2001

Full Issue

No Author

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Full Issue

Cover Page Footnote
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A Letter From the Editors

The sun is finally shining the whole day through, snow is beginning to melt, and spring is here! It's that time of year for flings and fever, and we welcome the creative energy that flows from the renewal of a new year and warm days ahead. We believe this issue reflects the new visions and hopes that spring brings with it.

There is an important change in this March issue; we have a new Assistant Editor, Melissa Japp (although she is not new to the staff). She is "learning the business" because as of Fall 2001, she will be the new Editor-in-Chief of The Angle.

Sit back and enjoy this issue. We know that things have gone a little off-schedule due to technical difficulties, but the lateness of publication does not take away from the great writers. Within these pages are captured moments, landscapes of far off lands, realizations at Burger King, and many more stories of triumphs and decisions.

Thank you to all the hard work, dedication, and sweat of the staff and writers!

Sincerely,

Sarah L. Cummins
Melissa A. Slocum
Melissa A. Japp
Co-Editors-in-Chief

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Submission Guidelines for The Angle

The following submission guidelines must be followed for every issue. All pieces must:

1. Be typed (space according to your preference).
2. Include a cover letter which contains the author's name, mailing address, phone number, and the title(s) of the piece(s) submitted.
3. Do not include your name or personal information on your submissions.
4. Contain 1 work per page only if writing a poem or haiku.
5. All submissions, including short stories, should not exceed three typed pages.

Regrettably, we are unable to accept any piece which does not follow these guidelines. If you have any questions concerning submission guidelines, please contact the editors, Sarah Crimmins, Melissa Slocum, or Melissa Japp, in The Angle office (basement of Basil) at 385-8213.

You may submit pictures, drawings, computer generated images, as well as many other types of artistic expressions. Please direct any general or specific questions to Sarah Crimmins (slc8600), Melissa Slocum (mms7750), or Melissa Japp (maj0770) at your convenience.

The deadline for the next issue is Monday, April 2nd by 5 p.m.

**** Please note: If you would like your submissions returned after the issue is published, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

** All submissions are judged anonymously.
The Angle

Spring 2001

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Melissa A. Japp

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Gillian Scruton, Oh Yeah, (front)
Melissa A. Japp, Eclipse, (back)
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First Prize
RHIANNON ROOF

Buffalo
-after Marvin Bell

The things I did, I did because I had to,
Because I enjoyed the drinking and the
Kissing, because the liquid felt good and
The song moved my feet, because the air
Was cool and the water was quiet, because
The nights were long and the moments were
Endless, because I liked the sound of your
Voice and the way your lips felt, because
Every turn was toward you and every move
Was for you, because the truth be admitted
It didn’t matter when we walked by the pier and
The glow off the water reflected in your
Eyes, because the rest of them didn’t
Understand your simple smile.

The things I did, I smiled in tears and
In pain, in the silence when you slept and
In the smell of your cologne when you showered, in
The length of your hair and eyelashes, in the
Touch of your hands and your feet, in the shadow
When no one was looking and in the day
When everyone was. In the card and the tape, in
The song and the message, in the perfect
Heart and the unforgettable hate. In the back
Of a car where you lost your soul and in the house
Where you took mine, in the empty room when
You left and in the room you shared with someone
Else. The decisions you made in a life warped
By haze and lighters, lines and boxes, round and
Shots were never more than you needed except
For the beauty of the gift you stole from me in the dark

The things I smiled in, I smiled longer in the dark, beyond
The expansive night, beyond the tar covered roads leading
To emptiness, where you send me when you need to feel
Good, dancing in grey, high in your haze, and like others
Before you, I saw you fade fast away from me, circles
And squares, all the same when you look at me.
Second Prize
Nikisha S. Johnson

sleepwalking

in the dark of
the night
while no one is
listening she wakes
and creeps
through the house... softly...
quietly... she closes
her eyes and now
she is one

slowly
out the door
the night greets her
the scent of a dwindling summer
brushes her lips
the last remnants of the
afternoon's rain
break free from their
captors in the trees
and caress her hair
she reaches out and
her fingertips graze
a star... she tries to grasp hold
of something unseen
somehow it eludes her
it dances away and
stifles a giggle
while the halo
of the moon
guides her way

she stops
and watches
her feet dissolve into the grass
and she realizes
that
she never
opened her eyes at
all
Third Prize
Mike Bailey

From the corner of my eye while sitting at Burger King, I figured out life.

