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Address correspondence to:

Rocinante
Warner Pacific College Humanities Department
2219 SE 68th Avenue
Portland, OR 97215

Warner Pacific College Library
2219 SE 68th Ave.
Portland, OR 97215
To all who care,

Art is one of the many elusive things that cannot be defined completely in our society. If you ever have spare time go ahead and try to define art, then write on it. We all have a loose idea of what art is, but to give it boundaries is to limit oneself. For those of you who do not know, writing is a type of art just as as painting, acting, taking photographs, sculpting, and creating music are. It can even be argued science is a form of art, because it takes instinct to know what questions to ask as well as passion to ask them. Then again some would say that art is a radical form of science, but that is neither here nor now.

Writing, being a form of art, inspires different opinions in different people. A written work can be seen as terrible by one and moving and revolutionary by another. While I am not saying there are revolutionary new forms of composition in this magazine; I do want everyone reading to remember differences of opinion. Diversity is an amazing thing. Sometimes it cannot be seen, but it is still there. Other times, situations seem to be filled with diversity while really everything is the same.

To write is to use heart as well as technical knowledge. Sometimes more heart is used than technical knowledge, but who wants to read high school textbooks all the time (technically correct, but uninteresting). I encourage all writers and all who write but don’t consider themselves writers, to continue on in the love-hate relationship of putting life on paper.

Writers are not the only artists on this campus. To all who know the passion of pulling life into a form, whether by music, writing, drawing, acting, painting, etc... to all who know the frustration of never getting it quite right... to all who will never quit trying, because to stop would be to die, we at Rocinante salute you and ask you to share your attempts with us as we share ours with you.

From a lover of life,

Amy Carlson

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Unconditional Love
by Lynn Andersen

He is almost impossible to convey to anyone who doesn’t know him. And by “know him” I’m talking about something that goes way beyond simply being his friend, relative, or acquaintance of any kind. I have known him myself since before he was born, and even I can’t say that I truly know him; and I definitely do not understand him.

I remember when he wrecked his first car. He was 16. He should have been at school that morning at 10:00 a.m., but there was an assembly and he just didn’t feel interested in it. Two blocks away from the high school he was driving through an intersection after having stopped, looked both ways before crossing, and then a pick up truck drove over the hood of his car. Not just any pick up truck. This was a giant, red truck with huge tractor tires and raised frame. It literally drove over the hood of his car!

“How could you have not seen it?” I asked in disbelief.

But the circumstances of the accident are not what really sticks in my mind. It is what occurred immediately following the accident that will forever be remarkable to me. He limped his car down to a local auto repair business and went inside.

“Could you take a look at my car and give me a repair estimate?”

The man agreed and followed him outside to have a look.

“Total loss,” the repairman tells him.

“What do you mean, total loss?”

“It means that it would cost more to repair it than the total value of the car.

A moment’s pause goes by. “Well if I wanted to pay to have it fixed anyway, could you have it done by 3:00 today?”

I wish I could have been there to see the man laugh and shake his head, which I’m sure is what happened. Then he most likely returned inside the business and told the joke to all of his coworkers. But it was only at this point that the teenager resolved to call me and tell me about the accident. Did he honestly think he could get the car fixed by 3:00 (which is when I got home), so that he wouldn’t have to tell me about it? The scary thing is that the answer to that question is yes. Perhaps there is just a flaw in the reasoning abilities of a pubescent male. For example, one day he returned from a trip to the mall with the newest Adam Sandler comedy cd. When I saw it, I told him that I wasn’t comfortable with him listening to the kind of language and humor that I knew was on that cd. I told him that he would have to return the cd to the store. When he inquired as to whether he could be allowed to trade it with a schoolmate for something else, rather then return it to the store, I accepted his compromise. Two days later I knocked on his bedroom door and without waiting for a reply I opened it. His eyes reflected those of a deer caught in the headlights as the latest issue of Playboy flew across the room. What sort of reasoning would make one believe that Adam Sandler is not acceptable, but a magazine depicting naked women was?

Perhaps I should be flattered that I command such subterfuge. He must consider me an omnipresent god of sorts. Like the hot July morning when I summoned him from his bedroom to bring his clothes downstairs to the laundry room. He emerged with rumpled brown hair, and his narrow eyes squinted tighter than usual. His tall frame was wearing a flannel shirt with the collar buttoned to his lower lip.

“Hickey huh?” I stated.

The amazed look in his eyes reflected his unspoken thought of “How did she know?” And then the sudden appearance of fear as his mind moved on to “What else does she know?”

The pervasive theme of my time with him is that “Life Happens.” Some people steer the boat on the river of life, but he simply chooses to float. On those rare occasions when he does put an oar in the water and attempt to select which fork in the river to take, he invariably chooses the one that is strewn with the most obstacles.

“Alicia called again.” I tell him as he comes in the door.

He drops his books at the foot of the stairs, fills a giant glass with milk, and then settles in with his headphones and a comic book on the couch.

“Are you going to call her back? She’s been calling here for days.”

“Nope. It’s all part of the plan,” he tells me, pushing the headphones away from his ears.

“A plan? You have a plan? Do tell.”

And thus begins his theory on how to dump your girlfriend by not actually dumping her- in 4 easy steps.

1. The Logic: No one enjoys the agony of breaking off a relationship. The crying, the screaming, the begging, etc.

2. The Concept: Rather than put yourself through this emotional battle, simply reverse the roles so that you become the innocent victim and they become the evil relationship killer.

3. The Process: Do not call them, do not answer the phone, and never return a phone call. When confronted in person, apologize profusely and lie. “I wasn’t home, I didn’t get the message, and I was up all night with my sick dog.”

4. Final Step: Make dates and then cancel them at the last minute due to circumstances beyond your control. Never argue: “You’re right, I am a jerk.”

“Where’s the air compressor?” He asks frantically.
I'm curious. "What do you need it for?"
"All the tires on my car are flat and I've got to leave for work."
"All four of them? That's amazing!"
"Yeah, Alicia let the air out of them last night."
"How do you know that Alicia did it?"
"Because she left a note on my windshield telling me that I am a jerk and that she's breaking up with me."

I am rereading these stories and I am finding that I have failed to capture a true picture of my subject. So far I have given the impression of an insensitive, narcissistic male and that is not accurate at all. It is at this moment that the telephone rings and ironically it is him. I read to him what I have written so far and I tell him that I am having trouble deciding where to go next. He need to tell a story that conveys your sensitivities and reveals how sweet you really are" I tell him.

He tells me that the stories I have used are fine, "But you're missing the point," he continues. "I was only thinking of other. Rather than have you worry about a senseless car accident or the ruin of my impressionable morals, I was hoping to simply spare you the pain. Rather than tell Alicia that I found her physically repulsive and intellectually mutant, I was willing to make her feel superior to myself at the cost of my reputation in her opinion."

So now I understand. All of these actions were selfless attempts at sparing the emotional pain of others. It's all starting to make sense to you now, isn't it? Welcome to my world. The world of unconditional love that a mother feels for her son.

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Crippled on the Path
by Kenneth Keyn

I am crippled with possibility: Two destinations on one path. For fear of one place, I deny the other. Oh, what troublesome thoughts.

Time itself seems to want to forward And I must reign it in. I dare not be swept away To lose myself. How shadows veil my way.

I cannot stay, I cannot go. I know where I want to be. If only I could know somehow Which way would take me there.

I am crippled with possibility: Two destinations on one path...

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A Riddle
by Kenneth Keyn

I am the deadliest thief known to all I steal away children and kill old men I plunder all riches and heist precious artifacts No one can stop me Except one in love what am I?

Answer: Time
Majestic Dream
by Jeff Shermer

I feel the rays of sun caress my face
And the ocean’s spray in its windy ways.
The setting sun’s the world’s crown.
The crashing waves’ the cheering crowd.

Here I amidst the floating gulls,
their caws mix with ocean’s rhythm,
syncopated with my own heart’s breathing.

The hues orange, lavender, and red,
siphoning the pulses in my head.
Dreamy eyed -
Moonbeam bright -
Awaiting the coming of cool night.

Dare I dream or desires unfurl,
pondering my path in the world.
Through storm rain, summer dry,
or winter snow
Whether just born, or growing old,
Enchanted beach and sparkled sand, Holding hope -
With open hand. So dream now I,
Splendid, real, radiant gleam...
Gifts giv’n in glorious majesty.
The Mean Goatee
by Isaac Christopher

Multicolored goatees are not "in" as far as fashion is concerned. Good thing Petey cares little for fashion. His once-buff body glistens in the sun while the water slowly beads over his empty scalp. Hair would contain and control some of the ocean's water that now lay atop Petey's head. The tan line where hair once grew is now like lava, folding and moving ever so slightly with each twitch of his face or turn of his head.

At summer camps, students would ask to braid or dye or twist or hang from his goatee. After a camp one summer where his facial hair was dyed a deep purple, he realized that he was more recognized with the goatee and the coloration it took on that week. He decided to further his reputation as a 20-year-old in a 42-year-old body by exploring other colors, combinations and even red, white and blue leading up to Independence Day. Acting out of character for one's own age is all too familiar to me.

"When is this church finally going to give in to the stupid dreams they have and realize that God is trying to work in them to expand the boundaries and strengthen the church?" he asked me one summer day spent at his house, hanging out until Wednesday night youth group.

I told him, "I am not sure what the older folks want, since everything at church is directed at them."

Petey and I always held common frustrations about church and life, including a shared distaste for behavior that defied common sense. Neither of us understood why the elders of the church refused to change anything about the services or the makeup of the church. The youth did a lot of work to try to get things going under Petey's direction, but the congregation as a whole was stubborn and unwilling to help. This kind of stubbornness is also something that led Petey to stray from the church as a child. He was more interested in girlfriends and drugs and being rebellious against his mother than following the rules at church and contributing as a student. As a youth pastor he strived to make sure this did not happen to the students under his wing.

His experiences as a youth and into early adulthood led to the man he is today. Growing up in an "old-fashioned" Christian home with a father in the Air Force, causing the family to move around a lot, including to London, made the formative years very difficult on Petey. His mother and he will tell you that it was even more difficult on her because of his attention deficit disorder and not having any way to deal with it initially. Once Ritalin became available, his mother jumped at the chance to do anything to calm or sedate him.
He soon became addicted to the medication and sought other ways of getting himself to reach that state of passivity (usually drugs).

