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### Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 2013

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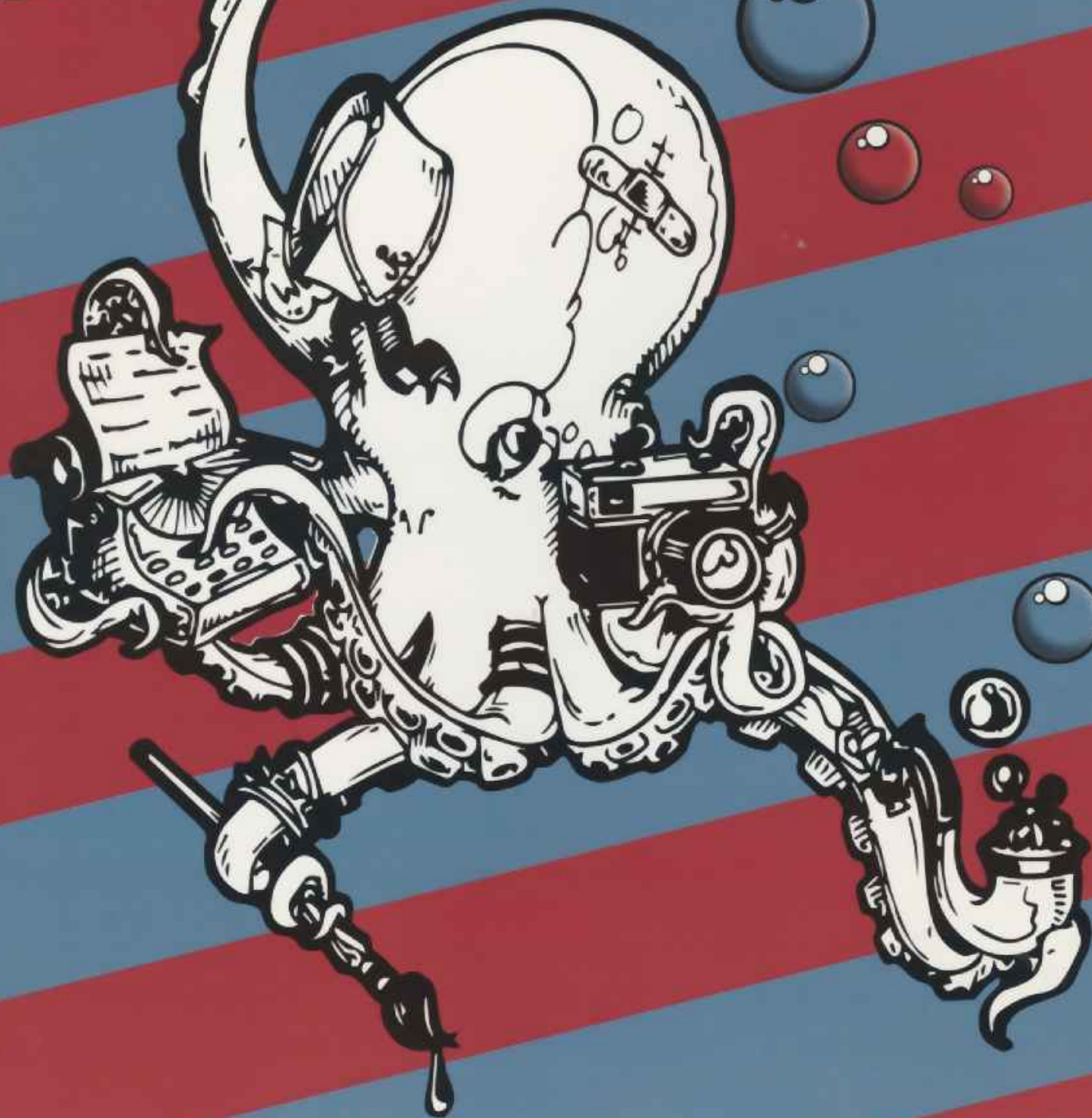
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# In-stress



# Instress

Literary & Arts Magazine

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to the 47th edition of Instress Magazine. This year's edition is a wonderful blend of the verbal and the visual, of the serious and the sarcastic, of the revised and the raw.

Within these pages, you will find the collective creative unconscious of Misericordia University.

These are the emotions and experiences of the students of Misericordia University wrapped up and prepared specifically for you. So, please take that in mind as you peruse these pages.

This year, as in past years, it was a Herculean quest on the part of the students involved to organize, evaluate, and finalize the magazine, and I congratulate them on their efforts. Of note, I'd like to mention Heather Marsicano and Auraleah Grega, who, without their tremendous work, the magazine you hold before you would not exist. So, thank you, and thanks to everyone who submitted and aided in putting this together. Most of all, thanks to you, the reader, who will give these works their value out there in the world. Without you, these pieces would remain unseen, unread, and unremembered.

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**Special Thanks:**

Virginia Grove & Erin Delaney

&

R.J. Barna for

"Ink-Stress" Octopus Cover Art



# Award Winners



The Walt Whitman Award for Best Poetry

**Matt Schlasta** - Snake Pit Locks

The MC Escher Award for Best Artwork

**R.J. Barna**

The Dorothea Lange Award for Best Photography

**Darnetta Yusko**

The Kurt Vonnegut Award for Best Short Fiction

**Marina Orrson** - Fatkidprobs

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# Award Winner

## Snake Pit Locks

Matthew Schlasta

Self control is beyond a drinking prick  
Finding temporary people to spend the hours with  
Swaying until seasick  
Puking until homesick

I still remember that eggshell skin  
Those snake pit locks  
That crush exposed players into cheap mattress springs  
Forcing them to walk through witching hours  
Face their demons in the dark  
Sucker punched

I heard you lacked interest  
I see now that they were right  
Weak to old fans met on foreign ground  
Lust for that southern point engulfs your agenda  
I know this cold settles into you  
Your bones rust and creak like antique machines  
I try to keep you burning, like a fire in the rain

# Award Winner

R.J Barna







# Award Winner



Darnetta Yusko

# Award Winner

Fatkidprobs

Marina Orrson

Let's be honest, I don't remember every detail of that outing...but there is one important thing I remember from that day:

Amy pushed the button.

And everyone knows that once you push the button, you never can un-push it.

Couple years ago, there used to be a Friendly's Restaurant in Dallas.

It was in the awkward island between Mr. Zs Supermarket and the Dallas Memorial Highway. The building is still there since the restaurant only closed down year or so ago.

Back in its prime, it was the only beacon of hope to many coming through the area in search of something decent to eat. Decent, but still smothered in grease and fat.

Sweet, heavenly, greasy fat. \*swoon\*  
Oh, how miss it.

Oh, the Honey Barbeque Chicken Supermelt, I swear, was made by the gods and handed down from Zeus himself as a gift for the mere mortals of Earth. I swear, it's true. I didn't matter that it had roughly ten thousand calories, and I probably died inside every time I ate one, it was worth it.

It was so worth it that we used to go there all the time. I went after various practices, school events, plays, family outings, and even after a cross-country meet.

So much so that I could probably tell you the whole menu in such extreme detail that the heavens will part, and Zeus will punch me in the face for divulging the secrets of his Olympian diet. Ambrosia my ass.

They eat the Honey Barbeque Chicken Supermelt and laugh at the mortals who desire its gooey, greasy, barbeque-y goodness...

THE HONEY BARBEQUE CHICKEN SUPERMELT IS NEVER COMING BACK AND I HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT!

And this would be the moment where I hashtag "fatkidprobs."

Anyway, so back to why I brought up this establishment that crushed my hungry dreams. (I'm telling you, all tonight, that's all I'm going to dream about.

I'm probably going to take out my retainers unconsciously so I can eat in my dream.)


A few years back, like roughly twelve, my family and I decided to partake in a meal at this fine (and heartbreaking) establishment.

Amy, who was about four at the time of the incident, is my cousin. And you see, being that she was the youngest of the group of grandchildren at the time, she often found herself blamed for everything.

At an outing with my Aunt Donna, mother to Timmy, Jennie and Amy, we decided to eat at Friendly's. The meal was wonderful, yadda, yadda, yadda...

I had the Honey Barbeque Chicken Supermelt...

Goddamn that was a good sandwich!  
Why does this economy suck!?



Why couldn't Friendly's stay in business for my dining pleasure!? God...I shall forever live in anguish over my love of a sandwich that is now dead and buried.

I'll stop now.

So anyway, I've always been pretty gifted when comes to playing claw games. Yes, I know, a lot of people make that claim, but seriously I'm like the flippin' master. It's one of the few traits I got from my dad that I didn't really mind getting.

To emphasize my awesomeness, once while at the Wildwood New Jersey Boardwalk, Erica, another cousin, made the demand that she return home with a total of TEN balls to play with. I took that as my mission to win her as many balls in the claw games along the Boardwalk as I could.

While when ended up buying several of the balls she asked for at the one of the Dollar Stores along the Boardwalk, I must have won a solid half the lot. Seriously, ever try winning a ball in a claw game? It's all but impossible because the Boardwalk carnies have the games so rigged it's trying to pry the Honey Barbeque Chicken Supermelt recipe from Zeus' glowing hands.

