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ROCINANTE

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A JOURNAL OF ART AND LITERATURE

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About the Journal

Rocinante is a student publication with the intent of supporting and promoting the creative capabilities and talents of the Warner Pacific College community. Initially conceived as a student project for Dr. Pamela Plimpton's Creative Writing class in 2001, *Rocinante* has become the premiere venue for the college's artistic expression.

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Questions should be directed to WProcinante@gmail.com.

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Letter from the Editor

The year 2013 marks the twelfth annual volume of *Rocinate: A Journal of Art and Literature*. Though a twelfth year commemoration for a student literary publication may seem gratuitous; twelve, nonetheless, is a noteworthy number.

In astrology, the Western and Chinese zodiac both have twelve signs. Greek mythology recognizes the number with the twelve labors of the hero Hercules. There are twelve Olympians in Ancient Greek religion. This number has served other religions as well. There are twelve traditional Jyotirlingas (shrines) in Hindu Shaivism. In Christianity, there are twelve apostles of Jesus. Within Shia Islam there are twelve successors of the prophet Muhammad. Even in sports, particularly soccer and American football, the twelfth player is special; this player doesn't play on field but instead represents support through fans cheering in the stands. As a final point, many clock systems divide a 24-hour day into two periods starting at midnight and then again at noon. The calendar year is also comprised of twelve months.

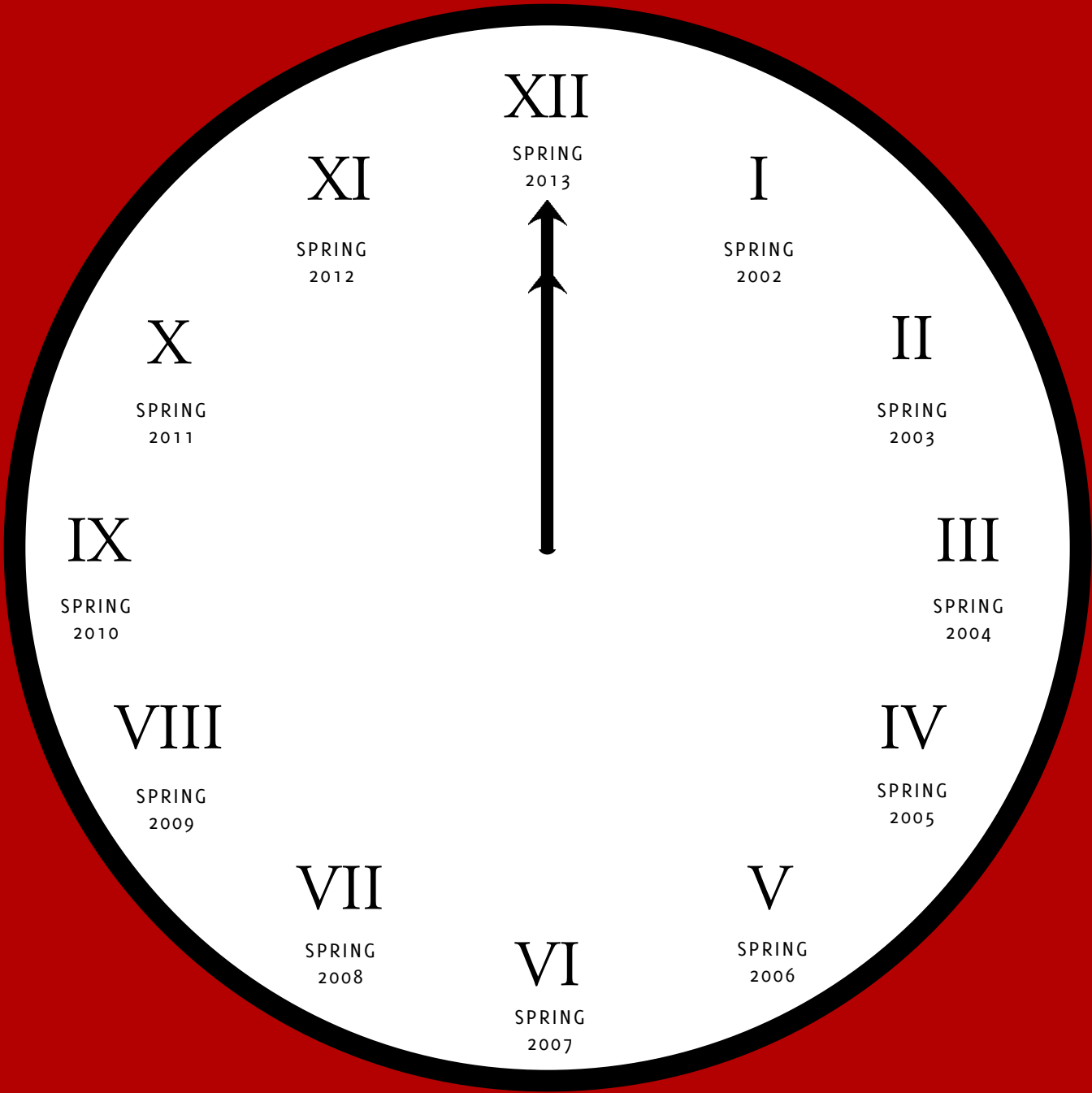
In short, the number twelve cannot be overlooked.

As a child I, quite arbitrarily, dubbed twelve as my favorite number. This year I can finally connect meaning to the number twelve that makes it more symbolic than an unexplained affinity to a 1 preceding a 2 in close proximity. My team this year was made up of twelve people who dedicated their time and energy to representing the literary and artistic expression on the Warner Pacific College campus.

Whether it's found in religion, astrology, science, or *Rocinate*, the symbol of twelve represents more than the shared use of a numerical value. I notice a unified intention—the number twelve represents the paradoxical, evolutionary message of progress and permanence.

Enjoy.

— Monique Lay, Editor-in-chief



PROSE & DRAMA

BENJAMIN CONNOR IRWIN	4	An excerpt from Running Down the Highways: A Love Loss Story
SHAWNA DOWNES, ZACHARY KAHLER AND SARAH MCCARTY	24	Hold Your Fire
TIM JACKSON	33	Solum
OLIVIA GRINDER	49	Sunflower
SHAWNA DOWNES AND ZECHARIAH DIRDAK	56	The Thing's the Play
ADRIENNE ALEXANDRE	72	I Can't Remember
LEAH UNDERWOOD	81	Never Home

POETRY

SHAWNA DOWNES	1	tabula rasa
DANIEL YOUNG	3	An ode to the washing machine
OLIVIA GRINDER	10	Poppy
TAYLOR CLARK	12	Wind
DANIEL YOUNG	14	A day in the life of a burrito making machine
MONIQUE LAY	17	Glorification of Choice
SHAWNA DOWNES	20	ANAPEST
DEBORAH LANDERS	22	A recipe for one writer
J. WILLOWS	32	Yesterday's News.
ROSEMARY BAYLEE	44	we are origami
SHAWNA DOWNES	46	without closure
ANONYMOUS	53	Mommy Dear
TIRZAH ALLEN	54	My Name is Alice
KATHRYN CONYERS	62	A Business Man and a Social Worker
DANIEL SAIN	65	Dancing Master
DUSTIN MCGUIRK	66	Casimira's Night—
DUSTIN MCGUIRK	69	Woven Hills
SHAWNA DOWNES	75	Felicia Seery
TIM JACKSON	78	Web.
DANIEL SAIN	80	Books Are Alive
RUTH RENO	84	A Season of River
TAYLOR CLARK	87	Colors
DANIEL SAIN	91	Symphony of the Night
DEBORAH LANDERS	92	The night is not for sleeping anymore
ERIN FLYNN	95	Destroying the Ruins: Redemption Through Defeat
RUTH RENO	99	Sea Gown

ART

TIRZAH ALLEN	2	untitled
ALLISON BEISLEY	9	untitled
TAYLOR KAUTZ	16	Intertwining
TIM JACKSON	19	Ex-Marine
TIM JACKSON	23	Van Gogh vs Volcano
TIM JACKSON	43	Northwest Cities
MOLLIE BERRY	47	untitled
VIVIAN WALIKAINEN	48	untitled
TAYLOR KAUTZ	63	untitled
NICOLE SHAFFER	64	Oasis
TAYLOR KAUTZ	67	Depot
TIRZAH ALLEN	68	untitled
ERIN FLYNN	70	Equo Avectus
ERIN FLYNN	71	Team Roping
VIVIAN WALIKAINEN	77	untitled
TIRZAH ALLEN	85	untitled
TIM JACKSON	86	San Antonio
LOU FOLTZ	89	untitled
TIM JACKSON	90	Hello Seattle!
TIM JACKSON	93	Crazed Constellations
TIM JACKSON	94	Themis
VIVIAN WALIKAINEN	97	untitled
TIRZAH ALLEN	98	untitled

This
world
is but
a canvas
to our
imagination.

Thoreau

tabula rasa

BY SHAWNA DOWNES

the blank slate waits
to be filled with
small pieces of dreams
pressing into the margins,
filling out the page
with apple trees and
petals hanging in the air
on the first day of summer.

markers of moments burned
into the matter—
of no importance, but never forgotten:

the rich scent of earth,
the dust hanging in the air
in front of the windowpane,
construction paper and glue,
white lace and your grandmother's
pearls cool on your neck,
cinnamon and coffee,
and the touch of old hands,
new hands,
soft bodies learning what it is to be strong,
sharp words biting into heart-flesh,
cracks in composure,
and yellow lights in the river
as paper flowers float by.



An ode to the washing machine

BY DANIEL YOUNG

From the time I was a child
filled with curiosity and awe
I followed your rotation closely with my eyes.
Your magic must be hidden inside your metal box.
You stomp and shake about
and yell to those without.
Such violence with each slosh and thump, I wonder if you're drowning.
But soon your tantrum resides
and my clothes are fresh... and damp.
No matter how I dirtied them, you scrubbed them clean.
You stand still, unmoved.
So long have you aided me. You never quit!
But now you've died, and I must buy anew.
Noble Washer!

An excerpt from *Running Down the Highways: A Love Loss Story*

BY BENJAMIN CONNOR IRWIN

*An excerpt from *Running Down the Highways: A Love Loss Story* (a pseudo-autobiographical drama/comedy novel I'm writing about coming of age, finding identity, losing love, getting a dog, and going on an odyssey across America).*

A troubadour and poet named John Lennon once famously wrote, “All you need is love.” I remember hearing that song as a kid and believing it. After everything that’s happened, I’m not sure I still do. Before you get your hopes up, I feel I should warn you up front. Just because I’m looking back and narrating this story doesn’t mean I’m at the happy ending, or that I can guarantee one. I’m not there yet. I’m as curious as you are. On second thought, I’m probably more curious, because it’s my life and who the hell are you? Also, just because I’m the one narrating this story doesn’t even mean I’ll still be alive by the end of it. I just have a story to tell, and my laptop has caught me at a time when I’m sober enough to tell it (more or less). In a lot of ways, this story is autobiographical, and in a lot of ways, it isn’t. I won’t claim it as factual, though it is still true. I also won’t claim this story as worth reading. This text is more or less a diary, not necessarily meant for you, but

like Anne Frank’s diary, it has found its way into your hands and you are going to violate my privacy to read it.

Hell, I won’t even go as far as to claim myself a reliable narrator for this story, seeing as I was drunk either on love or liquor for most of it. That’s the way life is. Whatever you spend your life pursuing your next fix of, there are only a few brief moments when you come off it long enough to see things for what they really are. Alcoholics Anonymous calls this a moment of clarity.

What I am trying to say is that the only certainty I have, the only claim I will make, is this: this is not a love story. If love is the fix you’re looking for, like most people, you are looking for it in the wrong place. Put my book down. Get out.

Still here? Good. That either means you aren’t here to read a sappy romance novel, or you’re completely irreverent and don’t give a shit about what I’m saying. Either way, I like you. You have my respect, and if

you stick by me, I promise I'll stick by you. Let me say here, this is my first attempt at writing in the first person and I am already finding it awkward. We need to have a conversation about how un-affirming and one-sided our relationship is. Here I am about to pour out my heart and soul to you, and I don't even know the first thing about who the hell I'm talking to. By the end of this book, you will know me well enough to call out to me and say "Hey, are you...?" if you ever run into me downtown, in Portland, and I'll just awkwardly wave back and secretly wonder if you're going to kill me later—but it will just be a terrible experience for the both of us. That just isn't how relationships are supposed to work. And trust me when I say, I know exactly how relationships aren't supposed to work.

