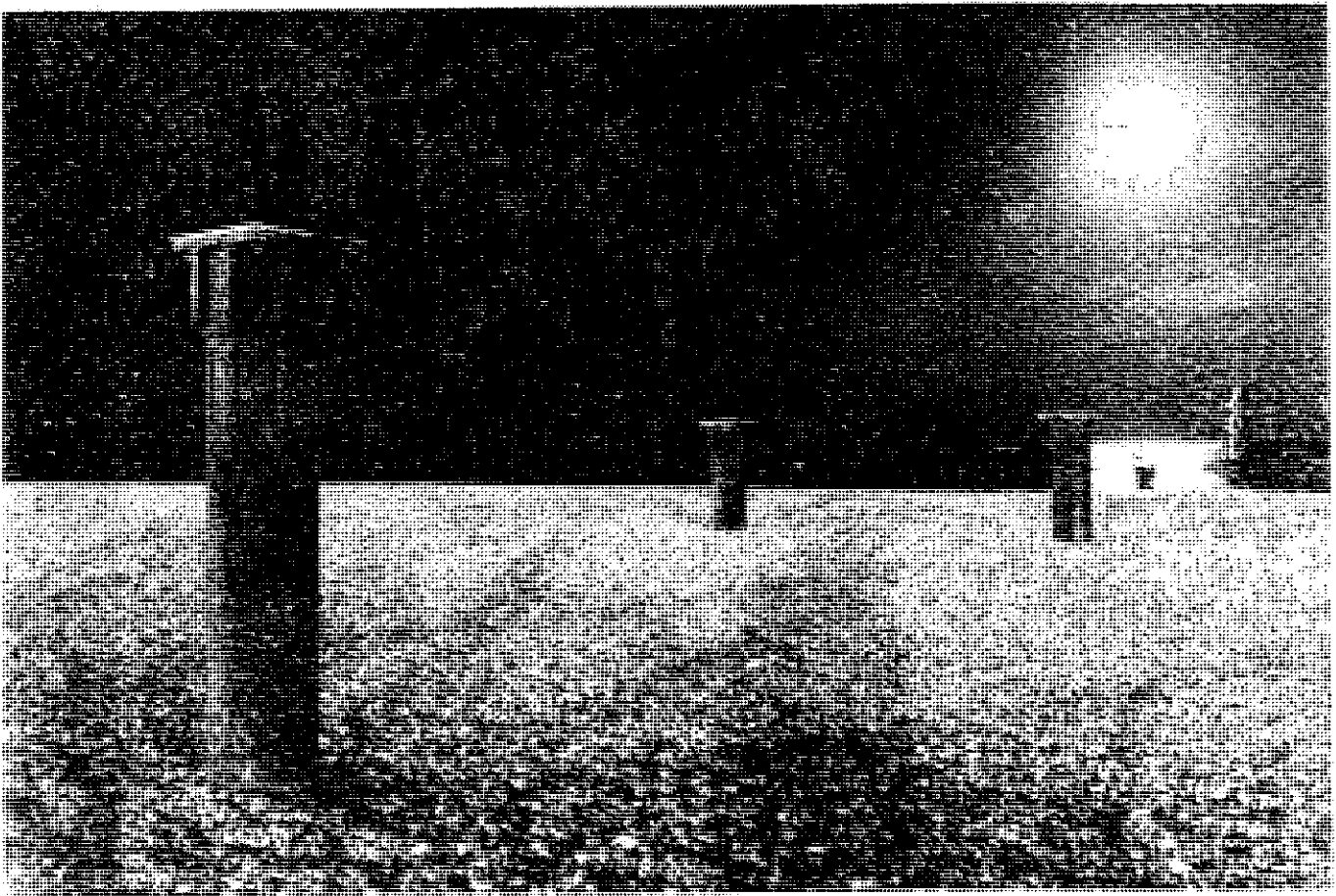


ROCINANTE

Warner Pacific College
Spring 2005, Volume 4



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ROCINANTE

Warner Pacific College, Portland, Oregon
Spring 2005, Volume 4.

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Mission Statement

*Men must be taught as if you taught them not
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.
-Alexander Pope-*

When Jesus was teaching here on earth in physical form, He often used questions to answer questions, or told stories in response to questions he was asked. Both of these methods bring the questioner to or towards the answers they were seeking. This process occurred within the individual and his or her own relation to the question or story, rather than purely outside of them by being told the answer by Jesus. Simply stating the answer is a static process. Truly teaching as He did, is "teaching as if you taught them not." That is the goal of this magazine and the art within. By telling the right stories and asking the right questions, regardless of the language of art chosen to achieve this goal, be it fiction, non-fiction, poetry, prose, critical pieces, visual art, even musical compositions, the hopeful intention of Rocinante is to act as a catalyst, causing the reader to seek, and continue to seek.

In his quest to find true love, the disillusioned knight Don Quixote of La Mancha rode upon his horse called Rocinante. In our quest to find true enlightenment, Rocinante is our vehicle to take us to the realization of our own illusions, carrying us, through art, dutifully down an endless road of human folly, faith, sincerity and jest. It is to hope as Quixote did, perhaps vainly, yet faithfully, that not all who wander are lost, and that those who seek shall find. Above all Rocinante is a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously as we seek, to not despair along the way.

Letter from the Editor

No one ever actually reads these things when there is much more interesting stuff inside. With that in mind I shall not belabor the point of a Letter from the Editor. The forming of Rocinante is no small task, and yet it often can seem as foppish as charging at windmills. Similarly, creating art and sharing it with others can often seem as equally ridiculous. It takes a sort of courage to overcome this fear of foppery, and for those who did, my fellow fools and I -- err I mean editors -- salute you. To everyone else who did not submit but should have, we give the slightest knowing nod.

With the production of Rocinante now as an accredited class, this year's magazine has been the most democratic, and as holds true with most democracies, the least efficient. To begin with we have had many presidents (teachers), four to be exact, yet three the same. First there was a teacher, then no teacher. Then the same teacher, yet at class time there was no teacher. Finally the same teacher, who quit again, resulting in the addition of our newest adjunct and savior, J.D. McIntire. Mobilization has been a slow process, and there are pieces in this magazine that I would not have selected as dictator, and there are some rejected which I most enjoyed. Nevertheless we have a fabulous magazine this year, again. Our little school has a multitude of artists to be proud of, and people committed to exhibiting this art in the form of a literary magazine that are as diligent and dedicated as any school could wish.

*Happy Wanderings,
Zach*

Table Of Contents

On the Streets of Sarajevo	3	Andria Cotton
And There Are Those We Never Say Goodbye To	4	Heather Joice
Paradoxing	4	Brendan Abraham Murphy
God as a Deconstructionist	5	Zach White
"The Seventh Seal" and the Theological Quest for Meaning: A Film Review	6	Andria Cotton
content with this, yet	7	Simple
Measure for Measure 11	9	Daniel Ray
To the Mouths of Wolves	12	Kenneth Edward Keyn
Remembered	12	Amber Marie Heavilin
The Resurrected Ones	12	Steve Wing
Understanding Strangers	12	Kenneth Edward Keyn
Large Mountain	12	Frankie Sidewinder
Stupid Love	18	Morgan Belmonte
Denouement	18	Brendan Abraham Murphy
California Frown, an excerpt.	20	J.J. Putulowski
And I Stumbled	22	Urban Jack
A White Upper-Middle Class American and Rwanda	23	Bridget Murphy
Slow Down Stoopid	24	Mihaires Algone
Family	25	Morgan Belmonte
Church Service Surprise	26	Charity D. Darnall
Solar Eclipse	26	Saymore
Hear My Silence	26	Kenneth Edward Keyn
Autumn Air	26	Charity D. Darnall
Before the Cleansing's Done	26	Urban Jack
Desvelar	27	Tyler Caffall, Alex Kuechler, Daniel Ray

On the Streets of Sarajevo
Andria Cotton

What comes to your mind when you hear Sarajevo?

Sounds familiar

I should know

more about it but I don't I

think I remember something about it on the news

A while ago

A war

Not too long ago World War I, WWII, Vietnam...

Those were a long time ago

Things are different now

We didn't know

about Auschwitz otherwise we would have stepped in We knew

about Sarajevo

We knew

The sky of the Sarajevo dusk is a moody blue cut by streaks of neon pink. Jordan and I slowly walk the path of the river that flows along the historic downtown. About every 150 feet a bridge crosses the river. I wonder which one was the bridge that Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on in 1914, the shot that started the first World War, right here in Sarajevo.

We meander along the sidewalk in a second world daze. Releasing hands, we sneak in a few pictures and try to consider ourselves as artists, not tourists. We take one of the burnt library. The edifice remains, but the insides went up in flames during the war. The fire licked every last page of recorded history. The Call to Prayer comes out of speakers hanging from one of the hundreds of mosques. They all come on in unison, although their songs are not synchronized, and the clamoring of voices creates an uncomfortable moan. Haunted and enchanted by the man who sings, I have begun to look forward to his plea that interrupts us five times a day.

My boyfriend Jordan and I are in Bosnia visiting his sister Dayna and his brother-in-law Matt who are YWAM missionaries. They live in a small apartment that they have decorated with artifacts gathered from their travels around the world. They grapple with the language, and learn to cook outside of American packages; it is a perfect setting for two people who are learning to live as one. God recently gave them a car, so they are getting used to driving on cobblestone roads where the horn is used as often as the brake pedal; pedestrians get one honk. If they don't move they should expect a blow from the side mitrot.

Matt and Dayna take us into town and we drive past clumps of hunched over people waiting for a bus. Two girls catch my

attention. They are stretched long and thin, their denim toothpick legs are propped up by spiky stilettos, their hipbones jut out of their bodies, hovering over the dead pavement. One of them has her arms crossed, like she is tired of waiting. The other has a passive aggressive hand on her hip. She takes a puff of a cigarette. Her lips pout out of emaciated jawbones. They are the ones the models try to imitate. They are the real thing.

"The youth in Bosnia want to leave," Dayna says. "The ones that are educated don't want to wait around here."

We drive along the outskirts of the downtown between green, grassy fields and gray, gravel buildings. On my right I see the Olympic rings that still tower over the city. There was a time when all eyes were on Sarajevo as a symbol of peace, unity, and hope. Less than a decade later -- war, fragmentation, despair. The Olympic tower hovers over the city, mocks the city, reminds the city. Sports were one of the only things that unified the people during the war. They'd call a ceasefire for a game of soccer. Two hours of peace. Two hours without the crack of a gun or the scream of a sniper victim. The only screams were those of the wild fans. When the clock stopped, they'd grab for their guns.

Sarajevo used to be the image of Enlightenment dreams. It was a place where Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics lived in peace, yet maintained their distinction. All of that was washed out in the Ethnic Cleansing. The downtown is heavy with modern sadness. The buildings that used to represent the future now wither. They are not strong enough to hold up under the pressures of idealism. The socialist housing complexes stare with eyes glazed over, jaded by their sameness, neglected by the visionar-

ies who birthed them. Chunks of the apartments are missing from the building's side. When did it all fall apart?

"They said that communism was about equality, right?" Matt said. "Well it wasn't. Sure, no one got a special deck, or anything. But they don't have elevators in those buildings. Some people had to walk up twenty flights of stairs, grandmas too. The government did a pretty bad job keeping up with the maintenance on those places and since people didn't own them, no one wanted to take on the burden of repairs." It doesn't look like anyone is too concerned with that now, either. I could imagine all of these tired buildings around me all giving up at once, tumbling down in a fury of dust and rubble. What keeps them standing anyway?

Back at the apartment, Matt puts the candy red Dcesva on the stove and waits for the water to almost boil. At that point he drops two scoops of the finely ground brown flecks in the water, stirs and waits. As the moistened grounds rise to the top, he skims them off and dollops a spoonful into each mug. When the now brown water begins to boil over the top, he pours the Turkish coffee and we all sit and drink together. The coffee is rich, flowing like melted chocolate. It's perfect with the baklava that you can get at the bakeries for only one mark. As I cup the mug with two hands and sip the smooth mixture slowly, I look up at the main living room wall and the enormous mural that overtakes it. The painting is of a sunset, at least five shades of orange. Black cowboy silhouettes ride along the mandarin sky. I think about what would have possessed someone to paint that on their wall. Matt and Dayna told us about their landlord who lives upstairs. During the war, he moved his family down to the apartment that we were now staying in -- less chance of sniper fire down there. Maybe they painted it as something to do while they passed the time as prisoners in their own home. Maybe they painted it in a claustrophobic hysteria, as an alternative to clawing at the walls.

The walls are comforting until they start closing in. I get to choose when I come and go. In this case I get to choose my claustrophobia -- the house, or the streets. It's a new day. I choose the streets. Today they smell of mud after the rain. The sun glistens on the lead puddles. Tasting the spicy Chevape mear in the air, I get hungry for the warm bread and the creamy yogurt sauce that goes with it. We walk deeper into the Turkish side of the city and turn left on Brass Alley.

"How much does this cost?" I ask the man, holding up a turquoise tea pot.

"Come inside," he says. "Just come inside." He's not asking me. He's telling me. I follow him into the store. It is thick with smoke. Through the haze I see hundreds of brass and silver coffee sets that line the walls and shimmer against the dull shelves. Inside, the man tells me that the teapot is fifteen marks. That is more than I want to spend, so I ask the price of something else. I don't really want anything now. I just want to get out. The man spits out prices at me, each time lower and lower. He is desperate and I am caught up in the whirlwind of humanitarian sorrow and the limitations of my vacation budget. Jordan saves me, pulling me out of the shop. He says the "good bye" and "thank you" and I shrug empathetically.

"Stop following them in there," he says.

"I can't help it. I don't know what to say to them," I reply.

"Are you even looking for anything?"

"I just want a turkish coffee set for me and a coffee pot for Marcy."

"Do you have to go into every store?"

"No." I could go into every store though. Brass Alley. They all sell the same thing, but each has its own twist. Some sell special fabrics, some sell water bonges and some sell jewelry. They all sell brass coffee sets. Brass Alley is a reminder of the old world. The way it use to be, before the war. Old town Sarajevo is still recovering. A new building stands alongside an old one. The old one still has blast marks indented in its side. These are the streets of Sarajevo. As they slowly rebuild the city, one hand holds the hammer, the other holds the side that still aches from the wound.

And There Are Those We Never Say Good- bye To

Heather Joice

I didn't sleep much the night before; there was just too much on my mind. Tyler and I had been laboring all day long over creating a "wedding weekend schedule," proofing vendor contracts, and searching the internet for a local cake bakery that would actually deliver on a Sunday. I realized it was late and crawled into bed. My brain didn't want to slow down for the night. One o'clock came and went. Two o'clock. Insanity was quickly approaching. With class in the morning, I desperately wanted some sleep, any sleep. Surrendering to the exhaustion of simply being awake at that hour, I finally dozed off -- it must have been at least three o'clock, but I don't really know.

Paradoxing

Brendan Abraham Murphy

idea one knocked on the door, present her case an hour or more and left me feeling satisfied, trust worthy were her steadfast eyes, but when came in idea two, convincing, smart did he argue that quandary came to find me last, and said 'forget it all and fast,' but nagging would not feign confuse, the cases left did still argue that black is black and white is white and caught me in their tempered fight that when i tired had to admit, though contradictions veiled the fit that everything i had assumed was left behind in finding both were true.

The next thing I remember is the unfriendly scream of my alarm clock, waking me into another day. As I drug myself to the shower, I was already daydreaming about squeezing in an afternoon nap after school. This motivated me through breakfast, my morning classes, and all the way home. I ate a rushed lunch, half-heartedly worked on some homework, and then happily proceeded to reward myself. I turned the fireplace on, wrapped up in my favorite quilt, and drifted...I could hear the small noise of my dad typing at the computer in the next room, and there was the faint sound of cars driving by outside. I was not quite asleep when I remembered to turn off my cell phone; nothing was going to interrupt me. With that done, I was out.

So often we live our lives as if the next day is a guarantee. Each day after the last, like clockwork. We are invincible, and living for the future; the world is ripe with promise. Yet it only takes a second for this illusion to crumble, changing us into people who wish for the day before; we want our time back.

It had been three hours; I woke up and awkwardly stumbled to the kitchen for a glass of water. The living room was too hot now. I couldn't fall back asleep. My dad had left for work, leaving a note asking me to make sure the dishes got done before mom got home later. The house was silent. I turned my phone back on; maybe Tyler had called. Sure enough, I had messages. I only got through my first message. My life quickly changed while I listened as Tyler painfully told me that Brandon, our best friend Ryan's brother, had died. "There had been an accident...I needed to call him ... soon...where was I...click." I stood there, dish towel in hand, tears flowing, wondering why, numb to the world, upset that Tyler hadn't called the house phone, shocked that someone so young, so good, had just been taken from us.

Hours of phone calls followed this voice-mail: friends calling friends, sad, confused, gathering information -- lifting each other

up, because the burden is much too heavy to carry alone. I text Ryan: "I know you must be getting tons of calls -- so I wanted to write and tell you how sorry I am and I love you." I cry, I weep, I grieve. How painful to lose a brother, how painful to lose a friend. Ryan texts me back: "Thanks so much. Love you too." I call Tyler, and we talk about Brandon, about how we didn't even want to ask about how he died. Did he suffer...was he alone...did he know? I thought how angry I was going to be if he'd been hit by a drunk driver, then paused, deciding that I was already angry. I said what makes it worse is that no one got to say good-bye. Tyler agreed and told me his parents were going over to Ryan's house, his mom made some food to take. They wanted to help. I suggested that sad people don't have appetites. I had to go; my call waiting was beeping. More explaining, more crying, confusion, anger, questions...more friends call. Everyone wants to know why, they want to be sorry enough to change it, and we all want to go back to yesterday.

We want to say good-bye. To tell the ones we love that they mean the world to us. Leave no unfinished business. We want closure, to touch, to listen, to remember -- before it's too late. This is not always possible. Sometimes we are robbed of reaching out that one last time, that last embrace -- we only have the memory of before, when we didn't know there would be an empty place in the world. We become unjustly stripped of our comforts, security, and our sanity. The world becomes ugly and cruel, like death and there are those we never say good-bye to.

I won't sleep much tonight; there is just too much on my mind. I have been laboring all day over a pain, a loss, a tragedy. I realize it is late; I want to go to sleep. Tomorrow will be another day, arriving like clockwork. I call Tyler -- I want to say goodnight...be careful on the road...I love you so much...goodbye.

For Brandon Moor 1983-2005

God as a Deconstructionist

Zach White

"I built that whole house three summers ago," I said to her. It was nearly two in the morning. We were a few hundred meters from my grandparent's house, and I was going as slowly as possible, dreading our arrival. It was a feeling I have commonly had the last few years when approaching that house, and one that I am not yet used to. I used to love going to their house, and most of my best childhood memories involve my dad's parents, and Medford, Oregon. Medford is one of the best places on earth. It has a raw simplicity that is, for periods of time, quite refreshing. That night Medford was foggy, miserably wet, and underlined with a sullen and demented cold.

I rounded the second ninety-degree turn and approached the driveway. Kalea's brother was still asleep in the backseat; her mom was awake, but pretending not to pay attention to us. It is an old trick mothers think they are good at, but aren't. Kalea squeezed my hand and smiled, she had heard the quaver in my voice I was trying to conceal. There was not a lot she could say, and that was a good thing. Silence, when used effectively, speaks the things words never quite get around. I remember whenever she called me as I was building, my grandpa couldn't understand her name, and called her "Korea." I always wrote it out for him, but he could never remember. I reminded her of that and we both smiled.

Finally I turned into the driveway and passed the truck my cousin Paul smashed that summer when he wasn't old enough to drive. It was my fault for letting him, but that is another story. We got out of Kalea's mom's car and headed up towards the studio apartment. My grandma left it unlocked because she knew she wouldn't be awake when we got there. My grandpa built it over his little shop area that is disconnected but only a few feet from the house. As I walked in I was overcome with memories. After settling the guests into bed, I crawled into my sleeping bag on the floor. Things pounded in my head as I tried to sleep. I was dreading waking up to meet my grandparents.

I spent a whole summer in Medford between my junior and senior year of high school. It was life-changing in ways I cannot put into words. I was allowed to have the two-bedroom apartment all to myself. It was freeing. I had a car, and an apartment, a job, but I had no friends, nor time to build friendships. I did build that house though. Granted it was not a big house, nor the most beautiful ever, but it served its purpose in the neighborhood, which was relatively

moderate, accommodating housing at low cost.

My grandpa invired me for the summer, at least he thought he did. I really gave him the idea that he should build a house and I could come work for him for the summer. It happened just how I thought it would. He forgot it was my idea, and the next time he saw me he asked me if I wanted to do it. I told him I did want to, smirking a little inside. It was not that I was taking advantage of him or causing him to lose money, but just that I got to do what I wanted. I knew he often had thoughts and ideas and forgot the source. At the time I thought this fact to be nothing more than a little memory loss.

A week later my grandpa and I were staking out the house, and had the site excavated. In a few days we were building and leveling the forms for the foundation. It must be mentioned that while we got this project done rather quickly, we used "old" or out of date methods for things. To level the foundation we actually used a water level, which is just water in a plastic tube. There are no nail guns on any of my grandpa's job sites, practically the only electrical devices are skill saws. Even for screwdrivers we used an old wooden-handled thing, which had to be pressed hard in order to screw the screw in. I don't think it was so much of an intentional thing as much as that was how he was used to doing it.

