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Angle’s Home Grown Awards

Readers’ Choice

First Place Bleeding For My Valentine......Erin Dorney

Second Place Out of Respect......Erika McRae

Third Place A Window to the Past......Christopher Ouimet

Faculty Award Growing Old Absurd.....David E. White

Art Picks

Art Award Stephanie Metz

Tamara Dixon
In the shower,
my tears are icy cold
to the scalding water,
as I burn you away.

No middle ground,
no lukewarm degree.
The dial stuck on the bleeding red “H”
like an arrow to my blistered heart.

Droplets glide effortlessly down my side,
where once your hand caressed.
Pounding down on my face,
over my hair, my ears,
where you used to whisper.
But I have forgotten the sound

of your voice.

Hypnotized by the swirling blood down the drain,
mixing in rivers,
rushing in rapids.
Will this nightmare
float me back
to you?
Out of Respect

Let's not start this journey off on a bad note
more of a sad tone that has no boundaries, yet it echoes
my vitality seems to have taken the best of me
a shadow of fear that shrouds my heart with ice
cold as snow in the middle of June
my head aches from thinking of you
sleeping around me is the world and their dreams
alone am I and forever it seems to be
only when I close my eyes and wonder
do I ever escape this lonesome boulevard
an alley of desperate need is darkened by my impossible dreams
where one alone could always be happy; in a state of self-pity
a music hall reflects light from the water below
an omen of a relief from my indecency
a place where I feel at home
with an instrument to play on my own

my neck stretches with a broad oak core
lined by nails that illuminate the brightest silver
like a sliver, my bow is strung
strummed once and my note is done
this violin has played its final tone
a note that roams inside the walls
and echoes down life's greatest halls
where two doors meet to end its scream
a lonely dream that I have of my own
where I am with myself and a well-known no one
this journey has ended in a dying plea
only ears of heaven hear my final key
one last strum
that's it for me
CHRISTOPHER OUMET

A WINDOW TO THE PAST

I knew I shouldn’t be there, but I was there just the same. I had no business peeking into the window of this strange man, in this strange town. But that was the funny thing. This man shouldn’t be strange to me. And if things had turned out differently, I might have actually lived in this town. But things hadn’t turned out differently, and everything was strange. I was strange. My childhood was strange. My father had left our family more than nineteen years ago, and I hadn’t even seen the guy in thirteen of those years. Hell, I wasn’t even sure this was his house. But I knew it was. I could feel it. I had the Internet to thank for that. It’s amazing that you can find anyone’s exact address, as long as you know a name.

So there I was, three steps away from the bearer of half my chromosomes. I couldn’t bring myself to knock on the door. What if he had a whole new family? What if he forgot about me? What if he just doesn’t ever want to see me again? What if I have brothers and sisters? I was so excited and so scared at the same time. I was beginning to think I was better off pretending he doesn’t exist. I mean, there really never is a reason to disturb the status quo if things are fine. My mother and brother and I were doing just fine on our own, and we had put all of this “dad” business behind us. It took years to get over the fact that I have no dad, or to at least pretend I had no dad. Upon knocking on this door, I could be reopening a Pandora’s box of emotional strife.

It was beginning to snow, but you could only tell by looking at the streetlight’s beam. The flakes would suddenly appear at the top edge of the beam and disappear just as fast at the bottom edge. While staring at the snowy phenomenon, I was startled by the front window suddenly illuminating with yellow light. Life. Not yet sure I wanted to make my presence at this house known, I stepped over to the window and peered in. I only did this because of something I learned back in sixth grade. Mrs. Taft taught us that if the source of light is greater on your side of a window than on the other; you can’t see through to the other side because of glare. But if you are on the darker side, you can easily see through to the other side. In this situation, I knew I would be safe from sight, unless of course an unexpected visitor was to show up on my side of the window and catch me peering in. That wouldn’t be good.

