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THE ANGLE 1993

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BRIAN WALSH

Burgundy and Incense

The fractured images lay as colored splinters on the ground, each a shard refracting distinct shades of burgundy that lit up the night in a halo of red. A heavy object hurled through a stained-glassed window has wrought this scene upon the street. From deep within the sanctuary it was tossed out. The incense was soon to follow and escape the frosty air, where it hung heavily over the people below who had come in observance of this odd ceremony.

They inhaled and absorbed it into their being and became intoxicated with its overwhelming aroma. They could only watch in silence the broken glass on the street, apparently caused by the expulsion of a leather bound volume, a heavy text set in gold. From inside, the low murmur of deep voiced chanting was making its way out on the tail end of the incense. The candles cast strange shadows against the shattered pane, which threw an eerie glow over the red haze.

A sudden gust of wind shot through and flung open the book. Little Simon wrested his hand free from his mother's grip and broke through the crowd. He knelt over and examined this novelty that lay on the ground. His eyes darted in nervous delight as he peered at the print.

"Don't TOUCH it!" a voice in the crowd screamed, prompting Simon to do just that. He was immediately enveloped in a ghastly white light that seemed to disintegrate the whole of his tiny frame.

A unanimous murmur of approval at the arrival of such an acolyte was heard within the structure. His mother's silent tears went unnoticed as the crowd simply looked down in quiet desperation. She wanted to be with him—but at what cost to herself? This she disregarded as secondary and moved out of the ranks toward the book. She leaned over as the child had before her; she saw his name and small hand print burned into the ledger. Finally, she surrendered herself and placed her palm on the page. She was immediately overtaken with light until her consciousness, as well as her physical being, was relocated to the center of the temple. There was a nod from the robed men who formed a circle around her. Simon's hand now clung to that of a burly bearded man who pointed to a hole in the window above them.

He nudged the boy forward towards his mother, who took him in her arms and kissed his forehead.

"Oh Simon, you sweet child," she whispered in his ear. "What have you done to us?"

"He has guaranteed your salvation," answered the bearded man.

"He is indeed special."

The two were undressed and fitted with robes akin those around them.

Outside, the book was shut by a second gust of wind, and the people began to disperse, relieved in knowing that at this moment, they were as far away in time as possible from the next such ceremony. They walked away sullen, though, in the knowledge that the next such time would similarly attract the curious and the foolish into the sanctuary—sucked in by the undeniable and morbid need to experience the unknown.

As the candles burned lower and the burgundy shards of glass dimmed the smell of incense still hung in the air, and its aftertaste followed the spectators home, serving as their only reminder of this night, and those departed. 
MEGAN CAVANAGH

Literacy

The rush begins, slightly above the page, as eyes bear down, intent to make the kill. Now brains flare up almost as if enraged. Thoughts sift eagerly through words and will, like miners praying for one gleaming grain. Wonder travels paths engrossed in night; Beginning, to the end and back again. A fleeting interest slowly turns to flight. Conviction grows, indignant as a child, “I want to know, where is the gold, my friend?” Patience leads them closer to the wild jungles filled with promises that may send these seekers soaring freely towards the sky, no longer wasting breath to question why.

CHRISTINE STROSSMAN  La Femme qui lit
Introducing...
Your new home, your new life,
the state of mind;
it's part of you, it's everything,
but it's locked up, trapped in a useless maze.
You created it too.
Locked up, can not come up for air,
smothering, choking, exits and entrances are
becoming extinct.

My world cannot grow
with a mind and a body
tightened in a cramped jail cell,
Breathe.

Take it away, get it out of here.
It doesn't belong to me.
Is it a gift?

What did we achieve?
What did we do wrong?
I am naive.
Are we just non-believers?
Do you know what time it is?
I do.

Everything happens for a reason, or
so they say.
Explain this-
Explain pain and suffering
heartache, misery, and
Explain feeling lonely, down, useless
and unappreciated and
Explain feeling sick, ugly, tired
and lost.
Explain that to us, and maybe
they would bring the key and
open these cell doors.

Introducing..
Fuschia
Vivid tangerine
Jungle green
Cerulean
We need to learn how to color
outside the lines.
A friendship that began on the unfamiliar floors of a freshman dorm. Two people with the same doubts and fears become friends. However, as their doubts, fears, and hopes changed, so did their friendship. It lost its charm of innocence and care. It became spiteful and mean.

A friendship that lasted only through convenience, And the super ability of each to bask in the inadequacies of the other.
Feelings that have become false, and although noticed the words have not been uttered. The laughter is no longer, but strained with the echoes of hurtful words and cold stares.
And they appear to be friends.

Why?
To soothe their minds or they may have some new fears that cause them to cling
Even if the feelings are unpleasant.
Years later the place will still be unfamiliar.
Their new way has meant the creation of a new world that they must step into.
Although they part, the friendship has not been officially broken.
The letters will come.
They won't mean anything.
They will say nothing and the story will remain unchanged.
The floor becomes even harder, and colder, and unfamiliar
And they must exist alone.
I bounded into the locker room full of excitement. It was game day, and as usual, I was longing to play. There is nothing that I would rather be doing, I thought, as I headed to my locker to change. I wanted to go on and make millions of dollars, and tonight’s game was my ticket because in the bleachers of our rinky-dink little high school gym there was a college scout that came all the way from Kentucky to watch me play. I wasn’t worried though, because I knew I would play well. I always did.

As usual I was the first of my ten other teammates to finish getting ready, so I headed out to the floor. Jimmy told me to wait up, but I couldn’t. I had to get out on the floor and touch a ball. I had waited all day, went to my classes, and would not wait any longer. Jimmy would probably be mad, but who cares. He just plays because he has nothing better to do. He doesn’t feel the game like I do, nor does he care about it. Yesterday I told him we were skipping school to go shoot. That’s when he gave me a sob story about going to class because he needs good grades. I don’t need good grades; almost every college in the country wants me at their school. So I skipped and shot hoops all day by myself. The first time I had ever skipped school to play basketball was in seventh grade. I shot all morning before taking a lunch break, and then came back outside to shoot some more. I hadn’t gotten two shots off when Dad’s Toyota turned into the driveway. “Oh my God,” I thought, “I’m a dead man! What’s he doing home?” Then I remembered that he only worked half days on Fridays. “Tommy, you are the biggest idiot that I have ever seen,” I mumbled to myself as he opened the car door to get out. I just stood there in disbelief, with the ball pinned against my hip as I watched him reach back into his car and pull out his briefcase. I decided to play it cool and just keep shooting, but my body had already decided it was going to stay right where it was. As he approached, my mind began to race as to what kind of trouble I would be in. When he reached speaking distance he said “Aren’t you supposed to be in school right now?”

The calmness in his voice surprised and confused me, so I decided to play it safe and try a lie. “No! We only had a half day today!”

“Don’t lie to me.”

“OK! OK! I’m supposed to be in math class as we speak.”

“Is this the first time you have skipped?” He said, and then calmly added, “And don’t tell a lie.”

“Yes!”

“Truth?”

“Yes sir!”

“How does it feel?”

“Excuse me,” I said, as I almost choked on my tongue.

“How does it feel to skip school and play basketball all day.”

This question totally baffled me because I wasn’t sure if this was one of his tricks where I say the wrong answer and then he grounds me till I figure out the right one. I was scared to death. I had never seen him so easy going. I thought that I was really in for it this time. I finally replied, “It felt,” and then I looked at him hoping he would give away the right answer, but he just looked back blankly so I took a chance and finished the sentence with, “great?”

“Good,” he said, “sometimes you deserve a break.” Then he added, “But don’t let it happen often.” Then he reached into his pocket and pulled out two slips of paper and handed them to me. They were two floor level tickets to the Kentucky Wildcats game scheduled for later that night. When I finished reading I looked up and he smiled and said, “Think you can make it?” I couldn’t
answer him. I just stared blankly at him like an idiot as he put the tickets back into his wallet and went into the house. I could not believe what had just happened. Did some genie give me a wish that I didn’t know about? I was stunned. This was the same guy that grounded me for a month when I forgot to call him one day to tell him that I would be late getting home. I was still pondering these questions, and the idea of going to my first college basketball game when he came out in shorts and sneakers and said, “Let’s play some one on one. Take the ball out.” I was still so stunned I actually let him have first ball instead. Then I let him win. It was the first and last time that I ever let anyone beat me at one on one.

As I trotted in I noticed that the gym was starting to fill up even though there was still a while until tip-off. I saw a few people I recognized when I first came in, but, as soon as I grabbed the roundball, I didn’t notice anything, because nothing else mattered. I bounced the ball a few times between my legs and then pulled up for a jumper. The swish of the net reminded me of when I used to play down at Michael Turner’s house after school. It was nothing spectacular. Just an old bent rim that we had nailed to a tree in his backyard. We’d play for hours, and wouldn’t stop until Ma called me for supper. The game was so different back then. Not a care in the world. Nothing on the line. Just two good friends playing hoops in the backyard. No coaches, fans, referees or statistics. Just me, Mikey and a ball.

I remember we were playing one afternoon when Mikey’s older brother came out with a friend. He was carrying his own ball and coming towards our worn-away-grass court when he said, “Mikey, why don’t you and your little boyfriend go somewhere else, cause Jason and I want to play here.” To which I quickly replied, “What’s the matter, you get kicked out of the YWCA?” I turned and smiled to Mikey and then turned back in time to see Todd’s ball go whizzing by my head. Then he said, “Listen you little geek, we are going to play you two up to eleven by ones, and will spot you ten points up front. The winners get the court, and the losers hit the road.” Again before Mikey could answer, I accepted the challenge and before we knew it, the score was ten to ten and the ball was in our possession.

Mikey threw me a bounce pass, and Todd flew by for the steal, but missed. I was finally open for a shot. It was our first actual shot of the game. I let it fly from about fifteen feet, and knew it was good. At that moment I knew what I wanted to do with my life, and I started the pursuit by running straight home and interrupting the N.B.A. play-offs on TV to tell Pops that I wanted to be a professional basketball player. He waited for a commercial, and then just laughed and said, “Yesterday you wanted to be an astronaut. And besides, you don’t know how to play basketball.”

“Well then, you could teach me.”

He sat quiet for a moment, mesmerized by the television as the game came back on and finally said, “Why don’t you go get your old man a beer.”

I had listened to coach’s pregame speech a thousand times, and needless to say, I could probably give it. So when he asked me to say something to the rest of the team before our game against McKinley High, I gave his speech. He didn’t find it at all very funny, but I didn’t really care. He couldn’t bench me, I was his best player. He replied, “I don’t expect that kind of attitude from a senior captain.” That was funny, because I didn’t even want to be a captain, I just wanted to play hoops. I didn’t need this kind of crap, and it made me feel like I was listening to my dad and his lectures. “You need to have more respect for me and the game,” he would say. Hearing that phrase became more familiar to me than hearing my own name.