I'm pretty sure I'm a claw game demi-god. I'm not entirely sure, but I suspect I am.

Back at Friendly's, I was scoping out the perfect prize to win and show off my awesomeness and demi-god status. I mulled over the options in front of me.

The teddy bear? Too heavy for the claw.  
The foam finger? Too big for the claw to grab onto. The doll? It's half-covered, half-buried.  
The claw isn't good at digging things out. There!

After selecting the prize I would attempt to snatch up, I positioned myself to in front of the machine. My cousins flanked the sides, watching through the glass. They knew I was good at these kinds of games. I knew I was good at these kinds of games.

I gently toggled the controller, watching intently as the claw moved ever so slightly, shaking for a few seconds every time I wiggled it a bit further. My eyes remained glued to the claw.

I only left my position for a brief second every now and again to check each of the sides through the glass to make sure I was positioned exactly above the prize.

It was all working out so nicely until...

The claw suddenly dropped.

I hadn't touched the button at all!

I watched in horror as the claw descended upon the prizes inside the glass and grasped nothing but air. "What happened!?" I was mortified. I hadn't touched the button at all! The timer was still going! The only way the claw would have gone down was if –

"Amy pushed the button!" Jennie yelled, pointing her finger at her sister.

Amy seemed surprised and upset, "No, I didn't!" Jennie began to chant in a teasing manner.

"Amy pushed the button. Amy pushed the button. Amy pushed the button."

And then the rest of us joined the in chant.

"Amy pushed the button. Amy pushed the button. Amy pushed the button."

Tears began welling up in Amy's eyes as she ran over to my Aunt Donna. Aunt Donna gave us a look to cut it out.

We didn't. Hey, we were kids.

You never let the person who pushed the button live it down. It's a rule of childhood.

When it comes down to it, the button can never be un-pushed, and the Honey Barbeque Chicken Supermelt isn't coming back.

Ah, hell...

#Bringbackthehoneybarbequechickensupermelt

# Step

Melvin Jay B. Busi

I saw you yesterday  
It was love at first sight  
Can't stop thinking of you,  
Dreaming night after night

That I'll get to say "I do",  
That I'll hold you, warm and tight,  
That I'll live my life together with you  
But I can't.

I watch from a distance, three steps behind.  
I see your joys, your fears, your smiles, your tears,  
All this, from three steps behind.

I move a little closer, now only two steps behind  
My eyes glued to your form as my shadow dogs your  
heels

I wonder that you cannot feel my presence  
From only two steps behind

I am almost upon you now, just a single step behind.  
Can you not feel my breath, hear it, fear it?  
So close now, our shadows are as one  
For I am but a single step behind.

The knife slips in.  
Why? How did it come to this?  
Stabbing four times, red spills out.  
I never would have imagined it going this far.  
I take a sip of wine.  
Sitting with you, chatting over dinner, I feel fulfilled.  
Under the table, our fingers intertwine.





Sarah Wigg

# The Child's Mind

Suz Wielgopolski

It was safe where he started,  
But he was ready to travel.  
His sea-worthy craft awaited him,  
Its small belly would barely hold him.

He got in and set off,  
Seeing things only in bad dreams.  
He saw snakes; off green and yellow,  
And dragons that breathed sweet –sour fire.

There were also sea monsters and shipwrecks,  
And one-eyed pirates with patches of gold.  
Ghostly specters of times long passed,  
Jellyfish, an octopus and creatures of such.

But what he saw next was the worst of all,  
He saw the end of his journey.  
He had made it,  
From one end of the bathtub to the other.

Matt Wielgopolski

I am very tall  
I can see over the stall  
Don't pee next to me



# When the World Has Gone Cold

What will become of us  
when the world has gone cold?

An extinct race  
rightfully forgotten  
held still by layers of sadness and time.

Will they look down on us from above  
and wonder what it was that drove our species?  
Whether we had minds...  
hearts...  
dreams...

Auraleah Grega

Whether we had minds...  
hearts...  
dreams...

How could we?  
If we had made the world so barren  
and sterile.

They will wonder at our statues  
the life encrusted on our lips  
and ask what mysteries we hold  
kept from the sunlight  
hidden deep within the ice like the  
mammoths of old.

Grace Riker







Mary Bove

# Like Painting Over A Black Canvas

Patrick Aulisio

Aspirating blood  
continuously.  
Drowning endlessly from gradual heartache.  
Intermittingly jousting knights,  
Loathing mortality never ending.  
Overzealously praying queries religiously.  
Silently troubled.  
Unanswered Vocally.  
Where's Xehovah?  
Yahweh?  
Zion?

# I Wonder I See

Tracy Powell- Bonk

There is never much time to spare.  
In this craziness, the hassle, the fuss,  
I could not dare.  
I should learn to take a moment.  
To look and see.  
What is real, especially to me?  
At one moment I found my thoughts.  
In a single timeless stare  
At her I wonder, I see.  
Her eyes so blue, her blonde hair.  
A smile that lingers, and skin that is fair.  
So precious and care free,  
She looked toward me.  
Full of life and love that all could see.  
Was I once like her?  
So precious and so carefree.  
What does she see when she looks at me?  
My only hope is she does not loose,  
What may have been lost in me.

**Honorable Mention**

Alexandria Smith



# Staring at Eternity

Ruth Whitesell

1  
Just before the flash  
I imagine a perfect day  
we were so young  
I drove us to the beach  
just because you wanted to see waves  
the ocean dwarfed us  
crashing like thunder  
the taste of salt thick on my tongue  
reminding me of taffy stolen from the boardwalk  
when I was young and time was kind  
Everything passes you said  
almost as if you could read my thoughts  
I didn't want to  
believe you  
if only I could live in that day forever  
I would run it over and over  
until the reel breaks  
your face stands so clear in my memory  
looking to me for answers  
I love you  
the words painful in a way they had never been

2  
looking through the  
sepia tainted  
photographs  
remind of that time  
long past  
moments captured in  
grainy hues  
imperfectly preserved  
the flash snaring us  
as we once were  
here and gone forever  
in the same instant  
I can still hear the  
waves  
the only proof that day  
existed  
in these old relics  
covered in dust

3  
the inside of the barrel  
is darkness  
all I can think about  
is the look in your eyes  
that day when we had  
everything  
as the flash recedes  
I imagine dead stars  
their light only  
reaching us  
after it's too late  
in a blink I'm gone  
the only thing left  
blood spattered  
memories

## The Crash

Hilary Hoover

As I look languidly out the window during class,  
I am met with an unexpected surprise. Fluffy,  
crystalline snow begins to dance past.  
As the dance progresses, it quickly covers the  
trees, the cars, the roads.

As I walk to my car, ice fairies land gently on my  
face with their quick, sharp kisses with the prom-  
ise of class cancellations. As I got in my car and  
pulled carefully out of the parking lot, I made my  
way slowly down the road.

I'm a Pennsylvania girl. Snow is nothing new to  
me. I can handle any blizzard with a soy latte and  
some Dave Matthews. My car began to slide as  
it hit some packed snow. I knew the drill- it was  
second nature. Sliding is just an inevitable in-  
convenience. But this time it was different. Why  
didn't I have on four-double u-dee?

My back tires fishtailed and "Bessie" began to  
spin. Turning into the spin only made it worse.  
My car jumped the curb. As the telephone pole  
got closer and closer to the driver's side door,  
I thought about what it would be like to die.

In the movies there is always a white light. A  
white light and the pearly gates. When you're  
dead, you're gone. I didn't believe in that shit  
they preached.

Gone. Buried. Nada. You lose. Left.  
Not here. In Heaven. Not alive. Eternal Rest.  
One with the World.

We have all these handy euphemisms for dead.  
Some are  
decidedly more  
pretentious than  
others, but they still mean the same thing.

The body lying there is empty. A shell of its  
former state. An empty cup.

You hear horror stories about how scary and  
plasticized dead people can look lying there in  
that open suitcase full of cards, booze, and me-  
mentos of a life lived and lost.


Knowing my family, they'll stuff me in my high  
school prom dress and stick a tiara on my head.  
Glass slippers and glitter. A Disney fucking Prin-  
cess lying in Snow White's glass coffin for all to  
see and mourn. No kiss to wake me.

Scratch that. I don't want people touching and  
kissing my inanimate corpse. That is really  
creepy. I'm gone. I can't feel your love.  
I can't feel anything.  
I don't even exist anymore. My life is officially in  
past tense.

I really don't want a funeral at all. No wake. A  
wake is an absolute joke. Seriously.

But what other options do I have? Freezing?  
Too expensive.  
Mummification? Too old school.  
Plus, where would they put the pyramid?

A Viking Funeral? What if my burning corpse  
floats back to shore? That's just disturbing.  
Hmm...



I think I'm most keen on cremation in a nice, warm and toasty oven. That way, it's easier to get rid of whatever's left after they take my organs.

I hope they get some good use out of them. However, I pity the sorry son of a bitch who gets my kidneys. Those things are such a pain.