Before he began a lifestyle dictated by marijuana production, distribution and use, Petey was very much into his body and making it stronger and more attractive. He was once the type of guy who had the confidence — and the body — to walk around the beaches of Hawaii showing off and picking up women. In his later years while going to college and becoming a youth pastor, all after he spent a year in prison in California, he would lose the physique he once cherished and the hair that had begun to form a semicircle around his head, making him look even older than he was. With the shaved head he never looked 42, and only in his knees did he feel his age.

His spunk and charisma in the form of passion for life brought him personal joy and also added to the excitement and happiness of those around him — mainly his students in youth group. I was one of such youth group attendees. In my interaction with Petey as my youth pastor for three and a half years, and as a friend since I graduated high school and throughout high school church youth group, he has always been a friend and mentor first because he cared so much about me as a person and he was interested in my growth as a young man of God and seeing me successful in my walk, my schoolwork, my family, my relationships, etc. He challenged me to be conscientious about my words and actions because I tend to unintentionally influence my peers.

His wisdom was often bestowed upon me at the Burger King across from the church on Tuesday afternoons. During my college search I told him my current thoughts about my choice of major. "I want to help people, but I don’t think God is telling me to be a lawyer.”

"Why do you feel that way? Do you feel God telling you what He wants you to do? I thought you always wanted to help others by being a Christian lawyer.”

“No, but I feel very strongly that He wants me at Warner, even though I don’t want to go there, and they don’t have a political science major or a very strong Pre-Law program, so I think if that is what God wants I need to change my plans for my major and my career.”

"Perhaps you should be looking at what else interests you. Or maybe something that will challenge you.”

Little did I know that God had in store for me a memorable epiphany during which I would come to realize that my disposition towards counselors stemming from my negative experience (in which I was the problem) was leading me directly on the best collision course of my life and straight into the counseling field. Petey would soon become a mentor in more ways than we had intended when scheduling our regular Tuesday afternoon rendezvous.

Although his departure was not pleasant, Petey left the youth pastor position at my old church in Salem. He spent a year in pursuit of a senior pastor job which would allow him more freedom to follow his passion, his calling, to be a speaker at Christian events such as summer camps. He worked at Sears and for Verizon Wireless while volunteering in his new church’s coffee shop and young adult classes. His passion to follow God’s will has led him to be a strong example of what God wants from a man with influence and whom people listen to so that God can bring his instructions to others through strong people like Petey and myself.

Since he has ceased being my youth pastor, I have seen Petey in many different situations including both times of despair and times of feeling lost and unsure. His passion to lead others in Christ is strong but when he feels unused by God he begins to wonder why. His time spent at Sears made him realize how much he missed the ministry and engaging with others who could carry on a conversation about something deeper than lawn mowers. His new church is allowing him to see big things in the future.

“How long has the church been meeting in the cafeteria of the school?” I asked him when he came to visit earlier this month.

“Ten years. As long as the school has been there.”

“Do you have aspirations to move or build elsewhere?” I did not envision Petey as the type of pastor to complacently sit by and let his congregation wallow in the local elementary school cafeteria.

“Actually, the church has twelve acres just outside town. And we are paying $800 a month for the school. We just talked about the potential to build on that property the other day.” I could see him swelling up with joy about the growth a new building would allow for his ministry. He loved to teach people but more importantly to challenge them to strengthen their relationship with Christ and to spread it to others. Contagious Christianity is what he taught us in youth group.

“What would it cost to build there, and is the church behind you?” I wanted to drag as much information as I could out of him while I had him on the topic.

He proceeded to tell me about the plans and how they could build with a new steel technology that allows for strong support and expandability that is cheaper than wood these days. He envisions a small building that would one day be the multipurpose room to accompany an actual church facility in the near future. The money makes sense, because they could borrow money from the conference and start paying that $800 towards a loan to build instead of to rent out a small elementary school gymnasium.

His heart and passion are like the empty twelve-acre lot outside town just waiting for God’s purpose and direction. He does not want to be limited in his ability to serve God and he always wants to allow for expansion and improvement. To serve God and to serve others in the small school will not work — he has to have the best to give God the best.
Nice to Meet You

by Scymore

The day started lifeless,
I moseyed to school feeling sluggish,
I questioned God a bit,
Then let my mind change the topic.
I sat on the bus irritated,
Minding my own.
Across the way sat a slightly incapable woman,
Talking out loud as if on a phone.
All at once she motioned for my attention,
So I courteously removed my headphones.
She said, "You look like a nice lady,
That got her act together."
I nodded, "Thank you,
Nice to meet you."
She asked, "What do you do?"
I said, "I'm a student,
Studying to be a teacher."
She said, "Wow,
That's the best career,
Do you listen to a preacher?"
I smiled, "Yes indeed I do."
She asked, "What you listening to?"
I said, "Scriptures."
She exclaimed, "I'm a Christian too,
Messianic Jew."
I reached my stop and turned to say,
"Make sure you keep the faith,
and have a blessed day."
As I crossed the street I felt her eyes,
Searching through my head,
"You just met an angel,"
My Spirit softly said.
I turned to confirm,
And sure enough she was gone,
I waved to God in heaven,
Then sang Him a praise song.
A Philosophy Dialogue

by Beau Holland and Sean Erion

B: Well Sean, we’re onto book three now. What all did you find it to be about.
S: Book three appears to be mainly about stories, about the true concept of love, and other things as well. But let us start with your thoughts.
B: How kind of you. But I always go first. Tell me the thoughts that book three stimulated in your mind.
S: Ah threads. I made some ties to our earlier conversations about the affects of age on thought. It really seems to be a common thread throughout the books that we’ve read so far. However I noticed some other threads as well. The one in particular that I am thinking of is censorship.
B: What about it?
S: Socrates recommends that in the structure of the kallipolis poets should be limited. And in the case of a few of Homer’s poems whole sections should be rewritten or deleted.
B: Most of his poems really.
S: He says that this is so in order to limit the ideas that the guardians will have concerning injustice and other non-virtues.
B: Much like what the professor talked about last week. If a person never has knowledge of something, how can they pursue it? A terribly interesting question, but one that I’m afraid will never have an answer.
S: So where would you like to go from here?
B: Hmm, a difficult question. There are so many avenues that beg exploration, but one in particular has been on my mind this past while.
S: And that would be...
B: The effect of stories on or in a culture. More specifically I would like to discuss this and then apply it to our modern circumstances.
S: Please build me more of a base on this thought.
B: The effect of stories on a culture, that’s what I mean. Socrates talks about how he is going to limit the poems of the poets in order to instill virtue into his citizens. He places a great deal of importance on this form of communication, and in my mind he sees it as the guiding force in the upbringing of his citizens. This got me thinking though about the stories that we raise our children with.
S: Such as...
B: Well cartoons to put it simply. I think that the cartoons that our children watch will be the guiding force in their formation of morals and virtues. May I share with you the questions that are guiding my thought?
S: Please.
B: Alright, but be prepared since they are rather long. First, do we intentionally raise our children with stories that will give them certain beliefs? In other words, do we as a society recognize the impact that stories have upon children?
S: Stop there and let us answer that before proceeding. It is an awfully big question to begin with.
B: Very well. For Socrates stories seem to determine the course of a child’s life, or at least their moral life. In dealing with the guardians he mandates that they must be raised in this way in order for them to become true guardians. Anyone that was not brought up with these values would have a faulty system of morals. In regards to the intentionality of our society in choosing the correct stories I am not sure that we do. I think that both you and I would like to think we do, but I am afraid that we do not. We seem to leave the subject of stories up to the wind and let popular belief guide the lives of our children. Do you know of many parents that sit down and choose a story because they want their child to emulate that moral?
S: What about in church?
B: True, stories are chosen out of the Bible for this reason, but I don’t believe that people think about it before hand. They figure out that Bible stories teach good things, but do not decide to teach their child truth and then pick out a story. We seem to think as culture that because we want our child to be an honest person they will be. We don’t take the practical step of choosing a story that exemplifies honesty in order to instill this in little Timmy.
S: You mean we are lacking in our means and simply looking toward the end result.
B: Yes! I do not feel that it is
a topic that is taken seriously at all, especially when I look at today's cartoons. Cartoons today are what stories were for Socrates' Athens 2500 years ago.

S: Like the Teletubbies?
B: No, not like the Teletubbies. While that show may not be teaching great moral foundations it certainly is not focusing on detrimental morals.
S: Before we look at the current state today do you mind if we look back in history briefly?
B: By all means go ahead.
S: Well what about shows like "Leave it to Beaver" and "The Andy Griffith Show?" They were on in the fifties and sixties and depicted very clear-cut morals and virtues.
B: Interesting. Where do you think that this slide in morals is being introduced? Who decided that "Leave it to Beaver" wasn't enough? Was it the adults, the children, the children who grew up with these cartoons and this value system? At some point there had to be a conscientious choice to move away from the early foundations. Did you ever watch "G.I. Joe?"
S: Yeah.
B: At the end of every episode there was always some moral or lesson taught. There was usually a tie-in with the episode as well. So if there was a new character that was a firefighter, at the end of the show a boy might burn down a house with matches. G.I. Joe would then come on and tell how playing with matches was dangerous.
S: And today we have cartoons like "The Family Guy" to teach our children.
B: No. "Family Guy" is a cartoon for adults, not children.
S: So there are cartoons for adults then?
B: Well yeah, because it's not really about cartoons at that point. That medium is simply being used to tell a story. Cartoons are not restricted to children, but that is usually the medium we use when transferring stories to them.
S: It would be interesting to see how this moral shift occurred from the baby boomer generation to today's society, such as what the kids are watching.
B: Well what do you think? Anything come to mind?
S: I was thinking of the baby boomer generation and the values that they were raised on. Something had to happen that pushed them from the moral path that they were walking.
B: The civil rights revolution of the sixties and seventies, as well as the feminist movement seem pretty obvious choices to me.
S: That is true, but I am more curious about how the shift happened as opposed to when. Was it an internal or an external change? Also did it start with the parents of the baby boomers or the children who were raised on these cartoons themselves? As I begin to think of my children certain cartoons stand out as ones that I will not let them watch. There are others, however, that I fully support such as "Sesame Street," a show that in my mind gives a positive moral image.
B: I know what you mean. As I have begun to think on this topic I have decided that I will probably only allow them to watch ones that I already have seen. This is a tough task however since as a parent I won't have the time to watch everything. However when I went shopping this Christmas I noticed that they are now selling the old cartoons that we grew up on in syndicated boxed sets. With the old Disney ones like "Rescue Rangers" and "Duck Tales" it works out to about a dollar an episode, which in my mind is a small price to pay for good morals. I assure you that years of counseling are far more expensive.
S: Definitely.
For my 40th high school reunion, we were asked to write a short story or poem of around 100 words to capture the last four decades of our lives. Here was mine:

100 Words
by Jon Zall

A 100 words,
perchance to speak,
My mind grows weary,
and then goes weak.
What sorts of things,
What kinds of tales,
What stirring stories
would I seek?