Driving down there that summer was a growing experience. I must admit I cried some as a seventeen-year-old leaving the house for the first time as well as a beautiful girl I had just met that I was sure would forget me in the next three months. It was pouring rain all the way down to about Wolf Creek. I only cried to about Albany. By Grants Pass it was hot and I was smiling, singing "Dammit" by Blink 182 at the top of my lungs. I guess that was growing up.

As I lay in bed thinking about all of this, the light was changing outside. It was beginning to get lighter and the factory by my grandparents' house started its work again. It gave a wonderful smell to the whole area. I groaned thinking of how tired I would be in the morning and of my seven-hour drive with Kalea and her family. I closed my eyes and tried to sleep but kept remembering things that wouldn't let me.

One of the things my parents liked about that trip for the summer was that they knew my grandparents were getting old, and it would be good to spend as much time as possible with them before things changed. I thought little of it at the beginning of my

stay, but I learned so much about them I never knew before. The things I learned are things I cannot specifically remember, but which refine my perception of the essence of who they were.

My grandpa always kept a little steno notebook in which he wrote everything we needed for the house. I didn't think much of it until he lost the notebook. He couldn't remember what we needed to do for that day. I didn't really take much notice. It was just kind of a hassle. We searched and I finally found it in his trunk. I really pondered the night I found that notebook about how people get older and lose themselves slowly, and wondered who's there to find them. I decided I wanted my grandparents to write letters I could read to my own children as a way to connect them to these incredible people with so much to say about life

It was an awkward request, and I never got around to it. Now I wish that I had. Things went on through the whole summer with a systematic variation between the elation of building and the melancholy of loneliness and deterioration. My grandpa and I were usually the only ones on the jobsite. My cousin Tony came for the pouring of the foundation, and we got the flooring done by the middle of July. We took a week off at that point because all of my family was going to be there for a week. It was nice to see my family for a short time, but I was really into building because we were about to start framing and that is when it really starts looking like a house. We framed the day after everyone left. Two days actually, since my grandpa forgot to call for the studs.

I loved my grandparents, but I was lonely for friends and people my age. I took the loneliness out working. My grandpa was so impressed he nipped my hourly pay to ten dollars an hour -- not bad for a seventeen-year-old. My first check however, he forgot my wage. I didn't let him forget. I was his memory that summer. He almost forgot many things -- nails, boards, subcontractors, and meals. After my first week I merely assumed the role and thought nothing of it.

There is something therapeutic about framing. When I am doing it I never want it to end. As I said before, we never used new tools, so we framed the whole house with plain old hammers and nails. It must have been a sight, a sixty-eight-year old man and his seventeen-year-old grandson working away, wearing shorts and nail bags, our smoothly tanned Indian skin, oily with sweat in one-hundred-and-two degree heat. He always wore his T-shirt wrapped around

his head. It looked so funny, almost like a long head rag the rappers wear these days.

I quickly gained a good hammer stroke, setting the nail in one blow, moving swiftly from wall to wall, finishing it in a day and a half, from the layout to the last wall. I read *The Talisman* by Stephen King and Peter Straub that summer. There is a line in it that I will never forget: "God pounds His nails." I have come to realize He does, and in one blow. I often thought and think of God as a constructor, He is always building in my life, in all people I am sure. He built much in me that summer. He built my grandpa's being into mine. I began to live ontologically, without hesitation. I can't pinpoint the exact moment of change, but to say my grandpa taught me would not be right. It was just how he lived and it rubbed off.

Sometimes I feel that I stole something from my grandpa. I was being built as he was being torn down that summer. In a way I did steal something. I stole his memory. A week and a half after September 11, about a month after I came home from the job, I got news that Grandpa had dementia and would slowly lose his mind and memory. He will for sure be dead three months after I finish writing this. He is a mere shadow of the man he was, and I wonder if he knows, if a shadow knows the form that casts it, if it can remember its undistorted shape.

I woke up that morning and walked with Kalea into the main house to hug my grandparents. It was a long walk, I knew my grandpa would be worse than ever. The same man who was walking in the rafters with me not three years earlier was wearing diapers. I hugged him... hard. He felt deflated. While he was mumbling at me his hands were trembling, hardly able to hold and press the buttons on the T.V. remote control. He defecated as Kalea's mom shook his hand. My eyes blurred with embarrassment, and sorrow; they burned with anger and bitterness.

I used to leave piles of nails on the floor at different places in the house so they would be there for easy access when the ones in my bag ran out. I usually always forgot them in the sun when we went to lunch. They were burning hot when we came back to them. I didn't use them until the evening. Sometimes I feel like a burning nail, waiting for God to pound me, hoping I will be used for something meaningful. Then I think about my grandpa. There was never a more amiable character created, not even by Shakespeare, yet what a sickening paradox he has become: a demented carpenter, one who is deteriorating yet still building within

me. He is in a nursing home, a bent nail, cast aside soon to be swept off the work floor into the dirt. There is no constructive reason for his condition. God should have let him die in peace. God should have given dementia to all the people in the world who actually deserve to lose their minds. I am pretty sure that's how it is in God's blueprint, or at least how it should be. God pounds His nails, in one blow. Sometimes I feel I am a pounded nail from the hammer of a demented carpenter, a nail at once part of deterioration and construction.

In Loving Memory of William Price White.

"The Seventh Seal" and the Theological Quest for Meaning: A Film Review *Andria Cotton*

Back in the 50's when the Americans were making "movies," the foreigners were making "films." As the distinction progressed, American cinema surpassed all venues in its technological advancements. However, what the foreigners held onto, and what the Americans may have forfeited for spectacle, was philosophical depth. Foreign film directors have shown the ability to develop a philosophical core around which all other elements of the film revolve. A good example of this type of filmmaking can be found in Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's "The Seventh Seal," a religious allegory about one man's struggle for meaning. This black and white beauty made its debut in 1956 and, while it may seem painfully slow for audiences who are used to the fast-paced gimmicks of a movie like "Phone Booth," a little patience will certainly prove its worth. With 'extreme long shots' and lengthy takes, "The Seventh Seal" is an example of mythic story-telling at its best. Placed in the company of other great films such as Akira Kurosawa's "The Seventh Samurai," "The Seventh Seal" portrays the ability of past paradigms to speak relevant messages to contemporary audiences.

"The Seventh Seal" is the story of Antonious Block, a disillusioned knight who while returning home from ten unsuccessful years on the Crusades, is interrupted by Death, a stereotypically black-robed, white-faced, sickle-bearing being. Death is delayed in his mission when Antonious challenges him to a game of chess for his life, to which Death accepts. As the game begins, so does another story line introducing a troupe of traveling actors. Two of the players, symbolically named Mary and Joseph, are traveling with their young son. In Joseph's opening scene he has a vision of

the Virgin Mary walking a child through a field. Excited by this encounter, Joseph tells Mary and she chides him for believing in his silly visions. Joseph sees more visions as the film continues, but they are always laughed at by the other characters. The audience is aware, however, that Joseph's visions are actually closer to reality than that which the other characters realize, contributing to the theme that it is from unlikely sources that real spiritual truths come.

Meanwhile, Antonious continues on his journey home while periodically stopping to make his next move in the fateful chess game. When he and his squire Jons arrive in a nearby village, they see that it has nearly been destroyed by a deadly plague. They find a church in which they can take rest and Antonious participates in the Catholic Church's institution of confession. In the confession booth, Antonious unknowingly bears his soul (and his next chess move) to Death. Antonious explains that his indifference towards men has caused him to live in a world of ghosts. He contradicts himself by saying that he no longer wants to live, but that he longs for knowledge. His unsettled feelings about God and eternity have left him grappling for one last attempt at understanding before his death. In a beautiful cry of desperation, he reveals one of his deepest fears, "It is so hard to conceive God with one's senses. What happens to those that want to believe, but cannot?" Antonious wants to know God in a way that is supported by rational and empirical evidence. He says, "I want God to put out His hand, show His face, speak to me. But He is silent." Death suggests to Antonious that maybe there is no one there, to which Antonious replies, "Then life is a senseless terror." For Antonious the idea that Death exists supernaturally without God empties out the meaning of existence. Antonious concludes his confession stating that his life has been meaningless, that he does not resent it, but that he wants to use it for one last significant action.

In the next scene, the actors and Antonious are both in the village square as a procession of people walks through the streets, some carrying crosses, some whipping themselves. An obnoxious clergyman stands in the Town Square and points at the villagers, accusing them of their sins. He tells them they must offer acts of penance to God in order to be spared from the plague. As the procession passes, Antonious sees a young girl chained to the wall and learns that she is believed to be the cause of the plague for

having slept with the devil. Antonious asks her about the devil, and she tells him that he can see the devil by looking into her eyes, "The priests saw him there and the soldiers -- they would not touch me." Antonious looks in her eyes and replies, "I see nothing but terror." In a later scene, Antonious and Jons witness the girl being burnt at the stake. There is a close-up shot of the girl's wide-eyed, frozen face behind the flames. Jons remarks, "She sees nothing but emptiness" to which Antonious replies, "She is making a discovery of emptiness and her emptiness is our own." The encounter with the girl only affirms Antonious' fear that there is no God, only emptiness after death. However, his assertion that life is empty and meaningless seems to be contradictory to his continued pursuit for one last moment of significance.

The redemptive moment in Antonious' quest comes when he finally meets up with the actors. They invite him to share a bowl of strawberries and milk as Joseph plays and sings lively folk songs. Antonious remarks that he will always "remember this hour of peace." The fellowship with Mary and Joseph has reversed his indifference toward men and gives his life new meaning. Antonious takes on the mission to protect the family from Death, but since Antonious is fated, he realizes that this can only be accomplished in their parting ways. To save the family he must release the one thing that has given him a moment of pure happiness.

In the following scene, the family flees off into the stormy night with the knowledge that Death is very near. Antonious and Death sit around for one last round of chess in which Antonious receives a checkmate. In his final scene Antonious arrives at his home where he, his wife, and a few of his traveling companions all sit down for a "last supper." They are reading from the eighth chapter of Revelation when they hear Death knocking at the door. They all stand to greet Death, except for Antonious who is in the background pleading with God to have mercy on them. Jons tells him that his prayers are useless and says, "I could have purged your worries about eternity, but now it is too late. But feel to the end the triumph of being alive." With that said, one of the young girls among them gasps, "It is finished."

Director Ingmar Bergman, who was raised in a strict, religious and often abusive environment, uses his films as ways to work through some of his own questions about religion, God and the meaning of life. His

portrayal of the superstition and violence of the medieval Church is a critique of the contemporary Christianity of his day and the ignorance and dogmatism of the Church that has caused many to suffer. For Antonious, who may be a characterization of Bergman's own struggle, the problem is in the Church's inability to let doubt and belief coexist. Antonious says, "To believe is to suffer." While the Church and his own crisis of belief have become sources of suffering, happiness has come through the actors, who with their carefree and compassionate ways welcome and accept him instantly. They are contrasted with the Church that requires much of people, but even then does not accept them. Antonious' happiness is found not only in companionship, but in the way that he is invited to move beyond his own predicament and take part in something greater than himself, or the needs of those around him. His search for meaning has been relentless, but, whether or not he can figure things out, he is still confronted with an ethical responsibility to help his fellow man. It is the lives of the actors who are in danger that demands an action on Antonio's part whether or not he has figured out if God and Meaning exist. His saving them proves to be the last significant act that he was looking for, which gave his life an unexplainable meaning and exemplifies the paradox of the wisdom of Christ, that in order to gain one's life, one must lose it. Through the act of releasing the life that he experienced with the actors, Antonious experienced a new life, one that was rich and meaningful.

The prevailing theme throughout the movie is that God is silent. The very title of the movie comes from Revelation 8 in which the seventh seal is opened and there is silence in heaven for half an hour. This film seems to propose that the search for meaning is not separated from the search for God, essentially making meaning a theological pursuit. The predicament that Bergman presents is: what if God remains silent? Can we determine that the silence means He does not exist? If so, then why can we not "rip Him out of our hearts," as Antonio says, and cease our struggle to understand Him? Bergman seems to offer several suggestions, as proposed in Jons' line, "I could have purged your worries about eternity, but now it is too late. But feel to the end the triumph of being alive." The quest for God and eternity is a futile one, but that victory comes in this world, by being alive and being present to the here and now. Even

if God remains silent, there is still a life in front of us that we can engage in meaningfully; there is still an other who we have an ethical responsibility to, whose needs demand from us a response. This is the cause that is worthy of giving one's life.

content with this, yet

Simple

wipe down the windows
a mist encroaches my room
the earth is shadowed

mysterious

heaven mottled by the southern army of
clouds
seemingly weightless they hover
as leaden fog intertwines in the valley

forest
these thousand sentinels guard
a fortress of rock hidden from sight
the moon
strains yet casts no light on it
it briefly glimpses me

far away signals beam
blinking a morse code
now gone

glare
a henna halo glows
an arm's width away i wonder
might i reach out
and pluck you from your midnight cloth?
no
the mist settles in the valley's depth
reality sinks in

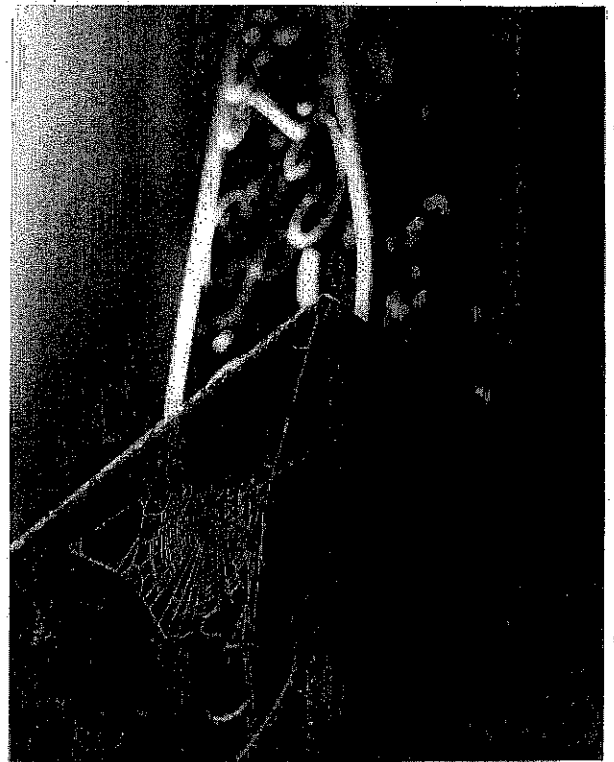
but what is better
or more beautiful
than this unattainable
moving
stillness?

yes, my heart flows
the stillness testifies to this
more subtle
brightened luster
sent through starbeams
pinpricked through the veil

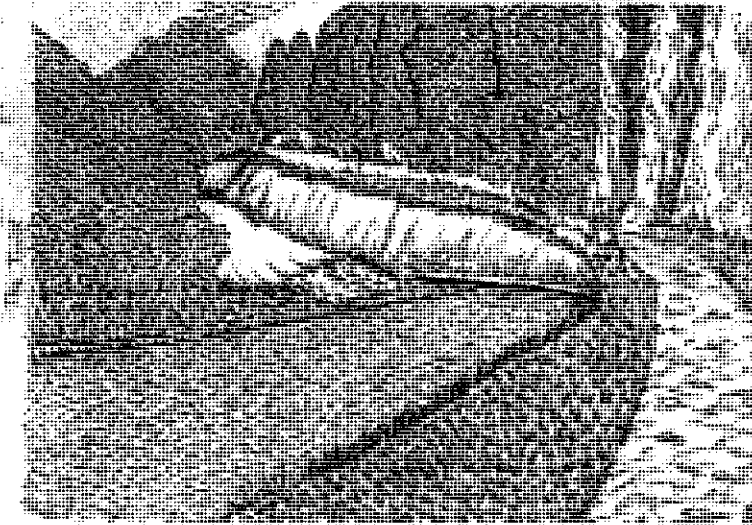
behind this atmosphere
my heart envisions what i cannot see
nights like these
stars like these
cast glimmers of peace
and awe
I wonder...



Back to Debrovnik -Andria Cotton-



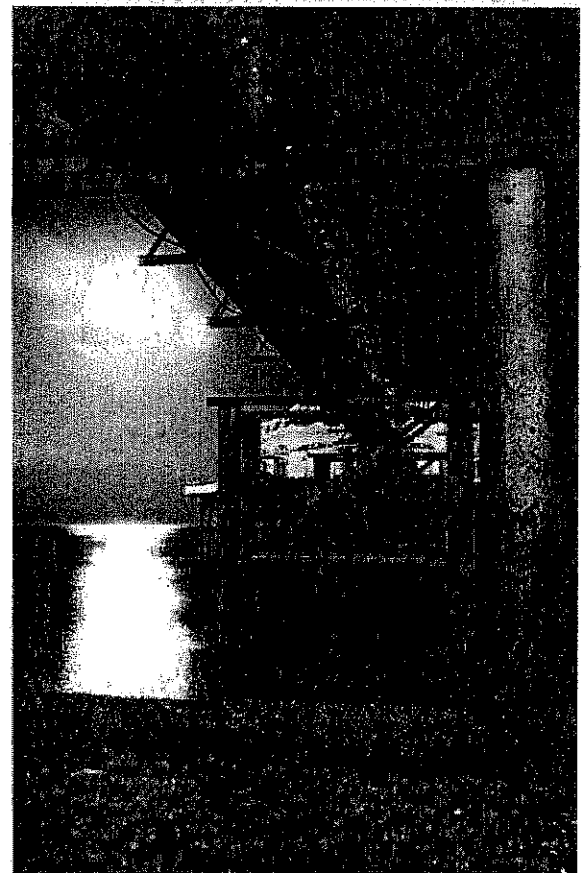
charlotte-Brendan Abraham Murphy-



The Twist -Bernadine O'Connell-



Shelf of Fans-Dr. Lou Foltz-



this was a carnival-Brendan Abraham Murphy-

Five Years Ago

We were sitting in his room playing video games for about an hour before I decided to bring it up.

"So who's this new girl you're with now?"

Phil looked away from the TV and handed the controller to me. "Her name's Manda. Met her a couple weeks ago."

I started playing, turning my eyes to the TV screen. "Where?"

"At this party. You know Chris, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, it was his party. He invited her, kinda had a thing for her. You know, wanted to get to know her better. But, she kinda demolished his dreams, I guess you could say. It was sorta sad. Though, I gotta admit, a little funny, too."

I smiled, my eyes still fixed on the TV, envisioning Chris being rejected, the look on his face. He wasn't exactly my favorite person in the world for a number of reasons, so I couldn't help smiling a little more as I imagined the scene.

Phil went on, though, bringing my mind back. "So, I saw her about the same time. She saw me. We started talking, and about an hour later she was on my lap making out with me."

I paused the game and looked at him. "Sounds like a swell start to a long, fulfilling relationship." He smiled, raised his hands in mock defense. "Hey, she came over and sat on my lap, man."

I laughed. "Whatever you say, dude." I unpaused the game, started playing again, landing a four hit combo on my computer opponent, then glanced back at Phil, pretending to be serious. "You're kind of a slut, you know that?"

He smiled again. "What? What the do you mean by that? She jumped me."

"So she's a slut."

"Hey, don't be putting words in my mouth. And be nice. It ain't like that with her. And to respond to what you first said, I'm a guy. Slut don't apply to me."

"Oh, that's nice."

"Look it up. It doesn't apply."

"Maybe some other time. Either way, you gave it up too easy, man."

"Are you on something? What the hell you talking about? Dude, we didn't have sex. At least not right then."

I looked at him again, trying to keep a straight face. "You're still a punk."

"You're just intimidated by my prowess."

"Your prowess?"

"Yep. And, hey, you shoulda seen how she looked, man, what she was wearing – you needed to be there."

I paused the game again. "Well, it seems I wasn't invited."

He sighed. "Man, you're always busy."

"Busy? Whaddya talkin' about? You're one the few friends I got."

"Well ..."

"Dude, I'm never invired to these things. Never. Sute, I don't even know the people, and I'd probably hate 'em anyways. But still --"

"There you go. You're incredibly antisocial."

"I'm never invited. I don't have much of a chance to be anything else."

"Alright, alright, I agree with you."

You're never invited to these stupid things." He paused for a second. "But I'm having trouble even picturing you at a party, man. Don't know if I've ever seen you in that kinda setting, in fact."

I shrugged, and rubbed one of my eyes.

"Yeah, it ain't pretty."

"Then why do you --"

"Just forget it." I returned my attention to the game again, just in time to get my handed to me by my current opponent. I sighed and handed the controller back to Phil. There was another question that was still on my mind.

"Hey, uh, aren't you still with Brenda?"

He looked at me, and raised an eyebrow.

"What do you think?"

I thought for a second, leaned forward in my chair. "If she knows about what happened at this party, I really doubt it."

"And you'd be correct, my friend."