My hair can go to cancer patients. There is no point in keeping it. Seriously. What are you going to do with 2 feet of red hair? I can only imagine it going up in flames.

If it smells bad with the occasional strand or three burning in the hairdryer, you can bet that I'd take a few more people to the afterlife with me if all of it caught fire.

I should have put this all in a will. They're going to screw it up. I should have written something like, "Keep my costs down, please. Don't get into anything excessive and unnecessary.

Put the ashes in a coffee can, and take a trip to Paris. I always wanted to go to Paris. Scatter the dust into the Seine on a warm summer night near the famous haunted opera house and toast with a bottle of Champagne. Sing a little "Music of the Night." While you're in Europe, stop by Florence and scatter a bit in the Arno.

Cross the river and go to the papeterie near the Palazzo Pitti. Watch them make marbled paper. Isn't it gorgeous? Talk to the owner. He's a great guy who will tell you the best places to sit down for a relaxing dinner and remember me fondly over a good meal."

I hope I did something good in this life. I hope I made some sort of difference. However small it may be, I like to think that we all make a difference. I know I have things that I wish that we got to do together to tell you. Heck, I could make a book entitled, "Things I Never Told My Parents and The Tall Tales That I Did."

However, this is it. I guess I'm ready.

The car gets closer to the telephone pole. I brace myself. I am ready and this is it. Bessie slides a bit more. Will the airbags go off? Am I wearing my seatbelt? Should I close my eyes?

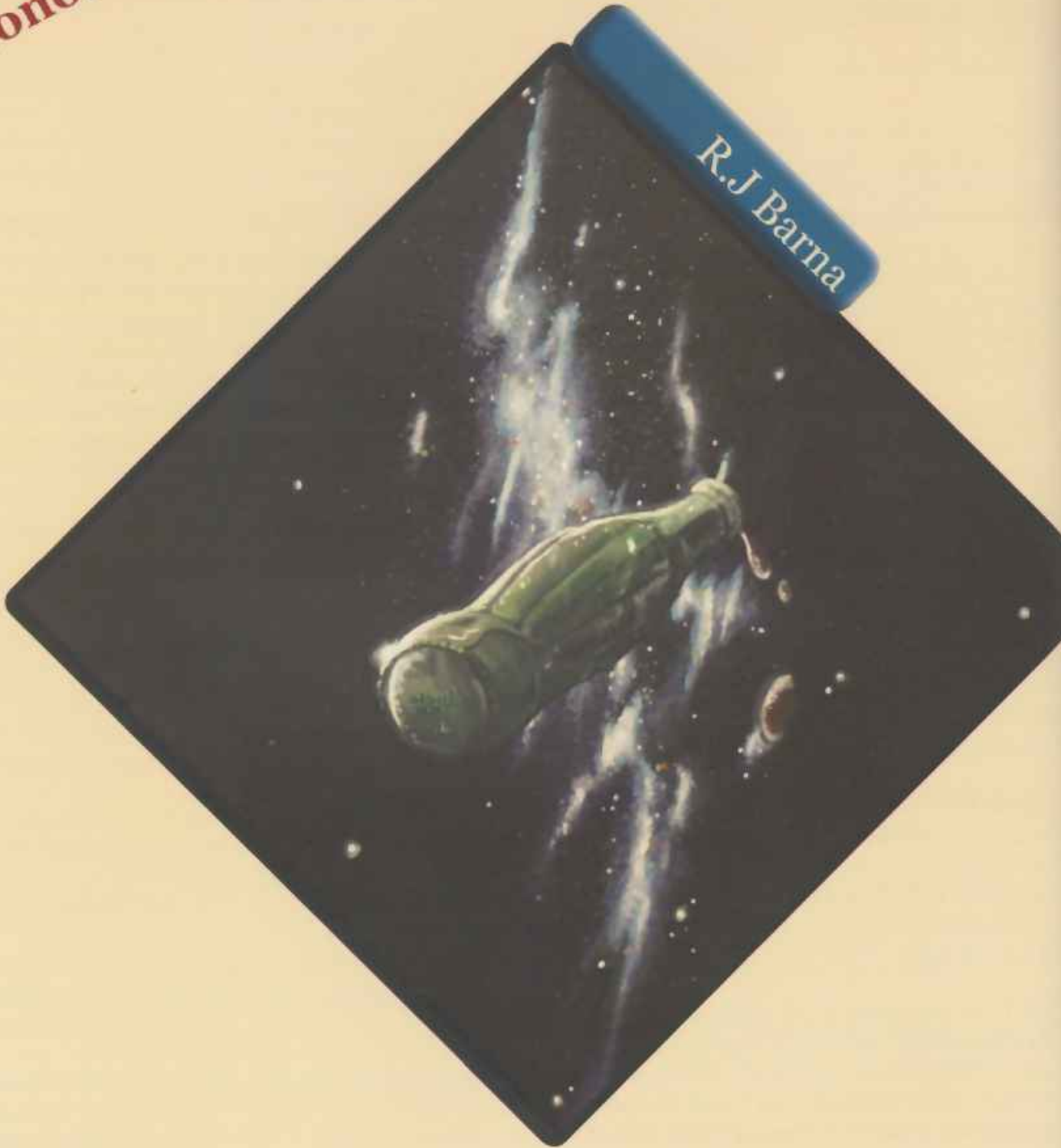
The car slips cleanly past the pole, missing by inches. My chest is about to explode. Am I having a heart attack? That would be ironic. A few small scratches to the passenger's side of the car.

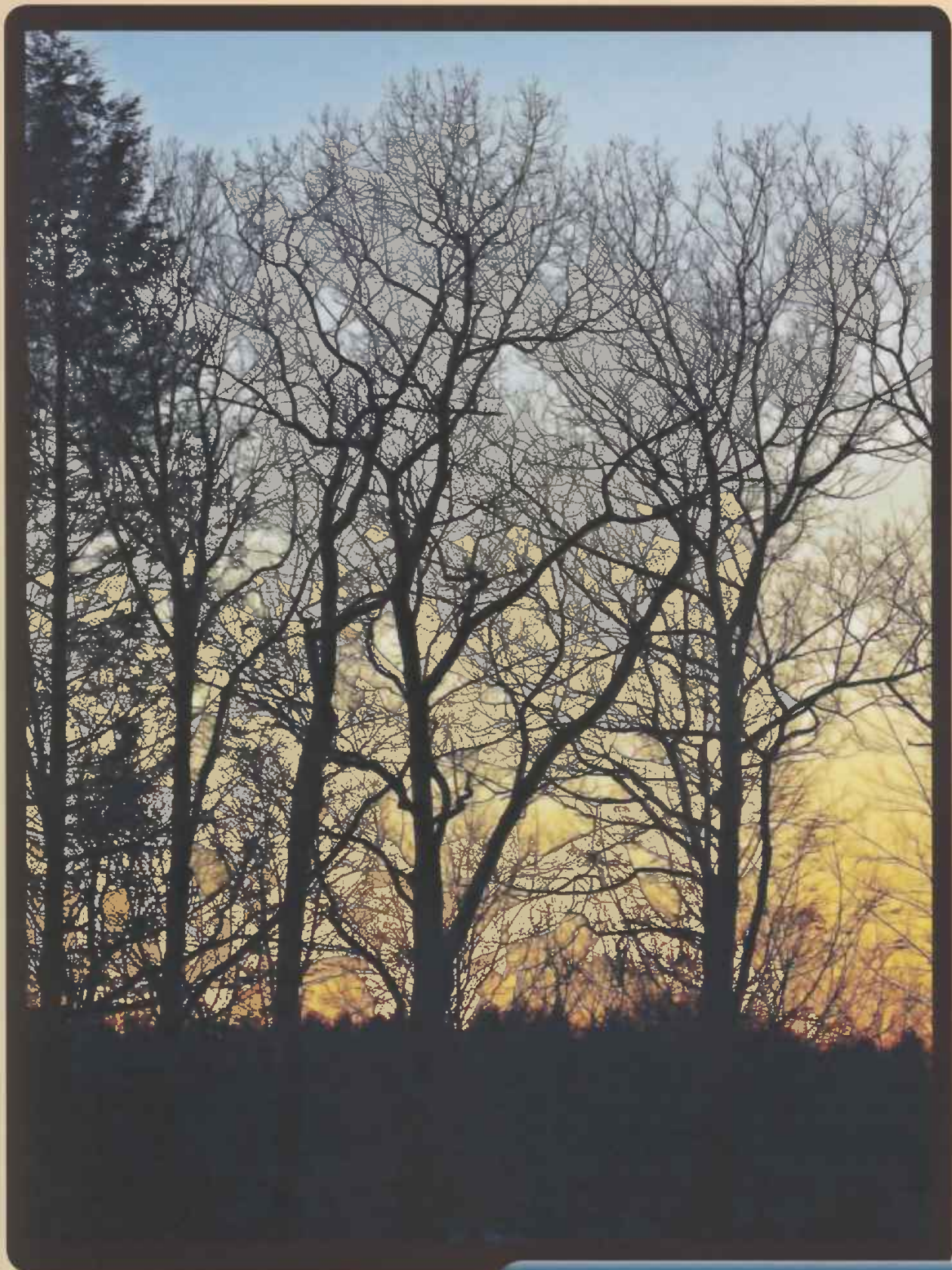
I'm okay. I'm alive. I made it. I touch my face and my heaving chest in disbelief after I put on the parking brake and hit the flashers.