Upon looking in, I saw a Christmas tree, full of lights and homemade decorations. There were four warm smiles in the room. And along with those smiles were the cozy bodies of a happy family. I was jealous. And I couldn’t believe I was looking at my father, stepmother and two half-sisters. The window turned into a television set, and I saw a movie that could have been a non-fiction documentary, but has always remained a fantasy. I stared at the love seat where my mother sat, alone, alongside the vacant cushion, which was perhaps wondering why it wasn’t being occupied. I envisioned a man sitting there next to her, his arm around her shoulders. He had dirty blonde hair and blue eyes and that brown t-shirt I always see him in, and he was smiling at my mother who was smiling back. In my mother’s hand she’s reading something, but it’s not the letter. It is the weekly Democrat and Chronicle TV book. We’re sitting as a family deciding what we are going to watch on TV as we unwind at the end of the
day. We are so happy, like a normal family.

The image was suddenly shattered as I heard a noise from behind me, and I knew I was caught. I'd probably go to jail or something for snooping. I would have to explain to my biological father why I was spying on him, and he'd probably take out a restraining order. I would have to explain to my mother why I had come all this way just to see this man she had forever forbidden me to even speak about, let alone go visit. Oh god, I was fearing her finding out about this much more than I was afraid of going to jail. I would eventually get out of jail, but mothers, they are a life sentence.

Luckily, the noise was just a raccoon rummaging through the garbage. I watched him crawl around the garbage can, scrounge around for scraps, and then knock over the can, spilling the trash all over the ground. Then he just nonchalantly walked away. No regard whatsoever for the mess he made or for the people who have to clean it up. What a disgusting animal. It didn't seem like the bodies inside the house even noticed. They were too caught up in their happiness and smiling. I wondered what was so special about this family. I wondered why this would make "dad" so happy and we couldn't all those years ago. I supposed it would be much too easy just to ask, so I tried to figure it out standing in the cold outside the house.

I don't know if it was because I had to find out about the father I never had, and the family that never was, or if it was because I was just tired of standing out in the cold; but either way I had to go in. I found the doorbell button and pushed it. This was the moment of truth. The moment I saw the door swing open, the light from the foyer burst out toward me, and the tall thin figure behind the door, I went numb.
Dying more than growing, limbs useless, digits immobile, 
no feeling, breath constricted, no pain, mind active, lucid, 
as I lie dying, memory alone survives, and desire, desire 
to remember and that memory cohere.

I'd been living this terrific comedic poem all my life, 
only now with no one to hear and no way to write, 
perhaps you have had the same thought—you are not reading 
this poem, as I lie dying in my home-made hospice— 
living will, living well, living by proxy—who the fuck knows?

Even if this goes on a day or so no one will come round 
unless I call, which I won't now that I'm warming to this death 
by dying. So long as memory cooperates, I'd rather go on my own, 
the perfect suicide, bound to be listed as paralytic asphyxiation.

See those toy soldiers? My life on parade. 
my fingers are useless now to move them, 
if I push them with a pencil I will only make a mess.

So the parade must rest the way it is, 
and when I am gone someone will take them away 
unaware of what they mean and how my memories cohere 
—but what's the harm in that?
hey there mr. shuttle man,
listen to my secret plan,
some late night adventures,
to wegamans!

oh mr. shuttle man,
i got the munchies man,
gotta get to wegamans,
as fast as i can.

step on it shuttledude,
im craving some food,
chocolate chip ice cream,
yeah.. you know what i mean.

so mr. shuttleman,
thanks for your time,
for giving me the inspiration,
to create this little rhyme.

if you’re ever down,
and can’t get around,
look for the green van,
the SHUTTLEMAN!!
As a child, religion was simple. I knew that if I prayed every night
I would go to heaven, and that thunder was merely God bowling a strike.

I remember nights, days, mornings, crawling under my bed to pray,
Pray that one day I would be the right kind of daughter.

I learned quickly what I needed to change while I was praying. I would beg
To be less talkative, nicer, not a cry-baby. Sometimes I would even pray
To die. But not for death. I prayed to go to heaven, to be safe. And in
My mind, I believed in religion, and I believed in heaven, and I believed

That if I prayed, I would be with God. It used to be that easy. As I grew up,
I realized that religion wasn’t as simple as prayer and forgiveness. Each religion
Had its own semantics; I spend a large portion of my high school years going from
Church to church, searching for that comfort I formally found in prayer.

