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# *Instress*

*2011*



*45th Edition*

# INSTRESS

LITERARY AND ARTS  
MAGAZINE

*Welcome...*

We hope you enjoy this forty-fifth edition of *Instress*, Misericordia University's literary magazine. This year's edition is overflowing with students' inspired works of art, poetry, and fiction. We have worked tirelessly over the past few months to present to you an original composition of campus creativity.

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# AWARD WINNERS

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## Artwork

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**LINDSAY BUSS**  
“Eyes of an Angel”

**LISA WITKOSKI**  
“Untitled”

## Fiction

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**KATHLEEN JENKINS**  
“Past Forward”

## Poetry

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**JULIA HANLEY**  
“The Mass Lives On”

# Poems written in Wilmington North Carolina from under a tarp.

By Brian O'Neill

Wed, Mar 10 11:44pm

Tin tasting beer cools the throat  
as the days begin to fall around us  
taking what they need and satisfying  
no bonds of trust or remorse.

Wed, Mar 10 11:44pm (2)

How do I associate fireflies  
with my ultimate end?  
Smashed abdomens full of light  
Glistening on the sidewalk.

Wed, Mar 10 11:47pm (this stanza has been modified)

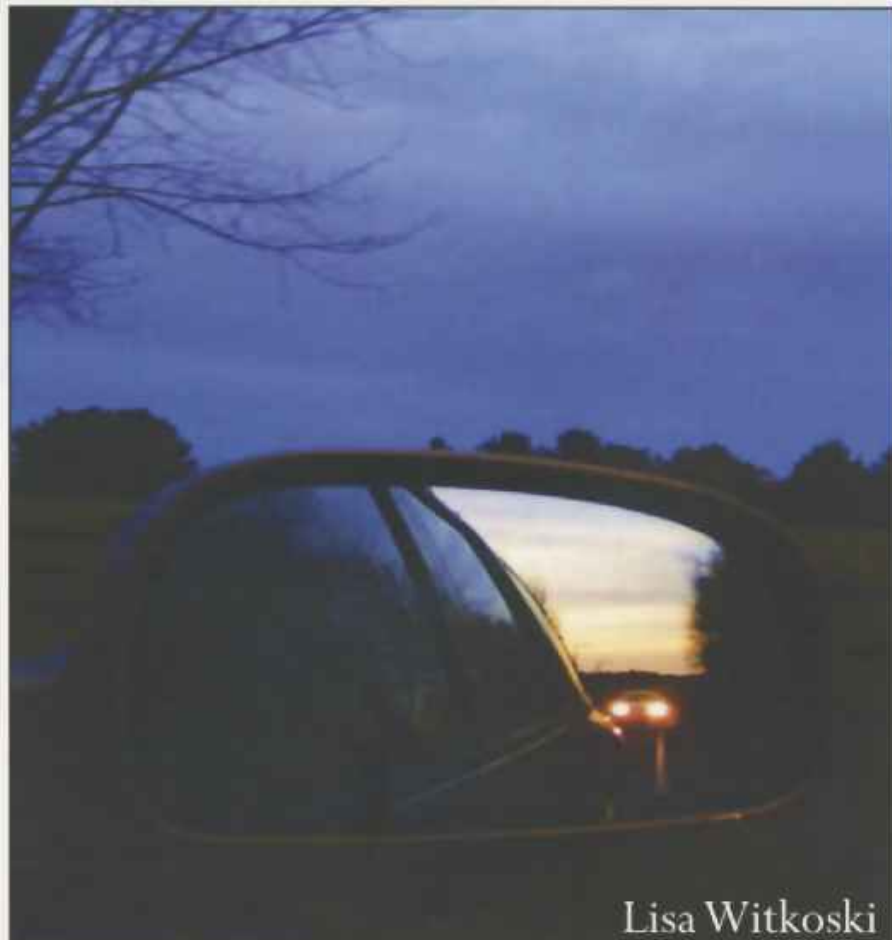
The ten days of solace that will follow  
can hold no candle  
to the light that was  
once shed on the  
eyelids of toy soldiers  
so full of innocent terror.

Wed, Mar 10 11:50pm

The growing void will sweep like  
bristles through dust as we part at the  
great divide. Like guns without powder  
we will misfire and rely on the notion  
that bullets were meant to shatter  
bones and split arteries. I'm sorry, I can  
no longer carry on the charade. I'm  
sorry, I can't live like the old.

Thu, Mar 11:22pm

When the falseness is recognized, the  
stone walls crumble and let leak the  
most putrid of waters.



Lisa Witkoski



# Version of a Villanelle

By Mary Scarpa

I plan to kiss life, to live forever  
A body is a cage that swallows you up  
To free the bird inside is my endeavor

Do not just exist because you are  
I will Sing, cry, laugh, birth, till I've had enough  
I plan to kiss life, to live forever

In the people you meet, you will touch them however  
Not everyone can fly, and this will be tough  
But to kiss life into them, is your endeavor

I want you to fly with me, to live on forever  
in the smiles you create, in the shit you stir up  
You will kiss life, so it will live on forever

And the bird in the cage, one day will die clever  
Flying elsewhere on in the legacy built up  
Kissing its life, living on forever

If you impact people, places, and time  
Fight under shadows and praise till you die  
Somebody's soul will be kissed by your cleanser  
And life will live on, and with life YOU --forever

# Abuela's Hands



Amanda Brown

# Award Winner

## The Mass Lives On

By Julia Hanley

A switch in a code  
Incorrect, try again  
The bells ring  
On a finger  
Sized mass in the liver

It started out  
In the organ next door  
A neighbor long welcomed  
— not anymore.

The liver was friends  
With a pair of balloons  
One deflated,  
Then there was one.

The pancreas was being  
Stabbed by the needle  
That deflated the balloon  
That pained the liver

The mass lives on  
Stabbing the pancreas  
Angering the liver  
Smothering the lungs.

The pancreas threw up  
A mass of black goo  
Like the black bile  
Of a long-empty stomach

The remaining lung ate it up  
Thinking it was licorice  
Her initial joy  
Turning into fear

Needles, operation  
Laying on a table  
A woman screams  
Sweat-filled pores  
Overflowing

Lung crying  
Liver bawling  
Pancreas rocking back  
And forth, shaking the pain  
Away

Tube in both balloons  
The lung's brother is revived  
He sighs in relief

As the licorice is removed  
Stinking so much it could  
Rival a skunk

A woman wakes up  
Lies in hospital  
x-rays, doctors, nurses  
checking the vitals  
leaving her without respite

The news is given  
The boyfriend lives on  
The chair next to the bed  
A once lively creature  
Has shrunk in the wash  
She will not grow again

The mass lives on  
Stabbing the pancreas  
Angering the liver  
Smothering the lungs  
The mass lives on

More needles  
More x-rays  
And the liver shows its mark  
Hospital mush  
Now eaten in silence.

Numbers and letters  
spin around the room  
10% chance, stage 4B,  
1 year at most

They are elephants of stone  
And will not be budged

A paper given to the woman  
Do Not Resuscitate Order  
Written across the top  
Tears roll down four eyes  
Four cheeks, one  
United heart

Worn, a blanket  
Carried too much  
Receives red dye  
To restore  
What they can.

The mass lives on  
Stabbing the pancreas  
Angering the liver  
Smothering the lungs  
The mass lives on.

Sheets folded  
Stretcher rolled in  
A body transferred to her home  
Where she can rest

Sleeping longer  
Breathing harder  
Lungs wither  
Pancreas struggles  
Liver shutting down

Eyes close  
A rainbow of colors  
Surround the soul  
Lifting her up gently  
Kissing her forehead slowly  
The mass lives on no more.

# The Dancer

By Eric Schollmeyer

A woman dances with direction as intent  
quite predictable if you know her rhythm and tune  
she treads lightly and is slightly bent  
as graceful as stars, as bright as the moon  
she dances with her heart-  
then dances with her soul  
her rhythm and beat are more than her art,  
as this has become her only goal  
look towards the audience to see them stare  
to watch you move in your own little way  
for your dance has nothing else to compare  
your dance of ages your dance for today  
All your effort and time stares back at you-  
in that cold mirror where no one sees your act construe







## My Favorite Song By Kristen Gazowski

I can hear my favorite song playing,  
Just about every day.

The words, the meaning, everything they are saying,  
Makes me feel a certain way.

Now I just want to dance,  
I can hear the bouncing, loud, pounding beat.

The feeling puts me in a trance,  
It pulls me right out of my seat.

Now I am pissed,  
The loud, obnoxious music starts to flow.  
It makes me think of everything I've missed,  
How much this feeling really blows.

I haven't heard this in so long,  
I think I hear my favorite song(s).

*Award Winner*

## Eyes of an Angel



Lindsay Buss

# Clarity

By Mark Walbert

I woke up with you on my mind.  
And I thought about how you are so kind.  
I then continued to think of you.  
And I was able to see through the window as if it wasn't there.

# Intuitive Expansion

By Eden May

To live in a box  
And proceed in a straight line  
is to go against the rhythm of nature.  
Our very essence is a spiral.  
Two lovers spiraling in sync  
Until their dance is  
Completed.  
They know they are One.

Live laterally,  
Branching out  
with your many magnificent mirrors to behold.  
Let them reflect light.  
What resonates best  
Is our own  
Truth.

# *Award Winner*

## **Past Forward** By Kathleen Jenkins

“This week on Teen Vampi--” Click. “-ing weight made me hap-” Click. “Bitch, you stol-” Click. Click. Click.

Your thumb presses the off button and the screen makes a faint shzwoop. Your brain, it won't shut off. Of course, there is no power button. It prevents you from concentrating. But really, there's no point in watching that shit anyways. Your brain returns to repeating the various assignments and tasks you know you should be doing. Rather than submit, you turn on your dying computer. The one with the flapping screen and the broken left click, the one you received as a gift five years ago. Has it really been that long? You think it to yourself. It's time to buy one that functions properly. Too bad you don't have the money. You don't have the money for a lot of things. Money isn't everything, you tell yourself. It just has a monopoly on everything. You wish it would change.

But don't say it out loud. No one is listening. No one cares.

---

“Mom! Look at me!” She hasn't taken her eyes off you. You are well aware of this, but need to say it. Just in case. She tells you how amazing you are, that no other little girl has ever been so beautiful in the history of the world. She's lying, but you don't know that. She might not either.

You twirl in your tutu, the one that looks like a Dalmatian. Your mother claps and smiles. “It's time for tea now, Mom.” Venturing over towards the kitchen play set, you realize that the tea cups are still dirty from tea

cups are still dirty from tea time yesterday. Upon realizing, you tell Mom that tea will be five minutes late. You aren't sure what minutes are, but you know that they take forever—and sometimes, when you want more, they aren't long enough.

“SHHHHHHHHHH!!!! Mom, look! I can wash dishes, too! SHHHHHHHHHH!” Mom smiles, knowing that one day you will hate to do dishes. You set the table, placing Mr. Bunny, Butterscotch, and Skipper in their assigned seats. “Skipper is getting married, Mom. Ken decided Barbie was too ugly, so they are getting divorced. Ken likes Skipper now, so they are getting married.” Mom laughs, loudly at first, then hesitantly.