If Phil had one critical flaw, it was being faithful to the girls he went out with. Even girls he was with quire a while. It was something that was honestly never openly talked about between us, never seriously. But it was something that was there, beneath the surface, in many conversations. And when it came down to it, Phil was just an extremely likeable guy. He had a great sense of humor, could make anyone laugh, and could truly carry on a good conversation with anyone. So, of course, girls were drawn to him. And like anyone, he liked the attention. He just had difficulty sometimes controlling himself.

I leaned back again in my chair, thinking about Phil's -- now ex -- girlfriend. She was a nice girl. We'd never been good friends or anything, but I'd never had any problems with her. Now, in just two weeks' time, that relationship was over. Maybe it had

been over long before, I didn't know. But I couldn't help feeling a little strange about it all.

I stood up and walked over to Phil's dresser, where he still had a few pictures of his ex. I looked at them a little while, then looked back at him. "Man, weren't you, like, with Brenda for a year or somethin'?"

"Almost two years," he said, not looking back at me.

"And it's just over like that? Two years."

"I guess so. Me and Manda, I don't know, there's just something there with us."

I chuckled a little. "Yeah, somethin'. Like your hand up her shirt, you clown."

"Hey," he said turning back, laughing a little himself. "She had her hands all over my person, as well."

"All over your person?"

"That's what I said." He tossed the controller back to me. "Now hurry and get your kicked so it's my turn again."

I walked back and sat down. "Hey, I'm startin' to get a little better at this. It might be awhile."

"Yeah, sure. Whatever you say."

"Shut your mouth, man. I'm tellin' you. I'm getting better." He laughed again. I shook my head, focusing on the game again.

"So when am I gonna meet her?"

"I don't know, not too long. Next time she comes by I'll let you know."

"Alright."

"She's a nice girl. You'll like her."

As I started getting beaten all too quickly again by my new computer opponent, my mind went back to Brenda, how easily it seemed to end with them, how easily relationships like that, in general, can just end. I couldn't help wondering what she was doing right then, how she was feeling. "I'm sure I will," I finally said. Then I handed the controller back.

Two and a half years later he'd moved out of his parents' house, and we were at his apartment, playing video games again. Once again, I'm the one who brought it up.

"I just don't love her, man. Maybe I did once, or thought I did, I don't know."

I set my controller down and looked at him. "But she loves you?"

"Yeah, that's what she says. I just don't feel the same."

"That is rough."

"Yeah it is."

He'd been with Manda for two and a half years, even longer than Brenda. I honestly thought she was going to be the girl for

him. They were living together, they seemed really serious. But I guess, again, it was never what I thought it was. And according to everything he was telling me now, it was really never like I thought it was. But that's the way it usually was. When the relationship begins to end, all the bad things come out. Everything they didn't like about each other, how possessive and controlling she tried to be, all that stuff.

As I listened to him tell me, feeling sad again for both, I was fully aware I was only getting one side of the story, and I knew I'd probably never get the other side.

Like his last girlfriend, I liked Mauda. We hung out, talked – though she did far more talking than I did, which was something she always bugged me about. But despite all these things, we were still never friends. Not really. She was still just someone I hung out with whenever I saw Phil. As much as I liked her, as much as I felt she and Phil were good together, I knew that my ties – no matter how small – were now gone. And like Brenda before her, Mauda was replaced even when they were still together. So I'd be adapting to someone else, but I was more than used to it.

I picked up my controller again. "So, this new girl?"

"Jamie. You know her, right?"

"Yeah."

"Went to grade school with her."

"Yeah, back in the day," I said. "We both did."

"That's what I thought. I wasn't completely sure for some reason."

"So how long has this --?"

"A few months."

A few months. I didn't say it out loud. It had actually been longer than that in some ways. They'd been friends before the relationship evolved. Friends for several years, even before Mauda. I guessed I should've seen it, considering what had caused a lot of his other relationships to end. And I knew her, I knew Jamie. Not well, but I knew her. We had gone to grade school together years before, though we were never in the same classes. I also knew she had been married and had a kid or two. Though I didn't say it to him, I couldn't help but worry if Phil understood what he was getting into.

I'd never had a girlfriend, honestly, so I couldn't completely understand why Phil was doing what he was doing, or how he apparently felt toward Jamie. But I still couldn't deny the feeling that what he was doing wasn't a good idea. I didn't say anything then or later, but I was thinking it

whenever I saw him, even until everything changed. I started playing the game again, and he continued to talk about Jamie, and I continued to listen. I would grow to like Jamie, like I'd grow to like everybody else. I'd also grow to honestly like her kids (who would eventually become Phil's kids, too). The kids would even come to look at me as part of the extended family, someone they truly looked forward to seeing. And I liked seeing them, which was a strange feeling at first.

But I would never shake that feeling that Phil was getting into a relationship that wasn't good for him, or that wouldn't end well.

I would end up being more wrong than right.

Two years later I was in the back of a van heading north, trying to sleep on a cramped seat. I couldn't. But I couldn't completely stay awake either. So I remained in a state in between for the trip. I couldn't wake up or sleep until I got to where I was going.

We arrived at the prison early, around 8 a.m. It had been a four-hour drive, and I'd barely slept the day before. But the fatigue hadn't hit me yet.

There was a line outside the door, so we had to wait in the cold for a little while.

As I looked around the place, at the gray, concrete walls, the high, barbed wire ringed fences, I could already feel my mood changing. I had been a little nervous before, but now, I could feel a certain degree of anger beginning to surface. I knew I had to hold it in check, even though everywhere I looked I felt nothing but negativity, thought nothing but bad thoughts. I wanted to hurt someone. But I couldn't.

We didn't wait out in the cold too long, only about ten minutes. Then the guards unlocked the doors and we filed in slowly. We'd all dressed accordingly, so we couldn't be mistaken for anyone within these walls.

At the desk we provided our names, where we were from, then we were told to stand and wait, until our names were called.

I stood there, trying to get a little distance from those around me. I looked around at everyone, feeling sick of them already. A few were trying to make conversation with others near them, telling them about the ride up, the people they were waiting to see. Everyone else remained quiet, keeping to themselves. I thought that was a good idea.

I was beginning to get really warm

standing where I was, next to whomever was standing near me, for some reason. I wanted to get the hell out of there. I just didn't want to look at any of those people anymore, listen to them talk about what their lives used to be like.

I looked over at Julian, who'd ridden up with us, just a kid, looking tired and bored. I really wanted to be bored too. Instead I was just getting pissed, thinking about why he was in here.

Finally, they called our names. We all stood, and started making our way through the metal detector. None of us had any problems going through. After we all passed they let us through the next big metal door, into a large hallway.

The place we were actually going was a little ways off. We had to pass through a few more check points, and through the cold air outside one more time too.

I kept noticing the sheer amount of metal and concrete that made up this place that surrounded me. We passed through more high, barbed wire ringed fences, more solid, metal doors, and more stone and concrete walls, until they led us into the actual sitting area.

They directed us to our seats, and we waited again.

The set up was simple. The visitors sat in one group of chairs, the prisoners were seated directly across from them in their own chair. There was no wall or glass separating us, prisoners could touch their loved ones, hold their kids. It was better than I thought it would be. In county lockup, you could only communicate through a sheet of glass and a crappy telephone.

I'd at least be able to talk to him face to face.

When we arrived, other prisoners were already speaking to their loved ones, holding their kids in their arms, or their wives' or girlfriends' hands. Some looked really happy, some not so much.

I was seated right next to the door they let the prisoners through, so it wasn't long before they let him in.

He was a little different than when I'd last seen him. Growing up he'd always been real skinny, sometimes almost unhealthy. I was always the bigger of us, even though he was a little taller. Looking at him now, he was a lot broader in the shoulders than he once was, and he'd put on some weight, too. Healthy weight. He was still pretty lean.

I tried to smile as he made his way over, but I couldn't. He embraced his mom, gave little Julian a hug, then hugged and kissed

Jamie. When he made his way to me he tried to smile, and managed half of one. Then we shook hands and he said, "It's been a while, hasn't it, man?"

It had been.

The last time I'd seen him was in county, and that was over a year before. Now it was December, almost Christmas, and like everyone else around me, I felt like ; for not coming sooner, for not being able to do more for him, for the stupid reasons he was in here, and for too many other things to name.

He took his seat, and immediately reached out to Jamie, took her hand. They looked at each other awhile, just holding hands, saying nothing. Little Julian came over, Phil smiled a little again and reached out to him, too. Then he looked at his mom, and they started talking about the things that had been going on lately, outside.

I sat in silence, wanting to say something, but couldn't. His mom was doing enough talking for everybody, so it was hard to get a word in at all. And when it came down to it, I preferred the one-on-one conversation. Waiting around, trying to find that moment where you can actually get a word in, just pissed me off even more. So I sat and listened, trying to care.

There was no denying that things had changed. They'd been changing before this, but what had put Phil here had made the changes more permanent. The connection we had years before wasn't there anymore, not like it used to be. The way our conversations used to flow was gone. I sat there listening to his mom, recognizing that. Though it wasn't exactly a new revelation. But he was still my best friend, whom I would do anything for. Just things were undoubtedly different now.

And how the couldn't they be? Honestly. He was in prison, living in a way I could only imagine, surviving like only he could. The reasons he was here didn't matter anymore. They were . They'd always been complete

You hear about people who get screwed over by the system, but those stories never seem real, or you simply don't buy them when you hear them. Until, of course, you're part of one. Then you want to do something, really do something to help, scream at and hurt those responsible, but you can't. You just have to watch. You can't affect anything. So that when it's over, everything you've known is gone, and the only thing you have is rage.

I looked at Phil, Jamie, and his mom, thinking these thoughts I'd thought far too many times before, feeling as weak as I did as when Phil was put away.

But there was something else I was noticing, too. Something that allowed me to focus somewhere else for a second. The more Phil talked, the more I noticed that something wasn't right in how he was speaking. It was hurting him to talk, physically hurting him. His mom noticed it too, and asked what was wrong. "I got into a little trouble," he said, giving that half-smile again. It wasn't the first time there was trouble. He'd told me of a bunch of other times over the phone. One reason he said he got into trouble was simply boredom. It was just so boring in here. You had to come up with things to pass the time. Sometimes that something was taking one of your blankets and flushing it down the toilet, causing massive prison plumbing problems. Other times it was getting into it with some guard or other member of the faculty. It was just something to do.

The other reason was, you couldn't let this place beat you, that's what he always said. It wasn't going to beat him. Like he did on the outside, he bucked the system, seeing how far he could push it. It was just who he was. Sometimes it put him in the hole – in solitary – but he never let it change him too much, get him too far down.

Because the idea of a "Correctional Facility" was a joke. It was a running joke among all the prisoners. There were no attempts made to actually "correct" anything. You were there, you were locked up, and that was it. A lot of the stuff you hear about? On the outside, in movies? About classes, other education opportunities? It was total , at least in this prison's case. Major offenders, minor offenders, people who just got screwed over, it didn't matter. They put you in, they locked you away, and hopefully you would make it out with some semblance of who you were before. Because in most cases, you just came out worse. "If they," he said, pointing to a group of guards overseeing the prisoners, "and all the other people who run this place had their way, they wouldn't let us do anything. No visits, no nothing. They'd take the money they get to run this place, and do whatever they want with it."

He'd told me all this before, and I believed him. It didn't make me feel very good, but I believed. But his mom and Jamie wanted to know what had happened to his jaw. He looked at them, still holding

Jamie's hand, then glanced at me.

"This stupid that works in the cafeteria, she's not even a guard, just a cook, but she thinks she can tell us what to do. Well, she can't. The guy I actually answer to told me when I asked him. So, when she tried ordering me around, getting me to do something I didn't need to, I told her she had no authority over me, I answer to someone actually in charge. She started whining and , blah, blah, so I told her piss off. So she runs off, and I'm like, OK, that's done with. Well, apparently she called a guard for some reason, so as I was heading back to work, this guard comes up behind me, unseen, does not identify himself – which he is supposed to do – and grabs me from behind. Well, you don't do that to anyone in here. 'Cause I reacted, like anyone in here would, and threw an elbow into his nose. I didn't know it was a guard till I turned around. Then he grabbed me again, drove me into the floor, and smacked me in the face with his baton, and asked if I wanted some more. 'No sir, I said, I've had quite enough.' So, he got a slap on the wrist for not identifying himself, and I got a fractured jaw. That's it. The only good thing to come out of this, is that got fired. She's outta here." When he finished he gave that smile again.

Neither his mom or Jamie could say anything for a second, then his mom expressed her justified outrage. Jamie remained quiet. I wasn't exactly happy to hear about it either. But it was just another day in this hellhole. He'd told me other stories, not quite like this, but always bad. He talked about it like it was nothing, but I was feeling nothing but that familiar rage.

After his mom calmed some, he looked over at me, half-smiled again, but I still couldn't think of much to say, so he said to me, "So what's been going on, man?"

I looked at him, glanced at Jamie and his mom. I really didn't want them to be here. I looked at Phil again and said, "You know, same old stuff. School, work, not much else. Just the same things I'm always doing."

I hated the response immediately. It was just pathetic, but it was what came out. I honestly didn't want to talk about myself because, compared to what he went through everyday, my troubles were completely petty. I fully realized he was just looking for something to talk about, and that he probably did want to know how I was doing.

I just didn't want to tell him.

We talked a little bit more after that, not about much, just basic crap. He talked

to Jamie and his mom some more, too. He picked up Julian again after awhile, because Julian was getting fidgety. It was hard for the little guy to stay in one place for so long. And I knew Phil just wanted to hold him again anyway.

After a few minutes, Julian interrupted Phil's mom, looked up at him, tired, sad, and asked, in that little kid way, "When are you coming home? I miss you." We were all thinking the same thing, but only Julian could actually say it.

No one said anything at first. No one could make eye contact. Jamie just sat holding his hand. I thought about the years he still had to go, thought again about the people that had put him here, looked at the guards around me, all the people I really wanted to hurt in that instant.

Phil kissed Julian lightly on the head, bringing us back, bringing me back, and held him closer. He looked at us, and sighed, "You're breaking my heart, kid."

I looked away from them, at nothing, thinking the same.

To the Mouths of Wolves

Kenneth Edward Keyn

To the mouths of wolves
Where rotting bones
Lay bleaching in the harsh
The errand of fools
Their wailing tones
Swallowed by the marsh
Pierced by tooth and nail
Open flesh to the air
Blood drawn across the brow
Too costly to fail
Too deathly to bare
Too late to turn away now
A shattered shield and broken spear
Defend against the maw
Across the void be better armed
With hate and fear
Those that care not for the law
And the hostages that they've harmed
Captured be love and peace
Hope and kindness
In its spiteful jaws
Ground by its teeth
Encouraged by blindness
Only to fall into its claws
Oh, woe and weep
For death comes nigh
To destroy the world
A cliff so steep
And a fall so high
Shattered once unfurled

Remembered

Amber Marie Heavilin

Roses land on grand pianos,
Soldiers draw up their arms,
A dancer holds in a graceful balance,
A saw pulses through a giant log,
A child pleas for understanding and appraisal.

The roses are remembered by the pianist,
A soldier cries in his losses,
The dancer of crystal balance falls,
The saw locks up,
The child learns through some times a
Hard way.

But remember, please
The roses were deserved, for you
Played well, the soldier lives,
You danced and dance well,
Cutting through tough times is hard,
The child smiles again for it is to be so.

The Resurrected Ones

Steve Wing

What lies inside a crimson coffin?
Naked, Rare and breathing
Vampire Red in color
(Of this thing that I am thinking)
Clothed with cotton knitted cuffs
And a dress silk long and fair
Breath never to be squelched
Lain in a bed of fire
Walking long in saintly robes
Grasping the Womb of Darkness
Lain within the Tombs below
And Hallowed in the Frog nets
Jumping through the corridors
And blazing even in Sun
Never dead but always ahead
Asleep but never shunned
The purified and purely
The Resurrected Ones.

Understanding Strangers

Kenneth Edward Keyn

It's a wonder of human life that we should
be so discomforted by strangers
You'd think with our understanding of the
universe and the workings of the atoms,
we'd have a little more understanding of
others, too
But it really comes to a point when you re-
ally have to decide whether or not
understanding is the basis of the life you live
Personally, I've lived a life dedicated to the
pursuit of understanding
Personally, I've found it a bit lacking

Large Mountain

Frankie Sidewinder

This morning I woke up disappointed. I have a problem with forgetting people that I used to know, and I'm sure they forget about me too. It shouldn't hurt to forget them because I have other obligations after they're gone, and I should move on with my life, but when something reminds me of these people, I often long for what used to be. Usually, the only things that trigger my memory are anecdotes from a friend, or some kind of a dream. Last night I dreamt. So when I woke up this morning, I had all these disheveled memories of Katie, wanting to go back to that dream where everything was harmonic euphoria. I dream about the past, and I dream about the future, but with Katie, I dream of the present. I dream of frozen moments in time, that I can only revive in that fantastical world created in my head in some slumber of infinite contentment. Yes those frozen moments, those were the good moments.

And when I envision one of those still frames in my head, I see an athletic girl that had naturally curly brown hair, but I liked it better in a ponytail. She had a flirtatious smile that was forcefully enticing and when I said something that she considered unreasonable, she'd turn her back and walk away hoping for me to grab her by the arm, to make her feel safe or something. That's how we felt together... safe. But when I woke up from this dream, I remembered the reality; the reality that nothing was about the present with her, because it was all past and future. I remembered the last night I spent with her, and that was what really mattered. I can see myself now, sitting across from her, staring around at the pictures on the wall in that restaurant the night everything went down.

"Which one is John? Is that John?" She asks, pointing to Paul.

"No, that's Paul. The guy with the glasses to the right is John," I say, pointing to the man that would eventually reform music, hippies, and the peace movement of the 70's. She loves John even though she doesn't know what he looks like. Last week she had never heard of him, this week her favorite song is "Ob' la de ob la da," and next week she'll fit in with all the other sixteen-year-old girls in Liverpool in 1961. We've just ordered in a local restaurant that emphasizes some time period that I can't figure out yet (probably from the 40's to

the 60's), called Boppin' Billie's. This is our third date I think, and she is really excited to see me tonight. She was crying on the phone last night when she didn't think she could get work off to see me but it worked out and she's here with me now. We live in Vancouver, across the river and we didn't say much to each other on the thirty-minute drive over here, which was different from the other times we've been together, and it was awkward. But it'll be fine. It's cool.

"He looks like that gay guy, you know, the one with that song about Saturday," she says, referring back to John.

"Elton John?"

"Yeh," she says.

"No. Not really. I don't see much of a resemblance between John and Elton John. But maybe that's just because I've seen so many other pictures of John. Sometimes I feel like I know him personally, you know. It's cool. But as for Elton, I don't think of him as 'the gay guy.' Is that what your family calls him?"

"Who's that?" she asks.

There's a man to the left of the Beatles that looks sad, even though we can't see his face, which is facing the ground. His trumpet is between his legs, held by both hands. He looks forgotten in a way, although he probably just got done doing a big show in some big city somewhere 40 years ago.

"He looks so sad," she says.

"That doesn't mean he's sad."

"What'da ya mean?"

"I don't know, a lot of times, the people that look sad or tired or bored are the happiest."

"That's not true."

"I can prove it. Not right now, but by the end of the night I can prove it. See how I'm smiling?"

"Yeh," she says.

"That's it. I just want you to see how I'm smiling, the rest of the night."

"Ooh. You're so harsh. I hope you're not serious," she says, scared.

I smile back, baiting her, dead serious. Sometimes when she's in that mood of excessive flirtatiousness, it gives me shivers, like I'm in over my head, doing something I shouldn't do. Her voice is genuine. It's a raspy tone teamed with a youthful girliness that makes me crumble whenever she says anything significant.

"But who is this guy?" she asks again, insignificantly.

"Uh. I don't know. Maybe you should look it up."

"I can't look up a picture like that."

"You can do lots of things with technol-

ogy these days."

"You know who it is," she says.

"No, actually I don't. I would tell you if I was lying."

"You must be lying then, because you're not telling me."

I don't say anything. I look around the room. It's a hip diner -- one of those places that begs for roller skates and Kingston Trio records. The tiles are black and white, red spinning stools at the bar, and the waiters have creepy Elvis hair. Paul McCartney's voice echoes somberly, sweetly the tune of "Yesterday," and that's what prompted the search for the foursome on the wall. We ended up here because Noho's, the tasty Hawaiian restaurant on the outskirts of downtown that I promised to take her to is closed already. I promised to take her somewhere wonderful for dinner, and especially wonderful after dinner, but that whole plan hasn't really worked out so now I'm improvising. This is the first place that we saw open, and it's in the center of downtown, asking for people to come, so we came.

When we walked in, I was checking out their posters of old movies on a sale rack. They had "Casablanca," "Maltese Falcon," "Citizen Kane" and of course, the all-too-well-known picture of "Gone With the Wind," where Clark Gable kisses Vivian Leigh, falling back in her red dress, bosom revealed. That was a good movie, but I always thought it was funny that her bosom was never revealed like that in the actual footage of the movie. It's amazing what kind of propaganda they could come up with back in the old days.

"Those are three for \$45!" the manager at the desk had said to me as I looked at the posters with an interested eye when I had first walked through the door, waiting for Katie to come out of the bathroom.

