Full Issue

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Submission Guidelines                       | //home.sjfc.edu/theangle/  |
ANGLE'S HOME GROWN AWARDS

READERS' CHOICE

FIRST PLACE A PLEA OF DALLIANCE......Matt Cook
SECOND PLACE THIS OLD METAPHOR......Andy Brunton
THIRD PLACE IN WINDY CIRCLES......Erin Dorney
FACULTY AWARD PHYSICAL THERAPY......Dee Dee Hogan

Krisitin Kelly
MATT COOK

A PLEA OF DALLIANCE

I am procrastination
I am the leading advocate of tomorrow
Anything you need to do
Any responsibility you have
I will re-schedule it
I will give you time when no one else will
Come to me
And let me put your stress on lay-away
Walk away from the task at hand
Let it ferment in my warehouse
Contract my services
Feed me your motivation
Under immense pressure
Diamonds are created
Just imagine what your burden could become
If only you’d let me hold it for you
Let me be the nirvana in your drink
Swallow your ambitions
We’ll waste the day away in euphoria
It's raining again
These days filled with pain
My stomach
like a bucket
gathering drops through
the crack in my mouth

This old metaphor has become self-aware
like the splash from water
poured into water
like tires through a puddle
and you on the sidewalk
like a hose
turned playfully on a friend
Like a squirt gun
on a hot day
I want to spit.

When I told you my father's story
you said, how did you never tell me that?
And I couldn't answer at first
Because it did not feel real
Like a screenplay I'd written
about myself

His life, his pain, my own are drops of water
that resemble each other
but not the clouds they fell from
and certainly not
puddles

We share the pain in our stomachs
like water balloons
dropped on whoever walks under us
And the drenching ruins their day
to our satisfaction

Pain is never original
even when swallowed

We spit out cliché
a mixture of bile and water
on our friends, on the audience
Or whoever comes close enough
to get wet
We do it because to be dry is to be alone
We use cliché because it's the same cloud
For every person
For every city
And because
no one carries umbrellas in L.A.
In Windy Circles

Been raining
for days now:
Puddles outside my window swell
up past the tree roots.

Footprints drowned
in soggy grass
All evidence of
night erased.

I can’t tell if
it’s my ticking clock
or the constant dripping
next to my bed.

Runoff filters like coffee
percolating in gutters.
And every inch of water sweeps
a lonely blue.

My mind moves
in windy circles.
Whistling around corners–
Over eaves.

Reminding the branches
that soon
they will shiver
naked.
we wander 'round the room
a personal battlefield
stalking the monster machines
who laugh at our pain
which is dark
as mortal sin,
though we are not guilty
of any crimes,
only victims of
precarious falls
accidents
surgery
arthritis
or 'other.'

slowly we move like
stringed puppets
in restless rhythms
of rehabilitation
reps
range of motion
strengthening exercises
a therapist's firm hands.

we are the broken,
the hurt
willing ourselves
stretching ourselves
back together
with bruised smiles
and tender dreams
of being whole again.
Erika McRae

A Poet's Poem

I need a reassuring true poem
A “You’re-not-alone” poem
An “I-know-what-you’re-going-through” poem…
And “This-is-what-you-should-do” poem

How about a honest poem...a full of strife poem
A “Tell-it-like-it-is” poem
No sugarcoating and playing down life poem
A “No-matter-the-vintage-point, life-is-just-unjust” poem

Not a “playing by the rules” poem
But a “Do-what-it-takes-to-survive” poem
A “bribe-to-stay-alive” poem

I need a “I-can-relate” poem
“My daddy’s a salesman...he sells cocaine” poem
“Some indecent things help to create our fate” poem
Forget the Brady Bunch, How about the Osbourne’s? poem

“Don’t lie to the youth, by hiding the truth” poem
“Feed them the facts and all that matters on a silver platter” poem
Cut out all the “everything-is fine” chatter and exterminate that everything-is-everything persona
Because you could inhale once more only to find you’ve suffocated on your own repression...poem
REBECCA HARRISON

PRACTICE SPACE

Five guys, blue and white lights
Three amps, three drum sets and a Chinese man’s hat.

Empty Icehouse cans on tables
Next to an untuned, unplugged organ.

Fender Strat, Ibanez, Pearl
Nameless African djembe.

Numbers of Asian men are nailed to the wall
Protective barriers of dime-size slotted eyes.

Cords are piled on the floor
Like heaps of sticky, starchy, spaghetti strands.

Is it Buddy Holly on the bongos?
His black thick framed glasses think so.

Pedals, of rainbow floral hue, hide scraps of carpet
Howling guitar player’s wah-face.

Bradley dog cowers
Snares make his ears scream.

And Little Wing caresses the air
Resurrecting the spirit of Mr. Hendrix.

