Full Issue

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Full Circle

As I lay awake I wonder out loud
"What is my meaning?
Am I destined to be something great,
Like a mountain?
Or am I destined to spend my days
As a tiny speck of nothingness?"
Again and again these questions plague
My slumberless dreams
As images of something and nothing dance,
As if madmen, within the depths
Of my mind’s eye.
Swirling, spiraling swooping
About my head as I try to
Decipher the hidden meaning
Of these ghosts.
I reach out to try and grasp the
Evasive images that elude
My fleeting hold of understanding.
Now I hide from that which baffled
Mine, the keenest of wits,
And sent me into a void of confusion
And disarray.
I will not retreat!
Again I face my mental persecutor
And with a new found strength of ignorance
I attack my assailant
Trying to erase that which I know is
An untruth in my life.
Searching, searching amid a menagerie of lies
For any sense of the truth that is meaning
In my life.
Then, when my victory seemed certain
A turnabout amid the night’s chaos.
The spirits that I duel with fade
In the midst of battle.
And, as if an evil phoenix rising
From the ashes of it’s own demise,
A single clear image appears before
My unbelieving eyes.
I see myself warring with uncertainties
Like those that had just departed me.

Is this my destiny?
Is this the limit of my life’s reach?
To continue to fight a losing battle
Until the end of my days?
Frustrated and angry,
I scream

Michael J. Tedone
You and I
Time will exist for us
Love will find a will
I will let down my guard
as you give life to a
heart once still
Time will exist for us
My pulse will find a way
to beat in time with yours,
until our hearts last day.
Chantel Febus

The Purpose and the End
Bits of joy • all come
together at death • to
create Heaven
Chantel Febus
On my 21st birthday I looked back on my adolescent years and wondered what my future held. What would I have to look forward to?

When I was eight, I had two brothers who were 14 and 15. I watched them go through puberty and experience new things in their life and I couldn’t wait to make those experiences my own. Unfortunately, the old worn-out cliche, ”No Pain, No Gain,” applies to the maturing game and, I would first have to experience some ”Pain.”

It was excruciating but not physically, unless I had a really big zit on my nose, then it was quite painful. That’s right, I had to go through the pain of puberty.

This stage wasn’t all that bad. I tolerated puberty before most kids my age, so when I had these red craters on my face (acne) the kids weren’t hip as to what it was so I never got picked on, except by my brothers, who were all too familiar with their childhood foe. Soon I shook the pink blotchy stuff and was enjoying the ”Gain.”

I knew 16 would treat me much better, I would have the world on a string then. No more riding my Huffy here and there. Now I would be able to drive. And you know what comes with driving?

That’s right - members of the opposite sex. The whole dating scene picked up quite a bit when I had some wheels. Putt-Putt, maybe a movie, then some ice cream, and the token ”sexual experimentation” every now and then. It all started out by coppin’ a smooch. But after enjoying first base for a while, second became more interesting but if I wanted to round all the bases and touch home plate, that would take some time.

Oh, yeah, it was sweet. Then these experiences were taken to a whole other level, eighteen. This age really opened up new worlds.

This milestone meant steamy car windows (since I could now legally drive after 9pm instead of crowded movie theaters. Candle-lit dorm rooms instead of fine-tuned ears listening to see if Mom or Dad were gonna storm in some time soon. Yeah, 18 alters the ”sexual experimentation” to just ”sex” (to use the college term) or making love.

Plus, I was eligible to vote! This was the first sign that the community accepted me as an adult. Adult? I was just glad to hang out with my friends in the college cafeteria. I was also told by my elders that now I could represent my country in battle.
Yeah great! I can go to some foreign country and get shot at! I could have done that when I turned 18 just by going to New York City! The next step was the ultimate, 21.

No longer did I have to worry about my fake ID getting taken away or rejected. I could go to a bar anytime I wanted to without a hassle. Not that I go to bars a whole lot - they aren’t the most appealing places to go all the time, but the option’s there. Plus, the days of asking upperclassmen to buy me and my friends beer were gone. Now I could do it all on my own.

Yep, twenty-one is nice.

But now what? What’s there to look forward to? Nothing comes to mind? I never heard my parents say, ”One time when I was 40 I was out with my friends and...”

Then it struck me. There are plenty advantages to aging.

For one, the obvious, getting married, raising a family and seeing my children grow and mature. But it’s the little things that need to be considered.

For instance, the older I get the slower I can drive!

I don’t know exactly what the rule is but older people are always slowing me down. I used to get so angry but I never realized how privileged senior citizens are. I’m somewhat jealous.

For example, I will actually get paid money just for being old! That’s right, social security checks! And there are two places I’m gonna spend that check.

First, the Barber Shop.

That’s right, I’ll get the senior citizen discount on my haircuts, and I love getting my hair cut. Let’s just hope my hair stays around long enough to take advantage.