Each church seemed to have its own rules, that there was always another group
Or belief that was wrong. I knew that my life was full of wrong –

Wrong choices, wrong friends, wrong attitude. In those churches I felt nervous,
As if my secret may come out. That these people would realize my wrong.

I was lost; each Sunday I went to another church only to realize more wrong.
I used to pray and my prayer would make God love me again. He forgave

My sins. Now I felt lost in sea of faith, each with its own condemning mindset.
After months of trying, I gave up. There was no church for me.

Religion was no longer simple and my beliefs still were. At night I pray,
Hoping that my prayer is heard.
DEE DEE HOGAN

A TRIBUTE

A Tribute: January 15, 2005

Montgomery, 1955: The night before Martin Luther King Jr. led the Montgomery boycott of buses and became a national public figure in the civil rights movement.

Martin's Prayer

It's time to wipe away my golden tears. This segregation has never been a meek violation, but a perpetuation of a million atrocities, a death ribbon for my people, my beloved people, those whose dreams were doomed before they could dream them, those who wore the invisible death masks of destruction with every breath they breathed.

I have prayed for guidance. I pray for it now. O Lord, give me the courage you gave my sister, Rosa. Was her arrest a sign for me? Is this the right time? Am I part of a heavenly plan? I am hardly worthy! I am no hero. I am only a man, stripped bleak by the sorrows and tribulations we have endured. I, too, fear going into the streets tomorrow and singing those somber clamors for justice. But the real burden will lie at feet of my brothers and sisters who will refuse to ride those buses, who will be harassed and intimidated, who may lose their jobs, their families, their friends, their own lives. They are the heroes, Lord, they are the ones I beseech you to protect. Give them patience. Give us all patience. Give us all strength.

It grows late. I hear the elegy moans of my ancestors and I know that I, too, am ready to accept my destiny because you have inspired me to dream of brotherhood and justice. In your holy name, I will dream! I will counter hate with love; I will meet violence with patience. All I ask is that you give me time, a few good years to be the instrument of your peace. For I know that as I step into the streets of Montgomery, I will become the primary target, the symbol of the movement, and I will die before I have had time to live. I see the truth, and I will do whatever you ask of me, no matter how high the price.
Silence surrounds you
while the herd is running,
    somewhere in the distance.

Nightfall in the forest; the indigo air
holds the smell of pine.
I find my eyes fixed
on the form of your wooden body,

bare
yet complex,
against the skyline.

Tan twig veins,
Olive branch arteries,
meant to pump peace through your heart,
if only it could beat.

Grey bark bones,
A gnarled knot, like limbs
under the sheets;

the heat of my body
departs in the winter breeze.
Frozen,
I watch you,
taking shape through the leafless trees.
Catherine Agar

Eye Level

It is a six by four foot patch of forest,
but its painted tree tops reach the far horizon
where the woods continue seamless to the sea.
The trees are gilded flame and crimson,
the sky a crystal blue, with peeling.
In the center is a clearing,
dirt worn bare and hard
by moccasins, scattered, fallen leaves,
a longhouse being built,
two Native men adjusting poles.
By the storehouse, full of tiny corn,
a wax man crouches, his arm around a naked boy,
the little wax dog, an old wax woman.
A fire burns, the matchstick logs
aglow.
Corn shocks lean against the fence,
squashes cluster in the corners.

There’s an old, padded kneeler
where kids like me
can rest their sweatered elbows on the narrow sill,
press their noses to the glass
and smell the cooking squash and wood smoke,
feel the pinch of coming snow,
and hear the press of leaves under softly padded feet.
I didn’t burn the baklava today
while you were gone,
nor did I put too many lentils
into the soup, which might have turned to paste.

I went to three different stores
until I found the cilantro
for the green fava beans and chicken liver
covered in onions and minced garlic.

I even made muffins
like Sylvia after she poised pen to paper
then nestled further into her nest.