"Wow! What a great buy! No thanks though. It's cool," I had said.

The food comes. "Would you guys like anything else?"

"Some barbecue sauce please." I'm going to need it. The first bite and it's horrible. I can't eat food like this. Why did I take her all the way out to Portland to eat this? It's not worthy of McDonalds, or Hardee's or Taco Time, and I feel sorry for the people that attempt to make a theme park out of this restaurant. When Katie asks me what I ordered I can't tell her because I can't tell what it is, and I already forgot what I told the waiter because I'm too tired.

"You just don't want me to seem stupid, so you act like you're just as dumb," she says.

"Wait. Are we still talking about this?"

She nods. "I don't want you to think I'm dumb, Jake, because I'm not. I'm not dumb. If you feel like this age thing is a problem for you, then it's a problem for me too. Because I don't want you to think that just because you're older than me, and I'm sixteen and you're nineteen, you have to treat me like I'm inferior. I don't want you to think I'm dumb, Jake," she says.

"I don't think you're dumb, Katie. It's cool. I mean... you're smarter than I am. It's cool," I say trying to make something out of this useless discussion.

"Yeah. Just say what you want me to hear," she says, turning her shoulder and looking up towards more pictures on the wall to her left, particularly a James Dean picture this time that is illuminated by the 1950's hanging light above it.

I spoke again.

"I'm sorry, I'm tired tonight, I got 2 hours of sleep today and none last night"--

--"Don't apologize. I hate it when you apologize."

"Oh, sorry."

"Gosh! Don't do that! But at the same time, I don't want you to think that I'm mad at you or anything. I hope you know that I wouldn't rather be with anyone else tonight. Truly Jake. When I'm with you, I feel perfect. Almost. I mean... I love being around you because you make me a better person," she says.

I don't acknowledge it. She's a walking Hallmark card. She pauses, and continues to talk about herself.

"I just hate history, and it bugs me sometimes when you always try to quiz me on those pictures, when I don't really care," she says.

"How can you not like history? That's ridiculous. Tell that to the people here and they'll probably send you to boarding school. And you do care, because you said that you wanted to know who that was," I say, pointing to the man with the trumpet.

"Not anymore. Because you won't tell me."

"I don't know!"

"Ok, whatever. But I still don't like history."

"Why? Give me one good reason."

"Well, I know, I know, 'You have to study history because you can learn for the future.'" She says, imitating a professorial

voice, way too loud. The people at the table in front of us look back, offended, as if they are from the 50's themselves. "But really, why do you have to study history? It's just a waste of time."

"Katie. We're making history right now. This fork, this is history. This bad food, this is history, that guy over there, with his butt crack hanging out, changing the jukebox, that's history. Everything is history. So why not study it, or at least respect it?"

"Because there are so many other things to study. I don't want to study forks."

"Come on, hypothetically. You just gave the best reason why people study history, and you don't believe in that reason? You just quoted one of your teachers and you don't take that to heart? I wonder if you trust those you're supposed to be learning from," I say.

"I have different kinds of trust. I seriously think that everybody is good deep down inside, so I trust them. I trust individual people but I don't necessarily trust pastimes, or ways of culture."

"Do you at least have respect for it? Because if you don't believe in those that teach you, then how can you respect them, and therefore truly believe in yourself? And if you don't believe in yourself, then you don't respect yourself," I say.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she says.

"I might."

"No, you don't I can tell by your eyes."

"What do my eyes have to do with anything?"

"You don't know what you're talking about," she stabs me in my stomach from under the table flirtatiously. She has now turned the conversation to a more apathetical mood.

"It's not how I look that tells the picture."

"Shutup. Let's talk about something else you liar."

"Sorry."

"Don't apologize."

"Okay. Sorry, let's go. Sorry about the bad food." She punches me in the stomach as I pay, and then we walk out as I elude the manager's sales pitch again for Scarlett O'Hara.

After the lousy restaurant, I drive routinely to the place where I always go, but never have been with a girl, or with anybody else for that matter. It's a hill that looks over the rest of the city. I forget what they call it, but it doesn't matter. The view tells the

words. There is an elevated, one hundred foot fortress on the top of the hill, that has stone steps on the way up and sometimes, this place is my own fortress. I go here when I want to get away. When I want to get the feeling that I am truly worthy of my feats, and that there are no worries ahead, and that the whole world is beneath me, I go here. In that case, I guess this fortress is a place that bathes me in falsities, and maybe that is the case. If that is true, then my truths are far from me tonight.

At the top, there is a courtyard, with a light tower, and a rotating satellite that drivers can see from the Glen Jackson Bridge a thousand feet below. We're in the courtyard now, strolling around, gazing below at the halfway-bustling city and we're getting acquainted to which way to look to find where home is. But even though I've been here many times, even though I feel obliged to tour her around my fortress, she's the first to tell me which way Gresham is and which way Vancouver is. My sense of direction is tragic. Off in the distance, I can see the lights of downtown. Somewhere, there are people still working, with their office lights on, counting the minutes until they get home to see their spouses, who are lying in their beds with a remote control waiting for the universal "honey I'm home" with dinner already cooked downstairs and eaten by the rest of the family. That's the ideal world at best -- that's the good future I have to look forward to.

The courtyard is probably 100 yards long, and 50 yards wide, about like a football field. There is one other couple on the other side of the field, and they seem to be enjoying themselves thoroughly, but that's not why I brought Katie here. Even though it's impossible, the satellite seems to be making the stars in the sky brighter in our eyes, and we look up in jealousy. We're facing towards downtown and she sits on the edge of the fortress wall over about one hundred feet of air, above the road where my truck is, her feet dangling into obscurity. I consider sitting up on the wall, but I'm afraid of heights. Oh, whatever. I do it anyway. I look up at the stars some more, and I can't handle it.

"See that hill out there," she says turning around by putting her right leg back up on the top of the wall and pointing back in some direction far past Vancouver, far past my home, where I will lay my head down tonight. "That hill out there, the biggest, most mighty looking one?"

"Uhh, yeh I think I see it," I say, not

sure, but wanting to confirm. "Actually, I don't know what you're talking about. What?"

"Ok see... umm... see how there are a bunch of sloping, hills right there, there's a bunch that look exactly the same?"

"What? Oh yeh. How they're all just kinda rolling along, yeh I see them."

"Now, ok, well there's one that kinda sticks out... no more to the left, no keep going. Yeh, see it, how it sticks up- it's not huge but it just looks different from all the rest."

"Oh, yeah! Ok, ok."

"It's called Large Mountain, I want to take you there someday."

"Allright."

Sometimes she talks to me like I'm a handicapped person. "Take you there someday?" Where's my wheelchair? I don't have a wheelchair. I can drive, and I can take you, on your request. I know, I'm cynical and chauvinistic, but it's these manly customs that need to be met in order to have a normal relationship these days. At least that's what I'm thinking right now, tonight.

"Yeh, that hill out there. I like it," she says turning around and putting her hands back down at her sides, still swinging her legs. There are dozens of hills that we can see in the night. The sky is beautiful and infinite, and desolate and lonely at the same time. Crazy to think that somebody somewhere that I've never met is looking at the same stars, with the same wonder that I am, on a sailboat somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico, or in the plains of Africa, or the mountains in Nepal, or somewhere wherever else reflective people like to look at stars, and reflect on their interesting lives.

"Do you ever look up at the stars, see the beauty and just get jealous?" I ask.

"Oh, so you're in love with the stars too?"

"I don't know if it's love, but... I don't know what it is but I think it's something like that. Well, yeh maybe it is love."

"Sometimes. Sometimes I do that. It's nice up here, you know," she says.

"Yeh. I've never been here during the day. But I like it at night."

"That's funny what you said because it reminds me of something. Sometimes my dad would take me outside when it was raining in the summer just before night time, when I was like 6 or 7, and he would place me out on this old swing that we had on the patio that faced our back yard, and we'd sit there and just watch the rain drip from this fern. And I liked it, just sitting there in peace when I was that young, you

know? Everything was like, pure and so polished and it was like if I had only known how like... strange this life would be, I would have cherished that moment more, because I didn't realize how beautiful that moment was at the time, you know. And he used to tell me that he would be envious of the fern, because it was so green and gorgeous and everything, but he couldn't be, because in his eyes, I was more beautiful than any type of nature that he could ever lay his eyes upon," she says.

There's a pause. That was pretty. I liked it, but I don't know what to say now to rival it, so the pause continues. It's a comfortable pause, a pause that makes me want to dismiss talking forever. But that feeling lasts about ten seconds and then I get bored, unfortunately.

"Do you wanna get married?" I say. She looks at me, strangely perplexed, and laughs. I'm 19 and she's 16. We've known each other for two weeks.

"Oh, no. Not like that," I say, correcting my knack for inopportune clumsy questioning. "I mean, do you ever want to get married, just ever?"

"Well, yeah. Well, I don't know, I don't really like marriages. They scare me."

I smile, trying unsuccessfully to hold in a small, matter-of-fact laugh.

"What? That's not funny," she says.

"No, it's just that most girls I talk to want to get married right now. As in, within the next two years. It's a little creepy to me."

"Guys want to get married soon too. I wonder why," she says.

"Yeh, I wonder why."

"You know."

"No I don't. I'd tell you if I knew."

"You know why you liar," she says, poking me in the stomach.

"Why would I know. It's not my right to speculate."

"I know," she says.

"Then say it if you know."

"I don't want to say it, because if I say the reason, then you'll think I'm dumb."

"What if we agree?"

"We don't."

"Why else could people want to get married so early? Honestly," I pause. "Well there are probably a lot of reasons," I say, even though I could really only think of one, maybe two.

"Umm. Let's just forget about it. With everything that happened to my mom, and with my dad, you know, that has kind of left me frightened to think about that whole

marriage thing, you know?"

"Well, you'll get used to the idea eventually. I was telling my friend that I didn't"-

"Let's talk about something else okay."

Silence again. She looks away, and I think I see a tear dropping from her eyes, but I'm not sure, and I don't know why she would be crying. So I don't ask why, and I don't say anything nice to make her feel better. I'm sure I'm just imagining her tears. The other couple is finished with their business now on the other side of the field. They descend down the fortress steps back into the real world. It's the end of July, but the wind picks up, and it feels like we're somewhere in Colorado. But I want to stay. I want more of a productive conversation. We were doing well with the discussion of the fern, the rain, and the stars, but I crushed it. I ask to lend her my sweatshirt, but she declines.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" she asks.

"I am grown up."

"No you're not. Not all the way."

"I'm 19. Legally, an adult is 18. In case you didn't know."

"Shutup. And anyway, you don't know everything. And you're not grown up if you're not anything, because I asked you what you wanna be when you grow up-not, 'what do you want to be when you're 18?' You're still young."

"You humble me. That youth will leave me soon if it hasn't already. Soon, I'll be conformed to some job at the office somewhere in the middle of a city. I'll be that average suburbanite -- That guy in the Tostitos commercial watching the ballgame."

"Is that what you want to do?"

"Be in a Tostitos commercial?"

"No, be just that average suburbanite," she says.

"I don't know. Maybe I'll never know. But I think I'm bound for those confinements someday."

"Why? You shouldn't feel confined to some desk space all day. I know, that sounds like a cliché, but doesn't it make you feel weird to tell yourself that you're giving yourself up to something that you don't even want, or need to be truly at peace with yourself. Get something that is rewarding to you. It's your life, you only have one. Just live it man." "You know?"

"Wow. That's inspiring. I feel like I'm in a Disney movie. Where's Denzel Washington at? Robin Williams, carpe diem, woohoo. But seriously though, I thought

that you said if you had God, then you have everything that you need. Isn't that what you're always telling me? Can't I just go to my cubicle, BS for eight hours, come home to my wife and kids, love God and be happy?"

"Sure, but just because you love God, that doesn't mean that you are perfect, and that you don't need to still evaluate yourself. I mean... you know? You shouldn't feel constrained by anything. I know God sets you free, but why can't you do something that makes you free anyway... something that makes you feel good inside when you go home to your kids. You know?"

"Let's talk about something else, okay," I say, tired of the incessant evaluation of goals and lists to do in my head, and things that my mother wants me to do tomorrow when I wake up. I'm tired of the way that my hands shake when I debate whether I'm going to work out tomorrow. I'm tired of the everyday decisions of deciding to read, or to play video games. I'm tired of the idea that having fun with friends does not produce long-term happiness. Why can't I just live back in the eighteen hundreds when there was one choice, and that was to read. Yeh, it was so simple back then. Why can't I just play Texas Hold Em' all day? Why can't the girls I meet just like me? I guess that's why there's a God, because God is the only thing that's perfect, right?

"What are you afraid of?" she asks me. The last of the lights are going off in the buildings. The city is quiet, except for the wind bullying the branches of the trees around. Those wives are happily with their husbands by now, probably watching Seinfeld reruns in that ideal world. The last cars are heading towards the Glen Jackson Bridge with optimism. We see this happening down below, but we seem to be alone with our falsities atop this hill overlooking the city in our envy.

I thought a little bit about it. I wanted to give a one word answer, so I did once I got my head right.

"Divorce."

"Why? Me too actually. But I should be the one saying that not you. Your parents aren't broken up."

"Exactly."

"Come on. You're afraid of a lot of other things Jake. You're afraid of a lot of other things."

"What's up with you tonight? Why are you trying to be so confrontational?" I ask. "I mean, I like it when you communicate, but this is like Sally Jesse, okay."

"I'm sorry," she says turning her head away in the manner that would indicate to someone not listening to the words that she is about to cry about not seeing me ever again, and just breaking up. She whispers something I can't hear, but I think it sounds like bloodshed if I'm not mistaken.

"What? Did you just say you're sorry. Because if I'm not mistaken, apologies are not acceptable in this realm."

"No."

She whispers to herself again.

"What are you saying?"

"What's ahead. You're afraid of what's ahead."

"No. It's just that" --

"Yes you are. Don't say you're not. You're afraid of the future. You're a stress machine. You can't talk about your goals, because you don't have any. You're not ready to succeed in college, because you're afraid. You're not ready to go to the real world because you're not ready for college. It's a cycle Jake. I talk to you about anything in the past and your face lights up like you just got married or something. I talk to you about anything to do with the future, and I could swear it's already gone. It's already gone Jake, and it seems to me that --"

"Why are you doing this?" I interrupt.

She pauses for a while. I'm amazed by her honesty.

"Because I like you Jake. I like you a lot. And I'm trying to get some kind of fire under you, and if this talking of your goals doesn't scare you to death, and this foreshadowing doesn't... I don't know... scare you a little bit, then I don't know what does. You need goals, you need desires, Jake."

"Why do you like me?"

"I just... I don't know. I can't really explain."

"You don't like me Kate, not like that."

She rushes to correct me.

"No no no! You're cute, you're eyes are pretty and --"

"Katie! What the hell does that do? What does that do?! Huh?! What is a good looking guy good for in the long run? And why do you have to scare me in order to portray some sort of... uhh... affection you have?"

"I was going to say that you're smart. Gosh! Don't overreact!"

"I'm not. I'm sorry Katie but I just--"

"Don't apologize."

Silence again. She's sitting in the same way she has the whole time, swinging her legs, watching the lights go off and the cars go home in Portland, like nothing was even

said. When I look at her, stubborn as a little kid, I finally understand that feeling that those comedians get when they say that it's hard to look at their companions after they get married, because their personalities that they'd had all along just turn them into witches.

"You're afraid of the past," I say. I wanted to ask her about why her parents divorced but I haven't yet, and I don't think I will, but this is at least alluding to it. I'm sure that this works according to my anger right now. This will satisfy my annoyance. This will shut her little mouth up. At first she takes the comment in stride, nodding her head. But as I keep staring at her, and she keeps nodding her head, like she has it under control, I notice that she is crying again. And out of all the words and phrases I've heard tonight, she leans to my side and utters the strangest, most inopportune words of all,

"I hate you," she says, softly bawling. Why does she cry? Why does she always have to cry? These words make me crumble, and I can't hold on to her, and instead, I push her away. We sit there and marvel at the sky and it's big, infinite emptiness. Looking at the stars, I see now that people might be looking up there too from the Gulf or Africa or Nepal or wherever, but they can't be looking at the same stars as Katie and I. We're different. We descend on down, back into the real world, where honesty is a virtue.

We drove on towards home, or tried at least. We got lost and Katie called her mom to try to find the freeway. What a great feeling to go on a date with a girl, get lost, and attempt unsuccessfully to convince her that I know exactly our whereabouts. I think I was still trying to shake off the residue from our discussion earlier when I took a couple wrong turns, or five. Sometimes, when I drive home from somewhere, I'll be completely oblivious to the turns I'm making, or whether I'm going north or south, but I know that even though I am steered off course quite a bit I'll get home just fine. "It's cool," is what I always say to myself. But tonight, that's not the case. It's not cool, because there is someone in the car with me that needs to get home, to sleep in a cozy bed, to be comforted by something, like a blanky.

We eventually found our way back to the interstate thanks to Katie's mom via that cell phone, and now we're going over the Glen Jackson Bridge, and I'm thinking about

everything other than the moment itself. I lean back in the seat, and try to relax my body. All the cars on the road are a blur. If I was dying right now, I wouldn't mind. I'm not angry, not sad, and I'm not dying, but the insignificance of myself rings so hollow that it makes me hope for a happy dream tonight, about something else, or someone else I forgot. Or maybe it could be a dream about Katie. A dream that would bring every bad moment we had tonight to a halt, and freeze everything and rewind to a good spot just so I could remember one good thing about her, one last good thing and I'd be all right with that.

Actually, if I was alone in the car, by myself, I wouldn't be having this feeling. If I would never have gotten myself into this hopeless attempt at a teenage companionship, I might be on my way to a poker tournament with some buddies, or maybe I wouldn't even have left anywhere. Maybe I could just be at home watching Seinfeld reruns or something in a perfect world, by myself. That would be better. Much better. However, this feeling is so necessary, so commonplace for me that I can't retrieve myself from its doomful conclusion. It happens every time with these girls and me, and there is no cure for its inevitability. And anyone watching over us tonight could swear that we have never had a spark of chemistry together. That's not true, but I might soon start to believe it as I look down at the river in the dark, illuminated by the moonlight, straddled by this giant concrete structure that we glide across comfortably. We're only a quarter of the way down the bridge but it will soon be half, and after that we'll be in Washington, and then the exit, then she'll be home.

This is one of those times of awkward silences. Everybody has awkward silences, and we're not any different in that aspect. Usually when these types of things happen, I say something ridiculously ignorant just to try to get something going, and it ends up being for the worse. I wish I could be charming and effortlessly appealing. I wish I could just freeze this moment in time and find some way to say something decent to her. It should be easy to do that, to alter the ever-moving machine of life, because after all there are only two of us in this car, and we don't really hate each other I don't think, and we just want to like each other and communicate, we want the same thing, but whatever we're after must not want us -- I wish I hadn't said that about her past -- But that machine... that machine it

keeps moving and its probably a train, and it's whistle is blowing loudly in my ear and it would be easy to fend off the sound, but all these premonitions, all these thoughts, are filling my head with too much burden and the whistles are coming at me from both sides, louder than I've heard before, and as hard as I try to think of something romantic, something impressive or profound or witty, I can dream up only one word or phrase that I can communicate to her: "Please."

That is all I can think of, and I don't know why. I can't tell if I want to say, "Please help me," "Please get out of the car, find a ride home, this won't work out," "Please may I kiss you?" "Please say something." I don't know, and I can't think of a coherent phrase that is appropriate for the situation using please, so I keep driving and count the minutes until she is gone. We're halfway down the bridge when she speaks.

"Have you ever seen 'Pulp Fiction'?"

"Yeah, but it's been a while."

"Well, there is a scene in there, with the girl and Travolta."

"You mean Uma Thurman?"

"Yeah, well she says something like, 'I normally don't feel comfortable having long silences, but I feel comfortable having long silences with you.' Well you know -- that's how I feel with you."

This is a great try. Splendid, but in no way am I poised to muster up the compliment and send it to my yearning ego. I'm not ready, because I can't just keep driving, with my eyes on the road and accept this attempt to mend this disastrous night into something great by simply saying a few words, "Yeah, I'm comfortable with you too," because I'm not. It would be nice if she truly did feel comfortable but it doesn't take a fool to recognize that her hostility is leading her to embrace the longing for comfort. The exact words she had said before this display of her liking towards Tarantino's writing were "I hate you." One of these comments is full of fraud, and I conclude that it is probably this one about silences and maybe even both, but I reward her for trying at least. It's much better than anything that I can attempt to throw at her. "Yeah," is all I say in response, dishonestly. There's another uncomfortable silence for about a minute.

"What's wrong? I don't want us to be like this Jake."

"Nothing's wrong. I feel comfortable with you too. But in case you haven't forgotten, you did tell me you hated me about

thirty minutes ago."

"I know Jake. But it's not the same tonight. I don't feel the same as I did last week with you. You're not talking, you're not as funny, you're not as engaged. I don't feel great either but..." She sees me yawn. "Ok, sorry. I know, you're tired. Jake tell me now if this isn't going to work out, because I don't want to go through it if it's not going to work out."