Place number two, McDonald’s.

Every afternoon or morning I go into McDonald’s, the place is packed wall-to-wall with senior citizens attempting to impress each other with their wise rhetoric while the grasp a McMuffin. McDonald’s is the senior citizen of a bar for 21 year olds.

Yeah, I thought I had it all, but when I’m cruising 20mph on the way to McDonald’s with my new haircut, I know I’ll have it all.
My Dream

A dream is a wish your heart makes
to find true happiness
When I fall asleep at night
I think of all good things
And my heart goes to work.

In my dreams I see my life
the way I want
Sometimes I see things I don’t
want or things that are
inevitable to happen

But through it all
the dream I feel most
comfortable and alive in
is where I am with a
warm, gentle heart
that loves me for me and
nothing else...
That dream is you!
I love you "faithfully"

Amy M. Jenkins
In answer to all the critics, especially those who should not throw stones in glass houses:

I cannot help it if I am happy please do not blame me blame yourself for you have made me this way in your own way (people like you and you just do) it has been thus so it is not my fault if I like to romp with words or whathaveyou for fields were meant for running (ploughing and sowing and reaping) and I like to run with naked stinging feet and bare wind biting at the back of my neck because it makes me feel so damn alive; happiness is not a state of mind but a state of being and I simply do not understand why it is such a sin to be happy I mean let's face it wouldn't it all be better if it were thus all over and who are you word police that tell me not to say it like this
or do it like this
or be it like this
or write it like this
words are not
priceless Olmec figurines or
Ukrainian Easter Eggs
they are not meant to be
treasured
but to be used
so why not
employ them one and all
and all at once
(and all for one
and one for all
and such twatter)
if need or pleasure so be
for what is the curse
in verbosity;
Your enmity? Your scorn? Your laughter?
I have oft known
that I am here
merely for your
amusement
this I have heard and
I am sure that
I will hear
this
several times again
and once each time around
but I think that you are
not correct in your assumption
because you think
that I am
what I say
because although I am
what I say
you do not listen
so I am what I say
but not what you hear;
Oh, YOU think YOU hear
you think you have a grasp
an understanding
a psychoanalytic understanding
beyond all human comprehension of gibber-gabber and flibber-flabber but you do not; YOU think it fluffy and light and droll and (gasp) amusing, simple and airy and airheaded I am sure but you are so wrong that it would pain me to laugh at such incorrectability if I gave it a thought but I don’t – can’t – because I am much too busy radiating for such drivel and flitter-flatter and pitter-patter and bitter-batter as that like you but you do not of course you have all the time in the world smelling the roses not raising the roses for what gift is there is silence but empty air and man and woman and all such creatures do not live on empty air alone no one does so what the point is (and there is always a point) is that you have no understanding of the sun.
so don't criticize or belittle you should respect that which you do not understand because like a snake in the woods with red and yellow bands not red and black which venom lack (which is good for Jack) that which you do not understand can bite and it can hurt (oh how it can hurt) so like the snake best leave well enough alone or advance at your own risk unless of course you know what you are doing which you do not which is not to say that no one does it's just that you think you do but you cannot stand to look at the sun for too long it hurts and that is the tale that I have to tell for someday that etoile will shine so bright that you could be blinded while running through the fields (if you should ever run through the fields, with the wind at your bare back in stinging naked feet and the
sun smiling on your face
you really should try it)
for fields is where
the answer lies
not the cellars that
you seem so fond of
darkness is no answer
save to Morpheus
so why even bother
with the slimy
and the creepy
and the crawly
et le noir
for it just makes no sense
that a species
claimed by the light
craves the dark
that a species
born of the light
dies for the night
it just makes no sense
if you think about it
which I do
which you think I don’t
because you perceive
that light has no thought
that the two are not the
same but separate and
unyielding to the other
but you are wrong
(as you can be)
but don’t like to admit
but if you
silence your
silence
for just a minute
there is much to learn
from the light
do not underestimate
what you hear
but instead absorb
the beams
like sunlight
and from that
you get Vitamin D
which is good I’m told;

you say this makes no sense
but it does if you
look hard
which you won’t
because although you
do no know
me I
know you and
you are not so hard to read
just like most of the others
I am deep like a cave
and dark if I need be
is it my fault I live near the entrance
so say that I am
a little being
with little dreams
for I know the
truth of verbosity
and it is simply thus:

stay in the cellar if you like
or follow me to higher ground
neither does it differ
to me who
likes to run in the fields
with the bare wind at the back
of my neck
in naked stinging feet
for the sun has
a toil that’s lonesome
and empty
but oh, the sheer
brilliance
of it all!