Let me paint a picture for you, of the perfect day. This isn't where the story begins, but it's where we'll come in. A cool breeze was rolling down the stretch of the golden Oregon beach, in the shadow of the coastal cliffs of Lincoln City, the cozy tourist town I call home, even though it isn't. I nervously fumbled in my pocket as I stood and watched her, bare feet splashing in the waves that crept up the beach and crashed

against the jagged rocks. Her wavy black hair was billowing in the wind like it was a beauty product commercial as her little feet churned up the sand and the water. The star-spangled towel wrapped around her bare shoulders caught on the wind and fluttered free for a few seconds before collapsing on the thin line of foam the retreating

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waves had left between us. Her cheeks smiled as she turned and watched it fly away, until her brown eyes followed it to the ground and settled on me. She gave a strange half smile as we wordlessly both made for the towel, meeting in the middle to pick it up. I draped it over her shoulders and pulled her

in to me as we walked side by side down that beach. When I felt her fingers brush my shorts I caught her hand, interlocking her fingers in mine so that she wouldn't feel the lump of the tiny box she had nearly grazed.

"How much farther?" she whined impatiently like a child, resting her forehead on my bare left shoulder as we walked.

"Have you got somewhere better to be?" I teased. She didn't answer.

This is Rosaline (like gasoline). That's not her name, but we'll call her that. Rosaline was, well, she was everything. She and I had been best friends since I was fourteen and going through my regrettable all-black phase. We met like a scene from a music video, spotting one another across the crowd at a packed concert put on by a local punk band. We had both ducked in there to drown out the sounds of our parents fighting back home. As for the band, they had been broken up for years by this point, but we were still dancing to their songs. When I met Rosaline, she could have sworn she was in love with this mouth-breather jock that didn't deserve to know her name, and had a way of making my blood boil whenever he came around. She figured out he wasn't

worth her time a few weeks after she figured out he'd been running around on her with anyone whose standards and inhibitions were low enough to actually sleep with him. She figured out she wanted to be with me around the time I went to the Winter Formal Dance with someone else. And so the cliché went that when I was single she wasn't, and when she was single I wasn't, and no matter how much we

how right something can feel when you're in it, and the perspective time can bring. There's a lot that happened between that punk rock concert and this day at the beach, and you will become more aware of that later when it becomes necessary. The funny thing about perspective is, so will I.

We walked silently down that endless stretch of beach for what felt like hours, and I mentally

a solid and cooperated, and this had been the perfect day. From breakfast in bed to the scenic hour and a half drive through prehistoric, lush forests and rolling farm country accompanied by a playlist I'd made of all the perfect songs to complement it, to clam chowder at Mo's, to hours exploring the town, to what was coming next. I was pulling this off perfectly. Ryan Gosling wasn't

The **water** was churning and swelling like a storm, and all God and nature were crying out for us to **hold back**.

wanted to, we just never happened.

Everyone else could see it too. Our inevitable passionate hook-up reached Chinese Democracy levels of anticipation from the gossip-mill. Or at least it would have if anyone still cared about Guns N' Roses. It wasn't long at all before I realized I was in love with Rosaline. About two years later, she realized she was in love with me too. We finally got together in December of my junior year in high school, and everything was perfect from then on, except when it wasn't. It's funny

cursed myself for not choosing a closer parking spot. This walk felt like the last mile to the electric chair. My mouth was parched, and I could swear she heard my heart quaking.

"Your hands are sweaty, babe. Are you okay?" she asked.

"Yeah, sorry," I replied, wiping my hands on my shorts. "It's just hot out." It wasn't.

Why was I so nervous? What was so foreboding? Everything was going exactly according to plan. Even the weather had done me

this smooth.

But something about her was just off. I couldn't place it, but I could tell. It all makes so much more sense to me now than it did back then, but every step seemed like it was killing her, and it wasn't because I had parked the car too far away from our destination.

We listened to the roaring waves and sniffed the briny air as our feet left two sets of tracks in the sand that the water washed away in our wake. It was like we had never been there at all. There was a ridge in the

distance that had become visible through the briny sea mist, where the jagged rocks had battled the turbulent waves since long before she or I had gotten there. The water was churning and swelling like a storm, and all God and nature were crying out for us to hold back. When we reached the ridge I clambered onto one of the jagged rocks and held out my hand to Rosaline.

“I don’t know about this,” she said hesitantly, wavering there. “The tide is coming in, maybe we should turn back.”

“Aren’t you the one who told me all the best things in life will kill you?” I replied with a grin. “Come on, it’s just a little further. I never said this would be easy, but I did say it would be worth it.”

“What’s beyond this ridge, anyway?” Rosaline asked.

“You’ll just have to trust me. You do trust me, don’t you Rosaline?” I said, holding out my hand.

“Of course I trust you,” she said, taking hold of my hand and letting me help her up. The angry waters frothed and hissed, and the mist sprayed us as we picked our way carefully over the rocks at the base of the cliff.

“I’ve never taken anyone else here before,” I said as I dropped

down from a rock onto the sand and held out my hands to catch her as she timidly followed, “but I’ve been waiting to show you.”

It was like the first day broke as we stepped off the rocks on the other side of the ridge, onto a small, secluded beach. We weren’t that far removed from town, so I won’t fool myself by thinking this hidden cove was my discovery, but in all my visits I had never seen anyone else there, and everything was as quiet and peaceful here as before man and engines and factories and machine guns had ever been a thought. This place was eternal, unspoiled, like a bride on her wedding day that hadn’t yet been weathered by credit card debt or divorce or custody battles. To me, this was the most beautiful place on earth, a jewel out of time.

I smiled with satisfaction as the scene washed over and astounded her, as I heard her gasp. I lived for those moments when I could take her breath away. We stood on a crescent beach of gold-dust sand in the arms and shadow of a looming coastal cliff, accommodating enough to have hollowed out several cozy caves at its base. The sky was painted in gold and streaks of fiery orange. The majestic sunset glimmered on

the shifting topography of the jade green waters that rolled peacefully onto the beach, and glistened on the monolithic rocks that had stood up to their battered knees in the Oregon shallows since the dawn of time, and were still learning all it had to teach them. I like to think God painted this place just for me, but I know in the scope of the universe that Rosaline and I were the least important things in the scene, and that the cliffs and the caves and the jagged rocks would all be there until long after our driftwood romance had been washed away in life and time.

“This,” she started, at a loss for words, “is the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.”

“It’s perfect,” I mumbled faintly, fumbling for the ring in my pocket I had been saving up everything for over the last year. This is it.

“I love you,” I began, looking deep into her eyes, trying to keep my voice steady, “I always have. You’ve been my best friend since we were kids.”

“Sweetheart,” she smiled with perplexed eyes like I was a child, or a drunk, and didn’t know what I was saying, “I love you too, so much.” Her eyes were starting to well up.

“I know I want to be with you

for the rest of my life,” I said as I knelt down on one knee, like a knight before his queen.

“Oh my God,” she whispered, cupping her hand over her mouth and stepping back towards the ocean as tears streamed down her face. I pulled out the ring, the white gold and costly princess-cut diamond glimmering in the sunset.

“Rosaline Alice Waits,” I said, “will you become my wife?”

And then the horrible unexpected happened.

“I can’t... Baby, I can’t. I’m so sorry,” she wept, turning and running away. Running like I had pulled out a knife. This was a nightmare. This had to be a nightmare. Oh my God.

“Rosaline,” I murmured, watching her slip through my fingers in slow motion. She was getting away. “ROSALINE... ROSALINE!”

In case you slept through this in seventh grade English class, I should tell you that all stories follow a certain arc. They start out with the exposition. This is where the happy little characters are introduced in their happy little natural habitats, and everything is great. It never stays that way for very long before that happy little illusion everyone lives in is shattered by something

writers call “the complicating incident,” the introduction of conflict into the otherwise peaceful world the characters inhabit. The complicating incident is horrible, and sure isn’t popular at parties, but without it, the story will never go anywhere. As heart-wrenching as the conflict is, it is completely and wholly necessary for the growth of the main protagonist and the progression of his story to an eventual resolution.

This was my complicating incident. ■■




Poppy

BY OLIVIA GRINDER

if your blood fed the ground,
what would grow from it?

i'm sure mine would be a
poppy, so
loud and
screaming and
violent—
as if everything i've ever held inside for too long would somehow
manifest itself
in this
one
blossom—




it would be so
bright, so
explosive and
blinding and
nuclear that everyone would have to
don sunglasses to
look upon it—
your eyes would
burn with it, the
red
searing
into your retina and
turning away you'd see it
everywhere—
staining
everything you see.

Wind

BY TAYLOR CLARK

The world is still,
As it should be.
To those who don't notice
Or bother to care
All seems at peace...
But peace to a human
Is tension for a tree.

For she stands not in peace,
But intense yearning.
A desire
Beyond human comprehension.
She waits patiently,
For that which will set her free...



It is here!
The key to her freedom
Has finally arrived!
And now she dances.
Stretching her stiff arms,
Shuddering in pleasure
As her piney mane undulates...

Just as quickly as it began,
It is over.
Exhilarated, she settles
Into her monotonous pose.
Waiting for freedom,
Waiting to dance.

A day in the life of a burrito making machine

BY DANIEL YOUNG

Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Sometimes I think about the ocean.
Soft shell. Meat. Onions. Cheese. Fold.
I look at the deep fryer, floating islands in vegetable oil.
Stainless steel roads, line my insides.
Slowly churning bits of sun.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
I'm in love with a cooper.
Not those giant feet with racing stripes
and cubicle corners.
But the little British miss, who comes on Tuesdays.
She's like a coffee shop on wheels,
I just want to sit and have a conversation.
But she always parks so far away.

Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold. Sauce. Onions. Tomatoes. Sauce.
They're planning on replacing me soon.
Apparently, I'm too old for this job.
I philosophize too much.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.
The cook has a tattoo of a samurai in prayer.
A demon mask beneath his face.
A sword thrust into his torso.
They call it seppuku, but I don't know how I know that.
Perhaps I was made in Japan.
Soft shell. Meat. Cheese. Fold.



Glorification of Choice

BY MONIQUE LAY

Quarter of a century...

And I can feel it,

My skin cells turn over a new being.
I wouldn't say I fully know myself, but I've seen glints of light breaking through the seams.

Maybe I'm scrambling for rationalization—anything that justifies my being. Am I no better than the aristocrats of the eighteenth century? Violently clasp to some divine will that I've determined for myself?

Hindsight isn't 20/20

because mankind is wrought with superstitions and theories. No clean slates. How can a mind that is programmed to see only injustices reflect on the past in a way that is like broken glass? Shattered, but still clear. Experiences and beliefs make hindsight

blurry at best. Who's to say it's good, who's to say it's bad? Who's to say it never happened?

The way I see it.

It would be remiss of me to think

life is short so I must do and be all that I wish before my time on earth is spent.

I know not of the great possibilities that Death holds!

If it takes me a lifetime to know myself, to accept myself, to be at peace with myself, and to be at peace with the world—

then so be it.



ANAPEST

BY SHAWNA DOWNES

Suck it in. The breath is full of words that are meant to be exhaled—vomited out in a tremor of excitement or in a sigh to make the leaves on the trees above you tremble. Hold and count. Onetwothreefour—and it's gone. Shut into some dull place in the soul where the words have no names. They are formless, mute; but the pain still throbs.

| ~ ~ - | ~ ~ - |

Like that, only the stress racks bones and marrow as it ebbs and flows.

Like a black anapest that isn't funny.

Here we stand. Here we don't speak, and if we do there is no one to hear. Your brain has been battered too much by drunken Facebook love and the lust for sex or speed or World of Warcraft—

or

One new message. Your message box has a message. The Message is:

Hello, is your mind awake yet? Are you hearing me? Am I coming in clear past the newscast and the funny cats on YouTube? Is this the right wavelength or is it another rerun of Dance Moms or Survivors in Space?

C:\Users\am\i\alive\?

Would we be choking on words if we looked at each other?

Is it any wonder the imaginary has become more real?

when

the text

starts

crumbling.

are we in an e.e.cummings poem

;

Someday the words won't come out anymore

and the only way to release the clamor

will be to

howl—

A recipe for one writer

BY DEBORAH LANDERS

A little bit of solitude (to let it rise)
Just a pinch of fun (for color)
A cupful of laughter (the best medicine)
A pint of melancholy (be realistic with it)
A teaspoon of tragedy (a little goes a long way)
A gallon of passion (it is tasteless without it)
A handful of talent (to hold in moisture)
A name (ideally something memorable)
At least one genre (more if you would like)
One large vocabulary (varied is best)
Snippets of time (or chunks, if you prefer)
An audience (size does not matter)
A planet–full of inspiration (shouldn't be hard to find)

Mix together all ingredients (except genre, vocabulary, time, audience and inspiration)
Pour into a person shaped mold
Cook at 98.8° Fahrenheit for several years
Supply remaining ingredients and let it come to a boil
Watch progress over remaining lifetime
Bon appétit.