I watched as the white station wagon pulled into the Burger King parking lot and eased into the handicapped parking space. It was 1:04 p.m. and twenty-five seconds when the young man sitting shotgun opened the door. The woman driver was dressed in retro winter clothes, an old long blue coat, knitted blue hat and cheap denims and sneakers. She carefully removed a small metal walker from the trunk. The young man held onto her arm for dear life as she helped him to his fragile, turned in feet. Each step was a battle. The expression on his face became a little more intense with each inch his feet moved. The dusting of snow and ice did not help his cause much. 1:08 p.m. and fifteen seconds. The retro woman took a drag from what appeared to be a Misty cigarette as this young man struggled to reach the front door. He was only halfway there. His slow progress confused customers pulling in, as they were unsure whether to wait for him or go around. They all went around. I watched as his neck began to drop and his grip on the walker tightened. I ate my freshly baked onion rings, wondering if he needed a hand. The curb adjacent to the front door was covered in snow and slush and was sure to pose yet another problem. With the last bite of my Whopper Jr. I smiled before swallowing as my new inspiration conquered this huge task and had two exhausted feet on the sidewalk. He was almost there. 1:11 p.m. and eight seconds said my watch as I held the door for this warrior and his companion. “Thanks,” he said between gasps for cold air. “My pleasure,” I replied, watching his knees tremble. “You know you should really start using your wheelchair,” his sidekick said. “Why? My legs work,” he confidently answered. “And besides, what’s the hurry?”

I took the long way back to school after eating Burger King that day. I wasn’t in any hurry.
Meg Barboza

This Girl

You wanted to
talk to me but
I refused.
If I had heard
what you wanted to say—
your thoughts,
the precarious position
you were put in—
it would have changed
my mind.
And that
would have changed
everything.
And I,
being righteous,
but wrong;
being indignant,
but unworthy
sought to shift
the movement
of that moment.
As if to whisper to you
you will not forget
this girl.
Nikisha S. Johnson

Fear

who am I

to say

that it is not right

for you to love someone?

who am I to judge?

I sat and regretted those words

I said to you

hoping that you would not

see it as

an act of

maîce

impinging on your

happiness

I regretted those

words

until I saw your hands

shake with

a fear

that I am

amazed to have

witnessed

your eyes that I know

so well

pleading

please...do not say a thing

that look

is what pained me the most

knowing that

you were afraid of being

hurt or

watching someone

get hurt was

behind those eyes that night

yet I am forced

to smile as

I am called a bitch
just to ease your fear... or maybe to ease my fear of what will become of you. was something in you lost or was it I who lost something as I lay awake holding on to what may or may not be mine just to ease my fear of what may be happening outside of that door as the tear falls I realize that you are finally asleep and then I too close my eyes into ignorant bliss
Dawn Pogue

Untitled

She watched me from the window
A flower that did not blossom
A fruit that did not ripen,
And never would
Yet, she was a beautiful as the first snow of winter, and just as pure.
All around her was chaos.
Yet, she had no idea.
Knew nothing of the sadness in the world, and did not care.
I envied her.
Her ignorance, her bliss,
And I pitied her at the same time.
She waved to me from the window.
A carefree smile on her lips.
Outside sirens wailed, and police lights danced.
All around us, people were fighting.
People were crying and
All I could see
Was the girl
Smiling and waving at me.
And I envied her.
Julie Neel

I need things too

I want to be brought a breakfast of oranges and coffee, or perhaps a little something else—perhaps toast—in the sunshine, on a breakfast tray beside my bed or maybe in my chair.

I want to escape. I want to say at home, curl up, read a book and another and another. I want to learn from reading. I want to know every page. I want a freedom to do...whatever. I want to be able to do nothing, but instead to do everything possible, because I want to. Because I can. I want to build a house with built in bookshelves, and drawers. I want a place I know inside and out. I want to be important.

I want to do something to make people know who I am. I want a place of my own, where all my things are there to see and be seen. I want to not want so many things but I do.

I want to empty all my boxes of treasures and display them all proudly to my guests and to my own heart. I want love. I want to be held close. I want to be kissed on the forehead like a small child. I want fingers to comb through my hair. I want to be guided through doorways by a hand on the small of my back. I want to be safe. I want to be protected. I want to always invite people in for tea.
I want a rosebud tea set and watercress sandwiches or cucumber sandwiches. They are so dainty. I want to write books and books full of words. I want my library to hold shelves and shelves of my journals, my books, full of my words. I want letters to line my treasure boxes. Love letters with old roses. I want someone to love me. I want love to be a safety. I want love to be chaste. I want faith. It seems to have gone on an extended vacation. Maybe when I go

I'll find it. I want to love God again. I want to talk to Him about some things. I want to communicate His love. It's safety. I want this man to stop talking.

I want to be like that woman. I want to be tan and tall. I want my ring back. the one I lost. I want to grow plants, a room full of plants. ones that are leggy and leafy and flowering and prickly. I want them to be friendly. I want to eat lunch in the friendly plant room. with my cat. I want a cat.

