous, life-changing effect organ transplants can have.”

As he finished his sentence, the mystery man quietly opened up the briefcase in a manner not to draw attention to him and revealed its contents to Rich. Inside were thick bundles of green dollar bills stacked from end to end.

“There should be exactly one million dollars there, sir.”

Rich’s mouth was agape and he was rendered

completely speechless. His eyes were fixated on the pile of cash as he feebly attempted to muster a reply of gratitude. Rich remained mesmerized by the magnetic vision of the money and thus was oblivious to the hasty exit made by the benefactor back through the double doors. The charming, yet elusive man had successfully returned to the world of anonymity.

Rich was in a temporary state of shock. He struggled to come to grips with the fact that an unknown man had just entrusted him with one million dollars. Selfish thoughts of greed instantaneously raged against his moral fiber, each seeking advantage with his vulnerable soul.

“Since I am the only one who saw this man donate the money, if I keep at least part of it for me and my family, no one will be harmed or even know that the money was donated.” He wrestled with the dilemma until finally deciding that in the best interest of his family, he would keep the donation a secret and periodically take a portion of the money home as a well deserved “raise.”

As time passed, so did the long, slow process of bringing St. Mercy’s organ transplant wing to fruition. Likewise, Rich continued receiving his “raise” from the hospital’s unknown donation. Years passed, and so did the expected date of completion for the once heralded state-of-the-art

facility. St. Mercy could not provide organ transplant services to victims as they had once hoped due to dwindling financial resources. The anonymous donor had not been seen or heard from again, nor was any mention of the donation ever made.

Over time, any guilt Rich associated with the money vanished and he began to silently

revel in the deftness of his act. He figured his scheme was working, and working well. No one needed to know and no one had been harmed.

“Keep it clear! We have an emergency!” voices blared loudly through the hospital waiting room on a stormy night. Hospital workers were

frantically pushing two seriously injured patients into the emergency room. The emergency room staff became a flurry of activity around the patients as they assumed their roles as life sustaining operatives. Rich had been quietly busy filing paperwork in a secluded records office and missed the whole ordeal. Through the double doors at the end of the hall Rich heard a voice bellow, “Rich! We have been looking all over for you! Your wife and daughter were involved in a serious car accident. They are both fighting for their lives and they will likely need a transplant.” The words pierced Rich like a sword plunged deep through his guilt-ridden heart. The deafening voice of his past indiscretion, “There’s no

facility for them to receive an organ transplant because I stole the money,” echoed loud and clear in his mind.

Months after the tragic passing of his wife and daughter, Rich sobs as he awakes, wishing once again that it had all been a nightmare, the same way he does every morning.

“If only I had given the donation to the hospital, my family might still be alive.”

Unimaginable pain sears the soul of this man well beyond anything a jail cell could ever inflict. When Rich finally walks back into St. Mercy after a leave of absence, he finds the mysterious man dressed in the light raincoat standing at the receptionist’s desk.

Rich felt compelled to explain himself. He hurriedly walked over to the mystery man from his past and began to speak. Barely able to bring himself to look the man in the eyes, Rich apologized profusely and expressed his overwhelming sense of shame for what he had done. Surprisingly, the man had not been startled by Rich's sudden appearance beside him. He placed his hand on Rich's shoulder, looked him in the eyes, and with a knowing smile told Rich that he understood.

"Your wife was a loving woman. She had such great

faith in you. I too had every confidence in you and believe me when I tell you that you did not let me down."

"You knew my wife?" Rich asked.

"My associate knew of her," the man replied. "He called on her some time back."

With that, the man put his arm around Rich's shoulder and walked with him through the double doors and out of the hospital. As they were exiting, a frantic young woman carrying a baby rushed past them, disappearing quickly into the hospital. For a fleeting

moment, Rich felt his instincts call upon him to aid the woman in her time of need, but the pull of redemption was stronger.

Weeks later on a cold, drizzling February evening, a car containing a solitary occupant turned off of the highway and into the parking lot of a small community hospital several hundred miles away from St. Mercy's. After a few minutes, Rich emerged from the car. Wearing a light-colored raincoat and carrying a black briefcase, he strode toward large, glass double doors.



Illustration By:
Danielle Jespersen

The Wreckage

Brittney Woods

Parts were scattered randomly throughout the area and made the item almost unrecognizable, especially to the young native. He had only gone hunting to get food for his family and had not expected to run across such a mysterious instrument. Intrigued, the young male traveled closer to the wreckage intending to investigate. There were hundreds of white pieces strewn around the area and he had to be careful of sharp edges. The largest piece of the wreckage had an extended length protruding away from the ground. On the end there was a piece that moved back and forth, but he could not come up with a probable reason why that particular piece would move. Partially attached to what he assumed was the body of the instrument was a long and flat piece of material. He discovered an identical

piece a few feet from the main part of the wreck. To him, the two pieces seemed to be the wings of a bird, and the back was the tail. Towards the front of the body of the wreck, there was a hole that seemed as if it could fit a person or two of his size, but it was too destroyed to know for sure. The wreck seemed to have been there for a long time because the foliage underneath was dead, but there was evidence that it was starting to grow again. He walked around and around the wreckage, and he still could not figure out what to think of the wreck. He had never before seen anything like it and he could not wait to go tell his family about it. He tried to think about whether there was anything in the wreckage that his family could salvage and use. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught the sun reflecting off

of something shiny. It appeared to be a piece of metal of some kind. The object was shaped into an oval and had a circular spout at one end, and it looked as if one could pour a liquid into it. One end was broken and the structure would no longer hold anything but he did notice a strange engraving on the side by where the break started. He had no idea what it meant, but it seemed to be incomplete. The engraving read *A. Earh* before it reached the break and was cut off. He put the object back on the ground because it would have

little use to his family. As he approached the wreckage one last time, he seemed to realize just how late it was getting. The sun was beginning to set and he still had not found any food for his family. Regretfully he turned away from the wreckage vowing to go back another day. He walked away from the site without for a second thinking there was any significance to the NR16020 that was inscribed on the unattached wing.



Love Poems

IV

*And my night too resembles you,
this night that sighs, cries,
word-broke in a comfortless bed
I have come to dread,
in the unreachable heart,
where the stars drag past,
burned and burned out,
this night that aches, coils,
waits for dawn.*



*Yes, love,
there's someone who, like you,
as hollow, as cold, as sleepless,
pinned to a restless pillow,
weighed down by diminishing stars,
awaits dawnlight,
awaits the poor, limping relief
that is loveless sunrise.*

Nothing There

Richard Gilbert

The man staggered to his feet, his chest heaving from the ferocity of the combat. The boy stood nearby, his mouth agape and tears streaming down his face. With what remained of his strength, the man bent down and, with a thunderous crack, rent the beast's head from its bull neck. He made use of a nearby coat rack as an impromptu pike and with a last snarl of hatred erected the head as a testament to the struggle that had transpired.

The man wished that his son had not had to witness the horrific battle, but it was a necessary rite. The man placed one hand on his son's shoulder before he spoke.

"My son," he said. "You've seen a terrible thing today, something no boy should have to see. The ancients thought that by killing a thing you gained its power, and so that's what we've done, all of us, people, humans, through history. We lie to ourselves that we've driven out every demon, but deep down we all remember the old times, when we had more reasons to fear the dark. Sometimes there's a reminder that the old powers of the Earth are never really gone, like tonight."