Hold Your Fire

BY SHAWNA DOWNES, ZACHARY KAHLER AND SARAH MCCARTY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:

CAPTAIN – The captain of a human spaceship. Yellow shirt. Black pants.

NUMBER ONE – The second in command of a human spaceship. Red shirt. Black pants.

GERTIE – The driver of an alien spaceship. Wearing a muumuu and pearls.

PHYLLIS – The passenger of an alien spaceship. Wearing a ducky bathrobe. Hair in curlers.

SCENE:

(The bridges of two separate spaceships. The actors begin the scene frozen in place. CAPTAIN is relaxed and bored. NUMBER ONE is looking at the radar. GERTIE is driving with a huge steering wheel, like an old lady. PHYLLIS is sipping tea delicately.)

CAPTAIN: How does it look, Number One?

NUMBER ONE: Smooth sailing, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Good. Very good.

NUMBER ONE: Um, sir? What's this red thing on the radar here?

CAPTAIN: Our ship.

NUMBER ONE: Our ship... What's the blue one then?

CAPTAIN: Blue one?

(CAPTAIN leans over to look at the radar very, very closely. NUMBER ONE leans in too.)

CAPTAIN: GREAT FLOATING PORPOISES! IT'S AN ALIEN SHIP!

NUMBER ONE: RED ALERT!

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE freeze. PHYLLIS and GERTIE unfreeze.)

PHYLLIS: Oh! Look! There's the human ship!

GERTIE: What? Where?

PHYLLIS: Right in front of us, dear.

GERTIE: Oh. You know I can't see anything over this steering wheel.

PHYLLIS: I'm quite nervous. Do you think we're dressed properly?

GERTIE: I think so... But I'm rather worried they might have three legs instead of two legs.

PHYLLIS: Oh dear. That would be a problem. Hold on, I have an idea.

GERTIE: *(didn't hear)* What?

PHYLLIS: *(loudly)* I said, I have an idea. Let me just scan them.

(PHYLLIS and GERTIE freeze. CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE unfreeze.)

CAPTAIN: THEY'RE SCANNING US!

NUMBER ONE: WHAT DO WE DO?

CAPTAIN: THEY'RE SCANNING US!

NUMBER ONE: ARE THEY GONNA KILL US?

CAPTAIN: THEY'RE GONNA KILL US!

NUMBER ONE: WEAPONS!

CAPTAIN: WEAPONS?

NUMBER ONE: DO WE HAVE WEAPONS?

CAPTAIN: YES! THE WEAPON SYSTEMS!

NUMBER ONE: *(Checks the weapons systems.)* THE WEAPON SYSTEMS ARE DOWN!

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE freeze. PHYLLIS and GERTIE unfreeze.)

PHYLLIS: Don't worry, Gertie. It looks like they do have two legs. Do you think we should bring a gift?

GERTIE: I believe that is customary, yes. I wonder if they like tea.

PHYLLIS: Oh, I do hope they like tea. I have the loveliest little pouch of peach spice tea.

GERTIE: Oh, peach spice. That's a good tea.

(PHYLLIS and GERTIE freeze. CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE unfreeze.)

NUMBER ONE: They've stopped scanning us, sir! The blue light is gone!

CAPTAIN: Zoom in on their spaceship!

NUMBER ONE: What's that green thing sticking out of the wing?

CAPTAIN: MOTHER OF PENGUINS! THEY HAVE LASER CANNONS!

NUMBER ONE: LASER CANNONS?

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE freeze. PHYLLIS and GERTIE unfreeze.)

PHYLLIS: Do you think we decorated the outside appropriately?

GERTIE: Oh, yes. My guide book states that every human ship has cannons.

PHYLLIS: Cannons. What are those for?

GERTIE: Growing flowers, I believe.

PHYLLIS: When I lived on Arcton 3, I had the most lovely begonias.

(PHYLLIS and GERTIE freeze. CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE unfreeze.)

CAPTAIN: THEY'RE GOING TO KILL US.

NUMBER ONE: WE'RE GOING TO DIE!

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE freeze. PHYLLIS and GERTIE unfreeze.)

PHYLLIS: They died every winter.

GERTIE: Do you think they are as nervous as we are?

PHYLLIS: They do seem to be rather excited.

GERTIE: Phyllis, perhaps we should beam aboard the ship.

PHYLLIS: Oh. Yes. Let me just get my purse.

(PHYLLIS and GERTIE freeze. CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE unfreeze.)

NUMBER ONE: THEY'RE BEAMING ABOARD THE SHIP!

CAPTAIN: RED ALERT! BLUE ALERT! EMERGENCY ALERT! CREW TO ESCAPE PODS!

NUMBER ONE: *(checking the screen)* SIR!

CAPTAIN: WHAT?

NUMBER ONE: WE DON'T HAVE ESCAPE PODS!

(PHYLLIS and GERTIE enter, looking like they are on holiday.)

PHYLLIS: My, look at this.

GERTIE: It's a lovely spaceship.

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* What's the customary greeting?

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* Greetings, I believe.

PHYLLIS: Greetings.

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE scream.)

NUMBER ONE: THE ALIEN IS TALKING TO US!

CAPTAIN: ARE YOU GONNA KILL US?

GERTIE: Kill you?

PHYLLIS: Is that customary?

GERTIE: We weren't intending to kill you.

PHYLLIS: But if that is your custom, then yes, we're going to kill you.

CAPTAIN: I KNEW IT!

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* This is most strange.

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* I have never heard of this custom.

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* Why are they talking like that?

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* I don't know. Perhaps we should too.

GERTIE: WE BROUGHT YOU A GIFT!

PHYLLIS: YES! HERE IT IS!

CAPTAIN: WHAT IS IT?

NUMBER ONE: I THINK IT'S A BOMB!

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* They seem to be rather violent.

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* I don't really want to kill anybody.

CAPTAIN: WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

NUMBER ONE: WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!

CAPTAIN: NO! WE ARE NOT GOING TO DIE! *(To PHYLLIS)* OH MIGHTY ALIEN... LADIES!

PHYLLIS: I like this one.

CAPTAIN: YOU HAVE OVERPOWERED US WITH YOUR SUPERIOR... POWER. BUT... IF YOU HAVE ANY HONOR... YOU WILL... UM... UM... LEAVE MY SHIP ALONE AND TAKE ME INSTEAD!

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* What is he saying?

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* I think he wants us to take him with us.

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* I don't know if that's such a good idea.

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* He seems to do an awful lot of shouting.

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* Let's tell him we will do the other thing.

PHYLLIS: *(to GERTIE)* Kill them?

GERTIE: *(to PHYLLIS)* Yes. And then we can go have a biscuit... and a nap.

PHYLLIS: My sister and I have considered your proposal, and, uh—

GERTIE: We have decided that these spaceships aren't big enough for four of us.

PHYLLIS: Or even three of us.

GERTIE: So...

PHYLLIS: We're just going to, uh—

GERTIE: Go back to our spaceship

PHYLLIS: Yes, go back to our spaceship.

GERTIE: And...

PHYLLIS: We will kill you from there.

(CAPTAIN and NUMBER ONE exit. GERTIE and PHYLLIS go back to their own spaceship.)

GERTIE: What a peculiar race.

PHYLLIS: Yes, they are most strange. Are we still going to kill them?

GERTIE: No. It will make us late for church. And Reverend Beaker is going to be preaching.

PHYLLIS: Oh, he's very handsome. I wouldn't want to miss that.

GERTIE: Do you think you could drive for a while? I'm feeling a bit tired.

PHYLLIS: Yes. Go lie down. I'm going to make the jump to light speed.

(GERTIE walks off stage.)

PHYLLIS: LIGHT SPEED!

(Sound of spaceship passengers slamming into the wall as the lights dim.) ■■

Yesterday's News.

BY J. WILLOWS

Words will flow,
Words will drip,
 Words don't know,
They just slip

Bloody sentences gurgle and ooze,
 Poems, stories, yesterday's news.

 Scribbled on a page,
Ink on the paper,
They make us feel rage,
They make us feel safer.

Bloody sentences gurgle and ooze,
 Poems, stories, yesterday's news.

 Lies! Columns of outright lies!
There's no truth in these pages.
 You can see with your own eyes
How they try to change us

Bloody sentences gurgle and ooze,
 Poems, stories, yesterday's news.

Solum

BY TIM JACKSON

An excerpt

SETTING:

A small-detached moon called Solum¹ in the galaxy Messier 83 (M83), inside the academy.

CHARACTERS:

JACQUES-YVES: An academy student who majors in lunar herbal medicines.

'MADDIE' L'ENGLE: An academy student who majors in English with a focus on pre-2100 era writings.

TRAVIS MUFTIS: A descendant of "cargo-loaders" and an academy student majoring in philosophy.

PROFESSOR CHURCHILL: A history teacher, known for books on all five world wars of earth.

PROFESSOR TOLKIEN: Maddie's English teacher.

The following is a manuscript intentionally pulled in chronological order from a set of videos recorded by security cameras at Solum's academy. They were used as evidence in the Solum vs. Muftis case in which Travis Muftis was sentenced to death, and were also used to question Madeleine L'Engle and Jacques-Yves Cousteau's loyalties to Solum and forced former history professor Winston Churchill to resign from his position.

1. *Solum is Latin for country or foundation*

GYRATIONIS 2, LUNAR CYCLE 3, STAR CYCLE 9, TEMPUS 43:12.75¹

Inside the academy mess hall.

JACQUES: It's not even a quarter past 43 and you're stacking your tray with sac-harvested duck legs.

MADDIE: Would you not call them that? They're duck legs just the same.

JACQUES: I'll bet two shelts² you'll be regretting that in the uri-flush.

MADDIE: Yeah, like *you* have two shelts.

JACQUES: Well, father does say that lunar medicines are the new in. I'll be making loads. Especially in the inner city³.

MADDIE: Your father also thinks that fancy new wife of his is human, but who's to blame one for being related to a cargo loader?

JACQUES: She's not my mom!

MADDIE: I know. But a cargo loader? He can't stoop any lower!? Even the too-smart-to-be-social people we brought over are better than getting with one of the cargo loaders. Is your father okay?

JACQUES: I mean, he was dating a lot. She's nice though. Besides, her son goes to our school, so she's almost like one of us.

MADDIE: According to AR-2304, mandate sixteen, line four, she's not. All cargo loaders were supposed to die off. It's do-gooders like your father who continue the cycle of deadbeats.

JACQUES: Well, she's nicer than most royal academic women. And she's a hell of a cook. She can take a crater rabbit, skin it, and make the best stew I've ever tasted.

1. *One Gyrationis is about 20 earth years, One Lunar cycle is about one and ¾ months, one star cycle is about 4 hours, and one Tempus was equated to be exactly 5 minutes and 13.29 seconds.*

2. *2 Shelts is equivalent to 100 US dollars*

3. *Also referred to as "Royal section" – the nicer part of town.*

MADDIE: Solum creatures will get you sick. Anyways, lets sit down and say the meal prayer.

BOTH: *(muttering)* See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. Evil be gone!

BOTH spin their arms in a circular motion, clap, and bow over their food, and then to a large statue high on the wall, looking over the whole mess hall. It has a large head, with six arms, and symbols all over it.

MADDIE: Did they add to the mess hall statue?

JACQUES: Yeah, they did! It's a pre-Solum symbol of knowledge on the forehead. From the planet of darkness¹ we left, and I believe from landmass A-F².

MADDIE: It looks like its from landmass A-S³.

JACQUES: Well, either way all of those symbols but one come from the dark planet's 7 landmasses. The only Solum symbol is that weird gem on the heart that The Great Regulator Alexander⁴ found when he first landed with the scout team.

MADDIE: Why didn't you become a history major?

JACQUES: Because you look at me funny and blush every time you ask. And you're always on about wanting to marry a history major. Father says its best to stay single for a guy like me in this day and age, stay light on your feet for potential travel. What is history for other than getting you in trouble?

MADDIE: Well... I suppose. Have you read any Shakespeare before?

JACQUES: Shake who?

MADDIE: Err... he's mostly forbidden material. His sonnets are nice though. Professor Tolkien said Shakespeare probably had better works. Secretly I think Professor Tolkien read more than just his sonnets.

1. *Earth*

2. *Africa*

3. *Asia*

4. *The Great Regulator Alexander temporarily ruled from earth—years 2262–2264 during the earth—exodus, before the Lunar Monarchy took over on Gyrationis 0, Lunar cycle 1.*

JACQUES: Reading forbidden works could get you expelled. Even capsuled¹.

