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Instress 2002

College Misericordia's Literary Magazine



Cover Artwork: Sunflower Daydream
-Sarah Race-

Instress has been published by the students of College Misericordia since December of 1966. The word instress was invented by the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. It signifies the moment that the reader achieves complete understanding of the written word. The author, through instress, conveys to and shares with the reader an emotionally moving experience.

The 2002 Awards for Outstanding Creations

Cari A. Rose receives the Jack Kerouack Award for prose.

Sarah Race receives the Salvador Dali Award for art.

Rianna Johns receives the Gerard Manley Hopkins Award for poetry.

Nora Stephanitis receives the Judy Blume Award for best high school submission.

(All winners are awarded monetary prizes for their excellence.)

Editors

Jennifer Sency
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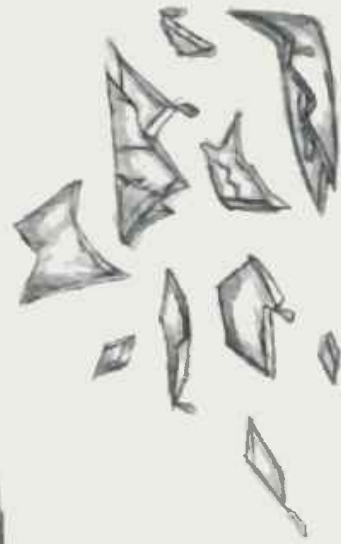
Carissa Artz
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Carla Cognini
Megan Decowski
Angela Kelly
Andrew Lawrence
Jeremy Shrawder
Jennifer Stires

Instress accepts short stories, poetry, essays, art, photography, music, and other creative works from the students and faculty of College Misericordia and the surrounding community. All works are judged anonymously by the editorial staff. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the staff or the college administration.

Autumn Days

-Michael Greenley-

Someone help this dying boy,
So young and trapped beneath it all.
Breathing in the lies and fear,
Exhaling to the dark of day,
But everything will be OK,
Everything will fall in place,
You drowned me with those red stained hands
And soaked me with improbity
To walk with you is mala fide
On paths of autumn and falling skies
But everything will be OK,
Everything will fall to place
We'll sing the songs of broken windows,
Broken glass, and falling grace,
Dark are dreams that lovers made,
When thieves break in and steal the flame.
And everything will be OK,
But nothing good shall ever stay.
It is sometimes best to just not know,
The reasons why this love turned cold,
I know you stole the stars at night,
The flame that flickered, and all its might.
And in your eyes you hide them well.
From naked eyes, but not myself,
And everything will be OK,
The dreams I lost can stay away
The glass falls down and there it stays,
To remind me always of these autumn da



Shattered
-Meghan Dwyer-

disposition

an excerpt from drowning in cold water

-Jason Miller-

thin and worn the boy stepped down pushed by the hands and the hydraulic hiss bustling behind him hands full and wrestling with themselves with one another and uncomfortable legs quavering lights harsh pushed into his eyes like fingers like hooks and pulled him forward voices pulled and pushed past him hands on his back and his eyes burning he placed his feet on the steel then the concrete the vibrations stopped voices pulled into forms staring and passing groping and pulling gnawing like cold ignoring they descended crossed the hardwood floor into arms and cars flesh and dough spices and urine alcohol all gutted his throat choking him his hands fingers long ribbons of flesh and bone crossed his face tight and angular smoothed his collar his fingers followed the line of his heavy wool coat and worked into tight pockets cold change and crumpled bills pieces of paper pulled out a cigarette and a shining silver lighter pulled in the current his thin legs carried him the air choked with thick clouds of smoke heavy and old he lit the cigarette and dragged heavily his eyes running the length of the floor ahead of him pushing past blue and gray movements passing quickly with familiar faces the acrid smoke hit the back of his throat pushing through the taste of everyday and he pulled it deep into his lungs

he walked slowly past women and girls eyes straight ahead bodies tight he watched them as they passed smelling of flowers and smoke white and red black and gray and blue and the women and the smells he made his way across the floor still moving beneath him in waves to a bench the light pouring in from the street burned his eyes he dropped his cigarette and sitting down slowly almost wishing to go back lit another cigarette and pulled the large black bag from his shoulder onto his lap and dropped his head onto the back of the bench

—alone?

the boy closed his eyes placing both hands over his bag blood rushed to his face filling his eyes with heat he breathed more deeply dropping the cigarette on the floor in front of him it still burned the voice warm and close pounded in his ears as if it had echoed through the station

the boy didn't answer his mind working quickly or not at all he heard the breathing quick and shallow felt it in his stomach below his lungs like it was his his fingers reached up quickly his eyes still closed to loosen his coat and he felt the breath pass over him his body tightened the aching muscles in his legs pushed nervously against the floor

the figure of an old man in ratted clothes watched the boy through smallish sunken eyes his thin lips pursed in anticipation he tapped his foot his face wrinkled and frightened and hair clung to his head in thin gray patches the thin black cloth that veiled his withered legs was wet smelled of piss as he moved the yellowed newspapers that filled his watery wool coat rustled crumpled his old weathered hands moved furiously in his lap damp from his pants his eyes moved furiously over the boy's body his lips quivering

—alone?