Perhaps of travels,
perhaps of works,
Perhaps of jobs,
perhaps of perks,
Perhaps of family,
love and play,
Perhaps of those
who held a sway.

Of those I've fought,
outside and in,
Of diets tried,
to make me thin,
Of beauty beheld
in creation's name,
Of journeys wandered
to stretch my brain.

But then it soon occurred to me,
my mind's not what it used to be,
100 words have gone astray...

What was it I was going to say?

October Rain
by Heather McLendon

October begins with skies of stormy gray
and crispness permeates the autumn air.
Red fire sways through leaves, divine array
of color floating down with simple flair.
And then the rain begins, a quiet dare
to stop and pause with purposeful intent
to hear joy splash on sable, slick pavement.
She stared at the stucco building with a sense of apprehension. Part of her wanted to be back at the beach with her friends, soaking up the California sun and enjoying the last day of their road trip. And yet a stronger part, a deeper part, compelled her to stay.

The house looked different than she remembered it. Older somehow, with weeds where the rose bed had once been, and the enormous avocado tree conspicuously absent from the front yard. The small, adjacent garage appeared as though it had been repainted, a stark contrast to the weathered sides of the house. Was this even the same house from her childhood?

Elizabeth glanced at the In-and-Out receipt she held in her hand, directions scribbled on the back. According to this, she was at the right address. It just looked so different. Then again, she was operating from memories that were over ten years old. No...it was longer than that. She hadn’t been at this place for fourteen years.

Glancing at her watch, she realized she had been gone for over an hour. She had promised her friends she’d be back by five. It was almost four-thirty. There was no way she’d reach the beach in half an hour. At this point, who cared if she was a little late. Her friends already thought her crazy.

“You want to find your grandparents’ old house?” her best friend had asked earlier that afternoon. “What for?”

Elizabeth merely shrugged, knowing any answer she could give wouldn’t be enough. “I’m not sure... Just to see it, I suppose.”

“Ok-ay,” Rebecka adjusted her sunglasses and reached for her iced smoothie. “That makes no sense... Gosh, what is with you lately? We planned this trip for, like, six months, and you’ve moped around the entire time. Have you had any fun?”

“I haven’t moped ar-”

“Whatever, Liz. I’m not going to argue. If you want to spend your last afternoon in Cali searching for some icky house, then go. I’m staying here, and Freddy and Seth want to surf some more, so...”

“It’s okay,” Elizabeth interrupted, relieved to be going alone. “This is something I want to do myself.”

Rebecka studied her friend for a solid half-minute before turning to look across the Pacific. “You sure you’re okay, Liz? Anything you wanna share?”

“No, I’m fine. Really.”

Her friend sighed. “Fine. I learned a long time ago not to try to figure out what goes on in that head of yours, so as long as you promise everything is okay, go on and do whatever you want. Just be back by five. I made reservations for dinner.”

Now it was thirty minutes to five o’clock, and Elizabeth wasn’t okay. She was sitting in Seth’s old Tercel, slowly roasting from the merciless summer heat, with no reason to be there except for an unexplainable prompting from deep inside.

The first prick of tears stung her eyes. Her throat clenched, and she swallowed quickly before she could start crying. This was ridiculous. It was just a small house in a nondescript neighborhood in the Californian suburbs. Nothing more. Not anymore.

Her hand reached out to start the engine but stiffled midair when she saw the curtains of the house move. Someone was home. Before she could change her mind, Elizabeth snatched the keys from the ignition and stepped out of the car. The seventy feet to the front steps seemed miles long, and Elizabeth wasn’t quite sure how she got there when faced with the off-white door.

No one answered when she knocked for the first time. But then footsteps could be heard from the other side after another set of determined raps. The door swung open, and Elizabeth found herself staring at a woman of about thirty-five years, red hair pulled back from her freckled face.

“Yes?”

For a moment, Elizabeth couldn’t speak. “I...I was wondering if I could look at your house. This place used to be my grandparents’ and...” The absurdity of her request hit her with abrupt force, cutting off her sentence. “I’m sorry...this is probably one of the weirdest things you’ve ever heard.”

The woman tilted her head to one side and leaned against the doorframe. “Where are you from?”

“Vancouver, ma’am.”

“Must be Washington because you don’t have an accent.” Elizabeth opened her mouth to speak, but the woman continued on. “Your grandparents used to live here?”

She could only nod.

“Well, I bought this place from a young couple about four years ago. I think they mentioned the previous
residents had been an older husband
and wife..." The woman was silent
for a moment as she took in Eliza-

beth’s face.

"You look honest," she finally
said. "And if you came all the way
down from Washington to find this
house..."

"I'm on a road trip
with friends, actually.
But..."

"You want a trip
down memory lane. I
guess I don’t have any
problems with that.
Come in."

She opened the door
wider, allowing Eliza-

beth entry into the house.
The first thing she no-
ticed was the smell. It
hadn’t changed a bit.
The strangely addictive
mixture of dry, old floor-
boards, mothballs, and
cedar was exactly the
same as it had been over
a decade ago. They say
that the sense of smell is
the sense most closely
linked with memory.
Elizabeth became an
instant believer of that
theory as a cascade of
memories crashed over
her.

She was suddenly
five years old again, per-
forming ballet twirls in
the living room. Watch-
ing Grandma make hot
oatmeal for breakfast. Curling up
on the sofa to listen to Grandpa read
her favorite Madeline book. Play-
ing with the family golden retriever
on the linoleum floor.

But the yam-colored linoleum
had now been replaced with blue
and white tiles. Part of her was glad,
for she had always hated the bizarre
flower pattern on the linoleum. It
had reminded her of demon fairies
as a kid.

As she walked through the nar-
now kitchen, more and more memo-
rries came back. Memories she had
thought to be discarded came to the
surface, surprising her with their

Passing through the kitchen, Eliz-
abeth glanced briefly in the family
room before heading down a hall-
way towards the bedrooms. The last
room on the right had been hers and
her sister’s for eight months. When
both her parents lost their jobs,
Elizabeth and her family moved
in with her grandparents. Of course, she had
been far too young to
remember anything but
the warm, yummy meals
her Grandpa made each
night and the new clothes
her Grandma had bought
for her Barbie dolls. It
wasn’t until she had
grown up a bit that her
parents gave her the rea-
son why they had lived
there. She still chose to
think of her time there as
an extended visit rather
than temporary living
quarters while under fi-
nancial distress. It made
it more magical.

The doorknob
turned easily in Eliza-

beth’s hand, and the
doors opened without the
horrid squeal it used to
have. Sunlight streamed
through the windows.
The walls were still a
buttery yellow, the carpet
still chocolate brown. A
desk stood beneath one
of the windows, covered
with papers, receipts,
and notebooks. Shelves lined the
walls, stacked with books on sub-
jects ranging from Scottish history
to gothic mysteries to Southern
cooking. Another bookcase con-
tained the volumes of Dickens,
Fitzgerald, Hugo, and Austen. A
huge, overstuffed chair resided in
the corner, accompanied by a tall,
vintage-looking lamp. Coffee mugs were lying all about the room - on windowsills, bookshelves, even the chair.

A smile tugged at Elizabeth’s mouth. This room could easily be hers, with all the books and papers everywhere. No one else in her family would accept such messiness, particularly her grandmother.

She scanned the room once more and found that it had a new personality. Perhaps she was viewing through adult eyes, but it just wasn’t the same as her childhood refuge of so many years ago. But then, she couldn’t expect it to be. People, rooms, houses...they all change with time.

A warm breeze entered through the window, a shocking contrast from the chills on Elizabeth’s arms. The breeze brought the smell of yucca, and when she caught a whiff of the plant, it triggered the final memory needed to give her an excuse to cry. She slid to the floor, back against the wall, as silent tears were released. She shouldn’t have come, and yet, not coming had never been a possibility. Wrapping her arms around her body, she began to rock back and forth, like a rocking horse set on automatic.

She didn’t hear the red-haired lady come in until she was standing right beside her. “You’ve lost your grandparents, haven’t you?”

Elizabeth swallowed tears and looked up at the woman’s face. It had softened from when she had first arrived, simple sympathy massaging out her features.

“How did you—?”

“I’m a writer. I tend to read people...comes with the job, I guess.” There was a pause. “Is your loss recent?”

“My Grandma passed away about a year ago, and my Grandpa...he’s been losing his memory ever since.” Fresh tears spilled onto her face. “The last time I visited him, he had no idea who I was.”

The woman made a slight “mmm” noise and then left the room, only to return a minute later with two glasses of iced tea. “I saw you eyeing it when you first came in. A favorite of yours?”

“You sure you’re a writer and not a shrink?” The comment was supposed to be biting, but the woman laughed, and Elizabeth was surprised to find the sound comforting. She permitted herself a tiny grin as she brought the glass of frothy tea to her mouth. The cool liquid felt good to her aching throat and half the tea was gone after her first swallow.

“Why did I come back?”

The sound of her voice startled her, and Elizabeth realized she had asked her question out loud. When her question went unanswered, she knew she was the only one who could answer it. She sighed and rolled one shoulder in a lopsided rotation. “I suppose I wanted to see if this place was really real, and not some part of my imagination. I remember all these random memories, but...sometimes I wonder what actually happened and what didn’t.”

That answer didn’t seem sufficient, and while she had no obligation to offer explanations, she wanted to verbally express her reasons for being there. Maybe saying them out loud would cause her crazy trip to La Mirada to make at least some sense.

After three minutes of staring at the ceiling and another sip of tea, she found the words. “Do you find it weird that while my friends were getting excited for our road trip and planning what days to go the beach, to shop in San Clemente, and to surf, the one thing I wanted to do more than anything was to find out if this house really existed?”

“No.”

Elizabeth’s eyes cut to the woman’s brown gaze. “Really?”

“Really.” She paused and then sent Elizabeth a smile. “I’m Alice by the way.”

“Liz.”

“Well, Liz, would you like some more tea? You can stay here as long as you would like...get reacquainted with the place.”