JONATHAN KING

MIRAGE
STYLE INSPIRED BY JAMES LAUGHLIN

Moonlight reveals the
image of her beauty casting a
silhouette from afar she stands

silent perched on a narrow
ledge focused as a cheetah stalks
its prey I stare into the

depths of her being and tip-
toe through a cloud of stolen
images only to find I did not exist.
MEGHAN PRICHARD

DREAMS IN WHITE ROOMS

I had a dream last night.
You were there,
Like a sugar bowl after breakfast.
Spilling out spoons of white.

And in my silent desperation
For rooms without doors
A perfectly padded periphery
From ceiling to cotton floor,
It was too early in my slumber
For dying and rearview mirrors
Your body sprawled out on my mattress,
Like chicken pox fevers.

I came in and out of bedrooms.
Mumbles from one world to the next.
It is sleeping solitary.
Where words silence color
And makes color meaningless.

Dream in sepia,
Or red words that spin.
Allusion and sunrise--
A dreaded reunion.

MELISA BEAUCHESNE

SEPARATION

I love the salty smell of the ocean and how the sand seems to dance between my toes as the wind whirls it around my feet. I can feel the sun’s rays beating against my back and I wish I had remembered to put on sunscreen this morning. I know my skin is getting redder with every step I take. Today is one of those lazy days and I don’t plan on going home until late afternoon. I wonder how far out I can swim...

Placing my feet into the ocean, I don’t notice that the clouds are turning gray. I wade past the children playing by the shore. I dive into the water, swimming past fish and seahorses. When I look up, I see sea gulls soaring through the sky. I don’t notice that sun is quickly moving behind the clouds. I’m energized and happy to be outside. It’s raining a gentle mist across the ocean. All of a sudden, I’m not as warm as I was a few hours ago— I can’t stop shivering. I’m terrified when I look around: north, south, east, west, I don’t know which way I looked. No matter what direction— I can’t see the shore...anywhere. I know if I keep swimming eventually I’ll find land, “It’s just a matter of time,” I tell myself.

The rain starts falling harder and harder like punches pounding my body into the water. Every time I try to breathe, I swallow water instead of air. The rain is pushing me beneath the surface. I’ve been swimming for miles and it doesn’t seem like I have gotten anywhere; that’s the moment I realized I’ve been treading water the entire time. It’s dark and I can’t rely on stars or the moon to help me. I can’t see past the pellets falling from the sky. I start screaming for help. It’s useless— no one hears me...

“Wake up,” says a familiar voice as he gently shakes me awake. “You have been whimpering in your sleep— is everything ok?” I tell him everything and he holds my hand. I look down and watch my fingers turn into water.
Ah! man of my ahorita,  
you who took away  
the rain from my soul,  
ah! my soul full of rain  
full of rain oh my blessed soul

ah! the rain the rain the rain,  
no promise of a mother’s milk  
for the newborn mouth  
nor hope for a new greening  
of the earth.

Ah! the rain the rain the rain,  
each drop a jagged blade  
through my heart.

I have shouted across the Gulf  
and you have reached  
across Gibraltar,  
O you of the eternal city  
by that endless waterfront,  
you of the cinnamon skin  
deepened by that everlasting sun.

My flow of tears my call  
from the depths  
as the rain  
carried me to the shadows  
where I awaited death

and now ah! how I feel you  
in my depths  
my flow of tears  
in the immense prairie  
of your arms

my call  
and the sweetness of my shower  
of honey  
ah! my rain my rain my rain  
and your nighted form  
that bewitched me.

¡Ay! hombre de mi ahorita,  
tú que llevaste  
la lluvia de mi alma,  
¡ay! mi alma llena de lluvia  
llena de lluvia ay mi almita

¡ay! la lluvia la lluvia la lluvia,  
sin promesa de leche materna  
para la boca del recién nacido  
sin esperanza de un nuevo verdor  
de la tierra.

¡ay! la lluvia la lluvia la lluvia,  
cada gota una daga dentada  
en mi corazón.

He gritado a través del Golfo  
y tú has llegado  
por Gibraltar,  
ay tú de la ciudad sin fin  
en esta orilla infinita del mar,  
tú de la piel canela  
dorada por este eterno sol.

Mi llanto mi llamada  
de las profundidades  
mientras la lluvia  
me llevaba a la penumbra  
donde esperaba la muerte

y ahora ¡ay! como te siento  
hasta en mis profundidades  
mi llanto  
en la inmensa llanura  
de tus brazos

mi llamada  
y la dulzura de mi lluvia  
de miel  
¡ay! mi lluvia mi lluvia mi lluvia  
y tu silueta anochecido  
que me hechizó.
EMILY RYAN

SOMETIMES YOU FEEL LIKE A NUT . . .