I want to walk in my father's footprints. they are just too big. I want dreams to come true. I want to grow and learn — to be happy — to be myself. I just don't know how.
there are no revolutions anymore
no one sees the need for
radical change. . .

we've all been programmed
at a young age
to believe all our problems can be
solved in half hour slots and
that taking any longer is
irrational. . .

we've been given 20 second
attention spans- programmed so
anything that takes longer to learn, is not
accompanied by a theme song and presented
in techni-color is too much for us. . .

we've been fed on instant
gratification, shallow
goals and self
loathing. . .

we've been brainwashed into believing
products, produced by the
corporations that run this country,
are the only cure for our
problems. . .

that happiness exists only through
the accumulation of money; money
to support our corporate society; money
to buy products produced to
cure our growing insecurity- which is produced
to insure their security;
profit. . .

but what of our own profit
programming
is called programming
for a reason; but
our deadened minds
reject the obvious facts
of our existence...

if we see the need for change,
for solutions, for happiness- we can
flick the switch and we are dosed with
instantly gratifying scenarios presented
to quell our fears, our
desires...

it's Huxley's soma via radio waves...

we've all been programmed
to be addicted to a box
carrying lies; that we've been
socialized to believe because
it's easier that way...

and we've been taught
that they easy way is
the best way...

so, we get our fix
and rest easy; believing
there's a world in which
solutions come effortlessly; in which
revolutions are unnecessary; in which
thought is consistent with
advertising; in which
everything's
easy...

because
we've been programmed
to live vicariously in a world
based on unreality and believe in
the reality of fiction over
fact...

and that
revolution is unnecessary
in this world...
Rhiannon Roof

Something More

My eyes are open now.
I can almost make out the shadows
That for so long been a part of you.
You look different somehow.
I wish I knew what to say or how
To say it.
I wish I could be all that you
Think I am.
I reach for you, falling without you.
You don’t move.
You are frozen in my gaze.
I dream of what we almost were,
What we could never be.
I try to forget, but your
Shape haunts me and your presence
Is always felt and I know
My eyes are open now, but I wish
I had kept them closed long enough
To feel something more than this.
William T. Harvey

Numbed

I lay in bed thinking of it,
A demon that won't let loose.
I fight it and win, but
Only for a moment
It peeks around the corner,
Then slithers back snickering.

Every minute of the day,
The myelin gets eaten.
A bridge of impulses are severed,
The drugs help, but for how long?
The glasses get thicker,
A steel framed prison awaits.
At Night

Cavities ruptured, not met
In neurons charged-
-electricity flows somewhere between.
Here time only flows at night
multiplying itself into oblivion
driving in damp moisture past
buildings and alleys and windows unlit.
Dream of times past — sleeping—
no sleep in car between spaces
in clean night no-smell.

The spine is tighter—electric—
-receptors organic, nothing here
grows outside—

Inside reactions split into another
and another and another,
its smell stuck wet to my clothes.
I cannot feel it.

Rain pulls around,
sleep in time organic—
uncharged, there are no reactions.
Ending has no end.
Gillian Scruton

And The Parade Marched On

I hate the rain. I hate being homeless even more. But being homeless in the rain is a monstrosity.

In the park, in the rain, fighting a cold breeze, I wear a thin Pittsburgh Steelers rain jacket that does nothing to keep my pathetic body warm. The trees do little to shelter me from the drizzle either, and this “Renter’s Guide” I picked up from Tops does little to protect my face from the relentless shower. I don’t even bother to flip through the pages and look at all the homes I would never be able to afford, I just put it on my face as I lie down on the wood bench, my wood bench (it had been for the past three months). The ‘free- take one’ magazine protects me from having to look at the faces of walkers-by. They always look at me with disgust, hate and pity. These people strolling down the park with their colorful umbrellas. Twirling them around, taking them for granted, having them perfectly coordinate with their fancy raincoats; it all made me grossly jealous.

Being homeless in the rain and without an umbrella is pure hell.

* * *

Drowning in the weather. Drowning in societal hate, being forced into self-pity, I doze off into a much drier state of mind.

* * *

The sun had been swallowed by the graying clouds and they showered us with an unwelcome rain. The parade, however, still marched on- the bands still played, the floats still rolled by and the spectators still adorned the sides of the road. It was wonderful, the rain was what brought us together, strangers shared the shelter of their golf umbrellas, large garbage bags were converted into makeshift macs, the puddles became playgrounds for the neighborhood kids.