Elizabeth took a moment to consider the offer before standing to her feet. “No, I’ve seen all that I need to see.” She set the glass down and made her way to the door, where she then placed one hand on the wall and lightly brushed her fingertips down the doorframe. “This house does exist.”

She turned to face Alice. “Thanks for the tea,” she said, suddenly excited to go back to the beach and skip along the shoreline with Rebecca before the long drive home.
Monarch  Shawn Palmer

The Loved
by Charity Darnall

Love is
Like hand-
Printed paper
Made to
Write poetry
On my maker.
Love is
Like fresh-
Milled soap
That caresses
The skin and
Perfumes it,
Changing the texture
Of life; the scent
Of one's attitude;
The radiance
Beaming from one
Who has found
True beauty
And learned
To live with its
Flaws because
The flaws help
Bring out the beauty
Of the loved.

Butterfly
by Charity Darnall

Little caterpillar,
Cocoon yourself -
Put on an evening
Gown of silk.
Stay yourself
Somewhere safe
Until time to
Show the world
The beauty
Of your
Transformation.

Transparency
by Charity Darnall

I consider here the turtle
Who cannot get anywhere
Unless he sticks out his
Neck made of fragile,
papier-mache, transparent
Skin, soft like the fingers
Of your hand brushing
Against my face when
You look into my eyes,
And see my transparency
While showing me your own.

A Diamante
by Sentimental Sally

Synonym
Similar, Positive
Resembling, Meaning, Mirroring
Image, Product - Mold, Void
Shadowing, Opposing, Deconstructing
Against, Negative
Antonym
POUTING ON THE DRY SIDE OF THE WINDOW

by Lu

I can't go outside today.
Dad said so.

"It's raining," he told me, as if the rain should be the reason I stay in.

He doesn't understand. It's the reason I want to go outside...

I want to play in the mud.

"Play with your legos," he said.

I don't want to play with my legos. I've already built three pirate ships, a spaceship and a castle.

Besides...who wants to play with legos when there are puddles to be jumped in?

"You could paint," he offered.

I don't want to paint. It would make a big paint-mess.

I want to go outside and have a mud-mess. There's a difference, you know.

A paint-mess is a silly mess. You only get a little bit of fun but you have a lot of clean up. You hafta clean out your paint brushes in the sink and throw away your plate with the paint on it. There's just so much work involved.

But a mud-mess...now that's different.

With a mud-mess, you have a super lot of fun and just a little clean up. You go outside and get as muddy as you can. When you've decided you're done, you just come inside, take off the muddy clothes and hand them to mom to put in the washing machine and get in a nice, hot bubble bath.

Now...which would you do? Clean out paint brushes or take a bubble bath?

See? Mud-messes are much better.

But I can't get muddy.

I can't even go outside...

...because it's raining.

But I if it doesn't rain...then how am I supposed to get muddy?

My life just doesn't make sense sometimes...

I want to get muddy, but I can't because it's raining. If it wasn't raining then I could go outside, but if it wasn't raining, then it wouldn't be muddy!

Life is confusing.

I told my mom all of this (mostly because I was stuck inside with nothing to do because it's raining) and she told me that life gets even more confusing as I get older.

I don't believe her...

How could it get more confusing than this?!

I guess moms just don't understand that being six is hard.

Just like dads don't understand that rain was made for making mud and mud was made for playing in.

"You could help mom bake cookies," dad said.

I don't think my dad knows what "fun" is.

"You could do your homework," he told me.

I'm in first grade now and have real homework, like math worksheets.

But who wants to do math worksheets when it's raining outside!

"You could write a letter to your grandpa," he suggested.

I wrote a letter last week.

And besides, Grandpa will always be here...the rain is going to stop soon!

I'm so frustrated.

Don't grown-ups understand anything?

They know about all these silly things that don't matter, like offices and cooking and driving. They should spend more time learning about important things.

Can't they see the puddles outside? Can't they see the adventures just waiting for me on the other side of this window?

I don't think they can. After all they're making me stay inside.

I wish I could get rid of this silly little piece of glass.

It's all that's standing between me and my adventure.

Can't anyone else see that?

It's just not fair.

I just wish I could be on the other side of the window...
Presence Like No Other
by Jason James Aiken

I know of a presence like no other
Majestic, Sympathetic, all knowing and true
He knows every thought, every truth and every lie
From the great beyond to the apple of my eye

A Presence so vast from our logical perception
That the next thing we do he already knows
A Kindred Spirit, A Warrior King
The One who knows our deepest feeling
To the inner-most heart

Creator of the spectrum of life
The One who gave us Free Will
The One who inspired us for his glory
The Beginning and the End
Of which he will never End

He is the One who brings Security
And Conformation of everything that is truth
A Friend to those Who have no Friend
A Will to carry on when You feel there is nothing left

to this be true
by Sean Erion

to this be true
to call me your own accepted and desired

warmth and light
shed sunshine on darkness
as the waves roll away
revealing the everlasting grace, love, forgiveness of the infinite

to be consumed in peace, still, at rest

to this be true
the love of the eternal
A

s I drove to my destination, I found myself anticipating the adventure. I had a list. I liked making lists. Most of the time, I never did what was on them, but I've always felt that it's the thought that counts. This list was different from the others. I had made it with the idea that I would read each item and make a choice. I could either accept it, or let it go. That was my plan, and I was determined to go through with it.

As I parked a spot in, I noticed the other cars. Obviously, I wasn't the only one who visited.

I regularly come to this place when I have the time. I can walk for hours, just looking. It's never the same. Every time I come back, something is different. An object has been moved, or taken away, or even replaced with something else.

In the light, some objects sparkle, while others just sit there, uninteresting and uncaring.

I passed wildlife as I walked and although some stopped and stared, others ignored me and continued with whatever it was they were doing. Maybe it helps them to believe they are alone on their own expeditions. I looked down and saw a trail of ants. These small creatures are apparently normal in this region, though I had never seen them before now. As I looked around, I saw people, but they were in a rush. Maybe to burn off some steam or maybe that is how they normally walked.

I easily get lost in my thoughts when I'm here, but never in my surroundings. The signs make it possible for a person to know where they're headed, and where they have already been.

When I surveyed my surroundings this time, I knew something was different. But it wasn't a small difference. The changes were immense. Everywhere I looked, there was green. It looked like Ireland after a long rain. But that was impossible. I wasn't in Ireland.

I walked down a path to start my exploring and my gaze kept finding more objects of green. The color was everywhere, clinging like moss clings to a tree. So much green, in a place that hadn't held it before, was stifling, and I found myself moving quickly to get away from it.

I continued on my way and as I got farther down the path, the green lessened, bringing a sigh of relief from my lips. A creature passed me with a strange look, almost as if it really wanted to know what the noise was for. Either that or I was going crazy and hallucinating.

Some paths I stay off of. I know where they lead to, and there isn't ever anything that I enjoy looking at. I've seen it once, and don't need to see it again. Unless of course, I am asked to find something that I know nothing about.

Although I was here for relaxation, I was also on a mission. I had a choice to make and trying to do so was already proving difficult. Taking a sharp right, I continued on my journey, looking for something specific. My brother had requested it but there were so many different objects to look through. He hadn't described it very well, and if I got the wrong one, I would have to bring it back and put it back in its rightful place. I got the feeling that this trip would not be very relaxing. I was already stressed out and I had only been here for fifteen minutes.

I took a left on the path and started reaching into crevices, hoping to find what I was looking for. My brother had claimed that he had seen it here the last time he had visited, but I doubted that I would find the exact one he was looking for.

My hand grabbed onto an object and I pulled it out, praying that it was the right one. In disappointment, I put it back and continued with my search. I was starting to get tired. It was one thing to casually look at things as you walk by. It was quite another to try to find something that you had never really seen before. This was not how I had planned to spend my evening.

Taking this trip has always been random. I never plan to come. I just get in my car, and somehow end up here. Now, I was regretting my decision to come. I was more stressed...
than before. I looked up and to my left and saw an object. It was round, but I could see through it. It was with a set of others just like it, as my brother had described. I picked it up and carried it with me as I finished my adventure. Now that I had found what was on his list, I could continue with my own.

Heading down my favorite path, I took my time, knowing that I could spend a good half hour on just this straightaway. There were trees and animals to look at. Some made noises, others stood silent. This path I have always saved for the end. It was on the way back to the beginning anyways, so it wasn’t as if I lost any time.

As I made my way back to where I started, my cell phone rang. Getting service here had always been a dilemma and I was excited to know that someone could reach me. It was my mom.

“Are you almost done?” She asked.

“Yes. I was just about to head out.”

“Alright. Well, hurry. Dinner’s almost ready.” She laughed. “I honestly don’t know how someone can spend almost two hours at Target and not buy anything.”

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Porcelain Queen
by Mandy Bozart

Porcelain Queen
You worship a bowl
That sucks away your agony
A slave to your pain
You bow down again
And pay a filthy homage

Where did you go, rosy girl?
Whose smile was alight
With mischief and peace?
All I see now is the cold and broken
Shards of your former self

Porcelain Queen
Why is the clearest crystal
Distorted in your eyes?
How can a mind stray so far
From what it should know
To be true?

China white cannot reflect it.
Reality you cannot perceive.
Even in a looking glass you don’t see
The wispy shadow that there dwells
Your body is stuck
Stretched and magnified
In imaginary fun house mirrors

Porcelain Queen
You’re wasting away
Softness replaced by hollow cheeks
Your pearly whites
Are no longer so bright
And you keep falling down

You run away
All you say is shame
“Why can’t I control myself?!”
But you are too in control
Now food is on a pedestal
And all kindness you reject

Porcelain Queen
My sister, my friend
I pray that through Abba
You will see
That cruelty and starvation
And torment and frustration
Is not how life should be

Be your own neighbor
Love yourself,
As all of us love you.
Take off your crown
Though it’s hard, step down
And abdicate your throne.
Red Tears

by Amy Carlson

Do you want to see if I can still bleed?
Alright, go ahead there's the knife.
Go ahead, I don't mind
Honest.
I'll prove with red tears
That I still fear, but
you won't make me cry.
So go ahead, there's the knife.
Stab me where you want.
I'll survive and my only tears
Will be red ones.

Don't Publish The News

by Your Local Dead Beat

Dear Editor,

Don't publish the paper. No one will read it. Sure they will buy it for the ride on the subway. Newspapers allow riders to ignore the self-loathing look in the eyes of the homeless who managed to scratch fleas together for the fare from one mission to another.