The man lowered his aching body to the ground, heedless of the gore that drenched the floor and walls.

"But for now it's safe," he whispered, to himself as much as the boy. "Go to sleep."

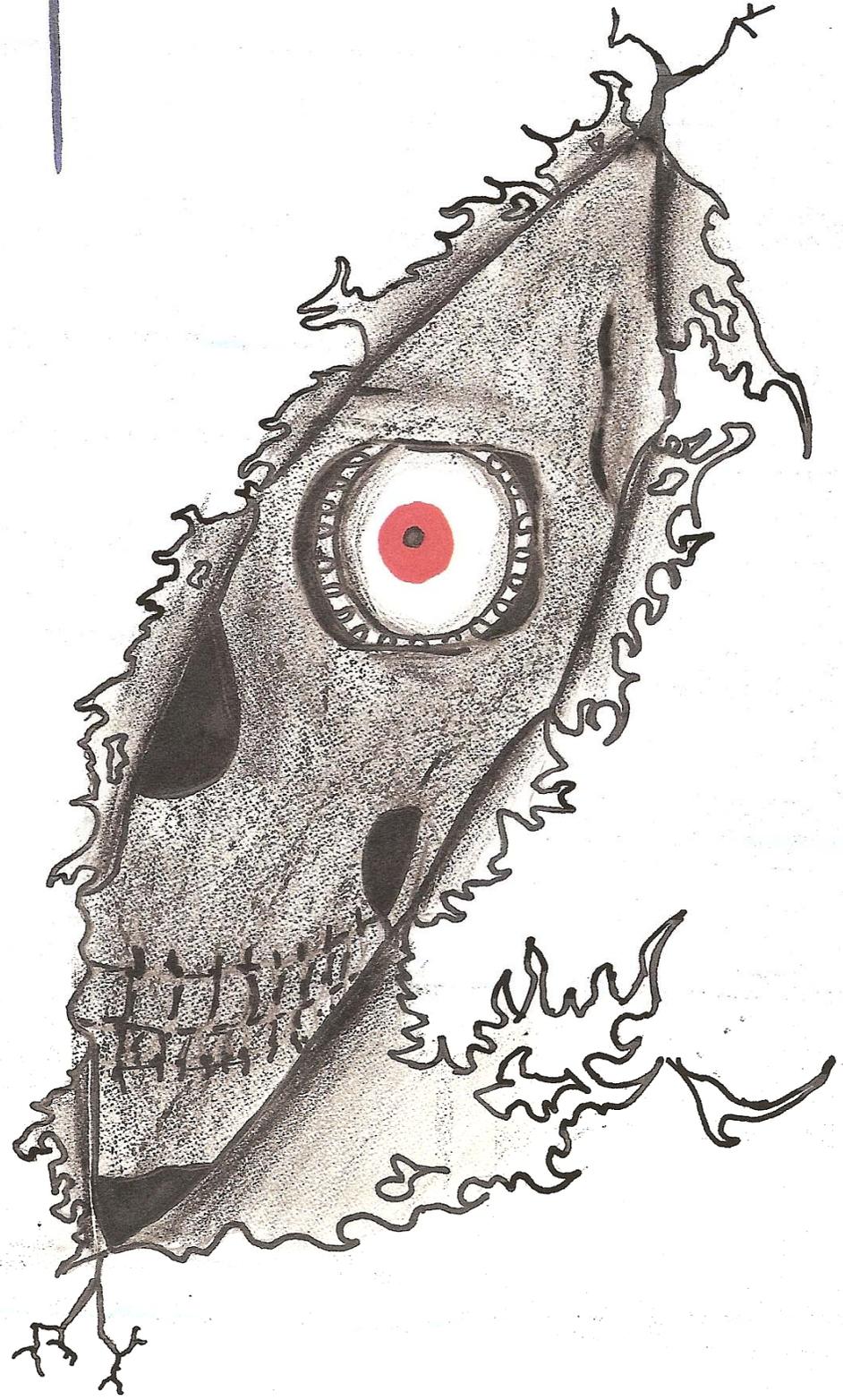
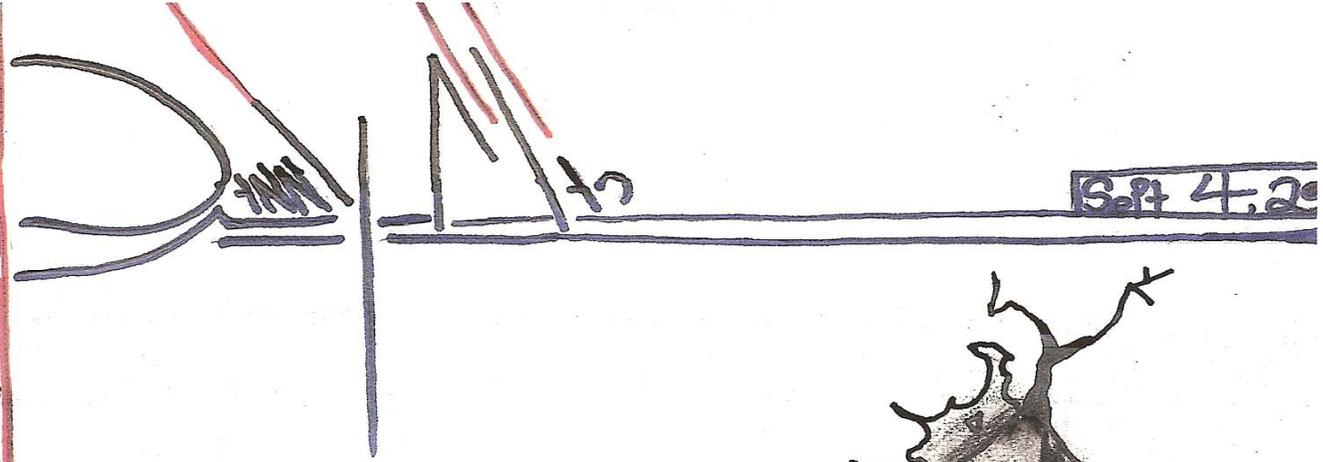
He was entangled in the creature's long limbs, and as he struggled to bring the slaving devil down he lost his balance. Man and beast tumbled into the hall. He remembered nothing but red.

The crimson eyes in the darkness seemed to peer through the man, seeing not only him but all of his prey ancestors who had once feared these same eyes. The smell assaulted his nose, his mouth, and his eyes watered. He was breathing the corrosive slime of something that should be extinct, something long thought driven off when the jungles were burned and every corner of the dark Earth illuminated by mankind. It was an old fear, a terror that the man had been taught was obsolete. He could not move until the beast was upon him.

"But Daddy, I can't sleep! There's a monster in the closet."