"What the hell! It's going to work out, okay? Why wouldn't it? We're fine. And stop with the whole 'is this going to work out?' thing. This isn't a marriage. This isn't an engagement. We're not even boyfriend and girlfriend yet. I mean... I don't want to do anything right now, but I don't want to just stop seeing you! We're reasonable young kids, and one of us is an adult okay. All right. Everything will be fine. It's cool."

"Is it my hair? Do you like my hair?" she says.

We're in college now. Well, she's not, but I know that she must be smart enough to know not to bring that kind of bogus talk in here. I don't care about her hair. Well, actually, it's not like it usually is, and I like it better in a ponytail, but it still doesn't make a difference. She really needs to shut up.

"Your hair is splendid."

"I don't think you like it when it's curly," she says.

"You don't think I'm funny tonight?" I ask.

"Have you said anything funny?"

"I don't have to say anything funny to be funny, right?"

"You haven't done anything funny either. It's probably because you're so nervous about my hair looking so ugly."

I don't say anything. There is no reason to say anything. If I never said anything to this girl again, that would probably be great. But strangely, I feel a strong obligation, like a magnet somehow making me heed to the customary proceedings of this vile experiment of a relationship ridden with inexperience.

I'm not as far leaned back in my seat anymore. I am nervous, and agitated, but especially nervous. Yes, extremely nervous. More than I was a few minutes ago, with both hands on the wheel like my uncle when he has road rage. I'm this way not because of the unproductive argument, but because we are over the bridge now. We're in Vancouver, and there are about ten minutes until she is gone.

"You know, the way you put your hands on the wheel like that, it reminds me of my

dad," she says.

What the hell, I mouth silently, and keep driving. I don't take what she says to heart, but forget about it. I don't let it bother me, but I let something else fester inside me and it is visibly eating me away.

"What is it?" she asks.

"Honestly, I'm debating whether to kiss you or not."

If there was ever a manual on what to say to a girl, I must not have read it, because I put myself in a position where I'm now caught straddling razor wire fence, and I have to decide if I want to lose my right testicle or my left when I jump off.

The ten minutes pass. I pull over in a church parking lot somewhere near her house. I wouldn't want her mom to look in through the window, so that's why I stop a block down. I know, it's one in the morning but there's no reason to take any chances. I think about making a joke about sinning near the house of God, but I'm too nervous to get the words out and she's Mormon anyway.

I leave the car running. I don't know why I'm doing this, but I must, I must. It's not testosterone or anything, I don't think, but these obligatory emotions are forcing me to just get this over with. Isn't that testosterone? Maybe, but I feel obligated, like it's my duty to do this. I lean over, expecting nothing, and nothing happens. Neither of us even open our mouths. I try to kiss her but it's just a peck. Somewhere deep down inside I'm crying, and she is too. I try again and the same thing happens. If she likes me so much, why doesn't she kiss me? About 15 seconds and I bring my face back from her face, and my hand from her hair and straighten my body towards the steering wheel, feeling useless.

It's over now, and I take a deep breath so I can start up the car, confused and bewildered more than disappointed. But of course the car was already running. This brings about the sickening shrill of anxiety from the Ford Ranger that symbolizes my complete meltdown. If there would be one sound that embodies my feelings for the night, it would be that appalling, dreadful cry of the ignition, telling everyone in east Vancouver that the truck is already running, and that its driver is really nervous about something. I drive back to the house to drop her off, with my stomach ready to fly somewhere else than here.

"Thanks," she says. "I'm glad this happened tonight."

"Me too," I say, amazed by her strange

contentment with this awful situation. I'm thinking of other moments that I've had that went horribly, but were good in the long run, like a marathon. This wasn't as painful as a marathon, but it was still scary. It's hard to imagine the same girl that cried on the phone to me because she didn't think she could get work off for tonight so she could spend time with me. She was really looking forward to this. I feel bad to spoil it for her.

Remember that guy that was always really impressed with himself in your high school speech class? And when it was his turn to make his final speech his mom came to class and brought popcorn for everybody because the speech was going to be so profound and impressive. Well, let's say that this guy is doing his speech on the Taliban or something and he stayed up all night the night before and wasn't prepared and all the speech was for twelve minutes was "Al Qaeda... umm... Osama... uhh," and his mom is sitting there, red in the face, thinking that she did her part with the popcorn but not with the part of raising her kid to be humble. Yes, if Katie was everybody in that class, that guy was me tonight. That egotistic guy from speech class that gave everybody high expectations and disappointed them, that was me.

"I'll call you maybe," I say. As she turned to walk up the driveway, she waved with a smile that crippled me. Then she athletically ascended up that sloping hill, swaying hips, and a confident sense of aspiration that holds true for so many high school girls across America these days. I looked at my watch, and realized there was nothing on TV, no movies to go to by myself, no more girls to talk to in the car, and no good night's sleep for me. And at that moment, right as she turned to ascend the last step to look back and give a sad grin one last time -- that was the first time I would realize that she was beautiful, and nothing else mattered.

"Louis Armstrong!" I shout, trying to get it all back.

"What?" she says.

"That was the guy in the picture with the trumper. I just thought you might want to know some more history or something." She shakes her head, and stares down at my truck window with a look that is teetering between disbelief and confirmation for a good seven seconds.

"I knew that you knew who it was."

"Sorry for not telling you earlier, I just was tired and I didn't feel like I wanted to give you some history lesson and it just didn't seem right you know. and umm... it just didn't seem like uhh...well when there was... I don't know it's hard... umm..." I faded off, took a deep breath and gathered myself. "And now that I think about it Ka"-

"Don't apologize," she said, cutting my last words off, grinning.

"One more thing," she said.

"What?"

"You're not smiling. Does that mean you're happy?"

She smiled like it was the last time she'd see me, and I knew it probably was. I looked down at the dashboard, unsure of how to reply. But when I looked back up, her door was shut. Gone. She was the last girl I saw that summer.

(the layout and spacing are important on this one)

denouement

Brendan Abraham Murphy

what cause the spark from flinted stoue
to kindle upwards pride and smoke
do vengeance to the soft and real
after the wounds of youth have healed
having the will of steel instead
fought hint and rumor filling head
hard sense and what could be not want
for true not appear such when taught
something s must come when time reveal
one course charted ou even keel
does not that lie a different way
not somewhere near where i could stay?
even though not occur to me i
want? no more than here to be.

Stupid Love

Morgan Belmonte

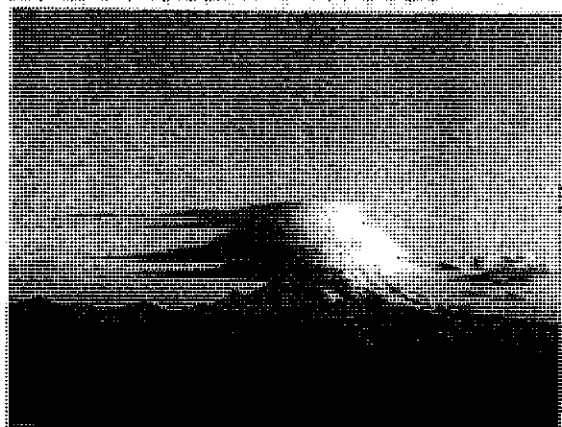
I can't put into words quite how you make me feel
Mainly because the feeling isn't rational at all
My stomach tightens up and suddenly I feel stupid
And my heart beats so rapidly that a heart attaché seems inevitable
It's not like you're that attractive
Not anymore than the average guy
But maybe it's the way that you look when you smile
With your eyes open and shining
And if it's not the smile itself, maybe it's that you don't smile so often
And when you do it's in a glimpse into something deeper
Something you don't show girls everyday
You let me see you, the real you, even if it's only for a moment
And that scares me and excites me so much
Because I can see so much below the surface
Such potential and possibility
Sometimes when I'm around you, my life is completely miserable
I can't breathe, my movements become awkward and I over analyze
Did he mean what he said? Did he say what he means?
I could find a hidden meaning in the way you combed your hair
Do guys do this? Does he agonize over some stupid girl?
Spend all of his waking hours with lingering thoughts in the back
Of his pea-sized brain in his stupid fat head, with its somewhat attractive eyes
And crooked but appealing smile, tall physique and soft hands
Damn those hands! Every time I look at them all I want to do is hold them
Forever and ever, feel and convey love and protection through those hands
I'm so lost in these feelings
Stupid emotions. Stupid you.
Wait. No. You aren't stupid... and what I feel isn't stupid.
It's love.
Stupid Love.



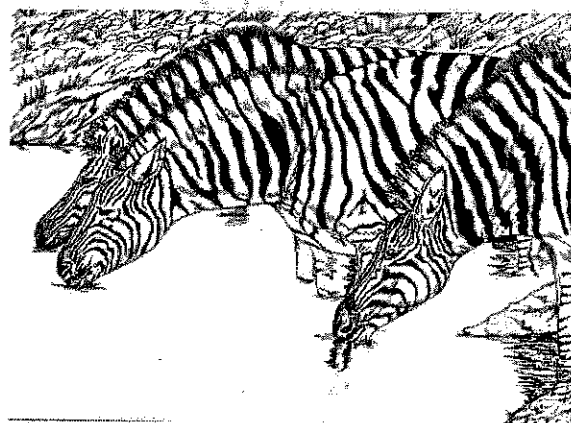
Japanese Monk - Dr. Lou Fahn-



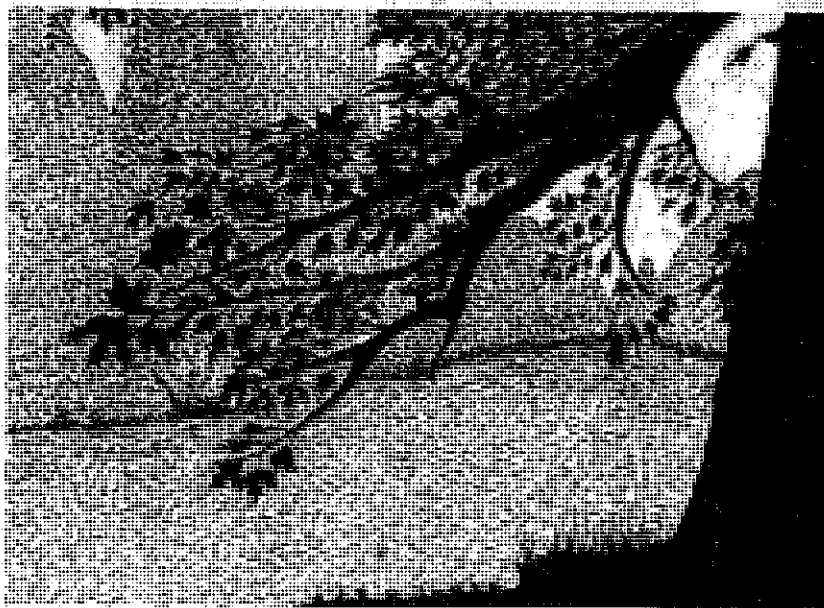
Rapture - Brendan Abraham Murphy-



A Storm Coming - Jeff Alarick-



Quenching - Barnabas Omulokoli-



She Watches the Water - Barnabas Omulokoli-

California Frown, an excerpt.

J.J. Putulowski

This is where the story ends. This is after the big, climactic ending. This is the blank page at the end of the novel. The credits rolling down the screen. The curtain swaying back and forth after the cast took their bow. This is after all that.

This is where the story ends and the rest of the little life left in me begins.

I woke up this morning with my face lying hard on the cold linoleum floor. A dead butterfly floating in the slosh of whiskey and stour and half-digested food in my stomach. My long, black hair soaking in the yellow piss around the toilet where I was too tired to aim, or too drunk. A layer of fog climbing up the side of the toilet with each breath I force out.

It feels like drowning inside my skin.

This is me without any regrets.

Some things are impossible to forget. Even though it is good to hold on; I have already lost it all. What I do is remember to breathe. Remember this is real. Close my eyes and start counting. 3. 2. 1. Breathe. 4. 3. 2. Keep counting. 5. 4. 3. Till the veins in my neck loosen their grip.

There are two things no one ever saw mother doing. Writing and cooking. Well, no one except me and that was only once.

At night dad cleaned up the take-out boxes and washed the dishes. Then, he tucked her in bed. Sat down, held her cheeks in the palms of his hands, and kissed her golden hair. Every night he whispered into her ear.

That made her smile, most of the time. He could have whispered anything. I like to think it was something she needed to hear. Something that would play in her heart and make her dream of endless blue skies and the ocean's breeze soft on her skin.

The night before Thanksgiving, after everyone was asleep, the house was quiet and the air still, mother curled herself in an old red leather recliner. She wrote in a journal. The kind with black straps that wrap around and tie in front. She collected notes and letters, pictures and postcards, and kept them between the pages.

Each step downstairs the wood breathed harsh and wheezed under my feet. I took it slow, from my heels rolling my weight out to my toes.

In the shadows of the doorway I sat on the floor and watched. Little flakes of dust rose and fell in the light above her head.

She picked at the lightning bolt cracks in the leather and thumbed her rosary. Then, her pen moved right to left, up and down the page, as quick as she could.

Don't know how long she kept writing. I sat there and fell asleep. Whether she knew it or not she was sharing a secret. That moment I knew her more than anything ever since.

The walls in my apartment could have been painted burnt sienna or fuchsia. Maybe the former occupant was a geek for prairie hills printed on wallpaper. Now, it's covered in notes. Yellow post-its for places. Blue for people. Taped and stapled to the walls are postcards and pictures and old letters. There are newspaper articles and scraps of paper. Notes on top of notes on top of pictures till everything that was once there is no more.

Each wall is a memory bank of lost events. A pool of information. A way to remember. Look north; the wall is covered with everything from before mother died. South; everything after. Look east; that wall is covered in everything surrounding the murders. All pieces to a puzzle. Clues to figure out. An equation to solve. The west wall is a large window and the front door. I covered the window with old newspapers, piecing together a collage of history with satin-finished giftwrap tape. Light still shines through, but it's more of a blank wave of white light. Stare long enough and the white goes on forever.

Mother's handwriting is light and fast. Each letter inclined. She never dotted her *I*'s; but she drew long, bold cross strokes through every *T*. Each *H* and *P* and *Q* is looped. Retraced loops sometimes. Maybe she felt tired or trapped, but she had perfect spacing and angular slopes. No impressed dots from letting her pen sit too long on any letter. It was beautiful and elegant, all crafted in red ink.

I write with an inverted left hand. Fast and hard. Black ink everywhere. My *A*'s are always open to the left with an open base. Most of my *M*'s have no middle bar. Each descender has a long, rising stroke which could be construed as a feeling of detachment. Spacing varies, no margins, small letters. My thoughts are lightning-quick, too fast for my hand to keep up.

Everything mother wrote has dissolved, coursed through my veins, and lined the inside of my heart. I don't remember the exact words but just what they mean. Everything she felt is in the translation of her penmanship. This is the legacy she left me

to read.

When mother found me sleeping on the floor she shook me awake. She bent her fingers and pushed up her glasses with her knuckles.

She put one hand on her waist, squinted her eyes, and said, Tonight we will be thankful.

A guest, she said.

In the letters dad used to write me in college I have never found her to be thankful for anything. Not that she's an ungrateful or anything; Dad just said she was sick. Too tired to be thankful.

The house smelled of fresh cut fruit and cinnamon baking in the oven. Dad was wearing a starched white shirt and pleated slacks. He was busy spraying water on the houseplants with dried leaves. Most of the plants were too far gone, and he took them outside to the trash and brought in new plants.

A clean house, Dad said. Reflects a sound mind.

In the kitchen next to the sink sat a white Styrofoam ice chest filled with crabs, scratching to get out. Flour stuck in the grout on the counter. Mother in her blue apron and flower-print oven mitts shuffled baking pans and pulled a fresh loaf of bread from the oven.

I kissed her on the cheek and promised to be home for dinner.

What happened that night I only know now because I kept detailed notes and newspaper articles. After walking into the house wearing another man's blood detective Miller rubbed his fingers through his mustache and told me to drop by the station in the morning. He had three body bags to fill and no time to talk.

In the morning I borrowed every paper on the block and threw them away, except one. No one deserved to know what I had been denied. Each article is a glimpse into the past. The collection of history that left me our.

Thanksgiving's Deadliest Recipe
Murrieta, Calif.—Today a small community is mourning the loss of three members of the community following last night's apparent murder/suicide in a small, quiet neighborhood. A woman identified by police as AnnaBéth Stanton, 40, is believed to have cooked poison into the meal she served her husband, David Sranon, 45, and an unidentified male. Paramedics found

the three bodies sprawled across the kitchen floor after responding to a 9-1-1 emergency call placed by Mr. Stanton. Neighbors close to the family are shocked by the incident that is still unfolding today.

Start counting. And don't stop.

Let's go over this one more time, detective Miller said.

No, I said. I've told you the story. Now tell me what happened.

I have three bodies chilling in the morgue, he said. I need to know why.

The roads were still wet, I said. It was getting dark and I was already late. The driver in the truck had sped off and no one stopped to help. The car was all twisted metal and the guy inside was leaking blood, shards of glass sticking to the red mess down the side of his face. I didn't know what to do. The guy was convulsing, his head smacking against the doorframe. He was going to bash his skull in pieces and spill brain everywhere. So, I got my right foot on the side of the car and pulled the door open. Held his forehead against the headrest and kept him still and whispered into his ear. That's all I could do. And that's when I saw Angelina, the moment after the accident.

Little beads of sweat collected on my forehead and underneath my arms. It was the only thing that felt cold. So cold it burned.

Miller pushed away from the table and started walking up and down the room, tapping his pen in the air.

Shouldn't I have a lawyer for this type of thing? I said.

Miller stopped pacing and started flipping through his file.

Do you recognize this man? he said, dropping an 8x10 glossy picture with white borders on the table.

It was mother. Her face stretched out and disfigured. Her body outstretched on the kitchen floor. Her face next to Dad's feet. Dad's face next to the guest's feet. The guest's face next to mother's feet.

We found traces of Mrs. Stanton's lipstick on the body of this man, he said.

Slow down. Breathe. 3. 2. 1. Keep counting. 4. 3. 2. Eyes closed. 5. 4. 3.

The poison used, he said. Nitrogen-bearing alkaline chemicals are found in forty-percent of all plants. Some cases, just a little of these alkaloids can stop the heart.

My mother was murdered by a plant? I said.

Mrs. Stanton suffered from anaphylaxis,

he said.

She wouldn't hurt anyone, I said. This isn't making any sense.

Mrs. Stanton went into anaphylactic shock, he said. She died before the paramedics could reach her.

6. 5. 4. She didn't do it. 7. 6. 5. Remember. 8. 7. 6.

She didn't do it, ok? I said.

Kid, listen to me, he said. It wasn't your mother.

I know.

9. 8. 7.

It was Mr. Stanton, he said. We found receipts for the plants in his wallet. His prints were lifted off all the pots.

I felt something wiggling inside me. Somewhere between the pulse of my heart and each breathing lung something was growing. The dark lonely center of my chest.

Miller looked down and closed his eyes.

Kid, I'm sorry, he said.

He dropped two more pictures on the table, one on top of the other.

I knew I shouldn't look. But I did.

10. 9. 8.

The table at home. Three plates with half eaten food. A fourth plate at my seat, empty. Silverware collecting dust on a folded cloth napkin.

11. 10. 9.

A note sitting on the counter. The first letter a lowercase H, hoop retraced. Light red ink.

12. 11. 10.

This is where history left me out.

help yourself to leftovers. Love, Mom.

This is not a complete story. It's taken from a library of notes and newspaper articles and journal entries. Letters that were the only communication between my parents and me during several years of silence. The story is being told from pictures and napkins from diners with words scrawled across. Every memory catalogued on the page.

There will be gaps. Time loss. All the boring details edited out. This will be the truth the best that I can tell it. Nothing less.

These notes are all I have, collected in boxes in the bedroom. Stacks and stacks of boxes filled full with notepads and records and everything I took the last night I stayed at home.

Besides that, there's not much else in my apartment. Just a desk, a computer, a couch I found on the side of the street decorated in cigarette holes, and a few clothes hanging in

the closet.

All the floorboards are scrubbed clean. The window seals washed. The grout in the bathroom bleached with a toothbrush. Wipe the kitchen counters with a white glove and it'll leave dust.

A clean house reflects a sound mind.

Every night before I go to sleep I tuck my feet under the couch and sit-up till the muscles in my stomach burn. Push-ups till my body is too heavy. An hour of muscles being pushed and pumped till electricity shocks carry through each vein can kill about 580 calories. The walk to the grocery store and back to get milk, can tuna, and more beer can kill about 600 calories. Just typing for an hour can kill 110 calories.

158 lbs, 30-inch waste, and 9-percent body fat reflects a sound mind.

Miller led me past paper-pushers in blue uniforms and fax machines, between cubicles, and through an electronic security door that locked behind me. The lobby was cold, grey-walls and a marble floor, an insignia in the middle of the floor promising to serve and protect. They were a little too late for the latter.

Angelina sat cross-legged waiting for me. She licked her red lips and stared at the people walking by.

She said the secretary behind the bulletproof glass window was a cocaine addict play pretending the flu, sniffing up where her nose had already begun to deteriorate. She giggled and said that everyone was someone else. That's what made people interesting.