the boy flinched pulled himself tight like the women that passed his eyes closed his fingers pressed white over the bag in his lap

the station rumbled again with another wave of blue and gray that frightened the figure his eyes moving quickly across the passing bodies sneering the women again some with other women some with men some alone tight and focused ignoring the eyes men moved in ellipses all hands and hips in groups and some alone the figure's mouth moved furiously again but still inaudible and the wave passed in loud echoing

steps then the air was quiet a few smells rustling again like leaves but nothing strong to hold

the figures eyes returned to the boy quiet and away across the bench eyes in the air breathing quickly through the rotten teeth and flattened nose his eyes working again like hands running over the boys body over the sharp tight angles of his face lips red and quivering moved strokes down his neck and across his chest and down over his stomach like hands and extending over both thighs and calves lingering tightly beneath the bad eyes resting and throbbing breathing more quickly more labored his mouth moving quickly now with breath his tongue sliding over the sharp and jagged slips of his teeth throat dry and waiting he swallowed hard his eyes returning to the boys child barely sixteen tall too old for his age thin lucid skin pounding red pulled tight over sharp bones eyes full and bright and nearly hidden lips red and open pulsing thick like blood

the boy shivered feeling the eyes unable to think and his heart pounding somewhere beneath his navel deep in his stomach in his throat and in his head his head still resting on the back of the bench he tried to swallow tried to breathe but was afraid the inside of his head moving in circles and his legs pounding stopped cold his fingers white from the strain released by the straps of the bag and loosened the buttons on his coat slowly he felt the vagrants hands slide under his shirt and over his stomach and chest he opened his eyes pushing them away he sat up lowering his head and breathing deeply feeling the numb tingling in his stomach tight and his hands he couldnt stand his legs folding beneath him he opened his eyes tossing his hair back from his eyes and felt free the station rumbling again in a wave and watched ready to stand his eyes on the blue and gray rumbling at waist level across his eyes he lit a cigarette and sat up a little further feeling the eyes of the figure retreat from his face from his body people pushed past close to his

body he felt fresh again like a boy he dragged heavily on his cigarette his legs eager to stand to move to pull away from his head and pass on the wave passed

the figure moved closer eyes and mouth moving quickly pushing out like the heat that caught between the boys shoulderblades closer and the stench gutted the boys throat pushing closer like a game hollering back at one another in a field years ago in the dark and rumbling together like boys pushing on the grass and feeling one anothers bodies tight against their clothes the figure spoke again softly and dragging out like memories and pulled the boy back from the field into the heat of the rumble

—alone?

closer the figures skin pressed against the scratchy skin of the boys coat he heard the boys blood pulsing through his skin his face red again again over the face sharp and tight pure the neck soft the arms and chest the shoulder slight over the legs pushed flat and white against the wood of the bench the figure moved his mouth to taste the skin soft and white he could feel it in his mouth warm and sweet pulling in deep flowers and flesh and soap strawberries stinging perfume and smoke the figures hand reached over pushing against the boys softly

the boy pulled tight into the bench pulling his bag closer to his body his fingers and eyes and legs burning his brain working quickly but not at all registering everything but not reacting quiet and frozen and cold unable to move or think or feel but just wishing to pass

warm soft flesh pulled over bone the breath hot withered the boys neck

—alone?

yes the boys breathing was awkward and forced

shallow growing quicker seconds passed when there was no respiration at all his lungs tight and quiet silence and pulsing red lips slip blue

the station rumbling again passed more quickly and then was quiet letting the boy breathe his eyes restless for something real girls in skirts men in gray and blue trousers and coats long wool cashmere holding them away

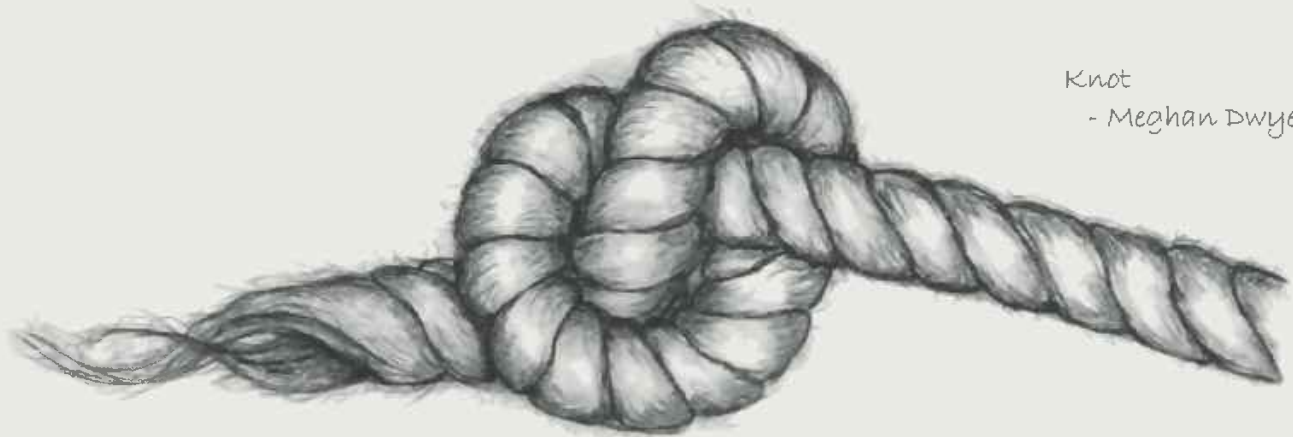
- yes?