Adrenaline rushing, I let myself lean back into the seat and hold onto myself. I'm still here. This is real. I guess somebody or something up there says that it's not my time. I've still got more to do. I am not finished with this life yet. No white light. Just the snow coming softly down around me.

Unable to speak through my sobs, I can choke out two words:  
"Thank You."

**Honorable Mention**





Taryn Talacka



# All I am

Jess Kitch

All I am  
Is this system  
Of working organs  
Who didn't choose to be alive  
So how could they ever choose  
To stop asking the question  
Why?

Stephanie Forbes





Heather Marsicano

Well ain't she a  
purrty kitty!



# Bagels

Grace Riker

Wake up.

Open eyes.

Glance around the room and get acquainted with the sunlight shining through the windows.

Smell the radiator heat.

A sweet blend of dust and hot water.

Maneuver your way off of the foam cot on the floor.

“Come on Grace, you’re 20 years old. You aren’t getting any younger.”

Ugh.

I’m too old for this.

Plant your feet on the fluffy teal carpet. It stays fluffy because only visitors stay here now.

Kids aren’t trampling it down everyday on their way in and out. Wiggle your toes into the fluffiness of the carpet. That cushion that you don’t get to indulge in with your hardwood floors at home.

Take the first steps of the morning.

Make sure all of your bones settle into the shell of your body again.

Look in the bathroom mirror to make sure you look presentable for the date you are about to have in the kitchen.

Mosey your way downstairs.

Bagels.

You’ve known that smell since you were 4 years old. Fresh, out-of-the oven, warm, moist, hard-crust, delectable bagels. All of that deliciousness, patiently waiting for you in the kitchen. Ever since you were 4,

Grandpa Dolly would wake up at the crack of dawn and head off to church and the bakery.

He knew the perfect time go, and was always first in line for the bagels.

He had since retired from bagel-fetcher, and then passed away, but someone keeps his memory alive and always goes out to get them.

Anyway.

That smell almost draws you into the kitchen, but you still decide to be bashful, and pretend that you don’t smell it.

“Good Morning, Morning Glory,” says Gram from her recliner. You walk over and give her a kiss on the cheek and take a seat on the couch next to her and grab the paper, still pretending to ignore the heavenly bagel smell coming from the kitchen, just feet away. You start light conversation with the family, glancing out at the kitchen, wanting so bad to plow everyone over and shove all of that bagel-y goodness into your mouth...

But that’s just a scenario running through your head.

You thumb through the paper, pretending to still ignore that smell. “There’s bagels in the kitchen,” says Gram.

Thanks.

“I know, but didn’t want to assume,” I think to my sarcastic self.

Bagels?

What are bagels?

You act as if you’ve never heard of a bagel before in your life and graciously take up her offer to indulge in this breaded doughnut form. There are always bagels, cream cheese and butter, for those freaks in my family who butter their bagel.

Not me.

I’m hard core.

Plain bagel with cream cheese.

The knife runs through the still warm bagel, only really fighting to make it through that nice, not-too-hard crust on the outside.





Cracking a bagel open is the best part. Sometimes, if your lucky, a puff of steam comes out, and smacks you in the face, as if it is saying, "you are about to take a bite into the best part of your morning." You then cool your bagel off with some cream cheese. Not too little, not too much. The best part is if you get a bubbly bagel. You then, of course, have to fill each crevice with cream cheese, which is a party in your mouth when you bite into those! Plate full of bagel-loveliness, napkin and glass of pulpy orange juice, and back into the living room you go, trying to hide your giddy school girl smirk, because you know of your beautiful creation in your hands and you can't wait to stuff your face with it. That first bite.

A doughy, cream cheesy blend that hits all of your taste buds. It brings you back to your childhood. The sole reason you went to Grandmas house when you were 4! Not that they weren't already the best grandparents ever, with an attic you could get lost in for days! You knew when you got to their house there were going to be two things: presents and bagels. You went for the bagels. And the presents too, of course. For that morning delight. You sink back into the couch cushion. Regis and Kelly filling the background sound, along with the old Irish radio station that Grandpa Dolly used to hum along to. You and your bagel. You and your childhood memory.

## Diane Hopkins



## Midnight conferences between head and breast

Alexandria Smith

Would you remember me  
In the near distant future  
In the same ways that  
I remember you  
A portrait of a girl with  
Midnight solace caught  
Between the pages of  
An empty book that  
Aches with every turn  
Every scratch  
Every scrape against  
Paper like needle to skin  
A slow deliberate prick to  
Fastidious egos held up  
Loosely by eager smiles  
And boisterous laughs  
Like the too raw edges of  
A canvas canopy  
Easily toppled and yet  
it remains poised and  
Overarching you from  
Where you stand, the  
Raw underbelly seemingly  
Flawless amidst the wreckage  
Within you, just as painful  
Just as throbbing  
An impacted molar of  
Disappointment and  
Expectations  
Long nights and early  
Mornings spent in  
Psychiatric hospitals  
Where linoleum floors and  
Dusty patterned couches  
Become your normalcy  
Nursing cups of coffee and  
Pancakes on plates at  
Lonely tables as you wait

Do you still wait for  
That golden ticket to take  
You anywhere but here  
Where you think you want  
To go where life isn't so  
Troublesome where there's  
Enough money to pay the bills  
And you won't have to worry  
If the neighbors could hear you  
If you fucked some girl that isn't me  
Are you still waiting on long  
Nights like these up like me a  
Portrait of a girl who buries her  
Feelings into paper with a  
Proverbial shovel only to  
Dig them up and bury them  
A thousand times over  
Before her body settles  
Beneath the blankets



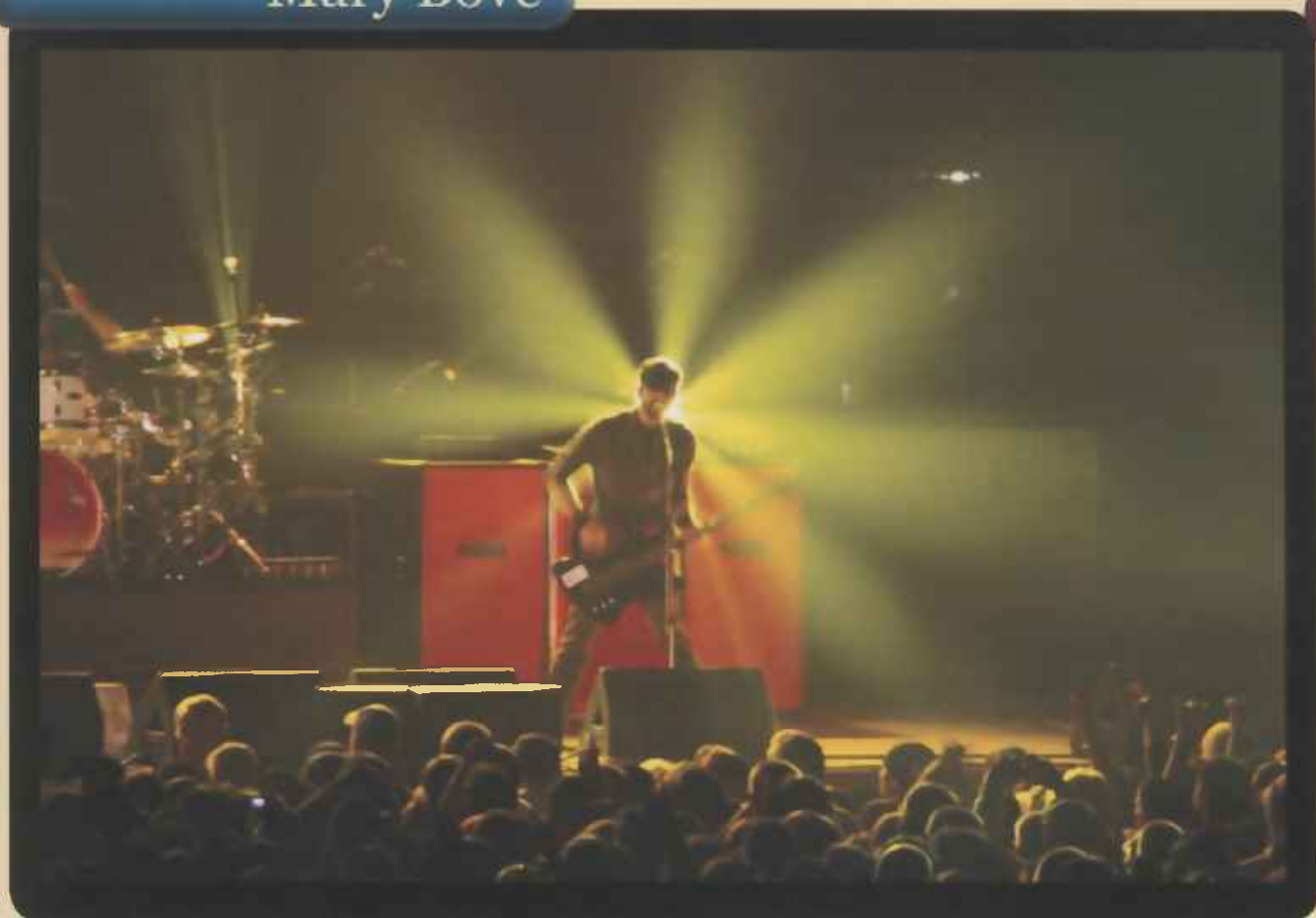
# Your rhythm, your beat

Jess Kitch

Your rhythm, your beat  
Produced by your  
internal drums  
They flow so eloquently with my melody  
The way I shape my mouth  
Mimics your sounds  
Our notes meet in the air  
Greet each other as if long lost friends  
And fold around each