People will open the paper with officious trembles at the un-important importance unfolding before them. Their eyes will move from left to right reading all that is red in the world. Eyes, moving from left to right covering all left un-right in other travels; not their own. The blind do not see unless they are on the street corner.

Each eye scans for something, a headline with meaning. Only the meaning must be meaningful in a light-serious way. Eyes are searching for something to be outraged about without affecting their sight or what they see.

Countless lives are counted and reported on in safe abstract numbers with commas and zeros. A lone picture is printed, and eyes glance over briefly to assure themselves they are human and it was seen; then move on. So don't publish the news; people are dead.

Instead report on celestial births and super Sundays where black and white was merged. Show the pain in the world, but only after dosing the crowd with self-righteous lawyer morphine from the left and the right. Help hide the truth from the people. They are tired of hiding from it themselves. Collage it together with bright colors and remind us gas prices are going up.

Sincerely,

Your local dead beat
The Library as a Place for Learners

by Tyler Caffall

This lecture was given on President’s Day, February 20, 2006 as a part of the 7th Annual Johannah Sherrter Memorial Lecture in Library Service put on by Lewis & Clark College. The series was directed by Jim Kopp, Director of the Aubrey R. Watzek Library at Lewis & Clark, and was entitled Peering Through the Net: Student Perspectives on the Net Generation. Panelists were asked to read the September/October 2005 issue of Educause Review and respond to the material as they saw fit.

I have never worked for the library, nor are my parents librarians. I suppose I am here because I ask my librarians obscure questions such as where I can get a hold of the dedication page to the first English edition of Machiavelli’s The Prince, but that is another story.

Let me first preface my remarks by saying that I am an English major at a relatively small institution and as a student of literature, I can tell you, there is really only one way to the end of a book and that is through it, and this is something that no technological advancement has ever found its way around. Furthermore, considering the size of my college and its technological resources, it may be the case that some of my priorities may differ from my colleagues here who come from more able bodies. In my own opinion, I think that what I have to contribute to the topic is simple. But I will let you others be the judge of that.

Originally when I was approached about this lecture series, I was asked to think specifically about the role of libraries in the net generation. While the focus of today may turn out to be more broad than that, I believe the question deserves some consideration: What is to become of the library in this new era?

Last May, MIT’s Technology Review put out an article by Wade Roush called the “The Infinite Library,” about the concerns surrounding Google’s plan to digitalize the world’s books. As he writes, “The digitalization of the world’s enormous store of library books—an effort dating to the early 90’s...has been a slow, expensive, and underfunded process. But last December librarians received a pleasant shock. Search-engine giant, Google, announced ambitious plans to expand its “Google Print” service by converting the full text of millions of library books into searchable Web Pages. At the time of the announcement,” Roush adds, “Google had already signed up with five partners, including the libraries at Oxford, Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Michigan, along with the New York public library” (1).

In those five libraries alone, there are around 60 million texts which Google claims it can copy and index “a big chunk of” in a matter of years. Copyright concerns aside, I think Roush gets at the heart of the issue when he writes, “Whatever happens, transforming millions more books into bits is sure to change the habits of library patrons. What, then, will become of libraries themselves? Once the knowledge now trapped on the printed page moves onto the Web, where people can retrieve it from their homes, offices, and dorm rooms, libraries could turn into lonely caverns inhabited mainly by preservationists. Checking out a library book could become as anachronistic as using a payphone, visiting a travel agent to book a flight, or sending a handwritten letter by post” (2).

Perhaps, speaking to the librarians here today, you are experiencing that surreal but all-too-familiar scene where you open the book and watch the words vanish before your eyes. “No,” you say to your self, “NO!” as you rush dramatically to the bookshelves only to find all the pages are blank! Your body sags against the stack and a darkling shadow descends as Zara-thustra’s French horn begins to swell; you look up and find yourself confronted by a giant monolithic PDA with streaming text planted squarely in the center of the room. “Oh the horror!” you cry, ripping out your hair in tufts, “the horror, the horror, the horror...”

What is to become of the library in this new era?

Alright so perhaps this is just my own apocalyptic vision...but you get the idea: technology is changing the way we encounter knowledge. As Carrie Windham, of the “Confessions of a Net Gen Learner” article notes “We don’t use print dictionaries—we go to dictionary.com. We don’t walk to the library—we search online journal databases. We wouldn’t know an archive if we stumbled into it on the way to the fax machine” (47).

Here again, I invite the question, What is the role of the library in the Net Generation? Before I answer this though, let me say a word about two influential individuals found in this new era, to serve as reference points for my further discussion.

In April of 2001, the year I began college, the cover of the Atlantic Monthly
The university has never been the keeper of the keys to knowledge, and a learner will find it elsewhere if the university is undermined;

essay, these bored college students, as Edmundson calls them, have accepted the vernacular mindset of consumerism and thus have an acute sense of what Kant means when he writes, “we could suppose no other way of estimating things and their worth than that which consists in the gratification that they promise” (49). An accurate mantra for this student is the phrase that Mark Prensky coined when he said on behalf of Net Geners, “Engage me or Enrage me” (60).

These are—as I said before—caricatures of two commanding attitudes in our generation. They are not limited to specific universities—both exist at my own institution—nor are they limited to one person as you or I are just as capable of displaying or operating by either of these paths’. I mention that, because I am not here to find a scapegoat. Rather, I critique so that we can decide how to implement these new tools that technology has to offer—which I will affirm have critical significance in the future of institutional education—before we decide how, we will first understand why we want them. And this is intrinsically bound to those who use them. In the final article of the Educause issue we were all asked to read, Diana Oblinger makes a simple but profound statement: “Colleges and universities are about people and knowledge; they are about learners” (69). It borders upon the stupidly obvious, but what keeps it from that are the two postures which I have described. Institutions of education—of higher education especially—must resist the temptation of catering to those values represented by the Organization Kid and the bored college student. This is a challenging responsibility because these values have over the years become all but inerter-
ate in American society; at a financial level, there is risk involved in frustrating one’s source of income. Nevertheless there is a greater danger in making the financial short line. I wish to avoid hyperbole here: I am not going to say that if universities acquiesce to these two attitudes that learning, as we know it, will disappear, because that’s just not true. The university has never been the keeper of the keys to knowledge, and a learner will find it elsewhere if the university is undermined; strictly speaking the best and most a university can aspire to be is an occasion for one to encounter truth through knowledge.

What is at risk then are the very thing that our students have come looking for: The Organization Kid will lose his degree to degree inflation; the bored college student will lose his daytime entertainment simply because school is an expensive thrill; and learners will lose their place to learn.

And here is where I return to the question of the library in the Net generation. Right now, 60 million of the world’s books are undergoing the process of digitalization. Right now, there are encyclopedias and other reference material sitting on shelves collecting dust because of search engines, online encyclopedias, and more radical projects such as Wikipedia. Right now, a student can browse thousands of journals without leaving his or her room—"At the click of a mouse," they say. The practical services which libraries have long identified themselves by are not disappearing—they are gone.

Aesthetics aside, with digital text one doesn’t need to check out books (one also need not trouble with library fines—by the way if Brian Kelley of Reed College is here, I have a check for you...so if you could find me after we’re done here that’d be great). Con
tinting on: with online encyclopedias, which can be updated more frequently than the traditional 27 leather bound volumes, it is arguably more accurate to use several credible sources over the one on the shelf (not to mention more convenient). Furthermore, with online databases, I daresay individuals have access to more scholarly journals and newspapers than his or her library could ever hold or keep track of. In other words, the technology available to us today—in terms of services rendered—has put the library out of business. But therein lies an important question: are libraries “libraries” because of the books they house and distribute? Or are they “libraries” because of something else?

Those acquainted with a history of thought, will recognize that this quinary parallels the disillusion of the transcendent mind, which, believing its meaning to come from within, was confronted by a great existential emptiness. Confronted with today’s technology, the library is nothing but an empty building: a word without meaning. Yet the fallacy of modern thought was that it sought to define itself by itself. A word without meaning cannot define itself, but only in relationship to something else; in this way a word has the potential to be an occasion for an encounter with truth. Furthermore, the relationship is determined when someone uses it to mean something else. Thus a word is dependent upon a user. Therefore, like a word, a building is dependent upon its use. Thus the library will be determined by its users. Who are they going to be: the Organization kid? the bored college student? Or learners? Ultimately, the university decides which students it will admit, but the library may resist this. Because, unlike a word, a library may choose for whom it wishes to be. What is the role of the library in the Net Generation? To be a place for learners: To be a place that recognizes the sacred relationship between knowledge and truth, and to be an occasion for learners to engage with knowledge, that they might encounter truth.

I would like to close with a quote from the article I began with. As Roush writes, “Ask [Stephen Griffin, former director of the National Science Foundation’s Digital Libraries Initiative] how he thinks libraries will function in 2020 or 2050—once Google or its successors have finished digitalizing the world’s printed knowledge—and he answers from the reader’s point of view. ‘The question is, how will people feel when they walk into libraries,’ he says. ‘I hope they feel the same—that this is a very welcoming place that is going to help them to find information that they need. As we bring more technology in, the notion of libraries as places for books may change a bit. But I hope people will always find them a comfortable place for thinking’” (7). Thank you.

Bibliography


Betrayal

by simple

your voice
continuous wave of electricity
unbroken, i can’t escape except
to push end
close the
ventricle
pumping memories and blood
through my heart, served in
pieces
“i’m free, sample my”

trust
i gave in letters and in eyes
to serve to what end, in your
mind - mine
reeling in

unknowns
in my throat and forehead; this
betrayal beats new and slices
clean, unlike
lies often

the wound
sinks deeper and truer, than our
skin tells us, to the core of
self - did
you know...

Undertaker

by Amy Carlson

I know who the undertaker is.
He almost took me under today.
The man of death is
not even a man.
The sickle carrying thief is none
other
than a worm.

I stepped down the hill to see if I
could
cross the road, without any warning
I slid and was face to face
with a motorized monster.

Terror scrambled me off the street,
a rabbit dodging a bear.

I looked down to search for the
cause
of my close call with death.
A worm
Flat on the ground
It all made sense, who had caused
death.

The worm, the worm; it was the
worm.

Kings had killed over good
farmlands,
but what did that mean?
One land had better worms than the
other.
Who claimed the body after death?
Worms.