yes eyes closed amidst dark blues and grays the stench of piss stale cigarette smoke heavy scent like last nights findings the figures hands close to him the boy coiled purely animal the hands ran over the boys stomach the acrid taste of the figures mouth breath pushed through rotted teeth tasting of whiskey and cigarette smoke the hands wrinkled and callused tearing soft skin as they pressed over and against dragging like nails over soft palpable skin tearing and breaking blood the mouth moving furiously against the boys ear the words inaudible blunt the same horrid ripping ripping through the hands like

glass scraping skin then bone then soul soul then bone then skin dissecting fine in fistfuls

the boy held his breath the shiver receded leaving only bone the figures eyes still ran his body quivering and sunken but further in a wave again gray movement then an explosion in rapid vibrations the bells loud and the feet clamoring voices echoing through the station others came passed stood still and stared drawing the figures eyes away as if he were done had his fill and felt his stomach beneath the stench and wrinkles pushing out pregnant but the boy pale and thin was barely bone child stretching out long fine fingers running through his hair smoothing over his arms clasped together child even a girl so young so fresh

the boy held his breath afraid to be alone to feel himself the figures eyes again pulled at his hair and scraping across the sides of his face bristled knuckles soft skin cutting fresh dough and flesh spices the boy pushed away shaking off the breathlessness filling his tight lungs feeling them tear into his stomach the muscles burning



Knot

- Meghan Dwyer -

A Dream for You

-Amanda Renee James-

I Hope You Chance Upon
Golden Flowers,
And Mend A Broken Heart.

I Hope You Give The Power Of
Love To Another,
And Repair A Life Torn Apart.

I Wish You To Have Faith And
Believe In Yourself,
And Show Another To Believe, Too.

I Wish You Would Share
Everything You Have Learned,
So Someone Else Would Do
The Same As You.

Elements

-Jessica Helock-

The earth gives me life,
Water cleanses my soul,
The grass gives me air,
Sun keeps me whole.
The sky gives me strength,
Fire burns my heart,
The blood saved my body,
Time pulled it apart.
The rose gives me feeling,
Knowledge feeds my mind,
The joy warms my thought,
Intelligence is unkind.
The laughter gives me hope,
Happiness has been lost,
The expression gives me pain,
Death is the cost.

Fate

Jeremy Shrawder-

"Oh, Fate, you are a cruel mistress."
These words ring out from the earliest of times,
From writers to kings and garbage collectors,
You treat them all the same.

Once you blessed a family with a beautiful child
But lame her out of spite of her beauty,
Which was superior to yours.

Maybe you remember a man
Granted a second chance
To right his wrongs and renew himself
Only to curse him with a disease
And cutting him down
Before his dreams became ripe.

Yes, you are cruel.
You are a tormentor,
Ruining all the lives
Of all you touch.
And they call you a lady...

I can say to you
What you truly are.
You are a succubus,
Draining the life of all you touch
And throwing them away
After you get finished
Draining their soul.

I shall not fight you
Out of the spite
And hatred I have of you.
I fight you to challenge you,
As a young man
Exposing his virgin heart
To the world and saying
That I have conquered you!

Fate! Be not my lover!
Be my challenger,
Pushing me to strive harder
And to fight for the dreams
That I choose for me!



Top of a
Bookshelf
-Carla
Cognigni-

The Heart, Mind, and Body
-Mike Schoppy-

The Heart dies, Once full of love
And passion, Now blackened by loneliness
And despair
The Mind drifts to shadows of friends and
Lovers, that once were important, But
Now are like a blanket of snow kissed
By the heat of the sun
The Body decays, Once a paragon of
Youthful strength and vigor now,
As withered and fragile as a rose
Devoid of light
The Heart, Mind, and Body
Descend, into nothingness

I AM
-Jessica Helock-

I AM everything, and everything is me. My song is absorbed into the wind.
Hear me as I fly through the trees, whispering, calling, crying.

Open your smell, I AM the air, breathe me.

Sweetly I give you life, life to the fullest.

Feel it, I AM the cold that raises your hair on end, the tingle to your skin, the strangeness in
your mind.

Do it all and do it well.

I AM the strength of your inner soul, pushing until it hurts.

Pain becomes everything. Harder and harder, feel the pain ripping you apart, push on.

Pain is merely a feeling. I AM that pain.

I AM the one whom you loathe. Here, there, everywhere.

I AM the sin, the temptation, the evil that makes you wrong.

It is good, yes, lie, lust, go on, all is well.

I AM the deepest ocean in which you drown, struggling for the answers, the secrets of life.

I AM all that you are, we are all and we are one. I AM.



Away
-Amber Hyder-

I Weep With the Willows
-Jennifer Stires-

I weep with the willows
we share the same parents
inherited wind as my soul
water of my ancestors courses as my blood

I am of two worlds
one of Nature, one of Industry
I see the benefits of leaving the past
and reaping the future

I understand the song of the Earth
to see her journey of fear
I see the weeping of the willows
longing for their home

I weep with the willows
I know what divide and conquer means
I understand change must occur
but, like a willow I bend

bending towards the inevitable
the crash back to Earth
trusting in my roots
believing in ancient prophecies

for now the willows weep
tears of immeasurable joy and triumph
the willows weep with us
I have found my way home.