I remember one of the first times I heard that phrase escape from his mouth. It was during the summer after my eighth grade year in Junior High. I had been the starting point guard for the Varsity basketball team that year, and was the youngest player in the school’s history to ever play on varsity. It was a nice warm June day and I was shooting out in the driveway as usual. The
weather was so nice that I decided to shoot all
day. It was about eight in the morning and I had
slipped out of the house in hopes that I wouldn't
wake up Pops. I hoped to get an hour in with-
out him, but he must have heard the ball smacking
against the pavement though because I wasn't
outside fifteen minutes when he walked out of
the garage wearing his grey sweatsuit and old
canvas converse sneakers. "Great," I thought, "the
know-it-all-about-basketball coach has arrived."
He took the ball from me and started his lecture.
"The game is not all shooting," he said, and then
continued to my silence, "You need to work on
your defense, it was horrible last year."
"Dad, come on, Coach doesn't play me for my
defense."
"Do you think a coach at the college level is
giving to play you if you can't play defense?"
He was right, and we both know it, so I didn't
answer. Then he replied, "I thought so. Now give
me the ball and let's see if you can cover me." He
bounced the basketball a few times until I moved
up to guard him. Then he spun around leaving
his back towards me and started to back me
down towards the hoop. I held my ground for
a few dribbles, but was very much outweighed,
so I kept losing ground. When he made his move
to the right, I decided to let him go, and he scored
on the layup. Then I said, "Great move Pop! You
could be the greatest forty year old basketball
player I have ever seen."
"Do you ever take anything serious?" He
replied in the angry father tone.
"No!"
This only made him madder as he said, "You
know, Tommy, you have no respect for me, and
you have no respect for the game of basketball,"
his tone got louder as he continued, "and it is rea-
ly too bad because this is a hell of a lot better
game to play if you really love it. You think you
love it but you don't, because you don't respect it."
When I heard his last sentence, something in-
side of me exploded. How dare he say that I
didn't love the game? There were times when I
loved it more than I loved him, and hearing him
say this brought out my temper and I retaliated
the only way I knew how; I shot back, "Well if
you know so God damn much about basketball,
then how come you can't even get a job coaching
a Junior High team." I knew these words would
pierce deep because I knew how bad he wanted
to coach. Ever since I could remember, he had
been trying to get a job coaching a team, any
team. But he never seemed to get a chance. I
didn't look him in the eye after I said this, I just
watched the ground. Before I looked up I felt the
leather of the ball slap hard against the side of
my face with enough force to knock me to the
ground. I still didn't look up at him, and he didn't
speak a word as he walked back into the house.
The left side of my face stung like I had been
burned, so I pressed against it with my hand.
Then the tears began to flow. I was surprised,
because I hadn't let my tears run freely since that
day when I vowed never to cry again. It was a
day I tried to forget, but sitting in the driveway
with the tears rushing from my eyes let the mem-
ories all come back like it had happened yester-
day. I tried to forget, but no one can ever forget
the worst day of their existence.

I was asleep when Dad came into my room to
tell me. He shook me a couple times to wake me,
and then he sat down beside me. I groggily sat
up and said, "What is it Daddy?" but he didn't
reply. The room was still dark, but I could see
what was wrong in his eyes. They were like I had
never seen them before. They were full with an
emptiness that can never be refilled. There was
something missing, and that's when I realized
what it was. He had wanted to say it, but
couldn't. He just reached over, hugged me, and
let me sob into his shoulder for the rest of the
night. The next day he put a basketball hoop over
the garage. I was too small to physically throw
the ball all the way up to it yet, but I wasn't too
small to realize that this was going to be my way
of coping as I tried most of the day to make a
basket. As soon as I was big enough to shoot on
that hoop I spent as much time out there
shooting as the days would permit. Just shooting,
coping, and trying to fill that emptiness in my
heart that was left behind by my mother's death.

Coach called a time-out with about ten minutes
left in the game. Macklery was up on us by four points and had been on a 15 to 2 run. We hadn't scored in the last five minutes, so coach called time in hopes to get us a bucket. He diagrammed the play, and we set back out on the floor to execute it. The ball was going to be inbounded to me and everyone in the gym that knew basketball knew that. So, when I got it at the top of the key, it was no big surprise. I faked my man left and drove the lane to the right easily beating my defender. Macklery's center stepped up to stop me, actually believing he could, as I floated into the air. I was releasing the ball when he undercut me and I lost my balance in mid air. I knew I was headed for trouble because there was nothing I could do. I broke my fall with my back and felt the pain instantly. As the whistle blew, I saw the ball fall through the basket.

I was lying on my back just staring blankly at the gym ceiling. I closed my eyes to ease the pain and could feel the sweat drip in them and it was beginning to sting. I closed them tighter, and then I noticed something.

I wasn't at the gym anymore, I was at a playground. There were a bunch of kids picking teams to play a game. I rushed over hoping to get picked, but they didn't even notice me. It was like I was invisible. There were two bigger kids that were picking teams, and they were surrounded by a bunch of littler kids. The one big kid picked first, followed by the other. They each took turns in succession until there was only one boy left. One of the teams only had four players while the other had five. That still didn't stop the undermanned team from picking up the extra boy. So they started playing five on four and left the outcast on the sideline. I couldn't stop staring at this poor boy and wondering how bad he must really be. As I watched him sit on the side peering through his open fingers on the hands that covered the face that watched the other play without him, I noticed that he seemed very familiar to me. At first I thought I was watching myself, but realized I wasn't because I didn't recognize the boy. But I knew that I knew him, and it even felt like I loved him. I walked closer to take a better look.

I finally decided to answer coach because he was starting to bother me. "Yes," I said, "I can play. I'm fine." My back was still in great pain, but I didn't tell anyone because I wanted to play. I didn't want to watch the game from the sidelines. I wanted to stay in the game. I could have cared less about winning or the fact that coach wanted me to play injured or not just so he could win. Something was keeping me out on that court and that scared me because I really didn't want to risk an injury and hurt my chances for a basketball career. It wasn't my love of the game that kept me in either, because my back hurt all over and I was ready to call it quits. But I didn't and I wasn't sure why. My mind was clouded with thoughts about that boy on the playground that didn't get a chance to play. He was the first person that I had ever seen that loved the game more than me. When he wasn't picked on the team, he just stayed and watched the others play. He didn't cry or complain. He just kept watching. He was just a dream, but I felt inferior to him. I could feel that he was a part of me, but I didn't know why. I felt so close to him, even though we had nothing in common, yet I could not recognize what he really meant to me. He was a part of me I felt I owed.

I headed to the foul line to make my shot. "I hate these dumb things, they shouldn't even be a part of basketball, they just slow it down." What was the sense anyways. I knew I would make it. "Christ, Dad has made me shoot at least a million of the damn things at home," I thought as I bounced the ball twice on the floor. I looked over at the bleachers to see if he was watching me participate in one of the "most important aspects of the game," as he put it. When I saw him sitting there, I saw something that I had never seen him do. He had tears in his eyes. I was not sure how I felt because I had never seen my father cry. Not even when Mom died did he shed a tear. I hated him for that, and now I wanted to know what it was at a stupid basketball game that could make him shed the tears that didn't stream for my mother. I threw the ball back at the ref, and walked off the court towards my father. He stood up from his spot on the bleachers.
and was on the floor when I got to him. He gently put his arm around my neck and said, "Come on son, let's go home," and we walked out of the gym. I didn't understand why I was actually listening to him for once without complaint, and I didn't understand why I was actually leaving in the middle of the game with him, but for some reason it felt good.

That night I had a dream about that little boy that I had seen during that short blackout. We were at the cemetery looking at my mom's grave, and there were tears streaming down his face. I asked him how he knew my mother, but he didn't answer, he just kept crying. I hugged him and then we turned and walked out of the cemetery together.

CIPRIAN ALMONTE  Looking Ahead
Perma-Grin

Twisting, twirling, swirling-dancing?
Stumbling, that’s it, bumbling.
Colors shown bright, glowing with light,
Rotating blue, brown, hazel.
Awake for hours, tossing-dancing?
No, still bumbling, yet tumbling.
Images passing, days
Growing longer, growing older - dying?
No, dancing. Yes stumbling
Over words, unspoken, mispronounced.
Standing, alive, alone.
Surrounded by multitudes,
Breathing, grinning.

CHRISTINE STROSSMAN  The Big Game
DAWN WHITED

For Carrie

You can tell I was born
in the early seventies
by the way
my hair
parts naturally
down the
mid dle
just like
Laurie Partridge

CIPRIAN ALMONTE Minority
Who is the heathen responsible for this
desecration of my peace of mind?
Frightening and tumultuous,
I now see your world through a series of lines
Connecting me, subduing me --
Your conscience, it upholds this thing.
No man’s land of white and blue
Up at the surface, I see you.
Strange creature
It is of human Nature to disgrace,
To lock up simple beauty,
Exile it to a foreign place.
Misconstrued -- cold observation
What do you have to change?
Of us so few and you abounding
Put us in a cage.
In the twilight's final ember
the jester sheds a tear
Then chuckles at his majesty
reclaiming all his fear

But in the night on mountains
of magic grounds so hallowed
The noot returned to his rock
and his majesty followed

And in the morning's purple sun
shadowed by a noose
Prodded toward the dissonant gallows
that jester dances loose

Bouncing down the road with an
untimely laugh of time
Proving for the moment you don't
always redress the crime

Inside his Majesty's royal forest
resting by a stream
Listen to the water trickle
gazing at a dream

A tiny lizard on his chest
chanting on some gold
The King's crown, ring, and scepter
where it is he is told...

Amid the granite cavern halls
guarded by a beast
Just like an ancient fairy tale
the fire and the feast

Dancing to the tunes of Time
weary in the night
He sleeps upon a bed of roses
when darkness turns to light

Across the stream of heat and color
will not be the man
The scavengers robbed the flesh
left the ring on his hand

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KRISTEN BASI

The Canyon

As I start out on the trail, I can feel the heat of the sun, even at this early hour. It is sure to be a day of rising temperatures, and the city dwellers will probably all head to the beach. The drive on the expressway was quiet - there weren't many cars headed in this direction. This place is virtually empty, and the solitude is a welcome companion.

I take my time walking my usual route. Soon I am in the woods. I am greeted by the cool shade provided by the canopy of the many tall trees. These trees must be a few hundred years old. I wonder how many people have walked this trail before me? It's a relaxing walk. I hear scurrying in the brush and realize I have disturbed some raccoons who thought they were alone in the forest. I hope my presence hasn't interrupted anything important.

I move on. There are signs of forest life everywhere. My ears tune in to the subtle buzzing and humming of insects. I hear the shaking of the leaves and branches as birds land, and once again take flight. The sound of my own breathing is the only foreign noise in this natural community.

The trail is gradually beginning to slope. The terrain gets steep in this area, and I begin my descent carefully. As I move toward the bottom I can hear the rush of the river and the gentle whisper of the waterfalls. The river is running high - the rain has been relentless for weeks. This makes the waterfalls more abundant in their splendor. As I get closer, I can almost feel the waterfall's mist gently kiss my brow - although I can not yet see it.

I reach the bottom of the trail and take a deep breath. This is the absolute crescendo of my journey; resting my eyes upon this landscape instills a calm inside of me; an elusive feeling that is impossible to achieve elsewhere. I haven't been here in a while, and my return is a soothing remedy for the trivial stresses that have been polluting my soul.

The river's shore consists of large slabs of shale that have been long weathered to a cool gray. Across the river is a cliff much taller than the one I just climbed down. To the right - and the top of the river, the water comes rushing down, hurrying toward its ultimate destination, which is a mammoth waterfall that drops to about thirty feet below, where it will continue its endless journey.

The gorge is vast and deep. Its cavernous walls reverberate even the gentle sound of the water's rush. If I were to shout, there would surely be a tremendous echo. But I do not want even the sound of my own voice to interrupt the stillness. It is almost perfect in its tranquility.

I'm not exactly allowed to be here - this is unregulated park property. This is because in some areas, the water is moving so fiercely that an ocean-like undertow is created. But experience has taught me exactly where to wade when I want to cross the river.

I sit on the rocky shore and relieve my feet of the now unnecessary burden of my heavy hiking boots. To my left, I notice a half-empty bag of pretzels. The litter looks out of place. I quickly stuff it into my pack so that I may later discard it properly, and so that I won't have to see it all day, disrupting the natural innocence of my retreat.

I step into the water and wade over to a rock that sits in the middle of the river. It is large enough for me to lie down on, and it extends two or three feet above the water. Situated in my favorite spot, I allow myself to become caught up in the beauty of the view in every direction. For me, Heaven couldn't be better. I believe that if each person in the world could be able to spend
an hour alone here, all of humanity would come to realize the urgency of preserving nature and its inhabitants.