MADDIE: I know. I wouldn't ever try. There are too many cameras anyway. They'd catch you before you even got through the first page.

JACQUES: It's getting on to be the next star-cycle. It's weird to think it's already past 47. Time flies. Lets get to class; we can't be late on the first day of the term!

GYRATIONIS 2, LUNAR CYCLE 3, STAR CYCLE 10, TEMPUS 0:14.32

Inside the History classroom with PROFESSOR CHURCHILL.

CHURCHILL: So, class. Heri Lunaris² you took a class with professor Napoleon on post-exodus studies, which is especially exciting with the turn of the Gyrationis. Seeing how we just started a new Lunar Cycle though, for the next three cycles of this term we will be talking about the history before the Royalty, which is called what?

ADAMS: Professor, Pre-exodus³?

CHURCHILL: Correct. That is, before we left the planet of darkness. Evil times they were, my great grandfather lived to see the last years of that planet. Anyways, lets take attendance. Raise your hand. Adams? Okay. Madeleine? I see you. Robert, Robert Frost? Okay, excellent name too. The other Robert? Robert Hooke? Okay. Amelia? My student log says you're a rocket engineer, we need those.

AMELIA: That's what my DNA sample approved me for professor.

CHURCHILL: Well, we don't get many. You must have some good genes. What was your sample score?

AMELIA: 289, professor.

CHURCHILL: Wow.

1. *Too expel from the planet in a solid metal box as a method of execution.*

2. *Last lunar cycle (equivalent to last month)*

3. *Before the departure from earth*

MADDIE: *(under her breath to JACQUES)* Yeah but a knowledge score of 256.

CHURCHILL: Okay, is Jacques here? Beethoven? Livingstone? Gillibrand? Kirsten Gillibrand? Looks like the girl named after the first female president of landmass N–A¹, sector US is sick today. Okay, and finally Muftis? Muftis... I've never heard of that historical figure. Travis Muftis, there you are. And where does your name come from? That must be one of the minor philosophers or something.

TRAVIS: Oh, no suh.

(CLASS giggles)

CHURCHILL: Professor? Perhaps that is what you meant to say. So, where do you get your name from then?

TRAVIS: Welp, I suppose it was from my daddy, at least it's what my momma says. But my daddy was killed in that big debate they had when they chopped the heads off of half the male cargo loaders. I never known him much.

(CLASS is holding in laughter)

CHURCHILL: Fascinating... you're that cargo loader who was just admitted then? The second one in Solum academy's history! Wasn't it your cousin that came here a few years ago? Cargo loaders that make it into the academy have to be very clever. It's a wonder the few like you were never selected to be royal blood. Now, you see class, cargo loaders were the very select group of people who were... um... staffed to help the intellectually select make their way to Solum after the dark planet's fall. So, what were your intelligence and knowledge scores?

TRAVIS: My intelligence scored a 299 and my knowledge was a 221. Highest intelligence possible is what the kind docta said! And he said I don't even speak good for that nice of a brain. Docta even said he doubted the test was right.

CHURCHILL: Oh, well you know, they're fairly accurate. And not to mention class, there are only twenty–three people in the history of Solum to score perfect on either knowledge or intelligence. None have ever scored both, but some say there was a god on the dark planet that was born that way. He was told to have so much brainpower that people killed him for it. He is a forbidden material though, excuse me for mentioning it. So, Travis. What is cargo loader life like?

1. *North America*

TRAVIS: Welp, the new King and Queen have made new rules, but we're still hangin' on. They say that one day maybe even people like me and my momma can vote for the people that sit on the throne. Home is nice though, maybe not like the nice housing they provide for the royal blood, but we gotta nice flat. We even got one-a-dem green houses to grow some veggies and fruits. And...

(WHOLE CLASS has slowly broken into complete laughter)

CHURCHILL: SILENCE! I will not hear any more giggling and foolery among you lot. I pray to the idols of our planet that every one of you realize the school board is starting to make conscious decisions to accept people like Travis. If there are people like him in his community, maybe there is hope for the cargo loaders to live among the educated.

MADDIE: *(under her breath to JACQUES)* Say, isn't that your Dad's girlfriend's son? *(she snickers)*

CHURCHILL: Moving on, do any of you know the importance to your names? It seems Travis knows a lot about his name. And he is proud of it, aren't you Travis boy?

TRAVIS: Yes suh.

CHURCHILL: So, I am sure all of you received the first assignment I sent. It was to look up the historical background of your names as best you could. This will lay a good foundation to the pre-exodus topic. Who wants to share something about your name? Robert?

ROBERT F.: Professor, I was named after a writer from what I could find. Most of his work is forbidden, but he was still considered to be one of the dark planet's gods.

CHURCHILL: Correct. I think one of Robert Frost's encouraged works goes like this,

*"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."¹*

1. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost

CHURCHILL: Okay, yes. Very good Robert. I know it's a bit harder, especially with all the... erm... restrictions being reexamined and applied to certain works. Anyone else? Yes, Livingstone!

LIVINGSTONE: Professor, I was named after a god who explored a new land. From what I could get my hands on, he explored much of the River Nile in landmass A–F and went on to the southern portion of this land. He was definitely a god, but he seemed to be trying to tell all the people of darkness an important story. All of these portions are blocked due to dark material or inappropriate thinking. It was just odd that a god of the world would speak enough evil to disturb our perfect royalty.

CHURCHILL: Yes, our leaders do it for a reason though. Solum's reasoning is not because they were evil, for they were the only pure among the disturbed humans that once roamed that miserable planet. It is because they talk about ideas that may lead to corruption in Solum, and if we left the dark planet in order to separate from corruption, why have it in our thoughts? We are essentially these gods without the corrupt among us. Yet since the new royal decree, we are just considered to be Solumian Royal blood, and our King and Queen as the most divine, who may determine the prayers, statues and symbols to be examined and meditated on. Up until recent times we were adamant to eliminate people like our boy Muftis over here, but our planet still needs a working backbone and occasionally finds use for one in the inner city. Muftis is a fine example of a mix between a mule and a god. Now, I'm getting a bit off topic. Let's get back to names.

LIVINGSTONE: I understand professor. I didn't mean to be too curious.

CHURCHILL: Of course my student. Just don't let it wonder too far.

MADDIE: Professor, I couldn't find anything at all about Madeline L'Engle, the goddess I was named after. It seems that all of it had been blocked in the last purification of the library texts.

CHURCHILL: Sadly, yes. There were bits and pieces of stories we were allowed to read from her until about half way through the flight to Solum. She was a very creative goddess indeed, and knew much about the fourth dimension. We just felt that the way she conveyed the idea wasn't needed anymore once we found the solid science of traveling galaxies. She was more of an idea starter. She was considered a lesser goddess.

MADDIE: So, she was important for the voyage? Why would our leaders decide to discontinue to encourage her readings? I don't understand.

CHURCHILL: It is not for us to understand. All we know is that there was much discussion and... fighting among our royalty on the ship over. Some thought we should not forbid anything, others thought we should forbid all that we were leaving. What we have now a day is a compromise between the two. Not perfect but... sorry. I am finding myself off topic.

(CHURCHILL looks directly into the security camera nervously)

CHURCHILL: Maybe I have said too much... I have said too much, yes. Well, class. This is a good time to introduce the policy then. It is essential that we keep all discussions so that we are seeing no evil, hearing no evil and most important of all, speaking no evil. Now Travis, pick up this pile of handouts and pass them out to the class. It'll be good to have a working boy like you serve us.

TRAVIS: Yes suh. I'll move quicker than a vortex zoomer!

(CLASS lightly giggles, along with CHURCHILL)

CHURCHILL: That's a good boy. Now, students. As our boy over here is handing out the papers you'll see a rough timeline of the gods that existed throughout the dark planet days. We can see that more and more gods appeared near the exodus around what we would call "earth years" 2000 to the exodus in 2182. A god named Andy Warhol was quite right when he said right before the turn of their century that, "everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes." This is what makes determining who was a god so hard.

AMELIA: Professor, I've heard rumors that the people of the dark planet believed in one god. Or most of them, atleast.

CHURCHILL: Yes, they all were deranged and couldn't even come up with a single name for this imaginary being in the sky. Anyways, they declare he made that planet and would be coming back to that planet, and since we left that planet it would be illogical to think that such a god could even exist. Is he going to split his body and come to both planets?

(CLASS laughs)

1. *A hover bike that reaches speeds of Mach 1.*

CHURCHILL: And besides, some had similar views to us. Most of the more intelligent gods did, anyways. They all had different theories, but most support our idea that they themselves were gods. They write in a way that seems to glorify themselves. It's not clear how, but either way we have been blessed as the royal blood of Solum to inherit this divine intelligence and life.

TRAVIS: Well, I was diggin' through a random book on law and philosophy and found a side note in old led pencil that declared that whoever loved this man named Christ would become eternal, and that they could forever live through him. Not sure if it was much accurate, but it seemed to be either talkin' 'bout or written by a fella named John. Anyways I'm supposin' you higher class folk don't like talkin' 'bout that forbidden stuff so I'll lay off. Just some food for the conversation is all.

CHURCHILL: How... how very exciting. You said you found this in the library? In old led? It must be... ancient. It's a wonder the search committee for forbidden works didn't find it though.

TRAVIS: It was very lightly written. Faded out of sorts.

CHURCHILL: It's almost... a shame that they block such writings. Why I want to know about this. How much have our forefathers shunned us from knowing? (*To himself, rather loudly*) Think of the possibilities, the historical facts that could be dug up!

(*CHURCHILL suddenly looks straight up at the video cameras, pale white*)

CHURCHILL: I... I've said... class is dismissed early. There has been a... change in schedules. Travis, please stay behind boy. I need to talk to you.

(*ALL STUDENTS get up and exit class*)

MADDIE: Jacques... wait up! What just happened? I've never seen anything like it. One moment we're talking about an undiscovered text and the next we're kicked out of class! At least we'll get to catch up on the lunar medicine homework. That class shouldn't be a core prerequisite before our focus study cycles¹, I swear.

JACQUES: Yeah... lets go to the library. Was it just me or was Professor Churchill crying as we left?

1. Equivalent to a college major

GYRATIONIS 2, LUNAR CYCLE 3, STAR CYCLE 33, TEMPUS 25:41.96

Inside the school's meeting hall at a the start of a school day prayer ceremony

SCHOOL: *(together)* gods of our ancestors, who have given us identity, teach us today to see no evil, hear no evil and to speak no evil. Increase us in knowledge so that we might be perfect. Let the ruminants of our very DNA become like with yours, so that we may pass these genes to our next generation. In the name of the gods and the things that bind us to the very life around us, go in peace and let Solum be blessed.

MADDIE: *(quietly to JACQUES)* Pssst! Hey! Have you heard anything about that Travis boy's mom?

JACQUES: Shhhh! Speak softer! Yeah, she stops by every once in a while. She's still getting over her son's death though. The government chopped his head off and wouldn't give the body back; they probably capsuled the remains into the darkness of space. My dad is really angry too; he thought that he was helping the royalty by getting with this lady. All I know is it's illegal for them to be romantically involved now. The government is working on a decree to ban cargo loader relationships with royalty. They're basically going to systematically kill them off with a lot of laws. They're cutting down on food supply to the lower city, and they're going to start firing some of the un-pure from the inner city. My Dad keeps ranting about it.

MADDIE: Hm. I smelt trouble when I saw your dad hook up with that lady in the first place.

JACQUES: Well, my dad's actually really scared about you and I. He said something about the school looking deeply into the case and he said that students might get pulled out of school and professors may even be kicked out.

MADDIE: Oh, come off it. We never spoke of anything evil, did we?