As they waltz away  
Clearing the floor for more and more  
The tempo changes now  
Yet we remain  
And every time I might believe  
I've misplaced my mind  
The music we make  
Keeps me sane

Mary Bove





Maria Brody



# Sorry

Julia Whitesell

I covered my left hand  
in poetry  
because my pen  
couldn't reach paper  
and my hands  
couldn't reach you.

You asked me why I said  
"I'm sorry"  
when you showed me  
your scars

and I've been trying my best  
to come up with the answer,  
but every brick I lay  
lies to me.

I am not an architect  
or an artisan  
and my arms aren't strong enough  
to argue with the weight  
of the baggage  
they try to lift.

My brain is a blueprint  
of the person I want to be

but my fingers are fault lines  
and my thoughts are tremors,  
so my body  
is condemned.

I've been through

this

with you

about a hundred times

Alexandria Smith

You were a quiet bleeder,  
a silent screamer  
While I cried and howled  
over every thing that hurt me  
in my life  
you kept quiet  
Makes me wonder  
if you were quiet when I left  
If it hurt at all  
If you remember this song  
If you remember me  
If you even want to



# The Thoughts of a Shadow

Kelsey Gillette

I am the shadow,  
Dark and uncaught, a mystery to even myself,  
I hide behind a person, an object, Anything  
I avoid the sun,  
For the sun will expose me.  
What will happen if it finds me?  
Will I disappear?  
Will I be disfigured?  
Forever judged by my conspicuous actions,  
Seen by the sun.  
What would I do?  
What would I say?  
Mind racing,  
Heart beat quickens,  
So loud in my ears.  
I must stay hidden.  
Sometimes I wish...  
I wish I was...  
I wish I was like a butterfly.  
A butterfly is colorful.  
Beautiful.  
They flutter about gracefully.  
Carefree.  
And show their brilliant colors to the sun,  
Triumphantly.  
Oh I wish I was a butterfly.  
But a shadow could never be a butterfly.

No  
Not even close  
No  
I must stay a shadow.  
But sometimes I wish...  
I wish I was....  
I wish I was like a flame.  
A flame burns bright.  
Beautifully.  
It commands the attention of all around it.  
It too is colorful.  
Oranges, Yellows, even Blues.  
But it is one of my enemies.  
It cannot illuminate me.  
If anything,  
It makes me even more of a shadow.  
I could never be a flame,  
No  
Never  
It is safe to be a shadow.  
Here I can observe and not be judged.  
Here I can listen and not be heard.  
No one notices a shadow.  
I must stay a shadow.  
I must.

# Spectator

Thomas Simko

I

The oscillating fan is a fucking pessimist  
Vertical bands of air make no sense  
Neither does this loss  
Slippery like a used condom  
I tried to hold on  
To the horizontal  
The circular  
I puked everywhere  
Shook  
Counted the fibers of the carpet  
Wondering when the last time  
She vacuumed was  
So many songs I removed  
From my iPod now  
Out of wine  
Out of Xanax  
Wishing for sleep that can't come  
Baby coughs in the other room

II

It's ten days before Christmas  
She's been congested almost  
A week.  
I get up  
Away from the smell of the fallen  
Pine needles  
And stained carpet  
Heavy-headed  
Full of bile  
My ulcers clawing to get out  
She holds on to the rail of her crib  
With dry eyes  
Obviously in discomfort  
"Baby's up."  
The space between us congests  
Air and dust tense as stretched sinew  
Heat waves within eye lines  
Eraser marks scarring paper lives  
"I'll take care of it."

Mary Bove



## Because We Both Know What it's Like to Be Alone Alexandria Smith

I guess, you know, I've been accomplishing a lot. I really have. Or at least, becoming so much more involved in these great opportunities that are just rolling into my life. And that is not to say "Look at what I'm doing and you're doing nothing." No, not at all. I want to celebrate these great things I have with others because.. what is success or achievement without people to enjoy it with you? The concept of "It's lonely at the top," is a truer sentiment than you can believe.. and I consider every single one of my followers a part of my life somehow. I mean, you're here, aren't you? Listening to me. Reading me. Reading over me, maybe.

But you're here.

And that's great.

And I love that you're here.

I haven't really been talking to my parents much.. I don't know. That sounds awful but I'm just really into my life here, I guess. I'm spreading myself around a lot more since last semester, and I considered myself pretty rounded.

So, remember those blogs I was writing music reviews for? I'm still doing that, still loving it, but now I'm working with a good friend as co music managers for our university radio station.

My job will include writing more reviews of cds that we get and contacting companies/bands for more music.

So, even those few things are great in and of themselves, I'm still on the editing staff for the newspaper, still writing, still contributing to the campus literary magazine, meeting new people, reveling in my humanity and the beauty as such. I even tried out for a musical! I didn't make the cast but that's something I never did before.. so a feat to celebrate.

So, yes. Lots of great things that I am more than thankful for, more than appreciative, more than amazed with and yet.. and bear with me, this taking a sharp turn.. a part of me is still not happy. A part of me, emotionally, is still empty. And it's pretty sad, and pretty painful because I don't understand how I can feel this way when I have such great friends around me. Then again, you can't feel quite the same emotional depth and complexity with friends as you can with a lover, and I see that I am still aching for that.

It's officially been 6 months as of four minutes ago.. and I am still not totally okay.

That may be even more sad, that I'm not totally over what happened. Or you.

Maybe I see you in a different light now - someone that was good but didn't necessarily bring out all of the best in me even when it felt that you did - but it does not diminish the hurt. Sure, it isn't as though I cry every night over you or anything. Maybe every few weeks, when it really aches and I feel so fucking listless I can't shake it.

And maybe this feeling, this persistent sense of loneliness has somehow influenced some of the decisions I've made in light. Making out with a nice boy in my Religions class for example. It was fun and it was certainly something that I had been wanting - craving nearly - for the last six months but the after effects of giggling nervously as the acknowledgement of what had happened truly settled in our heads, our hearts, our mouths, and the hot air that had fogged all of the windows of his car - was too much. Not to mention the strange emotional regurgitation that came after.

"I don't want a boyfriend," I said reflexively, trying to cast off as much of the emotional dependency that I seem to inherently put upon others the second they give me the time of day to truly know me - and in this case, to mesh their lips with mine.

You said it was okay but I could tell you realized that I had every intention to use you and escape unscathed. To forget everything I had striving to erase for the last several months - all of the feelings, the questions left unanswered, the anger that bubbled in my stomach and shot up my spinal cord and into the stem of my brain - everything. Everything.

And I began to feel when I had specifically coached myself not to. "Don't feel, don't feel," I encouraged myself, drawing my hand away as I felt your fingers brush mine while we kissed. "Don't feel. Pull away. Pull away as far as you can." And I did. I do. I tried. And the next time I saw you, I felt like you couldn't even look at me.. and again, feelings that I never wanted to have in this situation made an appearance yet again, which begs the question.. why? Why am I this way? Why can't I have fun, and why must this physicality that is so ingrained in my general health be attached to my heart as well?

Perhaps it's because you were the first person I kissed since him. The first person I tried to move onto with. But not really, because I said I didn't want to be your girlfriend.

But I want someone to love me.

Wait, no not even someone. Anyone who is kind enough to get to know me - the real me, the damaged me, the intensely deep and pensive me, that finds more value and worth in the soul of music and metaphysical concepts than small talk - and not run away.

To hold me after, lay with me, and fall asleep with me. But I can't have that because I have no standards of who I'd want to share it with. No specific person.. just someone, which speaks volumes about the depth and extent of my loneliness: crippling.

Would you still want to be my boyfriend now?