I take off my shirt and roll it into a ball, resting it between my head and the rock. I close my eyes and let my body be warmed by the sun. Up above, the canyon walls display their greatness, reminding me that I am a mere human - a small life on earth for just a moment in comparison to their amazing and timeless vastness. Long after I am gone, this place will sustain. Or at least it is meant to.

Meanwhile, down below, the river rushes by, passing my rock, turning into rapids, leaving me behind as it gets closer to the waterfall. I let the sun's rays and the river's mist gently ease me into their silence.

I could spend a lifetime in this very spot, but all too soon it is time to make my way back up the trail and head for home on a crowded city block that is packed with man's most progressive inventions - cars, concrete, and apartment houses.

As I drive home along the expressway, the sun is slowly setting in a majestic display of fiery reds and oranges, a burning ember against twilight's pinkish horizon. I leave the river behind and take with me only the vision of the canyon in my mind's eye, and hope that it will be there tomorrow.
ADAM C. SLICK

Animals?

Do you really think that if they could...

Fish would purchase expensive eyewear and flock to America's sidewalks, laying there until their scales peeled?

Deer would hide in your closet all day then ambush you wearing a three-piece suit that matched the wallpaper?

Whales would sit outside motel windows with video cameras and narrate the mating they see inside?

Dogs and cats would spend a good buck to have a reputable bear make sure your gonads were rendered useless?

Birds would buy army surplus grenades and drop them onto your new car as you headed for vacation in Daytona?

Probably not. But wouldn't they have the right to?
Close your eyes and you shall see.

Many years ago, the world was very different from as we know it today. The world was a place of darkness. Yes, people did exist. Animals abounded the land. Mountains, oceans, plants, and flowers were all intact. All living creatures functioned and survived by relying on touch, smell, sound, and because of their lack of sight, imagination. With a world without sight, many of us would be led to believe that the world was quite a boring place to live. This was not so. In fact it was a much more loving and caring society than our present. The reason for this was because no one knew what the two round things between their nose and forehead were used for. Therefore, no one was judged upon their external beauty, color of skin, or ethnicity, as we are today. The world was darkness: no colors were seen. Well, that was until the legend of Angelica, Golden Eye.

Angelica was young and in love. The kind of love that made her heart warm with anticipation for life whenever Christian was around. Christian felt the same love for Angelica. Their lives would seem to be depicted in a fairy tale. The type with a wonderful ending. That was until one devastating evening.

Angelica and Christian went for a swim in the ocean. A strong undercurrent swept them both under. They struggled, but it was useless, nature won the battle. Soon after, they floated to shore. As they were laying on the sand, Angelica was still somehow struggling with her life. Her soul seemed trapped. She felt odd: she could see something! She could see Light. At the light she heard: and eventually saw, Christian. He was headed toward the light. Angelica could not move to catch up with him.

She screamed, “Christian!” He stopped. “Angelica, please go back, it’s not your time.”

“No, no. I will not live without you. Especially now that I can see you. Who would make me suffer without you?”

Angelica fell to her knees.

“I know I was dead back there, why must I go back?”

Then, from the light came a beautiful spectrum of color. It spoke to the desperate couple, “Your love is rare, Christian and Angelica. You are a symbol of the love all people must turn to for guidance, from now until the end of time. You have proved to me that your people have enough faith in love to sacrifice light for living in darkness: to simply be together. Your people deserve to enjoy light and my spectrum. Angelica, here is a mirror. Look at yourself. (She gasped.) You have only one eye compared to Christian’s two. All people and animals have two. Yours is special, you shall light the world with your golden eye.”

The spectrum took Angelica and placed her into Christian’s arms. “I will now send you both into Space. There you will live together forever. Angelica, you will light the world and be known to people as “Sun”. Christian, you will be close to her and be known as ‘Moon’. People will faintly see your face and look to you with many dreams of reaching you. However, do not be discouraged when you notice that once people see, they will treat one another with emotions you have never known. Somehow vision, the ability to see, will cause people to experience hatred, prejudice, racism, sexism, and other evil emotions.

With faith and hope people will look to you both, and your children around you called “Stars”, and wish. Your job is to send your children flying across the sky as if they were falling, to keep people believing in love and peace. Now go and mark the beginning of time.”
Four O'clock at the Lake

The pale afternoon sun spreads slender fingers across dense green grass, resting, until evening steals in to claim its place. Pink coral bells bob in the gentle breeze. Delphiniums, heavy with nectar, bow their heads in deference to the fading day. The backyard is testimony to what has gone before. Wet bathing suits hang, as if by ears, on the makeshift clothesline while a plastic pool, filled with a few inches of grassy water, waits, abandoned, in the middle of the lawn. Only the brightly patterned fish imprinted on its side swim there now. Jars of soap bubbles, half-filled, sit in sticky pools on cement steps, beckoning unsuspecting, drowsy spiders to visit. I stretch out on an old wicker chaise, toes pointing toward the lake, and close my eyes. I drink the last of the sun's dying rays, and feel the wholeness of the day inside me.
JENNIFER MCCARTHY

Shinehead

Sounds of thunder
Slam to the side
Shark infested waters

Swig Swallow Swig

Green tint glowing
Blue thumb rises
Pickpocket Ricochet
Winner buys drinks

CIPRIAN ALMONTE  Lot Full
MINDY HARDWICK

Memories of the Elmheart Hotel

My eyes gazed from two gaping holes which used to be windows overlooking Lake Ontario. I watched as sailboats played on the wind of the water. A breeze blew through the hotel's frame and the screen porch rocked on its hinges. Neighborhood children ignored the "No Trespassing" sign posted on the iron gates. Their shouts echoed into the elm trees as they rode their bikes through the overgrown grass. Beer cans were tucked into corners of the sagging porch. Chipped white paint, like ashes from a midnight bonfire, lay scattered along the edges of the building. I sighed and wondered, what had happened to the elegance and beauty which once belonged to the Elmheart Hotel.

Many years ago, people had spent their vacations in the hotel's narrow pine paneled rooms. The families were well established New York City residents who wanted to escape the heat. Women and children passed the sunny summer days playing on the shallow rocky beach. Mothers took afternoon naps while children splashed in the cool waters. On weekends, the men would join their women and children. They arrived in Rochester by train and would travel on the Charlotte trolley line which stretched along the coast. The final stop was Manitou Beach where the Elmheart Hotel displayed its finery. The hotel's Victorian design proudly boasted towers, balconies, fish scale style shingles, stained glass windows, and arches. The shoreline turned into a celebration as lovers strolled the pier and families spread checker cloth picnic blankets. As night fell, the breezes of the lake blew through open windows, cooling the sleeping bodies in the Elmheart Hotel.

Eventually, the trolley line was discontinued and people found other places to visit. Local children and families became the hotel's only guests. They explored the abandoned rooms and wreaked havoc on the dance hall at the side of the hotel. Beer cans and pieces of tinfoil were scattered among the overgrown grass. Occasionally, a potential buyer would walk the land. However, the price was always too high and controversy over zoning laws arose with the town of Greece. It was during the years of the hotel's decline into decay that I first saw the old structure.

On a warm day in late August, I stepped out of my boyfriend's silver Escort onto a land which had been forgotten. Earlier in the afternoon, Robin had told me there was somewhere he wanted to show me. He grinned when I continued to pester him about where we were going. "You'll see," he said as we traveled twenty minutes out of the city. Robin had been my personal tour guide in Rochester for the past two weeks while I was visiting my family. He had sailed with my parents and the fates threw us together for what would be a whirlwind fairy tale romance. He would hear my tears as I flunked out of school in Missouri and began a new school in Rochester. However, on that warm August day, I couldn't see what was in my future. I only saw the abandoned hotel beckoning me to explore its history.

The heavy wood gates were open and the car slipped easily onto the gravel. As we got out of the car, I could only stare speechless at the hotel in front of me. The white paint was peeling and windows were broken and boarded with plywood. The tall grass was overgrown and scratched my bare legs as we held hands and walked to the dance hall at the side of the hotel. The door was cracked and we slipped through the shadows onto the marble dance floor. A crystal chandelier hung overhead and a few wood benches were thrown haphazardly against the side of the dance hall. A small stage was hidden by faded red curtains in the front of the building. We ran like kids through the great dance hall, our footsteps echoed on the wood floors. "What
a great place this must have been," I said. "Do you realize what it could become if someone fixed it up?" Robin only grinned while an idea began to form in my head.

We walked out into the sunlight and slid the wood latch across the barn doors. As we stood in front of the old hotel, a shadow crossed the upstairs window. I watched the window and said, "Do you think there are ghosts up there? I could have sworn I saw something move in the third story window!" Robin grinned and said, "Let's go find out!"

I cautiously followed him through the broken screen door and tried to control my racing heart. The air was musty and hot as he took my hand and we began the walk up the broken stairs. "Are you sure this is alright?" I asked. "Maybe we should go back outside." He didn't answer and I decided it was better to be with him than make the solitary journey back downstairs.

We reached the top floor and turned right into a bedroom. A broken green chair rested on its side by the door and a single yellow curtain hung from its last thread in the window. I looked out onto the lake as Robin's arms encircled my waist. He pulled me close and his Polo cologne drifted into my thoughts. "See, everything is okay," he said. "I'm here and I'll protect you."

Years later, I would still hear his words as I sat on the rocks outside the Elmheart Hotel. I was a solitude figure lost among the lake and sheltering elm trees. Robin had protected me during the times we were together. He had shown me a place which would shelter me when he left to live a life without me. I returned many times to the solitude of a hotel which had been forgotten. On summer nights, our family sailboat would glide past the hotel. I would fondly look at the great white house which was hidden by the shadows of the setting sun.

Eventually, the hotel burned in the dark of the night. Its red glares lit the sky and the hotel said its final goodbye to all who had loved the sheltering banks. All that remains are three stone steps which once felt my footsteps as I embarked into a journey of the past. Tonight, the hotel sits in ashes on the shores of Lake Ontario and Robin has become only ashes in my mind. But, somewhere, in a far off memory, I feel his arms circling my waist as the sun sets behind the Elmheart Hotel. ☞
KEVIN K. ALLEN

The Fear

Our people live in the same city as They do
Yet, we are neglected, shamed, discarded
If this is what America stands for,
Then I want out

We live in a cardboard box, waiting to die
They get to smell the grass, make friends
All I get to smell is gunsmoke and all I see are enemies
Walking in our neighborhood makes no sense

I watch out my caged window
Them running from car to car
Selling, making deals that will further their careers
With their 9mm's stashed in the small of their backs

Yesterday was a dark day for me
(Not that anyone cares)
We buried my brother next to my father
Later that night, we received a phone call

They said he was shot in the face
Five times by a rival gang
No one caught whoever shot my other brother
I go to another funeral two weeks from now

Lying in my bed, I hear sirens again, I cry again
My dreams always suggest a way out of here
I've never known what was Nice, Normal,
Nor respectable

In the sunlight, as I'm walking home
The Fear is upon me; something just isn't right
Reaching for my semi-automatic, at the last
Second, wheels squeal toward me

I never did make it out of that place
The streets still burn with indigenous anger
My mother still comes and visits me
In the cemetery
MATT AVEDISIAN

Wasted Youth

Left, right
Prepare to die
Never even question why
Bomb, shoot
Run them through
These are the duties you must do
Fear and hatred cloud our eyes
Satiated
As the enemy dies
I didn't want to take their lives
I am not God --
Or am I?
These bloody hands betray myself
My morals lie
Rotting on a shelf
These bloody hands are living proof
Symbols of my
Wasted youth.
HEATHER JONES

The Photograph

Devotion is the decision to look upon whoever is before me, or whatever is within my grasp, whatever is within my hands... with perfect thoughtfulness and eternal fondness.

So take my hand, no matter how long the journey.