What interested her more was that people only see themselves in other people. Character flaws is what she said. Listen to what people complain about the most because they are only complaining about themselves.

I told her it was time to go, and she took me home for the last time.

Death gives the air a calm and quiet quality. Almost tranquil. The police put tape across the front door and drawn the shades. I went room-to-room pulling up the blinds and opening the curtains.

Fingerprints were left on the kitchen's doorframe, so I pulled my sleeve around my fist and smeared them away. In the moonlight Mother's chair looked black and the lightning bolt cracks glowed white. It was soft and my body fit right in. I ran my fingers across the leather and the cracks. I sat there, feeling her writing and

writing as fast as she did.
I pulled on the mahogany handle and the gears squealed stuck. I pulled it again, harder and harder. Then, it jerked open, dropping mother's journal on the floor. All her thoughts outstretched on the carpet. I am a lifetime away from understanding, but there had to be clues between the pages. Mother's legacy. A murderer's grace in words, not the grave.
I sat back, holding tight her journal close to my chest and fell asleep.
Sleep is a training exercise for death. It's preparation.
So you don't it up for eternity.

This is where the story begins.

And I Stumbled

Urban Jack

Alan held the rod in his right hand as he pulled the Bow out of the river. The cold water stung his sunburned hand. Robert called out to him, "How big is it?" "It's nothing but a minnow." Alan tucked his rod under his arm and grabbed the Bow by the tail with his left hand. Then with his right hand he twisted the hook out of its mouth. He held the fish facing downstream until it revived and whipped itself out of his grasp.

Alan sloshed back to the boat and opened the cooler. "Grab me a Diet," Robert yelled. Alan grabbed the Diet and then a Squirt and walked out to Robert. "Can't see nothing with this sun."

"I know, it was supposed to be cloudy today. Reckon most of the fish have found deeper holes than this one to cool off in." "Too bad these reds aren't trout." Alan pointed across the river where a massive freeway of reds were heading up to the mouth of the river. "Casting over there you can't help but snag one."

"They ain't no good to eat. Look how tired and worthless they are. Lazy bears is the only things that'll slap those out of this river. You going back to the boat?" "Yeah."

"Thanks." Robert handed Alan his empty can and Alan trudged back to the boat. By the time Alan had thrown the cans away Robert had a fish on. "Bring the net; this one's a keeper."

"How big?"

"At least thirteen or fourteen inches."

Alan sloshed back out to him, the net in his right hand. The fish jumped twice, frantic and desperate. Fish have no system or plan, they just panic. Robert had him reeled in real close when Alan arrived with the net. Alan grabbed his line and dipped the net

under the fish. They walked back to the boat and unhooked the fish. Alan held it down and clubbed it. Robert prepared a dragline and soon the Bow was tied to the back of the boat, drifting in the current.

"How come I ain't catchin' none of these?" said Alan.

"Cuz your presentation stinks. Your line is always bunched and you haven't learned how to mend up-stream or down. The big-guns are too smart for that kind of stuff."

"What do I do?"

"Find a better rhythm on your cast.

Remember to count slow: 1-2, 1-2. On your release don't try to cast—just release it. Stop, drop, and follow through."

Alan grabbed his rig and headed back to the water. The sun enflamed his burnt skin, red and raw. The water gargled around his waders as he slowly made his way out to the middle of the river. Just twenty feet ahead was the riffle they were aiming for, a rush of deep bluish-green. Alan gave himself some slack and made a couple of fake casts, mumbling a slow 1-2 count under his breath. He whipped his wrist too much on the release and the fly tagged the water behind him before tearing to the front, stopping short of the riffle in a bunch of line. Alan shook his head and prepared another cast. A smirk traced his lips as he glanced down stream at Robert who already had another fish on and was working it back to the boat. Alan took a breath and set to casting again. 1-2, 1-2 and this time a gentle, rhythmic release that laid gentle on the back side of the riffle. Alan pulled in some slack and followed the line as it floated down-stream. The fly lifted off the water as he mended but then lay back again. A small splash and Alan lifted the rod setting the hook, a beautiful little Bow with its stockings in a bunch yanked at his line. Alan worked him back to the boat where Robert was waiting. "Good job, that's a fine little Bow." Alan pulled his rod over his left shoulder and grabbed the line with his right hand about two feet above the fish and pulled it in. "Whadaya think?"

"Bout twenty inches. Nice color too."

"I'm glad I at least I got one before the day was through."

"Ah...you'll slaughter 'em once you start gettin' better drifts. Your drifts aren't dead yet."

Alan twisted the fly out of the Bow's mouth and let it swing free into the breeze. "Here's dinner."

Robert grabbed a fillet knife and one of his Bows and sloshed over to the shore. Kneeling at the water's edge, he laid the

Bow upon a smooth rock and began to slice into the flesh just below the jaw. After hitting the spine he tilted the head downward creating a space in the slice for him to turn his knife sideways and cut out the fillet down to the tail. The meat was red and plump with very little blood. Robert rinsed it in the shallow waters next to him and placed the fillet in a small plastic garbage sack then repeated this process on the other side of the fish. After completing the other side he pitched the rest of the carcass into the middle of the river allowing the swift current to carry the bones to some other shore where they would not have to see it. Alan then took his turn filleting his fish and the two hopped into the boat and made for camp.

"Why do you want to start fishin'? Isn't there enough to do around here without taking off for days at a time just sitting around waiting for fish to bite? You ain't never been fishin' before in your life. You'll probably hate it."

"I won't ever know 'till I try."

"And what am I going to tell your brothers, your younger brothers, when they have to do your chores as well as theirs?"

"Tell 'em I'll do the same for them someday."

"Huh, I know about someday with you boys. Someday is on some calendar that ain't been invented yet. Speaking of calendars, I want that fancy car calendar thrown in the trash immediately. You never said there was gonna be girls dressed in dental floss lying on the hoods."

Alan was glad to be in the boat speeding down the river. The bugs can't keep up with a jet boat. Robert sat in the stern guiding the boat through the tangled water.

"Rocks ahead. Won't be surprised if we hit on bottom."

Alan placed his hands on his knees in a stabilizing posture.

"I'm gonna steer real clear of most of them but watch your head."

Robert curved the boat towards the right-bank as it was deeper there. Some trees had fallen over because of the eroding bank. They balanced in the air at about eye level creating a nice little canopy that threatened to decapitate careless boaters. Both of them ducked and then Alan restored himself to his steady posture. The river widened and Robert sped the boat up towards the left-bank. There, in a clearing, Alan saw the tent and the fire pit they had made in the rocky shoreline. It was an orange hunting

tent built for four, but there barely seemed enough room for the two of them. A pair of Alan's clothes hung from a line that stretched between two trees nearest to the tent.

"Oh, I just know you'll fall in and get swept away to some watery grave."

"I won't fall in."

"You will. And you'll probably think you're too cool for a life preserver too. You'll put on your sunglasses and sit in the boat and the next minute you'll be floatin' face down in the river."

"You can't swim."

"I can swim fine."

"And where'd you learn ta' swim."

"At Wilson's water hole."

"That water ain't nothin' but a couple feet deep, and there's no current. You'll get out there in the deep water and the current too strong for somebody who can't swim and's too cool for a life preserver. Your waders 'll get full of water and that'll be that."

"I'll be..."

"No more. I hear another word about it and there'll be no television for a month."

"So how come you never been fishin'?"

"My mother never let me when I was a boy. She was afraid I'd fall in."

Alan looked over at his damp clothes on the line and laughed. Robert laughed too.

"That's a prophetic woman."

Robert opened a box of Shake 'n' Bake from the food chest and emptied some into a zip lock bag. Alan was cutting the fillets into small chunks that Robert grabbed a few at a time and placed in the bag to shake them up. Some cooking oil heated in a pan over the fire and an open can of corn heated in some coals on the edge of the pit. A pot of water was also heating for the hot chocolate.

"I ain't never met a man that ain't been fishin'."

"So you've said."

"It just ain't right. Why didn't your daddy take you fishin'?"

"Daddy died when I was nine. Before that I guess he was just too busy on the farm."

"Huh, ain't nobody too busy to go fishin'."

"You ain't never lived on a farm."

"I don't want to if there ain't no fishin'. I bet that's why your daddy died: from lack of fishin'."

"Daddy died because he got ran over by a cultivator. Chopped him up from his head to his knees."

"Humph, he shoulda' been out on the river teachin' you how to dry-fly."

The fish sizzled and popped as it fell into the hot oil. Immediately the air was pungent with the smell of Shake 'n' Bake Spices and fish. Robert breathed deep with his nostrils and held it for a second before letting it out. *"Ain't nothin' like it. You can keep your fancy New York Strip or your fresh Lobster with the butter sauce. I'll take this stuff any day."*

Alan wasn't convinced yet but it did smell very good.

Alan grabbed an oven mitt with his left hand and a mug with his right. With the mitt he grabbed the pot of boiling water and dumped it into the mug. Hot chocolate mix was waiting on the bottom and the water turned dark and a new, sweet smell permeated from the mug. Alan replaced the pot and grabbed a spoon and stirred the hot water and chocolate until he was satisfied that they were married. Switching the mug to his left hand he reached into the marshmallow bag with his right hand and dumped one in the mug.

"Hot chocolate?"

"No thanks. That's desert."

Robert grabbed a tin plate and began to scoop fried fish onto it.

"Better eat it all now."

"Why's that?"

"You ain't even got no fishin' license. Don't you know you need a license to do that fishin'? And where you gonna get the money for a license. Ain't gettin' it from me."

"I don't need no stupid old license. Ain't nobody gonna catch us."

"Rangers catch us with these Bows and it's curtains."

"But everybody fishes for Bows."

"Catch and release boy."

"Thanks for sayin' somethin'."

"Figured you knew."

"I don't know nothin' 'bout this stuff. You know that."

Robert scooped the rest of the fish onto another tin plate and set it beside him. With pliers he grabbed the can of corn that had been boiling in the hot coals. Tipping it slightly, he drained most of the water out then dumped half on his own plate and the rest onto Alan's.

"Don't worry. We ain't hurtin' nothin'."

"Why don't we just fish for what's legal?"

"Cuz these waters have got the biggest Bows in the world...the biggest in the world...and... I'm tellin' ya', everybody should taste it just once...a fresh Bow over

the open fire. Ain't much they let a white man do up here any more...Everyone should just taste it once."

A White Upper-Middle Class American and Rwanda *Bridget Murphy*

I am my only enemy
In my world of mediocrity
In my botedom I am killed
While you die by machete
Butchered by your brothers
Your pain flows in your blood
Mine flows in insincerity

I'm being robbed by my wealth
Enslaved in my freedom
To do what I want
Just do it
Just do it
Starved by this gluttony
Raped by this naivety
To think ignorance bliss and
Just ignore you
Just ignore you

April 13th, 1994 was of
Genocide and a birthday song
I rejoiced for 8 years of life
You chose death ou that day
And seven and a half million strong
Crushed a million of their own skulls

I'm too shaken at this irony
Can't sip my coffee in harmony
My emotions hurtling at this world
Of fat pockets and flesh-stuffing America
broken heads and torn flesh bleeding Rwanda
While I live life
I just live life

I'm being robbed by my wealth
Enslaved in my freedom
To do what I want
Just do it
Just do it
Starved by this gluttony
Raped by this naivety
To think ignorance bliss and
Just ignore you
Just ignore you
You are the armless woman left alive
You are the pastor pleading for his sheep
You are the mayor who betrayed them
You the women raped before death
You are the orphans scarred and homeless
You are hearts bleeding to death
And I am me
Alive and free
And no longer ignoring you

Slow Down Stoopid

Mihaires Algone

"The garbage man didn't pick me up today," she muttered indifferently aloud to herself. "Why is it that stoopid people find their way to the jobs we rely on the most. I need to empty the cat litter into the can, now I can't," she thought. The crotchety old woman shook her head as she waddled into the house to phone the garbage company.

"Hello, this is Town Sanitary Service, how can I help you," a false melodious voice flowed over the phone.

"He missed us again, that stoopid man almost never gets it right, well at least he hasn't the last two weeks," the old woman whined into the phone. "Now I expect someone out here to empty my can immediately."

"I am sorry ma'am but I'm going to need some context like your account number... and, did you say can? Like a metal can..." her voice trailed off in thought. It was the most excitement she had all day in the office.

"You know damn well who this is, you hung up on me...well maybe it wasn't you but one of you young know-it-all secretaries," the old woman snarled into the phone. "My name is Marsha Watson, and yes I said can, like a metal one, where else are you supposed to put the trash, dummy."

"Calm down ma'am" the secretary said over the click of her American flag manicured nails on the keyboard of her computer. "Well I'm not seeing a Marsha Watson and we haven't issued metal cans for almost ten years now ma'am. We recalled them all and exchanged them for carts, we must have missed you, but our computer shows that you have never had garbage service..."

"I most certainly have, Marsha Watson, I pay every month on the dot."

"Ok, ok, but you're not in our system, I am accessing the older accounts now, ones that have not been activated in ten years or more...and it appears that you have not been registered for garbage service in eighteen years."

"But of course I have...eighteen years ago is when I moved, just after my...who do you think you are?"

"Ma'am if you would like to register for service today we can have someone out there in an hour, it'll be \$35.99 for the subscription fee and \$29.99 a month after that..."

"What the is this?" Marsha snarled. She swore when she was angry, but she only really got angry when money was involved. That and when cars drove within ten feet of

her as she was walking to her apartment on Highway 99. "I pay five dollars a month and that's it, stooped," she said to the secretary.

"I'm sorry ma'am I don't know what to say because you haven't had service in eighteen years. I can sign you up." The secretary's voice had dropped the melody, and become condescending.

"I don't have to take this. I am Marsha Watson, I'm not listening to another word. Goodbye and good riddance." She slammed down the phone.

Later that day I showed up with a pizza at Marsha's box of an apartment. I smiled reconstructing this conversation in my head. I knew that my dad, her garbage man, was on vacation, and no one had bothered to pick up her dwarf of a trash can. I couldn't wait to hear it from her. I hadn't seen her in about a month, and didn't know what to expect.

Pretty much everyone in town knew Marsha and knew that her son had died eighteen years previous. He burned up in a house fire that was likely caused by a cigarette he fell asleep smoking. It was a freak thing, she was visiting relatives out of town, and her son was house-sitting for her, which meant staying there with the five cats. The cats all felt the heat and made it out just fine, but the son apparently did not. Marsha never forgave herself, and she never moved on with the times. She still paid a dollar for a burger and fries. At least when people were kind to her she paid whatever she wanted, but most people were not so kind to her.

My father and my boss Gerry were a couple of the exceptions. She was going to pay four dollars to have the pizza delivered, a 55% loss for Gerry just on the product, not considering my wages. My father took five dollars a month from her for her trash. It cost the garbage company about thirty-six cents for him to empty her can every week. He usually put the money into the deacon's fund at our church, which helped Marsha pay her bills. When the pizza place opened up eleven years after her son died, Dad gave it to Gerry to help pay for the pizza she ordered once a week.

I often thought that both men were too nice to the old gal; she was a real hand-ful when it came to providing her with service. I first encountered her my third day working at a local sandwich shop. I was a freshman in high school and did not know how to respond to her. I came to learn to just tell her she was right about prices, the weather, and her dress size, which she said

was still a size 3, but was at least a size 1. Gradually I came to like helping her at the sandwich shop and later the pizza place, and I slowly won a small place in her heart. I kept expecting her to lose all her marbles but she never did. She always remembered who I was.

As I was walking up to the door I wondered if this time she would forget who I was. She had the door open before I was halfway up the stairs and she was already yelling. "Calm down Marsha," I said. "My dad has just been on vacation, he'll be back next week, don't bother calling the Town Sanitary Service because they won't know who you are."

"Yeah cuz they're stooped," she spat.

"Perhaps you're right," I said, but you just have to be satisfied until my dad gets off vacation, just put the other trash in the bin beside the can ok?"

"Oh, all right. Make sure you give me my change," she said handing me a five-dollar bill. She stood there impatiently while I got the pizza out, and her dollar in change. She was a squat woman, the kind who never heard of osteoporosis until after she had it. I towered uncomfortably over her. I felt her beady black eyes staring at me, scrutinizing me, looking for something wrong with me, it was just her way. At last she found something, "You've got flour in your hair, stoopid," she said. Stoopid was one of her terms of endearment towards me, she didn't really mean it. She just couldn't possibly be kind, and because she said it to everyone else, she apparently had to with me as well.

I wanted to retort back that my hair at least had some color in it, and joke around a little, but I could see she was more serious than normal today, so I held my tongue. There was a silence for about a minute after she had the pizza and change in her hands. She just stared at me. I could tell she didn't want me to leave yet. I wasn't sure why, but I didn't move, I just stood there kind of smiling at her, shuffling my feet. When the minute was over, she just nodded her head in approval, turned around and sauntered back up the stairs. "You ok going up the stairs Marsha," I said.

"I'm fine stoopid." She muttered something more but I lost it as she turned back up the stairs. I laughed to myself and turned back to the car. "Yoohoo" she called out as I was opening the door to the car, she was trying to be young and cute or something.

"Yes, Marsha?" I said

"Thank you for the pizza, and tell your father to be on time next week." She was

imitating cuteness again.

"You're welcome," I said, shocked. It was the first sliver of gratitude I had ever seen from the woman, and I couldn't believe she could go from calling me "stoopid" to being kind in a matter of seconds. There was another awkward pause, she turned inside and I got in my car as soon as she turned away. "I wonder what she does actually remember and if she will remember this encounter the next time we meet," I thought.

Shortly after this encounter I moved away to college. I still see her occasionally when I am driving in town because she walks everywhere. I honk and wave, and she generally stamps her foot and shouts "Slow down Stoopid" thrusting up a typical middle finger of wild rage to anyone in her vicinity. At least until she sees it's me. Awareness passes through her eyes and I think she smiles for a second. She never waves, but I think it makes her day.

In the grand scheme of things I wonder what good a garbage man, pizza owner, and sandwich maker/pizza boy, can actually do in the world. Helping Marsha has not, and probably will not ever have any more of an effect than the day she thanked me. It makes me feel a sense of uncomfortable helplessness when I think of all the other people in need, many like Marsha too afraid to be kind, many like me who are too stoopid to even slow down every once in a while.

Family

Morgan Belmonte

My mother spoke of silly things
Like, purple and therapy and underwear-
Which should be worn on the head.
About history which she recalled with a pride
Then promptly despised at the same time.
Talkative and outgoing
Laughing snorts over corny jokes
Which inspire groans from we children
But seem to amuse adults
Whose humor is often unexplainable.
Yet the best mother in the World
Must, at times, go unappreciated.

My father talked of odd things
Such as Perry Mason and bowel control
And zany songs with no meaning
That should be sung with words
That weren't real, to people who were.
All-American, hot dogs and coca-cola
And respecting your elders.
Memories and movies from long ago
Gifts and seeds of knowledge to my generation
That are lost to so many, and found by so few,
"Nowadays..."

My sister boasted knowledge

Of pop culture icons and their signature catch phrases
With voices and tones
That found a place in her mind, and that she made funny
At least to herself.
But humor sometimes wears thin
Like the peanut butter on her sandwiches.
Her friends are mine, and there is much that we share
Yet I am my most selfish to her.
Often taken for granted when a smile is given
Or chuckle induced.
Anger seems to melt when a joke is cracked
Or trust counted upon.

The youngest knew things that we all did not
Like, why the sky was blue
And where angels sat in church
The secret flying that was locked away
And the best way to pinch and cause pain.
All she showed through her eyes
But her mouth would not allow the words to escape
That others might hear them and learn truth.
Spent instead are her days with Mickey, Alvin and Barney
Sing-a-long songs and dolls whose heads are promptly discarded
And laughing feet and magical busses
Whom she seems to understand
And communicates through the language of babble to.

Older was another sister still
Who loved young and married young
At least, according to my parents.
She possessed an air of childishness
But spoke, as an adult should,
At times when she wished to be treated so.
Fragile shell of confidence
That from blade to ice cut her down.
And gave birth to a monster of self-loathing.
But the fighting spirit inside of her triumphed
Over the toilet of sadness
And admiration and respect have never been properly expressed
From my point of view

Grandma survived the World
In her own self-reliant way.
Antiques and totem poles and thinking the best of all
Not relying on first impressions and glances.
Wisdom and opinions flow from her mouth
In an unending downpour upon my head
Pushing and striving and forcing me to remember
Things I didn't know already, but should've.
So "cool" to everyone, including people she'd never met
Reputation preceded her
Animal planet rescuers and game show re-runs
Adopted member of our house
With Archer quickness, pride and blood.

My Family.

Church Service Surprise
Charity D. Darnall

Baldachino draping over the altar,
And purple irises bedecking the dais
Five feet behind
The priest in his balmacaan-sleeves
Who, for the last forty minutes has been
Preaching on how Jesus is the Balm
Of Gilead, waving his hands at someone
In the balcony.

Balsamic fragrance permeates the air.
It is dreadful hot in here,
Five people have already baled...
But as another goes to leave,
The priest interrupts his sermon
With, "Young man, sit right back
Down again please. Really, I'm nearly
Through." And he continues
The young man stays

After the service, the chuckles
And guffaws arise to the surface
That had been suppressed
During the duration of the sermon.
Red-faced, the young man goes to leave
But again is stopped, again it's by the priest.