Lady Lazarus, the frightened Mrs. Plath
of that genteel tea on Cottage Street,
inhaled gas from her oven
three years before my birth.

One day you may not come home to taste
the Mediterranean meal I’ve concocted,
but my oven is too full
of batches of baklava and muffins
for the young man from your neighborhood
of balconies overlooking Mount Qassyun.

Do you truly think me
that far from shore
but immensely drowned?

Freshly stepped foot on American soil,
I will ask him how he likes his tea
or better yet, how much sugar
in his Arabic coffee.

I may never learn to roll grape leaves
tight enough
or fashion kibbee
into those smart little balls.

I will let the grape leaves simmer anyhow
on the stovetop,
for he does not mind it
if sometimes they break apart.
DRAWING "Tiffany"  LISA STEVENS BROTZ
MARK JOHNSON
EARLY DECEMBER ROMANCE

How am I going to tell the woman I have loved all my life that I want to take her hand in marriage? As we approached the quaint village of Skaneateles, NY on this calm night in December, anxiety filled the air and possibilities chilled my spine. Tonight, words will pour from my heart and she will understand the magnitude of my love for her.

The North wind sailed through our bodies and snow fell like gentle angels upon the village. We walked down the slushy sidewalk, capturing a night out of a Charles Dickens novel. The women, dressed in bonnets and long dresses, hurried out of the café, mingling and laughing over the smell of hot cocoa and fresh snow. The men, dressed in top hats and long coats walked into the corner bar for a cigar and a draft beer. I pushed the button on the pole and we crossed the slippery road toward our final destination—the concluding chapter of a childhood filled with memories and dreams.

We approached the horse-drawn carriage as the woman yelled, “Last call” with an all-knowing wink in my direction. The beautiful black horses were standing perfectly still, with the steam pouring from their noses and snow upon their hooves. As we sat in the carriage, I could hear faint voices singing “Silent Night” and the cries of a child with her mother. We started to move and the water dripped from the carriage’s wheels and the reflection of the traffic lights on the wet pavement added to the scene that I will look back upon forever. I looked over at my beautiful Amy, her hair sat gently upon her grey coat and she huddled up close in search of warmth and comfort. My mind was lost in a never-ending puzzle of thoughts, I was searching for the final piece, the piece that would complete my vision and join my hopes and dreams with hers.

The horses marched around the final street sign in the village and, for a moment, it was as if time had stopped. I pulled her left hand from her pocket and sank my knee in the heavy slush of the carriage floor. I looked into her beautiful brown eyes and asked if she would be my wife. I could feel my heart in my chest, reminding me that an answer was still pending. She smiled back at me and said, “Yes, yes, yes!” of course, I will marry you! I placed the ring on her left hand and we hugged for what seemed to be a year. Time stood still and, in that brief moment, I grew up. The horses slowed down to an abrupt stop and the carriage holder raised her hands in the air and screamed to her husband, “He did it, he did it.” She turned to me and said, “This was the only successful proposal in all my years running this carriage.” I suppose she didn’t want to inform me of that haunting statistic ahead of time. I helped Amy off the carriage, and we walked hand-in-hand through the village, to the restaurant where we had our first date.

She showed off her ring to the waitress and as I sipped my water, I said to myself, “How did I get so lucky?” A new painting in my life has begun and now, I have the love of my life to create it with me.

Wedding Date: July 9, 2005
NICOLE GAULIN

THE STORY OF MY MORAL

The angry dragon grins as
she curls around my gaze
she sings along my spine
and sinks into my pain
The demons praise the fates as
they wait for me to fall
they grapple at my eyes
and forsake me as their doll
Your kisses are too sensless as
they twist around my tongue
they sting the liquid silence
and rip into the sun
My deadly sins are laughing as
they wrap around my wrists
the break inside my body
and bite into my risks
The dying griffin screams as
he suffers at my grace
he digs into my flesh
and I sink into his pain
The story of my moral
is to break before you fall
to drink the blood of heavensent
before you drown in awe
“Hey come on, you’re a guy, you should want to do this more than me.”