EVERYONE rises as they are dismissed to their first cycle of classes, bowing to the meetings hall's half lion, half bird statue and saying the words, "Evil be gone." ❖❖




we are origami

BY ROSEMARY BAYLEE

We like to swing round and round
The golden paper suns we've found
Like origami Earth and moon
strung up on fishing wire

In folded eyes we see the light
That our star does not emanate
Our fiber creases warm themselves
In fantasy or fire

It's a pretty little sky
underneath the ceiling
framed by walls and winding halls
It's a better way to fly
Without any wings
chained to walls and winding
yourself tighter
strangled on fishing wire



We like to sing our paper sounds
 To golden-paper gods we've found
Like rustle-crumple tax returns
 Ever so polite

It's a pretty little choir
 With a pretty little feeling
 Written by a newspaper machine
It's a better way to fly
 With your bloody wings
 Quietly removed to the side
 So be quiet and
 strangle on the pretty lie

without closure

BY SHAWNA DOWNES

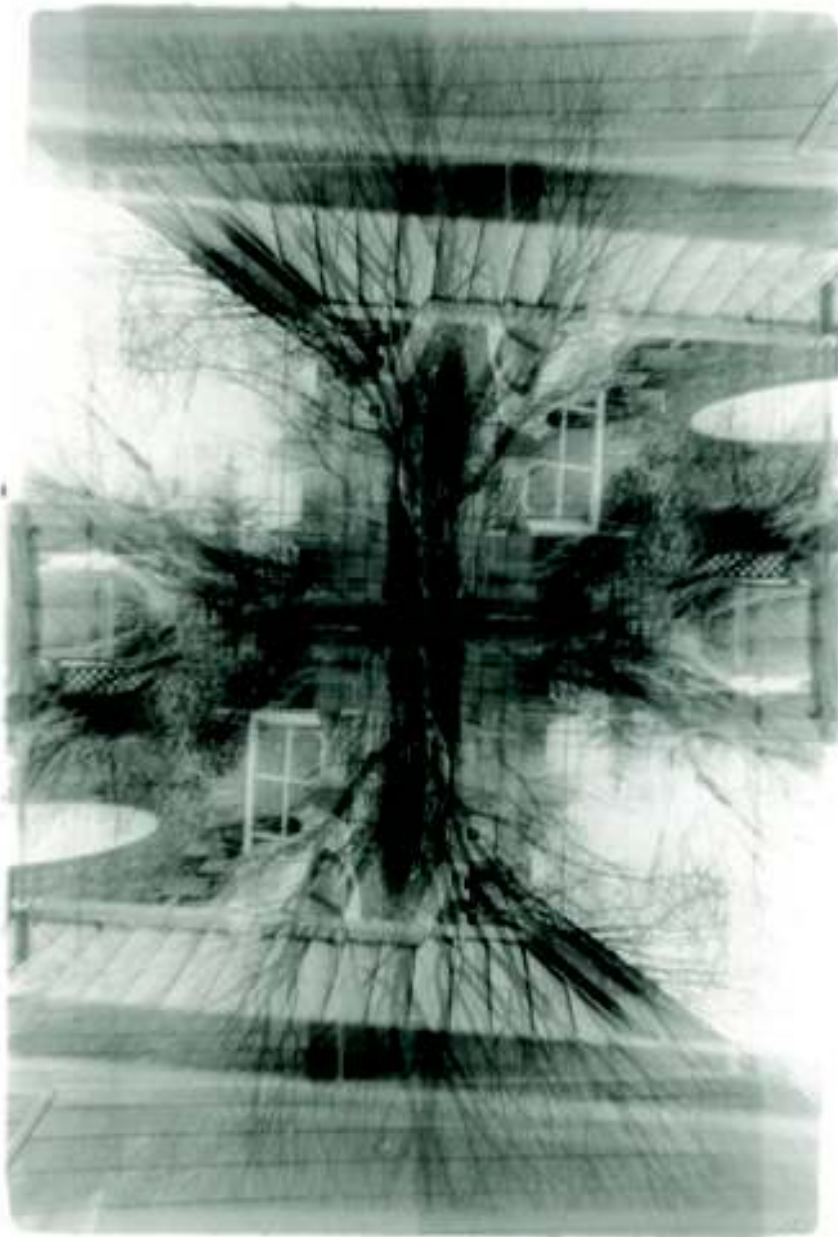
we stood blinking in the darkness
and breathed in the breath of God
whistling through the trees—
toes curled in wet blades of grass
as the wind whipped our bare faces.
breath hitching, gasping; heart racing.
the burning in our throats
when small words could not contain
feelings and thoughts that caused
our souls to burst.

what can you say?

these lips, locked in time, cannot convey
the sharpness,
the tightness,
the hands that would grasp these fleeting moments
and never let them go.

hot pinpricks in your eyes,
clawing fingers,
the images seared in your brain.

the laughter rings in your head,
but the voices are gone;
they have vanished,
scattered,
like whispers in the wind.



MOLLIE BERRY



Sunflower

BY OLIVIA GRINDER

Every morning she watered her sunflowers. It was a routine she had mastered to a T. It was her ritual, her sanctification. She would awake at precisely 5:30 every morning, brush her teeth, get dressed, wash her face, and comb her hair, glancing briefly at herself in the mirror. Dirty blonde hair; not quite brown, not enough blonde—eyes: not quite blue, not quite green, maybe gray. Pale skin. Wrinkles making their appearance around her eyes when she would brush through a particularly tangled strand of hair. Wrinkles canvassing her forehead; the corners of her mouth. Wrinkles in the spaces of her face that had too much use—like a worn groove in a record, playing again, and again, and again.

She would quickly remove her gaze and move on to tying her shoes, always a firm knot, never a loose end. Her sneakers were familiar friends, safe and embracing. Worn and comfortable. Reliable. Clean. Next came the most challenging task: walking—through—the—living—room—to—the—back—door—which—led—her—to—her—sunflowers—which—were—okay—which—were—safe—which—were—golden—which—were—alive. Carefully, carefully, she stepped past the couch, the television, in and out of the pattern on the polished hardwood—

toy land—mines strewn maliciously. Lego, army man, matchbox car, jump—rope, dump—truck—*he'll clean it after school, we'll make a game out of it, maybe he'll like that, maybe he'll actually do it, maybe—there is no point. there is no point. It is no use. it is no use.* She glanced toward the television, perched on its throne of oak and glass cabinetry. She could see her reflection in its black void, swallowed whole. She shuddered and turned away, making the final steps to the back door.

She looked over her victory, the living room. *—avoid the black void—* Hardwood gleaming. It was an easy battle. Over even before it had begun; her opponents abandoned long ago, dust trapping their bodies to their designated grave. Earth—to—earth—ashes—to—ashes—dust—to—dust. *—avoid the black void—*

Shutting the back door behind her *—no—more—darkness—no—more—empty—* she was immediately immersed in the warmth of the rising sun, its golden fingertips reaching gently toward the sky. She stepped onto the patio and took her tin watering can off of its rightful hook. From the garden hose she filled its emptiness, the cold water sloshing around. She waited for the water to settle before she lifted the can, so as

not to spill on the concrete patio, so as not to splash on her clothing, so as not to feel the sharp bite of the cold water on her body. She had mastered it to a T. She walked to her sunflowers, inhaling the damp, earthy smell of the grass underfoot.

There they stood. Gods, towering above, faces toward the sun. Bejeweled with dew. Golden. Mystic in the early light. Here she stood. Their beloved. Their life-giver. She poured the water from the tin onto their feet, anointing them. The sun warmed the dampened soil, rich and dark. She carefully set down her tin after they had had their fill and knelt down before them. The gold filled her, warming her. Hypnotized, she slowly and carefully lay down in the grass, head near the roots. Her heartbeat echoed and synchronized with—grass, soil, roots, flowers, sky, sun. As she observed ecstatically the roots and stems that formed the base for the god-heads, an expression of horror crept into the spaces in her face where it was welcomed—forehead, mouth, eyes. A cold numbness spread throughout her body—her sunflowers, her gods, her golden-safe-alive, was rotting from the inside. A blackness had found its way into their core, and everything showed itself truly—the

wilting leaves, the flopping heads, the fallen-over dead. Terrified, immobilized, she slowly closed her eyes, heart pounding in her chest, a million horses trampling through her body. She felt herself sink into the earth, a darkness overcoming her, sucking her into the black—

The sharp sound of a school-bus horn awoke her suddenly. Its cheery ‘beep! beep!’ sounded the

**There they stood.
Gods, towering above,
faces toward the sun.
Bejeweled with dew.
Golden. Mystic in the
early light. Here she
stood. Their beloved.
Their life-giver.**

arrival of the victorious survivors, their laughter echoing as they exited the bus. As if in a trance, she pulled herself to her feet, walking stiltedly toward the back door, a marionette on strings. Opening the back door, she hurried to greet the victor. “How was your day,” she would say, “What did you do?” she would say, “What did you learn?” she would say. She was now in the

field of land mines, the mass grave for the dead-toys, dust-toys—*can I get your bag for you?* she would say, *are you hungry for a snack?* she would say, *after that we can pick up your*—and she tripped, matchbox-corpse underfoot, falling, falling, —*avoid the black void*—landing on the hardwood with a dull thud, eyes shut from impact, body impaled by the toy-warriors, still fierce in death.

As she slowly opened her eyes, the places in her face welcomed the harsh grimace, lines creasing, teeth clenched, a pounding in her head, the impact of her skull on the hardwood resounding over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over, and she looked up and saw the television screen, saw the darkness, sucked into the void, the dark void no escape no escape—

A channel flickers slowly in, a gray-scale program filling the screen . . .

A small boy, light-haired and smiling, walks in through the front door, holding a packet of seeds. A woman, light-haired, and smiling, greets the small boy, taking his backpack, his packet of seeds. “What have we here?” she questions, voice soft, play-curious. He answers in a chirp, “Sunflower seeds, mama! She

gave us some of our very own to plant at our homes! You put the seed in the dirt, and pat in the dirt like this, see?" He pats the invisible seed into the invisible dirt on the hardwood ground. "Then you water it every day and the sun comes out and it grows and grows and grows!!" he spouts, words bubbling out from his mouth. "Very wonderful!" she esteems, patting him gingerly on his light hair, putting

she says in a saccharin-sweet voice, a darkness bidden underneath, army men and jump-rope in her hands. But the small boy does not hear. He is sucked into the colors now appearing on the screen, life-moving-quickly-happy-free, laughing, attentively cross-legged in front of the screen, as if listening to a wise sage, soaking in his advice. She screams at him, walking briskly toward him, "This is it, young

fills the spaces in her face where it is welcome—forehead, mouth, eyes. Her mouth open in a silent, perfect oh, a swallowing of darkness. The small boy is silent. The small boy is on the hardwood. His head is on the hardwood. The impact of his head on the hardwood ringing over and over and over and over and over her hands on his head his head in a perfect oh of darkness spreading slowly slowly

She looks into the black screen, catching her reflection, her face in the void.

seeds in her pocket. "We'll plant these after we clean!" As he waddles into the living room, tripping over his toys strewn about on the hardwood, his eyes fixate on the television, which is glowing a static gray. As he crawls toward the screen, pushing the buttons to change the channel, the woman scolds him, attempting to stop him in his tracks. "Young man! You clean up your mess before television time, do you understand? I'm tired of tripping all over your toys! Now come over here and help me pick these up!"

man, I've told you over and over and over and you never listen, you never listen!" shaking his shoulders. "Listen, listen, listen!" she shrieks.

. . . A blackness fills the screen momentarily, black hole sucking, everything-to-nothing. The television is silent. The small boy is silent. The woman is silent. She turns her head slowly, slowly, craning her neck around, and stops, staring. She looks into the black screen, catching her reflection, her face in the void. An expression of horror

from the epicenter his head the darkness spreads over and over and over and over and over and over and over his eyes are the blackness are the void avoid the void avoid the void avoid the void—the woman stands, a marionette on a string, head ringing, small boy in hands, dragging through land-mines, through the back door, darkness making a pathway behind small boy, the sun hitting woman's eyes, boy's eyes, dark eyes, earth opens up, a void, a blackness a mouth agape in a

*perfect oh, boy disappears in darkness
earth swallows boy earth swallows
boy whole, packet of seeds falls from
pocket woman rips seeds open woman
scatters seeds earth to earth ashes to
ashes flowers to flowers watering tin
cold against skin cold biting earth
in rivers over and over and over and
over sun hitting, enveloping, gold. . .*

*The channel flickers in, out, in,
out. . .*

Slowly, she blinks her eyes, one, two, three times. The grey morning light from the window illuminates the hardwood, the dust-cloud over her body, her body on the hardwood. A ringing in her ears. *Morning has broken.* She stands up, joints locking, rigid, walking to the bathroom, stepping over land mines, feet finding their footing methodically, precisely, surely. She brushes her teeth, washes her face, combs her hair. It was a routine she had mastered to a T. Her ritual, her sanctification. As she brushes through a particularly difficult tangle, the brush gets caught in the jumble. She plows through, brush rips out hair, darkness leaking from hair darkness leaking from ears from eyes. She glances briefly in the mirror, eyes staring back, eyes seeing black. Slowly, she approaches the land mine graveyard. She walks through, marionette on a string,

feet crushing army man, lego, matchbox car, dump-truck, jump-rope. Darkness behind her, trailing behind her, slick on hardwood floor, door shutting, sun bright shining gold fingers reaching across sky, warm enveloping woman. She pours out her offering from the watering tin, cold, overflowing, spilling, biting her skin, biting the earth, the damp dark earth, the sun-gods towering above her, gold-dying-dying, and she lies down at their feet, earth cradling her, darkness coming over her body, her last offering pouring from her, ringing over and over and over, swelling the earth over and over and over and the sun-gods drink up the life, the dying, and the gold lights up the stems, the roots, the god-heads, the sky, the earth: okay-golden-safe-golden-safe-alive. ❖

Mommy Dear

BY ANONYMOUS

Seeing you sleep there,
Breathing in survival,
I see what you need here
Is love from me your child

Forgive me for the things I say,
To its core they break my heart.
And I know you love me anyway,
But I dream of a brand new start.