The scene opens to what looks like a low-budget talk show. Seated is the host, Dick; a middle-aged man, slender, handsome and graying with Chicklet sized teeth. Next to him is his guest, a man dressed as a squirrel. The squirrel, named Nigel, sits on edge, agitated and uncomfortable, constantly twitching his nose and tail. Back from commercial, the show commences with a sound-track of applause.

Host: Welcome back everyone! (cheesy applause track) As you know, our show today is dedicated to embarrassing stories and their effects on those involved. We are now talking with Nigel Squirrel, welcome to the show Nigel.

Squirrel: Thank you very much, Dick, it’s good to be here. (more of the applause track)

Host: So let’s start from the beginning, I understand that this is the first time you have stepped out of hiding since your premature hibernation earlier in the fall. What exactly happened to make you turn in so early?

Squirrel: Well Dick, it’s true, this is the first time I have left my hole in Willow Tree #4 in four weeks. (gasps leading to applause by fake audience track) It all started on a fairly nice day . . . (host interrupts with a cheesy grin)

Host: Seems like most stories start out that way. (a laugh track is played, but is a bit too delayed for Dick’s liking – he is momentarily agitated)

Squirrel: (with a shudder) Yeah . . . well like I was saying, I was just minding my own business, collecting nuts to prepare for the long winter. There wasn’t a cloud in the sky, and the breeze was still warm, but like mom always used to say, “A happy squirrel is a prepared squirrel.”

Host: Mmm-hmm, she sounds like an intelligent…squirrel, so what happened next?

Squirrel: Well, I had found this really great pile of acorns, just sitting there, waiting to be harvested. I try not to do this too much, but I just had to stop and try out the goods - you know how that is . . .

Host: Yes, I really do, I don’t think I would have been divorced four times if I had taken a little nibble first. (laugh track plays, and Dick chuckles) So, you were just standing there, eating a couple acorns, and what happened?

Squirrel: Well, Dick, it’s really hard for me to talk about, but all of the sudden, one of the nuts just jumped up and started chasing me.

(laugh track plays, Dick looks surprised; yet pleased at this; Squirrel is a bit dismayed)

Host: Wait, so one of the nuts jumped up, and was chasing you, a squirrel? (more of the laugh track)

Squirrel: Yes. I was so frightened that when I got to my hole, I jumped in and decided not to come out. Until your show contacted me, I was facing a long hibernation without nearly enough food.

Host: That could have been bad. That’s why we would like to help you with your food situation, we really feel for you.

(applause track played)

Host: Come on out! (Dick gestures to curtain with his arms extended; elated smile exposing all of his huge white teeth)

A man in an acorn suit jumps out from behind the curtain. He is waving his arms and running towards squirrel who upon seeing the nut, jumps out of his chair and begins running frightened throughout the studio. The chase continues as the applause track is played, and lights turn out.

Curtain

10
ART GALLERY

DRAWING

MARY LOPORCARO
ART GALLERY

PHOTOGRAPH

KAYLENE TRAN

PHOTOGRAPH

COLLEEN MORSCHAUSER

DRAWING

MEGHAN PRICHARD
MICHAEL STECK

YOU CAN'T PARK YOUR ELEPHANT
ON MAIN STREET, YOU KNOW

LAW: A person may not cross state lines with a duck atop his head. (Location: United States, Minnesota)

In high school I was very experimental with my hair. I just felt like it needed to be a different color every week. I’m not exactly sure why but for some reason I thought this was a good idea. I wanted to look different from the person I was and I hated blond hair. In fact, I actually came to loathe the dirty blond creature that perched on top of my head. I guess I felt that my blond hair made me stand out to much. I wanted to be like the guys I saw on television who all were abnormally good-looking and they all had dark hair. Why couldn’t I be like everyone else?

Of course if my goal was to blend in like everyone else, the fact seemed to elude me that no one else’s hair color changed every week, although the interesting dichotomy was in some ways I wanted to stand out. I wanted people to take notice of me because I was different, yet part of me just wanted to fit in. My mind was like a big tub of yogurt with the fruit on the bottom that you could swirl around. One part wanted just the plain vanilla and the other wanted that fruit all swirled around for everyone to taste. I guess one way to accomplish both was to change my hair. One week my hair was the color of a copper kettle. The next it would be the color of fudge. Another time it was the color of rusted metal and like the Sonny and Cher song says, “the beat goes on,” and on, and on.

I was also completely influenced by the media. I lived for MTV. I dreamt of being a rock star but my singing sounded like a dying cow, so it was never going to happen. I worshipped all of the Pop/Rock Gods and none of them more than Madonna. From floor to ceiling my bedroom was slathered in pictures of Madonna in every incarnation. Every time she changed her look I would get that itch that I couldn’t scratch and I’d want to change my hair again too. I wanted to be like Madonna and all the other gods with the cool hair.