Weeping Willow
-Carla Cognigni-

Letter to an Old Friend

-Michael Greenley-

This day reminds me of somewhere that I've been,
I stopped to think of the days of my life and everywhere in between.
My thoughts stumbled across your face and the beauty of your eyes,
And the way they touched my heart like birds soaring on open skies.
You always knew a way how to always make me smile,
And each night you would ask if I would stay just for a little while.
Each night I would stay and you would lay your head in my arms,
Teaching me of life and how to love the stars.
I wonder if you still remember those nights, even if you still remember me?
And if I came back, would you be sitting there waiting by our tree?
If I passed you on the street today, would you recognize my eyes?
Would you see into my heart and recognize my true disguise?
If you saw me again today, would you remember what I said,
About holding on to this day's breath, to breathe it in your dreams?
My face has changed so much since the last time that you saw it,
But I assure you that inside there is still so much the same.
When I left that September day, would you have believed me if I said,
That I wouldn't be coming home again, I'd never again hear you say my name?
Would you have waited and saved a place for me?
And left the porch light on, not taking me seriously?
I once said that everyone has a page torn out of their book,
And when they let it go it gets lost inside their dreams,
They have to keep it close to heart,
And you said that you agreed.
Mine is like that song for me that you used to sing,
When you sang of life, love, and the importance of everything.
Waiting for the day when all of that would start,
My missing page is life, love, and the absence of you in my heart.
You set me free from life when everything was dark,
You stood up side by side with me and showed me how to walk.
My music helps fill your place these days,
I play in darkness to find my way,
I search for the light that bleeds from your heart,
Because the sound of my song is the sound of your name.

[I used to think-]

-Father Michael Bryant

I used to think-

Making haste got life done,
Endless rain cursed the dawn,
Disasters were always demons,
And the longings of the heart
Best not be touched.

I used to think-

Patience was only a virtue,
Inner strangers were unwelcome,
Running away kept you safe,
And the wandering soul
Needed fixing.

I used to think-

Pondering poetry wasted time,
The cost of suffering was of no use,
Nakedness spoke of sin,
And the rush of the moment
Mattered little.

I used to think-

Kisses counted for naught,
The best in life was unobtainable,
Parenting came natural,
And the smell of success
Was always putrid.

I used to think-

Life made its own bed,
Cracks in your character were flaws,
Mindlessness polluted potential,
And the emptying of your cup
Left you barren.

Now-

I don't only think.

I feel, I want, I touch, I hold, I dream, I swear,
I massage, I pass out, I swim, I sink, I marvel, I drown,
I peel, I mold, I wander, I wonder, I scream, I cry,
I bellow, I long, I hurt.

I open this head-full horseman to a world beyond

All the thinking I could ever create

To keep me safe and sound.

The passions of the mind have become real.



Elephant
-Traci Badami-

[Moonlight in our bed--]
-Amy Lynch-Biniak-

Moonlight in our bed--
He sleeps
Whispering moments,
Drooling dreams,
Robbing my bare feet.

Starlight in our bed--
He stirs
Tossing and turning,
Talking in his sleep.
The night is stolen time.

Sunlight in our bed--
He wakes
Smiles at the morning
And kisses me hello.
My sweet vision of love.

Not Just a Game
-Richard Brown-

Approaching the challenge,
And feeding its demands,
She stands before it,
And takes command.

Her wide eyes are focused,
As she stands on her toes,
She feels the machine,
Its weakness she knows.

The lights begin flashing,
The battle began,
The points are building,
And the excitement expands.

She bumps and guides,
Holding her breath,
She is playing the game,
Like it is life or death.

Feeling lucky but anxious,
She makes a call,
Double or nothing,
Leads to her fall.

Cursing distraction,
She walks away,
Her mind is plotting,
For the very next day.

Product of an Oyster

-Nora Stephanitis-

Bishop O'Reilly High School

Happy Happy

I am twirling with arms outstretched
A new euphoria has kidnapped my heart tonight
Don't tell me it can't be done
Don't say wounds run deeper than love
Hurt isn't as real as this
Last year I was devastated
Pain couldn't cut deep enough
Friends were just not good enough
Eggshells thinning fast,
Like an apple seed in my stomach
It took root

Funny

I was at the bottom of the ocean floor when I
Caught a grain of sand between my teeth
I didn't know why but you were always there
Forming a pearl
Now 2 minds form this bond
Instead of one shrinking down
And when I spin I might trip
Maybe I'll get disoriented and stop
But I like the way it feels for now
so I'll keep drifting

[bare moon shines time on]

-Jaime Verazin-

Bishop O'Reilly High School

bare moon shines time on
sound less streets

staggering skies whisper
symphonies of love

black shadows moan throughout
still winds

I crush the voids that
consume my life but
chocolate sweet bitterness eats at
my
soul

Quizás me volverás
-Jennifer Stires-

Quizás me volverás
Quizás no te tendré en mis brazos
en una otra noche loca
Pero, está bien
Porque tuve una noche loca
contigo.

En una noche magnífica
tuve amor
Me duele el corazón
pero sé que necesitas a volar.

Por eso, mi vida
ha cambiado mucho
Puedo ver finalmente, y
nunca creí que la vida es horrible

Quizás en un otro tiempo
en un diferente lugar
en una otra historia
nuestro felicidad sería real otra vez

La simfonía de dos cuerpos como uno
Recuerdo la melodía de su aliento
caliente en mi piel desnuda
Por un momento todo el mundo no importaría

Y mi pelo en mi pecho
Tus manos en mi cuerpo
Mis manos en su pecho
Sonríe

Y tus besos en mi cara, mi garganta y mi pecho
y tus ojos en míos
mis brazos y manos tocandote
mis piernas listos a abrir para ti

Esperé que la noche no terminará
por la noche caiga
y invítame a bailar la canción de amor
Entro entre dulce sueños

y la realidad
que estoy participando contigo
donde el cielo encuentra
el mar

Quisiera verte,
tocarte,
sentir tu piel
a lado de me.

y si me tocarás el corazón
cuando tus palabras besan mi cara y mi alma
y soy solo para ti, para siempre
y cuando la madrugada viene

Quizás me volverás...