The man walked to the closet and opened the doors. He would show his son that there was nothing in there but clothes.

staring
at a
Blank
page
is hard
Some-
times
it all
most
starts
●
Back
at
you
Looking
at
you
harder
than
you
●
can
look
at
it



IRENE

Stephanie Wright

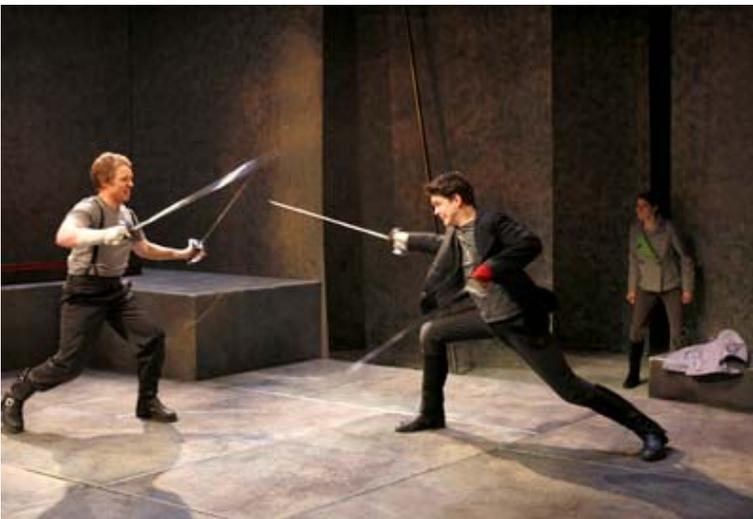
Caedmon has long awaited this moment to come. Diomedes and his victim, Irene, are heading toward the plaza, while Caedmon watches from a nearby street. Irene sits down to think, and Caedmon knows the time has come.

Exhausted, Irene sits on a bench in the middle of the plaza, shaded by the nearby trees. She wants peace, but the nightmares have returned, interfering with what little sleep she normally gets. Even now, she sees a vision of her father standing over her, wielding a wooden paddle, about to strike. She feels the pain and numbness wash over her once more. By now, she would be in a bar drinking her problems into momentary oblivion. She does not feel like going into the bar today, though. She wants to rid herself of this pain, if she can. Thinking about pain, she realizes that her actions make work almost unmanageable for her husband. With him being the Secretary of Defense, she was expected to act as a large part of his conscience. She battles with the weighty expectation of being his sole support, and becomes aware of how she is aiding in his downfall.

Diomedes wants to be finished with this job. Many months ago, he was given the assignment to bring down the Secretary of Defense. For a time he found no weakness in the man, but soon enough he saw that the man was unusually dependent on the support of his wife, Irene. If he could bring down Irene, then the man would lose everything and Diomedes' mission would be complete. Already, the man's work is sluggish as a result of Irene's recent drinking problems. A few more months at this, and Diomedes could begin a more meaningful assignment.

Caedmon has been training for this battle against Diomedes for many years now. The moment that the battle was foretold, he began to trail his enemy. He learned Diomedes' every move, fighting tactic, strength, and weakness. He watched his every interaction and learned how he used his immense size to control others. Caedmon especially watched over Irene, though only passively. He had watched as she slowly lost herself to Diomedes, but she is different today. She yearns for change. Because of this, there is a deep tension in the air, a type of quiet before a storm.

Irene continues to mull over her growing insecurities. She wants to head downtown to the bar, but fights the urge. She wants to rid herself of the nightmares, but they are too painful. Her mind is fixed on the same image of her father.



Diomedes has her under his spell again. Ruining Irene's petty life was easy now that he had found what would destroy her. The memories of her abusive father are what hold him in ultimate power over her, and he enjoys that power immensely.

Caedmon begins to close the distance between himself and Diomedes, trying to keep hidden as long as possible. He begins to feel his nerves

awaken. Though he has been trained to counter every attack from his enemy, he knows that Diomedes is intelligent.

The plaza is crowded now, but Irene stays on the bench, feeling like she is going to burst from her conflicting thoughts. Diomedes realizes that something is wrong. For the last few months he sporadically experienced the feeling that a pair of eyes was studying him. Because of this, he decided to put extra time into learning new attacks. He hopes that his adversaries can not see him perfecting the new series of strikes under the darkness of night. He immediately feels the same sick feeling consume him. Wielding his sword, Caedmon launches his body toward Diomedes.

Caught off guard, Diomedes feels searing pain shoot up his left arm and looks to find it almost hacked in two. After he takes a second to recuperate, he quickly unsheathes his own sword to fend off his attacker.

Caedmon begins to test Diomedes. Though he had trained well, Caedmon knows that he has to figure out exactly how Diomedes thinks and reacts.

Diomedes is surprised. Of all those who would persuade him into battle, he hardly expected Caedmon to be the one confronting him. The last time he fought Caedmon, it was fairly easy to toy with his pride. Once Caedmon's pride got in the way, Diomedes beat him down until he swore not to get in the way. Now, facing Caedmon again, Diomedes becomes outraged and flies into a quick succession of sword movements that make even Musashi look inferior.

Caedmon knows that he is making Diomedes uneasy. That was his goal at first, but now it is about the redemption of Irene. As far as Caedmon knows, they are evenly matched. Diomedes has his size and anger to depend on, while Caedmon has his agility and extensive training. As he wonders if Diomedes will lose control, Caedmon starts setting up a new attack.

Now Diomedes knows that Caedmon is toying with him. Furious, he sees the opportunity he has been waiting for and proceeds to maneuver through his new sequence of attacks.

Caedmon has studied Diomedes well enough to know that something is new. This is one thing he realizes that he is not prepared for. Not knowing what else to do, Caedmon braces his body for the onslaught of pain.

Diomedes is triumphant. He definitely wants a raise after he is done with Caedmon because this was not part of the job description. As he raises his arms to give the final, fatal blow he notices that something is terribly wrong.

Caedmon is almost dead. He has little strength left, but this battle is not about him so he knows he cannot fail. When he saw the opportunity, he lifted his sword and threw all his weight toward the other pair of hands that held a sword.

Diomedes finally registers what happened. The pain begins where his hands should be and travels up his arms, throbbing and burning the whole way up. He is dazed.

Irene is still sitting on the bench. The image of her father still fixed in her mind, but she suddenly refuses the guilt that normally comes with it.

Caedmon feebly lifts his sword and ends the life of Diomedes. He crumples to the ground, feeling weak and ultimately victorious at the same time.

Suddenly, Irene is exuberant. Her nightmare is gone and she surprisingly does not feel the urge to go drinking. She wonders why it was not this easy to let go of her pain before. She also wonders what she is going to do now. She wants to go back to her husband and explain to him what has happened.

Caedmon disposes of Diomedes' lifeless form. He takes a look at his own mangled, bleeding body, ignores it, and heads toward Irene.

Irene finally decides to get up from the bench and begins walking home. She wonders how she can explain the importance of what happened and not look crazy.

Caedmon stands by the last tree in the plaza, waiting for Irene.

As Irene passes that same tree, she feels an unexplainable bliss consume her, but it is gone within seconds.

Caedmon waits for Irene. As she walks toward him, he remembers something. She is right in front of him, and then passes right through his body. He reminds himself that Irene has no idea who he or

Diomedes is. She had that passed between know.

Irene is in high unaware of the Caedmon, keeping her



not seen the battle them. She would never spirits, but remains protective force, named safe.

smile

by Jessica Geiss

She didn't know as she opened the door, if she did know she would not have opened the door in the first place. She simply heard the bell and turned the door handle, a normal reaction.