"I thought that was you,"
I heard him reply to the red-faced
Young man now looking for a way out
"Why is it that you wanted to go?"

"Come on, Dad, you know I need to
Get back home, and I didn't want to say
good-bye
Because I knew we both would cry,"
Was the riposte, much to my surprise.

I let them be, and left myself
Wondering who might have been
The other five to leave before
The service had been over
And with one last glance
Over my shoulder as the door
Closed behind me,
The scent of balsam filled my senses
And I wondered no longer.

SOLAR ECLIPSE

Saymore

I become a solar eclipse,
To the world around me.
My mind is lost in space,
The sun is my boundary.
No one sees past my face,
Into my galaxy.
A dark empty place,
That only God can see.

Hear My Silence
Kenneth Edward Keyn

My soul seeks solace that it cannot find here
And in all this my path begins to veer
A torrent of tears, a wall of fears
In my mind it feels like the end is near

Though I know in fact that it's not real
It's hard not to react to what I feel
My mind says one thing, my heart another
All in search of my one true lover

I want my ways to change so I can live like
I'm normal
But I cannot arrange to break free of formal
In my heart wells hatted, not for someone
else
The pain and anger are directed at myself

I'm angry because I fail at what I want most
When others sail and ride past on coast
For all my strengths, I lack so much
All things normal feel so out of touch

I want to say to all, "See the pain in my
eyes!"
"Can't you see me fail? Don't wait 'til I die!"
"How loud must I cry silently before you'll
see?"
"How long must I wait until you notice
me?"

But in silence I wait in pain
Contemplating fate and hoping for gain
I pray for answers and get more questions
I ask for help and get lousy suggestions

Hear my silence...

Autumn Air
Charity D. Darnall

Autumn air
Caresses the skin
As rain softly
Falls, wetting the hair.
Leaves along the walk,
And leaves clinging
Fragilely to their trees
As though afraid
Of falling to the ground.
Frost along windowpanes
Ready for fingerprints
And little kids' faces
To smudge it.
Winter is near
Yet November doesn't
Seem to want to give
Up the Autumn air.

BEFORE THE CLEANSING'S DONE

Urban Jack

I

DISINTEGRATION

She walked in and I watched from the ch
I have sat in for the last thousand years of
these past three weeks.
She's so ragged looking
Ragged hair and eyes
Dark eyes
She cried so much of the night
She doesn't want to be held
Not by Daddy
Daddy wants to hold her
I want to hold her like the little girl she w
Little girls can't see that
Can't imagine that
She can watch all the T.V. she wants now
They can't hurt her
Can't depict it
Can't realize it
I can't understand
It took so long for her to talk and I listen
night and day for something that was mor
than a crying moan.
She talks now but silently
Don't you want to talk?
Daddy wants to talk
Talk like she's a little girl again
She can't be a little girl
No one can hurt her
I can't hold her
Daddy wants his girl
His girl wants Mommy
We all want Mommy
She doesn't know who Mommy was
Mommy might have jumped
Maybe she fell
Burned
Everything fell
Burned
Crushed like dry leaves
Dry leaves
Concrete
Dust
It's everywhere in this place

Story Continued on page thirty-two

Desvelar: A Comic

The following comic was adapted by
Daniel Ray from a longer piece by Tyler
Caffall called *Jury Duty* at my request. It
began as a semi-joke, but Alex Kuechler
started doing the art for it, and it material
ized into something unique. We here at
Rocinante are proud to attempt something
completely new, branching out into graph
literature. So here it is, *Desvelar*, a comic
about the tragedy that is sleep.

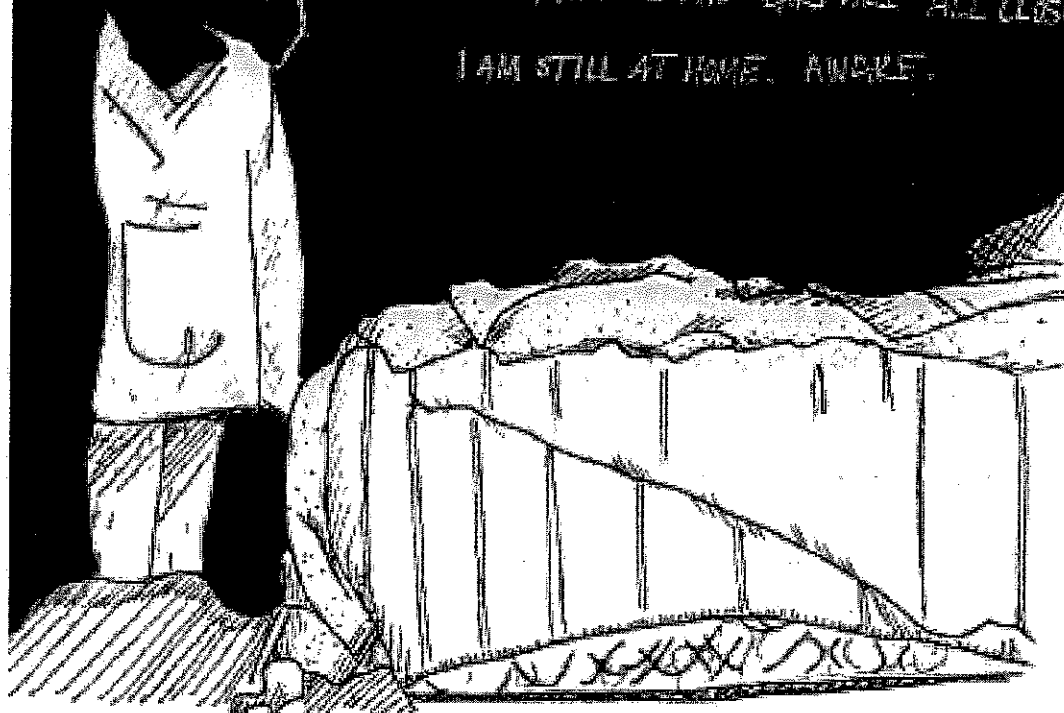
Zach

I WAS UP LATE AGAIN LAST.

MY DEEP AVERSION TO SLEEP ALLOWED
ME 3 HOURS OF WAKE DEPRIVATION
BEFORE I WAS JOLTED OUT OF
NOTHINGNESS.

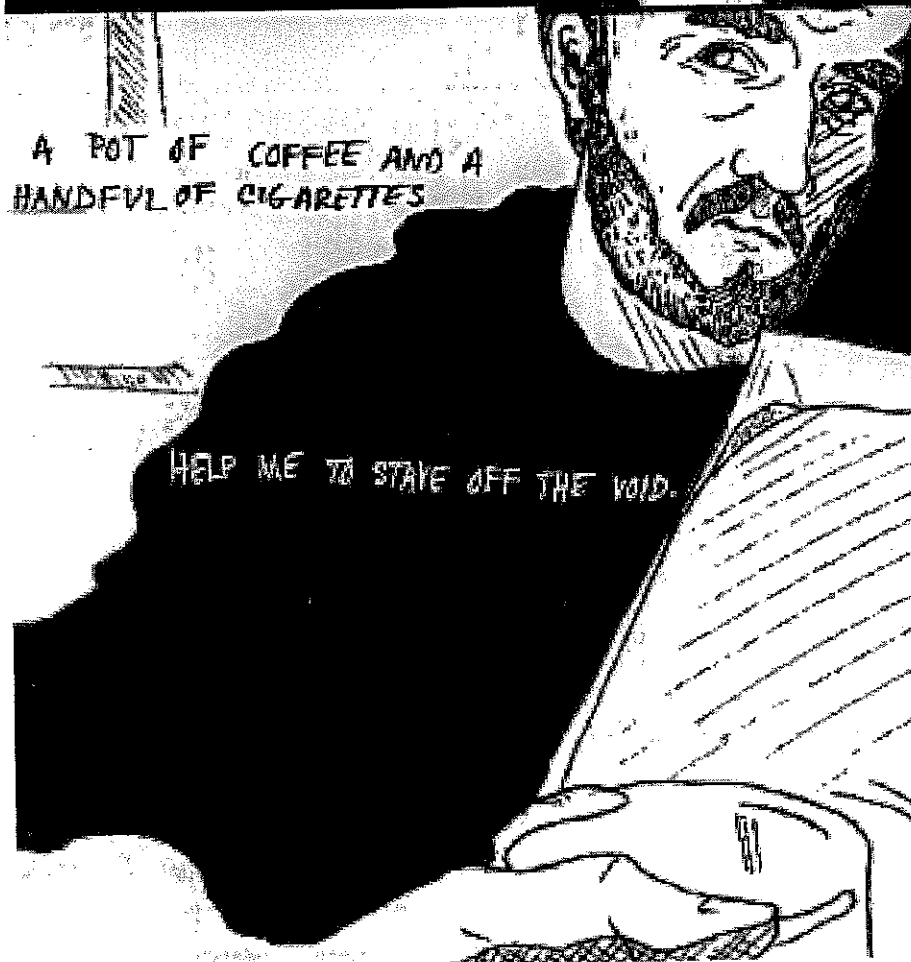


I HATE GOING TO BED,
BUT I HATE WAKING UP EVEN MORE.
AT NIGHT, AFTER THE BARS ARE ALL CLOSED,
I AM STILL AT HOME. AWAKE.





'THE EYE IS NOT FILLED WITH SEEING'
SAYS THE PROVERB,
'NOR THE EAR WITH HEARING,'
AND I AM NEVER FILLED
ENOUGH TO ESCAPE THE
EMPTINESS OF SLEEP.



A POT OF COFFEE AND A
HANDFUL OF CIGARETTES

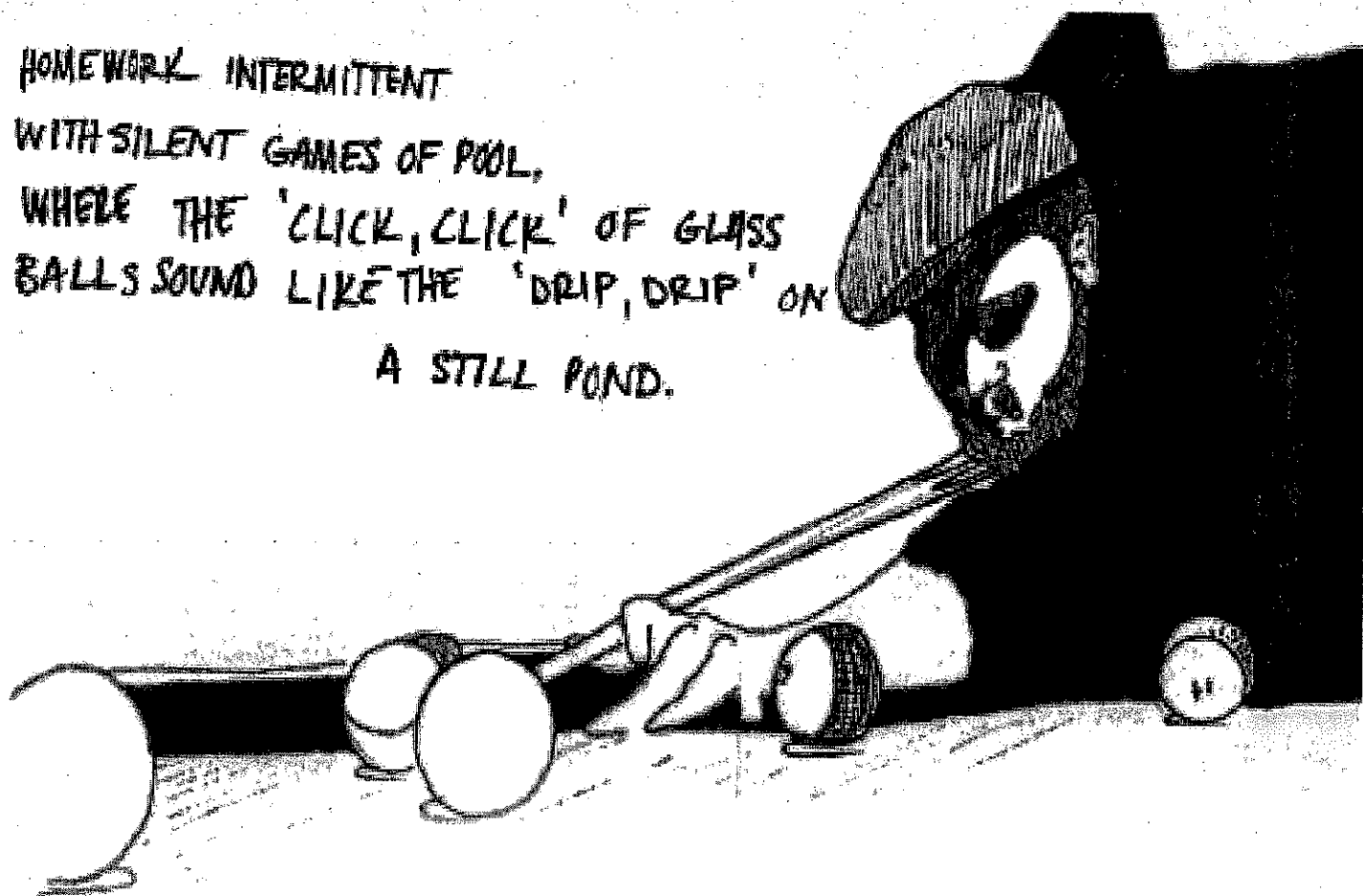
HELP ME TO STAVE OFF THE VOID.

HOMEWORK INTERMITTENT

WITH SILENT GAMES OF POOL,

WHERE THE 'CLICK, CLICK' OF GLASS
BALLS SOUND LIKE THE 'DRIP, DRIP' ON

A STILL POND.



ONE FORFEITS SO MUCH

GOING TO BED,

YET I CAN

STILL NOT GET ENOUGH BY

REFUSING IT.

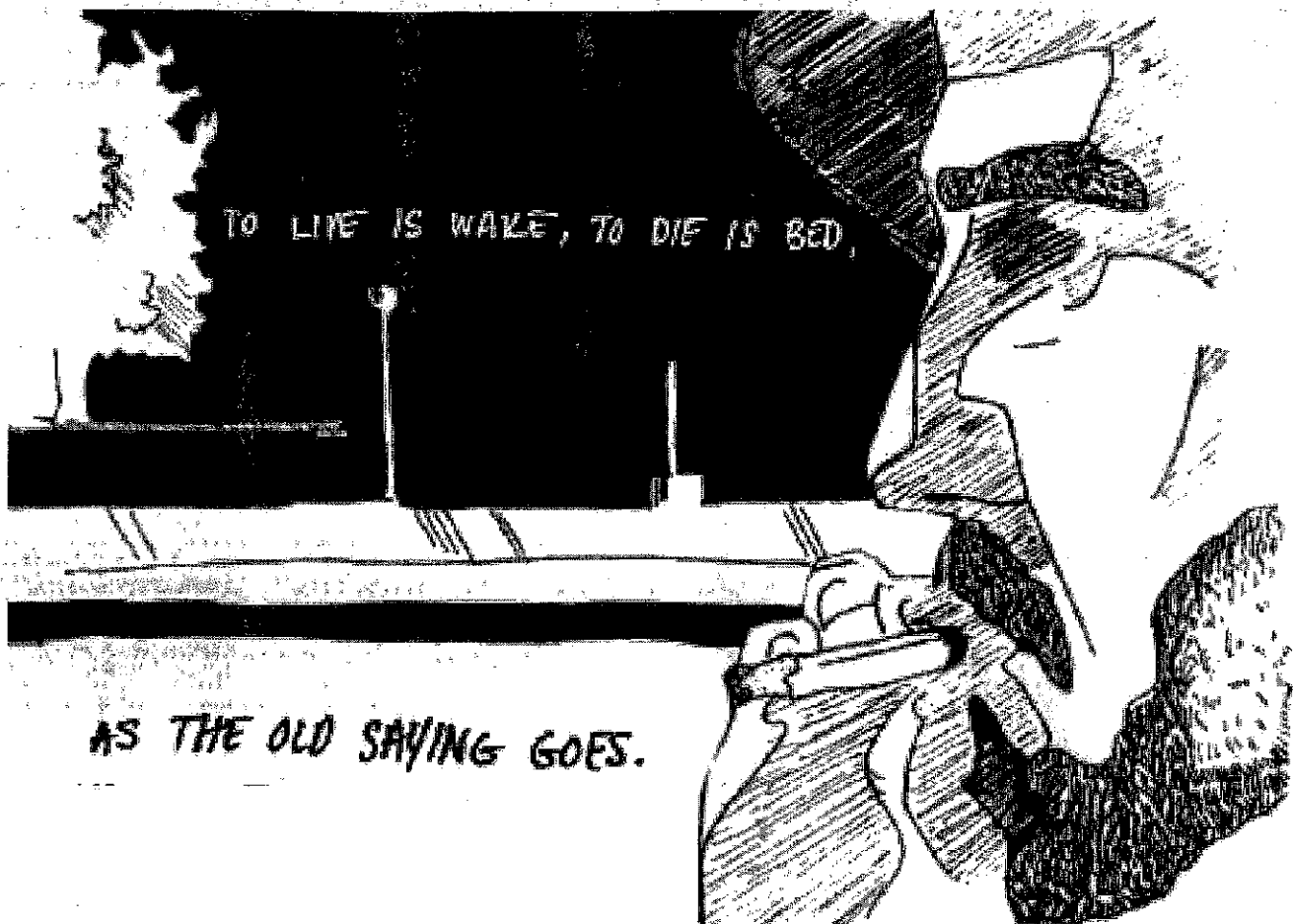


AT NIGHT I AM CONSTANTLY
HUNGRY: THE LIGHT IN THE FRIDGE
LIKE THE LIGHT IN MY
BRAIN, IS ALWAYS BURNING,
BRIGHTENING...

MY HUNGER SOON TURN
IN ON ITSELF & BEFORE I KNOW
I AM CHEWING MY
OWN THORNY SIDE

I RUN FROM SLEEP
AS I AM
RUNNING TOWARDS IT.



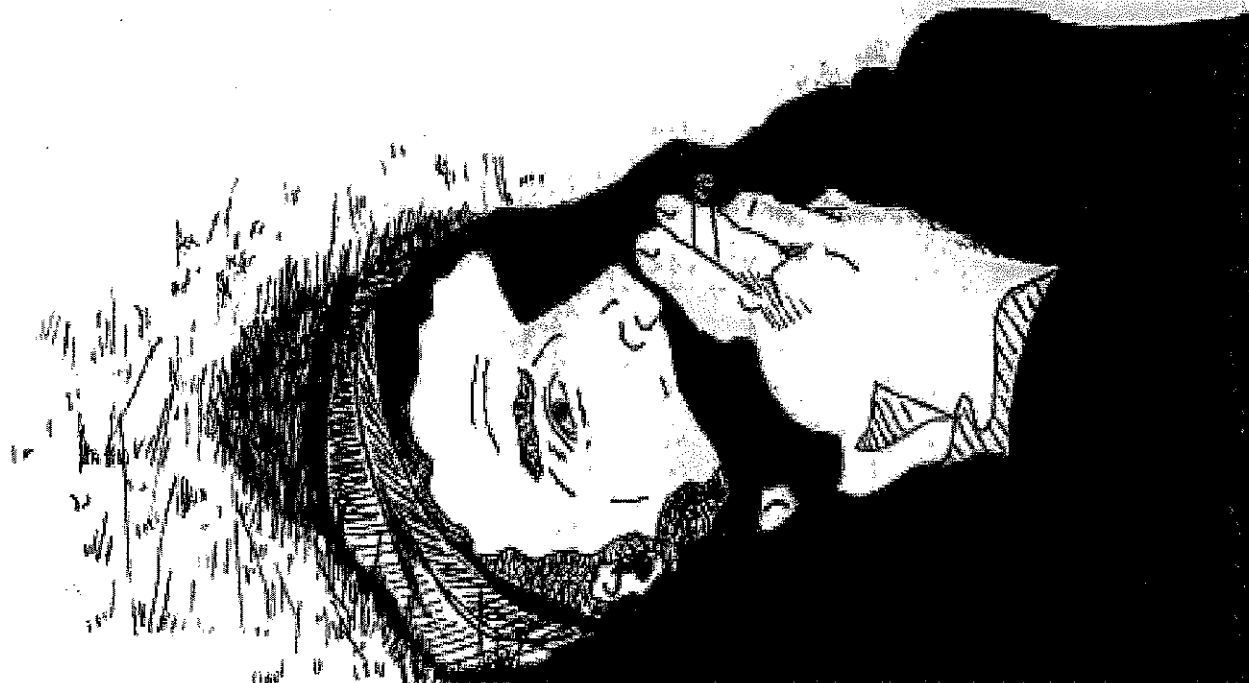


TO LIVE IS WAKE, TO DIE IS BED,

AS THE OLD SAYING GOES.

SO I STAY AWAKE, ALWAYS RUNNING, NEVER SATIATED.

I STAY AWAKE...