Michael G.M. Cornelius
Untitled

Today I saw your smile
in my mind’s eye
and couldn’t help but smile too.
I remember when I could make you smile,
like it was yesterday
Your eyes would twinkle,
like you had a secret you couldn’t wait to tell
Your face would light up
like you hadn’t seen me in years.
Today as I remember this,
I want to cry
because I haven’t seen you smile in a while.
Your smile brought so much happiness to me,
it cheered me up when I was feeling blue,
helped me enjoy like so much more when I was with you,
and made me feel special
the way no one else could.
Someday soon I would like to see your smile
until then I know I have to be patient,
but at times I wish I could see it now

Melissa Wisniewski
You Came

Breezing in like a breath of fresh air
On an unbearably hot afternoon,
You came.
Lighting up the room like a beam of sunlight
Peeking from behind a dark, forbidding storm cloud,
You came.
Bringing with you
The sound of laughter
And the voice of understanding,
When you came.
But perhaps best of all,
You brought with you
A ray of hope
When you came.
Breezing into my life,
Lighting it up with sunshine,
And bringing with you
A reason to believe
When you came.

Sarah Blake
Grandmother

I’m taken back by a memory of her,
I was just three then, I think
The way she held me on her lap,
talking for what seemed like hours.
I admired not her voice,
but those hands which held me,
tight and secure, smooth and gentle
so pleasant to look at.

I imagine now why they had that happy look,
when I know the places they’ve been
and the work they’ve done.
What I saw as beautiful then,
are now wrinkled and worn,
yet always a grandmother’s loving hands.

Debby James
I thought I lost a friend today,
The rain began to fall.
Or was it just my tears again,
That I could not hold at bay.

They told me you had left me,
And you didn’t say goodbye.
I waited for the phone to ring
Silently screaming ”Why?”

For once in my life I’d found someone
Who made me feel I belonged.
My dreams to you had meaning
I could never do any wrong.

So I questioned what they told me
And searched to find the truth
I couldn’t believe that you’d leave
I began to lose my faith.

So I sat there unbelieving
As they lowered you into the ground
I wanted to follow you in there
When no one was around.

Then it finally hit me,
You went to a better place
This world had had its fill of you.
Your life, your smiling face.

So now you’re looking down at me,
Smiling all the time,
No pain can ever reach you
And you always will be mine.

I thought I’d lost a friend today,
The pain too much to bear
But instead I gained a friend ”up there”
And I know you’ll always care.

Amy Wolf
He Was Shot and Killed

At night
when you begin to lay down
and the ghosts start to come
Do you run?
Can you hide?
I cannot

The sound of bullets
I never heard
ring through my ears

His blood
that I never touched
begins to dry between my fingers

The screams
I never choked on
don’t get stuck in my throat anymore

The sirens
that were never turned on
echo through my skull

The kind of death
that I have never had to swallow
leaves my mouth tasting bitter every morning

And with that taste
I read the headlines

innocent

When you sleep at night and the ghosts
start to form
Can you still find some peace in darkness?
I cannot

Alycia Gregory
Every time Gordon exits that dingy little pornography theater, he extinguishes his scorpion-red cigarette with the butt of his left palm. “Remember that pain the next time you want to give into sin,” Gordon usually mumbles in an effort to reproach his spontaneous and fleeting immorality. interestingly he feels no guilt when he enters it, but instead relishes in anticipation of the flesh-indulging sin screen. It’s like being back in the tenth grade all over again when Gordon and Tommy Baker would sneak into the high school basement to peer through a hole the size of a pen tip, partially blocked by a soap tray, into the girl’s shower; the only difference being that Tommy and Gordon never saw but a few callused hammer toes and, if they really put their heads to the dusty floor bottom, a couple of bruised knees.

During the day, Gordon gives lectures at the University on the declining morality of man. The original sin of Eve, Gordon teaches, has been haunting man ever since she committed it. Gordon is a clever misogynist who provides justifications for blaming women for all problems. Just last spring, he chastised a newly recruited female adjunct for having replaced his long-time friend at the University. “If you fall out of line,” Gordon scornfully promised, “I’ll be the first one to catch you and then I’ll bathe in satisfaction while your dirty behind is forced to gallop on out.”

One’s innards are sinful regardless of the external facade she creates, Gordon privately maintains. Thus, any attempt to front a life of piety and staunch morals is purely superficial; there exists no woman, at any time or location, who is without evil desires or thoughts.

“Give me a ticket for Melanie at Midnight,” Gordon demanded from the lady in the box whom he always thought repugnant for working at such a place andconsorting with such men. Once seated inside, his legs began to bounce from the bottom up, tip-toe style, as if he were a little boy again, impatiently aching to go potty. With one hand inside a bucket of popcorn and the other in his left-hand pocket, he watched with intent as the movie began.

As Melanie caressed the unnamed beau, with concentration in her hands and adoration in her eyes, Gordon’s mind relapsed to adolescence; the hot and sticky camping tent in which he got to know his adopted sister a little better. His upper lip was covered with beads of salt-laced sweat, matched only by the saline suds in his left palm.