“Well, I don’t,” he said crossing his arms across his chest. As far as he was concerned, the conversation was over because he was done talking, but to her it was just the beginning.

“What are you, gay?” Okay, so she knew insulting his masculinity would make him talk more, too bad she wasn’t aware of the full extent her comment would have.

“Hell no,” at least he was talking.

“Then you should at least want to do this.”

“Yeah, I do want to, but I don’t have to.” Again he would like the conversation to end here, but she pushes her luck further by continuing to talk, again.

“So, what? You don’t want to do it with me? Is that it?” Her arms flailed in large circles with each question. “Am I not pretty enough for you? Am I too fat? What’s wrong with me?” Tears began falling from her eyes with the last shouted words.

He seriously didn’t know which questions he was allowed to answer or supposed to answer. All he knew was that he was still peeved about her questioning his sexuality.

“Everything’s wrong with you,” he snapped back.

“Like what?” she asked through her tears.

He was getting tired of this argument. He just wanted it to be over. “You know what? I am gay if that means you’ll stop asking me about it!” he shouted.

“What?” A new wave of tears was about to start.

“I’m tired of you asking me this question when I’ve already told you the answer!”

“But you might change your mind and…”

“And what? I’m not going to change my mind.”

“But you could…”

“I won’t. I can’t take this anymore, it’s over.”

“No, it can’t be.” She choked out through her sobs.

“It is.” His tone meant his word was final.
NICOLE GAULIN

NIGHTMARE OF TODAY

I look around. Blearily searching for something in the darkness. Searching for the something I would never be able to see.

Standing up, I brush off my knees with careless hands and start walking. Looking behind me unconsiously, I watch a shadow skulk behind the light. Panicking, I realize that I am all alone in an unfamiliar place with my imagination scaring me brainless.

So, like any normal panic system would tell me to do, I run. I don't think I have ever ran as fast as I am now. I look over my shoulder again and choke down a scream, my shadow has become a man. A dark handsome man with lovely locks of darkness.

I bolt forward into a city I don't know, skidding around unfamiliar buildings and signs. I duck into an alley, frantically looking for an exit. Trapped, like a small bird under the paw of an angry tiger.

Pretty eyes I don't know I have scan for possible exits: fence! Using nimble hands and quick legs I scramble up the sharp metal obstruction that was meant to keep me out. I catch myself on the barbed top and dangle hopelessly for a second before I come crashing down on the otherside. Allowing myself a grimace as my hands hit the asphalt, tearing off my precious flesh and rippining my favorites jeans, I look over my shoulder again. Almost triumphantly, defiantly, until I see his pale barren face. I can feel the blood run from my face and my angel from this nightmare smiles mockingly.

A smile that is liquid sin, a sweet unadultered silence that rings on his lips. A cold shiver sings up my spine to mingle with the pain that's swimming there. And before my mind gives conscious consent, the body that might belong to me jumps up to its feet in a spasmatic hurdle to live.

I am running again, towards a bridge I'm not sure I recognize. But I know that if I can cross it, I'll be safe. Safe as a murderer can get. I can get away from the my shadow man, from all of his devouring darkness, MY darkness.

I sprint ahead, dashing onto the safe haven. Smiling to myself, I carry ahead. He could never catch me now. I look behind me with a triumphant grin on my lips, expecting to find the face of my pursuer. But once again I am only met with darkness.

A red light goes on in my mind, and I stop. Looking desperately around I realize I cannot see anything a foot in front of me. A small whimper escapes my lips as I take a step backwards. I hit solid. Whipping around, I throw my hands in front of my body in a mocking position of a fighting stance. I streetlight flickers on. A scream hollows in my throat.

A giant hairless white rat and a monsterous black panther circle around my dark man, and he tips his hat cruelly. I look deep inside his black tone eyes and find that he is someone I know. I take another step back and stumble, my jean clad ass hitting the smooth surface of the bridge I can't even see.

The creature and his pets advance as I scramble backwards like a lopsided crab. "N-no..." I whisper brokenly as I finally realize what's going to happen.