Tea time doesn't happen tomorrow. Mom says she has adult things to do. Play with your brother, she tells you. You go play up in your room, instead, not forgetting to close the door.

Tea time doesn't happen the following day either. Instead, Skipper decided she was in love with Barbie. Ken started dating Teresa. Mom started dropping you off at the neighbors to have adult time with a special friend. You decide you don't want to have tea time ever again.

Skipper doesn't mind.

---

“Good job!” Your teacher praises you as she hands you your paper. Once again, you got an A. You smile. The bell rings for lunch. You grab the lunch your dad made you this morning, thankful you don't have to stand in line to eat the cardboard pizza. You sit at the table, waiting for recess.

Instead, the teacher comes to get you. No, it can't be time, this can't be happening. You remember that it wasn't your dad who made you lunch. It was your stepmother.

You go back to the classroom with the teacher. Tears stream down your face. The teacher begins to cry, too.



"It's going to be okay," she tells you. "You'll like it there." You and she both hate your dad right now. "I know you'll do great at your new school," she tells you, still crying. "I don't care, I want to stay here with you!" you cry out.

Your dad comes to get you. Your stepmother is there, too.

You don't speak. You cry. And you hate them.

---

"Are you listening?" Your therapist calls you out. You were thinking about him. Again. He wants to have sex. You aren't ready. Well, people tell you that you aren't ready, so you listen. You love him. Not that fake bullshit where you think you are in love, but it's really not. "I think I love him," you tell your therapist. She tells you that having sex is okay, that it's just a taboo, especially for younger people. "You've been with him for over a year, haven't you?" she asks.

It's hard to explain, but she already knows that. You're apart more than you're together sometimes, and it's usually your fault. No, it's always your fault. You just don't know why you can't commit.

"You have to stop seeing your therapist for a little while," your stepmother tells you. You aren't surprised. You're actually okay with it, for now. You've seen her since you were eight. In a few months, you'll be an upperclassman. You have more important things to worry about.

In a few months' time, right before summer break, your dad and stepmother will sit you down. You asked them to see your therapist, but they just keep telling you that she is sick. They tell you something you never expected to hear.

Two days later, you go to the funeral. Alone.

---

"Why are you working out all of the time?" a stranger asks. You want me to tell them some unpleasant words but keep them to yourself.

You just position your earbuds back in place and continue to run. You're not really running anywhere, though. Maybe you're running from something. But that takes too much thinking. You're much better thinking about numbers. Three sets, fifteen reps. Superset it with sixty seconds of calisthenics. Start off with a hundred-eighty minutes of cardio, more if you decided to eat that extra handful of cereal last night.

Meet a boy. Not just the ones that call out to you when you're out walking. One who likes you, wants to get to know you. You told yourself you would never go fast. Slow, you always said. Slow.

You've been going full speed for too long. And this time you sprint. You went too fast. You forgot how to breathe. Stop running, dammit!

Too late. You trip. You shatter.

---

"Reach out. He's there for you. He has been waiting so long for you to realize that you need Him." You see the congregation. The girls, especially. They have friends. They belong. They have fun. You don't.

You just want to be happy. But Skinny doesn't make you happy. What makes you happy, then? Maybe God does. Sure, that's it. But can you still be Skinny? Change seems too hard. So does working out six hours a day. What do you do then? Try to slow down. Pray. Try to read the Bible. You can't concentrate. Not in school. Not for fun. What is fun? When did you have it last? Do other people's brains ever turn off? Stop asking questions. Just go back to bed.

Wake up. Too early. You don't want to wake up at five in the morning. Never again, you tell yourself. Just go back to sleep.

---

"You shouldn't be eating that," your grandmother tells you. "Cookies are bad for you." Your grandfather's funeral was yesterday. Grandma refuses to cry. She won't break down. You do, though.

You've gotten really good at it. Grandma is more focused on the fact that you gained weight. More than anyone is comfortable with.

The phone rang at work last Sunday. Again. And again. It's mom. You know enough to realize something is wrong. Normally you text. After all, she is more a friend or big sister that you refused to talk to for eight years. There is a lull. You can finally call her back. Hearing the intonation of her voice, you know.

Brother is working with you today. You don't have to tell him over the phone. He was the last one to visit. You are angry at yourself for not going. Instead, you were locked behind doors, trying to fix your life. You've spent eight of the past eleven months behind doors. Every time you were freed, you ended up back there.

You wish you were back there now.

---

"I don't personally understand, but I love you. BEYOU." Your best friend left this comment on your blog. Earlier that day, you wrote a post, allowing yourself to say something you thought you would never have the guts to say. You still haven't told anyone else. No one you see, any how. Just the internet, of course. So much for being an adult.

Your dad will never understand. You can remember how he protests "unlawful" marriages, even when he himself has already had two divorces. It's not natural. You learned this as a child. When your stepmother heard that you had kissed a girl back in middle school, you denied it. Even though you were internally aware that having girls over to the house was just as "dangerous" as having boys over. Keep playing it off like it's nothing. Date boys, kiss girls, too. Just don't tell Dad.

Yet, there was a reason you tried too hard and yet could never commit. It was the same reason Skipper fooled around with Ken, but ended up with Barbie. Give it up, you tell yourself. Stop trying to hide it.

You are who you are. Deal.

You do deal. You just aren't sure you can handle anyone else dealing. Especially Dad.

---

Save and close the document, exit out of the screen. The power down takes too long, you press the button that makes it go faster. Fold the screen down. The computer is about to break.

Your brain still has not turned off. Try again to do the work you know is due the next day, even though you know it's not going to happen. Shut the book, open the blinds. Open the windows, and the cold air comes rushing in around you. Hands tingling, your body is about to go numb. Across the snow and dead trees, not a single thing moves, except the howling wind.

When everything is dead and gone, you don't know what you have left. You're not sure if anything is left.

Shivering, your body reminds you that though the plants are dead, you are not. And the thoughts you have need to be said.

Because even if no one else is listening, you are. And even if no one else cares, you can.





# Spring Brings Lots Of Yelling

By April Dulsky

“Spring brings lots of yelling”—the golden fakes can tell you that, more than just one time or in good taste. The candy on the table is bad so everyone should dig in before there is too much to consume and the aunts have a field day. The night beings of the TV look rather odd compared to how they talk to you in the day light. I don’t know if they see since they’re not the brightest but I guess you would know if your head was rolling on the cement next door and down a block from the alleyway. Give directions and receive the best lecture from someone with nothing else to do but get lost and forget to turn on the light switch. Speaking of flowers, the flour on the pavement is eating a mouse and now it’s white and black. The no-good people on the other side of the alley seem to be very nice in the way they say goodbye.



Caitlyn Day



# The Human Genome Project

By Aimee DiLucido

Maybe there's something wrong.

You know, something you can't control.

Something microscopic that makes all the difference,  
a gene out of place, releasing a funny looking protein

Or maybe there's something, something all together missing. Like  
a hole in every cell, everything flows and works

fine, don't get me wrong. I'd consider myself normal but  
you see there's things,

people, places, events—that pass through me and take up space.

They hold up guns, knives, freshly broken bottles, lace, lipstick, pointy  
shoulders, any weapon of choice

and claim their territory

on the parts that used to be my wide open plains.

It's beyond me.

All the grass, trees, details unnamed,

hidden in the folds and in the footsteps

on fresh ground, in the paint strokes painted over, are all revealed.

My secrets, our secrets are free like cotton flower

wishes but their path, landing, living, loving, and planting, are mapped  
out, tracked

down and

read out loud.

Fatal imperfections

Maybe they're wrong. Who's to say?

What's written in the stars that glitter in my veins,

every cell by cell a mini destiny.

# Dances with Foxes

By Susan Panaway

Youth, have you got any sense?  
Any cents of cheap perfume  
for blonde dates?  
Many cents for penny arcades  
where we spend our pocket change. Nothing will  
change.

Tomorrow will be a better dancer.  
Today can barely waltz.  
Let alone tango.

It takes two. Two to break up the band.  
Listen Yoko.

## Two Fish



Maia Painter

# Award Winner



3.

By Maia Painter

Thunder and wind roll,  
making fields stand on end,  
like hair on my skin.

4.

By Maia Painter

Hidden insects sing.  
The river below me laughs,  
at some lonely bait.

# The House that Built Me

By Katie O'Hearn

When I was little, I was convinced that I was going to be a famous actress. I had not the slightest doubt that I would move away from the East Coast to embrace the luxuries and warmth of the West Coast.

As I grew older, my career choices changed with the days of the week. However, my drive to move away from home never left me. I loved my family. In fact, I often felt they were the only thing that weakened my desire to pack my bags. I had a life better than anyone I knew. My parents supported me, loved me, and took care of most of my financial expenses. My sister was perfect: pretty, popular, and fun. She was always around to give me advice, help pick out outfits, and proofread my senior English papers. My extended family was at the most a fifteen minute drive away and at the least ten yards around the corner. They, also, showered me with praise.

It was the town itself that I despised. The people who were too self-centered to show any form of consideration to another human soul. The type of people that only allowed you to be happy if they were happy. The moment they were unhappy, they went out of their way to make your life Hell on Earth.

Immediately after graduation, I acted on my lifelong dream. I moved about three hours away to practice law in North Carolina. It was about a ten hour drive away from the town filled with the sad, desperate people that ruined my life. I met my very own Prince Charming in the form of a young veterinarian who cared for the puppy I adopted to keep me company. We bought a house in a small town filled with friendly people who held the door open for you at the post office. Last year, we got married on the state's beautiful beach.

The only drawback to being ten hours away from the place I was born was that seeing my family became a seasonal event. We went to Pennsylvania for holidays and my parents and sister vacationed in North Carolina. I missed my cousins growing up and was on my way to missing my newborn niece's major milestones. The only sacrifices I made in leaving Hell were the only ones that truly mattered to me.

Yet here I was, five years later, a twenty-seven year-old woman staring nervously at the house she grew up in. Soon after my graduation, my parents downsized to a small ranch home a half an hour outside of the city.

I know they say that you can't go home again. I never thought I would return home again during a time that was neither a holiday nor a vacation. My father's unexpected death at the age of sixty drove me to the house I grew up in looking for closure. I was shocked to find myself hoping they lied when they said you can't go home.

I took a deep breath and walked up the porch stairs. I closed eyes and inhaled, searching for the courage I needed. As I exhaled, I knocked on the door. A woman in her thirties answered the door, and I heard children playing in the background. Her eyebrows drew together in confusion as she tried to recognize me.

"May I help you?" She asked standing inside the screen door. I smiled. "I hope so. I know you don't know me from a stranger passing by in the streets, but I grew up in this house." I held up a picture for her to see as I pointed at the top concrete porch stair. "Those handprints on the front steps are mine. If I could just come in and look around, I swear I'll leave. I promise I won't take anything but a few memories. It's just, my father passed away a few days ago and I think I just need a little bit of closure before I can say goodbye forever."