“Filthy pigs, that’s what they are. Just plain disgusting sows, always taking control away from the man,” Gordon’s mind concluded. He was tired of being controlled by the enticing power of women and outraged at himself for having come to the flick in the first place.

“See ya next week Gordy,” the ticket lady spouted. “Go to Hell,” he said, as he blew the cigarette’s last puff in her face and left.
like a candle flame
rising from emerald hills
blood blinding the stars

Heaven's golden eye
destroys the brooding darkness
blood staining the sky

Wind-dancing pine tree
against the gray afterdawn
naked without snow

between the bright stars
the cold dark lack of chaos
envelops the soul

The carnivore hunts
within a mountain of wood
striking at false bones

Exiled and enslaved
Within cages of iron
For having no thumb

The tears of Heaven
fall, and freeze, and melt, and rise
from the tears of Earth

Incandescent tears
Rise from the border of falls
A midnight rainbow

Incandescent tears
Rise from the border of falls
A midnight rainbow

Throne of the hourglass
The widow spinning her fate
Venom slaying time

The tears of morning
dancing on delicate silk
Awaken the dawn
The crow held two swords
One to kill and one to die
One long and one short
From under a pond
With his strength in his bent skull
The shell on his back

The spirit stands tall
With eyes and horns and talons
And cloud under feet

The thunder exhaled
from the river swiftly flies
Undersea palace

Pearl behind the eyes
Divine wind within his grasp
Typhoon dragon roars

between two mirrors
infinity or darkness
or an illusion

shattered water burns
into rising orbs of light
scattered by the ice

the twisting stairs climb
within a watery prison
creating themselves

the world lies asleep
waiting to grow and to breath
two moons wandering

four lovers dancing
around the king of the gods
invisible ring

the crimson sword loved
the green mother, green mother
loves the dark liar

Daniel Jones
Dying Sunset

The breeze that once played amidst the waters
has faded away, lost to nature, and has
turned into a fighting wind, slaying leaves to the ground.
The birds that once flirted with the breeze
have headed for the sun, gone from the
September sky and stinging waters.
The rocks on the shore that once looked welcoming
have turned to only a cold, hard reality.
The waves that once kissed them only crash down hard and
unfeeling against their intrusion to the water.
But the Sun still pierces the sky,
His orange flow surrounding the land and water.
Yet His warmth is gone, smothered by the changing seasons.
And the Sun submits to the horizon, dying once again,
for the final time slipping away,
As His Love is gone.

Cheryl Schmidt
Don’t Let Go...
I lay awake at night wishing you were here, Here to hold me, here to love me. Hold me tight, hold me close Let me know You’ll never let me go.
I need you To help me make it through. You feel so far away Please tell me that you’ll always stay.
Say the words I need to hear Tell me that there’s nothing to fear. Let me know You’ll never let me go.
Hold me tight I need you tonight. I love you so How much you’ll never know. Hold me tight, hold me close Just don’t don’t let go
Angela Jenkins
The Daily Quest

I enter the room, all too knowing
dozens, may hundreds all the same.
And as I wander, the numbers growing
in my search for a number, not a name.

Shuffling through the chiming pieces
only one set of marks will do.
My wonderment never ceases,
could mine be of the chosen few?

Gliding easily, knowing it's place
turning quickly, the vault becomes mine.
In its darkness, my blood begins a race.
Not a prize in the hollow, not a line.

Once again, I close the door
And leave the room with nothing more.

Debby James
ANOTHER LEVEL

I wonder if
I’m the only person
Who can walk into a room
And know everybody
And still feel all alone?

Is it that I separate
Myself
Or is the plan to exclude me
And not tell me about it?
Maybe it’s both.

On the outside looking in
Feeling like a spectator
Looking like at a
BIG PICTURE
That no one else seems
To be able to see.

William Boatwright
A while ago, what seems like an eternity,
a ring was given to you.
That ring was a symbol,
a symbol of love and friendship.
It is meant as a reminder of what we share.
The ring is a promise from me to you,
no matter what has or will happen in our lives.
You probably have forgotten about it
and the promise that goes along with it,
but I have not forgotten.
That ring is a bond between us,
that can never be broken by distance or time.
I can only hope that when you come upon it again,
that you remember that promise and me.
Characters:

JERRY
MARYLIN
GERTRUDE
GUY
VOICE
TICKET SELLER

JERRY and MARYLIN standing in an elevator, facing the doors.