We will walk along the beach and out of the night together, and long after the memories of us have blurred... this photo will live on... as a constant reminder of what once was, what could have been... but what wasn't meant to be.
MARCIA MORPHY

Eye To Eye

When my daughter turned twelve, we stood toe-to-toe, and she looked me directly in the eye. Clearly, she did not like what she saw. Overnight it seemed, I had grown small and she, tall; as my stature diminished, hers increased. She did everything right; I did everything wrong.

"Mom, what shoes are you wearing? Those heels look terrible with jeans. And your hair..."

Once loved unquestionably, I was now judged unmercifully. But I understood the reason. My daughter was pre-adolescent — that in-between stage where her own shoes didn't seem to fit, and she couldn't wear mine.

However, one day my daughter decided that I could accompany her to a toy store, to buy a birthday gift for her friend. This time, she forgot to be embarrassed about my appearance, because her younger brother looked worse than I did. If my faults were in technicolor, his were in flashing neon. She told him so as we entered the store, and that's when I decided to browse alone. This puberty business was wearing me down.

Right then, I saw something in the display window that caught my eye— a three story Victorian home, complete with furniture, wall hangings, rugs and lights. The house was filled with people. There was a baby sleeping in the nursery... two children watched T.V. in the den. Dad was working in the garage and Mom was taking a turkey out of the oven. "Yes," I thought. It was the perfect dollhouse.

I felt someone standing next to me, and as I turned, I saw my daughter— her eyes wide and fixed on the display. Her lower face broke into a smile.

"Mom, can we get it? Look at the fireplace and fish tank. Don't they look real? And that dog and cat in the front hall; they look so guilty. I bet they knocked over the table."

"Yes, I bet they did," I answered. "That cat looks like Percey, don't you think?"

"Mom, you're not listening to me."

For some reason, my daughter always concludes that I cannot comprehend her point of view. Ever. She insists that I have my opinion, and she has hers. Period. Her eyes do waver for an instant, her lips do quiver for a second, but then she always manages to get out the fatal last words: "I knew you wouldn't understand."

But this time, she didn't stop there. "Please, mom, please. I'll give you all the money I've saved. I've never had a dollhouse, any kind of dollhouse before." She went on for the punchline — saying the words all parents hate to hear. "All my friends have one."

I never cared what other people owned — except when I was my daughter's age. A girl in my neighborhood, named Gail, had six Barbie dolls, the Barbie townhouse, and the Barbie Corvette. Not to mention the three suitcases of clothes. I never forgot how I felt back then, especially when my parents said "Absolutely no Barbie doll for you." Perhaps they did have a good reason...Barbie's body was too well-developed for its own good.

But that was past. I was determined my daughter would not suffer from the same fate I did. As I continued looking at the dollhouse, my mind and heart raced with childlike desire. But excitement soon turned to reality as I said "Honey, we can't afford to buy this dollhouse. It would cost at least $300 and Dad would be so upset. We came to the store to buy a birthday present for your friend. Let's get on with it and leave."

I ached inside as I looked at her face. My son, who was standing nearby, overheard our conversation. For a minute, he seemed lost in thought, like he was considering which new Nintendo game he would beg for. Instead, I heard him say, "Mom, get it for her. She never asks for anything
special. We'll hide it from Dad and he'll never know the difference. You know he doesn't notice anything but golf clubs."

I laughed aloud at the image -- my husband not noticing a five-foot-wide, lighted dollhouse. I wished things could be so simple. I looked at my watch, noticing it was almost five-o'clock. We hurriedly picked out the birthday gift, and moved towards the checkout counter.

For some reason, I felt horrible, cheated somehow. My daughter would soon be beyond such innocence, and there would be no time left for us to share a piece of childhood together. I made a quick decision. Grabbing my daughter's hands I shouted, "Didn't we forget something?"

We raced home with the trunk filled and drove up the driveway. My heart missed a beat as I noticed my husband had come home early from work that day. I opened the car door and quickly told him about our "new home". I looked at my husband, expecting the worst, and was surprised by the understanding in his eyes. He helped us carry everything inside, and the night was filled with laughter and squabbling, as my daughter and I arranged the furniture and lights.

A few months later, my daughter had some friends over after school. I was given some "much needed" advice before their arrival. "Mom, please don't say anything about the dollhouse, like when I got it -- or just anything about it." I suddenly got the picture.

The girls sat in the living room with their Cokes and snacks. They talked about getting tickets to a rap concert, whispering about back stage passes and what they were going to wear. One of the girls looked inside the dollhouse. My daughter quickly said it wasn't hers; it was her mother's, and wasn't that weird. They all laughed.

After her friends left, the house seemed quiet. I sat down with a book; my daughter watched TV.

A little while later, I noticed her re-arranging some of the rooms in the dollhouse. Our eyes met, and she smiled. "Mom, you know it looks better this way, with the lamp and master bedroom on the first floor."

I got up and stood next to my daughter, still noticing that we were both the same height. I took one look at the furniture she had moved. "Yes," I said. "That looks much better than before." I gave her a hug in celebration. At last, we were seeing eye-to-eye.

http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1993/iss1/50
M.P. CHRISTOPHER

Careless

Getting ready for bed
Dodging cans of hairspray
And tubes of Clinique exfoliant
I knock your earring down the sink
(slips with a clank out of sight).
The one like in all those magazines;
“European” you say.
“Taiwan” I say.
“How could you be so careless?”
You scream
And I wonder what part of you
I’ve lost down the sink
That you could be so angry
That you could yell so loud
And then I am quiet
I go to bed without brushing my teeth.
When your subscription runs out
Do you slip with a clank out of sight?

Now when I want to talk to you
I find you in those magazines.
They never yell
And the women with the earrings
Always smile.
They are made in Europe,
Worn to make money
Off people who get lost in a sink.

I scream
“How can you be so careless?”
Magnetic dots in the T.V.
Unnerving, staring
Pulsating;
They seek you.
Dreamworlds collide in a
Crushing
Destructive
Wave of
Reality.
Think you got it all
Under control?
Put your mind in your pocket
For further,
Future use.
No, we're not
All ignorant.
Ha.
How many hats
Do you have, anyway?
Just tell me -- I don't want
To see them.
Tell the sheep to move,
They all look alike to me.
You are so deep --
Just like
A T.V.
Crossroads

A dog’s toenails scratched the kitchen floor as the screen door slammed. Melanie held out her hand as the blonde cocker spaniel licked her fingers. She uncrossed her long shapely legs and shifted restlessly on the couch. “Cage,” a man’s voice said sternly. Obediently, the dog followed the man’s pointing fingers and settled into his white cage. The man grinned and closed the cage door. Melanie clutched a piece of paper in her hand and looked nervously at the man.

“Drew,” she began, “I got my acceptance to graduate school today.”

“That’s great,” he said as he walked into the kitchen. “Do we have anything to drink?”

“Are you listening, Drew?” she asked.

“Sure, dear,” he replied absentl.y. “I’m happy for you.”

Melanie looked at the man’s back as he searched the refrigerator. Frustrated, she stood and walked back to the kitchen. Standing in front of the man she said, “I am going to Boston for graduate school.”

The refrigerator door shut with a slam and the man turned to face her. “Melanie, Boston is six hours away.”

“I realize that,” she replied coldly.

“What do you expect me to do while you are gone for the next three years?”

“I want you to come with me,” she replied softly.

The man stared at her in shock. “You are kidding, right?” he asked. “You don’t really expect me to leave a job I have had for five years and move to another city?”

“Why is that so unreasonable?” Melanie stormed. “If you got transferred I would be expected to move with you.”

The man stared at the woman in front of him. Her eyes were dark with anger and he realized he was staring at a stranger. She had been his friend and eventually his girlfriend for the last three years. They had moved in together over Christmas and she had never once mentioned applying to graduate school in Boston.

“Why didn’t you tell me you applied to graduate school?” he asked.

“I was scared,” she replied.

“You are right,” he stormed angrily. “I waited for you to get your undergraduate degree. But, I am not waiting for you to get your graduate degree. What do you need it for anyway?”

Melanie’s thoughts rolled backwards as she calmly replied, “When I was a little girl, I used to tell my mom I was going to move to the East and live in Boston. I never knew how I was going to accomplish that dream, but I knew one day I would live on the East coast.”

Drew looked scornfully at Melanie, “That’s a real nice dream, dear. But it’s only a dream. Your life is here with me and there are plenty of jobs you can get with a bachelor’s degree.”

Melanie stared at Drew in disbelief and softly said, “You really don’t understand, do you?”

“There is nothing to understand,” Drew replied. “Raising my kids and marrying me do not require the prerequisite of a Master’s Degree.”

Melanie walked to the couch and sank into it as her thoughts whirled around her head. “Marriage and kids,” she thought. “I am too young to be making these decisions. But he is already thirty and wants to settle down. What if I go to Boston? What if this is my only chance to get married? What if no one asks me again?” She looked at the man standing in front of her and then glanced at the dog in the cage. For a minute, her throat closed with tears as she looked at...
the dog. The dog was always in the cage. Whenever the man couldn't deal with the way the dog was behaving, he went in the cage. Melanie stared at the dog and suddenly she was looking at herself. The man would cage her like he did the dog. He would never let her have her dreams. There would always be kids to take care of and a house to clean. Suddenly she looked at the man and said,

"I am going to Boston."

"What will I do?" he asked.

"I guess you'll have to find someone else to put in the cage," she replied as she walked out the door.

CHRISTINE STROSSMAN  The Passage
Four Women

Four women who are
Linked, not by choice
Joined by softness, strength,
an inner power
Crashing on the sands

One, whose strength is
seen by everyone
But the whispers are afraid
and offended by it.
A conviction that grows
stronger everyday
Yet admirable, and beautiful
Rolling, moving, thundering
And the shore is made aware
Stronger everyday,
Admirable and beautiful.

Her secret is hidden
Her secret is hidden and
Subject to the ridicule of those
who say "lower your hand."
Her waters have been silenced
on the surface, but her waves
are quiet and dangerous
And will surely erupt.

What belongs to her?
I don't know.
Sitting on the waters and
cautiously waiting to jump in.
Unsure, yet somehow ready.
And they wait...
And they wait...

What is her secret?
So ready, yet afraid
Of the differences...
What will they say?
No one knows her secret
Wants to dive in
Wants to be swallowed up
Wants to shout and scream

Women
Women who are
Linked, not by choice
Joined by strength
An inner power
Crashing on the sands
Waiting to be heard
Are they listening?
Stifled Honesty

That awkward moment
Before the phone's in place
Silence between two lovers
Words hung in space

You long to say it
But know you can't
When repeated too early
The results are scant

Denying their fate for one more day
Each lost in the world
That has no name

Spitting out rehearsed words
Not their imprisoned souls

Saying

Until next time, adieu
Instead of
I love you
LAURIE WARD

Only In My Dreams

September, 1988

I can still feel the terror in the pit of my stomach, hear the cruel wind that wouldn't help me, see the hatred and madness in his usually calm blue eyes, still feel the screams stop in my throat, forming a lump and turning to sobs.

October, 1992

It all comes back to me as I look at him again. I look around to see if anyone notices how scared I am. My friends are laughing. They don't notice anything. He sees me from across the crowded bar, our eyes meet, and I look away. I want to get out of here, but my legs won't move.

He's coming closer. He's fighting the crowd and making his way toward me. I turn to see that my friends have wandered to a corner with some friends from college. I'm all alone, just him and me. The way it was then. That night when he took it all away from me. He robbed me of my self-esteem and he stole my faith and my judgement in myself. And that's the way it'll be now, tonight, when I take it all back.

My back is to him, but I know he's right behind me. He reaches out and touches my arm and I coil away. I take a deep breath and turn around. "Hi, Laurie. What are you doing here?"

Just like that, like he's my favorite person and now my night is complete because I saw him. Maybe it will be.

I'm scared shitless, but I won't let the bastard see that again. "Hi, Mark."

"Do you come here a lot?"