A being that could survive
being cut in half.
We can’t do that.
Worms.
the curly-haired, brown-eyed girl’s smile

by simple

now disarm
my woe-me’s and have-not’s
purer than the breaking sky
her smile

shook my head clear and spirit joyful
these years
bear their stubborn weight upon me
to become
like
a child

again...

maybe my eyes would not be dim
maybe my smile would be true

SA-KAGA-WEH-A

by Susanna Lundgren

Crow woman
you were only twelve when at
the river, warriors, Mandan-Hidatsa,
came from Dakota plains, came to
replace lost children of the Mandan,
took you and your Shoshoni sisters
from Wind River, never more to see
Three Forks, the mountains of stone,
conical huts, horses grazing.

But when you were seventeen,
already wife to the trader Charbonneu,
Lewis, in April barely mother to Jean-Baptiste,
you returned in canoes of
hollowed cottonwood, as guide for
men who made writings in books
with leather covers, and who by in-
strument of metal measure earth and
sky, seeking the Big Water far to the
west.

On the journey you would save
the books, implements and medicines
fallen into the Missouri; you ensured
the party of good trading for horses,
speaking for these men who were not
understanding the word of the Shos-
shoni.

What word did you speak on the
long trail, or when you lay with fever
at portage of Great Falls?

Who knew your fear when a rush of
water nearly swept you away, taking
not Jean-Baptiste, but all the clothes
you had made for him so carefully?

Who felt your joy to find two
brothers living in the valley you re-
membered, and one now chief of the
Shoshoni?

At last you met Wet-Ka-Wees of
Nez Perce, a woman of eighty, and
you cried with her for once she her-
self had been bondwoman taken by
the rival Shoshoni - yet she enjoined
her people, “Do these travelers no
harm, give them what they need, for
when I was captive at Wind River, I
was treated well.”

What did you think, Crow Woman,
again leaving the stony mountains, as
later the wide water of the Columbia
lapped the sides of your canoe, as
birds you had not before seen glided
on currents of air, until late sum-
mer, when your feet unshed brushed
against cool sands of the Big Water?
Seashells come in many shapes and sizes, colors and textures, designs and patterns. My seashell is grey and white with a delicate spiral pattern and a glass-smooth finish along the inside curve of the shell. From where it rests on my bedroom shelf I can the rough outside curve with its jagged edge only slightly softened by ocean waves. This shell, though small in size, is big in memories, and I suddenly feel the need to take my shell down from the shelf and hold it again, to remember.

Over five years ago my family and I miserably boarded a plane to leave Malaga, Spain. Just nine months before that we had enthusiastically boarded a similar plane, yet that time going to Spain rather than leaving it. We were going there with many high hopes and dreams of ministering to the peoples of Spain. We knew there would be adversaries that would try to stop us from spreading the Gospel, yet little did we know that the opposition we did have would in fact come from within the ministry itself.

As a young girl of fourteen I was so excited to finally be going back on the mission field after staying indefinitely in America for many years. While living in Oregon, I had felt the common anxieties of missionary kids—being bodily in one place but mentally in another. My early childhood had been spent overseas so I felt like I was finally going home. I was eager to travel, to meet new people and most of all to find a way to be useful, if I could. This seemed like the perfect opportunity to do this and I was one-hundred percent ready to make it work.

When we got to Spain, it was just as wonderful and exciting as I had imagined it to be. While in the States I had often noticed my dad looking depressed, and I knew it was because he felt as if he was wasting his life when he should be serving the Lord. But once we got to Spain, we were all energized at having Dad looking so excited to be alive again. Dad would always be up bright and early to head down to his office to start his work, while we kids were just as excited to help out in the Bible clubs for young Spanish or Moroccan children. We also had plenty of school work at home to keep us busy. But no matter the work, we would always manage to find time to take a family walk around the neighborhood in the cool of dusk, to take a trip to the nearby candy shop, or spend an evening working in our overgrown garden. But of all our outings, my favorite was going to the beach. My family and I lived near the coast, so we would often drive the fifteen minutes through the busy town to reach the water. It was on one such trip that I waded deep into the water and fished out with my toes a beautiful grey shell. It was a lovely shell, with intricate details, but I was content at the time to smooth my fingers over the edges, show it off to my brothers, and then tuck it into my jacket pocket, where it lay forgotten. There were too many wonderful things going on in my life then that were fascinating and exciting and a shell, no matter its beauty, was not one of them.

Life seemed perfect to me; my parents were happy and I had plenty to do, there was nothing else I could have wanted. Yet as time passed, I noticed how Mom and Dad started to have little “talks” behind closed doors, and I would wake up late at night to hear their hushed voices coming from the dining room. When this began to happen more and more often, I knew something was wrong. Slowly, we stopped having any family walks or trips to our beloved beach, and our garden began to look more like a jungle than ever.

I remember when my dad started coming home for lunch each day and, instead of telling us about his day, and joining in with our teasing, would instead sit silently at the table while the rest of the family chattered away. He would pick at his food and tell us kids to stop making so much noise. Each day he came home looking more and more tired and dejected, until one day he sat down and put his head on the table and told my mom he couldn’t take it anymore. For a fourteen year-old girl who still believed her dad was the world’s greatest hero this was shock. It was at that moment when I understood, perhaps somewhat subconsciously, that the happy life I had just briefly got a taste of was not going to last forever; though I couldn’t understand why.

One day my mom sat me down...
and told me she needed to talk to me about something.

I remember fighting the impulse to cover my ears. I knew it was bad news, but I wanted to delay as long as I could.

"Honey, I know you’ve probably noticed how your dad and I have been having some serious talks for a while now. We decided it’s time to let you children know what’s going on. You know your father was so excited to come here and work with the people in Spain and tell them about the Lord. Well, he has tried so hard to do that, but his boss, who is supposed to be helping him, is actually blocking his work."

I just stared at her, not understanding what all the fuss was about. “What does this have to do with me?” I said in typical teenage fashion. I loved my parents but even then it did seem to be something that shouldn’t concern me, and certainly not the big issue that I was expecting.

Mom wore a pained look as she tried to tell me how Dad went day after day to the office, ready to start ministering to the people, even in some small way, but how day after day he was disappointed when he was assigned small, menial tasks that really had no point and accomplished nothing. Mom explained how his director, the head of the organization, really had no clue how to run a missions board, which frustrated Dad to no end.

When Mom saw I still was not getting the point she slowly spelled it out to me.

“Dad feels like he’s useless here and that all the doors are being closed. He feels like we need to leave and return to Oregon.”

To say I was devastated is an understatement. I almost couldn’t comprehend leaving my beloved home. Many night conferences were held around our large dinning room table with all the older family members; my parents, my sixteen-year-old brother, and I. We discussed every possible option we had of resolving the problems we had with the missions board, and especially the team director. But it always cycled back to one option—we had to leave. We were accomplishing nothing, other than spending our supporters’ money for no reason. We had no purpose where we were and our relationship with the director was rapidly disintegrating. I was old enough to accept and understand that we had to leave, but in my still-childish heart I couldn’t be even a smidgen gracious about it. For hours after our family conferences I would lay awake in bed and cry, hating and fuming at the man I believed to be the cause of all this, the man who was making us leave the home I was beginning to love so much.

A few days before our departure from Spain we made a final trip to the beach, despite the cooling temperatures of late fall. As I stuck my cold hands into the pockets of my jacket I was startled to find the long forgotten shell tucked deep in its recesses. As I think back, I can remember that, right before leaving the beach for the last time, I held my shell while standing just out of reach of the restless waves, realizing in my limited childish way that I would probably never be able to pluck another shell like mine from beloved Malaga’s waters again. Smoothing my fingers over the curves of the seashell, I thought back over the last months and of all that had happened to me, and how I had changed because of it. My mind ran over every bad incident that had happened; all the times my parents had cried over the troubles we had, all the tiffs that had sprung up between team members, and all the sleep lost worrying. Yet, surprisingly, for every bad memory I had, I also had twice as many at least of good memories to replace it. I remembered the shopping trips we made as a family and our joint efforts in Spanish as we tried to communicate that we wanted olive oil and corn flour and how instead we got vinegar and cornstarch. I remembered our walks up the hill and the views we had of the harbor, watching the huge cruise ships dwarf the houses along the port. I remembered our makeshift church services of a dozen or so people, my English lessons with a small Spanish boy, and our trips to the Moorish castle Alhambra in Grenada. I even remembered my brother breaking a finger while playing football at a picnic, and when I dropped a dozen eggs when taking a shortcut home from the corner bakery.

Shells like mine are odd in that they have inconsistencies within themselves; one half is glass-smooth yet the other half is porous and rough. The top has finely chiseled ridges yet the opening curve has a blunt, rough edge. My time in Spain was like this shell. There were the good times, and the bad, the smooth and the rough, yet together these smooth and rough parts make up something of beauty—a memory to keep. Yet I think all of my family, me included, left some part of us in Spain, just as the broken piece of this shell will always stay behind, somewhere in the ocean. But now that rough edge, left by the missing piece is still grating on me, and it is time I get out my sandpaper.

When I took my seashell off the shelf in my room, all I could see was the rough topside, with its pock-marked exterior and ragged edges. Yet, if I just turn it over, instantly my eyes light on the smooth texture underneath. Five years later I can dwell on those bad memories that I experienced in Spain, and the harsh feelings that come with them, and I can let them gnaw and grate away at me. I can let the rough side of my time in Spain always be visible to me, or I can choose to carefully turn over the memories until all I can see is the smooth side, the good memories. It’s all up to me; only I can choose what to dwell on.

Even now, rubbing my finger over the smooth underside of my shell, a wave of memories comes rushing back on me again. Yet, like the ocean where this shell came from, the wave of memories recedes as I return the shell—for now at least—back to its place on my bedroom shelf, and this time I place it smooth side up.
What can I do for You?

by Jeff Shermer

On Daddy's lap, I hide my face
Leaning, clinging to his arms of strength.
(Without hope - future no more)
The past whelming with arrowed wounds.
A little one lost and alone,
A broken heart, a broken home.

Nestling close to Daddy's heart
Healing touch upon my head,
A refuge - safe and stead.

Then hear I in heart and head:

Let me take you in, Won't you come?
I will hold you, my little one.
And upon the earth simple yet,
My love Never let's go, Never forgets.
I see your fear and your brokenness,
I feel your ache and taste your tears' saltiness.

Then held so close in his arms,
Being held safely, far from harm,
hear I,
You are mine, always my child to be.
What can I do for you?, says he.