The happiness expressed on everyone’s faces despite the rain was completely surreal. The fact that I had my umbrella was surreal. I didn’t even bother to express joy about having a long camel rain coal, shiny black shoes, or the weight of the wallet in my back pocket.
The parade's completion was followed by a stroll through the southern part of the public park. While strolling down the path, I noticed a man lying on a bench, with nothing to protect him from the rain but a 'Renter's Guide' that he had precariously placed upon his face. He looked like a sponge lying there pitifully soaking up the rain.

"Hal!" I thought to myself, "must be shitty to not have your own umbrella in weather like this."

I groped the wooden handle carved like a duck head and felt the pride of owning my own umbrella rush through my chest. The rain still poured down but the multi-colored umbrella with the duck handle owned, and I was drier than that deadbeat lying on the park bench.

As I left the park and headed toward my house, the clouds turned black, the calming breeze changed into an unrelenting gale, and the drizzle strengthened into a storm. I clutched the duck head handle and mathematically tilted my umbrella to act as a shield that could withstand the savage gusts. Each step took more effort than the last. Each step found me more and more isolated.

In a flash of complete disorientation, fear, and weakness, the wind took control of me. The grasp that the wind had of my umbrella far exceeded the strength that I had. In the end, it ripped the duck handled, multi-colored umbrella from my hands, turned it inside out, bent the spokes and sent it tumbling down the street with a surreal speed and swiftness.

* * *

I was wet again. The rain got to me, so had the dream I thought it was real. The pain of having shelter being swept away from me startled me and forced me out of my slumber.

I went to tear the 'Renter's Guide' off my face and see what a brief sleep had done to change the weather. I didn't have to. During my sleep it actually had been take away by the strength of the augmenting wind. The lack of any shelter left me with no options except to abandon my bench and head for the 'Friendly Market' once again.

The walk was straining. The strength of the wind was challenging mine and each step proved itself more fatiguing than the last. After only a few dozen yards, I found myself completely
alone. The streets turned dark, and the storm had denied the lights power to shine and guide me through the entangling streets. I had not other place to go but underneath the awning of 'Peter's Piano Repair.'

I crouched down on the wet pavement and held my legs close to my chest with my head resting against my knees. I didn’t want to look up at the world that had turned dark, and offered me no place to get out of the storm.

* * *

A crack of thunder blasted through the clouds and my eardrums. I looked up to find the rain still pouring down as hard as ever. I looked down both ends of the street and saw no one, no streetlights, and no sign of clearing weather. Though I did see a multi-colored umbrella blowing down the street at a surreal speed. I stood up. I kept my eye on it. And as it grew closer to ‘Peter’s Piano Repair,” the storm calmed more and more. Until finally, the umbrella rested at my feet.

I bent down to pick it up, examined the duck head of a handle, and the bent spokes that had ripped through the cape. “An umbrella, oh my god, I finally have an umbrella!” I thought. Who cared if it was turned inside out? It doesn’t take a genius to fix an umbrella.

As I shook it dry, the clouds ceased to rain, the winds ceased to blow and the sun peeked through and had a chance to shine on the streets once again.

While examining the state of the bent spokes in a state of disbelief (that I actually had my own umbrella), I noticed a man in a black raincoat, collar up, hair drenched, pant legs soaked, walking hurriedly towards me. I ducked my head thinking he would be one of those pitying types, or even worse- the kind that decided they hated me at first glance.

But on, he gave me a nod of the head as I looked at him out of the corner of my eye, and said, “Some weather huh? Well, at least the parade still marched on.”
Anthony Liccione

Gradual Retirement

Albert sat back in his leather recliner feeling tired,
Though, he did nothing to weary him today
It felt right to put up his legs and lay back
To the crackling wood in the fireplace.
He was still holding onto his walking cane
Sitting in the chair with the orange glow of fire
Illuminating his face. He hardly noticed the warmth
From the flames licking his old body,
It was second nature to him since those days of work.
Through the window, he saw Mrs. Carrillo cursing and
Swinging a broom at icicles hanging off the edge of her roof.
Her husband retired from farming when the
Government took part of their land for back taxes,
Shortly after the time they passed that silly
Potato Control Act in '35 when potatoes hit $1.14 per bushel.
She would come over crying,
"They come enna takka my lan,
En now my husbin' dunno whatta do."
He found a trade in lumberjacking.
The icicles dangled like a top mouth full of
Sharp teeth ready to close on the little Italian woman.
He detested ice no matter what form it came in.