What the hell does he want? "No, I'm home from college. I'm here with some friends." I turn around and walk away from him. I push my way over to one of my friends. She is very taken with her new companion. "I don't feel too great. Are you almost ready to leave?"

She gives me the evil eye and pulls me aside.

"Not really, I'm talking to Chris."

"I really don't feel well. Do you think he'll bring you home?"

Her eyes brighten. "What a great idea." She hugs me. "Want me to walk you to the car?"

"No, I parked right out front. I'll be fine."

I pull my keys out, say good-night to a few people and walk out to my car. I almost know what is coming and I'm not surprised when I hear his voice, oozing in nicety. "Leaving already?"

For some reason I'm not scared. I slowly turn around. "I'm tired."

"I hope you're not leaving 'cuz of me, Angel." Angel, that's what he used to call me, actually I think it was his "worthless angel".

Don't flatter yourself, asshole. "No, not at all. I'm tired."

He comes closer and I can smell the beer on his breath. "Don't you miss me?"

"Not at all." My voice starts to shake and I clear my throat. I take a few steps back away from him.

"We used to have some good times, Laur.""

"Maybe, a long time ago."

"Yea, you remember. We did." He brushes the hair off my cheek and I am repulsed by his touch. "Mark, leave me alone."

"Oh, don't be like that."

I kick him in the groin and walk quickly to the other side of the car. My heart is racing, but I'm not scared. I only hope I have enough time. I open the car door and reach under my seat. I'm standing back up again by the time he makes his way to me. He doesn't see my hand.

"You little bitch."

I smile. "That's the nicest thing you ever said to me."

He lunges at me and I hold the gun out for him to see. He almost falls on his face trying to stop himself. "What the hell is that?"
“What does it look like?”
“Why do you have that?”
“You made me what I am today.” I laugh as I say it.
“Put it down, Laur.”
“NO!”
“What are you going to do with that?”
“Kill you.” I say it so matter-of-factly, too much so that I don’t think I really said it. I hold the gun out and aim for where his heart would be, if he had one. I step closer and he cowers.

I love this power. Is this the way he felt? Probably. Too bad! Not a good enough excuse.
“No, Laurie, please, no.”
“I said no, too.” I close my eyes and pull the trigger, “But you didn’t listen.”

October, 1993
I wake up, sweating and shaking, hoping It’s all a nightmare. But I know that the end was a dream, the rest was a cruel dose of reality.

36
Ravens Calling

Ravens call as I cross campus
On the snow blinding sunny day.
I try to forget what we just said,
I DON'T want to forget!
The conversation playing in my head.

“What is wrong with society today?”
Women risk their life to pursue an education,
Students pay thousands of dollars-
and sit like lumps in classrooms,
Professors are forced to conform to traditional roles-
to keep peace,
Qualified, exciting professors are forced to leave; and students don’t care.

This can’t be a small version of a large picture.
Our community is supposed to be isolated and protected.
I drive away from campus, my mind heavier than
when I arrived earlier.
MICHAEL G. M. CORNELIUS

Disturbing

A shadow moves across the wall,
A great clock clangs from down the hall.
The hour, now, has come at hand,
To carry out what I have planned.
In my hand I hold a knife,
That's sharp and sure to end your life.
I creep up slowly to your room —
Are you dreaming of your doom?
You smile softly in your sleep;
I pray the Lord your soul to keep.
The silver flashes - once, then twice;
Your eyes spring open, frozen ice.
It's too late now to start to fight;
Your cries are swallowed by the night.
The blood spurts down upon your shirt,
Then you feel no pain or know no hurt.
I giggle softly when I'm done,
Murder, my sweet, is oh so fun.
I leave and know what I must do;
I'm coming now to look for you.
JEFF MARSH

A Frozen Memory

It was cold. This was more than the bone-numbing cold experienced on winter days, this was true cold. I looked out over the barren wasteland of tundra before me and thought that this is what hell should look and feel like. Hell would not be warm, it would be cold. The cold seeped through eight layers of clothes and made me sick from its numblness.

Only miles away from me was a village; a ramshackle array of huts huddled around a plot of land that was no different from the thousands of miles that surrounded it. It survived only through the fierce will of its inhabitants, and would survive for many years to come. Set amid the horrid plane of barren ice and snow, this village had become safe haven for those fleeing persecution or punishment. Daily life was a constant struggle for survival, but it was this struggle that kept the inhabitants strong.

I drove closer to the nameless village, and stopped on its outskirts. Amid the snow where I had parked, was the remnants of a plot of plowed land, although I could not know that at the time. It was in the dead of winter, the waning days where winter refused to relinquish its hold to warm, life-giving spring, and the land would not be farmable for another three or more months. After that time, the sun would show its face and melt the waves of snow that were packed upon the frozen ground like rock. Then weak carrots and potatoes would grow to supplement the diets of the pilgrims who lived in this place. They would eat and revitalize their bodies with the nutrients that they need but couldn't receive during the harsh winter. For now, however, they struggled to survive, eating roots and dried herbs from the year before. Many died each month: another body for the mass burial ground on the opposite outskirts of the village. The dead, however many died each harsh, unending month could not outnumber the living, however, as more people came each year to find a place where they could be accepted in an equally harsh society.

Now I entered the village, looking for the single inn at the edge of town. The inn was really another hut, barely big enough for the three rooms that it housed. There were only two rooms for visitors, and these were usually used only for the occasional person who still possessed money when they came to this solace. The building was empty now, not another single soul had entered the village for six months, and the supplement of reserved food would not last the surviving residents through the winter. Such were the harsh realities that these people were forced to endure.

I trudged through the drifts of snow piled to my waist, forcing my body to make each next step. It had just snowed, and it appeared by the sky that it would soon be snowing again. They did not bother to clear paths through the snow, there was no need. Few left their homes during the long winter days for other needs than to satisfy bodily functions and to trudge to the building where the stores were held. The single-room huts that housed entire families, and single pioneers, were relatively warm with smoking fires and thick blankets. No amount of encouragement could force these people to leave what had become their homes in the fiercest of cold other than total necessity.

Just before I reached the ramshackle inn, I heard a scream. It was the first sound I heard in this seemingly dead town besides the howling of the wind over the unbroken plains, and its stark resonance startled me from the deep retrospect that the bleakness brought about. I turned and ran toward the source of the scream, thrusting my way through snow drifts and over ice in an attempt to reach the hut from where the
At last, my own weariness and numbing cold forgotten, I reached the hut and threw myself through the snow to its rear. There, before me on the ground, was a small hole cut through a depression in the snow and through the ice beneath into what must have been a spring or stream of running water. A woman, dressed in fur parkas and boots that reached her thighs, was on her stomach over the hole, her face and arms submerged in the water. Before I could run to her rescue, she emerged from the hole holding the form of a small body bundled in frozen blankets and blue with cold. She stood up and screamed again, her face turned toward me, as she began shaking her child up and down, up and down, up and down.

She screamed again, before her voice was choked off with a gagging cough. In shock, staring at the bobbing body of the frozen child, I mumbled "dead", almost to myself. Now the woman turned toward me, and I lost all semblence of control. I was forced to stand, rooted in my spot like another frozen form, as I stared at this woman. Forced to leave her home in another far-away country with her child and her husband, the woman survived almost two years of ice and storm. Her survival instinct had kept her and her family alive, and she always carried the kernel of hope that the situation would not be permanant. Now, she had attained her hope.

Her face, frozen with a sheer, transparent film of ice, stared at me in panic and fear. Her child, her joy and most precious accomplishment, was dead and frozen in her arms. In an attempt to save the child, she had brought about her own death in the frozen ice and water. Now, her face permanantly frozen in a hideous expression of fear, loathing, and desperation, she had only moments to live. Her body rapidly losing the precious heat it had retained for over two years, in her eyes she still held only love for the child she had killed trying to protect. That part of her that held hope was shadowed by another part of her heart in which she knew that she would give her life in this manner. The desperation and hopelessness were present forever in her face, but gone in her eyes, replaced by a sadness and love. That impression was frozen forever in my mind like block of the hard, impenetrable ice, and I would often look back at the harsh contrast between terror and love that marked this woman's terrible conception of life. I barely noticed when she fell to the ground, dead with her eyes open and her mouth frozen in a silent scream for mercy and forgiveness. I simply turned away, content to remember her face, and would not watch while she was taken away to become yet another nameless, forgotten member of a great mass grave that was a monument to life and its harsh realities.
MEGAN CAVANAGH

To the Child Within the Child

Into this world she came-
abruptly turned, soon lost.
He blessed her as all others,
He prayed as she cried,
slowly.
The illness, it causes pain
buried too deep for us
to scratch.
She loved
she lost
she hurt
and history repeats itself,
until it overlaps, twisting too tight.
Prayers are prayed
tears are shed
forgiveness, is asked of you
love her - that she may learn
its blessings.
I like the fogs of early spring.
The quiet easing
Tepid transition
Masking the struggle of wills between restless air
And reluctant, relinquishing earth.
Disrupting hibernation
Seducing latent buds beneath satin white sheets
Of moist air
Warm breath
Of all who are weary
Of death.
Every morning, for as long as I could remember, Morty would wake me up. Those days were always the same: Morty would stick his head into my room, let out a big scream and beg me to get up and "Do something" with him. Don't get me wrong, I counted on his wake-up calls. Not only was a spectacular adventure had but he was my guide. I was quite a bit smaller compared to Morty, so he guided me through the dark. We had been best friends for as long as I can remember. We would play games and run and jump and swim.

I would tell him all my secrets and he always listened to me no matter how absurd my ideas were. I wondered what life would hold for us and what the world looked like in other places. After a long day of escapading, we'd go back to my house and mom would have fixed us a great feast. And then we'd sleep and our daily ritual would begin again. Every day was about the same until the one no one will ever forget. Morty and I were heading down Old Rockbottom Terrace, one of the nicest roads in town, to pick up my dad's clubs that were being fixed. All of a sudden, Cecil and Rex, who were two notorious troublemakers from town, were coming our way. Cecil had a terrible reputation for being a bully and he was a real brute. They challenged me and Morty to race them up Hairman's Mountain, the steepest hill in all of Cavern County. And to refuse their challenge would be the kiss of death. So the race began...Rex was running as fast as he could but Morty was still faster. I was amazed at how steep the mountain had become, I had never been up this far. Morty's speed was like nothing I ever saw before. Rex was exhausted. It was so dark but I knew I had never been so high in the sky before. Not a minute later something amazing happened; As Morty was nearing the finish, his head broke through the lining of the sky and a strange glow came over the mountain. Darkness was no more. Beams of golden rays of light shown down over the town. And for the first time I really saw Morty for what he was—I mean I always knew he was my best friend but I never knew dinosaurs were purple.
MEGAN CAVANAGH

God-tears

The meadow pushed its face up, through the snow. Receiving the stinging slap of man. Not one - but millions did scar this shrine, forcing the beauty to hide in shame. It could not taste the grace of light, nor offer itself unto the heavens. The barrier of mortality spread fast and free, destroying those places where land meets sky. I wonder now, when the last horizon has shed its final tear, will God cry?

CIPRIAN ALMONTE Life and Death
CHERI CRIST

The Hello Man

Louis was a happy man. Everyone that met him thought he was either happy, or eccentrically simple. He was neither. His cousin Leda thought he just had to grow up. By the time he hit 45, Leda knew it was more than just a matter of maturity, but she deigned to bring up the topic to anyone. Her interest in him was a combination of ancestry and a faint notion of obligation. However, she didn't see Louis as particularly unusual, just terminally satisfied with everything he saw. Her heavily made-up face looked perpetually disgusted.

Because both of their parents were tragically killed in the same plane crash on their way to a vacation in Reno, Leda felt morally compelled to look after him, as she said all men had to be looked after. But for all her fawning and nagging and attempts at affection, her daily phone calls and frequent midafternoon visits to Louis' small, neat apartment were interrupted due to Leda's miscalculation in stepping onto an escalator in the shopping mall downtown. One man, who was traveling on the UP escalator, said he heard the woman, who was Leda, mutter, "Sonuvabitch!" as if it were one word as she tumbled like a human snowball down the DOWN escalator, knocking down other shoppers and pulling them along with her as she fell.