With wordless wind my heart replies,
Heal this hurt and hear my cry.

Held so close and understood.
Eyes finally opened, He is Good.
Tho' felt forgotten long ago,
Now I see he never let go.

Know that I'm standing here today,
'Cause he alone could heal that ache.

Tho' done not yet,
And more work yet to go,
I am his and I am whole.
For years I fought, tears stained dry,
Holding out a smiled eye.
Fake no more and trust not lies
But let his love wash it by.
For those words he speaks today as then,
To you, to my new friends,
What can I do for you? He says again.

Scriptures to read:
Psalm 51:6-17
Psalms 62:8
Isaiah 61:1-3, 4
Luke 4:18-19
John 10:9-10

Summer Hosta - Elizabeth Kilada
Unexpected Visit

by Victoria Schaaf

She walked into my room at half past eleven on Monday night. I was busy coughing everything down to my intestines out of my cavernous stomach as she peaked in the door that read, “Come in, we’re open!” and asked if I was busy. It was Kari. The brown-eyed girl who was from a beach town just as I am. We both adore the ocean, but cannot seem to find it even in the chaos of Portland. Kari and I became friends in the most unusual of ways, in fact, I had no intentions of being her friend, but I guess God’s plans do not always work out the way we have planned ourselves. She stood there waiting for an answer from me as I thought about her inside my head.

“No,” I finally said with a quiet voice from my computer desk by the window that looked out on Tabor Terrace Apartments and the lamp post whose illumination kept me up half the night, every night. I told her to come in and have a seat on the bed opposite mine. It is not really a bed, it is a couch because I have no roommate and refuse to call it a bed. It can only be called a bed if someone is sleeping in it, and as much as I am convinced I have an invisible roommate named Pepperanne who eats my Little Debbie cupcakes and drinks my watermelon kool-aid, I know that nobody siestas there. It has three pillows that stretch across the disgusting split pea soup colored green, bolsters that the college provides that switch back and forth from black to red to black. It is indeed a couch.

Kari sat herself down with a plop on the only corner of the couch that was not covered in stickers. All week I have been putting together what I call my life-journal. It is a compilation of every year in my life complete with vivid memories, stickers that bring back moments and pictures that represent the past.

“What is this mess all about? Where did you get all these stickers?” Kari questioned.

“Oh, the mess, I did not even notice. Sorry you had to struggle to sit down.”

“Oh, it’s fine, really.” Kari is always such a good sport.

“Well, you see,” I continued, “I have been putting together something I will call my life-journal, did I mention it to you?”

“Yeah, that one time we went for a run on Mt. Tabor that cloudy midnight last semester to relieve stress.”

“Yeah, that night, I remember now, remember how I was panting and dying of exhaustion and crying all the way up the hill?”

“That was a great night.” It is obvious how optimistic she is.

Kari always seems to be my midnight buddy for everything; runs on Mt. Tabor, Cinnamon roll runs to Pallo coffeehouse, trips to Rocky Butte off Division to watch planes land and see her home state of Washington across the river that separates Oregon from the Apple State and various other random activities that kept us away from the books and off campus.

“Anyways Vik, tell me more.” Kari insisted.

“Well, it is a compellation of my life in my own words, my pictures from childhood to the present, and stickers that back up my point in the individual stories. I want to leave something behind when I die, something that will show I, Victoria Schaaf, did indeed mean something to this world and to my family and friends.”

“That is a great idea! Can I see it?”

“I guess so, but you are the first and probably the only, so don’t be mean.” I replied defensively.

I pulled out a black twelve by twelve inch scrapbook that was edged in dulled metallic silver duct tape; the duct tape is symbolic of my craftsmanship with the tape that can fix anything. In high school I would make belts, purses, dresses and anything else imaginable of the sticky stuff; always experimenting with multiple colors of tape, of course.

The scrapbook was topped with two pictures of me on car rides; one of me dressed in a rather girly outfit, almost too girly for my taste, and the other with my arm around my childhood friend Katy on the way to Acquire the Fire in Portland. A hot pink travel tag that boldly stated, “My Life is a Road Trip” graced the top of the duct tape story. I was reluctant to move any further than that, even though Kari and I had shared our painful life stories one morning last November around two a.m., I still did not with one bone in my body want to
proceed.
What I have forgotten to mention is that the life-journal is not just a journal of my life. It is an attempt, and dare I say a last resort, to find the good, any good, in my life I have so easily forgotten and a challenge to make the bad memories go away. It seems every time I try to right something positive, I can think of a negative aspect of the story to follow, but I fight the tide and live in denial that the event ever took place.

Hesitantly I grabbed hold of the lower right hand corner of the book that was a symbol of so much more than Kari could ever imagine. Everything in this book was positive, yet I was scared to open its heart; my heart.

“What if I had written something Kari would find stupid?” I thought to myself. “And what if she sees the pictures of me from middle school when I was five foot five and fifty pounds heavier? What would she think of me then if she saw my thick waist and chubby face?” Eventually I had to let the thoughts slide, because I had already opened the book and could not bring myself to so rudely close it on her. Confrontation is the worst mode of communication.

Page by page I barely showed Kari what had come of the book so far. She was amazed and deemed, “This is amazing, I am so proud of you for doing this.”

I found myself comforted by her accolades, but just let out a soft “thanks” under my breath. Sweat seemed to be pouring out everywhere on my body and my throat felt dry.

Kari quickly became more uncomfortable in a different way than I was. Sitting on the corner of the sticker covered couch looked as though it was doing a number on her back. Before I could think any further into the situation she had thrown herself onto my Asian comforter covered bed, which indeed was clearly a bed. My bed has a black, red, and gold Asian comforter on it, with matching Asian fabric covering those hideous green bolsters.

I gave her a look of confusion for moving beds and she guilt fully asked, “Is it okay if I sit here?” I said, “Of course,” and carried on with a new conversation about worship. Anything to avoid more talk of the journal.

“What do you define as worship, Vik?” Kari asked.

“Well I don’t think worship is just merely music like we are brought up to believe. I think we are called to worship with our everyday lives and singing is one tiny aspect of that. I think the word worship is overused in relation to singing.”

Kari strongly agreed and asked me what I thought of contemporary worship.

“Well I think contemporary worship definitely has a place in postmodern society and ministry, but I think too often it is egocentric.”

“What do you mean by egocentric?” she inquired.

“Well all this talk of I, Me, and You. We, Us and Our; since when is this about us, it’s not about us.”

“That’s really interesting.”

“Yes, my goal for this year is to write a good, no, a great worship song with all the feeling and emotion of a contemporary song with the kick of a hymn. Something entirely selfless.”

“Well let’s do it right now.”

“Are you crazy, Kari, it’s after midnight, I need to go to sleep, I am getting sick.”

“What is college for?” She replied and quickly grabbed a guitar off my tri-guitar stand.

She handed me the guitar I refer to as Terrance. He is named after my friend Terrance whose nickname is Alex. He is tall, dark and handsome, just like the guitar.

I strummed the mahogany stained guitar lightly as it was after quiet hours, but before I knew it; my love for the instrument outweighed the consequences of breaking some mediocre quiet hours.

Kari grabbed hold of my five colored rainbow post-it stack and started writing lyrics. I was still busy strumming away at Terrance’s light weight new strings. He sounds like the ocean when he plays, which is exactly what we wrote about pertaining to God.

It was a mystery how it all played out. We had to use the thesaurus multiple times to find synonyms that just did not fit into a worship song. We sang the song for hours, harmonizing our keys and working the hook around the chorus which would blend with the bridge and verses. Song writing is one of the most intricate tasks in life and this proved to be no exception.

With me coughing in between every six syllables from exhaustion and the cold I had mixed with dry throat from singing and being overwhelmed with sharing my life-journal, we decided to quit. Kari snuggled herself in her zebra blanket at the opposite end of the stickers on the couch around six a.m. and I lunged on my bed and began to breathe.

Kari and I talked about everything from our individual theology to what has held us fast in our faith. She shared with me stories of her boyfriend from high school and how she wished he would have some faith. And I told her how I befriended the high school quarterback and taught him to understand my faith, even if he would not accept it. We discussed our favorite books, chapters of the bible and forms of ministry among other things until the light shining in from Tabor Terrace could no longer keep us awake.

I was going to go to bed half past eleven that night, but I am more thankful now that I did not. It seems at the most ironic times; we find just what we are looking for; our very own ocean.
Nerves
by Kirstie E. Richman

Right here I am
waiting for this new event,
with stomach like a cold clam
and my intestines bent

out of shape.
All solid things appear
distorted from my concrete fears.
What I would like to ape

is their cool calm.
They sit in perfect ease,
yet they must pray the 23rd Psalm.
Keep it to yourself please

you make it worse!
Right now I dread the time
when watching eyes will want my line.
A sudden high-pitched force

of people laughing
rattles the air while they applaud.
I need to run an offering
to the white porcelain god

who'll extend mercy.
This line should be a breeze.
But here I stand and sway and wheeze.
Blackness comes peacefully

as down I sink.
Of this I can be certain,
I am on the dark and gloomy brink
of the rise of the curtain.

Nestled in Forest’s Bed
in Filtered Rays

by Kirstie E. Richman

Nestled in forest’s bed in filtered rays,
Watching the flitterings of dancing nymphs
In gold array, I listen and attend—
For nature’s woodwinds play and nymphs applaud,
While I take sleep and drink of nature’s nectars.

Succulent feasts of comely beauties
That bring the dreamful fancies of chimeras
(Who tempt the senses and fascinate the mind)

Nestled in forest’s bed in filtered rays.

The rhythmic swaying causes swift dances
Above my lying head and brings strange dreams
Of faerie land— a place no mortal finds
Except in tranquil resting of the mind.
Visions will cross the ivory gate. I doze
Nestled in forest’s bed in filtered rays.
Unspoken Good-Bye

by Lynn Andersen

(This essay refers to the poem "To a Daughter Leaving Home" by Linda Pastan.)

I was immediately drawn to read this poem simply due to the title. The title instantly invoked emotions of how I felt the day that I took my daughter to college.

When the poem begins with the teaching of a child to ride a bicycle I quickly recalled the ordeal of teaching my daughter to ride her bike. It was a battle at first as she was scared and lacked self-assurance in her ability. I had taught younger siblings as well as her older brother, so I had complete confidence that she could do it.