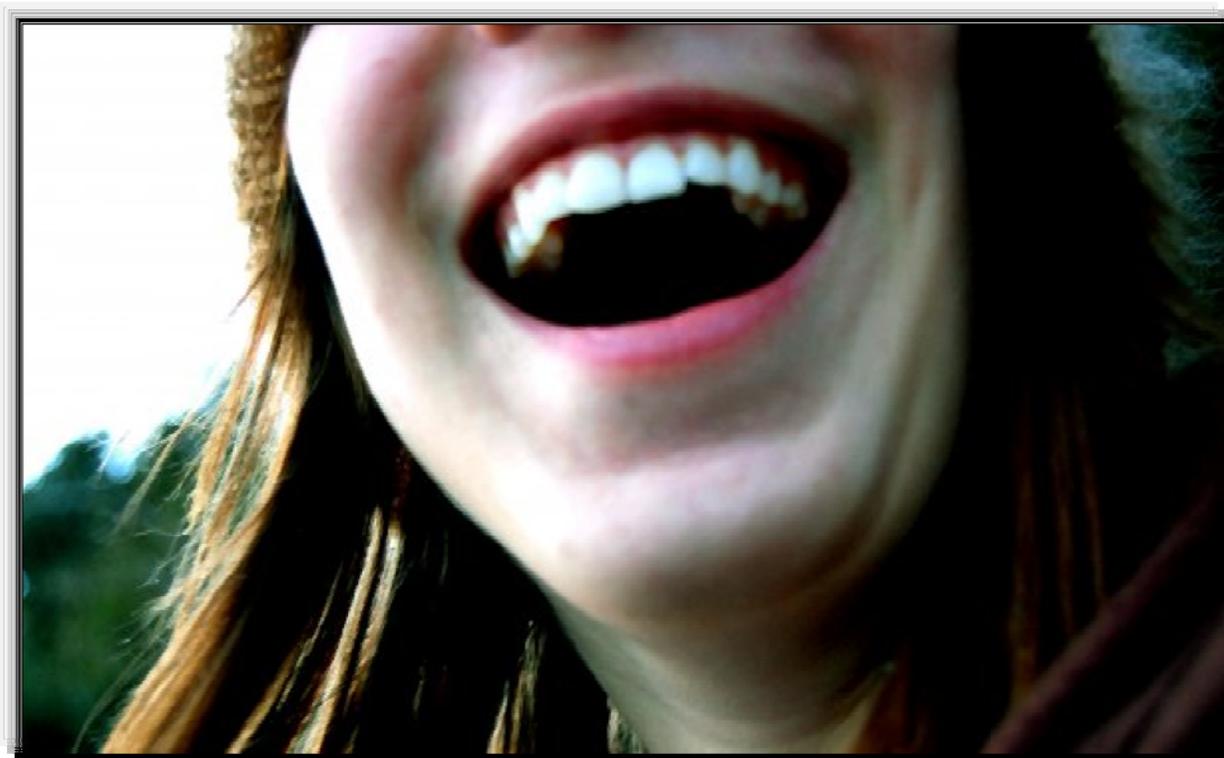
She lived in a blue house with white picket fence in the suburbs of a tiny ranching town. Her world consisted of her nuclear family unit: a mother, father, and pet dog, Harmony. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom, that was an active member of the PTA and the leader of the neighborhood girl scout troop. Her father used to work as a mechanic part time and serve in the National Guard part time, but was flown to Baghdad when more troops were needed. It was his patriotic duty he said. She was not worried; she knew her father was fine, they talked via web cam every day and he always had some new joke to tell her, he was always smiling. Her mother, on the other hand was more negative, constantly worrying, and to take her mind of her anxiety through her self into even more activities, sending care packages for the troops, joining the local 4-H, and volunteering in the local homeless shelter. Nevertheless, they got along fine and lived a semi-normal life.

Opening that door effectively ended her world. No more small city, no more blue house, no more picket fence, no more dog, no more family unit. All normalcy, even her usual semi-normalcy was gone; perhaps it flew out the door. Yet, life went on, people carried on their daily business. From her window she could see two women leisurely walking down the sidewalk pushing two pink strollers, and a man jogging a little further ahead.

She rapidly grew older, was forced to mature from thirteen to thirty with the opening of that door. She had to leave all her friends and her teen years in that small town suburb and fly to Bethesda . She had to be strong and console her mother as she looked down at the bloody body, the head wrapped with sterile white bandages, that would rapidly turn red from the small hole in the skull. She had another world to live in now, the twilight zone, she thought. Her picket fenced house had become a hospital

room, where the doors were automatic; now her life could change from bad to worse with no pause, no knock.

Decades after that dreaded day when she opened the Pandora's Box of her life, the memory of that fateful day shot through her head. Her opening the door to reveal two uniformed men . Her mother shooing her from the room. The slam of the door. The blur of words she heard them saying to her mother as she strained to listen behind the closed door. How she pieced together phrases such as: her father's heroic actions, taking the place of a scared young boy, their convoy was attacked, he was critically injured. She shook the reverie out of her mind, and went back to the task at hand, cleaning the house before her husband and sons came home from their regular Saturday afternoon baseball game. As she turned on the vacuum cleaner, she supposed that her life did turn out normal after all. She was interrupted from her chores once again by the door bell. Then she opened the last door of her life to reveal her husband with a gun pointed directly at her head, and in those last few seconds as the bullet raced towards her, she realized her life could never be normal. And she smiled.



Love Poems

V

*Cold one
colder than
cold's ashes
become clear
in a whirling
colorless cloud
round round
in rapid
overlapping
curves circles
again dance
swirl and swerve
over an ever-
emptying expanse
here illusion*

*there betrayal
(heart, be silent)
dancing away
set off again
in what direction
leaving who
to sing
sad music
to sad strings
beside this small
fading fire?*



Photo By: Meaghan Kingsley-Teem



Judgment

Johana Shea

Trial Day 3

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Mrs. Hill please explain to the jury why you murdered your husband.

MRS. HILL: I suffered a case of temporary mental insanity.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Could you elaborate for the jury?

MRS. HILL: I met Isaac Hill in rehab when I was twenty years old. Isaac was working there; helping patients like me overcome their addictions. I was young and very vulnerable. At first, everything went well and I was making real progress. I finally felt like the person I had been before I started abusing drugs. During that time Isaac and I had become friends, he would talk to me and help me through whatever rough patch I was experiencing. We had a good relationship.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Did you and Mr. Hill sleep together while you were in rehab?

MRS HILL: Yes we did. But it was *not* consensual. He basically raped me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: How did this rape occur?

MRS. HILL: One night he knocked on my door. When saw who it was I didn't hesitate to let him in. I trusted him more than I should have. He looked different somehow, almost maniac, I could tell he had been drinking. We talked for a time, then he made me sit next to him on the bed, and eventually he raped me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Why didn't you tell anyone?

MRS. HILL: He threatened me by saying that he could plant cocaine in my room to frame me. Then I would have had to stay another year, I wanted to go home desperately.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: What happened after that?

MRS. HILL: He told me he loved me. He apologized for hurting me. But he still visited me at night and because I was still at the rehab center, I couldn't do anything about it. When I got out after another six months, he took me on a trip...he proposed to me there.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Why did you say yes Mrs. Hill?

MRS. HILL: He threatened me again. He told me that if I didn't say yes then he could make it look like I was abusing drugs again even though I was completely clean. After he asked me to marry him we spent a whole week up in Maine somewhere. We stayed in a cabin. He called it a romantic getaway, but I was emotionless at this point. I kept trying to find a way out of this doom I was headed toward. Isaac must have known what I was thinking because on our way back, he showed me a bag of cocaine, the drug I had been addicted to, and said that I had two choices: marry him, or end up back in rehab for another two years. It scarred me badly and I just went along with whatever he wanted after that.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: What caused your temporary mental insanity?