JERRY: Alright, I can’t wait to see The Fugitive 2.
MARYLIN: Yeah.
JERRY: I hear it’s even better than the first.
MARYLIN: Yeah.
JERRY: Did you call a cab?
MARYLIN: Yeah, I called the cab.
JERRY: And it’s going to meet us outside at the door?
MARYLIN: Yeah.
JERRY: Okay. Oh, you won’t believe what happened today. There I was, in the men’s room, minding my own business, as I went about my business, if you know what I mean. Then this guy walks in, uses the stall right next to me, and starts to talk to me. There were plenty of other stalls he could have used, but he took the one right next to me. And then he started to talk to me. And I didn’t even know the guy.
MARYLIN: What’d he say?
JERRY: I don’t know. The weather or something. But that’s not important. He clearly violated commode protocol. There ought to be a law or something.
MARYLIN: It’s not a commode.
JERRY: What?
MARYLIN: It’s not a commode. A commode is a toilet. You were using a urinal.
JERRY: Whatever. Definitely a breach of men’s room etiquette. Then he didn’t even wash his hands.
MARYLIN: Hmm.
JERRY: Yeah.
Elevator door opens and GERTRUDE enters. She is very pregnant. She turns around, presses a button, and looks at the doors.

MARYLIN: When’s your baby due?

GERTRUDE: Actually, it was due yesterday. But the doctor says it could pop out at any time. But I’m not worried. My first kid, Patty, was almost two weeks late. Hey, do you want to see some pictures?

GERTRUDE fumbles in her purse and pulls out about ten feet of plastic photograph protectors. Before MARYLIN can refuse, the doors open and GUY steps into the elevator. He presses a button that is already glowing and stands facing away from the doors, towards the other 3 occupants. JERRY nudges MARYLIN.

JERRY: (whispering) Hey. That’s him.

MARYLIN: Who?

JERRY: The guy. In the men’s room.

GUY: Hey, don’t I know you?

JERRY: No. I don’t think so.

Suddenly the elevator come to an abrupt halt.

JERRY: Oh, this is great. We’ve got to get to the movies.

GERTRUDE: And I have to get to the doctor.

GUY: Are you sure I don’t know you?

JERRY: Yes!

GUY: Hmm.

MARYLIN: Let me see those pictures.

GERTRUDE: Here you go. Ow. Ooh, that hurt.

MARYLIN: What?

GERTRUDE: Oh, it’s probably nothing. Probably heartburn.

JERRY: You sure? I don’t think this is a good place to give birth! It’s not very clean and we don’t even have any boiling water!

GERTRUDE: Relax. It’s nothing.

GUY: It’s okay. I’m a chiropractor.

JERRY: Yeah, that’s a real doctor.

GUY: What do you mean by that?
GUY: What?

JERRY: Nothing, okay?

GUY: Fine.

MARYLIN: Let me see the phone.

JERRY: Here.

MARYLIN: Hello, the elevator stopped and we’re trapped.

VOICE: Yeah, it’s just a little glitch. We’ll have it fixed in half an hour or so.

JERRY: (grabbing the phone from MARYLIN) Hey, there’s a pregnant woman in here! And we’re late for a movie.

VOICE: Just hang on. We’re working as fast as we can.

JERRY: This is great. We’re going to miss the movie and see The Miracle of Life instead.

GERTRUDE: I said it was just a little indigestion. Pickles and Cookie Dough Ice Cream can be hard on the system.

The elevator begins to move.

VOICE: Okay, there we go.

JERRY: Well, it’s about time.

(They stand around for a while, then the doors open, and they egress. GUY quickly gets out.)

JERRY: Hey, he stole our cab! Now we’ll never get there on time!

SCENE TWO

There is a long line outside the movie theater. JERRY AND MARYLIN get into it’s end, and right in front of them is GUY. GUY turns around.

GUY: Are you sure I don’t know you?

JERRY grimaces and turns away and talks with MARYLIN. After a few moments of unheard small talk:

MARYLIN: He’s staring at you.


GUY stares at JERRY until he is at the ticket counter. He buys his ticket and enters the theater.

JERRY: (to the ticket seller) Two tickets please.

SELLER: Sorry, we only have one left.

MARYLIN: Now what do we do?

THE END

Daniel Jones
All Alone in the Night
by John P. Parungao

Why am I here? Alone in the dark, outside and separate. Is it supposed to be this way? Sometimes I have to wonder, because no matter how hard I try I remain cold and alone. Am I a dark angel cast out, forever searching for acceptance where there is none.

Perhaps I'm an alien, for no matter how hard I try fail to understand the people I see everyday. Why do they fall in love? Why do they kill each other? It makes no sense to me for I am outside ALONE

Do I choose to live apart from the rest of you? Perhaps, then again I know I want to experience more than this constant doubt and sorrow. I want love and joy and all the wonders that life has to offer, but something holds me back. Is it fear? If so, fear of what? Happiness perhaps, all that is light?

Until I decide, I stay to the shadows, all alone in the night.

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IMMORTALITY

All I ever wanted
was to have a normal life.
To graduate, get a job,
away from all this strife.
But all that’s in the past now,
it doesn’t mean a thing.
My mind no longer functions;
my heart no longer sings.