Mary Bove



## Day Old Sin

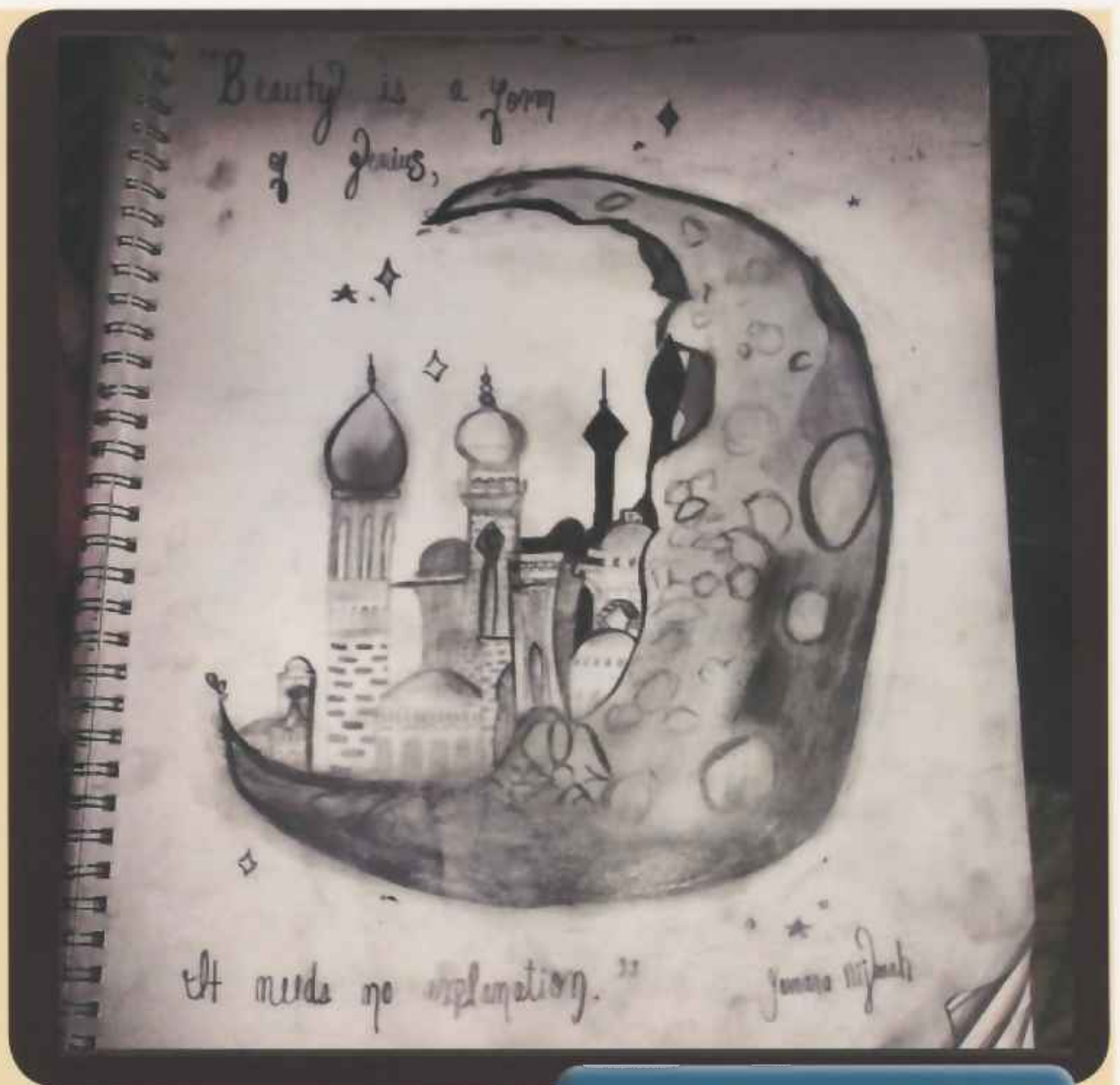
Matthew Schlasta

Day old sin gets washed away  
Blood red sunset cleans your face  
By the end there's not much to say  
Drifting off  
Forget your name

White chalk wraps my shape  
But my soul you'll never trace  
I curse these cold dead hands  
Tight pressed lips can't kiss me back  
I watch your hair turn gray  
Way too young to rush your age  
And from these cold dead hands  
slips everything we've ever planned

Alexandria Smith





Tamara Nijmeh

R.J. Barna

This is a haiku  
It's written to fill up space  
in the Instress mag





Andrea Carr

“Somewhere over the rainbow,  
skies are blue.  
And the dreams that you dare to dream,  
Really do come true.”

*E.Y. Harburg*



Grace Riker



# The Five Stages of Grief

Meghan Digerolamo

## Denial

Come the sun, and I  
am free.

I dance through fields  
of lush green,  
Over hills and through  
tall grass.

I pick flowers of white  
and yellow,  
Watching the birds fly  
passed.

Beyond the hills, I see  
no end.  
There are only the  
skies of blue,  
Blocked only by white  
pillows.  
And where the blue-  
bird flew.

On my path, there sits  
a rock.  
It is plump, and round,  
and fat.  
The walls are dark and  
jagged and cover,  
Over where white  
flowers sat.

I stand and stare,  
And walk away,  
The thing is gone  
That blocked my way.

## Anger

A shade dark upon my face  
A wall of fire coats my eyes,  
It blocks the present from my vision,  
But shows all of the lies.

I cannot fathom the anger  
That has grown inside of me,  
The unending frustration  
Has left me inept to see!

It fills me from my toes to ears,  
Filling each part of me with rage,  
I can feel my fingers tingle,  
My anger, I cannot gage.

It makes me want to hit,  
To break,  
To fight,  
And to spit.  
The anger that has grown inside me  
Has left me unable to sit.

How can something this mundane,  
An emotion in my head  
Cause me such distortion,  
Such poison to spread?

I will not move on,  
No, not what I will do,  
I will embrace this rage inside myself  
And become what I am, anew.

## Bargaining

In my hands wrapped so  
tight,  
Close to my mind and close  
to my heart,  
I've carried long and hard,  
To the place where we must  
part.

It is all that I have ever  
known,  
Every love I have ever felt,  
Every possession I have  
ever owned  
Every joy I have been dealt.

Yet here I am,  
All bent and low  
Holding tight my life  
For which now must go.

For if I give all that I own  
To the power I cannot see,  
You will be saved,  
I know you will,  
From this misery.

This power that remains  
unknown,  
My love I am to save  
And he will live forever  
grateful  
And I will be left to my  
grave.

Although I will be dead and  
gone,  
My life given to this being,  
I am not sad, nor am I  
scared,  
From his life returned is  
freeing.

## Depression

A curtain has been laid over the sun.

The day brings no light,  
No yellow over the hills.  
The flowers wilt in sadness,  
The tress turn brown and still,

I sit ever waiting  
On my porch that has no end  
I do not move, no not an inch,  
I will miss the message it will send.

I will miss the moment,  
The unending wait,  
The torturous darkness,  
The relief that has come too late.

It waits behind the curtain,  
To rise over the peaks,  
To spread its fingers upon the grass  
And kiss my too pale cheeks.

And at that moment,  
I will rise,  
Just as the sun has done,  
And walk over the calling hills.  
No wait, I will run.

I will feel the grass between my toes  
The dew that drowns my lace,  
The wind that blows over my hair  
And the sun that warms my face.

But until the time I will be free,  
I sit and wait without a breath,  
Until the sun will come again  
And release me from this death.

## Acceptance

I have faced my rock,  
Broken my shade,  
I have kept my possessions,  
From my porch, I have strayed.

I have felt the life within me,  
The warmth of the sun,  
The wetness of the grass,  
And the rage now undone.

Although I had a heavy heart,  
Of which I could not hide,  
Although it was so beaten, battered,  
Its all is left behind.

I hold my head up to the sky,  
The sun upon my face,  
I look behind me at my path,  
And feel not a trace.



Heather Marsicano

Yvonne Staller





Heather Marsicano



# Fraudulent

Alexandria Smith

There are times like these  
when the night slowly turns  
to morning and the world is  
that much quieter  
that much more still  
And my mind if far beyond  
its limits of sleeplessness  
but pliable, more giving toward  
these questions which long to be  
answered but rarely make  
themselves known with such  
urgency in the light  
Such as the lies you told when  
we were together and the lines you  
carefully spoon fed me with a  
calculated ease that I was too blind to  
see or too idealistic to notice  
Eyes plucked out and replaced by  
rose tinted glass that saw only the purest  
intentions and the purest of skin when  
we shed our clothes and made love with  
hands and mouths whenever time allowed  
Did these moments cross your mind  
when you told me you were failing  
not because you were trying but you  
simply weren't going  
How much love we shared between us  
and pressed between our aching bodies,  
nestled in between your thighs or  
impressed in swollen purple bruises  
all over your chest and in the way  
you'd say "I love you," as you came  
Your body arching upward to meet  
mine in a reflexive embrace of  
throaty groan and heavy breath  
Or was that a lie too?

Tony Lubinski



TONY LUBINSKI  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# “A Thousand Loaves of Rye”

E.W. Bottel, translated from the Hebenese by

Jacob Hebda

Frost gnawed at the window. Beyond, the bleached aspens stood colorless. Naked, their skeletons clambered along the fading avenue, the benign presence of nature subdued at the onset of another long winter in Rachelon. Somewhere, the larches burst alight into golden flame.