Those were the days when he exchanged
The ice-cold ice for heat. Remembering back how
He and his father worked like slaves
Hauling slates of ice in that wrecked truck
During the Depression you did not complain,
Seventeen cents per haul filled stomachs and starved egos.
For five years, he dragged ice up
And down stairs, flights of stairs, throwing it into
Those dark ice sheds, thousands of pounds
Every summer until he was twenty-two. The numb
Soon left his fingers after quitting. He took a job at the
Steel plant as an ironsmith, where he melted down lithium
And iron in large hot furnaces. He retired forty years later
With a good pension and burn scars on his hands and arms.
A year later after hanging up his ice gloves, he
met Mary at the market, a small woman with
 Pleasant eyes that needed help with her grocery, he
offered to assist in carrying her bags of potatoes to her
wagon. Both fell in love and married the following
year, she then carried his son for nine months.

The government took their son and
sent him off to Que Son to fight Viet Cong,
Seventeen-year-old snatch in high school-
they put a Browning in his hand
and crossed tags around his neck.
Almost forty years now-
you could still hear the guns being fired
helicopters and planes swarming by
and the news reporters cutting through static airwaves
"4 dead and still..."
"7 more died today after an..."
"6 soldiers went down after their plane..."
The radio was always on,
he sat with his wife in tears
Praying it was not her Timothy.
Their son never came back home...
Never came back...
They sent his tags in a violet velvet box
and a sympathetic messenger
As thin as his son told them
His body was missing in action,
apologies for a brave young soldier.
Mary screamed, "No, no...God no, no...
The thin man pulsed her hand.
They later engraved his name
on a veterans monument
With fifty-eight thousand winners. Albert would argue
That his son won the war,
They all won though they lost their lives.

By this time
Mary never came to see her son's dedication
Carved in stone.
She passed years later one winter
When her brakes failed her at pearl avenue
And River Wind Road. Ice took hold
Of her tires and slid her into an unexpected tree. She
died two days later from severe hemorrhaging.
She whispered to Albert she was tired with frail lips—
The same lips that he kissed forty-eight hours previous
The same lips that told him she loved him before she
left to pick up her prescriptions for her sleeping difficulties.
Albert took her by her hand and told her to take her rest
And he'll be right here when she awakes; he'll be waiting...

She never said goodbye

The flames dies down in the fireplace
And the logs were now glowing and wheezing, he knew
Soon the warmth will retire and leave particles
Of ashes floating in the air... he was too
tired to give the sparks fresh wood. It was better to let
The fire extinguish, and in the morning,
He will sweep the ashes clean.
Thinking on this, his eyelids finally gave out
And his cheek tilted to his shoulder. As
His chest continued rising and falling in slow rhythms
The cane lost its grip and fell to the floor.
Joella Sweet

Capturing a Moment

The fabric of my jeans has been deceived
By the seemingly crisp real imitation grass
Turf-
My moistened palms press into this created ground
As I lean back to gaze up to the heavens,
The expansive universe above me.
Amidst the haze is the ever-radiant moon;
Its beauty, as always, illuminating the night.

...An incandescent ring surrounds this moon.
In this moment, I forget my moist hands,
My dampened derriere,
My worries, fears, and doubts.
The moon extends its light beyond its normal realm
And this ring
Corona-
Expands and reached for my earthy concerns
And sends a shiver to me
As my worries
Are pulled to the moon.
After seeing the commercial for Disney world, my brother Kevin and I were convinced it was Heaven on Earth and we knew we had to get there. We weren’t sure where it was, but it didn’t really matter. We planned to raise enough money to take our family to Disney World, but it was all going to be a surprise. We would plan it ourselves.

“I found forty-eight cents today, Kevin. It was just sitting on the sidewalk.”

“Yeah, I found fifty cents in the couch. Let’s go put in the jar.”

The bottom of the jar was just about covered with silver and copper coins and there were a few green bills in there, gifts from mom and dad for good behavior or extra housework. We hid it in our closet so our parents couldn’t find it. The front had a large picture of Mickey Mouse and the words FLORIDA JAR glued on it with letters cut from magazines. The back had $875 written in black marker as the commercial suggested this is the cost of entering utopia. We also made a chart broken down into twenty-dollar increments so we could mark our progress.

With the newly deposited dollar, the grand total rose to about twelve dollars. My second grade education told me we needed to save 863 more dollars if we were going to pay for the family trip. My brother and I heard our parents’ conversations about how tight money was and we knew we had to do it all ourselves.

Two weeks before our projected trip time of Christmas, my brother and I only collected forty-five dollars and we didn’t have nearly enough. We often thought about taking the money and buying toys, but we managed to stay focused on “Destination Disney World.” However, even an eight-year-old and a five-year-old could figure it impossible to raise that much money in a short amount of time.

Christmas morning arrived and there weren’t as many toys under the tree as there normally were. There was however, a big manila envelope that had MIKE and KEVIN printed perfectly on the front. I opened it after all my presents as my mother politely demanded. Inside it read BOYS, GOOD WORK ON THE JAR. I MADE A DONATION FOR YOU.