One adventurous time I was feeling a little on the edge, thinking I was Cyndi Lauper or something, and I thought coloring my hair jet black and leaving the front light blond would look extra cool. And with that thought I rushed to CVS to buy myself some magic-marker-black hair color. I rushed home barely able to contain the excitement for my latest hair “don’t.”

I watched the seconds tick away on my aqua Swatch Watch, waiting for the 45 minutes the directions said it took. As I waited, the dark slop on top of my head grew darker and darker. It looked like I poured a cup of tar on my head. I briefly thought that this may not have been the best choice for me. Yet, after I rinsed all the muck out of my hair I actually thought I was looking pretty fucking cool.

On a trip to the optometrist’s office shortly after my new hair session-de-jour, I was sitting in a chair waiting for them to bring me my new contact lenses to try on. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of something in the mirror and I nearly leapt out of my chair because I actually thought, for a split second, that a skunk had somehow landed on my head. I looked like I had Pepé Le Pew sitting where my hair should be. I could barely muffle my screech as I quickly made a mad dash out of the office and straight to the drug store.

As quick as I could I ran home with my hair color removal kit. I just prayed it would work and could salvage this cartoon skunk on my head. I read the instructions and I thought in my brilliant reasoning that I would not leave it on as long as it said, so I could just lighten the color a bit. I applied. I waited. I rinsed. I looked in the mirror and this time the cry came out like the wail of a banshee. Instead of my friend Pepé, I now seemed to have something that resembled a dead duck on my head. I went from skunk to mallard in just 15 minutes. It was every which color but right.
I called to my mother who quickly ran to the bathroom not sure what the hell I had done this time. When she first saw me she literally jumped back a few feet and then quickly tried to maintain her “Mom” composure.

“It doesn’t look that bad,” she said.

“Mom, it looks like a dead duck on my head.”

“Well, yes,” she said, with a smile that looked like someone was stepping on her toes while she was doing it. “You’re kind of right.”

“Thanks Mom. You weren’t supposed to agree.”

“I know, let me go make an appointment at my salon.”

After going to the salon and sitting in a chair for almost four hours and embarrassed beyond belief, my hair was fixed. My desire to ever color my hair again myself was also fixed, at least for that week.

LAW: Persons classified as "ugly" may not walk down any street. (Location: United States, California, San Francisco)

I remember one time being in Marketplace Mall in Henrietta, New York. It was the place my friends and I would always go to hang out, even if we had no money to buy anything. I remember skipping school one time and driving up to the big city. It was a big deal because we were from Canandaigua, NY, and the name of the town was bigger than the town. There wasn’t much to do in the upright little village so we’d always want to venture out into the great beyond, and back then that would be the mall.

We were sitting in the food court, eating some processed food (if you could even classify that fast food gunk as food) and in through the glass doors walked something and I stress the thing at the end of that word. I think I had to close my eyes and rub them to make sure I hadn’t gotten something on my contact lenses. All I could think when she or it walked through those doors was that it was this character, Augra, from the movie “The Dark Crystal.” The red, tattered, moth-eaten dress she was wearing looked identical to the one the character wore. She had this hair that was piled so high that it doubled her height. It was so matted and frizzy that it no longer looked like hair. Maybe it was just a 300-year-old wig. The color was this dead gray color like the color of a tombstone but it had chunks of red strands of straw strewn throughout.

I thought about this creature as she proudly walked through the mall past all the stores, the snickers and the people blatantly pointing at her. Though I couldn’t really see her face because it was covered by the monster she let live on top of her head, I caught a glimmer of something that look like her teeth in the shape of a smile. I wondered how she could march through that place without caring what people thought. I thought about myself as I walked down the halls of Canandaigua Academy and how I was always afraid that people were staring at me, giving me the same jabs and jeers. I always felt like someone had took my mind and shoved it into this strange body that never seemed to move the way I wanted it to. And yet this creature strutted through the mall as proud as a peacock displaying its grand feathers.

I wondered what mirror she was looking in when she got ready to go out on the prowl. Was it some crazy funhouse mirror that showed you in some distorted view or did she have a mirror like Malificent had in Snow White that instead of telling her the truth, lied to her and told her she was the fairest in the land? All I knew was that I wanted that mirror. I wanted my mirror to tell me I looked good. I wanted my mirror to stop crying out that I was not even close to the fairest of them all.