Sulel sat behind the counter, the scent of dough rising from his hands. He fingered through the newspaper, eyes rising to meet frost-scarred glass. Nothing beyond but walls of brick and a sky of slate. Not a single customer in four days.

His gaze returned to the paper. “Unprecedented Numbers Swell White Army Ranks.”

A metallic tingle roused him. Nearly starting from the sound, Sulel gazed hope upon the customers. Their heavy boots clopped against the floor, drowning the dying bell above the door. He put the paper aside and faced them.

“Welcome back gentlemen!” he cried, his whiskers curled silver in the lamplight. “What can I do for you today?”

“We want some rye bread, a thousand loaves, by Honnibar.” their chief commanded. He was clad in the dark, weathered gear of those who worked upon the bogs. The chief’s clothing seemed somewhat deeper than the charcoal shade worn by the rest of his followers.

“That’s quite an order,” Sulel said. “I’ll see what I can do for you. But to have it by Honnibar is asking a lot. My wife and I can only bake so much now that our sons have left and our daughters have married. Can you give me till Frestar at least?”

“No, we need it by Honnibar.” the leader said. “If you don’t want the business, we’ll go somewhere else.”

Sulel could not afford to lose business. “Alright, you have a deal then. Will you be picking it up or shall I deliver it to you?”

“We’ll come first thing on Honnibar,” the dark man said, dropping a generous bag of coin on the counter. “I expect the order to be ready when we arrive.”

Sulel handed the chief a receipt and watched the men leave. The clomping of their boots mingled with the whine of the little bell. He swallowed hard, dabbing his moist brow with his handkerchief. Turning back into the kitchen, he called for his wife.

The next three days were filled with frantic dough-kneading and baking. Snow claimed the streets while Sulel and his wife toiled. In their fear and haste, mistakes multiplied, costing them time and flour. When the sun broke the cold horizon, stabbing the spruce ranks across the bogs, they had nearly finished the order. Only a dozen loaves remained unfinished.

Several trucks rolled up alongside the little shop. Sulel gulped when he saw the men leap from the covered wagons, clad in immaculate white and toting muskets. The dark men were dark no longer.

Their chief burst through the door, sending the little bell crying. He strode up to the counter and set his fierce eyes upon the baker. “Where’s my bread?”

“Right this way,” Sulel said, inviting him behind the counter with an outstretched hand. He hoped the White chief would not notice the sweat which coated his palm.

Geyl joined her husband, and together, they directed him to the storage hold. Piles of neatly-wrapped loaves lay stacked there, threatening to spill out of the room. The chief drew in his breath, and upon his cracked lips a smile lengthened.

"You understand, I see, the things we live by," the man beamed. He shone brilliance in his cloak of snow, a saber glistening at his side. The gilded emblem of a captain anointed his cap. "You're a true Sympathist, a true White citizen indeed! When others are in need, you provide for them! And trust me, we shall provide for you and your wife in return! Money can only go so far in a world woven by love!"

Dashing out to the wagons, the captain gave orders to his troops. Men poured into the cramped bakery and carried off the goods. With a heartfelt salute, the captain bid them farewell, leaping on to one of the wagons as it rolled off along the icy street.

"Thank heaven they've left," Geyl whispered to her husband. "Thank heaven..."

As the lights died in the city, Geyl and Sulel crawled into bed. Outside, the dome of heaven sparkled. The frost lay encrusted upon surfaces untouched by snow. The bakers huddled beneath the feather-quilt sighing with exhaustion. With heavy eyelids and weary hands, they passed into another realm.

A brick smashed their window. Glass shattered and cold air rushed in, yet it failed to rouse the sleepers. From the street below, a glowing circle whipped toward the busted window. Landing upon the bedroom floor, the torch crackled and tasted fleece. Flames crawled up the foot of the bed toward the dozing bakers.

Then Geyl shrieked. She shot up to find the sheets alight. The stench of singed cloth stung her nose. In a flash she roused Sulel and they rushed to the stairs. There was no escape; the way was blocked by pillars of flame.

"There's no reason for this!" Sulel howled, his beloved bakery collapsing before him.

"You should never have dealt with the Whites!" Geyl cried, pulling him aside into the bedroom. There remained one last avenue of escape.

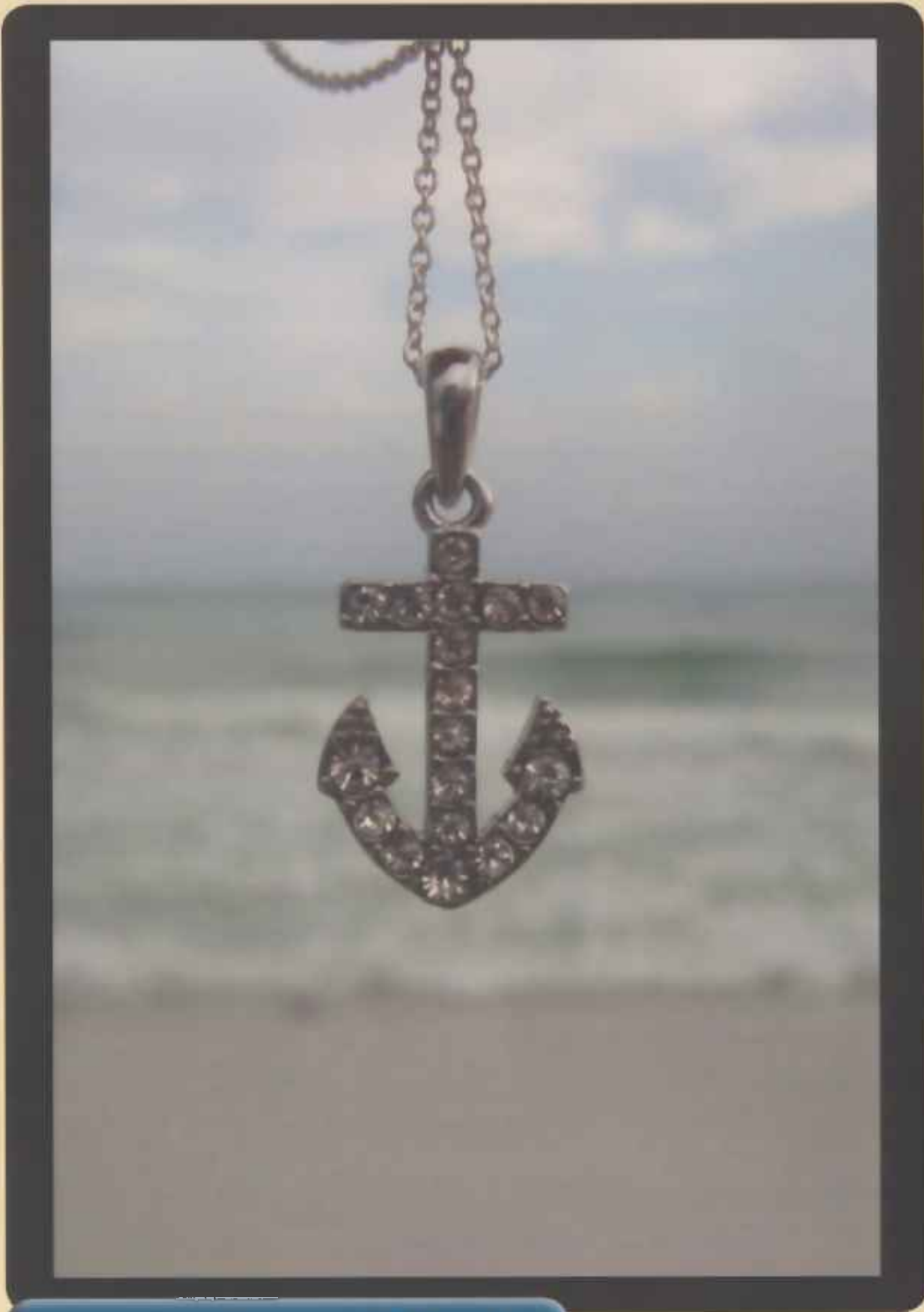
The snow did little to cushion their fall. Already the pallid glow of the fire seized the street, lit by that solitary beacon of flame. The neighbors were nowhere in sight. But the Whites were. Twenty of the cold men were assembled there, spectators to the ruinous blaze. Crisp against the night-tide they stood, assembled ranks of ghosts austere. At their side was the captain, his icicle-blade naked and shimmering with the flame's reflection. The white caps upon their heads, skull-like in the shadows, whispered of death.

The bakers' screaming limbs thrashed against the White hands that seized them. Mittens stifled their cries until cloth gags could do so. The White Men dragged their victims into the shadow of an alley. There, a wagon nestled between brick flanks. Horses vented steam, eyes wild, lips exposed bloodied gums.

Several Whites pinned Sulel and Geyl to the wall, while two men ran for rope from the back of the wagon. They bound their struggling prey in man's rough spider silk, and together, they approached the truck. Tossing the writhing bodies inside, the Whites smirked as flesh met wood, marking the space where a dozen loaves should have been.