SANTA CLAUS
I ran upstairs as fast as I could and my bewildered little brother was right behind. Inside the jar was 875 dollars mostly in crisp 100 dollar-bills. A note on top read, HAVE A GREAT TIME AT DISNEY!

Last Christmas when I came home my mother had her own jar set up. MERCEDES JAR read the front with $40,000 written on the back. I laughed for a minute, as I hadn't thought of my Florida Jar in years. I threw a dollar in her dream jar and thanked her for funding our childhood dream, but more importantly our lives.
I'm dancing!
I'm moving my feet
They're taking charge of my legs
And they're moving me all around!
Boy! Let me tell ya', if you ain't never danced
you gotta!
You gotta stop listening to music
You have to swallow it.
Don't let it slide down your body
You gotta let it pull at your marionette strings
You gotta dance!
Boy! You gotta dance.
Let it shake you up like dice
in the cupped hands of a gambler.
Let it awake you like a phone call
during your afternoon snooze.
Let it talk to you and talk back.
Have a conversation
A Use-no-words conversations and just let your
Tongue stick to the top
Of your parched mouth as you

Dance!
Listen to the banging
BOOM BOOM BOOM
Or listen to the Tah-tah
Tah Tah dah
Let your body loose like casting
Out a fishing line
Let it roll, like a bowling bowl- but take no
Aim- just roll, man, just roll.

Roll up
Roll down
Roll up your pant legs
Roll 'em back down
Do what you gotta go and

Dance

man, just dance.
Meg Barboza

On Gibbs

The light
of the city
during the changing of the guards
from winter to spring is
bright.
Light
shaded hues and shadows move
over Kodak
and High Falls
and Manhattan Square Park.
Icicles and snow fall of
East Avenue awnings
like jumping
off the lip of this world
into the next.
The Whitman glass of a season
is placed over Rochetser
like an ashtray.
And while we sit at Java's,
the bitter tongue
of winter's last words
Licks our bodies
Like a heaving, heavy
warm and wintry lover
in a brownstonebigwindowed loft
on an equally anonymous day.
Joella Sweet

the indescribable

place into words that feeling
when a star bright as the sun
that's been burning inside you
hiding
suddenly starts to spin
triggered by only one
and spreads throughout your body that light
to your fingers, toes, lips and nose
gleams out of every pore
and when you round the corner
and see that one
that thing that starts
in the pit of your belly
and flickers
shudders, flutters, tingles
all over
and makes your face feel numb
and your heart squeezed out a bulge of light with each pump
it's that star
triggered by that one
the pleasant burning light

is that a sufficient
description
of that feeling?
Because when I see that one
I can feel a star inside me growing
Glowing

so yes, that must be right
and I love to feel that light
triggered by that one.
Mamdouh Alsafadi

A Song for Reconciliation

Far away from the land noises of the vehicles and factories, there lies my peaceful small Syrian village, surrounded by wide green fields. Among these green fields there is a narrow stream of water, which is the source of life for this corner of the world. As the sun rises in the blue sky, it makes the surface of the water glitter like a shimmering stream of silver.

This small lush valley is the place where all the peasants meet during the lunchtime when they take a break from their fieldwork. Breaking bread, sharing their lunch, they chat and laugh together. The midday sunshine penetrates their weathered skin. Their hands bear the weight of their forebearers. Here you can listen to the flying bright-winged birds singing happily their songs of freedom in the seemingly peaceful landscape. They swarm through tunnel of the white, plump clouds. Whenever you approach this valley, you can smell the scent of wet soil and green grass. Here, in this valley, I feel as if I could become part of the beaming light of the sun. In this place, I could forget the troubles around me. I could turn quickly sideways and slip into a different world, forgetting that the peace of this valley is the only transitory peace. Here, in this valley I am able to fly with the birds over the high trees, towards the clear bright sky, gazing at the land beneath me where for centuries children of Sarah and Abraham, Mary and Joseph, Khadija and Mohammad have swept the grounds with their feet. The air is pregnant with the pungent smell of the spring. As I experience this peace, I realize that on the other side, beyond this valley, peace no longer exists. My thoughts flow with the pure water that runs in the bed of the river connecting the two nations of Syria and Israel to each other. This water is the blood running through veins of our nations.

Waves of heat brush my body and I grow away from the sun, moving towards the earth. I think of how great grandsons and granddaughters of Sarah, Mary, and Khadija roam the land on both sides of their frontier. They are my brothers and sisters, my distant cousins and my grandmothers. I call out to them to come back home. My palate yearns for the taste of Mollwah, the bread that we have shared for centuries among ourselves in these parts of the world.