My world has reached a stand-still,
my life is over now
I’d like to go on living.
but I’ve forgotten how.
There’s nothing left for me to hold,
not hope, not fear, not love.
Death has got a hold on me,
there’s one thing I think of.

Immortality,
Come to me,
Rescue me.

Immortality.
Let it be.
Can’t it be?

The fault belongs all to me
there’s no one I can blame.
My candle’s slowly burning,
a solitary flame.
My life is almost over,
my hour is quite near.
I’d like to live forever,
I’d like to stay right here.

Immortality,
Come to me,
Rescue me.

Immortality,
Don’t leave me,
Let me dream.
Why did I let this happen,
how could I let it be?
It's only one small mistake,
Why must they punish me?
If I could have another chance,
I'd do it all just right.
My candle softly flickers,
I'm alone with the night.

Immortality,
Come to me.
Rescue me.

Immortality,
Let it be.
Can't it be?

Immortality,
Why not me?
Why me?

Michael G.M. Cornelius
Untitled

It's a bold ray of sunlight.
   A moonbeam aglow
   A picnic in autumn
It's to play in the snow.
It's a game of catch.
   A stroll through the park
   A friendly embrace
It's a kiss in the dark.
It's eyes wide with wonder.
   A smile ever bright
   Hair softly flowing
It's a feeling so right.
It's to cuddle together.
   A warming embrace
   Eyes gaze at each other
It's a beautiful place.
It's an understanding moment.
   A wink and a smile
   Time spent together
It's all of the while.
It's joyous. It's festive
   It's a story to be told.
   It's energetic. It's strong.
It's a sight to behold
It's pure and innocent.
   It's wholly divine
   It is my dream
It is her hand in mine.

Christopher Parks
Untitled

All that has been
done to me
Has been
done before
I ask why?
but silence is
My only reply
Never alone but
never accompanied
Standing in the light
the shadows surround me
From there comes
the darkness and pain
From there and where
I came
When I leave the light
beyond the shadows I will go
Another will come forth
to take my place
And all that has been
done to me
Will be
done again
Keith Kiedrowski
Acceptance

I stand behind these two women
One is my mother
One is my aunt
This is my legacy.

Each has had a piece of her womanhood taken away by the knife
This is my legacy.

Each has lived with denial
One has emerged victorious
One still lives in darkness
This is my legacy.

One had the energy
The other had the brains
One had the beauty
The other was beautiful
This is my legacy.

One has raised her daughter to love
One has raised her daughter to be loved
This is my legacy.

Both are trying to stop aging
Both will be unsuccessful
This is my legacy.

Both will walk with grace in old age through all the past pain and heartache
This is my legacy.
Both were raised
by a woman with a bottle
Both wear this
like a badge of courage
This is my legacy.

Both use the power
of control
One uses it with force
One exerts it with timidity
This is my legacy.

Both love in their own ways
One wears love
openly and honestly
One only loves when loved
This is my legacy.

They each project
their own morals
They are both Christian
with two different Gods
This is my legacy.

I fear my legacy.

I will accept
bits and pieces
from this, my legacy.

I will take what
I need
from this, my legacy.

I promise to be different
I strive to be the same
I vow to teach them
what I will learn
I yearn to make the into
strong, confident women
because within them lies
my legacy.

Alycia Gregory
Peace

It only takes a minute, and then I am there, there in the sun, in the balmy breeze, in the clean, fragrant air. The sand feels cool beneath my feet, between my toes, as the waves lap gently around my ankles, I could walk for miles without every realizing, My mind is uncluttered, free of my everyday concerns. I am at peace.
The birds fly silently, black against the brilliant pinks and purples of the sunset. Everything is quiet, except for the soft lapping of the waves upon the rocks And I am at peace.

Jeanne M. Moose
She struggled to her feet, mind clouded with bewilderment. It was nothing new to her. Same scene every morning or day, what ever time it was when she came to. It became her routine - at night fade to unconsciousness feeling found, in the morning wake to the sting of reality feeling terribly lost. Today was different. Today the sting hurt more, today she needed a change. It is her birthday.

What the hell did she care, she was lost. She didn’t know where she wanted to go, how to get there, or who to turn to for guidance. All she had was thirty bucks she had earned last night for ten minutes work and planned to spend at Seven Towers, but not this time. This time she meant it, she was leaving.

She gathered her small bag and walked along the street looking for the answer. People looked at her and occasionally barked out an obscenity or two in her direction. She met their comments with a cold hard stare and then a grin as the rain began crashing down across her soiled face and hands.

Today is her birthday. Everything was new and nothing could bring her down. Not a numb right arm, the insults from passers by or the rain. Night had begun to settle in when she found her answer in a run-down train station. She darted up to the ticket window, reached into her bag to pull out her money and quickly pulled her hand out after she had been pricked by a sharp object. As her expression turned to anger and disgust, she clutched the instrument and considered throwing it on the ground and stomping it. Then she restrained herself and gave the man ten bucks to get to the next stop. Today is her birthday.