(Translation)

Perhaps You Will Return to Me

-Jennifer Stires-

Perhaps you'll return to me
Perhaps I'll never have you in my arms
in another crazy night
But, that's ok
Because I had one crazy night with you.

In one magnificent night
I had love
My heart aches
but I know that you need to fly.

Therefore my life
has changed a lot
I am able to finally see, and
I will never believe that life is horrible

Perhaps in another time
in a different place
in a different story
our happiness will be real once again

The symphony of two bodies as one
I remember the melody of your breath
warm on my naked skin
For a moment, nobody mattered.

And my hair on my chest
your hands on my body
My hands on your chest
I smiled

And your kisses on my face, my throat and
my chest
and your eyes in mine
my arms and hands touching you
my legs ready to open for you

I hope that this night never ends
for the nightfall
and invites me to dance the song of love
I enter into sweet dreams

and the reality
that I am sharing with you
where the sky meets
the sea

I would like to see you,
to touch you,
to feel your skin
next to mine

and if you would touch my heart
when your words kiss my face and my soul
and I am only yours, forever
and when the morning comes

perhaps you will return to me.

sitting there long after midnight
-Rianna Johns-

thinking
as a shooting star passes
the rooftop, our home of
cold nights- long talks- unanswered questions.

frozen fingers clutching blankets
mouths alive and warm with voice:
how does it work,
why does he feel,
the waste of my love for him.
trying to save ourselves
from ourselves
still

quiet
dreaming.

Mourning Mist
-T.J. McGough-



Sarcophagus

-Jennifer Sency-

I listen to the sound of the respirator that I know is my last tie to life. I remember what my mother always told me: "Ellie, life is so unfair. You're born completely helpless, dependent on others. You learn to care of yourself, learn to love independence. As you grow older, you realize that you are losing. You die like you were born, completely helpless and dependent on others." She wanted to go quickly and she did one cold winter night in her sleep. We found her in her frigid white sheets, as cold as the ground she would be buried in.

I, on the other hand, wasn't so lucky. For years my health has slowly been failing and I've been hooked up to this machine for the past two months. With nothing to do but wait for the daily "care" visits from my kids, all I do is remember. How ironic it is, I think. I took care of them and now they're taking care of me.

While I think, I know where my thoughts are headed even before they get there: Paulette, my dearest, closest friend throughout my whole life. Paulette always knew what I was thinking and always knew how to make me forget the restraints of adulthood and make me get silly. Whenever I was sad, all she had to say in a quiet playful tone was, "You know, we can connect Hawaiian lei and sarcophagus in five words..."

My mind jumped back to the day when we were twelve, bored and lethargic. Relieving our misery, we decided to play the word association game. Slowly smiles spread across both of our faces and in unison we'd yell, "Sarcophagus! Egypt! vacation! Hawaii! Hawaiian lei!" each word being successively louder than the last. Bursting out in laughter like small children giggling over a secret, we'd get what-the-hell? looks from our families and friends.

Paulette, oh God, how I miss her. From my bed I see the stars forming in the night sky. They always remind me of her. We would always lay in one of our front yards at dusk, even as middle-aged women, and just talk, any kind of talk, our worries, excitements, and our memories of youth.

A tear forms in the corner of my saddened eye and escapes its boundaries. Sitting up, I throw back the sheets that have covered me for months. Wobbling slightly as I stand, my head spinning, I steady my self on the respirator. Freedom! Independence! I try to calculate how long it's been since I was out of this bed without anyone's help. I can't remember. Tagging the respirator behind me, I slowly make my way to the sliding glass door illuminated by the moonlight in my tiny, unkempt living room. I throw back the glass door and faintly smell real air. Longing for more of this deliciousness, another tear slips down my cheek as I begin to remove my artificial life. Making my way outside, I smile. Suddenly I'm twenty again, laughing and talking with Paulette underneath the omnipresent starlit night, the pain of life slipping away.

I lie down on the grassy knoll and look up at the stars. A shooting star cuts across the darkness. "Paulette," I whisper. "I'm scared." I lay in the dark feeling the dewy grass through my cotton nightgown. I take a deep breath of the incredibly fresh air that I once took for granted and let my mind wander back to the days of sleepovers, and swing sets,
and "true" loves,

and

A Culture of Fatalism

-Father Michael Bryant-

Prostrated in pilgrimage before an unseen
god, she had sunk into this position
of wanton weariness enough times
to taste the dirt smashed to her face.
A stain, a blemish, an aftertaste

reeked of eroded contempt
for the culture who bore her.
The oasis of fatalism lures its desolate
lost sheep into the thick darkness
of political rhetoric, filled with promises

broken and hopes stymied.
Stigmatized into believing a flaming torch
guides her into a bed where wombs
are sheared away from her life-source.
No wonder a paralyzing fear dispirits,

leaving little license to re-ignite
tomorrows tied umbilically to nothing.
Her children watch as an imposing
arm blocks the beauty born centuries
before in humble villages now violated

with coke-infested homilies of trust.
The tangible appears to be withdrawn,
detached from her vocational forces.
All is seen in silence as smoking pots
billowing clouds of discountenance.