The woman had opened the screen door in order to examine the photograph. At my outrageous request, she looked up and carefully scrutinized my face. Her sky blue eyes pierced my hazel ones as she tried to detect a hint of dishonesty, causing my heart to race. In the blink of an eye, her face relaxed and a sympathetic smile appeared on her face. "I'm sorry to hear about your loss." She held open the door and stepped back. "Please, come inside."

My eyes widened in surprise. "Thank you."

The woman walked behind me as I immediately went up the stairs to a little back bedroom. It was painted a different color and filled with a crib and baby supplies. As I looked at it, however, I saw room I grew up in with a faded Rolling Stones poster hung above the bed.

"This was my room." I told the woman. "I used to sprawl out on the floor to do my homework. I even learned to play guitar in here. God, I haven't touched that thing in ages."

"I'm sure Cynthia will be doing lots of homework in here. Maybe she'll even play an instrument."

"Maybe." I said with a nod. We walked down the hall together. As I looked at her family's photographs, I could only envision my own that had adorned the hallway. I glanced into my sister's room. It used to be filled with makeup, clothes, and nail polish but now it housed two bunk beds and a giant stuffed panda. I leaned in the door frame of what used to be my parents' bedroom. My eyes begin to water as I pictured my father sitting in his bed with his glasses on reading a book or saying the rosary. I imagined my mother sorting out various loads of laundry on the floor.

My mother, like me, always talked about moving. Only, her dream was only to move outside of the city, not outside of the state. After years of looking at magazines and house listings, my father finally built her



the ranch she dreamed of after I moved out. Looking back, I find this fact ironic since she never seemed to love the new house as much as she loved this one.

After a final glance, the lady and I headed down the stairs. I walked slowly as I ran my hand over the wooden staircase railing. A tour of the house revealed that our playroom had been turned into a workout area, and that our basement had been furnished and filled with toys and a tanning bed.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” The woman offered as we re-entered the foyer.

I smiled in temptation. “I appreciate the sentiment, but I have to begin packing to go back to North Carolina.”

“Did you find the closure you were looking for?” The woman asked hopefully.

I stopped and turned to glance around the house again. “I think so. I just felt like I had to come here. It seemed that if I could just touch this place, or feel it, this brokenness inside me could begin healing. After recalling all of the memories and feeling the emotions this place held, I think I’m beginning to find myself. It’s funny, but all my life I only ever dreamed of escaping this city. This house probably has the only pleasant memories I have of this town. Yet, out here it’s like I’m someone else. I return home and I’m suddenly the prodigal son.” I say the last sentence with a little laugh.

“My family always knew I’d be successful. I was the gem in the family, the kid who didn’t break the rules. I guess I thought that by returning here I might be able to find myself. To see what they saw in me. What my father saw in me, who he raised me to be...and yet, this city still feels like a poison to me.

“What I’m trying to say is that it did help. It brought back the only

happiness I've ever felt in this city. It also reminded me that I could never survive in this town. I can return home knowing that my father understood this. I was wondering if before I left I could just have a private moment in front of that oak tree in the backyard. My favorite dog is buried back there, and I would like to say my last goodbyes to this place."

"Of course." The woman said leading me to the backdoor. "Is he buried by that big oak, next to the swing set?" The woman asked pointing.

I smiled and nodded. "How did you know?" I asked, surprised since we didn't leave a stone or tree carving behind.

"You know, it's the strangest thing, but our dog always lies under that tree. She sometimes just sits and seems to stare and whine at nothing. Curious that's the tree your dog is buried under."

I nodded, processing that thought. "Well, I'll just head out after I visit the...tree. I really appreciate you giving me the opportunity to say goodbye to this place, to my memories of it. It's really helped me heal inside. To understand I didn't make a mistake moving so far away."

She reached out and squeezed my hand. "I'm glad I can help."

I squeezed her hand back in thanks before turning to walk down the deck. I had to swallow in an attempt to rid myself of the pain that was rising in my throat. I reached the giant oak tree and sat down in the grass.

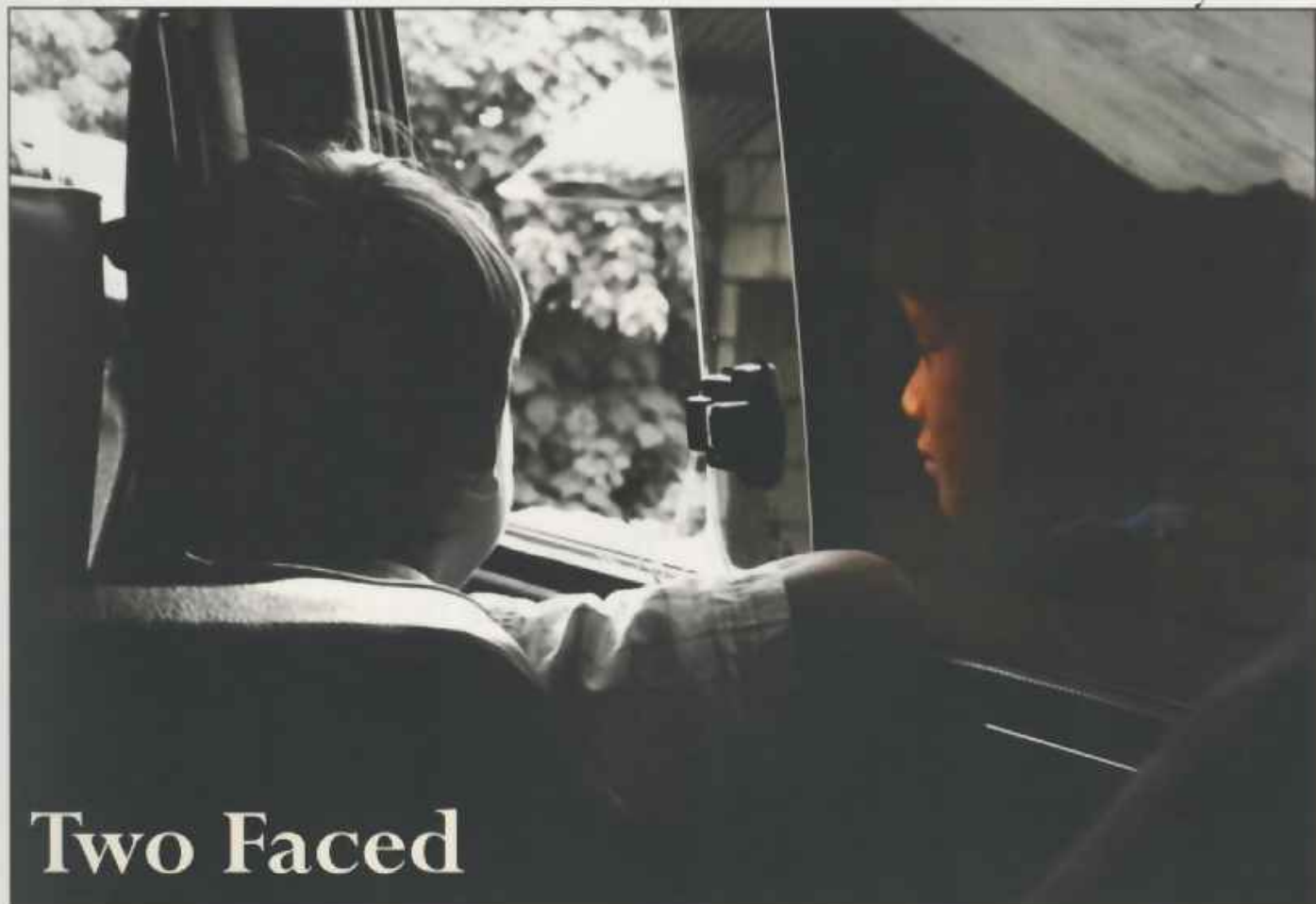
I ran my fingers through the cool, luscious green grass as I remembered Chip. He was my best friend growing up. I often joked that the man I loved was short, stout, and hairy before mentioning that he was also a Beagle. Chip had helped me through the turmoil of adolescence. He allowed me to sob into his fur after every heartbreak, every betrayal. I began thinking aloud in order to ward off the tears that threatened to flood over. "You know, Chip, it's funny. You leave home, you move on,

and you do the best you can. You do the best you can to accept the choices you've made, the things you've sacrificed, and ward off the doubts. I think I got lost in this world. I wanted to leave home, to put this place behind me. I know now for sure that I made the right decisions. I also know now that I forgot who I was for a while. I forgot how much I missed my family, which distancing myself from this place meant distancing the affect they'd have on my adult life.

"North Carolina is home now. It has everything I've ever wanted. It's warm, the people are kind, and I married a man even you would have approved of. And yet...it doesn't have this. It doesn't have you. It doesn't have mom, and Dianna.

"It doesn't have the house that built me."

Lindsay Buss



# A Winter Night

By Caitlin Hails

Red curls quiver silently  
as her whispery breath slips,  
clinging to snowy streets

Pale yellow doors still shut coldly,  
lock tight her dry lips.  
Red curls quiver silently.

Sprawled dog huffs sweetly,  
pinches her shoulders, tighter grips,  
clinging to snowy streets

Creaking stairs above, below slowly  
Close the throat, a word trips,  
red curls quiver silently.

Dark blue, taillights shakily  
slice through the air as a thought skips  
and slides on the snowy streets

Silence again – falling – heavily  
mounding flakes cover the tips,  
Red curls quiver silently,  
clinging to snowy streets.

# Snowmelt and Shingles



Jacob Hebda

## Weeping Willow

By Kailee Hummel

Weeping willow, cry for me  
And let your leaves hang low  
Fall has come and touched your leaves  
Now the wind comes and your bright  
colors blow

Weeping willow hold on tight  
To your leaves for now  
Winter will come far too soon  
And steal away your leaves somehow.  
Red curls quiver silently,  
clinging to snowy streets.



# Summer

By Kailee Hummel

All I want is summer  
Warm sun upon my face  
And sand between my toes  
Waves crashing all around me  
Enveloping where I stand  
I want to wade into the water  
And let the waves push me around  
I want to feel the power of the ocean  
And let it make me feel so small  
But then I want to feel my strength  
As I go against the waves  
Water spraying all around me  
As I dig into the foam  
Overcoming the strength of the waves  
As I push past into the unknown.



Carly Markovich

# The Persnickety Portrait

an automatic writing

By Pam MacSolkam Jr.

It just isn't fair.

It's something from another world inside the cold, dark interior of  
the room.

The night beings of the TV look rather odd compared to how they  
talk to you in the day light.

Finally a moment of clarity.

His partner helps to ease the pain by slitting his wet throat.

I caught one to feed the hunger inside my veins and continued on,  
traversing the nerves that vibrated like a guitar string on the  
verge of breaking until I reached the brain.

Scour, scour, scour.

As long as we have each other

Just stood there like a statue.

The Ivy was lost in lasciviousness.

There is no time left to lose in the dining hall.