As she stepped onto the well-lit train and out of the driving rain, she was sure where she was heading. As the train chugged along she saw Seven Towers and knew the task was going to be difficult. Tears began rolling down her face as she grasped her right arm and rocked back and forth. She popped up from her seat and yelled at the top of her lungs. People just looked at her. No one offered help or tried to calm her, they stared as she panted frantically. As soon as the train came to the stop she ran to the ticket window and bought a ticket back to where she had left.

It is her birthday and she wants to be home for her birthday.

She ran onto the train and darted to the back where she wouldn’t be bothered by anyone. She knew they would just look at her funny and think she was crazy, and she didn’t need to be treated like that on her birthday.

The train passed the scenic Seven Towers and she felt at ease. She was home. Her heart began to pound at the excitement of her homecoming. Today was her birthday and birthdays meant celebrations. She was going to celebrate.
The train stopped and she ran straight to Seven Towers. As she passed through the crowded alley way, she wasn’t abused like she was on the street, she was welcomed. Everyone knew her and greeted her. This was her home and she was glad to be with her family on her birthday.

She walked through a doorway and past a few people huddled in a corner slapping their arms. As she made her way through the room, she was looking for her birthday gift. Sweat was pouring down her face and her heartbeat was like a drum roll. She knew there had to be a gift for her there. They had never forgotten her birthday. They she found her prize. White gold and pearls. She frantically dug into her bag, pulled out the remainder of her money and bought herself a present. She grabbed the sharp instrument that had angered her before and embraced it. She wanted to become one with the object.

The sweat drenched her body and the anticipation of receiving her birthday gift mounted to a high. She stabbed the instrument into her pin cushion arm and an instant ease came over her. Today was her birthday.

This birthday was different, just like she knew it would be. Her eyes began to roll in her head, the sweat became worse than it ever was, blood spouted from her ears, mouth and arm. She never experienced a birthday like this before. Instead of fading into unconsciousness, she was smacked in the face with the cold hard brick of reality. She had never had a fix go this bad.

She sprinted out of the room into the alley where once again she was given a warm greeting from her family, blood streaming from her body all the while. As she hobbled down the alley, she came to a halt and dropped to the ground.

The next morning she woke up and couldn’t place exactly where she was. But she knew one thing...today is her birthday.
Untitled

I went searching for myself
in that magic place of reflection
(and deflection).
I caught a glimpse
and grabbed it
So now what do I do?
...The woman I saw...
she looked like me...
talked like me...
She made a lot of sense.
I even did what she told me to do.
And I thought she’d be strong,
standing beside me.
...And now she’s gone again.
Leaving me to drown,
in my dissolving resolve.

Jill Tripp
It's a cold gray November day
and I'm walkin' all alone
The sound of the leaves beneath
As I walk the street
Covers the sound of my heart breaking
Like the rain covers my mood
I have a picture of you in my mind
An image of warmth and love from a time gone by
I still remember the sound of your voice
The warm caress of your touch
I'm here waiting for you, and I won't let go
I still remember before, and I promise you won't forget tonight
I never knew
I never knew pain, 'til I was forced away from you
I never knew
I never knew loneliness, 'til I woke without you by my side
Evening approaches and I'm scared to see you
What will I say, what will I do?
I have some things in mind, but I'm nervous too
I miss you so much, I just can't wait for that plane to land
I'm staring at the sky, waiting for my angel to come
When she arrives, I'll take her to heaven
It's been so long since the last time
It's been hell without you
Only my dreams of you give me pleasure
Never again will I let you leave like that
I'll follow if you go, no matter where you lead
I never want to be left alone again
I never knew
I never knew pain, 'til I was forced away from you
I never knew
I never knew loneliness, 'til I woke without you by my side
I stare out at the window, up at the sky
And this lovely dream fades from my mind
I sit and I wonder about things I never knew
I dream all the time about things I'll never know
I never knew
I never, never knew
I never knew love, until I knew you
Michael J. Tedone
Fear Not the Night...

When rage of day is nearly done
And mother earth has scorned the sun
When darkness stealth'ly settles in
And mother earth is back with sin
Though it be devoid of light
Yet you must not fear the night
When misfits creep and children sleep
And mother earth makes not a peep
When prince of night looms large and grim
And mother earth is stalked by him
Though it seem as full of fright
Yet you must not fear the night
When visage ashen turns sanguine
And mother earth is rife with wine
When drunk on being he becomes
And mother earth is overcome
Though it's ruled by his might
Yet you must not fear the night
When hard oppressed 'neath his reign
And mother earth screams silent pain
When children thus awakened hear
And mother earth is muted here
Though it be so plagued by blight
Yet you must not fear the night
When all his victims he has claimed
And mother earth is deadly maimed
When every land is overrun
And mother earth he joins as one
Though it be not union right
Yet you must not fear the night
When partnered thus in carnal need
And mother earth has ceased to bleed
When end is near for rabid night
And mother earth seeks out the light
Though it seem a dreadful sight
Yet you must not fear the night
When thus he sees the dawn has come
And mother earth then drives him numb
When now he rests inside his lair
And mother earth does grasp for air
Though it be no end to plight
Yet you must not fear the night
When eager sun has quickly rose
And mother earth has masked her woes
When lurking sleeps the restless night
And mother earth does loathe tonight
Though it now be warm and bright
And mother earth is freed from fright
Though this be a welcome light
Yet you must not fear the night