Mommy dear, your child here,
I love you more than you could ever know.
Breathe it in, fill your soul:
You are loved and I hope you know.

If only I could better your world,
Instead of making it difficult.
If only I could watch my tongue,
And keep inside the potential hurt.
I know you understand the fact:

We're human and, well, that is that.
But I just need you to hear me say:
I'm sorry and I love you.

I'm sorry and I love you.

Mommy dear, your child here,
I love you more than you could ever know.
Breathe it in, fill your soul:
You are loved and I hope you know.

My Name is Alice

BY TIRZAH ALLEN


Tick-tock, tick-tock
Goes the golden pocket watch.
“Oh dear, I’m so very late!”
Memories whispered in my mind jolt me awake.
A White Rabbit keeping watch of time?
A Mad Hatter singing and speaking in rhymes:

“Twinkle, twinkle little bat.
How I wonder what you’re at.”

I fall and tumble
Down,
 Down,
Down,
The rabbit hole.

It’s the last place I ever thought I’d go.
A world so very odd and unlike my own.

Everyone’s mad here!



Or so I'm told
By the Chesire grin
Possessed by all who live within.

Welcome to Wonderland;
Let the games begin.
Who are you?
Their faces seem to say.
I'm not sure or at least I did yesterday.

"Did you paint the roses red?"
Asks the Queen.
"Well, yes."
"Off with her head!"
She says with glee.

Can I at least finish my
bread and tea?
I'll take my medicine,
And you'll see
Through the looking glass
What your reality has done to me.

Stop your Nonsense!

And I'll
Tumble
Down,
 Down,
Down,
The rabbit hole.

It's the last place I ever thought I'd go.

The Thing's the Play

BY SHAWNA DOWNES AND ZECHARIAH DIRDAK

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:

PORTER – Possibly the bartender; possibly just a drunk patron who thinks he is the bartender.

BUNCHBACK – Famous screenwriter. Wearing black sunglasses even while indoors.

TOAD – Screenwriter's assistant. Disheveled and nervous. Carrying a small notebook.

SCENE:

(Knocking outside. PORTER is sitting on the floor, going to sleep.)

PORTER: Knock, knock, knock. Who's there?

BUNCHBACK: Bunchback!

TOAD: And Toad!

PORTER: Eh, away with you.

(PORTER goes back to sleep. More knocking.)

PORTER: Knock, knock, knock. What do you want?

TOAD: A table for two!

BUNCHBACK: A beer.

PORTER: Eh, I don't know what you're talking about.

(PORTER goes back to sleep. Persistent knocking.)

PORTER: Knock, knock, knock. Persistent little bugger aren't you.

(PORTER answers the door. BUNCHBACK and TOAD take a seat at the nearest table. TOAD takes down notes as BUNCHBACK speaks.)

BUNCHBACK: First, we kill all the lawyers.

TOAD: Yes!

BUNCHBACK: Then, we go out onto the moor in a rainstorm.

TOAD: Yes!

BUNCHBACK: Then we get down to our gym shorts.

TOAD: ...Yes.

BUNCHBACK: And summon the witches.

TOAD: Yes...

BUNCHBACK: And then... we do a little dance!

TOAD: Oh! Yes!

BUNCHBACK: And murder the king!

TOAD: Yes...

BUNCHBACK: And then... deliver a rousing speech while sitting on top of a horse!

TOAD: Yes! Yes!

BUNCHBACK: And... dress up like a woman.

TOAD: Yes?

BUNCHBACK: And discover our long lost twin.

TOAD: Yes.

BUNCHBACK: And then exit... pursued by a bear.

TOAD: Yes!

(PORTER delivers water to the table and listens critically to their conversation after he walks away.)

TOAD: And then what?

BUNCHBACK: Nothing. That's the end.

TOAD: Oh.

BUNCHBACK: *(In disbelief that TOAD would question his writing.)* What do you mean oh?

TOAD: It's just... it's a little anticlimactic.

BUNCHBACK: Anticlimactic?

TOAD: I was expecting a little more...

BUNCHBACK: More...?

TOAD: More...

BUNCHBACK: Blood? More blood.

TOAD: No, no, no. Not blood. Romance. I was expecting more romance.

BUNCHBACK: Romance? What?

TOAD: Yes!

BUNCHBACK: ROMANCE?

TOAD: Two houses—

BUNCHBACK: Yes!

TOAD: Both alike in dignity—

BUNCHBACK: Yes!

TOAD: In fair Verona—

BUNCHBACK: Yes!

TOAD: Where we lay our scene—

BUNCHBACK: Yes!

TOAD: From ancient grudge break to new mutiny—

BUNCHBACK: Yes!

TOAD: Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean—

BUNCHBACK: Yes! Yes! Blood!

TOAD: From forth the fatal loins of these two foes—

BUNCHBACK: Yes...

TOAD: A pair of star crossed lovers—

BUNCHBACK: Yes...

TOAD: Meet at their high school.

BUNCHBACK: Yes... (*He says yes, but perhaps means no.*)

TOAD: (*Getting excited.*) At first, she thinks he really doesn't like her. But it turns out that he's avoiding her only to protect her because he's a vampire and then he saves her life and then she meets this other guy, Jared.

BUNCHBACK: Jared?

TOAD: Yes, Jared. And the two guys don't like each other but the first guy has a nicer car.

PORTER: (*Returns to the table.*) What's this, eh?

TOAD: We're writing a... a thing.

PORTER: A thing?

BUNCHBACK: A play.

PORTER: The thing's a play?

TOAD: Yes.

PORTER: It's rubbish.

BUNCHBACK: Well, how would you write it?

PORTER: Is this the face that launched a thousand ships—

TOAD: Oh! And then they get married and they have a baby and she almost dies!

PORTER: Death be not proud, though some have called thee mighty and dreadful—

BUNCHBACK: Eh? What's that?

PORTER: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps at its petty pace from day to day to the last syllables of recorded time and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle—

BUNCHBACK: Rubbish!

TOAD: Rubbish!

BUNCHBACK: What were you saying about the two vampires?

TOAD: One of them's a vampire. One of them's a werewolf.

BUNCHBACK: Werewolf?

TOAD: Yes.

BUNCHBACK: Vampires, werewolves... must be a lot of blood.

TOAD: Blood, yes!

BUNCHBACK: Brilliant!

TOAD: Brilliant!

PORTER: *(Walks away and returns to his spot.)* It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. *(He takes a swig from the bottle.)* ■■

A Business Man and a Social Worker

BY KATHRYN CONYERS

He was riding home from work,
With his tucked in shirt under his suit.
He wore shiny shoes.

He avoided a drunk man,
Rambling and waving his hands,
But who then said:

Do you know that you can breathe intentionally?

She was going down the street,
Finding ones that she could meet,
And take inside.

A woman who approached
Seemed to place her only hope in one request.
It went like this:
Help me take the doors off please;
The churches need to breathe.

In reflection I declare:
We can live with purpose,
But we're scared.
The churches and we alike
Need to breath love with our lives.

Do you know that you can breathe intentionally?



TAYLOR KAUTZ



Dancing Master

BY DANIEL SAIN

The old man grabbing with old frail fingers,
trying desperately to snatch one of us.
He needed to know who, was dressed in all black,
and prancing through his yard late at night.

Ruffians, rascalions, rascals, rogues,
raucous laughter rose from the boys.
The old man couldn't touch them,
they danced in circles around him.

In turns they departed,
always the slowest first, then the next,
one was left for last.
He was the dancing master.

No man could touch him,
his feet were fleet, his footing sure
his muscles tense, he chose
to his right. Then he spun left,

the old man was always late.
The boy passed behind his back
the old man was still turning right.
All the boys had taken flight,

the dancing master had done his job.
Hopping a fence he caught up to his friends.
They skirted through trees,
clung to fences, passed unnoticed.

Reaching their homes they dispersed,
the dancing master entered his house.
The door squeaked,
he walked silently to his room.

Adrenaline slowly starting to subside,
he stripped off his sweat soaked clothes,
and scampered into bed. The nights dance had ended.
I am the dancing master.

Casimira's Night—

BY DUSTIN MCGUIRK

The dawn was long and fast.
Greens from the basement,
kept running the gas

A house made for a whole,
was filled with only two laughs
We dowered each other,
in every corner and crack.
No room left undone
No habit, no fun.

Days went on
Her temper drew near.
My sight grew large
dismantled by tears

One day I said, I think I shall run
Gardens have become winter
grown out; solid frozen dirt.

Better for worse
worse in the end
Like most things that break,
they've been broken again.





Woven Hills

BY DUSTIN MCGUIRK

Woven hills, capture the night
reaching out past,
brings me back, country life
forest that can feel, trees , the smell of pine
illuminated life, dirt on my boot





I Can't Remember

BY ADRIENNE ALEXANDRE

I can't remember his name. Even if I did, I wouldn't be allowed to tell you, for patient privacy reasons, but I do remember the first time I saw his face. In fact, I saw much more of him than most people would expect to see of a man upon a first encounter. After all, he was completely naked and his chest was pried open, exposing the heart that had stopped beating just moments before I entered the room. It was an evening I'll remember for the rest of my life, but I can't remember his name.

I was an Environmental Services Aide in the Emergency Department at a hospital in Arizona. "EVS" as they often called me, a fancy name for housekeeper. It did bother me a great deal and I insisted everyone there call me "Adrienne" instead of "EVS." EVS wasn't a name; it was a department I worked for. My name was Adrienne and it was important to me that everyone I worked with call me by it. My job was to clean and disinfect as needed in the Emergency Department. During my time there, the space often either smelt sterile, or it smelt foul. I had only just begun working there maybe a month before the tragic night this fellow came in. The one whose name I cannot remember.

Calmly and quickly, the crowd of hospital employees gathered in preparation for the patient coming by ambulance. Male, 22 years old, stab wound to the chest, no known allergies.

It was the calm before the storm—a storm I had never experienced before, but the first of many to come in my years of labor there. There were four nurses waiting: one to administer drugs, another to document every move, another to assist the doctor, and another to watch and chart vitals. There were two doctors, one, as a matter of opinion, a complete jackass, and a second, a fine doctor, whom I would be a patient for any day. One paramedic, and one tech, one Charge nurse, one phlebotomist, one X-Ray tech and one EKG tech were all present and anxiously waiting.

I watched, eager to see all of these men and women I had grown to admire in action. In a moment, the calm had vanished. The tech, on her first real trauma, was in tears as she questioned whether or not she could do the job she had to do. The pressure was so much for her to bear she asked the charge nurse to switch her out with another more experienced tech. She was not permitted to, but I remember another tech that encouraged her:

“You can do this Melissa. You got this.” Melissa nodded her head through wet eyes and kept on while sobbing. The secretary was on the phone, frantically calling in orders. The poor woman didn’t have a second to breathe as people shouted various instructions. All other patients in the department were simultaneously put on the back-burner. Just one nurse made her way to the ten or so other patients in the department that night.

Sixteen units of blood were pumped into the unconscious patient and sixteen units poured out on the floor as he slowly slipped away. I spread out damp bath blankets over the floor in front of the critical care room to soak up the blood on the bottom of workers’ shoes so it would be contained in this single room instead of being tracked all around the halls. “Damn heart won’t stop beating,” one doctor said after working on his new patient for over an hour. His comment, though not that funny, provided quite a bit of much-needed comic relief.

Several police officers arrived to watch the circus of organized pandemonium; they walked about, pacing the floor, these are the kind of nights that police, ambulance and hospital employees live for.

The Charge nurse, who to my very last day intimidated me, approached and asked me to go in the room where the patient was still being treated. He wanted me to try and clean some of the mess so the staff wasn’t tripping over things. I was very anxious about doing this, but I entered as requested. The energy in the room was fast and restless. As it should be when someone’s life is on the line. I hurriedly picked up parts of the room that weren’t occupied, but it became clear as I was crawling on the floor, that I was in the way. I quickly removed myself from the room so the staff could do their jobs without an added tripping hazard. The Charge nurse apologized for asking me to go in the chaotic muddle. He realized after seeing my face that it was a bad call on his part; there was just too much going on to properly decontaminate the area.