Whatever has been left to drink
requires a contemplation in the streets.
Whatever will quench thirsts of faith
can only be inhaled through the heart
where God speaks altogether alone.



Flight
-Greg Keck-

A Shot in the Dark

-Rianna Johns-

He walked into the dark apartment, kicked off his shoes, and collapsed on the floor with a sigh. It had been another long day in the office, with one meeting after another. The insistent ringing of the phone drilled through his skull and into his mind with the shameless pain of a dentist working on his worst enemy. The secretary's voice, shrill over the intercom beckoned him from one office to another until his miserable day came to a close.

Now a thirty-year-old nothing, he spent every waking hour working for the company and living a pathetic life in the glamorous West Village. Laying in the dark silence, he realized the light bulb was still burnt out from the night before. A fresh bulb was found with a few staggered steps and fumbling grasps. The old bulb

was unscrewed and discarded like it had never served any meaningful purpose.

As he began to twist the new light into place and replace the shade, the miserable corporate executive realized he too is an old light bulb. The company could at any moment realize how burnt out he truly was and twist him out of his place. He would be discarded and replaced by a new light, burning brighter and sharper than he. The radiant light would once again shine on the company, and the new star would be fixed in his place until he loses his electrical capacities. And so he now sits on the floor in the dark, contemplating his life as a light bulb, burnt and replaced with a fresh one, and counting the steps to his nightstand where his gun lay.

[Thoughts to ponder of a season's change]

-Tracy Badami-

Thoughts to ponder of a season's change
Wind whispers evil; children fade.
Playful waters stand silently still
Reflecting naked tress swept with chill.

Thought to ponder of a season's change
Crayola leaves dance a paper ballet.
A burnt orange glaze blankets the west
Casting a lion's shadow upon autumn's breast.

In old man winter's bed thy lay
A June bug's bride cast away.
Bitter awaiting a Quarters fade
Thoughts to ponder of a season's change.



Renewal
-Amber Hyder-

Treasures Grove
-Jennifer Stires-

The world surrounding
Hot, muggy, humid
Reeking with the stench
Of day old food
Lost will to exist
I remember the days
We'd spend laying under the shade
Of that huge oak tree
Remember how the dew
Would soak your shirt
And dry slowly
Refreshing you?
I recall running the
Damp grass having it
Tickle the bottoms of my
Feet. Then you would
Twirl me in mid air
Holding me so I couldn't fall
Then sitting having
Ice cold lemonade
Holding your hand
Down in that place of ours.
I went back there
The other day, you know;
Physically you weren't there
In my heart you were
And I ran, and I ran
Running breathless to the wind
Recollecting every past emotion
Every memory
Then I collapsed under that
Big oak tree
Closed my eyes picturing
You sitting next to me.
I needed you then
As I still need you now
And this time I know
You want and need me too
For our times in the grove
You've given me so much
To live for
You've given me the treasure grove.

(Untitled)
-David Kennedy-

I will fall into the concrete landscape,
As all eyes love this season.
Cool stars dream in a velvet sky,
The succor of infinity.
Her kiss is a fragrant green bouquet,
Her tapestry, a delirious and tragic thing.
A flawless cancer in my summer region.
Sad and sumptuous, a dark light throbbing,
Rain detonated ominously,
In a whispering afternoon both cold and ancient
Her love was a season, vast and wicked.



Three Doors
-Amber Hyder-

Three Doors
-Amber Hyder-

"Door number one,
Number two, number three...
Pick one! Pick now!
Which will it be?"

"The first is the past
Full of ignorance and bliss,
Tell me! Tell me!
Will it be this?"

"The future's behind
This door number two.
The possibilities abound.
What will you do?"

"And Here is behind
This last of the three:
The present, the now.
So what'll it be?"

"Take care in your choice.
Door one, two or three?
The first makes the third,
The third makes the second;
A circle is all it can be.

"Choose now, choose wisely.
Door one, two or three?
Number one is gone, two is going
And three may never be."

Whisper of Love
-Jennifer McCall-

What had been a beautiful autumn day turned quite gloomy. The sun had grown dark, and it was starting to rain. A cool breeze came through the open window, playing with the curtains and causing them to dance against the wall. The flame of the candle flickered, allowing the light to break from its steady beam. The glow from the candles was the only means of light coming from my bedroom. It was quiet in the room, and the large oak door ensured no visitors would intrude from the outside world. Wrinkled clothes were slung across my favorite over-sized recliner, and the bed was buried in pillows and schoolbooks. Despite the chaotic order of my bedroom, it seemed as though everything was comfortable in its place.

I was sitting on my bed fumbling through old pictures and poems I had written. I was feeling alone, so I sat there in silence. I opened my nightstand drawer to get a piece of candy, but when I did my fingers grazed a small cross on a gold chain. I pulled it out from its corner and stared at it for a while. The diamonds in the cross seemed much duller than they were when I used to wear the necklace. I remember my father, who was not a religious man, questioned its meaning once.

"Emma, honey, why do you wear that cross everyday?"

I smiled faintly and responded, "Well, Daddy, I figured that if I kept God close to my heart the He would help Mom get better."