"Hello, hello," Louis said amiably to the young girl walking toward him on the street. Her soft, lemon-colored hair fluttered like the feathers on a bird's wing in the gentle, cool September breeze. She nodded acknowledgement and then shook her head silently as they passed each other.

Louis smiled gleefully. He saw no reason to be sad, or frightened, or even worried today. He rarely did. Making his way toward the park, he sat down on a bench opposite a tall stone structure that marked a memorial to a general in the Civil War. He had supposedly led his battalion bravely and blindly through the battle lines and was promptly met by enemy forces. He died a gory but courageous death and was thus immortalized in stone. It was a twelve-foot high statue, with a figure of a man leveling a rifle at an unknown target. Louis didn't care for the statue - he didn't hate anything - because he thought it was too big. A real man, he thought, is only six feet tall, and this man, pedestal excluded, stood at about eight feet. And Louis specifically remembered that in the Guinness Book of World Records, the Tallest Man was never in the Army.

A pigeon strutted in front of Louis' bench. "Hello," said Louis to the bird. The pigeon continued pacing back and forth, as if waiting for Louis to go away so it could sit on the bench. Louis liked birds immensely. They never seemed to mind anything. Looking at the pigeon, he wondered if the bird's neck ever hurt from jabbing forward all the time.

The sun was dying a bright and bloody death in the sky beyond the park. Louis listened to the twilight birdsong. Sitting perfectly still, he could hear it. So beautiful. Why didn't the others hear it? He liked the music the birds made; it was their language, and it was always the same. Each bird had a voice and that voice was all it needed. One sound that communicated everything it needed to. Louis wished people could be the same way, with one sound that everyone else understood.

Two girls dressed in grubby clothes laughed suddenly and made gestures in Louis' direction with their short, stubby hands.

Louis lowered his head and squeezed his eye shut until the voices faded and the ring of the birdsong returned pleasantly in his ears. He left the park quickly.

The television sets in the window of Bezler's were always on. Or it seemed so. On cold nights, as darkness set in, Louis liked to walk down Finch
Street, toward Bezler's and see the glow of electronic buzz get brighter and brighter as he approached. Purple, blue and peach blobs mingled together and fell on the sidewalk in a muted beam.

Louis ambled down to Bezler's and stood in his spot, between two splotches of old gum, one pink and one a beige-rose color, like someone's fancy living-room furniture. There were the unusual ten television sets, arranged in three rows with four sets on the bottom half, four on the middle and two on the top. The shelves, painted a rich green color, matched the green and gold awning above the main door. The colors were nice. Nice and simple and they matched.

Every day that he came down to the television sets, Louis watched the set on the far left in the bottom row. The channel didn't make a difference. Tonight the news was on. They were broadcasting a tape of an electric chair execution that had taken place earlier that day. The man in the chair had pushed his pregnant girlfriend out of a twenty-third story window. Louis watched intently as the priest in black and red robes prayed over the man, and then blessed him with the sign of the cross.

A man walked out of Don's Bagels two doors down from Bezler's, a bag of sesame bagels in his right hand. He looked down the sidewalk and saw the tantalizing glow of the TV's. Usually, he didn't like to watch store window TV's by himself - he always felt self-conscious when he was alone in any endeavor. But tonight, another man, with a red and black plaid jacket was standing, shoulders hunched and forward, in front of the window. The man shrugged and strolled over to Louis, and quickly became engrossed in the macabre picture on the screen.

"Wow," he said. "They showing these on the TV now?"

Louis looked over at the man. "Hello," he said and turned his attention back to the television, smiling.

"What did this poor slob do to get the chair?"

Louis looked, wide-eyed at the man, with an important expression creeping over his face.

There was a sudden motion on the screen, and the condemned man flopped around in short spasms. The scene was cut abruptly to show the murderer lounging quite limply over the arm of the oak chair.

Louis pointed to the television and screamed with laughter. He turned to the man next to him, roaring.

"What the hell...buddy, you got a funny sense of humor," said the man, taken aback at Louis' display.

The laughter subsided, and Louis' arm slowly reached out toward the TV, where the doomed form of the criminal was still pulsing across the screen, and the laughter returned in small, helpless bumbles. He smiled broadly and looked hopefully at the brown-haired man staring at him in silent amazement.

The man took a deep breath and let it out. "Fella, that just ain't funny." There was a pause as Louis thought this over.

"Fella, that just ain't funny," he replied.

"That's for sure."

"That's for sure."

The man exploded. "Crazy fuck! Why are they all a bunch of crazy fucks?" He wheeled around and was gone. Louis watched his form grow smaller and smaller until he was only one inch tall, near as Louis could tell.

"Crazy fuck," said Louis.

That was Sunday. The next day, Louis awoke at 5 AM to go to his job at the factory. He walked the half-mile from his apartment to the enormous structure of concrete and old dusty glass as he did every weekday. It was a pharmaceutical manufacturer, and the company made a variety of pills...diet pills, allergy pills, anti-depressants, blood-pressure pills. Leda had gotten him the job through a friend of hers who supervised the production lines in Section E. His name was Fred, and he and Leda had had a torrid affair which ended when Fred's wife came back and begged for a reconciliation. Leda took it as fate. She took mostly everything that way.

Louis worked on Line E2, which chugged out cold capsules. They were clear, filled with tiny blue and red balls. His job was simple. Every day he sat on the tall black stool and watched the pills
surge by on the belt. Next to him, near the end of the belt were six pigeons, three on either side. These were specially trained pigeons and were extremely intelligent. Their job was to pick out those capsules that were filled wrong, or half-filled, or defective in any other imaginable way.

All Louis had to do was watch the pigeons to make sure they did their job. He also had to feed and water them and put them back in their cages at the end of their shift, the A shift, which ended at two o'clock.

Louis loved his work. Every day he watched with fascination as the pigeons would pluck out a mutant pill with a quick dart of their sleek necks and drop them into a tray which ran alongside the belt. Fred had told Louis that when the pigeons grew too old and dull to perform their job, Louis could take them home.

"Hey Louis! How the hell are you?" Fred came up and slapped Louis on the shoulder. Louis smiled and nodded. Leda had told him to talk as little as possible. "Fred's a nice man, but I don't think he'd like you too much if you go opening your mouth too much," she had said to Louis.

Louis looked at his birds and rocked to and fro slowly. He liked to pretend that the stool was his perch. The swaying motion calmed him. Fred walked away.

The soft coos of the pigeons were also soothing. Louis tried to imitate them - he wanted to speak too. He looked at a bird across from him and readied his throat.

"Grrahicht," he said.

The pigeon looked up, startled.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" it said, head cocked.

Louis sat very still. He said nothing. Then he said, "Hello." And waited.

The pigeon seemed satisfied and returned to its job.

Even his trusted birds were turning on him now. The sun, high in the noon sky, shone ominously through the cracked window near the ceiling. It made him dizzy. It made him see hundreds of pigeons filling the room, their calls building and wings swooping in giant circles around him. Louis held his hands to his ears and shook his head so violently that he fell off of his stool.

Louis got up and grabbed a cage used to keep the pigeons in at night. He focused in on the impertinent one and jabbed his hand toward it. Maybe all birds were nice, except for this one.

Leda would have stomped over to Louis' apartment, if not for the thick white cast on her right leg. Instead, she hobbléd. The sound of the hard plaster alternating with the click of her shoe made an odd beat. She had not seen Louis since the accident, or mishap, as she preferred to call it, and had tried to telephone but there was never an answer. Louis wouldn't be home for another hour, she thought, so perhaps she would get some of his laundry done.

Louis came through the door while Leda was down the hall in the laundry room. He put the cage carefully on the table and took his coat off. He paused, one arm still in the coat sleeve, and listened. There was a strange hollow sound, like water gushing through a tunnel. He breathed slowly and waited. The noise finally receded a bit and Louis looked around the small half-lit apartment, forgetting at once what he was looking for. Then he saw the TV. Funny things happened on the TV. He turned it on. The pigeon gave a mighty "Cool!" that startled Louis for a moment. He turned and gave a radiant smile to the bird. "Hello." He went over to the cage and put his hand on the thin wire bars. He sensed that his pigeon was not happy in the factory, would never be happy. He wondered if other people heard what the birds were thinking. He didn't want them to laugh at his poor pigeons just because they didn't understand their language. He picked up the cage. He wanted everyone to hear he and his pigeon and the thing they had to say.

Wobbling through the door, Leda set the basket of clothes down on the table. The television, silent when she had entered, suddenly blared forth a commercial. "We love to fly and it shows." While she was trying to remember if she had turned the television on when she had first arrived, she felt a cold draft of air. On the TV, a National Geographic special showed an ancient
tribal ritual of sacrifice; a woman in colorful garments and colored ostrich feathers stood on the rim of a volcano, ready to leap in at the given signal.

Something was different about the room, Leda thought. The window was open, but the light seemed to have gone out of the sun. It was dark. On the arm of the couch she spied Louis' coat. Red and black checked - strong colors. Maybe not so strong, she thought with sudden fear.

"Louis?" she called, glancing down the hall to the bedroom. She could smell the awful smell of those nasty birds he was always playing with. "Louis! Where are you? I don't clean your clothes and your apartment to be fooled around with. Come out now!" she heaved a quick sigh and started down the hall. On the windowsill, the small grey feathers danced and circled like leaves on a smoky autumn day.
DAWN WHITED

One Less

senseless
mindless
endless
conscious of
nothingness

shameless
blameless
loveless
full of
emptiness

helpless
powerless
meaningless
oblivious to
my madness.

CHRISTINE STROSSMAN

The Asylum
This fight has become a personal war
I struggle to shatter that image...
   Crawling back like an unwanted friend,
   It grabs and chases me through this
   Never-ending maze of afflictions
   I am caught with trembling fear,
   A wall suddenly confines me
   I am left with the agony of my mind.

Soothing and reassuring is your voice
Somehow I find comfort, I know this place well.
Your wings hold me to your heart.
I long for those lips to embrace mine,
It is just the way I remember...
Passionate, loving, gentle, perfect.

My eye squirms at the girlish body in the midst.
She appears slyly as a shimmering, shadow figure.
The light shows cold flesh.
Suddenly, I hear a ringing laugh and you disappear.
A whirlwind of endless repetition,
Constant mental tortures operate this night.

Dawn approaches with an annoying buzz.
I am weakened by this cold sweat,
I find myself surrounded by sheets and pillows.
I am torn between reality and imagination.
Can I accept this experience as a nightmare,
When I felt such a definite feeling of desolation?

The air is thick and I find it impossible to move.
I must face the day before me
With a knife lodged in my back.
The walls are caving in and my escape becomes narrower.
I barely survive yet I manage to find air to breathe.
I am alone but you are in love
I am afraid but you are secure
I am hurt but you are healed
I remember but you forget.
Dancing With A Candle

The heat transfers to my hand
As my cupped hand favors the small flame
The flame grows steadily from a child to a mature being
Giving off the soft radiance it creates.

We both step back and look at each other
She receives my warm smile by reaching for my hands
Like a floating angel she guides me to a joy never felt
Anytime in my life.

Soon, we both embrace, more like grasp each other
Acting afraid that one of us will be taken away prematurely
That can't happen tonight, though
Because we've found one another.

Making symmetric geometry with our dancing steps
Our eyes meet again and again hoping to fetch a glimpse
Without the other looking
So as to appreciate the other in privacy.