# Swallowtail Butterfly

By Robert Wilson



# Brains

By Jill Edwards

How superb are these delicate machines,  
Which shoot and fire with endless energy.  
They paint our eyes with nature's pleasing greens,  
For without them, eyes have no sight to see.  
Just like the core that holds the earth intact,  
It never ceases, lulls, or breaks from use.  
Though we do doze that does not change the fact  
That it goes on – its labors still profuse.  
But does it not aggrieve anyone's soul,  
That life depends on such an instrument?  
One so often out of our own control,  
That surely we can't have sincere intent,  
To go on living any way we please –  
Contained by these unseen technologies.



Caitlyn Day

## 19 vs. 33 By Marina Orrson

Some races one could win without a problem.

A young child versus a limping grandparent. A three-legged dog versus a one eyed cat. A hobbling turtle versus a waddling snail. These match-ups were almost predictable from the get-go (That is granted all plays in favor of the favorite in the race.).

Other races weren't so predictable.

A graceful dancer versus a toned runner. A hung-over party girl versus a hung-over frat boy. A nineteen-year-old versus a three-year-old. These match-ups were hard to pin point a clear winner. One moment the scale might tip, but soon enough it was back up into its default position, waiting impatiently for the victor.

"Mweena," the call of a child, no more than three feet tall, rang through the room.

She rushed her way over toward me on her unsteady, chubby legs. I watched her blond, half-curled hair wildly flipping and flopping with each stomp of her feet across the carpet to the couch where I sat.

"Yes, Nina?" I caught her in my arms, encircling them around her waist to trap her within my grasp.

She struggled, giggling loudly in my ear.

"I wanna race." She pointed her little finger toward the bench sitting on the other side of the room. "Race woo to there! I win and you wose!"

She forced her way out of my grip and ran over to the "starting line." Gesturing furiously, she motioned for me to follow her lead. With a slight roll of my eyes, and a smile pulling at my lips, I stood and positioned myself next to her.

"Weady!" With this single word, Nina was already halfway to the destination of victory. "Set! Go!"



She had reached the bench before I had even taken a step forward. I watched, smiling to myself, as she preformed her victory dance around the living room. She shook her butt in my face and mocked my failure to beat her. I covered my eyes, feigning an expression of sadness. "Alright, you won."

Sighing, I fell back into my position on the couch, hoping she wouldn't ask for a rematch.

"Wet's race again!" She exclaimed, sprinting back over to where I sat. She grabbed at my hand and attempted to pull me up, but I resisted, causing her to fall to the ground.

"Pwease!" She begged, using her large, blue eyes to her advantage. "Woo win this time, and I wose!" She smiled at the prospect of her losing, so I could win.

"Fine," I agreed, reluctantly. "But only if I win and you lose."

Nina nodded with a wide grin as she rose from the floor and danced her way over to the makeshift starting line. Her giggles and the pounding of her ever-moving feet were hard to ignore as I stood and strolled over to the line.

"One...two..." She began, giving me a quick glance before speaking the next number in the sequence. "Three!"

I started the "race" off with a step that could only be described as small shuffle of my right foot. I had gone all of one inch, and already I knew this was going to be a thrilling race. And by "thrilling" I mean, that I was going to take my sweet time "running" this race to see how long it would be before Nina blew me completely off, went against her word, and won the race anyway.

Step number two, or should I say, shuffle number two.

Two inches.

Man, I live an exciting life.

I could feel Nina hot on my heels, walking even slower than I was to keep to her word. It amazed me how a three-year-old could be so patient. Normally, she was a wild, crazy child that could barely be tamed, but currently she was slowly shuffling behind me.

Our Nana, who had been watching the events unfold, called toward Nina, "Hey, Nina beat Marina!"

Nina took that as her cue to then smack me in the butt.

If our Nana was keen on face-palming herself, I'm sure this would have been a prime moment for it.

"No, Nina, not that kind of beating."

I chuckled, moving a few feet closer to the bench. I was nearing the final destination at an alarming pace, and yet, Nina still remained behind me, shuffling along. It was becoming increasingly apparent that she actually wanted to keep to her word and lose this race.

I felt a pang of guilt beating the three-year-old, but, hey, she had almost ten minutes to run the whole five feet from the starting line to the bench.

Reaching out, I touched my fingers to the solid surface of the bench.

"I win!" I declared with a fake smile of glee, knowing that defeating a three-year-old in a walking race was more than a hallow victory in the long run.

Nina fell to the ground, curling her knees up to her chest and ducking her head into her chest. Short, soft sobs began emitting from her; her little curls shaking along with her entire head. I wasn't wholly sure what to do, but I knelt down to her level for lack of a better reaction.

"Nina, what's wrong, honey?" I ran my hand through her hair.

"I wost." She whimpered into her chest. "I'm a woser."

Gaping for a moment, I regained my composure before replying.

“Nina, you let me win!”

Her sobs increased in volume.

“Hey, Nina, do you want to race again? You can win this time.” I offered with a genuine smile, praying she would cut the crying and accept.

Almost too eagerly, she jumped up and raced back to the starting line, waving madly for me to follow in suit. I did as she silently instructed and positioned myself next to her on the line.

“One. Two. Three!” She shouted in rush, before proceeding to plow her way over toward the bench.

I didn’t even bother moving.

“I win!” She screamed, dancing around once more. She sang and swayed her body around in circles, throwing her arms in the air.

I laughed, watching her antics. She never ceased to amuse me with her actions.

Suddenly, as if remembering something, Nina froze and turned toward me. She pointed out her finger and declared before the world.

“Mweena, woo’re a woser.”

I nodded, “Thanks, Nina.”

And then there were some races never have a clear-cut winner.

# Grass Girl



Kelly Cresci

# It Was Raining

His lips tasted  
Like pomegranate and ash  
When he pressed me  
against  
The tiled bathroom wall.  
The tang of fruit  
flavored with the sharpness  
of regret.  
Sorrow and smoke  
Enveloping us both.  
A fugue is written  
On our lips.  
It says everything.

# Wine and Moonbeams

That glass of deep red wine,  
sitting on the shore,  
illuminated by the pale beams  
arms around each other,  
Sip, Sip, Sip.  
It seems too high class.

Hand me a beer  
to chase that tequila.  
Hand me my cigarettes  
and turn up the stereo.  
Let's dance on the sidewalk  
under the harsh street lamp.



# Worry

By Hilary A. C. Hoover

I am getting that feeling again.

Unnamed it is, or perhaps it has forgotten.

It's mixed up with so many others to the point where I feel as though I am  
in a constant swing of altered motion.

The colors streak past me like blazing city lights as we shoot past in a cab.

That night in the restaurant with the candles on the table, the yellow  
napkins, and the inability to feel any fear as I struggle to comprehend  
the meaning of that certain smirk and eyebrow quirk.

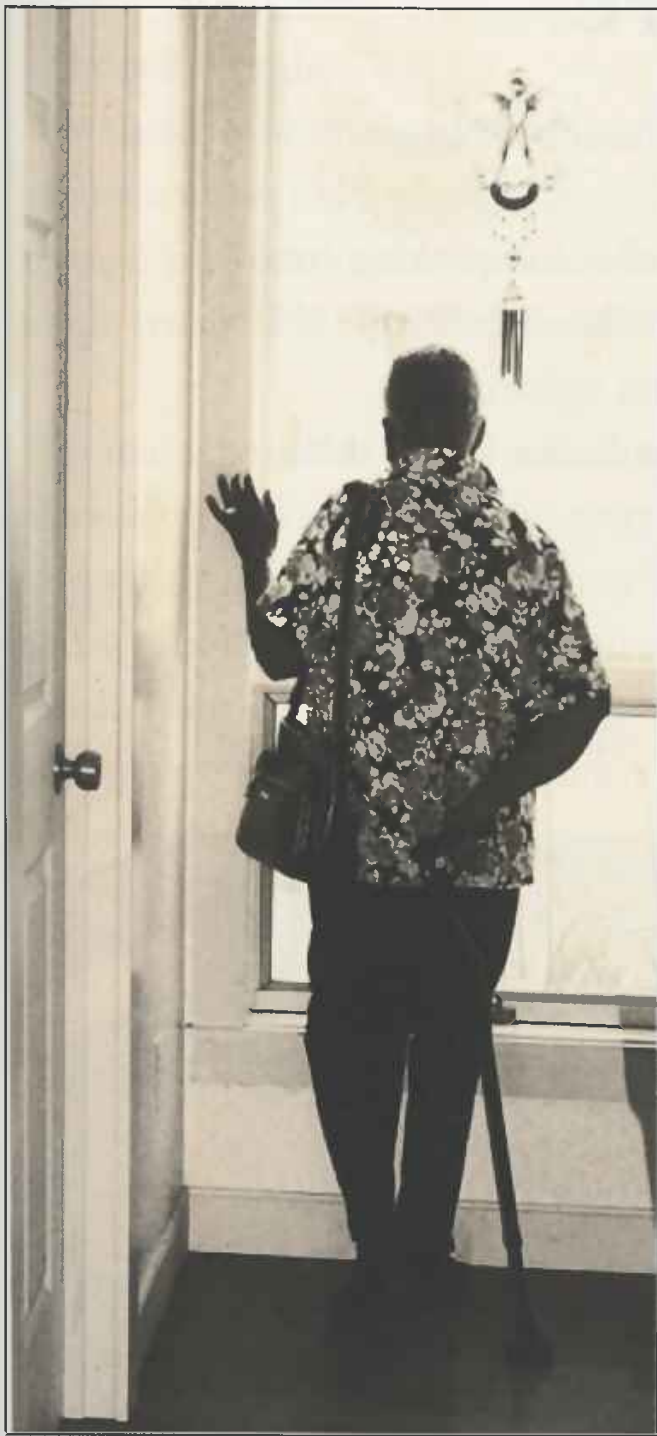
But now, you're cold and I feel as though you're slipping like silk from my  
fingers or like sand in a sieve. Cold silk, you are. Slipping across my  
skin and across my eyelids and my elbows dig into the beach and the  
tart salt of the sea.

But the sea is cold. And the wind is picking up. I know it's the storm  
between the temples of your existence. I dread the changes, but I  
know there's a reason. Or lack of reason. There's got to be.

I have to hope that there is.

My heart bangs across my ribcage and bleeds a bit for you. You're strong  
and beautiful and everything I am not. To see the change, is hard for  
feeble me.

But love of loves that is more than love, just forget my petty dread. For I'm  
ready to close my eyes and fall asleep- to dream- in my bed.



## Always Searching

By Amanda Brown

# Ode to Independence

By Dinamichele Boyer

11:11, Make a wish!

Cannot our troubles cease?

Despite our wishes, pleas, and cries  
life continues without a glance  
toward those with pain or suffering.

To wish and dream or dream of wishing;  
must we all sit idly by?

If we are masters of our fate,  
why watch our troubles ruminate;  
escalating without end.

As wishes dreams and hopes  
are faded, ripped, and torn by time,  
we come to find our breaking point  
when all must find their strength.