MRS. HILL: I was cleaning his office and came across a tape hidden in one of his drawers. It was labeled "Dinah"; on it were his verbal notes about this girl. He talked about her like he loved her. I didn't completely understand parts of it, but the overall meaning was clear.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: What did this mean to you?

MRS. HILL: I realized that he was sexually abusing this girl...this Dinah, just like he had abused me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: And how did you react to such a realization?

MRS. HILL: I remember being completely furious, almost that out of body anger. I felt betrayed, and hurt, and worried about this girl. Mostly anger though, that's what I remember best.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Thank you Mrs. Hill. No further questions Your Honor.

JUDGE: Prosecution?

At the prosecution desk sits District Attorney Dave McConnell and his assistant Ms. Lawson. After hearing Mrs. Hill's previous speech she gathers up her notes and quickly exits the courtroom. The man stands up and walks over to Mrs. Hill who, he has to admit, is a very convincing witness.

MR. MCCONNELL: So, hearing this tape convinced you to kill your husband.

MRS. HILL: I know you don't believe me Mr. McConnell but yes, that is the summed up version of what happened.

MR. MCCONNELL: Your husband was not at home correct?

MRS. HILL: No, he was at work.

MR. MCCONNELL: Where did he work?

MRS. HILL: He worked as a counselor at the David M. Green Rehabilitation Institution.

MR. MCCONNELL: Did you walk there?

MRS. HILL: No, I took a cab.

MR. MCCONNELL: You were in your right frame of mind when you purposefully got into a cab and drove to your husband's office, but not when you actually shot the gun. Is that what you are saying?

MRS. HILL: Do you know how often I have taken cabs to my husband's workplace? I was on autopilot. My mind was somewhere else entirely. I just knew that I had to stop him.

MR. MCCONNELL: Well, you are in your right frame of mind now. Do you feel any remorse?

MRS. HILL: Of course I do! But I am not sorry about saving that girl.

MR. MCCONNELL: Why didn't you call the proper authorities?

MRS. HILL: Because I was trained not to! Isaac threatened me all those years ago, scarred me so badly that I didn't even tell my parents what was going on. Calling the police just didn't occur to me. It was not an option at that time.

MR. MCCONNELL: When your daughter testified yesterday she said that you often told Mr. Hill that you loved him, is *that* true?

MRS. HILL: What part of being manipulated don't you understand Mr. McConnell? Isaac manipulated and threatened me from the very beginning of our relationship. He had me completely under his power. Don't you think I'm ashamed to admit that? Those ten years I was with him were a lie!

MR. MCCONNELL: So you never truly loved your husband?

MRS. HILL: No I did not.

At this point Ms. Lawson is seen coming back into the courtroom. When Mr. McConnell turns to her she walks up to him and whispers in his ear. His eyebrows rise to his hairline and a smile forms across his face. She hands him a piece of paper and walks to the desk where she calmly sits back down.

MR. MCCONNELL: Mrs. Hill, where in Maine did Mr. Hill take you?

MRS. HILL: *(taken off-guard by the change in topic)* I don't remember the exact location.

MR. MCCONNELL: You don't remember the name of the town he took you too?

MRS. HILL: No! I told you I don't...*(here she trails off looking slightly bewildered. She pauses, and then suddenly panic erupts across her face.)*

MR. MCCONNELL: Was the name of the town 'Dinah', Mrs. Hill?

(Her mouth moves, but words do not come out. She is seemingly to stunned at this turn of events to form a coherent sentence.)

MRS. HILL: I-I thought.... I...

Mr. McConnell turns around, his job apparently finished. He takes his seat and pats Ms. Lawson on the shoulder, completely oblivious to Mrs. Hill who is now hyperventilating on the stand. Almost as an afterthought, he stands up and says those most comforting words-

MR. MCCONNELL: The prosecution rests Your Honor.

The End

Love Poems
VI

*And you
you have loved a shadow
fear
you have loved a dream
and loving
lost surance and safety
know now the viscous time
hours
when eyes closed you*



Love

Blind Jealousy

Hillary Lucas

The snow descended silently upon the cedars. Outside the air was frigid enough to make a soul numb. Yet, even the fierceness of winter's wrath was not able to cease a young girl's search. And all she had intended was some playtime, an alternative from being cramped in the horrid wagon.

Her family had been on their way to Endurance, Oregon. Pa had been offered two hundred acres in the exchange that he would plow and create profit from the land. But at the present, guilt settled in her bones and her family's pioneer dream seemed to vanish; *it wouldn't be worth it to them, not if they lost their only son.*

Shame and frustration caused tears to stream down the sides of her freckled face. Although out of breath she continued to cry out her brother's name.

Heading west created a difficult lifestyle, especially for two children. In order to create some escape from the monotonous days, together she and her brother devised a game. The rules were simple. She would cover her ears and count as her little brother would find a hiding spot, in close proximity. When finished counting, she would call out his name and he would answer back. He stayed close by, but would remain dead silent until she called. Because of her disability, this game was intriguing. However, at the present he had stopped answering back. This made her panic. She instantly fell to her knees and searched all over the forest floor with her hands to find a stick. When she found one she moved it side to side, desperately hoping to poke her brother. She knew what flesh felt like when poked by the end of a stick. She yearned to feel his presence and know he was safe, for it was believed these woods had the potential to be deadly.

Should I tell them? The thought ate away at her, as she continued her frantic search. Surely by now Pa and Ma must have heard their daughter's screams. *Wait, where are Ma and Pa?* The ground beneath her footing then became unrecognizable. Rocks, roots and plant life were felt beneath her shoes. She had been told not to leave the bare clearing near the campsite.

It was discovered that this little girl had become lost. While believing her brother had gone astray, she had managed to misplace herself. All hope quickly vanished from her tired being. Frustration increased, and she began to feel faint. She used her stick to find a stump or rock so that she might rest. She needed to think clearly.

Before her family left their home in Augural, Wisconsin, Ma gave her an earful of words, telling her to take precaution while on their journey westward. She was told to stay clear of danger and make wise decisions. Tragically, all of her Ma's words now seem useless. She felt as if carelessness was too late to avoid; it had already been done.

A rustle came from nearby. She guessed it came from within a shrub. It was of her knowledge that beasts and untamed creatures inhabited these uncivilized woods. This naïve girl froze out of fear. If only she could lay sight upon what may be before her. Then maybe her subconscious could become untroubled. Pleas for help did not voice from her mouth. Instead she was silent, and chose to rely on her hearing to replace sight. Her final thoughts were of desperate curiosity. *Is anyone looking for me?*