A blood chuckle is the only reply I get back as my handsome monster extends a bandaged hand. I continue on my backwards scramble hoping to find some sort of escape.
"No!" I repeat looking up at the looming shadow frightenedly. "Please, don't. Don't do this...." I nearly sob, begging as he steps closer still.

My back hits something stiff and my brain jolts awake. My ears prickle up and I listen for a sound. I nearly burst into tears when I finally hear running water. Quickly, I stand shakily and press myself into the cool metal of the railing. Running my right hand along the length of it, I feel some sort of sick relief. Anything is better than what he'd do to me. Even...

Perhaps my shadow lover realizes what I am going to do because his face twists into something like terror, or maybe just disgust. His hand flies out of his coat rapidly and snatches my left arm roughly. I can feel his dirty nails ripping at my skin. But it's already too late for regrets.

One foot on the rail, and the other on the ground, I wrench my arm free and push off the bridge. Hands spread out like the wings I dreamed of owning, I throw myself over the edge.

The sensation is perfect. Trapped in midair for one fleeting second is enough to make me love all over again. One perfect second of ecstasy, and I can forget what lies below. A sick smile graces my lips and I feel like I'm not so alone. I can forgive the fall; I can even forgive my shadow. But not myself.

As I look over my shoulder one last time, I selfishly smile at my shadow lover. MY lover, my once in a lifetime soulmate. I catch the last glimpse of his face, but his expression has changed. Funny, he looks hurt. I toss him a haughty glare anyway and watch his solemn face disappear. As I smile I tell his deaf ears one last secret...

"Take that."
Today
she is left to seek herself
in bathroom mirrors;
where purple bags of blood
from her heart are
captured beneath her eyes,
where thoughts rest
trapped
beneath straightened hair
mascara, blush, toothpaste -
she can’t tell where she begins.

Over the running water
it is impossible to tell
her beating heart
from the changing numbers
on the alarm clock.
She stares
into the rippling water
where bubbles collect
iridescent light
and reflect fragments of her face
in rippling shadows.

She buckles her watch,
her shoes, clasps her necklace,
her coat and mittens;
ammed and ready.
Her watch ticks
in time with her
breaths that taste
of perfume and early morning haze.
With one glance in the mirror
her legs, her clothes, her hair,
are out the door.

But she went down with the bubbles.
The tiny black eyes of knowledge. That smug smile he had on his face. Everything about that picture pissed me off. Every time I walked to class that moron stared at me from his little picture frame. It really creeped me out every time I saw it. I could never concentrate in class with him staring at me like that. I always had to study harder and get notes from other people because all I could do was think about that picture.

On Wednesday we had to take a midterm that was 25% of our grade. I had been studying nonstop for this and by Wednesday I was ready. I didn’t want any problems so I walked down the other hall on the other side of the building, away from the sinister smile of the picture. I sat down and was feeling pretty confident. I looked up and could see it through the window in the door, but I told myself to just ignore it. The teacher passed out the tests and I got started. I flew through the first ten questions with no problem. Then I got to number eleven. I remembered reading something about this somewhere, but I just couldn’t place it. That’s when I saw it. That picture was staring at me again; staring a hole right through me. What the hell was it staring at? Did it know I couldn’t figure out the answer? How could it possibly know? I tried to get back to the test but it kept staring at me. I couldn’t take it, it was too much. I felt like I was about to snap right there in the middle of class. All of a sudden I heard, "Ok everyone, hand in your tests." Class was over and I had only answered ten questions! I tried to scribble in a few answers before the teacher took my test, but it was no use. That picture has screwed me. It screwed me out of a good grade on my midterm. But I vowed right then and there that was the last time it would get in my way.

It was late Thursday night and I knew no one would be around. I packed a few supplies and left my house. I parked my car across the street, snuck through an open window and made my way down the halls of the school. I turned the corner and saw it. The same beady little eyes, same goofy smile. I took my paintbrush and dipped it in my bucket of paint. It was time for revenge. I drew a nice big moustache on him and a big cigar in his mouth. There, I thought, that’ll teach you. So I stepped back to look at my work, but something still didn’t seem quite right. Maybe it was the angle of the picture in the moonlight, maybe it was the fact that I was in a poorly ventilated building with an open bucket of paint, but I could have sworn that he was laughing at me! Oh you wanna play hardball, eh? So to further insult this punk, I wrote my name in huge letters across the picture = Hugo was here. That shut him up. I left the school and headed home, feeling very self-satisfied.