From far away, I see a young woman, much like my age, wondering under the branches of an ancient oak tree, near the flowing water. Tender youth emanate from her face. But, behind
her calm face lives a deep sadness. Wasted tears pool in her dark brown eyes. I do not need to ask what might cause these tears which burden her almond shaped eyes. I too bear the weight of the tears in my eyes. I stretch my hand to touch her face and wipe off the tears. I want to call out to this far-removed sister that I too feel that the war which divides us is senseless. I want her to know how my heart pains for both of us when I think of the fathers, the mothers, the brothers, the sisters, the grandparents, and all the other loved ones that we have lost to this war. I think of the chasms that our burnt houses have left behind and I think of the ashes that blow in the hot mid-day sun, haunting us with the sighs of the dead. I lift my hand to dry a tear coming down my cheek. A warm and soft breeze brush past my thoughts of flowery meadows, of white clouds, of honeysuckle-covered walls, of giggling children bring a smile to my face. I feel as if the warm hand of my far-removed sister, on that other side of the valley, touches my shoulder. For one solitary moment, I sense that we are breathing in peace, with one pulse and one heart, embracing each other in reconciliation, calling out to each other to come home.
Melissa M. Slocum

Orb

Dazzling orange
horizon’s orb
sinking into
the liquid blue
purple
red
gently
holding breaths
of rainbows
at each cloud step
until it tips
the trees
with flames,
meets the snow-topped
bruise-hued mountains,
and mirrors itself
in the lapping crests.

There it rests
held in a puff
of air
ready for
the last descent.
Suddenly
it slides
down the mountain
a flash of green
disappearing
under
the sea
leaving finger
scratches down the wall
of sky
that fade with
the drawing curtain of
black velvet
and silver flashes.
To live like we have never lived,
To love like we have never loved,
To know someone like we have never known anything.

What is it like to live and love and know like never before?
Do we meet a person who makes us feel this way,
Or does everyone in life at some point earn this right?

Living and loving and knowing shouldn't wait,
Everyday should feel like this day is the last
Making us make the most of each moment.

So everyday are we to
Live and love and know someone
Like never before?
I awoke
to the reality of your voice
whispering screams of sorrow
into my vulnerable
cheating face.
You leaned in to kiss me
and bit my bottom lip
bloody
then cried because you hurt me.
You tried to pull me up
lunged at my lifelessness
too weighed down with pain
to really move me.
I laid there flat on my back
surrounded
by your sadness
Drowning.
I am

I am the crisp air in the night, blowing through the leaves and haunting your mind.
I am cool rain that waters the fields, but puts out the candles.
I am playing hide-n-seek, though I've lost myself for good this time; can you find me?
I am soup on a warm day that burns the roof of your mouth.
I am a fragrant rose, beautiful to look at, but painful to touch.
I am here, wherever that is.
the ultimate radical change boy—who went
from morose and loving it to sarcastic
but sane—who has an amazingly creative mind
and a self-esteem that could fit in a thimble—who has
a beautiful spirit and warm eyes—who sat
in summer fields with me twisting his beard
and recording life—who could take art out of anything—who
carried a collage in his soul and a graphite pencil
in his brain—who sat with me on a city street under
a streetlamp on an abandoned couch because none of us
were sober enough to drive home—who found my daughter
an electric piano at an auction for a dollar and asked me
if it was okay to give it to her because of the flaw—it only
had one volume—who made up stories about why we were late
with me and created clowns who wanted to be doctors
and doctors who wanted to be clowns—who met a girl and got
engaged—who went away and never came back—who left
me with a couple newts some minnows and a crooked hat—who sent
me a postcard once from a temporary residence with an e-mail
address that didn’t work—who hated anything sticky—and loved
I don’t know what—who wanted to make his own drum
and had a log burning party that I couldn’t attend—who gave me
a green pepper for graduation and a smile for my birthday—who
hugged tighter than anyone I know—who met a girl—a series of girls
actually but met a girl—in the end to call his own—who went away
and never came back—and left a silence in his wake
Jennie Raymond

Move On

Glittering faces of
Memories long ago

Sweet sixteen years
Of friendship
Honesty and trust

Only children
Like fraternal twins

Each girl spoiling
The other with
Love and faith

What happened to
Those two sisters?

One confided
In life, and
The other took a

Long walk into
The dark, scary night, alone
I was the last and most anticipated family member to meet him. Of course, they had only known each other since the end of August. I remember the day that she came to do her laundry at the house, the first day I heard her mention him.

“So, this guy at work invited me to the Montrose Fair.”
“You’re goin’ on a date? Do you know him?”
“Yeah, we’ve talked before. He’s cool.”