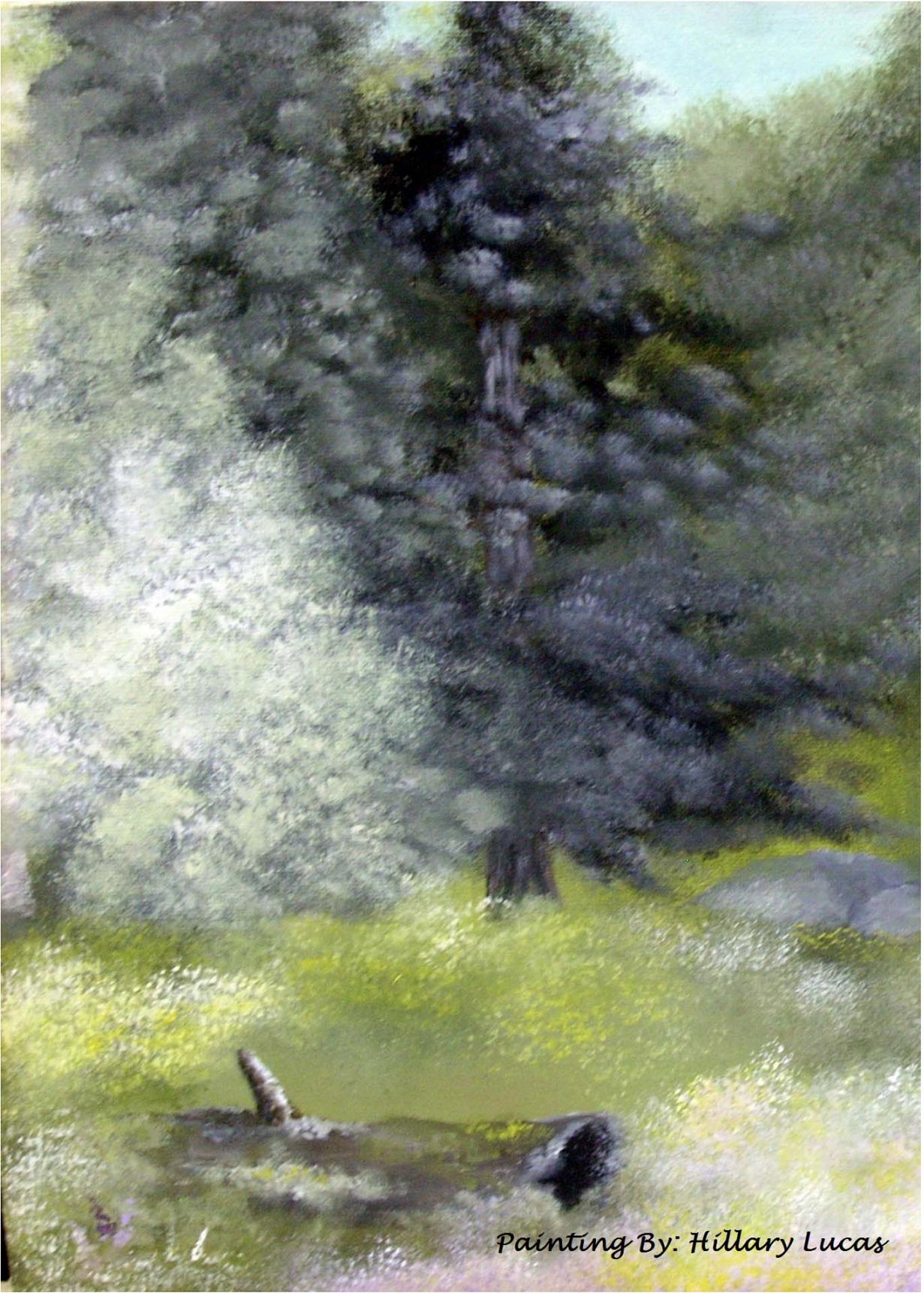
"Where is your sister?"

The young boy looked innocent as he pointed towards the back of the wagon. His father then gave a quick nod.

But this wayward boy knew the truth. His sister was not within that wagon. Instead she was alone, deserted by him. Yet what caused a young boy to commit such an act?

Because his sister had been born blind, she was considered unique to the family. Her receiving undivided attention accumulated a heap of hatred inside of him. In this boy's opinion, her existence was wasteful. And in the act of depriving his Ma and Pa of a burden, he felt justice. They were living in hard times, and even though he was a juvenile, he understood the act of surviving. The boy swept the leaves of shrubbery off his sleeves and then climbed into the back of the wagon.

Once again, the wagon set off. And the snow continued to descend silently upon the cedars.



Painting By: Hillary Lucas

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE BEST TIMES

By: Kristin Lee

I'm sorry that I left you.

She imagined that if they ever saw each other again that he would say something to that effect. However, she knew that he would continue in his head, *But, really, I'm not sorry. I never was.* To cope with the situation, she told herself that there was nothing she could have done, that he only spoke truthfully in his head where he could control the outcome of the situation. Secretly, he reveled in the misery he caused. Once she realized what she had lost, she allowed herself to become satiated with self-pity and desolation. It took some time for her feelings to dissipate; however, like a phoenix rises from its ashes, so she rose, but this resurrection also brought with it anger and bitterness.

The box arrived late one Tuesday afternoon; it was lighter than she thought it should have been. She had waited years for it to come and over this time she imagined it would be weighed down with emotions, sorrow, perhaps regret? But it was obvious from the way the box nearly floated to the kitchen countertop that he had never felt any of these. The box was smooth, pristine, untouched. She felt a strong desire to damage the box somehow; a dent or scratch would make it look more realistic.

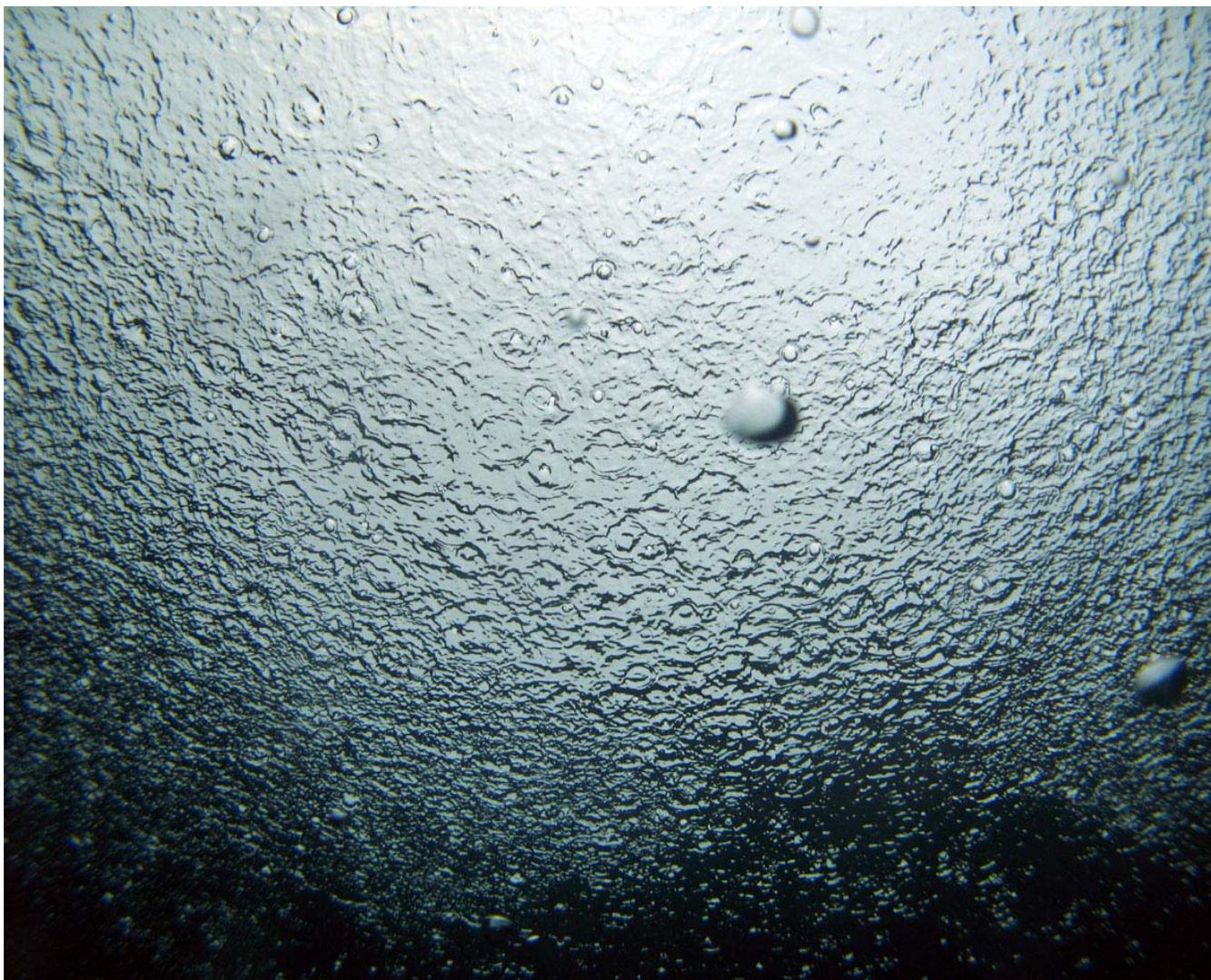
She went over to the bookshelf where the family photo album was kept. She had to strain to get to the top shelf where her mother had hidden it because she thought that she would not be able to reach. Normally she only looked at the album once a year as part of her tradition. This tradition was not about the album itself, but about one of its pictures. On the back of this picture, someone had scrawled "Tim and Sarah, '93 " as if in a hurry to write it down before it became untrue. But, she referred to the photograph only as "The Picture" and it was this picture that made her despise the tradition. The picture had an undescrivable hold on her that she found she could not ignore regardless of how much she desired to. Standing in the picture was a man holding