He smiled back at me and kissed my forehead. I knew that he loved my mom and I so much and that he hoped for my mother's recovery more than anyone. The cancer never did take my mother's life, because a drunk driver had taken her life instead. I was nineteen when she died, and it was since that day that I never wore the cross again.

I threw the cross and its chain back into the drawer and picked up my old journal. I was

intently reading about a party I went to with my boyfriend Robbie. I had fallen into a state of depression because of my mom's illness, and I knew he wanted to get me out of the house.

"Emma, please come with me," Robbie said in a pleading voice.

I smiled at his desperation. "You know I should stay home and study tonight."

"But you're always studying. I miss you, and everyone has been asking about you." He hesitated a little. "You haven't hung out in a while."

I just sat there looking at him, and then sighed because I knew he was right. "Alright, you win. I'll come out for a little while, but I don't feel like drinking tonight."

"You don't have to...I'll drink enough for the both of us." I shook my head and pushed him in a playful way. Robbie laughed and flashed his boyish smile just before he leaned over and kissed me.

I got so caught up in the memory that I barely noticed the telephone ringing. I was too engrossed in my own words and just stared at it blankly. The answering machine turned on, and then I heard Robbie's voice. I noticed how quietly he spoke, almost in a whisper.

"Hi Angel. I just called because I miss you, and I needed to hear your voice. I knew you wouldn't be there, but I just wanted to say I love you."

I smiled as I sat there listening to his words. I was very much in love with Robbie, but my father never really cared for him. My father was convinced that he had a drinking problem just like Robbie's alcoholic father, who had ended up in rehab somewhere. I noticed how cynical my father was towards Robbie after the accident occurred. A few days after the accident had happened Robbie came over to the house, and I remember the fire in my father's eyes. I heard him screaming, "You were never good enough for my daughter! You stay the hell away from here!"

I pleaded with my father to let me see Robbie, but it was useless. My father was not the

same man after my mom's death. He barely spoke and he never smiled anymore. Instead he would just sit on the porch swing and smoke cigarettes. So I isolated myself too and tried to give my father some space. Sometimes I would sit on the porch with him, but he acted as though I wasn't even there. Only once did he say my name, but then he sighed and began to cry. I felt so out of touch with my father and with Robbie, too. I knew how much I meant to Robbie, and because he respected my family he gave us space. Robbie stopped coming to the house as often, and it meant me seeing him less. It didn't matter though because I had big plans for Robbie and I, and I knew that he loved me.

I couldn't stop thinking about Robbie since he called, so I decided I needed to go see him. When I got to his house he wasn't there, so I decided to take a walk. I knew my destination before I got there, my mother's grave. When I got there I saw someone else crouched next to the tomb-

stones. It was a young man, and he was sobbing with his head in his hands. He was muttering something under his breath, but I couldn't understand his words until I got closer.

"I'm sorry, Emma. I am so sorry. I never meant for this to happen. I only had a couple of drinks...I didn't see your mother's car..."

His voice trailed off. I stood there staring wide-eyed at him in disbelief. It all made sense now, and his words echoed in my mind.

"I love you, Emma. I never wanted to hurt you or your mom, and now you are both gone. I'm so sorry, my little Angel. I love you."

Robbie just sat there crying, and I looked down at the mounds of fresh dirt. When I looked up I saw Robbie pull a gun out of his pocket and stick the barrel in his mouth. I screamed, but it was as if I hadn't made a sound. The only thing that could be heard was the shot ringing out of the graveyard where my mother and I had just been buried.