Augra continued her stroll down the mall, pushing her own personal cart, filled with bags of mysterious contents that I was probably better off not knowing what was inside, further into the heart of the mall. I thought if she could walk with her head held up high, especially holding what could have been her house on her head, then there was no reason for me to even think there was anything wrong with me. I realized I didn’t need a lying mirror, I just needed to look past what I thought I saw. I also didn’t want some mirror lying to me and letting me go out
in public looking like I was rode hard and put away wet.

LAW: You’re not allowed to park your elephant on Main Street. (Location: United States, Minnesota, Virginia)

I remember my second grade teacher Miss Ismann. Her high pitched voice still rings in my ears. I can’t recall the exact words but she always reminded my of Edith Bunker from “All in the Family.” Well, more like what Edith’s mother would be like. Sometimes her perfectly coiffed do would be slightly crooked, much to our glee. I used to love watching “The Carol Burnett Show” and I always thought Miss Ismann’s wig looked like Carol’s character Eunice on the show, sort of like a brown bob with a poodle puff in the front and along the bottom edges. In her dark monotone colors, her favorite was gray, she looked like an baby elephant with a winter hat on. I used to imagine someone walking her down Main Street for our annual Christmas Day parade or maybe, more appropriately, St. Patrick’s Day, since I think she liked to sneak a nip of the bottle now and again.

When we would take tests in class, we would have to all line up in a single file line at her desk and wait for our papers to be graded. I’m not exactly sure why Miss Ismann was the way she was. I don’t know if it was that she had a bottle of gin tucked away in her large purse she always carried or if she was just old, but as she got further down the line, she would start to fall asleep while she was grading our papers.

“Miss Ismann, Miss Ismann,” someone would call out.

With a loud snort she’d raise her head and push back her wig that had fallen far over her forehead. The kids used to whisper about how she was completely bald underneath. They also used to talk about how one time a boy had brought a fishing pole to school, and how, during one of Miss Ismann’s naptimes, he had thrown the line over the large movable walls of our classroom that looked like big Legos. Supposedly the hook had landed right on top of her wig and pulled it right up off her bald head. I imagine if it did happen it probably took her a few minutes to wake up and even realize what had happened.

If you were one of the lucky ones, you got your paper graded while she was falling asleep, like I always seemed to. She would take her red pen and check the answers that were wrong and when she went to put your letter grade on it, that’s when it happened. Just as she finished writing my “A” her head fell lower as if her wig were made of lead. As her head fell down, her hand started to drift on the paper like a psychic doing automatic writing.

“Miss Ismann,” I said, gently taping her mushy shoulder.

“Ten divided by two, oh,” she mumbled as she kick-started back to life. “Good job, Billy, you got an A.”

“It’s Mikey.”

“What?”

“Never mind,” I said.
It was a not-for-profit beginning—he was in it for the story. Now his office teems with dirt.
The President caught in under an intern’s skirt: Have You Seen the Commander in Briefs?
Yellow paper printed in grey—throw away.
Oh, but I digress.

Spread the truth! He yells to midnight Boston, horse-backed. Tell the people:
Pedophiles at the Pulpit! Front page. Cover up! Bold type. Let’s spread the word:
Lawsuits Topple Steeple.
    Meanwhile, Joe Schmo rapes four thirteen-year-olds in Bunker Hill.
The public asks, “Who’s Joe Schmo?”
Oh, but I digress.

Opinion piece: Is It Still PC to Support the Troops? One if by land. Two if by sea.
How many if by car-bomb? Thousands lay in the waste—death by an unknown enemy.
Wait a second…see no enemy, hear no enemy—speak to distract: Blasphemy in the House of White.

He speaks of politics not peace.

Will his malarkey never cease?

Oh, but I digress.

A journalist can bring us our daily heartache.
    But he never thinks of the babies—millions ended.

    Not a thought…
we hunt the things that we let out of the cage.

call it sport, but the bite marks leave a promise.

we bought the things they swore would camouflage our age.

call it botox, but our smiles are set in granite.

true love got lost somewhere in between the sheets and mattress. thirty-second clips are what we saw; a single sip of what went on. the decor: a fake set. the scripted lines of a true romantic. at least pretend the sunset turns you on. we'd be convincing with a little practice. we sold ourselves in movies; pink death on the silver screen. can't feel a thing, but don't stop moving. you're so natural. so natural. cut through red tape. pan out to a parking lot. unroll the welcome mat and kiss the hand that's taking your snapshot. paint on a plastic face: synthetic beauty that i can't erase. come sit with me: a perfect portrait for my limousine. the only thing that all the pretty girls wanted was 20 minutes in a broadway production. you'll be the cover of this week's heartthrob. you don't have to like it, baby, it's your job.

tonight?

tonight, staccato skeletons stumble out of my closet, marching one by one like dripping drops from a faucet.

tonight, electric lights meet stage fright and bend at the knees as the disco ball throbs like the moon spreading seeds.