The next day I got into school and ran to the hallway to see the picture. They had taken it down! I won! Ah, it looked so much nicer with him gone. I walked into class for the first time with a big smile on my face. But as soon as I sat down, I heard the principal over the intercom, "Hugo Quinn, please report to the principal’s office." I felt a little nervous, but figured it was probably nothing and went down. When I got to the office, I sat down and he asked me if I knew anything about an act of vandalism that occurred last night. I told him I didn’t. "Oh come on," he said "I know it was you." I didn’t leave any evidence, did I? "How could you possibly know it was me?" I asked. "You wrote your name on it!" he said. "So, maybe it was one of the other Hugo’s." I told him. "There aren’t any other Hugo’s!" he shouted. I couldn’t believe it. That picture screwed me again! That’s why it laughed at me, so I would get mad and write my
name on it. But how did it know I would get mad? "You don’t understand," I said "It keeps staring at me, it won’t leave me alone!" The principal looked confused, almost like he didn’t believe me. He looked down and sighed. "You don’t have to make excuses and lie to me. All I was going to have you do was clean it off." ‘You mean it’s still here?’ I asked. "Of course, why wouldn’t it be? The janitor just hung it back up in the hall - Go get a wet rag and wash it off. Then you can go back to class."

I walked back down the hallway only to see that menacing face hanging right back where it was before. I took the wet rag and began to wipe off my artwork. It wasn’t coming off very easily, but I kept scrubbing, trying not to look it in the eyes. It was no use. Its piercing gaze caught mine as we stared at each other. But this time was different. This time it was actually waving at me! I was tired of this. I only had one more option. I lifted the picture off the wall and stared at it. It stared back at me as it always did. "I’ve had enough," I told it. "This is the end of the line." I lifted the god-forsaken picture over my head and threw it to the floor. It smashed into a million pieces all over everything. There, it’s over, I thought. It’ll never bother me again. "What the hell was that noise?" a voice screamed from the other end of the hall. The principal came running from his office to see what was going on. "It was looking at me again!" I shouted. "It was mocking me, it knew it outsmarted me and it was trying to rub it in!" But as I pointed at the shards on the floor, I saw it. It was still there. The face was still there, in one of the pieces, yelling at me. I picked up the piece and looked closely at it. It was still there, the whole face in just one piece of the picture. But how? I picked up another piece and again I saw it. I picked up another and another and another, but it was there, in every single one of them. "What are you doing?" the principal yelled? "Do you know how much that mirror cost?" I stopped moving and turned around. "What did you say?" I asked. It couldn’t be. There was no way. No, I know the difference between a mirror and a picture. He was lying. Yes, he was lying! He was friends with the picture and was trying to protect it. No, you can’t be friends with a picture. Can you? It was all too much to take in.

I woke up in a dark room. It was a quiet place, different from the places I was used to. Not quite as friendly. There weren’t any pictures here, just soft walls and a nice bed. The other people that lived here were strange too. For some reason they always gave me paper plates and plastic forks for my meals. And they never let me drink water either. I never saw the face again.
Megan Webb

She Doesn’t Know She’s Beautiful

Mom always said
“It’s what’s on the inside
that counts.”
But all she hears is:
Eat right.
Diet.
Exercise.

“Beauty is in the eye
of the beholder.”
Society is the judge.
She comes home
from school
with tears
soiling her clothes.
Her thick legs on
tiny ankles
make her
almost bowlegged.
Her braces shine
like the train tracks
next door.
And the large scar
on her forehead
from falling off her bike
three years ago
shines like freshly polished wood.