That’s all that was said about Ryan until we were packing my car for my trip back to school.
“I think I am going to have a boyfriend soon.”
“No, Lis. You remember that guy Ryan…I went to the fair with him.”
“Really. That was quick.”
“Yeah, it’s weird. He’s so easy to talk to.”
“Shell, you know this means I need to meet him.”
“Yeah, Yeah.”

It never happened. I didn’t get the chance to meet him before I went back to college. I really didn’t suspect much. She’s had her share of boyfriends. Some serious, some not. So, when she called me one day and said, “I’m gonna marry him,” I thought she was kidding. But she wasn’t. One conversation after another brought about the same dialogue.

“I know it, Lis, he’s the one.”

“Shell, how do you know? Do you really know him? I haven’t met him yet.”

Time and time again, I questioned her about this stranger. I didn’t know him. I hadn’t met him. I hadn’t even talked to him. I didn’t know what kind of family he is from? I only knew his name. That bothered the piss out of me.

My mom finally called one day. “Lisa, honey, you need to come home and meet Ryan. He and Shell are pretty serious. Your dad and I have met him. We like him, Lis. We think that you will
like him. He fits in with the family. He just fits in.”

Of course I wanted to meet him. My mom saying that “he and Shell are serious,” is synonymous to “Lisa, we need your approval before we can go any farther with this.” I made plans to go home the following weekend.

He wasn’t at all what I expected. Shorter than I had predicted, more love handles than I had anticipated, more talkative than I wanted. I felt like I was interviewing him. I felt like I was scrutinizing him. I felt like breaths were being held in until I said the words, “I like him.”


I met him. I gave my sister, my other half, my approval. Lied. Don’t get me wrong. I like the kid. If he were friends with my sister and I met him, it would be cool. We’d be cool. If she were her boyfriend, a not-so-serious one, we would be cool. But he’s not just a friend or a not-so-serious boyfriend.

He called me yesterday. He told me a secret. This is the first secret I have ever had to truthfully keep from my sister, for her own good. On February 23, he will become her fiancé if all goes as planned. That doesn’t make me like him any more. Yet, it doesn’t make me like him any less.

He asked me if it was okay to marry her. He hasn’t asked my dad yet. The way he talked about her. The way he looks at her. This one is not going to hurt her. He actually does love her. That makes me like him a little more.

Not today, not tomorrow, but someday, soon, I will learn to share her.
How can it be
that I can see the moon through
clouds that are exhaling?
It's true. I can see the moon through
the crystal snow that falls light
like dust hanging in the air.
Ahh, these are the moments I love.
Walking at night alone with the snow
spread out before me, and the stars
spread out above me like a net
of Christmas lights.
Vast space until trees,
until cars
until the path
worn by heavy shoes.
And I am there by myself.
And I inhale the pixie dust snow
and I exhale the steam, my heat.
There is no better feeling than this.

I brace myself for spring.
And Yet...

Never knowing, yet always sure
of the amount of pain you can endure.
Always smiling, yet you frown
letting even the little things get you down.
Inside fragile, outside tough
never knowing how much is enough.
Hide your tears, let them flow
you don’t want to be let go.
Always talking, yet never speaking
everyday your will is sinking.
Being listened to, yet never heard
"everything you say is so absurd."
Making friends, yet pushing away
leaving us with nothing to say.
Being alone and always accompanied
by those who know you’re in need.
You are blind, and yet you see
inside everything you need.
Yearning for help, yet wanting to die
Watching the tears fall from my eyes.
Fading Sun

"I never dreamed I'd feel this fire beneath my skin..." Elton John/Bernie Taupin, "The Last Song"

*Borrowed light, tossed to and fro, that's all we are.
Blood, cells, fluid, air, what a fundamentally simple composition.
Funny how that simplicity turns tragic and cryptic in the blink of an eye.
What happens when you don't even recognize your own reflection anymore?
The borrowed light dims until the only light remaining is a haunted, hollow gray spark.
The spark may flicker and restore the borrowed light, but when the sun finally retreats, so does your shadow.
That shadow has converted itself into your only being, into your body.
When the sun sets, your shadow fades, leaving you with a breathing, moaning, shitting, failing, crippling, dehumanizing half-life shadow.
Destined to slowly and painfully destroy you from the inside out, until you've aged a hundred years and your lungs can no longer sustain your aching frame.

**"Borrowed Light" by Kathleen Wakefield
Melissa A. Japp

blind

di was told to have faith in prayer
(if ye ask, ye shall receive)
sO I asked You to give me a sign
to let me know if I was
making the right choices

i dreamt that night of an iridescent river. I jumped over it
then sat down to dinner beside a blind man.
a woman sitting across from me asked,
"What will you do with your life?"
i replied, "I want to lead the blind."
as i glanced over to the man sitting beside me
his face morphed into my own

i understand now