the hand of a young girl. He had blond hair, the girl had dark brown, but they shared the same shade of deep blue eyes. She sighed, pretending to feel emotions that she could not. In her head she thought, *This is the last time*. Carefully, she removed the picture from the album. It was a Polaroid, only a snapshot of a moment in time.

She took the picture over to the box and opened the lid. Deliberately, defiantly she put it on top of the box's contents. She had to take care of the box. She had a plan for it. For years she had thought of what to do with the box; it had arrived earlier than she had anticipated, but, nevertheless, the plan had been formed and it was etched in her mind. The box and the picture had a sickening meaning to her; like the throbbing of a headache, it would not go away and she longed for that rapturous feeling of numbness. But, really, it was the empty years of nothingness that meant everything. In a few short hours, fourteen years of anxious waiting and thoughts of *What if?* will be over. She often thought of how she would feel afterwards. Sorrow, perhaps regret? – no, she imagined vindication and a sense of relief.

The plan was perfect. In an hour or two, she will take the box and put it in the passenger seat of her car. She will drive out to the Californian coast, an hour away, but she will fill the time by telling the box who she is – her life story. When she arrives at the beach, there will be a high tide. *This is the best time*, she will think to herself. As she searches for a rock that opens to the ocean, the steel-gray waves find a sanctuary in her deep blue eyes. Then, once she finds the perfect location, she will deliberately, defiantly dump the contents of the box into the ocean. The picture will float at the surface for a moment; just long enough so that she can make out Tim's vanishing smile before it sinks. She will not think about where it will go and she never will care to find out. When she leaves, she will speed intermittently down the highway; the ecstasy of the invincibility she feels is overwhelming.

When the call came in from New York, she was in the midst of her annual tradition. She once wished that she could remember that time, that happy moment, but she expected it would only make things harder. She had said, *Cremation, cremation is best*. She thought that a funeral would have been irresponsible. Her father had been dead to her for years.



The page features a light blue background with a subtle floral pattern. A large, ornate, golden-brown frame with intricate scrollwork and floral motifs surrounds the central text. On the left side, there are two large, overlapping, rounded rectangular shapes in shades of pink and orange. The text is centered within the frame.

Love Poems
VII

*Not alone for love
of a love lost,*

*but
because lost*

*any and every
precious and little*

*exposes again
the nakedness*

*the hard thingness
the soft flesh, blood*

*that isn't much,
nerves overburdened*

*scraped clean, white
with a stone's edge.*

Who Made the Mess?