Buzzing circulated around about the patient’s brother. He was in our Fast Track (a.k.a. Urgent Care) being treated for a similar stab wound to the upper left arm. The story of how these men were stabbed had finally come to light. Staying at a hotel, the patient, his brother, and his pregnant fiancé went to dinner. On the way to the

car in the parking lot, someone was double parked behind them and so naturally, they asked the driver if they could move the vehicle so they could go to dinner. The driver did, but when the family returned, the driver was waiting for him with a gang of men and they were attacked.

I can’t remember exactly when, but it was some time after midnight that the man was pronounced dead. “He musta been stabbed with a sword or something,” another doctor commented as he washed his hands. He knew that it was difficult to penetrate that much of the heart since it is so well protected. I was asked to enter the room to begin my clean up, though my shift had ended. I stayed, knowing that the task ahead would be a great burden for the shift after me. The smell of blood overcame me as I entered the room. The body lay there, lifeless on the gurney, blood dripping from his fingers incessantly to the floor. I had never seen a dead person before. He was so young, and I was astonished at how perfect he looked. His heart was purple, and quite large, I stared in disbelief as I tried to clean the blood off the floor. I had underestimated the size of the human heart but nothing prepared me for what happened next.

All throughout the department was heard a blood curdling scream. Like none I have ever experienced, and hope never to experience again. It was the mother of the deceased and her obligatory cry after hearing of her son's passing. That's when it hit me. I stared at his body lying there and realized he wasn't just a patient with a medical record number, as I had been seeing him and many other patients previously. He was a man, who left behind a mother, a brother and a fiancée with child. This was indeed the tragedy of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. For there was no real reason why this man and his family were attacked, but what his death meant after all was said and done, was that he had value to someone, he was someone's deepest love, he was someone's dearest comrade. I can't remember, but he had a name.

I didn't go home until 3 o'clock that morning. I wasn't sure what to make of the tragedy that night; I was unsure that I could continue the job. I went to church that morning and sat in service. I can't remember the sermon preached or the songs sung. All I could see, all I could think about were the images of this man, and his heart and the blood all over critical room 3. I felt like I had witnessed a murder; the

reality was I had witnessed a death after the murder had taken place. I went to another church across town where I knew my parents were partaking in a potluck. I wasn't hungry, but I knew I had to see them.

"It was obvious you had been through something," my mother told me. I asked her and my dad recently how I reacted that morning. All I could remember about that morning was being in a crowded room that had become white noise and a blur of familiar faces. I had become cold and unable to move. Was it okay to mourn the death of a man I didn't know? Was it okay that I wiped away his blood? Was it okay that I stared off, seeing only the images of him tattooed on my brain? "You couldn't stop talking about how much blood there was and you weren't sure if you could continue that job," my dad said to me.

I went into work that night, sleep deprived and undone. I was haunted by the halls that welcomed me just 24 hours before. I recalled images of a tall police officer going through the dead man's belongings post-mortem; cash, wallet, and a bag of weed. I recalled helping move his body from the hospital gurney to the mortician's gurney: I lifted his feet. They were big and

heavy, it was the first and only time I had touched a dead body. He was still warm and it seemed normal to me. What other temperature was he supposed to be?

A week later, I discovered that four of six of this patient's assailants were captured and given time in jail, but that could never bring this man back. The prisoners never knew the patient's name until being indicted. They damaged lives without any rhyme or reason. A child will never meet his father, a new mother will never marry her love, a brother will defend the pride of his now broken family, and their mother, will never forget the feeling of burying a son. It was an evening I'll remember for the rest of my life, but I can't remember his name. ❖

Felicia Seery

BY SHAWNA DOWNES

b. January 4th 1994 – d. April 19th 2012
Dedicated with love to the Parkrose High School Class of 2012
and the Seery family.

I saw a photo of her yesterday.

she seemed older than she is and
breathtaking
beautiful
powerful

like she put that scarf on her head just to be
fabulous
like she just slapped cancer in the face
one more time

only cancer slaps harder than any
chemotherapy treatment
unless you're lucky
but she's been lucky
and so are we
even as we grasp so hard

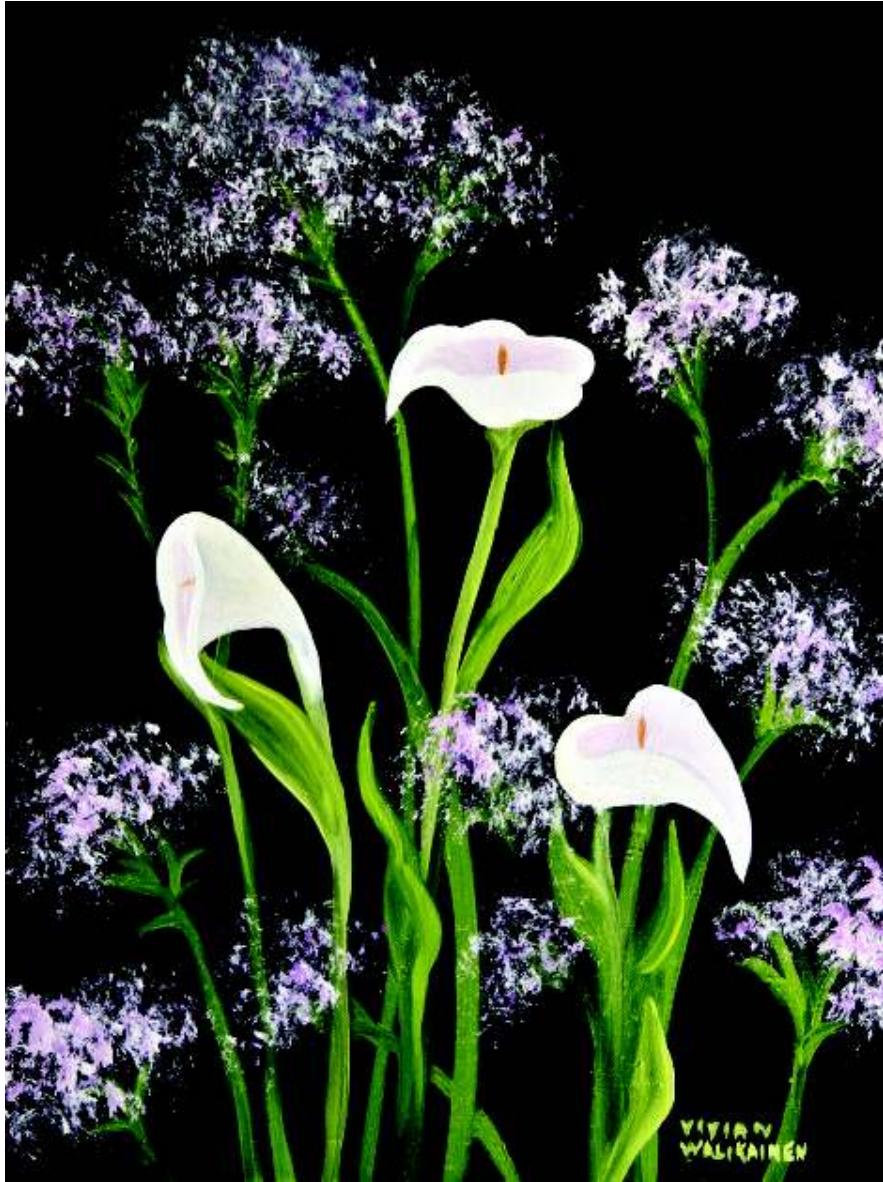
we hope that if we hang on tightly enough
another revolution around the sun will pass
and she'll still be standing here
grinning
laughing
crying

we try to suck in every single moment

we hope that she can hear
the message as we stumble over
words that are too meek to express
how much we love her
how much we love every second with her

as she slips away
we pour it out rapid-fire
as if to say:

back off cancer
we are loving her to death first.



VIVIAN WALIKAINEN

Web.

BY TIM JACKSON

*Dedicated to a man I extended a hand out to:
James Storer Majors
b. March 15th 1925 – d. January 20th 2013*

This rooster on my wrist
keeps time with the sun, the moon and mars,
and calculates evening cool and morning mist.
With every clinking hand, knowledge connects with stars,
fingers predict the slithers of the sun,
and every fingerprint sets the motions of a day.
One second, what seven billion have done!
Birthing groans and bones that weigh.
Matter is not the only one in production,
reflections of the mind are reflected
into 1,000 lakes of scattered reproduction,
inside a bowl of cerebral fluid collected,
and scattered by my nervous system's web.

Little ticking hands will not hold that much!
Energy beyond the field of view,
lifts off to what we cannot touch,
into starry heavens, like patterned dew
scattered on a spider's web.

These two ticking hands stop and clasp,
when fabrics of time should be tender.
An old man lets out his last gasp,
and the beats no longer render.
You could meet a new person every second,
and never meet them all,
but if you truly met just one,
your time will stop.
Because it is not time that makes the rhyme,
or our work is that of ants.
What makes these moments stop
is what these hands can't see,
and what can only be caught
in this web.

Books Are Alive

BY DANIEL SAIN

I crack open a mind,
sit back, and enjoy,
Its succulent juices,
cascading down my chin.
Warmth splashes my tongue.
The smell of old paper wafting in the air,
the tingling aroma trickles up my nose.
The sound of a turning page,
my ears twitch in delight.
Eyes focused as if,
looking
away could make me
lose it all.
I step forth on a journey
once more enthralled.
My fantasy will only be,
Interrupted by the,
turn of the next page.

Never Home

BY LEAH UNDERWOOD

“Her name was Aimee, and she didn’t last very long.” Those were the only words that could be heard from the tour guide as he continued on in his thick German accent. Aimee was 10 years old and didn’t survive more than a few weeks in the camp. Her small, black boots sat on top of a pile amongst a hundred other pair of shoes that were in a display window like animals at a zoo. The black laces ran up the length of the boots and you could almost imagine her lacing them up as she ran to get to school on time. A plaque on the wall showed an enlarged picture of Aimee’s shoe and showed on the inside where she had scribbled her name in a childlike manner.

We were told that the Jews were stripped of all their personal belongings and that these items were then traded and sold among the Nazis who imprisoned them at the Dachau concentration camp in central Germany. I stood there and stared at the picture before me that was right at eye level. Who was Aimee and what had this journey been like for her? My mother calling my name brought me out of my trance, and my eight-year-old legs ran as fast as they could to catch up to her.

Aimee, cold and terrified, waited for the large metal gate to open and the rattling of the metal shook her to her core. It was crowded and she clung to her mother’s hand with a desperation she didn’t know existed. It was cold as the icy rain pounded against her cheek and soiled her coat to the point that the long wool garment was now useless. She didn’t dare complain because this was the least of her worries. The train ride to the concentration camp had taken two days and she heard horror stories that her mother kept insisting weren’t true, but she didn’t know what to believe anymore. They had been loaded off of the train cars and onto a large platform where they were then piled into trucks and brought straight to the gate. Days of no food and little water left her weak.

Barking German shepherd dogs caused her to turn her attention from the throng of people and she began to whimper. A reassuring hand on her back calmed her some but not much as the animals nipped around her and she heard the German officers shouting; whether they were shouting at the people or the dogs she didn’t know. Officers surrounded the large group of people and they began to point their guns at them and shout. A whimper escaped from her rose-colored lips as the crowd slowly began to move.

I looked up and saw the dark gray clouds rolling in over the camp. A sense of doom overcame me. A crack of thunder scared even the adults in the group and a light sprinkle began to fall. I was scared, everything I was seeing and learning was too much for my young mind to take in. I looked to the far corner and stared at the fence that had kept so many people imprisoned. The glisten of the barbed wire atop the entire perimeter was daunting. Coil after coil of sharp wire stood high in the air to deter anyone from trying to escape, as if the guard towers every couple hundred yards weren't enough. I pulled my coat on tighter and looked up, letting the rain droplets hit my face.

Aimee felt another droplet of cold rain hit her face as she crossed the threshold of the gate and moved closer and closer into the prison that looked like hell on earth. The guards were seething and the anger in their faces was enough to cause even the strongest of men to shake in their boots, let alone a little girl. Everything was happening so fast. She longed to be under the protection of her father's arms but her mother and Aimee had been separated from her father and brothers when the soldiers tore them out of their homes. Children were crying and she wanted to cry herself

but she'd promised her mother that she would be strong. Blood curdling screams broke her train of thought. Everyone began to panic at the sound. "They've been taken to the showers," she heard one hysterical woman shout as she pointed to the direction from which the screams had come. "The showers," was a term she'd heard numerous times during the train ride here. People told horror stories of how men and women, children even, were shoved like cattle into a large

The yellow and green star shone bright and as she looked down at it she wished more than anything that she could just tear it off.

room then instead of water coming out of the shower heads, gas did and it stopped you from being able to breathe. She didn't quite understand it all, but she knew that once you went in there that you didn't come out alive.