tonight, these arms will swell into barbed-wire dolphin fins; helium laughter spat through glass toothless grins.

we sold ourselves in movies; pink death on the silver screen. i hope you know that you're the reason i left the city smiling.
JASON COTUGNO

ESCAPE IN THE WILDERNESS

Out on her deck overlooking the wilderness, the mother was looking for her son. Her 13-year-old ran away again. She figured he was somewhere out in the back of their five acres, but she had no idea where. She clutched her whiskey glass and lit a cigarette. She screamed his name in a voice that sounded like she had a sore throat. She listened for a response as she finished her drink. In her Mrs. Cleaver house dress and white ruffled apron, she thought to herself, boy is he going to get it.

Meanwhile, Dominic sat among the tall oaks and fall leaves scattered about the ground. He leaned against the trunk of a thick and watched the leaves as the cold air blew them to new homes. His nose was cold and red; he felt it start to run out of his left nostril. He used his jacket sleeve to wipe his nose, but he couldn’t stop the constant drips. Still, that wasn’t his main concern. He rubbed his cold fingers under his eye and felt the bruise start to form. It was still throbbing, but it was a pain he had grown accustomed to. He wanted to cry so badly, but he knew it would do no good. Instead, he started to think about all the other bruises, cuts, broken bones, fractures, and sprains.

There was the time he forgot to organize the books in the library of their enormous house; for that, he got beaten with a wooden spoon. When he had made more than one error during his weekly piano lesson, his mother would slap his hands with a ruler for the number of additional mistakes. Still, his worst punishments came when report cards came out. For every grade below an A, his mother would lock him in the downstairs storage closet for one hour. Sometimes, he spent up to six hours locked in the room no bigger than a closet. His only company was the rats that made their way throughout the basement and into the closet.

These rats scared him at first, but he eventually got used to them. They never bothered him or hurt him in any way, unlike her. Instead, they would just go about their business. If only life were that simple. If only people realized basic human needs.

Dominic’s only solace came from being outdoors and away from the woman he hated so much. On her calmer days, Dominic’s mother would kick him outside onto their property to “reflect” on what he did wrong. He would spend hours climbing trees, chasing deer and squirrels, and looking at the sky. He often lost track of time, so his mother would yell for him to come inside. Mostly, he ignored her screams, which forced her to come out and grab him by the neck. He knew if his mother was drinking that he would be beaten anyway.

As a result, he took to creating his own world. The large oak was his home. His mother was the doe and his father the stag. The foxes were his brothers and the squirrels his little cousins. He knew they didn’t talk, but that wasn’t a bad thing to him. Most of the words he heard his mother say were four letter gems that children weren’t
supposed to repeat.

This time he knew things would have to be different. He had suffered enough and needed to figure out how to escape. Sure, he knew 9-1-1, but no one would believe him. After all, his mother was one of the wealthiest women in their town. Not only that, she seemed to have connections with every law enforcement group in the area. No, Dominic knew that only he could be the master of his destiny.

Recalling his knowledge of the woods and the outdoors he spent so much time in, he walked over to an area where the land sank in. *Perfect*, he thought to himself. He ran 500 feet back to his shed and grabbed a shovel. As he made his way back, he saw his mother through the kitchen window, sipping a drink and smoking her cigarette. He figured it was probably her third seeing as it was almost 6 o’clock. He knew she would be looking for him soon, so he took off his sneakers and tiptoed down the deck stairs.

All of a sudden, he heard the deck door open. His mother had walked out. He fell to the ground and laid on his stomach. Dominic was conscious of his body’s movement. As he smelled the fall that was still in the leaves, he begged to hear her footsteps followed by the closing of the deck door.

“Come inside, Dominic. It’s almost dinner time,” his mother said. She walked back inside and returned to her whiskey bottle and glass. She lit another cigarette and watched the small television in the kitchen.

As soon as he heard the closing door, Dominic got back to his spot and began digging. His thin frame worked tirelessly until his arms became weak. Eventually, he declared himself finished and began disguising the hole with brush. When he was finished, he knew it was a matter of time before his mother would start calling.

“Dominic,” she screamed, “Get in here if you want to live to see fourteen!” She heard no response. As the alcohol saturated her system, she grabbed her spatula and fur coat. *He’s really going to regret this*, she thought to herself.

She began stumbling into the wooded area; the alcohol had taken its hold on her. Dominic could hear her walking on the dried leaves, coming closer and closer with each step. He sat down, hiding behind the oak tree watching her hunt. She was only feet away, but her drunkenness had overpowered her sight. He started thinking about what life would be like without her. I will have the house all to myself, he thought. Then, he felt a sudden jolt to his shoulder. He returned to reality.