The perfect smell clings to the perfect woman
Apricots growing on trees
Their scent is carried swiftly by the passing breeze
Is what she must be wearing

I can't help but kiss her
And I do; she lingers with my lips for awhile
As we keep moving to the melody
The candle won't go out this evening.
Calentures

Silent verde, noble green
My sea legs will not carry me
to silent fields;
only angry sea
calling me, taunting me -
Traverse the land I cannot see in
My mind's eye.
Lunatic heat -
it tricks me.
Plunge myself into rolling hills --
Oh, tranquil green
You deceiver of wills -- you;
Not my knoll,
but chilly sea --
For me
Your mocking death-knells toll.
Deceptive Smiles

Why aren't you told as a child
That most dreams die

Learned reluctantly as an adult
After waking up

Abruptly!

During The Nightmare and suddenly remembering

Knowing it was something from the past
Locked away and denied

Things like...
Being stabbed with swords and told not to bleed
Or dead siblings buried under rotten leaves

Worst of all the pain and guilt

Soon forgotten as the days quickly pass
But never really lost

Resurrected
After years of suppression
While The Green Dragon roams freely through the peaceful fields
Of Holy Camelot

You fight the hurt
Try to get by
Lie hours alone in bed holding pillows

Masking your enlightened eyes
From the ignorant outside world

Wishing there was someone nearby to protect the torture on
Knowing though its your isolated doom to overcome
Not for others to bare

Besides, they don't really care
For they have their own enigmas to overcome
That Fate forbids them to share.
NICHOLAS S. PENNA, JR.

What Could Have Been

Mommy, Mom
Watch me, Mommy!
I'm gonna catch this one
I'm gonna catch the bomb.

Mommy, you're so beautiful
You know so much
How is that?
Your skin is so natural.

Mommy, will you help me?
My math is hard
3-2 is what?
Three bees minus two bees is one bee.

Mom, one more year
I'm done.
I know, there still is college
Alright, I hear.

Mom, I won.
They voted me the best
Thanks for being beside me
I'm going to run.

Mom, I'll pay for it
I'll take care of you
You took care of me
Every little bit.

Mom,
You are the best
I succeeded because of you
Mom, I Love You!

"That's it honey."
"The procedure is done."
"Doctor..."
"Doctor..., Did you hear anything?"
HEATHER LOBBAN

Bullet

Shiny, smooth and
made to protect.
Flying through the air
with speed and grace.
Shattering the silence
Leaving a promise
of pain,
Death.
Powerful
Mouths filled with awe
They're made afraid.
Wrapped in blue,
yet dirty and
harmful.
Gleaming with safety
leaving a trail of
Hurt.
CHERI CRIST

The Tragedy of the Rain Forest

They came again today. I do not understand what they want from me. I keep telling them that the best thing I can do, the only thing I can do is to try to feed and shelter my family. And still the man from the Peace Corps tells me I'm doing the wrong thing. Well, maybe I am by his standards, but not by mine.

I am a poor but proud man. My wife Maria tells me, "Alberto, pride goeth before a fall," and what can I say? This land belonged to my father, and his father before him. They were all able to survive on the land, but I cannot any longer. The Brasilian government has proven itself not to care about its people and their welfare. So I am on my own; no longer is my father here to tell me what to do. But now I know what I must do. The rain forests must go.

We own a tiny house in a small clearing. The forests surround the house on every side. They have been there since long before the Mendez family settled in Brazil. My father used to take me for long walks in the forest when I was young. He would point out all of the different animals peeking out from behind the lush canopies near the tops of the trees and tell me that animals were very important and special, because God created them. Just before he died, he called me to his bedside, took my hands in his and said softly, "The world is changing quickly, Alberto. I have taught you what is right and what is wrong, and now you must build your own life, make your own decisions. The beautiful trees are now yours to show your sons, and I know that you will teach them to marvel at the beauty of them. I love you, my son, and I trust you to make the right decisions." Then he drew a last, quivering breath and was gone.

The years have passed quickly, and in the tradition of my father, I led my sons through the magnificent forests and they too are in awe of them just as I was when I was younger. But a vague shadow of apprehension has clouded my thoughts lately. My children's faces have become pale and gaunt. My wife, too, looks tired all the time. And finally, I realized I must face the awful fact that food is getting harder to find. We killed our last cow last week and although we are stretching it out and trying to make it last, the flour is running low. For a long time I sat on the front step, letting thoughts come and go through my head, and I felt guilty. I could not support my family any longer; I had let them down. And to make things right for them, I will be letting my father down.

A different man came to my house last week. He was well-dressed and well-spoken. He told me that he was a representative of a Japanese timber industry. I did not understand most of the things he said, but one thing was clear. He wanted me to sell my forest to him. I got angry and told him to go. He nodded as if he often heard that and gave me some papers—some sort of contracts, I think, and told me to think about it and he would be back. I said that I didn't need to think about it, that I would never ruin my beautiful forests no matter how much they were willing to pay me.

And yet, my wife grows weaker, the baby cries all the time, and boys no longer run about the yard, shouting and laughing. I have prayed to God and gotten no answer. I have sold almost all of our possessions, even the tattered Bible that has been in the Mendez family since Columbus sailed the seas, but the food is almost gone. The forests, which have always been my stability, my source of comfort and delight, and the single lasting link between my father and I, offer the only solution, and although I fight it every day, the hateful knowledge of what I must do haunts me.
And so I have made my decision. The man from the Peace Corps returned again today, and I told him of my plans. We argued for a long time under the hot sun. He shouted at me, "Don't you know the consequences for your action? Haven't you seen the smoke? Heard the saws? You can't destroy the forest knowing what will happen, knowing what your children will have to face!"

Finally, I told him I did not care about the Earth getting hotter, or some invisible layer of the atmosphere disappearing; these things I could not see or feel. My children were dying in front of my eyes—it was them or the forest, I told him. And yet I wonder if he saw the agony in my eyes as I looked to the lush green forests that I had come to cherish almost like a part of my ancestry.

After a sparse dinner of rice, I sat down and signed the rich man's contract. As soon as my pen left the paper, I felt a fierce emptiness settle inside of me like a huge rock. My heart felt as though it had been ripped from my body, and I wondered if perhaps my father was clutching it in his hand at that very moment. I took a final walk through my beloved trees. The leaves rustled in the gentle breeze that always came at twilight. As my boots crunched the vegetation beneath my feet, the animals scurried to take refuge from the sound. I made a silent apology to them for stealing their lives and homes away from them. A quietness settled into the forest, as though all the animals were judging me at once. I ran from the forest and into a small clearing that would soon be ripped from the Earth. Looking helplessly toward the setting sun, my nose caught the scent of smoke destroying those trees which had already been condemned. The fire had come. 

CIPRIAN ALMONTE  The Next Generation
DAWN WHITED

Dandy

girls really dig him
    he's my man
takes a good photo
    yes he can

    perfect nose
    strong cheekbones
you should model
    he's been told

    plays in a band
    that's my man
they scream for him
    I understand

    girls really dig him
    completely unaware
    he is my man
for them he doesn't care
Catching Up

I sat down today to write some of my memoirs. I'm not sure why I'd want to do this. I really am not the type to write things down. As a matter of fact, I never liked to write, but I'd been thinking a lot lately, and thought it might help to ease my mind; if there are a lot of mistakes, forgive me. I don't even know to whom I'm writing, but I have a feeling that someday someone will stumble upon this, and it will make sense to them, at least I hope it will.

Anyway, as I was saying, I was sitting down to write memoirs (maybe I just like the word memoirs, and wanted to be able to have a claim to it...I don't know) when I was interrupted by a phone call from an old, mostly forgotten friend from home, or rather the place I was before I started to live on my own. It was all so strange. I still have no idea how she got my phone number. I thought (and hoped) that I'd left my past behind, somehow I knew it would always come back, though.

She had news about another old friend of mine. It's funny, now that I think about it, because even in high school she was the person who got news around. I guess some things never change. Maybe it is true what they say about changing and staying the same.

He died. That's what she called to tell me. The friend she called about died. He's young, too, only a year younger than myself, and I'd hardly call myself old. It's weird to think about life ending now. It seems to me that it was really just the beginning. Maybe it wasn't for him. He was always taking chances with his life anyway, so I guess it shouldn't be a shock that he died. I remember the nights when he'd get wasted and drive down this dark windy road. The road was down near the lake-- he loves the water. Anyway, he'd turn off his lights and go as fast as his car would let him. Sometimes, I think he hoped that every trip would be his last. That was definitely the mildest thing he did then.

Once, he did try to kill himself. He was going to use his father's handgun. He shot some things in the house, but never did end up shooting himself. His father came home before he aimed for his head. After that, he went to the hospital for a couple weeks. I remember going to visit him. I could tell he had everyone there (doctors especially) wrapped around his little finger. He's extremely good at manipulating people that way. So manipulative, it's amazing!! He's very convincing, too, and somehow charming, but not in a normal way-- kind of entrancing. It's like I know that he shouldn't be believed, but there's no defense. Believing him is inevitable. It just sits at the back of my mind that I shouldn't believe him, but all the while I do. Time and time again I would get in so much trouble because of that.

I don't know how he died. I didn't ask. She didn't say. He just died. The whole conversation was odd. I felt like I was sitting in my parent's family room again, listening to the latest gossip. How pathetic we were. The bunch of us thrived on the misfortune or glory of others. It was almost like anything that happened to one of us happened to us all.

I have to admit, he was crazy. And powerful, now that I think about it. I often wondered if he was liked as much as he was feared. If he was in a bad mood there was no way of knowing what he was going to do. One young skate-rat suffered the consequences of his mood when he inadvertently hit him in the arm with a pebble. He left him unconscious on the sidewalk. I remember him telling me that it made him feel better.

I guess it's kind of stupid of me, but I don't know if I was ever afraid of him. I know I was afraid of myself with him. Oddly enough, he was
a good friend to have: loyal, trustworthy, honest, protective. But he's the most hateful enemy. I know that I wouldn't want him on the opposite side of a fight. He's had too much practice. One day he was jumped by three city boys. One had a knife and another had a bat. I didn't see the fight, but when it was all over he was the only one to walk away. He was bruised and had a couple of gashes, but for someone who amuses himself by seeing how many tacks he can stick in his arm to test his pain tolerance, it probably wasn't too bad.

We were a definite group. I wouldn't say he was our leader, more of a director. He could tell what all of us were thinking just by looking at our faces, and he seemed to make the future happen according to his predictions. That's why he's a director and not a leader. He didn't know the future before it happened; he told us the future as he wanted it to happen, and that's how it moved. We all just accepted it as fact, or life, or at least beyond our control. Our lives were under his direction, and we never objected. I wonder why.

It wasn't until we were out of high school that I realized I had to get away. Not just from him though, but all of it. I began seeing my life through his eyes, the way he wanted it, and for the first time, I objected. Maybe it was just because mine was the only life he still tried to control. Of course, I never really said anything, but I knew – he only had to look in my eyes, or through my eyes, to see it. He never said anything about it, but he would just look at me sometimes.

Then one day I left. The last day I saw him, he was standing in his father's garden next to the tall sunflowers. He had his fingers fanned around his face, just like a sunflower. He smiled at me while I got in my car, and with this look on his face, mouthed the word "Good bye." Maybe it was pride or sorrow or just plain knowledge that was on his face – I really don't know. It gives me the chills to remember.

After she told me he died, we just talked about what we had been doing with our lives. I told her about college, my job, my apartment, my cat, the weather. She told me about her life. If I ever had thought about what she would be doing right now, I would have guessed it perfectly; married to one of the group with two kids and one on the way, not working just making cookies and dinner every day. She told me about everyone else's life, too, but I stopped listening. She did ask why I left without telling anyone. I almost told her that he knew I was leaving, but she wouldn't understand the truth. I didn't know what to tell her, so I said the past is gone, and as long as we keep in touch from now on, that's all that matters. It seemed to make her feel better.

When we hung up I poured a glass of milk and shared it with my cat. I started thinking about how I felt, and realized there wasn't much to feel. I guess, I loved him, but it seems odd to me that every time I reflect back, I begin to believe that I've never loved before. It's all so frightening -- that I could feel nothing when someone dies.