Looking up into her mother's eyes, she saw terror in them and knew that her mother's word of encouragement and promises that everything would be okay weren't true. A panic like

nothing she'd ever felt came rushing over her and she clung to her mother's hand even harder. One of the guards began to shout even louder and kept pointing at her. A hand involuntarily shot up to the breast of her coat and touched the star that had been sewed on months before by her mother. It was so they would know she was a Jew, she'd been told. At first she was proud to display this insignia but soon she found out that all it did was bring her trouble. The yellow and green star shone bright and as she looked down at it she wished more than anything that she could just tear it off.

The faded yellow star seemed to be inspecting me as much as I was inspecting it, if that were possible for an inanimate object. It was tattered and behind a glass wall like most everything else that had been saved from those days. We were inside and the warmth was welcomed as the rain had soaked us to the bone. The Star of David that should have represented peace and love had been demeaned to a symbol of hatred.

Aimee could still hear the guards screaming at them, but she could no longer make out their words. Everyone around her was crying; there wasn't a face in that place that didn't look terrified beyond words. The crowd slowly made their way closer to the

center of the camp where she saw thin and ghostly looking people dressed in striped, white and black garments. They looked wet and cold. An elderly man looked her way from afar and what she saw terrified her more than the screaming soldiers. He had a look that seemed to say "I'm sorry," as if he already knew the doom that awaited her. The man in the striped clothes put his head down and resumed his work of pushing a wooden wheelbarrow through the mud.

The soldiers began to separate the crowd. A small portion of the group was taken to the left and Aimee and her mother were forced to the right. The sharp noise of guns going off alarmed everyone. They screamed, terrified, in unison as they looked to see where the noise was coming from. Immediately everyone in her group had ducked down. Her mother's arm was over her in a protective manner that made her feel safe even if just for a fraction of a second.

Eyes open wide, she began to sob as she saw the lifeless bodies piling up one on another as the soldiers lined up men, women, and children against the wall and set their guns off. A river of red began to run as the rain washed away the blood. Red, the most vibrant red she'd ever seen. The realization of what was happening started to hit her as she stared at the dark red.

I stared at the brown stain against the rudimentary plastered wall. I couldn't take my eyes away as the tour guide explained what it was. Even after decades of the sins committed there, the stain of their blood was still present where they'd been lined up and shot. Why? That was the only question running through my mind, I couldn't peel my eyes away. Why would someone do that?

Aimee cried harder as the sounds of the guns penetrated her ears and she could no longer hear her mother's voice over all the noise. Her only line of safety was being diminished. The rain continued to hit her face but the warmth of her tears began to mix with the cold wetness of the precipitation. She didn't have long to process what was happening because before she knew it she was being rounded up again and forced to move along with the crowd. Making sure she still had ahold of her mother's hand, she prayed that this was all just a nightmare.

I turned around and looked at the prison as we began to climb into the car to leave. I saw the prison from the outside and realized this was a view that so many people never got to experience. They saw the chain-link fence and the barbed wire from the inside, and

that represented their entrapment. I was able to see it from the outside looking in, something most of them never experienced, something that they only dreamed of, to be looking in and not looking out.

She was only ten years old and she had to endure more evil in her short time than most people will be exposed to in a lifetime. She was a child with a promising future that was cut short at the hands of men. She was a daughter who was loved and a woman who could have changed the world. She was a friend to many and a girl who just wanted to experience the joys and wonders of being a child. Her name was Aimee and she didn't last very long. ■■

A Season of River

BY RUTH RENO

Where the river meanders and amber glow fills the day,
I'll slide my canoe into the water and slip away,
Away from the hectic to loll in river's languorous mood

The fog like a silk veil hovers in morning's spark of dawn
I'll net the energy of quiet where journeying salmon spawn
Gaze at the posed blue heron and sip silence from my tea

I'll ride the rippled waves with my mind resting in slow motion
Paddle in hand with the river and glide past all the commotion
Freeing myself in autumn along the way

Where the river meanders and amber glow fills the day,
I'll slide my canoe into the water and slip away, away





Colors

BY TAYLOR CLARK

What is my favorite color?

The fresh tips of new growth
On a spruce tree,
The harsh sky
On a crisp winter morning,
The rich grains
Of fertile soil,
The calm glow of coals
Emanating heat and hope,
The sterile powder
That abolishes earth's scars,
The dull of the ocean
After a storm,
The soft blemish
Of a secret let slip,
The chlorophyll deprivation
Of an oak leaf come autumn,
The rich hue
Of a pomegranate kernel,
The cold glare,
Of the darkness unknown...

What is my favorite color?
I couldn't choose just one
For without the others,
Its identity would be distorted
By its solitude.





Symphony of the Night

BY DANIEL SAIN

Lying in bed attempting to sleep,
the symphony of the night starts softly.
Wind seeps through the screen,
rain pelts the roof of a car.

The symphony of the night starts softly,
wood floors squeal in delight.
Rain pelts the roof of a car,
thunder claps a furious beat.

Wood floors squeal in delight,
trees sway, snap, shatter their shackles.
Thunder claps a furious beat,
lightning flashes.

Trees sway, snap, shatter their shackles,
the frenzy of the night swells.
Lightning flashes,
a tree bursts into flame, sirens drawing near.

The frenzy of the night swells,
wind seeps through the screen.
A tree bursts into flame, sirens drawing near,
lying in bed attempting to sleep.

The night is not for sleeping anymore

BY DEBORAH LANDERS

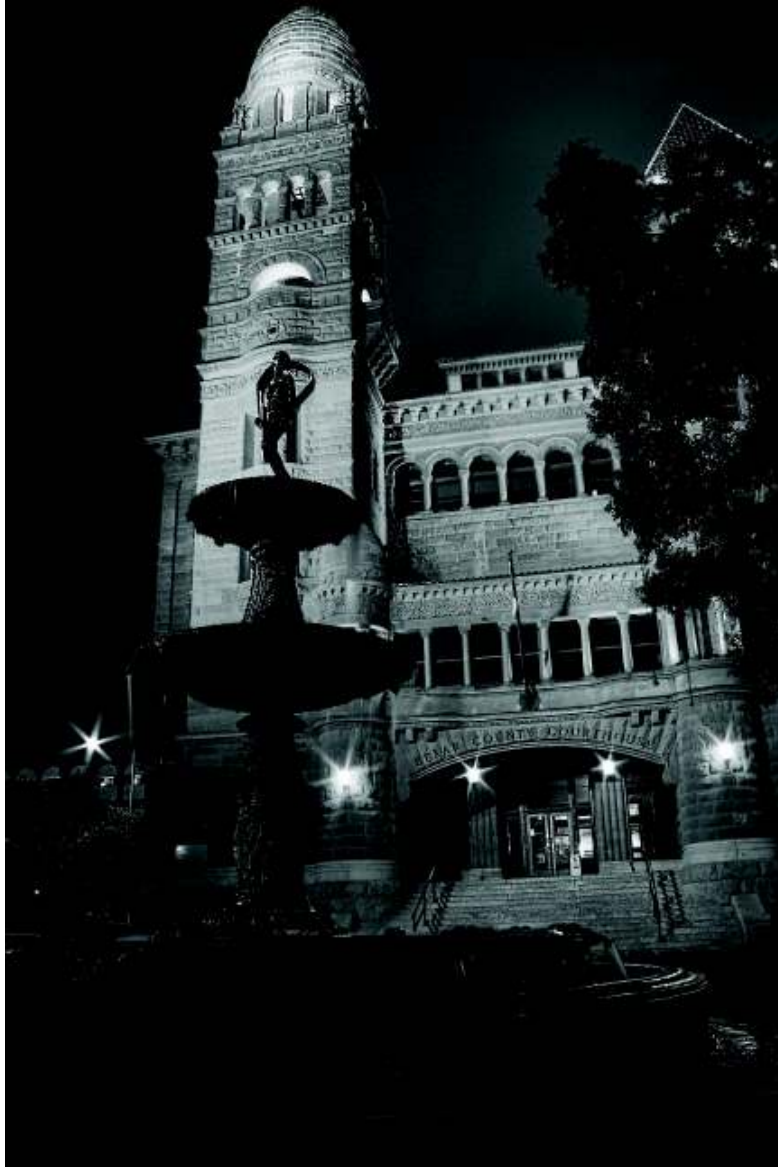
The night is not for sleeping anymore.
It used to be a time when we curled up,
Exhausted but satisfied,
Having accomplished all we set out to do.
There is no more satisfaction.
We fall asleep in the early morning hours,
Dreading the ungodly hour we have to wake up
Just to finish a project,
Or a worksheet,
Or a reading,
Or go to a work–study job.
The night is not for sleeping anymore.
It’s for feverish studying,
For the guilty rush as we indulge in entertainment,
Although we know that we have a paper due in mere hours.

We know that watching one more show—
One more episode of “How I Met Your Mother”,
The last 20 minutes of *The Bourne Supremacy*,
The second disc of *The Two Towers* Extended Edition—
None of it will get our homework done.
We dutifully drag our overtaxed bodies to class,
Force our sleep–deprived minds to work at 8a.m.,
After only 4 hours of sleep,
And remind ourselves that we are paying for this.
We who fight for a future cannot sleep at night,
We cannot slip under the radar as we did in high school.
So we bury our heads in our books,
And we rub our bloodshot eyes.
We resign ourselves to one fact:
The night is not for sleeping anymore.



TIM JACKSON

Crazed Constellations 93



Destroying the Ruins: Redemption Through Defeat

BY ERIN FLYNN

This broken life
Destroyed with greed;
Distorted thoughts
Of want and need.

A damaged soul,
Crushed by faith.
Propagated lies
Promised better days.

Slithering snake
Eyes his prey.
Outstretched hand
Guides his way.

Muscles tense,
Skin feels cold.
Prepare sweet bite.
Poison, take hold.

Eyes closed tight,
Fingers inch near.
Body's slight twitch
Reveals deep fear.

A voice fills the heart
Sweet, Soft, Subdued
You freeze and listen,
Knowing not else what to do.

“My child,
I ask you to stop.
This life is not yet through.
Listen to My Word,
My love will surely renew.”

The scent of death
No longer sweet.
With fear of sick bite,
Hand coils in retreat.

Then it was gone;
The voice, the despair.
With head bowed low
Out came a short prayer.

Life and soul
Feel slight pulls.
The Thread of Life
Heals torn wounds.



VIVIAN WALIKAINEN



Sea Gown

BY RUTH RENO

I lounge on the sand and imagine the sea
draped around me; this majestic robe lying on the ocean floor
I lift it by its white foamed collar, wrapping it around my shoulders
dressing the front of me, except for a sliver of opening
clasped by a brooch of mother of pearl
Fluid, blue green flows down my back, trailing miles behind
a thin veil of misty brine moistens my face
and a crown of plaited clouds adorn my head
I stroll along the shore on light, sand slippers
A banner of seagulls flies above me
and sandpipers parade alongside
I wear the sea on a barren beach
while beachcombers stand agog
and the wind whispers, "Why?"
"This is my dream," I sigh,
sauntering inside the lullaby of an ocean tide

RUTH RENO

Sea Gown 99





INDEX OF IMAGES

JOE FLINTHAM	11	Poppy
EVAN LEESON	13	the kind of day it was
JEFF EATON	32	Ink Stained Wretches
ZEV	44	construction
DIEGO SEVILLA RUIZ	50	a universe within the sun
BRANDON CHRISTOPHER WARREN	54	Alice in Wonderland: White Rabbit – Long Live the Queen
JACKRABBIT	80	Old leather books, 4
YANIV GOLAN	99	She brings the sunset

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are accepted year-round at WProcinante@gmail.com. Although reading periods are subject to change depending upon the editors, expect responses during mid-Spring semester. Please include submissions in an email containing your name, contact information, a three-line biography, and the genre and title of your submissions. Please ensure that your pieces have been edited and are ready for publication.

Poetry: limit five pieces per person

Prose: no more than ten pages double-spaced

Artwork/Photography: limit ten per person. Any digital photographs must be at least 240 DPI. Contact the staff if you need to scan artwork.

Check WProcinante.com for more information.

Any submissions without proper contact information or over the submission limit will be subject to automatic exclusion. Those submitting hard copies are responsible to claim their submissions within 30 days of the journal release party.

By submitting your work to *Rocinante*, you give us permission to use your accepted pieces in the journal at our discretion and to use it outside of the journal for marketing purposes.

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A piece
of art
is never
a finished work.

It answers a question
which has been asked,
and asks
a new question.

—Robert Engman

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