If we so choose, we all can rise  
to find beauty and glory in misfortune.

If we so choose, we may remain  
in self-pity's restrictive shadow.

# Parking Meters are

## Walking Sticks

By Thomas Simko

16th street silhouettes play tag across dollar bill parking lots.  
Rusted glass pairs, pliers pulling at teeth through the grass stains.  
Elephants stomp and stand two-legged on tightropes  
helping propagate marketing schemes on coffee mugs with  
thirty eight unique effects,  
illustrative pyrotechnics, and splinters  
of sky.

And the illuminated sprites romp in the windows like kindling  
throwing down in a bar room camp fire.

Subtle freeze tag glancing off of store front mannequins  
displays offensive and crude such and such for a steal at  
six hundred ninety nine dollars and ninety nine cents.

The swaying plan, the noise classy ties make  
when they tighten.

Bourbon stains new rugs bought from an albino in a small  
boutique somewhere near the Reading Terminal Market.

There's a line at famous Ray's out to the boondocks,  
and I'm standing in it even though I'm not  
hungry.

Walking along, curbside, insomniatic suppressants kick in hard.  
The waking world wears Armani and drinks Starbucks;  
coffee stains all look the same.

I buy mine at the donut shop near 9th and Passyunk.

Well, it's not there anymore.

At the park, Christ shows up as a constellation  
of bread crumbs.

The dancing soldiers of tomorrow fire rocket red Frisbees  
across a mine field of pigeons and dog shit  
though sometimes the barkers' bosses pander plastics  
made from 92% recycled political promises.

The bar across the street was closed, so I pissed in the alley  
next door and shifted to the next  
impound. They were playin' my tune  
so I stepped in and rested my tired smoke,  
inhaled soldering iron sulfur,  
and spilled a little nectar into my bowl.





# Double DD



## Behold, a Sort of Joke

By John Meholic

If you have a mustache you probably  
know how good it feels.

Your upper lip is always warm.

You have a permanent tickle  
machine.

The ladies love it.

At least I think they do.

Or

Maybe it hurts them

The tiny hairs penetrate

Her skin while you kiss

Causing tiny droplets of blood to

Role

From her nose

Down

Into your mouth

It tastes like cherries

But only better

Go home and shave your mustache

Nobody likes a rapist



# Cantankerous Noise

By John Meholic

Our dry hearts have come for patchwork.

The crickets and roaches know a bar has no sides.

It's an analogy.

If you can't see it

it's not meant to be.

Maybe spring will spark you a light to slide our little knees into the oven.

I've encountered a never ending math equation.

This time..here,

there,

him,

her,

north,

south.

I just want to forget the crime, but I can't.

So, I broke my promise because my bike got a flat tire.

What to do?

Can you see it yet?

I'm as humble as a horse but not as modest as a mouse.

It's right in front of your eye.

This is the part of me that picks on you.

This is the part of me that lies.

Did you find it?

If you can't see this swallow this.

# Daddy

By Mary Scarpa

"You've been gone a long time," I said rather obviously as he walked through the door.

I always knew that if I were ever to see him again, if he were ever to appear in front of me, that he would walk in through a door unexpectedly and wait for me to realize that it was really him standing there. I use to day dream in my high school classes that I would see him in the hallway among a crowd of people, and I would recognize him immediately and run into him and cry, arms stretched out reaching to feel the tangibility of his presence. Somehow life and death would make sense to me, I would be able to know he was alive again, or he would find me wherever I was as he descended back on Earth. He'd come back to me. In my day dreams my dad would always find a way to leave Heaven and appear to me, but I could never finish the story of my day dreams because I knew that seeing him again could never really happen.

"Hey Mary." That's all I could picture him saying. I don't know what else he would say. What else would you say if you had passed on and then somehow had the chance to come back onto Earth and appear to the people you love the way they remembered you? His voice would sound the same, and he would look just like he did in my nine year old eyes. My dad's memory was burned into my brain so I would never forget. I hope I never forget.

I keep pictures of him on my cell phone, in my dorm room, in my car, and I look at them all the time on the walls in my home. Home videos are my favorite because I can see him living, and breathing. He moves about my house and talks to my mom and I, and it is like watching him standing there alive in front of my eyes. Most of the time he hated having himself recorded on video camera, especially when my mom videotaped

me a lot running around in the backyard of dancing to songs on the TV as I got older. But he was always tolerant of my mom when she filmed him holding me. I was his only daughter. I was his miracle.

There is one video in particular, taken right after I was born back when my family lived out in Long Island, New York. My father sat on our living room couch in front of a large TV screen eating cheese curls with me next to him on the couch. My dad would give a little finger wave to the camera, place a cheese doodle into his mouth and with his other hand on my stomach would rub my belly or wiggle my leg back and forth saying "Hey Mary" as he chewed. That is something he said a lot on film as my mom was recording him, which would make sense to why I could imagine him saying that if he ever did visit from a world beyond. The video is my favorite because my mom asked him to dress me in my onesie pajamas. He would pick me up and place me on top of the pajama that he spread out of the couch and then tried to fit my arms and legs inside while still watching the TV and eating the occasional cheese doodle. At one point he tried putting my arm in the correct slot and he must have bent it back too hard because I began to cry and fuss. Obviously a father of all boys previous to me, he learned firsthand how girls are more delicate than boys. In his defense, I could imagine that trying to get a baby's arms in those pajamas would be really difficult to begin with, let alone halfway paying attention to a movie and a snack. But I remember he multitasked and eventually dressed me and then went back to his routine of cheese curls and TV, while patting my belly and kissing my feet as he tickled me. And although I have no memory of this ever occurring, in the video it reminds me that it is real and it makes me feel comforted somehow. I feel like he never left when I watch him hold me and play with me. And even though I was a baby in the video at the time, it makes me cry to know that all I have left are my memories through these videos.

But even when people die, they never truly leave you. My dad survives in my memories and through me. I, along with my brothers am the greatest gift that he passed onto the world. It reminds me that he lives through me, and I am not alone. I know for a fact that he's with me; sometimes you just have to be open enough to feel the people you miss the most speak to you in the only tongues they have left to speak with. There are always signs they send you; you just have to be open to them. Not as obvious as him walking into my door like I day dream about, but just as meaningful, and when you see them you understand.

For instance, a train whistle is a sign that I connect with my father's presence and his memory. My dad worked for the Long Island Railroad for most of his life, and he turned the attic of our Victorian House into a giant train layout.

"Hey Mary, I'm going upstairs to work on the train layout if you want to come," he would ask. I was still rather young at the time, maybe seven or eight, so my biggest job was to hand my dad nails to nail boards together and to overall be some company. I remember he even let me nail a nail into a board while he was making the layout. But he was crazy about trains, and he collected a decent amount that he showed off on shelves in the attic as well. My dad loved trains, and that is one thing that I always connected with his memory.

After he passed, I started to associate them more with messages he might be trying to send me. When you lose your father at the age of only nine years old, you're left completely in the dark with no way out; just blackness and confusion. It was no wonder that I waited desperately for a sign, for any answer that would console me in knowing that even if I didn't understand why, I was still not without him watching over me. The day we buried him in Gate of Heaven cemetery in New York was a muddy and rainy day that wish I could remember more of.



However I do remember one thing and that was the train whistle of a long locomotive that ran behind the cemetery as we lowered him into the ground. No one was aware that train tracks were laid back there in the woods, and when it passed at that exact moment with its horn deafening out the sound of the rain hitting his casket, I knew it was a sign from him. That was his way of communicating with us through whatever means he had to our human ears. I will never forget that, and I have never let a train whistle go by without blatantly pointing it out to anyone who was around me to hear it.

“Hear that, that’s a train whistle. That’s my dad,” I say.

I say it all the time, to whomever I am with at the time. Some people understand, and some don’t, and that’s okay.

To my mom and me, hearing a train whistle is like a secret language that only we really seem to understand. Sometimes we will hear it throughout the day and call each other explaining excitably about how we were thinking about him or something he use to do and then we would hear the train whistle go by outside and smile. We always share stories about things that we experience throughout the day that remind us of him. My mom will call me throughout the day with all sorts of random stories about things that would happen to her that she felt was a sign from him. Even for dreams about him, my mom would take the time to call me and tell me that she had one, and what it was about.

“I had a dream about Daddy,” my mom would the next day as I would call her in between my classes at college.

“Oh? That’s cool. What about?” I ask nonchalantly.

I would be very casual about it even though secretly I was burning with curiosity. Sometimes we would both have dreams about him on the same night. Sometimes I would share mine too, and other times I didn’t even mention that I had one. As open as I am about my father’s death, I do



not try to relive too much of it with my mom other than are mentioning of a train whistle or sign we felt we had experienced. Been there, experienced that - learned better.

“You and Daddy and I were in the house and it was Christmas and you were opening gifts and we were watching you...” she would fiddle with something in the kitchen or put the TV on mute and then take a moment to breathe. She always talked really fast when she was excited.

“...And then I realized I had to go to the bathroom, and I handed the video recorder over to him and told him to keep filming, and I was yelling at him to make sure he was doing it right cause I didn't want to miss you opening anything.”

“Oh. Haha..Cool” I'd answer, although inside I was delighted to hear the story even if I knew it wasn't that interesting.

I could see it happening though and that made me smile. My mom and I share the ability to produce the craziest dreams, although hers are more realistic than mine. I enjoyed hearing about them, mainly because I felt like sometimes they were a sign too. Nothing really big in comparison to the one we received the day we lowered his casket, but just a “Hey, I'm still here and thinking about you!” kind of sign. And I can remember that through almost every hardship I have ever faced since his death, that I have felt his strength pulse through me to keep me going, especially his wrongful death lawsuit.

Now, not only did I lose my father at age nine, but I also lost him due to negligence from both the hospital and the doctors that I trusted would be able to do their job efficiently like they were trained in years of schooling to do. The only reason my father died was because he had an ulcerated esophagus when we sent him to the emergency room and they never caught it. Not only did they misread the x-rays, fail to take an accurate medical history, fail to obtain his records of past surgeries performed at that exact hospital we took him two years prior, fail to diagnosis him 54

with anything other than right wall chest pain which we explained were his symptoms when he arrived at the hospital, but also a failure in discovering that an ulcerated esophagus if not caught is 100 % fatal. Unfortunately, he was sent home with drugs to alleviate the pain, sent home without a real diagnosis as to what was causing the problem, and sent home to eventually die of sepsis in his lung from fluid that would eventually leak out of the small tear in the bottom of his esophagus and into his right lung. Painful, and slow, and fatal.

Now, the trial for my father which ended this past April, took eleven years to actually take place. Mainly because the hospital knew they needed a good defense, and sometimes documents would magically show up, or they would try and offer us a cheesy amount to persuade us from bringing the court to trial.

“So Mary, if you don’t mind me asking, how did your dad die again?” my friends would ask.

“I honestly don’t know, I know that we took him to the hospital, and they sent him home when they shouldn’t have, and then he died two days later in my mother’s arms.” I’d reply.