She grabbed his shirt saying, “So you think you can fool me, huh? You don’t think that’s been done before? Why do you think the hole is there in the first place? Let’s go.” She brought his face inches from hers and stared at him, half-angry, half-drunk. Dominic could smell the alcohol on her breath and he turned away. She dragged him towards the house as she continued to stumble. She opened the patio door and pushed him inside. He wondered if he would even survive to think of Plan B.
There are times
when the barriers between the world
and you
seem so flimsy and thin.

The night I swept the floor
in our little house-trailer
Gathering crumbs of bread and dirt,
Pieces of spit-out food, dust bunnies
All gathered in by the long reach of a corn broom
A soft whoooshing sound as broom-strands hit vinyl tile
a neat pile taking shape.

I pulled the chairs out from the table,
one by one,
Stopping to read a magazine
that lay open on the table’s edge.
Full of stories that happened
far away from my trailer-house
on my muddy road
in my tiny town
The broom still in my hand.

I read about lives of newsworthy people,
Watching the late spring sun shine through the dust motes
Quietly.
Children all asleep, the evening turning silent,
When the floor started shaking,
Undulating softly beneath me.
The walls began to shudder gently
Then harder
As some determined force
Shook our home like we were in the spin cycle of a washer.
Windows cracked, dishes clattered
I held on to the broom tightly
Steadied myself on the table

Then, slowly, the shaking grew less,
subsided until there was only the shaking in my knees left.
It was then I knew
All that lay between me and a bottomless chasm in the earth
Was a few inches of aluminum,
Pressboard flooring and some tiny wires
Suspended on eight cinderblocks
In the mud.

That was it.
After that, the place never seemed quite whole,
Never seemed able to keep out the elements
The wind, snow, rain, or sun
All that stood between us and all that
Was that flimsy aluminum skin.
We gather here today
To mourn the death of a girl;
One who we will miss fervently
For eternity
Her purity will be remembered.
Her small, delicate hand
Remembered being grasped so tightly into yours

We remember scraped knees
Lemonade stands
Mischievous grins.
Suddenly and unexpectedly
Summers turn to autumn
Autumns turn to winter
Winters to spring
So on and so forth
And slowly...

Chocolate covered mouths alter
To lipstick, and Lash-by-Lash mascaraed eyes.
Constantly searching reflections
Complexions
Obsessions with one's self
Confusion about destiny
As memory soars past with its
Silver, translucent wings
And the paper-thin skin of youth
Sheds its original radiance to reveal
Not the empty shell of a child
But a confident, finished
Beautiful
Female.

So, although we mourn the death
Of a girl
Tomorrow let us celebrate
The birth of a woman.
A sweet, balding, elderly man waited patiently, crouched on all fours, behind the couch. His skinny frame, with yet a rotund belly, cast a shadow on the living room floor. He would remain there until the pinnacle of our camp-out, when he would come slowly crawling towards us. This happened every night as my grandfather, Pops, would join my sister and me in our elaborate world of imagination as “Smokey the Bear” There were always pears; Pops loved pears.

“A camping we will go, a camping we will go, hi-ho and off we go, a camping we will go.” We sang this song as we got in line for our parade down nature trail. Nana stood first, with plate of fruit in hand; I was second, because I was the oldest, and Shannon was last. I felt important as I stood behind Nana. I watched her blonde curly hair bounce as we skipped, danced, and frolicked through the house. We made our way through the kitchen, around the dining room table, and past the “bears’ den.” We finally made it to our desired destination, our beloved, makeshift campsite.

Sitting around the living room campfire, made of ugly brown couch cushions, Nana told stories of growing up on the farm. We listened intently and wide-eyed, while munching on our delicious fruit. We enjoyed hearing those stories; but we were greatly anticipating the visit from “Smokey the Bear.” All of a sudden we would hear it, a growl and a gruff from behind the couch. It was Pops, on his hands and knees, pretending to be a bear, only to appease his innocent granddaughters. Shannon and I would leap to our feet; we were being attacked! It would always go the same way.

I screamed at the top of my lungs, “Oh no, a big scary bear is trying to steal our food and kill us; save us Nana!”

Shannon and I ran to cower beneath Nana, as Pops continually got closer, pawing and huffing at the ground, “Grunt grunt grunt grunt grunt.”

“He’s coming, he’s coming, what are we going to do?”

Suddenly, Nana said, “Wait, look closely, that’s not a mean scary bear, that’s just Smokey coming to say hi!”

“Yay! It’s Smokey. Let’s go feed him his pears.”

With that, Shannon and I would rush to feed Smokey his daily dose of pears. We would literally take three pears at a time and stuff them into Pops’ mouth. He would choke on them and spit them on the ground as we force fed him way more pears than was humanly possibly. Then, we would go for rides on Smokey’s back and pet his balding head as if it were full of brown fur.