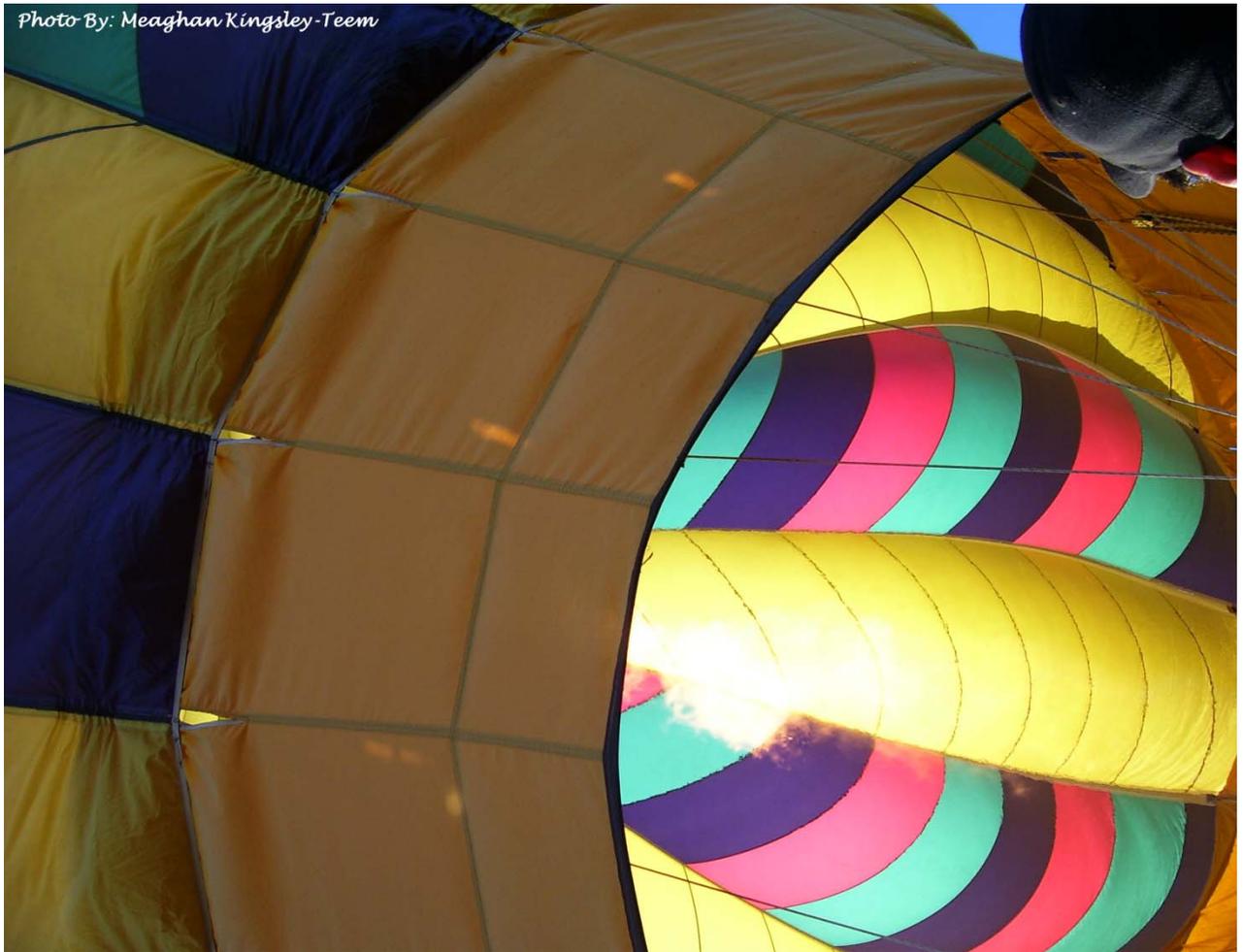
By Christa Brooks

Maria picked up the phone at the gate so that the receptionist would let her in. It had been a long day of cleaning and by eleven o'clock at night, she was ready to call it a night, but she had just this last job to do. Maria especially hated this office simply because of that receptionist. Every time Maria walked in, she was greeted with a look of disdain. She opened the door and immediately saw the receptionist's face. She had a talent for reading faces and when she read this one she conjectured this thought, "That poor Mexican can't even get a decent job. She probably has to clean like the rest of her Mexican family." Maria would receive this type of greeting at other offices as well, but this place she knew that she would never see a kind face.

Maria was sick of it; she would no longer take that judging look she was forced to bear every single day. Tonight was the night she would do something about it. Her supplies were limited, but if put to good use they would still be effective. Cleaning solutions were filled with different chemicals. One of them just had to be toxic in some way. Maybe, she could pour some bleach into the coffee pot, or maybe rummage around for super glue to apply to the keyboard. The idea to use the receptionist's purse as a garbage bag came to mind at one point. Maybe if she got a better look at her she could figure out what would really make her tick.

She started to walk back to the front desk but was dreadfully nervous for she did not want to get caught. She was startled for a second when a man quickly ran out of the building. He must have forgotten something at the office since the day shift had ended hours ago. After that little scare she continued her way to accomplish this devilish plan. She had her supplies in hand ready to throw the mix of toxins when suddenly she froze. She didn't know whether to be horrified, happy or infuriated. Someone else had used their own supplies and done the job for her. Who could have done this; what reasons did this person have to take revenge on this receptionist; what else has this receptionist done to invoke this? All of these questions ran through Maria's mind. Then her mind stopped and she realized she now had to clean up this dead body, but she had wanted to make the mess this time, not clean it.

Photo By: Meaghan Kingsley-Teem



Eleven

Katie Eng

We discovered the crash with everyone else. Helmets on, we made it to the scene and rushed in to help. Johnson - what a guy, he's always the first one in and last one out. I don't know how he does it with all his family problems at home. I could never keep up with my job if I knew my wife was having an affair. He never actually told us, but he hinted at it. He kept a strong face, but he still seemed tortured inside. There was a sadness in his tone of voice that just always stood out.

"Hey, Johnson, how many saves you got on this?" I asked.

"The most I ever got was ten. Let's go for eleven."

"You're on. Twenty bucks."

People were screaming everywhere. News cameras flooded the streets.

Four minutes in, Johnson was able to pull a guy out. It was difficult to search through the building. There were too many stories to check. I was only able to get six people out. Standing outside, you could see people falling from the sky. When Johnson got his eighth guy out, we could hear a crash. With more people to look for, everyone headed to the second building. I got two more guys out. So did Johnson.

"There's more in there that need to be saved," he said.

As he was looking for the next victim, the building collapsed. The world stopped. What could I do? How would I be able to find him? There weren't high hopes for him, but I searched for his body anyways. We never leave a man behind. He was too good of a person to be left alone in the world.

After forty-five minutes of searching through rubble, I found him lying there. He looked so peaceful. I thought about the last thing he said before he went in. And I tucked the money in his pocket. As I walked out of the building, there was a girl looking for Johnson. I asked who she was. It was his girlfriend.

Love Poems

VIII



*The last flower
drops its petal.*

*The house is still
with hard shadows*

*The last pictures
in a stacked box*

*The soft words burst,
quietly fade*

*The first rains' fall
darkens numbed earth.*

Next Week

by Nikki Young

Tuesday began the same as most mornings.

The alarm woke him from a deep sleep. Fighting the grogginess, he considered the day ahead. He had an appointment at eight, a presentation at ten, and a meeting with the executive director at three. It would be a long day. He peered at the alarm clock. 5:51 AM. Sighing, he slipped out of bed, careful not to wake his wife.

She awoke to the sound of the shower. Yawning, she glanced at the clock. 6:17 AM. Staring at the ceiling, she contemplated her plans for the day. The house needed cleaning, there was laundry to be done, and the downstairs bathroom was in desperate need of a fresh coat of paint. She would have to ask her husband once again what color he preferred. With this thought, she considered how long it had been since he had spent the day with her. He had been increasingly busy and stressed since his promotion. Quickly she dismissed the thought. Someday soon their life would settle down. With a moan, she slipped out of bed to make him breakfast.

He rushed into the kitchen, buckling his watch. Before he noticed the plate of eggs and sausage waiting on the table, he blurted "I'm heading to the office, I have an early appointment. Won't be home until late eve –" Stopping short, he let his arms drop to his sides. "Oh honey, I'm sorry, I don't have time to eat. I have a meeting at eight."

He saw the disappointment seep into her eyes. For a moment he considered canceling his appointments and evading the presentation. He had been so busy lately, too occupied to spend time with his wife. Groaning, he promised himself that one day next week he would call in sick. He would spend the whole day with her.

"Next week," he said, "next week I will take a day off and we will do whatever you want. Anything. Okay, babe?"

"Okay," she whispered. She gave him a kiss on the cheek and watched him rush out the front door.

Forty-eight minutes after listening to him back down the driveway, the phone rang. "Ma'am," she heard, "This is Officer Randall from the Breckview Police Department. I'm sorry to inform you that your husband has been in an accident. He didn't make it." The phone clattered onto the countertop as she slid to the floor.

"Next week. . ." she whispered.

Love Poems

IX

*Exhausting
to love you
running a
way from me.*



-Lander Andrus

Citing of Pictures From Outside Sources in Order of Appearance

<http://lh5.ggpht.com/teacherpattiw/R3JD_D1u08I/AAAAAAAABjc/-M2o-89gpLQ/s512/IM002136.JPG>

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<http://68.142.200.12/us.f395.mail.yahoo.com/ya/securedownload?clean=0&fid=Magazine%2520Contributions&mid=1_16434_AFtqv9EAATNMSQ%2FhmQpoVmVyZ8E&pid=2&tnef=&prefFilename=rain&cred=kzaF9j62bHGAKQXg0TcMKYoiPsiWXQ_pbwowzbgCHFXlyH6bATbGnm6TXfGTL_Y.ylK8rVk6keQmKbzSt1OoEK374qqPcvUWRZvRfAOkTDsOT4k-&ts=1225841536&partner=yemail&sig=1OqD520j4l_G45aQFrE_Q-->>

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<http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1344/1421987964_4223659c05.jpg?v=0>

<http://i15.photobucket.com/albums/a370/lisa291043/walking_away.jpg>

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/87/Woman_Silhouette.png>

<karenswhimsy.com/woman-silhouette.shtm>

2008 | Honors Composition
Short Shorts