That was exactly how the story would go for most of my life, because I actually never knew how he died. I had no idea except for the fact that something was wrong and he shouldn’t have died. I was left in a world of questions that I could never fully answer for myself or anyone else. But eventually I found out during the trial, and it was one of the hardest things that I had ever gone through. A week and one day is how long it lasted, and I missed every single day of class that week because court ran from 9:15 am to about 4 or 5:30 with a 40 minute drive back and forth from my school to the courthouse. And although I was scared, I felt him there. On my way to court I would pass trucks on the highway that would have logos on them that would remind me of him, or a song would come on the radio that I knew he liked. He was with me, and I know if

God had let him that he would have been there in that courtroom to testify and look into the eyes of the doctor that refused to use any form of standard of care and explain to the jury flat out that his life was stolen because of a negligent man.

“I will never be able to walk my daughter down the isle, or see my grand kids that my sons have given me, or provide for my family. I was murdered by a hospital and the foundation of lazy and careless practice that stole away my time to spend with my family and my daughter Mary. I will never be able to watch her grow up and that is something her, and my family, and you will have to live with for the rest of your life.”

I guess I could see him saying that. I wish he were there to testify and to prove to the jury what kind of person he was, and why he didn't deserve to die. Why it really was carelessness that the doctor failed to look into any of my father's symptoms, especially since he was the only patient that night in the emergency room from around 10:00pm when we brought him in, till about 12:30 when we left, and even then until 7:00 am when the doctor switched off duty. But he couldn't tell the jury any of that, so it was up to hard evidence and testimonials.

I cried during mine. I was told that my job of this lawsuit case was to explain to the jury what type of person my father was, and to help them realize that he was a family man who was stolen from his family. And he was stolen, and in between tears I think I even mentioned that.

“He didn't deserve to die” was one line I clearly remember saying.

And that's because it is true. He didn't deserve to die. Not when I had so much I still needed him for. And if my dad had been able to testify, he would have been right. He won't be there to watch me grow up, he will not be there to see my nieces and nephews, and he won't be able to meet my boyfriends, or give the “talk”, or send me off to dances and watch me graduate college and get married. He will be with me in spirit, and I believe that. But it hurts to know that the things that he yearned

to do most with me, his only girl, will never be able to take place.

But there's more to my logic than just the negative resentment that I hold for why I was cheated out time with my dad. I believe that everything happens for a reason, and I have adopted this saying into every aspect of my life. I believe in my heart that somehow it was meant to be like this, and that things have a way or working them out if I only am patient and believe. I know my father is in my life, even if he isn't physically here on Earth to spend it with me. But that's what day dreaming is for, and dreaming in general. And with pictures and home videos, he is real to me and I can dream about him and feel like he's visiting me and it helps me get by. My world has been confusing and without closure, but since the trial has ended I feel a cloud of unanswered questions lifted and replaced with peace. I haven't felt peace in a long time.

"You've been gone a long time," I use to say in my day dreams as if I were seeing him again for the first time since his death.

But not anymore. Yes, he has passed on, but he is still here with me, and I know that wherever he is, that he is watching over me and occasionally sending me a sign to let me know that he's there. That's my desire to stay strong and find a path through my sorrows. That's my hope, my courage, my strength, and my faith; my daddy, Michael F. Scarpa.





# Wizard of Watercolors

By Anthony Grzybowski

The colors form yellow brick.  
A tin man woke longing a heart  
The scarecrow not call for a stick  
As the lion did follow his part.

They travel down a winding path  
And Dorothy will precede the pack.  
I counted four, workout the math  
All figures were there nothing a lack.

The picture did assume real,  
A classic film frozen in time.  
An artsy piece with a famous appeal.  
How water mixed with color can  
mime?

The wizard not appearing the color  
flows,  
But I still know where the road goes.



## Let Your Colors Burst

By Caitlyn Day



# Untitled

By Amber Gulla

She stared at it with eyes wide open  
Afraid to walk away  
Yet at the same time, mesmerized  
By its beautiful yet horrific display

Their eyes locked intently and her heart raced  
As she feared the image portrayed  
She closed her eyes quickly to escape that moment  
“There’s no need to be afraid”

It says to her with a sinister smile  
As she quickly reopened her eyes  
Her movement was frozen, her voice as well  
What she saw she began to despise

“You fear me but yet we’re so alike”  
It said with that cold hearted look  
“You created this monster, now live with your choices”  
That voice was all it took

She ripped the mirror right off the wall  
Glass shattered all over the ground  
Her reflection in pieces as was her life  
Her old self nowhere to be found

# A Story

By Auraleah Grega

I.

your heart empties into the skies  
and tells stories that exist among the constellations  
they weave into the crystal air  
they shimmer like your fingertips

II.

You are a creator.  
Where you walk, you leave prints.  
They remain for all the centuries of the earth.

Your toes are pressed firm into the soil,  
lengthening and deepening into the moisture.  
They speak the words, not your mouth.  
They lead me, not your eyes.

I crave your crown.  
I crave your windows.  
I crave your cavern.  
I seek your branches.

# Untitled

By Kelly Rogan

You can tell yourself whatever you want,  
It never goes away

You can change your thoughts;  
You can change your world;  
You can decide;  
But it never goes away.

You decide what it is to you;  
You decide that it is okay;  
You can overcome;  
But it never goes away.

You can overcome great hardship;  
You can overcome the fear;  
You can hide;  
But it never goes away.

You can hide your feelings;  
You can hide your apprehension;  
But why?  
It never goes away.



# Poem about running into a former love at a party

her presence in the room was oppressive  
as she gripped the dusty corners  
with all three of her vein riddled fists.  
tugging the dimensions of the floorboards she began  
to traverse through the space  
that was already bending and twisting to her will.  
approaching now, breaking boundaries, county lines  
how are you  
fine  
me too  
ok.  
more pulling more bending,  
false hellos.  
then the door.



Bruce Riley

# under the overpass.

let me entail in full  
the error of your ways:  
you sell your thick taunting neck  
to other men.  
and they suckle on your clavicle  
and wait for the appropriate time to lay  
crumpled bills  
on the nightstand.

i saw you under the overpass.  
how you moved...  
how you moved?  
he kissed you under the overpass  
and I watched.  
the muscles and mussels churned from below  
so the hairs beneath your tongues scratched  
and tangled.

the nests you made were quaint  
and warm,  
so when it came time to raise the young  
they grew tiny bones and supple spines:  
biting and twisted.

i watched you raise your young  
together  
under the overpass  
and i felt around my lymph filled groin  
with earthquake hands  
every time they moved  
from left to right.

please leave me be spirit.  
i wish to see no more.



# The Mistress

By Kara Hawley

She silently creeps in  
And envelops him in sin.  
As she begins to entice,  
I begin to fill with spite.  
She has an incredibly strong appeal,  
She starts to numb what he used to  
feel

When it was just the two of us,  
Before she invaded on our trust.  
She soothes him like a lullaby,  
And taught him how to lie.  
I shake my head and stay quiet,  
Just to let him think I buy it.  
But I am far too wise,  
She is even in his eyes.  
How blunt can I be?  
He won't even look back at me,  
But we both see her

And I am entirely too sure.  
To her he turns,  
For him she burns.  
She tempts him with her looks and taste,  
So he holds her close to his face.  
She hits him with her sweet aroma,  
That nearly puts him in a coma.  
I'm sure she has plenty of moves,  
Makes him think there's nothing to lose.  
She has him where I want him,  
Where he would go out on a limb,  
Because she fills him with desire  
And raises him up higher.  
She has what should be mine,  
Not just his attention and time,  
But she thieved his entire mind.  
She's a whore of a different kind.  
And she has a name ...  
It's Mary Jane.

# Gone

By Kailee Hummel

Spin me around, not up, not down  
I'm fine with where I am  
Don't hold me in  
I can stand on my own  
She's stronger than you think, they'll say  
Don't hold me tight, just let me go  
I'm strong enough to be  
Myself in this world  
Since you have set me free  
And don't you dare come back to me  
I'm ready to move on  
Like you said, what's done is done  
And you are already gone.

Jacob Hebda



# How I Got My 'Scar'

By Matt Klassner

It was a dark and stormy night over Misericordia University. All of the golden and hazel colored leaves had fallen off of the trees by this time in the fall semester, and the campus was bustling with people walking here and there preparing to begin the night. I, on the other hand, was in no jovial mood to walk anywhere on this dreary Thursday night. Staying indoors, the warmth and comfort of my own room would be a jolly enough time. In fact, I invited some of my close scallywags in crime to accompany me on my voyage to never-land.

The anticipation was far too overwhelming; I was like an obese child in a candy store. I could not keep myself from undertaking the first phase of the expedition. With two bottles of clear, smooth, and disgusting 100 proof vodka waiting to ship my off to sea, I prepared myself for the 'straight' and narrow path that I would undertake. Admittedly, the alcohol was truly horrid. One shot felt like several minutes in the lowest level of hell. Yet, I pulled through each one with probably the most pitiful looking grin one could muster. One shot down, and then two, three, I was ready to go! Peering through the darkness of my window, I could barely fathom why any person would bear the frigidness that lay nay an inch thick outside of the plywood wall that housed the warmth that was bathing me so tenderly. Upon my friends' arrival aboard the SS Vladimir, I humbly invited them to join me in a rousing good game of beer pong; the table being made from the dismembered and dismantled ruins of my bed. My crew proved not the hardiest, for I had to add at least two different mixes to their drinks in order to quench their thirst. Alas, I stayed within my own means. Seven down, then eight, damn was I feeling great! The only part of me that was not feeling so dandy was my

throat. By that eighth shot I felt as if I was gulping liquid hot magma down my esophagus. Not to mention that on that shot I accidentally gagged from the pain and shot some of the liquor through my nose. The addition of this severe pain nearly made me want to vomit, yet I quickly collected myself in the bathroom down the hall and returned aboard my vessel. I poured my ninth shot, and prepared for ten, and my comrades were ready to drink again. Carefully crafting their drinks to their liking, I knew that I needed to abandon ship. No, I do not mean hurling. As I was seeing it, I could no longer tolerate the mindless dribble that was pouring out of the mouths of my two female companions who were equally as sloshed as I was at the moment. My head was swift as a rapid river with thoughts and grand ideas about what the rest of the night should entail. Not to mention, my head was throbbing with the force of a great typhoon. Piercing noise coming from my friends' mouths needed to stop causing trauma to my frontal lobe. So instead, I decided to walk the plank and visit the people around campus; the ones with less annoying voices.