Soon after, the night would quickly draw to a close, but there was still more fun to be had. Shannon and I would place a pillow behind his head and tell him to lie back against the wall. Then, just as he went to put his head down, we would remove the
pillow and Pops would bang his head, hard. He screamed in agony; we laughed hystically. This trick never got old. Pops would pretend to be hurt, and we would sympathize, but he always did it again, and again.

We got to hear a final bedtime story, upstairs, with Smokey himself. I never knew what story I was going to hear about - was it going to be about the gang of skunks Pops once dueled with, the adventurous bull, or Blacky the crow?

Pops began the tale, “Once upon a time, early in the morning, I went outside to feed the cows. On my way to the barn, I found an injured crow with a broken wing lying on the ground. There was something magical about this crow; I could feel it.

“A magical crow, Pops, really?”

“Of course, Lindsay, he is magical. I named him Blacky, and nursed him back to health, feeding him seeds and pears.

“You fed him pears?”

“Oh yes, Blacky likes pears as much as I do. As soon as he could fly again, I let him go, but I knew that wouldn’t be the last of Blacky. From that day on, whenever I was in trouble, Blacky knew it, and he would come to return the favor. So girls, whenever you feel lost or scared, look up at the sky and listen for that wondrous ‘caw, caw,’ and know that it is Blacky.”

“Will Blacky always be there, Pops?”

“Yes, girls, whenever you need him, he will be there.”

More than ten years later, I was sixteen years old, and it was a cold and brutal morning in November. Pops was in the hospital after having received a heat defibrillator. The doctors were hopeful, and he seemed to be getting better. I had spoken to him on the phone the night before, and he was doing “just fine.” Before Nana and my mother could make the one-hour drive out to the Syracuse hospital, Nana had to make one last essential stop. She absolutely had to go back to her apartment to get pears. Pops wanted those pears, he needed those pears, and she couldn’t leave without them.

They entered the apartment just as the phone rang. It was the doctor calling, “Wallec has just gone into cardiac arrest; we are doing the best we can, but it is not going well....”

The tone in the doctor’s voice indicated that the worst had happened. My mother, being a nurse, knew that Pops had probably died because doctors never tell family about death over the phone. In haste, the pears were left abandoned, in the refrigerator, as Nana and my mother rushed out the door to embark on a tense and tearful ride to hell. Vomit rose in my throat as I heard my Uncle Joe utter words I had been dreading to hear, “I am just calling about the funeral arrangements...” That was all I needed to hear, I knew the fate that had been sealed. Nana didn’t make it to the hospital in time; and the essential pears were never received. Smokey never ate his last pears; they remained forgotten and rotting at the bottom of the refrigerator.
Yes I will walk along the beach with you. Your hair shines like gold in the sunlight. Your eyes glint like diamonds in the moonlight. Your place or mine? I could lay with you all day and night. Let me touch you. BZZZZZ!!

Damn alarm! Always right when I’m getting to the good part of my dreams, the alarm goes off and spoils it. It is a small, off-white contraption with a black front and glowing green lett...well, I guess, they are actually numbers. No letters on this clock. Well unless you count the ones on top that mark the setting buttons and the snooze button. Then there is the button that I always always always push before I go to bed. The one that turns it from a lump of plastic to an annoying demon from hell. The on/off button. Oh, what a pain that button is. The thing always chooses the wrong time to go off. Oh I know that it isn’t the clock’s fault. But why is the moment that I am always about to bite into the biggest most tasty confection in the world, or kiss my dream girl exactly when that alarm goes off. You’d think it knew. Do I talk in my sleep? Do I give it some warning to my mindset right before it goes?

Or is it me? Do I in fact always set a mental clock that tells my dreams to come to a climax right when I know the alarm will be ringing with its annoying buzz! buzz! buzz!? Someday science will figure it all out, or I can ask God when I get up there, or at least Saint Peter, if I don’t get past the Gate. I will be most interested in the answer.

But for now wake up. Cast off the fading images of a warm sandy beach and come to grips with the reality of a cold off-white room made of concrete and drywall. Leave my fantasy maiden who never judges and always comforts and return to my roommate who, while a good roomy, is no fantasy maiden. Enter the world of no dates and many women. Pickups that never work and go untried as a result. A world where to be able to say what I mean would shatter the fabric of space time and condemn the universe to a cold hell and pork that gets caught in the turbines of 747s.

The floor is cold and hard and piled with things that I would file away if I had anywhere to put them. Newspapers I have yet to read. Folders that have yet to fill up with materials. Papers that lie half-finished and books that need to be studied. So much to do. My mind is full and I haven’t even gotten out of bed.
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.