Five days later, the good citizens of Dryapol learned of Sulel and Geyl's fate. The destruction of their livelihood was too much for them, it seemed, and they had hung themselves together upon the bough of a larch deep in the bogs. There, the authorities had discovered them, and endeavored to liberate the curious with the truth.





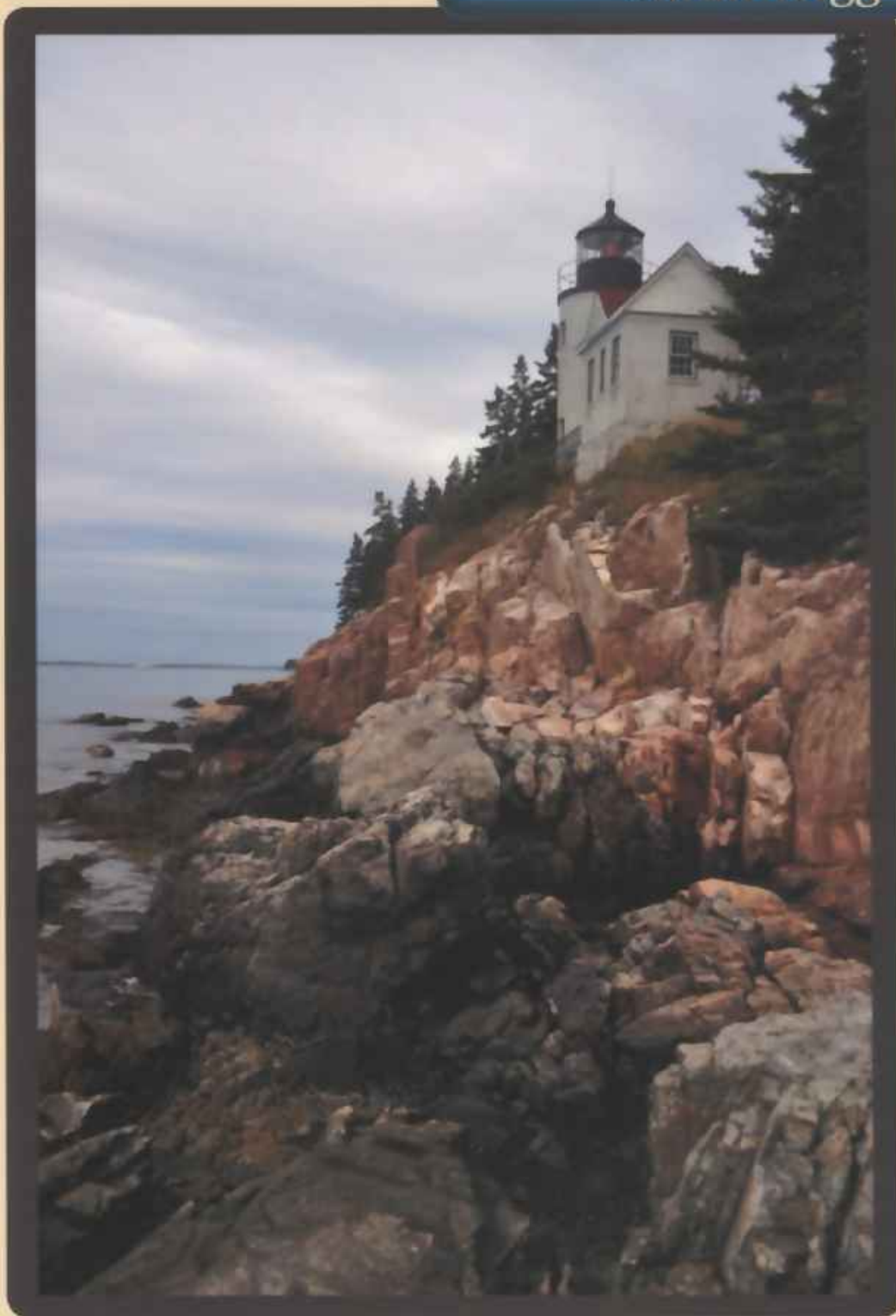
Taryn Talacka

“Somewhere beyond  
the sea,  
Somewhere, waiting  
for me,  
My lover stands on  
golden sands  
And watches the ships  
that go sailing;

We'll meet beyond the  
shore,  
We'll kiss just as  
before.  
Happy we'll be beyond  
the sea,  
And never again I'll go  
sailing!"

*Jack Lawrence*

Sarah Wigg





Lina Buali

## Time

Bryant Barnhart

Time is what we always have, yet never have enough  
Time is what pervades us all, and yet we think naught of  
Time is a bringer of life, yet a harbinger of death  
Time is ever-present 'til we draw last breath  
Time is an orphan, neglected and unloved  
Time is a maker of rivers low and hills above  
Time hides the past from the clutches of regret  
Time bears a promise of a future better yet  
Time can seem a prison to a mind unfree  
Time honest, time cunning; the essence of duality

Quickly we were born, but swifter shall we die  
Life may seem illusion; time's greatest lie  
Tarry not but hurry not and surely you will find,  
the time you had been missing while distracted by your mind  
One could wait a thousand years and time would be there still  
But mortals, we will perish soon. Cherish time for what we will.

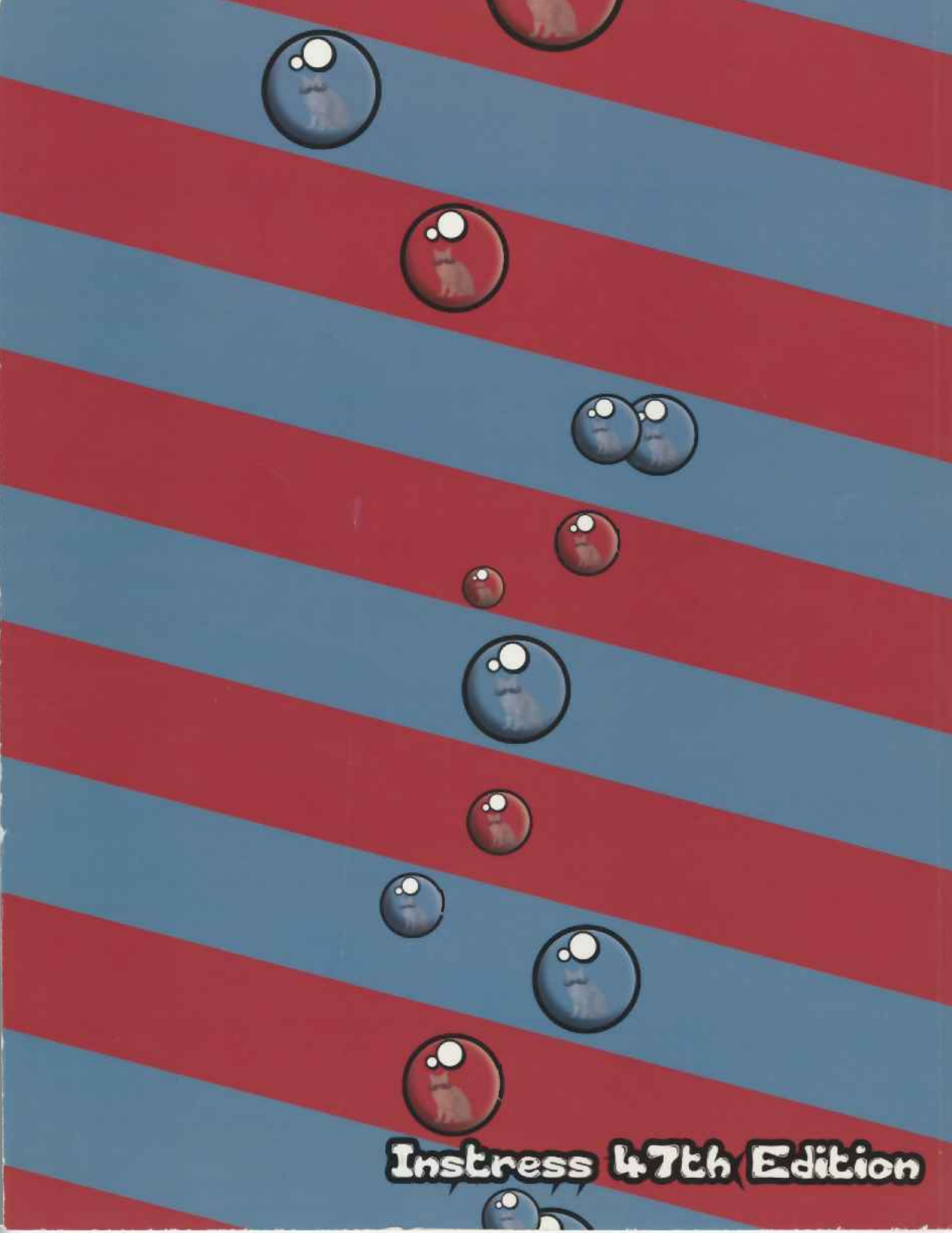


Marina Orrson

**The Instress Haiku**  
**literary genius**  
**I think so. Meow.**

Jolly Good  
Show!





**Instress 47th Edition**