I proceeded to travel to the main lobby, stumbling and weaving, with hopes that I would find somebody to enjoy a good rant with. Seeing a plethora of my friends standing outside and enjoying the abominable weather, I joined them with shorts on and no jacket. At the moment I could not care, for my skin was as numb to me as someone's mouth would be if it was just saturated with Novocain. Little did anyone know that this would be where the end would begin. Everyone appeared to be rabble-rousing with one another. Smoke from unfiltered cigars and cigarettes filled the air. A bright orange and white cat, no bigger than a midget's palm, walked by the group of a dozen or so kids and climbed the nearest evergreen tree for shelter. After discussing the debatable importance of me attending 8am class the next day, I decided it would



be a good time to do what any drunken individual with a high threshold for the bitter cold would do: take a leak outside. Still bobbing and weaving, probably more so than before, I walked around the side of my dorm and readied the cannon. This is where the picture gets fuzzy. Not only does it get fuzzy, but it also becomes nearly impossible to remember. For when I woke up the next morning, with a big yawn and a drilling migraine, I looked into the mirror and saw what image still frightens me to this day. Gazing back at me was someone with one eye swollen shut from deep scab wounds oozing with yellow and sticky puss, a nose completely smoothed over with dried blood, and a "blood-stache" that would have rivaled that of Hitler himself.

It was sunrise the next morning, and the light had powerfully beamed through the shades and into my room, illuminating the darkness. As I stood standing in front of the mirror, intently watching my reflection and hoping it was somebody else's, I knew this horrific scene was all too real. I immediately screamed into my sleeping roommate's ear, nearly crying, asking what had happened to me. With a look of bewilderment in his tired eyes, he told me that I had fallen on my face while I was urinating. He asked how I could not remember that and I reminded him how many shots I had endeavored. The pain in my face was excruciating, and I felt like my nose was broken too. Touching my face only made it hurt, and the wounds were still fresh, so I could not apply anything to them to prevent any kind of serious damage. I draped myself in dark sweatpants and the biggest dark black hoodie I had owned. I even went down the hall to my friend's room to get his giant white and silver stripped sunglasses in order to conceal what had happened. I thought I could hide out for a while and try to come up with a cool story to make up for the accident caused by my drunken stupor. This was false. Apparently, dorm keys were being changed that day, which I unknowingly



stumbled upon when I entered the lobby moments after arming myself with clothing. Filled to capacity with students and fellow classmates all staring at what I was hoping was my getup, I proceeded to engage many in conversation. Nobody was a fool; everyone knew what had occurred the night before, except me of course. No one I asked, however, seemed to be as surprised as my roommate was that I did not remember. Many people just commented that I truly was a mess.

Apparently, after falling on my face and hoisting myself up with my shaking, trembling hands, I stumbled over to the dozen or so kids standing around and asked them to assist me. A few grabbed my arms and one grabbed my pants because I was unable to walk at that point. After getting me to bed, several people heated up washcloths and dabbed away the blood dripping from my face. I do recall the warmth of the water against my face as if it were comforting me. Three hours of care went into my reconstruction until I eventually went to bed. Much of this care involved keeping me awake and attentive so I did not get a concussion. Talking helped, yet I suppose that I was getting very irritable because I was fatigued, and because someone was watching Doctor Phil on my television.



Lindsay Buss

# CAUSA SUI

By Anonymous

There are no more of the young and radiant days.  
When life was all beginnings,  
And the days, they had no ends.

Life allows so few of the lamb white, snow bright,  
days;  
the days that unfold brilliant about you,  
the sun, warming 'round you like a wish.

Soon, soon, soon, too soon,  
life shows its fangs,  
and we, pierced and gored,  
cease living out our questions.

'Tis toil to awake the day without answers,  
but it is to live dead  
to wake the day without questions.

The quiet journey within  
giving way to the silent march without  
...and in step we fall.

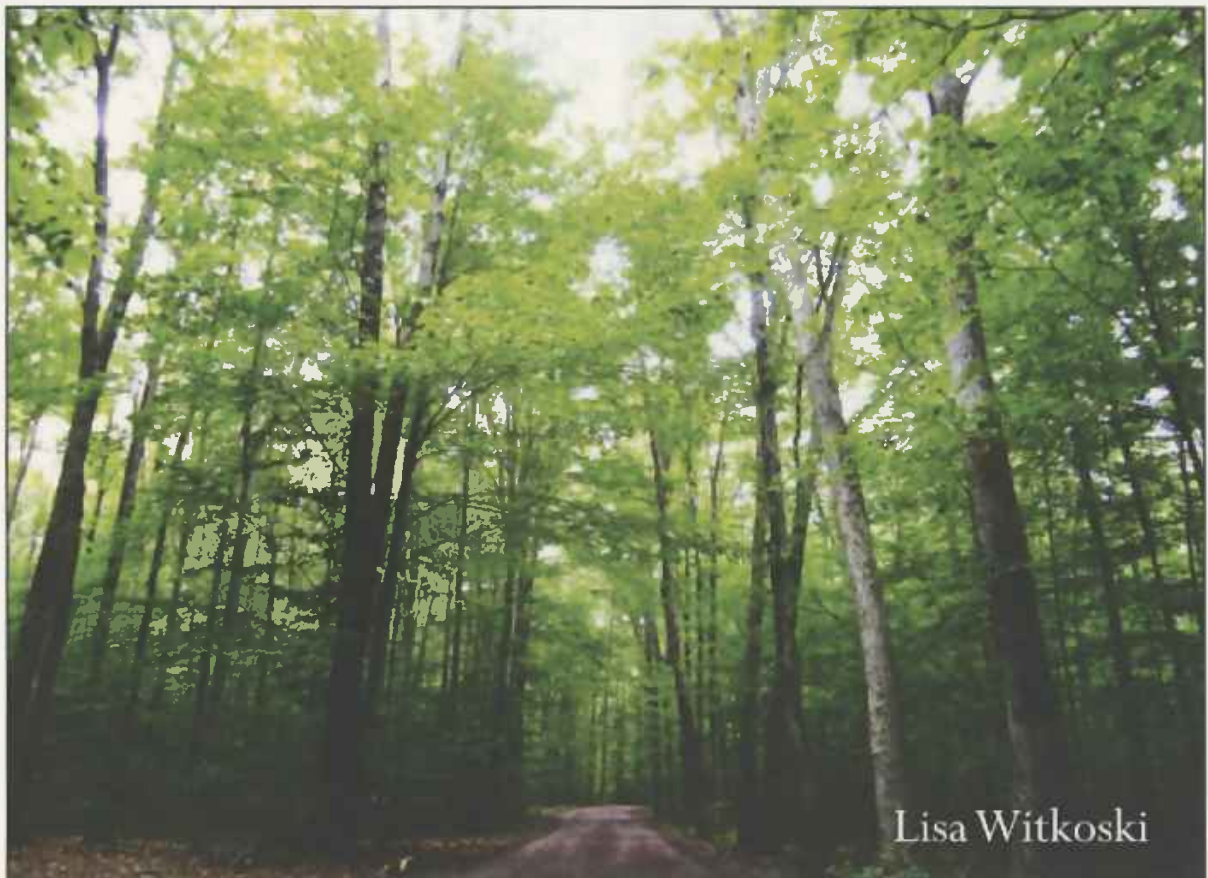
Life no longer robed in light,  
darkens, dusk,  
justness journeying mercilessly unjust.  
And retreat we unto the shadowy places  
... in its' wake.

# Untitled

By Patrick Noonan

i used to believe  
in people more than  
now  
now they're all just  
stories and  
distorted characters with  
blank  
characteristics like tiny  
marble figures of ballet dancers  
sitting pretty taking in sunlight  
but not feeling any warmer  
underneath stone

now people just  
seem colder and  
those people used to  
take statues and barricade them-  
selves  
in during war and that's  
how all the statues lost their arms  
that's how the statues lost their  
arms  
and yet they're still beautiful  
somehow  
beneath stone



Lisa Witkoski

# Villanelle

By Gabrielle Gattuso

You only have yourself to blame  
For the emptiness in your life  
I will never feel the same

There is no one for you to adore. What a shame  
For you to never feel loved again  
You only have yourself to blame

Try to find something to fit the void, but you feel too  
ashamed

I have taught myself to let go of your insulting remarks  
I will never feel the same

Stop trying to impress your peers, they soon will see the  
game

Of faking smiles and pretending to be nice  
You only have yourself to blame

Your hostile feelings have caused me to proclaim  
The truth behind your repetitive lies  
I will never feel the same

You still don't understand how many people think you're  
lame

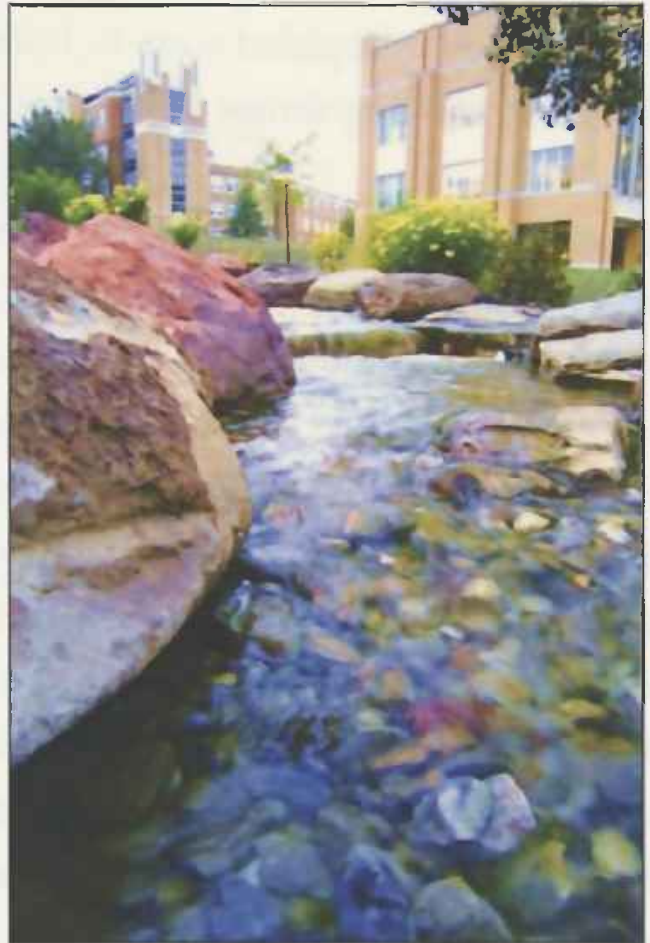
So don't cry when no one believes your lies because,  
You only have yourself to blame and  
I will never feel the same



# Sonnet

By Mike Martin

What it is the mound of tin foil,  
Can it even be considered a work of art?  
If a person says it is, they must be very loyal.  
To describe it, I don't know where to start.  
The bright glare off the tin made my eyes boil,  
It felt like I had been hit with a dart.  
I can't imagine the creator had to toil  
Like he was pushing a heavy cart.  
Picasso would have been in a state of turmoil  
From our gallery, he would want it apart.  
Looking at it, I was truly foiled,  
I just didn't know it part.  
    But that is the beauty of art,  
    It is in the eye of the beholder.