I'm going to hate leaving. I was actually starting to like it here.☺

http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1993/iss1/50
Thoughts pervade and intrude...
where have
they all gone? the
faces of yester
year,
names and faces, but no memories.
forgotten moments
...names. do they remember? present
day, will it vanish as black and
white?
longing to reach, to feel, to go
back. what would they say. do they feel
the same pain? bitter, bitter pain. sorrow
as tears fall
hitting the pages.
ghosts of dead
radiate through spine
as it shakes them loose.
forgotten moments...forgotten dreams.
desire,
honor,
respect,
love,
things to die for. Thoughts of the
one spirit
guiding,
leading,
holding,
longing.
resounding bells. gleam forgotten, lost.
pain of forgetting,
pain of remembering,
pain of having.
image. what of image? do they remember my image. selfish wants.
image to be remembered. why, why...
some are dead, others missing, ones never want to go back,
others do,
i need to. my love for the place draws me like a demon.
more good than harm. harm forgotten. pain to remember.
Thoughts pervade and intrude...
I wanted to tell you that
I love you
But I couldn’t
Find the words
It’s not that
I couldn’t find the words
It’s that
I didn’t know how to say them
It’s not that
I didn’t know how to say them
It’s that
I was afraid of your reply
It’s not that
I was afraid of your reply
But that
I was and always will be
inadequate.

A fiery passion embers burning
Waves of self-doubt
Quenching
The unquenchable flame
Why?
I ask myself
Does man live on bread alone?
Why can’t he have butter also?
Alas
It looks as if
I shall go hungry
Perhaps it is
Some twisted destiny
That I am forced
To silence these
Words not spoken.
I saw him today-
A beacon of light
sitting two rows over, one up.
God, his legs--
I'm a leg-lover,
and his were like
two white, strong beams of perfection.
Slender at the ankles,
curving up
flesh enclosing muscled calves.
Even the hairs are spaced just right....

Wait--
he's just spoken up--
Wow.
Awe-inspiring legs
and
insightful observation.
Quite a tempting combination.
I imagine touching those legs
gracefully with the arch of my foot,
and I ache for them to be
languidly tangled with mine.
Oh, to know, to touch; taste and smell
his glorious mode of transportation.
Tunnel

CYNTHIA COOK

Single file plodding endlessly in the dark damp
run my hands along the rough, wet walls
shuffle my feet along in time with the others
moist musty air filling my lungs with its disease
message is passed on down the line
disembodied voice whispers in the void ahead
I listen, I scowl, I pass on what I’ve heard anyway
low grumble and a curse behind me
he doesn’t like what he’s heard either
I hope he doesn’t blame me for that; maybe not
I hear that the whisper has continued down the line
He sighs defeatedly and I want to reach out to him
Fear stops me, after all I could have misread him
He might have just been sleepwalking when I woke him
and that bitch up ahead of me might hear us
she doesn’t like me and would like to get rid of me
but I didn’t know that when I stepped in behind her
She doesn’t scare me half as much as letting go of the walls
I have to keep my hands against these walls
to keep the darkness from caving in on me
They are so damn close, they choke the life out of me
keep my struggling for breath as this hole swallows me down
Hating myself for letting this thing consume me
for having believed what they said and following them
God knows what madman started those lies and passed them on
somewhere down in the bowls of this monster
that is quietly ingesting us, making us part of it
I believed that these walls would protect me
keep me away from those horrible people
that took my childhood and chewed it up along with my name
and left it along the tracks of an electric train
so maybe I’m protected from them now
but I will never be safe again, not while I’m here
and I can still hear their voices in the dark
I never watch my back, I keep my eyes inward
to make sure that I don’t fade into the darkness
I used to believe that these walls could protect me
and keep me away from these awful people
that took away my childhood and chewed it up
and left it by the tracks of an electric train
their voices will never stop grating my ears
and I have that I’ve nowhere to run
even though I know their greasy fingers can’t reach me
really I am protected from them now
but I’m not safe, not while I’m here
I never have to watch my back
but I have to keep my eyes inward
I have to be sure to keep track of myself
I have to keep making sure that I’m still here
so I don’t fade into the darkness along with the rest
and I keep my hands running along the walls
“Excuse me, sir. Would you mind telling me the time?”

The bartender looked at the pretty young woman in front of him. “It’s half past eleven,” he said, glancing stonily at a clock on the wall.

A small flush spread across the woman’s cheeks. ‘I see. Thank you,” she said. She started to go to her table but, on a whim, turned to the bartender and asked, “You haven’t, by chance, seen a young man in here tonight, have you?”

The bartender continued to stare at her. “I’ve seen a lot of people in here tonight.”

The woman’s flush grew even deeper. “He’s about 5’10” tall, in his early twenties, with straight brown hair. Does that sound familiar?”

The bartender’s countenance clouded for a moment, but then a look of recognition crossed his face. “Say,” he said. “Maybe I have. You wouldn’t happen to be Marie, would you?”

The woman smiled eagerly. “Yes. Yes I am.”

The bartender smiled for the first time. “Your friend left a message here for you. I’d forgotten until just now. Where did I put it?” he added, fumbling behind the counter for the scrap of paper.

“I hope nothing bad happened,” Marie said. “Gary - my boyfriend - said he had something important to discuss with me.”

The bartender gave her a knowing wink. “I know what that means!” He produced the note. Marie grabbed it eagerly. “Thanks,” she said, tearing it open to read it.

“Well?” the bartender asked, grinning, trying to catch a glimpse of Marie’s petite face.

“He - that is - um - he’s not coming back,” Marie stammered, fighting back the urge to burst into tears.

The bartender softened. “Hey,” he said. “I’m sorry. Sometimes these things just don’t work out.”

“Just don’t work out,” Marie whispered as she went back to her table. She sat down but she didn’t cry. She wasn’t going to cry in front of all these people. The bartender brought her a glass of white wine. “On the house,” he said, trying to give her a reassuring smile as he walked away.

Marie ignored the wine and hid her face in her hands. One lone, bitter tear escaped her eyes and crept down her face. She wanted nothing more than to go home.

“Your boyfriend - is he an idiot or what?” said a lightly accented voice coming from behind Marie.

Marie turned. The voice belonged to a tall handsome young man with dark eyes and wavy hair. “Excuse me?” she said.

“Your boyfriend. I asked if he was an idiot. He must be, to leave a woman as beautiful as you.” The hackneyed line did little to improve Marie’s mood. In spite of her chilly stare, the man sat in the chair across from Marie. She decided to confront the stranger head on. “So,” she said, “Do you really think I’m beautiful, or are you just trying to pick me up?”

Marie had figured that her directness would startle the stranger, but he only smiled and said, “Please! Do you think I would use such a cheap line on a beautiful and obviously intelligent woman such as yourself?” Despite her heartache, Marie laughed. Encouraged, the strange man continued. “I meant every word,” he said, fixing his dark mysterious eyes onto Marie. Marie caught herself being absorbed into them.

“What is your name?” she asked.

“Alec, Alec DuBoise.”

“Marie Winthrop.”

“It is very nice to meet you, Marie Winthrop,” Alec said, leaning in a little closer.

A short while later, when the bar closed, Marie found herself agreeing to accompany Alec on a
date.

The boy hurried past the dim apartment buildings. His father would kill him for staying at Jim's house so late. He would tell his father he had been studying, but his dad wouldn't believe him. Why should he? The truth was, Jim and he had been thumbing through Jim's father's *Playboy* magazines.

Boy, would he be in trouble, though! He smiled. That's OK. It would be worth it.

He cut through the alley to save himself precious minutes. A noise distracted him. He peered behind some garbage cans to see what was there; nothing was. Probably just a cat, he thought. Suddenly, a pair of strong arms grabbed him from behind and thrust him up against the brick wall. That was the last thing he would remember, save the piercing sting on his neck and the warm, dull sense of him losing his own blood.

Alec picked Marie up shortly after sundown. They drove to a very fancy restaurant. With an elegant wave of his hand, Alec told Marie to order anything from the menu. Marie thought about getting the most expensive item, but decided against it and eventually ordered pasta salad. Alec chided her gently. "You should order something more," he said, "You look a little too thin."

Marie blushed and tried to change the subject. "Tell me more about yourself," she said.

Alec shrugged. "There isn't much to tell." He looked at Marie and his eyes twinkled. "Besides," he added, "I'd much rather hear about you."

Marie reddened even more. "I'm afraid there isn't anything interesting to hear," she said.

Alec smiled, a mysterious half-grin covering his face. "Let me be the judge of that," he said.

Their orders came just then, so, for the time being, Marie was off the hook. The date ended soon after dessert, but Marie agreed to accompany Alec to the theatre the following evening.

The impulse to feed was very strong now. The night was half over already; the monster had to feed before sun-up. It had gone to the park to search for victims, because it knew it could find people in the park. They slept under the benches there and offered little resistance. Creeping stealthily, the monster soon came across an old woman, her head bent to her shoulders. In one hand was a bag containing her life's possessions; in the other, a bottle of cheap whiskey. The monster pushed her head back and began to feed. The old woman never stirred, not even when the fangs pierced her neck, and she died still clutching the precious bottle of whiskey.

The applause thundered throughout the auditorium. Marie jumped to her feet, excited; Alec soon followed. For a full five minutes they applauded. The show had been that good.

"What a wonderful show! The music, the dancing, everything!" Marie gushed in the taxi on the way home.

Alec smiled. "I'm glad that you liked it," he said.

"Liked it?" Marie replied, "I loved it!" Her features softened. "Thanks for taking me," she said.

"It was my pleasure," Alec smiled.

The cab rolled to a stop outside Marie's apartment building. Marie got out. Alec followed her. "I had a lovely time tonight," she said.

"So did I." Alec leaned in to kiss Marie, but pulled back when she stiffened. "It's just not the right time yet," she said. "It's too soon after - well, you know."

"I understand," he said thickly. There seemed to be nothing more to say. "Good night," Alec continued. "May I call you?"

"Of course," Marie said. "Good night. And thanks." She watched the cab pull away from the curb, then turned and went into the apartment building.

The teen paused to light a cigarette. Plied with alcohol, he tried to call after his friends and tell
them to wait for him, but he couldn't quite voice their names. He was on his way home from a party at - he couldn't remember. Who cared whose house it was anyway?

He looked ahead of him. His friends were gone now, out of sight. No, there they were - to the left. He could hear them. He began to stagger slowly towards them.

The monster grabbed him as he walked by. The youth tried to struggle, but the monster possessed unnatural strength. He felt a poignant pain in his neck, and he began to rain blows upon the monster's back. His fighting began to slow, and then it stopped, like a child's toy winding down, as the life dully ebbed from his body.

Alec hadn't called for three days, so Marie was surprised when he showed up on her doorstep with a bouquet of flowers. "They're lovely," she said, putting them into water.

"I was hoping you would accompany me on a walk," Alec said.

Marie smiled. "Just let me get my jacket." They walked slowly towards the park, taking their time and holding hands. The moon was new so it couldn't be seen; but the stars were out, twinkling like drops of paint on a far-off canvas.

"You know," Alec said, stopping and facing Marie, "I've been doing a lot of thinking these past three days."

"Oh?" Marie asked warily. "And what were you thinking about?"

"I thought about you, and how much I like you." Alec looked deep into Marie's eyes. "I know it sounds crazy," he went on, "But I really think I like you." He leaned in to kiss Marie. This time, she didn't resist. The brief kiss lasted one delicious moment. Then, Alec pulled Marie close to him and held her tight. He could feel her warm breath on his neck. Alec felt Marie's lips brush his skin. Alec relaxed, held Marie closer to him, and sighed. But he stiffened slightly when he felt the darting pain of inhuman teeth entering his body in the search for warm, sweet blood.