Jennifer L. Matt
I know I could have her any time that I want and I know that she wants me even more. Don’t mistake my certainty for over-confidence or a cocky sort of attitude ’cause I ain’t about all that. Fact is, I can tell just by looking at a girl’s eyes whether she want to bed me or not. Anyway, as if I needed to explain myself to you in the first place. You should be so lucky that I tell you anything at all. I mean, this is my life that you’re reading about isn’t it? I never really could figure out why people sit down with their pen and paper thinking that their words mean something. ’Cause as soon as idiot knuckle heads like you get a hold of the stuff it’s as worthless as Christianity in Ethiopia everyone anticipates this great exchange, when all it ever amounts to is all take and no give. But like I was saying, this girl needs me real bad, right? And she’s been sending the eye through this here crowded room all night long. You know, one of those sorry-ass stuffy inner-city houses that have “College Dormers Living Off-Campus For The Semester” written all over them. And, as if the requisite dart board and too-cheesy-for-me portable bar with neon lights isn’t bad enough they’ve seen to it to invite every beer-suckin, titty-twistin, exam-flunking dork on campus. And so I’m wondering (don’t bother me, okay): Self, would you bother moving off campus and endure extra commutes just so that you could not-quite-afford to drag everyone else off of campus to come to your house? But my self can’t answer that question right now because the girl with the moist panties is staring me in the eye again. Well, like I said, she wants my sex something fierce. I almost never have to ask for it. Actually, I don’t ever have to. Only sometimes I do it to humor the other person. Can you believe it? She’s actually coming over here to me right now. I hate to say it, but I told you...wait a minute, I don’t have to say it because you’ve probably read it somewhere before. Anyway I got to go right now to take care of business if you know what I mean, but I’ll be back right away.

Well, did you find anything interesting enough to keep your pathetic little selves occupied while yours truly was away sexing that girl’s brains out? I didn’t think so. Hell, if you actually had anything worthwhile in your entire lives to do would you spend so much time reading what other people felt important enough to them to write down? It seems to me that if everyone wasn’t so damn sorry then they would be more concerned with living that with reading what other people think about it. Oh so you’re just dying to know how she was right? Look at your cheap, dirty selves. All you care about is satisfying the id. Instead of worrying about what this or that person did or didn’t do why don’t you go out and get some for yourself. Besides, one thousand thirsty camels couldn’t have brought her to orgasm as many times as I did. My gynecologist says to be careful, I could catch something doing that all of the time, but what have I got to lose? The way I see it, if you’re going down make sure that you’re in first class and everyone else is with the baggage.
I don’t want to throw you poor breathing beings to the wind right now, but I have to go. My little girl is at home and the sitter said some shit about needing to go to a movie with her boyfriend at eleven and would I please hurry home. Oh, and by the way, after I walk out that door, don’t start talking about me like a bunch of whining dogs with tails between your legs. By all means, throw your shit up on the table top and scream like hell. You’re still alive!

P.S. If you could see me you’d want me real bad too. And who knows, if you were lucky I’d want you back. But that can never happen because I’m giving something to you and you’re taking it blindly. I see you only in that I know your kind, but you’ll never see me. It will always be all take and no give.
Guilt
I am flinching at shadows.
They chitter and rustle in their corners.
Hidden just out of eyesight.
Deriding.
Demanding.
Questioning.
I avert my eyes from these shadows
but they grow solid.
Taking shape.
Wrapping themselves around my ankles
like vines.
They grasp and grow tighter.
They are draining me.
Tendrils emerge, plunging into my skin
to feed...
Blood trickles down
forming pools at my feet.
These pools form mirrors.
And within, I see your face.
But the reflection is alive.
Your mouth forming words,
your eyes throwing questions.
Pleading.
Protesting.
Accusing.
Jill Tripp
Never Say Good-Bye

So long,
See you later,
Till we meet again,
You may say,
But never, never say good-bye.
Good-byes are so final
And we shall see each other again.
It may not be tomorrow.
It may not be next week,
Next month,
Or even next year,
But we shall meet again
So never say good-bye.
We’ve been together for so long
That it’s hard to imagine
Forever losing touch,
With our paths never crossing,
So just have faith
That we shall meet again
And no matter what
Never say good-bye!
Sarah Blake