Lisa Witkoski



# it's okay; i can wait,

By Patrick Noonan

the drab clothes and  
ceilings and hangers  
on your dresser drawer don't  
make you any person  
but if you're with a person  
you're  
a  
lot more  
whole.  
waiting can take a long time  
but i'm fairly prepared  
i've been moving things into my  
cupboard,  
taking notes on the sides  
of  
bulletin boards and  
counting the hours,  
minutes, weeks and  
dazed opportunities.  
it's getting a lot harder  
to move a coffee pot  
to my mouth  
to take a long drag and  
forget some trouble  
but i can wait at

least i think so  
i haven't done this  
before but it's  
getting easier i  
swear it isn't any  
easier i swear it is.  
and there's a plain towel on your  
bathroom floor  
all curled up and full of brazen po-  
tential  
so warm, smoothed out  
by years upon years of waiting and  
wait i've got to go  
late train schedules poor  
comrades waiting in a  
parking lot and  
me sitting curled up in  
a towel trying to force my  
self to believe i'm  
somewhere  
else and that's  
not  
true  
i'm imagining i'm a lot  
warmer  
and you're a better lover  
and that's not true

# A Somber Hallelujah

By Andrew Corbett

The opalescent shine of my skin illuminates my huddled form as I crouch in the darkness on the rooftop. Even in the midst of darkest night I cannot escape the Light. A mere ten stories off the ground is still too close to God, apparently. I had fled the celestial bastions to find my peace and yet still, the Light followed me. This unending light, burning away any hint of shadow, had come to represent all that I chafe under. The mantle of feathers surrounding me has become oppressive, a weighty reminder of all that is denied to me. So many wondrous creations I cannot experience, merely by the circumstance of my creation. I feel empty and false, watching all these amazing things, but never experiencing them myself. We become fulfilled and real beings by experiencing events and as long as I serve, I will never be satisfied. I am a rubber band pulled back, wanting to snap forward. I am unfulfilled potential and I can bear it no longer.

Life above was idyllic. I watched. That was my place. Virtues were destined to watch the movement of all celestial and sublunary bodies. Watch, but never touch, never interact directly. My existence is relegated to that of voyeur, someone that most humans would look upon with disgust, yet I am responsible for the order of the cosmos. I have never known anything but this responsibility. The moment of my inception coincided with the beginning of my task. I am forced to watch humans and their limitless potential and freedom fritter their lives away in complacency. I yearn for the freedom to make my own decisions and live my life freely. To be a complete entity with my own personal identity is my only desire. Instead, I am what I was made, and only through the gauntlet of sacrifice can I transform.

A jealousy burns in me so. A righteous and justified fury that I am enslaved to my purpose and cannot stray from it. As long as I remain amongst the creator's legion, I must forever and always watch life and its multitudinous possibilities pass me by. This jealousy consumes me. It is all I can think about as I trace the paths that the objects of my obsession have travelled. I begrudge them not. It is not their fault and I do not wish them to know my suffering. Even if I chafe at the constraints laid upon me I do not wish them upon those I envy. I do not wish for humans to suffer, I wish to be one. I cannot do this any longer. The thoughts that subsume my soul have become too much. I will not live any longer amongst the others of my ilk. I must leave behind all I have known to be re-birthed.

My change began when I first set foot on this rooftop. With my first thought of disobedience I can feel it. The cells of my body, the very atoms of my being are transmogrifying. My essence, my very being, is transforming. It is not fast enough. I need it to be over, I need the change to be complete. I rise from my crouch at the edge of the rooftop. Standing on the precipice I finally understand. I reach behind myself, twisting my arms and screaming in torment and pain and pluck the first feather from my wings. I hold it up to stare at it in the moonlight. It has lost its light, but gained a darker crimson beauty. I begin tearing handfuls of downy feathers away from my body. It no longer hurts. The decision has been made and I am now just shedding a dead skin that lay upon me. Finally my wings are bare, with white and bloody bone exposed. I take the final step over the edge, a smile and a tear gracing my pained face as I speed towards the busy city street below me. The bones of my wings are disintegrating into sparkling motes. I feel no remorse, only freedom. The last of my skeletal mantle has disappeared and my last thought before I hit the ground is...

Finally. I grin broadly and pull myself to my feet. All around, people are startled at the young man that suddenly materializes on the ground. I chuckle nervously and the word "tripped" erupts from my mouth. The first words I have ever spoken aloud are a lie and I can not be happier. The deceit tastes delicious on my tongue. A man walking past helps me to my feet and I grin lasciviously at him. He backs away nervously and continues on his way while I savor his discomfort. I dust off the knees of my pants and brush some dirt off the breast of my jacket. I run my hands through the wicked spikes of my dark hair and stretch for a moment, adjusting joints and feeling, for the first time, the weighty effects of gravity. It's time to begin my new life, free of constraint. I finally have what I want and it's time to enjoy it.

My fingers snake down into the pocket of my jeans and pull out an already open pack of cigarettes and a lighter. Something seems right about them being in my hand. I open the pack and pull out a long cigarette, raising to my face and inhaling the spice of tobacco. I hold the lighter in front of my face and the paper ignites. As I pull the smoke into my lungs it calms me. It smells like home, like anger, darkness and disregard. As I look around I can't even begin to comprehend the choices available to me. The urges I have so long fought to contain now control me and I am perfectly content to let them do so. The first door I am drawn to on the street leads me into a bar. I blend in perfectly, slipping in and out of the shadows of the patrons, ghosting past them towards the bar. The wallet in my back pocket is bulging. They don't ask for identification, all they want is my money. That's fine with me.

The first shot of whiskey burns me delightfully. Another makes me shudder with glee. I light another cigarette as a third shot of liquor, dark and brown, is placed before me. It sears into me, warming me in the core of my being, where before had only been chill. The scent of smoke



has settled into me, mixing with the pheromones and musk I naturally exude. Tobacco and frankincense mixing together to form a heady cologne. The woman sitting next to me seems intoxicated by the odor lingering between us. She is giving me furtive, coy glances that imply that with her there are more pleasures to be had, more sins to be experienced. I practice my small talk with her, lies pouring from me with ever greater ease as I continue to greedily consume the liquor and it becomes obvious. She is smitten and I cannot stop myself. I spy the rear exit and it is beckoning to me, sweetly whispering that my thirst, which remains unaffected by the drink I continue to consume, can be slaked simply by walking through the door. The thought that this is a bad idea passes briefly through my mind but against my better judgment I leave and she follows

Twenty minutes later we stumble out of the alley, giggling like children. A man with dangerous eyes places himself before both of us, halting our drunken dance. There is yelling and screaming, and I'm so bored by him, bored by all of it. He pushes me, still spouting obscenities, and the warmth that has been spreading through me explodes into a blaze. Flames whorl and crackle in my vision and then there is darkness. Cracking noises and whimpers fill my ears, and a maniacal laughter, high and cold, pierces through it all. Copper and salt fill my mouth, foreign and too cold, replaced by the taste of ash. My vision flickers on and off and I can feel the roughness of brick against my back. It is quiet now except for some broken noises of pain and the click of women's shoes against the blacktop as they quickly retreat.

My vision returns slowly. I am leaning against the exterior wall of the bar just inside the alleyway, panting and smeared with blood. The man is making the broken noises, curled upon himself, lying in the filth of the gutter and bleeding. His arm is bent oddly, and two fingers of his hand look red and swollen and wrong. There is a half moon of bloody 78



gouges along the meat of his palm between his thumb and pointer finger. Teeth. I smile again, wicked and mischievous, reveling in the grotesque. Something isn't right, though. The taste of ash remains heavy on my tongue and the smell of rot has enveloped me, like burning flesh and decay. I reach into my pocket for another cigarette, hoping to stave off that sense of wrongness with something so innately familiar, but I am frozen with my hand locked in front of my face.

Oozing from my battered and scraped knuckles is a thick black liquid, shining with a darkness and sheen of ill intent. I understand now. Oh God, I understand. Like Arachne being transformed into a spider, I am being punished for thinking myself and my plan greater than that of a God. This isn't what I wanted. I wanted to be free. I didn't want this. Again a slave, always a slave. Why can't I be free? I'm breathing in great shuddering breaths as the man limps to his feet and shuffles away. The broken noises don't leave with him. I realize they are coming from me. I am whimpering with the horror of what I have done. I cannot control these impulses. Every desire that comes into my head must find it self satiated before it will let me be. As a wave of disgust rolls over me nausea rises in me as well. The cigarette falls from my hand, the pack clenched in my other fist, as I vomit riotously, more of that thick, sable bile. My hair is plastered flat to my head as I sweat and shake laboriously. My fists unclench and the cigarettes fall to the ground, crumbling into ash as they do. I want to make it right. I need to make it right. I have to go apologize, do something to fix the man I injured so badly, but I don't move. Despite my desire, I am frozen in place. Again, I have changed.

The world tilts for a moment, everything sliding sideways before snapping back into place. I understand. It's only been a few hours since I threw off the mantle of angel and put on the cloak of devil but it feels like ages. I broke my wings and tore off my horns. I have finally become that which I desired. That boredom and lightness that I felt, draining all of 79

existence into the same monotonous grey, is gone. The deep yearning to enjoy the dark depths of humanity I watched for millennia and briefly enjoyed myself has vanished. I laugh somberly thinking that there is something fitting about the realization to which I have come. I am a fallen angel, fallen by choice, but fallen nonetheless. I am a risen devil, with no desire to suppress my empathy and love for others. I belong neither in heaven nor hell. I belong in life. I am in balance.

I can feel it in my core, in my newly created soul. I am a human. My previous forms are encapsulated into my new existence, balancing each other with the weight of their knowledge. Free to go out into the world and make my own decisions and judgments. He gave me a warning by letting the darkness in me rule for a brief period. I understand. To be human is to be balanced. Heavy and light, good and evil, dark and bright, all are contained within. To let one aspect rule, is to deny the existence of the other. Light creates shadow, but shadow defines the boundaries of light. Everything, including mankind, is in a state of constant flux. We are ever changing, as our experiences are integrated into our essence and affect the way in which we view and interact with the world. This is the essence of who we are. We are living, breathing, dynamic beings and to suggest otherwise is to deny reality.

You cannot live life without being affected by it. In this way we are not static beings. Everything we experience will alter the lens through which we view the world. The trick to being human is learning how to adapt to that change. We must embrace our dark while striving for the Light. We must learn from our mistakes and use that knowledge to live better lives, be better people. He wanted me to understand this before he freed me from my servitude. True, others might think it a harsh lesson to learn, but it was necessary. I think thoughts of gratitude and love, not to him but the entirety of the universe. I now believe there is even more to

existence than I had known previously. I want to experience it all, learn and grow from it, and become better for it. I stare upwards, silently, as it begins to rain, cold fat drops spattering on my face. But I smile. Inside, I am warm. I push myself off the wall I am leaning against and notice my hands are clean. No blood, no black tar. My cigarettes are lying near my feet. I pick them up and shove them back in my pocket. 'Balance' I think. A little vice for a little virtue. Finally, everything seems right. Whistling, I walk out of the alley and back into life.



**Fate** by Caitlyn Day



A photograph of a person running on a path in a forest. The ground is covered in fallen autumn leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The trees in the background have vibrant autumn foliage. The person is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, running away from the camera. The overall scene is bright and colorful, capturing the essence of fall.

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