She sits down
covering her face,
remembering the taunts
and whispers
on the way home from school.
She knew she looked stupid
when she started to sprint home.
She couldn’t take it anymore.
She wipes her face, 
stands up. 
She doesn’t care if she’s “ugly.” 
She grabs a magazine, 
swings her feet up 
on the wooden rocking chair 
in the backyard. 
Her favorite place 
to relax and read. 

If beauty is only skin deep 
what about the 
models on the cover 
of every magazine? 
The perfect plastic bodies. 
Straight white teeth. 
Highlighted hair. 
Tall. 
So skinny 
you can almost 
see bone. 

She whips the magazine 
at the freshly cut lawn 
while new tears fall 
creating a puddle in her lap. 
She looks at the 
woman staring back 
at her from the cover 
of Cosmo. 
Every blemish 
buffed out. 
Every imperfection 
gone unnoticed.
I spent days sleeping,
Hoping to wake up to something more than what I had gone to bed in.
I slept in my own sorrow because I was too scared to come out from underneath the covers.
Don't be scared of the light,
The boogie man has no power if you check underneath your bed.
Your fear cannot consume you if you confront it.
And I speak as if I'm finished,
Reached the limit of my road and ended at a secluded destination which shields me from the world.
There is no place like that,
No sanctuary which does not involve tragedy as some point.
It's about living,
Not waiting,
Or sleeping
Or crying through the day,
Although I spent many of my hours in one of those states.
Pick yourself up even if your heart predicted rain.
Get out an umbrella,
Put on some goulashes.
The rain can only get you wet,
Because if you learn to swim

You'll never drown.
I Write

My pen has ink
my fingers have motion

I had voice
tongue
cheek
lips
when I spoke

I write for my father who enlisted for his country
My mother jumped the red-eyed flight
liberating herself from dirty dishes
Dawn stopped making soap for sensitive hands

I write

My pen has ink
Fingers have motion
Entitled crazy
brave
girl
Pen in hand
like a gun
one click
Your brain explodes words onto paper

Ink
words
thoughts

I write

My pen has ink
fingers never stop talking

Speaking becomes voluntary
You’ve discovered the new soft grip pens
The extra cushion band-aids
when you write to bleed
write to read

I write

My pen has ink
my fingers
never stop moving
She can't remember when the morning became confused with night, when the clouds of her unrest shaded the glow of promise, making the beep, beep, beep, of her alarm clock the only way to tell one from the other. Life, like a long drawn out play with mediocre actors, bored from too many cigarettes and a diet of saltine crackers, had started to play out before her on a stage. Her eyes had become useless from over thinking and under-emotionalizing everything – she was always rehearsing, but never taking the stage. The little breaks that came from doing things she shouldn't with people who like mirages in the desert, left her longing, thirsty, and dry; were not enough to keep her going. She found solace in all things intellectual - peace in the finite black and white, and herself in the infinite minds of poets like Emerson and Gluck. What she feared most of this life wasn't the loss of human touch, but the loss of herself. Scared of getting lost between the desk shelves, between the beep of her alarm clock, between the action of everyday and everyday and everyday. Scared of not being able to find herself in her words, in a world that she can understand without a map, because map-less is how she prefers it. Where the white page becomes her foundation and she builds herself strong walls littered with puzzles of windows to let only the keenest light in, she has the reigns on infinity. She wonders when, if ever she will feel again? When will the morning be bright? When will the orange light melt like love on her tongue? When will she write and be real?

She wants to know and so she writes, she writes a manifesto. And it hurts. And she is not thirsty. And she is not lost. She is. She has word, and word has her, and she is. The morning ceases to be confused with night, and everyday does not dissolve, and the desert ceases to be dry, she thinks, at least, for today.
Submission Guidelines

- All writing submissions must be sent to angle@sjfc.edu.
- Although we have previously required your work to be sent as attachments, we ask you to please paste your work into the email. We will no longer be accepting attachments.
- Please include your name, address, phone number, and the title(s) of the piece(s) submitted.
- Art can be submitted in JPEG, photograph, photocopy, or actual form.
- All submissions are judged anonymously.
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Email us at angle@sjfc.edu,
and watch for emails regarding meeting times!!

All are welcome!