Later I recall reflecting back on how learning to ride a bike had opened up and expanded the world for both of my children. Whereas before learning to ride their bikes, an outing might be to a neighborhood friend’s house, or to the playground at the school, now they were riding off to friends’ homes that were farther away, and places such as the swimming pool, the library, and the store.

I used to be able to see them walk to a friend’s house, or I could walk to the corner and see them playing on the playground at the school. But now, they would just pedal off and I had to trust that they would find their way and come back home safely.

As they grew older and learned to drive it only got more difficult. I was one of those parents that could never fall asleep until I knew my children were safely inside the house. I set a very strict curfew of midnight. “Midnight does not mean 12:01,” I always told them. If they came home by midnight, all was well and I could go to bed.

But when they were late, they would pay with guilt for every minute after the hour when they came in and saw me sitting on the stairs with anguish on my face. This was due to the strain of the emotions I had gone through while waiting. Promptly at 12:01 I would begin to panic, because I was certain that something terrible had happened, this was followed by relief when I saw their headlights pull into the driveway, and then anger when they came in and nothing was wrong and they were simply late.

When I drove my daughter to her dormitory that first Fall of college I was distracted from my emotions by making sure that she wasn’t forgetting anything and trying to figure out how it was all going to fit into the car. Then came the craziness of the crowds of other students hauling all of their stuff from the curb and into the building. Finally, I had to say goodbye and leave. Even that I managed without tears. When I was alone in the car driving home the tears flowed with the realization of the fact that the child that had been home in her room pretty much every single night for the past eighteen years, was not going to be there tonight.

In Pastan’s poem the daughter is just riding off on her bicycle and we assume that she will be back. But there is a much bigger picture being created through the metaphor of the bicycle that I relate to my daughter leaving home for good. Because unlike the child pedaling off on her bike only to return in time for dinner, my daughter went away to college and never did come back home. When she first left I had pacified myself with thoughts of her coming home after her freshman year. Instead she got a job that summer and an apartment near school.

Today, her bedroom is unchanged. Her letterman jacket still hangs on the back of the desk chair, formal prom dresses reside in the closet, and there are posters of cats covering all of the walls. She graduates in June, but I know now that she will not be pedaling back home. She was saying “goodbye” all those years ago when she rode off on her bicycle. I just didn’t know it.

Geezer-Barnabas Omulokoli
My roommate’s phone rang a few minutes ago, and I know it’s her brother on the other end. He’s been trying to get in touch with her for a couple of days now. Her brother’s in the Army, Special Forces, and his unit is due to be shipped to Afghanistan any day now. She hasn’t really let on, but I know she’s worried, worried and upset. I wish I could be of some help, or at least some comfort, but I feel woefully ignorant.

Growing up in a Mennonite household and in a Mennonite community does not do much to teach you what it’s like to have a loved one go off to war. Neither of my grandfathers fought in World War II and none of my uncles, or my father fought in Korea or Vietnam. I do know that my Uncle Russ was, briefly, in the Army, but he got out long before I was born. He was too young for Vietnam anyway. Anyway, military tradition in my family is basically nonexistent. So how do I, a girl with Mennonite roots on both sides of my family, comfort a girl who once had both parents in the military. She grew up on a navy base, most of her friends had one, or even both, of their parents in the military. My only experience with someone going overseas strikes me as woefully inadequate.

I remember the day I first learned that someone I knew, someone I grew up with, had joined the military. My mom called me with the news while I was away at college. I can still remember the phone call today.

“Did you know that Brandon Schneck joined the Marines?” my mom asked.

“What?! No, I had no idea. When did that happen?”

“I’m not really sure of the exact date, but he was already in when Barry and Mandy got married. Anyway, Shirley said at church Sunday that he’s going to be sent to Iraq in a few months.”

“Oh no! I bet she isn’t handling that very well is she.” I felt sure that Brandon’s mother was going crazy with worry.

“She hasn’t actually said anything, but, knowing her, I’m sure she’s very upset.” And really, my mom ought to know, after all, they are in the same Sunday School class, not to mention they’ve been friends for years.

“I can’t believe that Brandon Schneck of all people, joined the Marines. It just seems contrary to his nature. I mean, he was always so quiet. Barry and Bevan were the talkative ones.” I remember feeling that this wasn’t quite real. There’s no way that Brandon could do what the Marines would require of him, he’s just too nice. But it must be true, of course. “So much for the lessons Brad taught us.”

“Yes. When I heard that he had joined up, I thought our church really failed that boy, didn’t it. It’s really too bad.”

“I just can’t imagine Brandon as a Marine. He’s too nice, too quiet.” It just wouldn’t sink in.

“It is too bad.”

It was such a surreal experience. Brandon was the last person in the world that I would have expected to join the military. He is honestly one of the nicest, quietest people that I have ever known. I can’t imagine what it is about the military that would appeal to him. I didn’t spend a lot of time with Brandon, but I have one memory of him that sticks out vividly.

I was over at the Amstutz’s. The Amstutz’s and my family had gone out to eat after church like we often did. Then my parents, my sister, and Rob Amstutz had gone shopping. Since I didn’t want to go, and they were going to have to drop Rob off anyway, I went home with the Amstutz’s. I should explain that the Amstutz’s lived next to the Schneck’s. The only thing separating their houses was Riley Creek, and the boys were used to crossing it whenever they felt like it. They had a small bridge and even a boat, not to mention the main bridge that the cars used. Anyway, I remember sitting at the computer with Greg, one of the Amstutz boys, playing some computer game that has completely slipped my memory when I heard someone directly behind me say in a very loud voice, “Hi Amanda!” Of course I jumped a couple of inches in the air. I was even more surprised when I turned around and discovered Brandon standing behind me. I couldn’t remember him even speaking that loud before, and I don’t think I’ve heard him be that loud since then.

Brandon is a friend and one of the
people I grew up with. Still, I cannot help but be painfully aware that my (rather limited) experience with Brandon is nowhere close to what my roommate must be feeling.

I don't have a brother, but if it were my sister who was going to Afghanistan, if it were my sister who was going to be in some of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan, I think I would be terrified. I cannot imagine knowing that the person I grew up with, one of the constants in my life, the one I fought with, talked with, and played with was going to be put into a situation where she may very well be shot at on a daily basis. I cannot help but wonder how well I would deal with that if it were me. And I cannot help but be impressed with how well my roommate appears to be handling it.

She's so calm on the outside, so placid. I realize that part of it must be a façade, a defense mechanism. I'm sure she tries to block the knowledge out for the most part; otherwise I doubt she would be able to get anything done. Still, it makes me wonder if I would be able to hold it together as well as she does.

My roommate has come out of her room. Her phone call is finished, and she is not holding it together any longer. As she cries, my other roommate and I go over to her. We try to offer her comfort, but it can only be comfort from those who love her, but do not understand what she is going through. It's a little frustrating, because I want to be able to understand, because I love her, and yet I feel blessed because I don't, because none of my family members are in harm's way. As we wrap our arms around her, I decide that maybe I cannot understand and more likely than not I never will be able to understand, will never know what it feels like to go through what she's going through. As she says, through her tears, "he kept calling me his little sister" I also decide that it doesn't matter. She is my roommate, and more importantly my friend. Maybe I can't understand what she is feeling, but she's my friend and I love her. As long as we let her know that we are here and we love her, that's the best that we can do, and the best anyone can ask of us. And for now, that is enough.
Rest
by Tori Ramsdell

I have found my days to be nights,
The sleep that is wading behind my eyelids
Is ignored by the constant nagging
Of the something else that is inhabiting my soul
From finding that peace.
Thoughts converge on me like vomit,
Coloring my mind to many colors
Of abstract feeling and half truths.
Sleepless I feel conflicting presence of what
Is and what should be.
It has come to a race of time,
Where light has become the enemy
Where dark and nothing is desired.
Oh so every softly do I long for rest;
The warmth of a slumber of nothingness.
Will my desire be fulfilled even with death?
Or is this constant spiral of going,
Going to keep me from what my flesh carnally desires:
The long awaited rest.

11:45 pm - 3/10/06
by Bridget Murphy

tonight the symphonies haunt
- strings pulling at the gates behind
my eyes - writing beauty upon
the walls of my inner ear - cellos
sorrow for me tonight - harmonies
empathize my lack

when did my heart's well run dry?
when did it cease giving,
only suck what sun, air and blood can give?

pity for shallow dryness - rests
upon the evening sky - tonight like
these filigree clouds - mourn with
the dusk the drought of life - dirge
with this symphony my empty well
- these dry eyes

some souls can't be spoken,
only played
on strings and skies

mine is only as good - as the
mannequin in the store window
- grateful for pennies and graces
- dropped her way as she hears - a symphony tonight and cries

The Concentration Camp
by Isaac Christopher

Through all of these days
I've looked through the haze,
As they look and they gape
While I plan my escape,
They sit and they stare
As if thrilling to scare,
I will never give in

To all their shameless sin,
I will fight till the end
While my life begins to descend,
The numbers on my arm
Mean soon I'll know harm,
Being ushered in so quietly
Not a sound, even slightly,

The terror soon will begin
And I must not give in,
To the leaders and chiefs
Stand strong on my beliefs,
They can force on me now
I'll escape soon, somehow...
Spots- Barnabas Omulokoli

The Final Last Words
by Isaac Christopher

On each side are robbers
On my head a crown
In my wrists are nails
On my face a frown

To die is final
But why me today?
To give hope to all
When they seek and pray

My eyes burn with blood
Flowing from my brow

Hanging on this cross
It’s 3 o’clock now

Looking up to Heaven
I cannot understand
Why so much hatred
Has risen in this land

I know where I am going
And why I have been here
So I yell out, “It is finished!”
And to my Daddy I draw near

Daybreak
by Kirstie E. Richman

This is the time when we now stand and cry
With voices that will rend the dark drawn veil.
We’ll turn the night to day and usher in
The dawning of the sun, who shines new rays
On moonlit grays and our proud country plains.

What ills were done here shadows never tell;
For they have all fled from the rising light.
In lightlessness they dwell and wait now for
Their time once more -- the never ending cycle.

Soft beams of light now finger through the dying,
Now crawling over rotting flesh to lift
Away the clinging cloak-like clouds that hold
To darkness, burning them to crimson mist.

In the end wrongs and wounds will heal with care.
Passing of time will restore peace and life,
Yet there will always be that mark, that scar;
That monument to tell the future youth
What happened before. Prices that were paid.

A crest of sun breaks calmly over night’s horizon,
A solitary hymn is sung to greet the sun.