Story continued from page twenty-six

For the first couple weeks our nostrils were full
Dust from concrete falling
They say vaporizing
She saw it fall
They all fell
Some jumped
And fell
They looked like they were screaming
The whole world was screaming
Nothing changed
Can't I hold you?
You could be my little girl again
We wouldn't fall
Not like them
Maybe she didn't fall
She could have been taken up
Maybe she fell up
She asked me
Where were the angels?
I don't know
I walk that street every day and watch
people pray in front of pictures of people
the angels didn't catch.
Who are you praying to?
She can't think in these terms
Church smells old and dusty
Our nostrils were full
For weeks they all prayed
They calmed down now
Not so much praying
But still on the sidewalk
The candles
The little flames
She stops to look at the little flames
They burn out
She can't think in those terms
Where were the angels?
She thinks in those terms
Better luck next time
Is Daddy next time?
She held me then and cried
I can't help her
They took Mommy
No one can hurt her
She pours cereal like it weighs a hundred
pounds
The flakes fall
Dry flakes
Into a bowl
Nothing to catch them
She cries
Nothing to catch her
Tuesday was the doctor and he said she is
already making *Great progress*
His office is old and dusty
His nostrils were full too
She can't sleep at night

Great progress

I can't hold her

Great progress

If our fates were switched Mommy could
hold her

I am not Mommy

I am Sisyphus

* * *

For a while I was like those waiting for a
POW to return home from war. When
would they come? I could not hold my grief
when I came to accept that September had
stolen April.

She made us pray

Kneeling at the side of the bed

The bed

So warm

So cold

The bed

I sleep in a chair

I have been there for a thousand years since
three weeks ago only getting up to take care
of Liney. She pulls me from the chair by
walking into the room.

She wants Mommy like I do

I want April

The bed

I can't hold her

I can't hold

The room smells like her

Our nostrils were clogged for the first
couple weeks

Now I smell her

I can't smell her

Little pieces of her left behind

No child left behind

She left us behind

Someone took her

Who?

Where were the angels?

She was an angel

She fell up

Her body

They can't find it

This whole place smells like it

The bathroom

Little pieces

I've thrown so much away

The garbage bag

I haven't taken it out

It's been a week

I take other garbage out but there is one
bag that sits in the kitchen and will sit there
until it grows legs.

I threw away the James Bond collection

She hated him

I hate him

He doesn't exist

Nobody can stop anything

Do you still exist?

You don't answer

He didn't answer

You were the POW

He was supposed to bring you back but I
waited by the phone until I lost my job

I still didn't hear from you so I tried calling
you but I received no answer.

Were you vaporized?

I made love to you all night in this chair
without touching you because you were
vaporized.

Poof

She thinks you exist

She screams for Mommy

Never Daddy

She pounds on the window

I hold her

I tell her *Hush, sweet girl, hush now and*

But she fights

You never fought

I held you and we were in love

I love you

I want you tonight

You want me every night

Can you blame me?

Of course not, I'm sexy

You would laugh and I would attack

But I never attacked

I tickled

You smelled like jasmine

Vanilla

Lavender

Honeysuckle

Peaches

You had your pick

They rot in the kitchen in the garbage

with James Bond and all of the music

Sometimes the music plays in the garbage
sack

John Coltrane

Otis Redding

Bruce Springsteen

Cat Stevens

Music I could depend on

Garbage

They can't touch me

I can't touch you

She can't touch you

Not tonight

Yes tonight

Of all nights

The lights bleed through the curtains

The machines never sleep

The volunteers that move the rubble

They can't take my garbage sack

Not until it grows legs

You have the sexiest legs

What are you going to do about it?

Kiss every inch of them

I will kiss you all over without touching
you because you were vaporized and I don't
know if you exist but if you did she wouldn't
bang on the windows at night.

I cannot touch you

He cannot touch me

I can't believe the way that you would

The way that she needs

Vanilla

Lavender

You had your pick

September took April

I lost my Faith

I am Young Goodman Brown

* * *

Caroline poured the cereal and I watched from my chair. I had been holding April again, the warmth of her vanilla skin exciting all of my senses. I arose quickly as if I had just woken up. Had I slept? I must have. But I don't remember waking up for the last four weeks. Caroline sleeps interrupted by nightmares and memories that can't be duplicated or renewed by anything but the repetitions of her mind that will grow fainter as she grows older. She will forget all of the times that Mommy was mean. She has already forgot. She prays every night just like we used to do at church. Sometimes I let her pray in the street next to the candles and the crosses and the pictures of people we don't know but have shared a common fate. The crosses don't remind me of Jesus. They remind me of the KKK and of vampires. Now they are used to keep the terrorists away.

Caroline wants to go to church again, like we did when Mommy was here. I tell her we'll go next week and that will be my answer next week too. The doctor says it would be a good idea, but he says that about everything that involves leaving the apartment, getting Caroline out of her room, away from her window. There have been times when I thought she would beat that window right out of its frame. But I hold her and lie her down in her bed underneath her crucifix until she wriggles free and hides her head in her pillow. April had bought the crucifix in Germany at a Christian gift shop. She bought that and a tiny replica of the Gutenberg Press with a little Gutenberg holding up a leaf of fresh print. He looked so triumphant. April gave the Gutenberg to my father, a retired pressman, and hung the crucifix above Caroline's bed to keep the

evils of this world away. She should have hung it in the window of her office.

Caroline spills a little milk into her cereal and begins to cry. I want to hold her, put my hand on her shoulder, kiss her forehead and whisper Daddy's love in her ear, but I know she will squirm away, shrug me off, run to her room. I let her cry and she eats her cereal without saying a word. I want to eat something but I can't think of what's in the cupboards.

"Let's take a walk today. Down to the park maybe or out to eat at one of those Italian places down the street."

Caroline nods her head and snuffles a little.

"You can stop by that one memorial you really like and say a prayer for Mommy."

"Why don't you pray, Daddy?"
I was a little too shocked by hearing her voice to answer straight away, but I tried not to lose composure.

"I'll pray another time, Liney."

"No you won't."

Her voice was shaking, cracking, ready to give.

"This time I will. I promise."

It couldn't hurt. I would just kneel and pretend to pray and she would be happy.

We left right after we were dressed. We walked into the abrupt noise of the clean-up crews who had been working all night. In the apartment they became a drone, almost as calming as the refrigerator's hum. Outside they were explosive, the noise was intrusive. We walked slowly even though we couldn't wait to get away. Not far from the street corner was the memorial she liked so much. It always had pretty messages and bright colors that almost made it seem happy, hopeful. The pictures of the lost were strewn about in a collage of broken homes and families. Once in a while I became unself-absorbed enough to wonder how the other families were doing. I wondered if Caroline had seen any of those in the pictures, jumping from the melting buildings. How can anybody watch that? She had no choice. It all just happened. She had banged on the windows and screamed for them to stop. They couldn't stop. They couldn't fall up. They had to save themselves by killing themselves.

My sympathy for photos never lasted long. No one else had loved as I had loved, had lost as I had lost. It was those times I felt like crying the most but I couldn't get myself to do it. My father had told me as

a youth that it was okay to cry but not to make it a habit. So the opposite habit was mine.

Caroline and I knelt at the memorial like two alter-boys. I began to act like I was praying but Caroline started talking for the both of us.

"Dear Father in Heaven, Daddy is here with me today and we want to pray for Mommy because we miss her so much. We hope she's okay and that she made it into heaven and that we can go there someday too. We sure miss her, God, and we would really like her back but I know that you can't do that...but it would be nice. Please bless me that I can sleep at night and do everything the Doctor says. And please bless Daddy that he can sleep in his bed at night and find a new job. And if we can have Mommy back please give her back. In Jesus' name, Amen."

A part of me, an overwhelming part, did not want her to stop praying, but when she stood up and hugged me, saying "Thank you, Daddy," I never wanted that moment to pass either.

"I love you, Caroline."

"I love you too, Daddy."

My mother used to tell me that every time you felt like crying but didn't that it took a year of your life away. If that is true then I should probably die tomorrow, but tonight I will hold Caroline and she will cry because the angels didn't save Mommy. I'll let her cry, I won't tell her to hush. "Cry on my shoulder, Liney." And we'll sit together, and hopefully I'll cry, too, under the crucifix.

II

MORTALITY

Pad closed the door behind him, stepping out into what seemed to be absolute zero. A cold that inspires legends, emitting a life force of its own, hungry, gnawing the flesh down to the brittle bones that ache with each subtle bite. Sometimes the biting was not so subtle. One could see the spiteful spirit of the North seeping through the weaknesses of the parka, the wool gloves, and the sheepskin boots. And there was darkness. Black trees, crystal windows, front porch stalactites, and everywhere snow that glowed in the darkness. These are the temperatures that make the senses grow dim;

feeling gives way to numbness, the mouth is dry, the air too crisp to carry odor, the sunless landscape too black to focus upon, the sound waves dampened by air too frozen to reverberate. The cold can silence the trumpets of gods. Pad hunched over a little more than usual in an effort to keep his body tight and warm. Pulling off one glove, he dug for a lighter in his pocket to ignite the cigarette in his mouth. The shaky flame caught hold of the cigarette and Pad inhaled the grey warmth down into his lungs and held it there. For a moment the evil spirits were vanquished by fire, but only moments later it got colder. The North can do that: get colder to fight off man's heat. The cold is patient. It will wait until the last fire of man is nothing but black dust and coal, until the last of the earth's fuels has been consumed in life giving heat, then it will enrapture. It will embrace. The cold will wait, for it will always exist.

Pad took the cigarette from his lips and flicked the ashes off the tip. The ashes separated and fell through the thin air. Pad's dim eyes caught them and took power of them, catching them in flight and slowing them on their way to the snow. They almost came to a stop before contrasting like muddy tears on a white handkerchief. Their moment of impact with the fresh powder was cataclysmic. A lever was pulled and gears began to crank and turn within the upper regions of Pad's skull. He could feel them turning, hear the steel clanging and becoming charged, sparks spraying all about. Images lit up and the gears spun old reels, projecting them inside his forehead. Old films about heroes and anti-heroes and mothers who lost their sons. About men doing the impossible and accomplishing nothing, surviving and dying through years of hell and comradeship. Familiar faces of men forced to march across foreign lands with empty stomachs and heads full of dreams. Escape...freedom...home again...home again. Dirt roads and broken cities; railroad cars and prison fences—the darkest of years when boys saved the world from itself. All of them ghost stories, haunting films about ghosts who never sleep but lie waiting like terrible jack-in-the-boxes.

The cigarette grew short, ashes fell upon ashes, the smoke rose above the trees like a New York City skyline. Pad stomped his boots to enliven the circulation to his toes and tossed the dying cigarette into a tin can at his heel. It joined about a hundred other butts, cold and lifeless, a pile of used bat-

teries. The gears slowed and the films went dark. And there was the silence. Pad stiffened, turned, and with a certain resentment, went back into the house. Pad disdressed himself of his parka and gloves and boots and replaced the parka with warm flannels and the boots with cozy slippers. Fresh coffee was waiting in the kitchen. Pad poured a mug full and retired to the basement. A small room awaited his return equipped with only a desk, a chair, some paper, and a typewriter. Pad grabbed a fresh sheet of the paper and inserted it into the typewriter. Soon clicking and the occasional bell signaling the new line of text was all that was heard.

I awoke to the warm comfortable smell of hay and well-seasoned cow manure. A piece of iron was pushing into my back and I rolled over and came up on one elbow. Moonlight streamed in the open door illuminating a patch of barn floor and the closely packed bundles of rags and the makeshift gear that were sleeping there. Beyond the door a guard sat on a low wall. The butt of his rifle rested on the ground. He clutched the barrel with both hands, leaning forward with his head down.

I climbed quietly down from the threshing machine and picked my way through the sleeping men. I stopped in the doorway when the guard looked up. He did not say anything, nor did I, and after a moment I ambled over and sat beside him, carefully keeping a discreet distance between us.

A full moon flooded the valley and lit up the surface of the pond and I saw the fin of a carp making slow swirls in the shadows. The stream and the irrigation ditches caught the light where they broke into the open around the hedgerows and the bright greens of the spring growth were a hazy iridescence in the moonlight. We heard the muted chime of a cowbell down the slope and the soft bleat of a sheep floated up to us. The breeze had the smell of alfalfa and freshly turned earth. A few clouds threw blotches of dark and I found myself to penetrate the shadow for hidden danger.

There was little time to take note of pleasant things. The scenes of daylight were always slighted or diminished by the overriding demands of survival. The feeling came again that I was a stranger in a strange land. A land of sordid ugliness and unparalleled beauty, of violent passions and infinite patience. It was a land of superb scientific innovations and remnants of civilizations long passed away.

A strange land of strange considerations; trajectory of the V-2 rocket, the exotic sp of jets, clearly they belonged to another as did the plodding endurance of the pe ants. It was a land, long fought over, the caught in another warp of history and g transitions were taking place. This man vanishing breed; at this moment his wo shrinking with unprecedented rapidity.

I wonder if he could see any beauty amidst of so much ugliness. He had an intuitive face, not the type to be impressed with anything loftier than physical needs and in no position to argue his priorities. But watched, his eyes swung around to the r of the castle on the hill beyond that had hidden until this moment by a patch of Turrets and battlements stood in bold n the crumbling evidence of its ancient de was not visible in the moonlight. A bur machinegun fire cut through the night the high uneven drone of a straining an reached across the distance. He shook hi and lowered it again and I knew he co his civilization passing into oblivion al whereas I would see him dead if it were power, at this moment I wished him w

Pad shivered and pulled his flannel closer around him. He stood up and the room, returning momentarily with electric space heater. Plugging it in the socket as the typewriter he turned it medium-high. Sitting back into his chair pulled the heater closer to him and h his hands over the new warmth, fully ing that someday it would fail.

III REVOLUTION

Eli picked her up. "You're walking slow, babe. Mamma and Clint are all way up there."

She looked ahead to find Mamma scattered crowd strolling on the cool faint breeze tossed her curls about, w ing all around her chubby face, making blink when they touched her eyelashes pushed them back with uncalled-for bits of sand falling from her darkened gers. Her small blue eyes squinted at sun, still searching for the rest of the

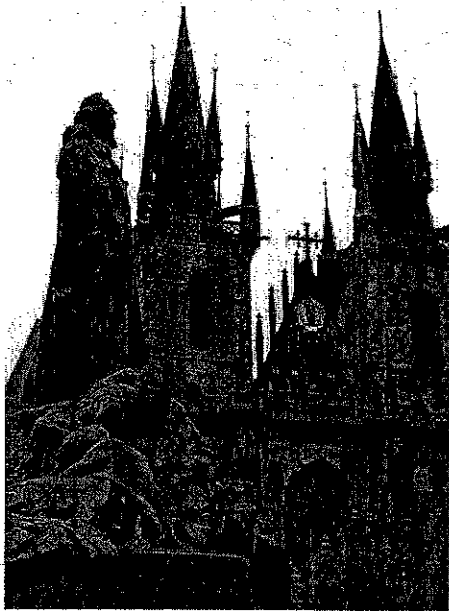
"Where's Mommy?"

"Way up there."

"And Clinton?"

"Yeah, he's up there, too."

* From the unpublished memoirs of "Pad" Arment.



Jan Huss in Prague-*Andria Cotton-*



Sea Sick-*Andria Cotton-*



Wheat Set-*Jeff Marsh-*



prison morning-*Brendan Abraham Murphy-*



The Gaze-*Scott Thompson-*



The Thinking Man-*Jordan Skornik-*

She seemed contented and eased into Eli's embrace.

"Look out there, Sunny."

Eli pointed out to the horizon. The sun was just touching the ocean, spilling its glow into the reflective waters. Framed by clouds, the sun gave its glow to both sides, the top and the bottom, and the glow spread out, like a can of colored oils flooding up and down and toward the spectators. The sun had no back, no sides, only a front that seemed eager to push forward, away from heaven's wall. It was almost too bright to behold.

"What is it?"

"It's a sunset. The sun is going to sleep and it will be night time now."

They stopped to watch and Eli noticed that others were stopping or coming to watch as well. Cars pulled off the highway and the porches of the beach houses became occupied, as did many of the decks of the nearby hotel. Nine out of every twenty-four balconies were occupied by those wanting to catch the tragedy unfold. Some took pictures; some held the hand of a loved one. One man took a long drink of beer and wiped the excess on to the back of his hand then looked hard into the orange radiance of the swimming star. He shook his head and wondered if it was real. Another man had been walking his dog and had stopped to kneel next to the Black Lab and tried to draw its attention to the sun, pretending all the while that the dog understood and would somehow comprehend why its owner was so intrigued by something that happened every day. A woman grabbed a child that had been chasing his partner in crime and pointed out to the ocean where the sun had been draining itself. The small boy stole a glance of the event, yelled something inaudible, then went about his business of catching the other small criminal. The woman stayed there, staring, observing, thinking thoughts that she still remembers years later. One couple that caught Eli's attention was a smallish Latino man sitting against a stone wall, his arms wrapped as far as they could around a very large Black woman. They laughed at something and he took a swig of beer. She never turned from the view of the sunset for as long as Eli took notice of them.

"Whachu doin' Daddy?"

"I'm just watching the sunset. Do you see

how pretty it is? That's why we named you Sunny, 'cause you're so pretty."

The sun couldn't swim. It sank farther and farther into the water. Eli stopped noticing any one around him and paid close attention to the immeasurable speed of the sun's descent. Its gradual decline changed the colors and hues of the clouds and water. Some clouds burned with fiery oranges, others with reds and fluorescents that hardly looked natural. All colors eventually faded to the grey tops of the clouds until finally, blue was the color of the sky. This did not last long. The lower the sun sank into the ocean the greater the influence it had over the color of heaven. After about two thirds of the sun had immersed itself, the whole sky had ignited into an otherworldly flame. In contrast, from the beach, man-made flashes sprinkled the air as humans tried to capture the gods, stealing their spirits into tiny metal and plastic boxes, onto film that would someday strap an image onto paper; a small irrelevant copy of celestial glories. Eli thought about one or two of those pictures one day turning into paintings; artists trying to copy the Artist.

The sun set faster, picking up speed as it tired and drowned in the cold ocean. It had chosen a slow demise, enthralling, but so sudden that its audience could only speculate if they would ever truly miss their once beloved sun. Love had been eclipsed by an act that seemed greater than life, more mysterious than anything life could create. In a purely sentimental, romantic fashion, it did not matter if this were the last sunset the crowded beach would ever behold. The memory, burnt into their foreheads, was all that mattered. For now, their sun's memory still lingered on the pink sky. The crowd on the beach lingered as well, reciting silently the mythical memory that they would never be able to describe to their friends and dogs. The crowd refused to disperse. Most remained for a while and hashed out the details of what they had just witnessed with those around them. Eli marveled that the Latino man was still supporting the black woman. He must have had a lap of steel.

"Wasn't that beautiful, Sunny?"

"Yeah."

Sunny hadn't really watched. The sun was much too bright for her little blue eyes. She still squinted whenever she looked seaward, even though the sun was vanquished.

"Where's Mommy?"

"I don't know. Let's go find her?"

"And Clinton, too."

"Yeah, and Clinton, too."

Eli strolled forward with Sunny still in his arms. From the corner of his eye he observed a woman leaning out over the railing of her hotel balcony to speak to her neighbor. The balconies were separated by wall so that both neighbors had to lean on to see one another.

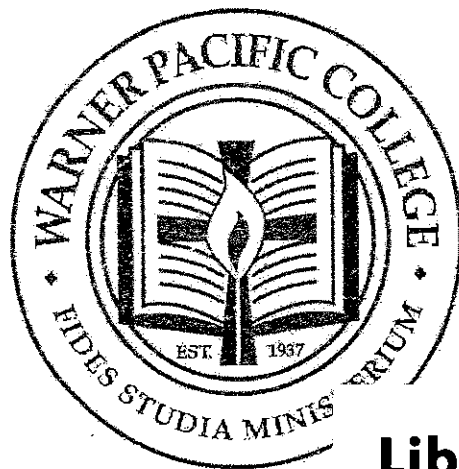
"Wasn't that just the most beautiful sunset you have ever seen?"

"It sure was."

They spoke like intimate strangers; two people brought together by a common fate. They were enchanted by tragedy. So happy to have witnessed death, ever hopeful that life would return, but never expecting to witness such moving theatre again. Eli kept walking but glanced backwards every few steps to observe these newfound friends and others who had found a familiar topic of conversation. He hated to leave. With each passing footstep he wondered where, if ever again, would he find such a faithful community. These people were in perfect harmony, their synergy full of such positive lusts that wanted nothing more than to share the good they had experienced. They would all share it differently and with different people, but it would never mean a thing to the second hand listener. The only people that mattered were on that beach right then and there. Only they could be the disciples, feeling forever a single moment like a wound that never heals. Only they could form the analysis, theorize its consequences and measure its impact. And Eli hurt inside for he knew it. He knew they had it within their grasp: Utopia for the taking. It hurt him, so he turned away.

Not thoughtfully, but automatically, Eli turned and kissed Sunny on the cheek. She did not tend to it as it happened so often. She kept a steady look out for anything that she could use as an excuse to run and play. She knew she was leaving the beach and hated that prospect probably even more than Eli.

"We'll come back sometime."



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