Rose
-Meghan
Dwyer-



Tiger (in pencil)
-Amber Hyder-

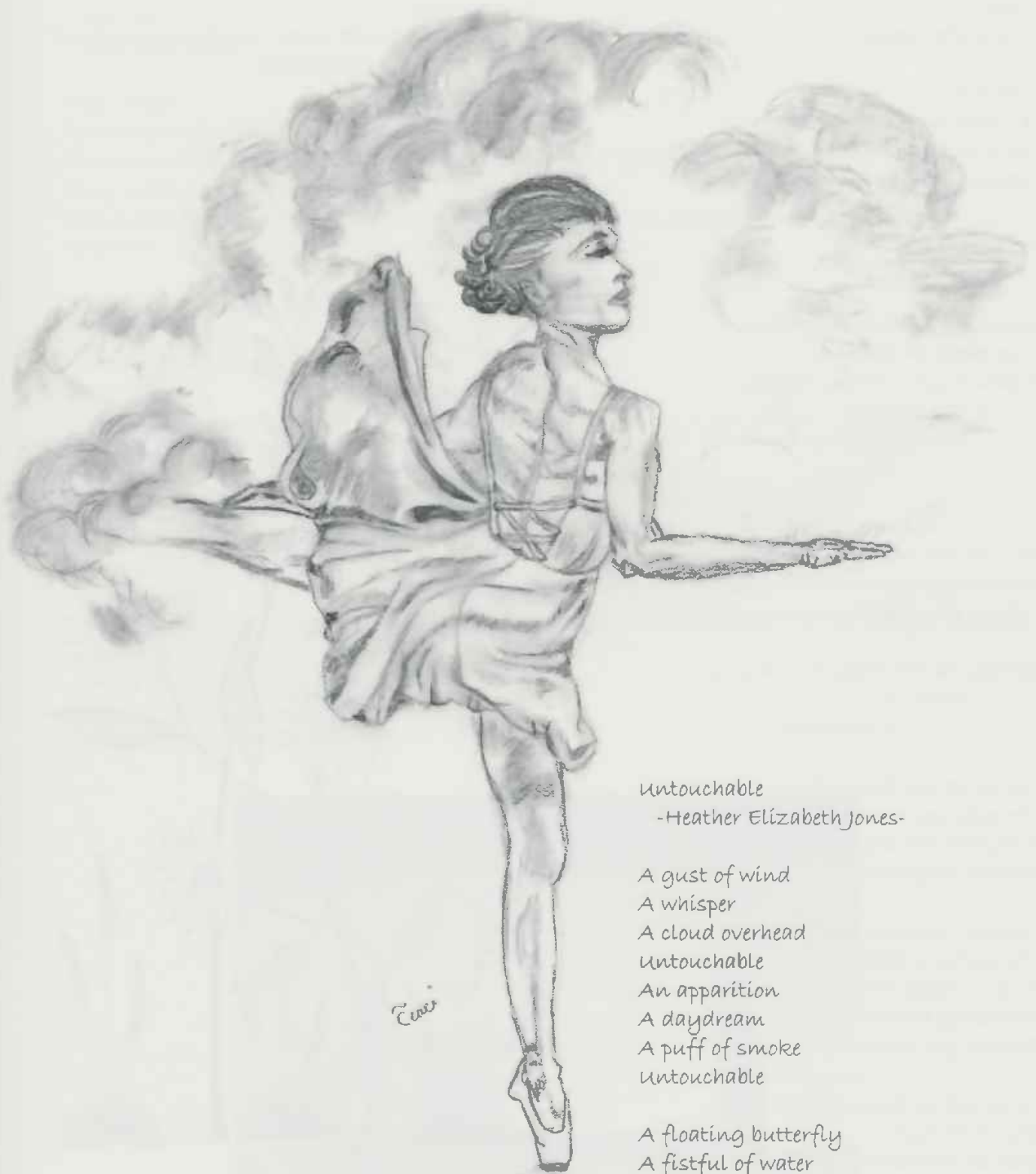
Observations from Inside a Parked Car
-Amber young-

Feathers floating
flying on the wind
dropping, lifting, swirling
Wispy white and gray down
all around
like snowflakes.

Here and there a tuft of ginger fuzz.

A slow-motion battle in the air--
the softest clashing
feathers outnumbering fur 10-1...

A tabby cat
crosses the road
licking red whiskers.



Ballerina
-Traci Badami-

Untouchable
-Heather Elizabeth Jones-

A gust of wind
A whisper
A cloud overhead
Untouchable
An apparition
A daydream
A puff of smoke
Untouchable

A floating butterfly
A fistful of water
A past mistake
Untouchable
A love without pain...
Untouchable

Tidbits

-Jennifer Sency-

Sad eyes

A finger tracing "I Love You's"
On a cold glass window that is my prison...
Keeping me away from you.

Longing touches

Loving stares

Carefully holding crayons to
Wax paper on epitomes,
Making sure nothing breaks:

The Crayola,
Memories of lost romance,
Or us...

Smiling inside

You tell me I'm the one and I'm lost for words
No phrase can express how I feel.
I think of grocery shopping with you.

Sitting on the dock, rock, bridge...

With you...
Everything...

Conversation flows like my fingers
Through you hair
Laughter coming like raindrops
Pelting the ground.

Musical romance dances on
The guitar's vibrating strings
And I wonder "Will it ever end?
Pounding emotion enduring time,
Forever you and me?"

Worn out phrases not said
Out of routine
But out of comfort,
Knowing that you still care.

Don't worry...

My tears are smiles when I can't smile anymore
Can't express the love inside.
Kissing your cheek
Holding your hand in mine
Meaning more than any I love you.

Kissing...

You...



(untitled)

-Dr. Stevan Davies-

Time Out!

-Meghan Dwyer-

Flip a coin!

Bubble-gum, bubble-gum in a dish

Rock, paper, scissors

Eeny-meeny-miny-mo.

Rationally examine the pros and cons of the complicated situation and make the most fair and least harmful decision.

Cowboys and Indians!

Dress ups

Put on a show

Play house.

Create a façade and pretend that problems are easily solved and that everyone fits into a designated mold.

Tag, you're It!

Hide and seek

Dodge ball

The quiet game.

Take a gun and hit as many people on the other side as possible without getting caught and then you win.

Children grow up so quickly.

But their games remain the same.



(Untitled)

-Mary Smee-

sweet sweat, bashing bodies, and home
-Rianna Johns-

As I stood in the room,
warm gusts pulsating through my body
smoke enveloping me,
and the sweet smell of cloves
pungent in my nostrils,
it grew dark. The band
took its place on stage
and the shrill pitch of a microphone
testing raked down my spine.
Lyrics wailed from a tall,
lanky boy whose voice was
that of a pre-pubescent, acne-prone
twelve year old screaming as he ran
through a pitch-black haunted house.
Bodies violently shook and slammed
into one another,
fists flew,
legs kicked
higher than birds in the air-
like can-can dancers on speed.
All the while I nodded
my head to the beat
tapped my foot in
synchrony with the other wallflowers,
wishing I could disappear in the smoke
of the cloves and travel over the sweet sweaty
bodies on a wave of
anguished lyrics
guitar riffs
and drum beats.

The Void of the Man
-Amber young-

How beautiful to me is the fruit
Of all your countless hours of thought.
I have tasted and stolen but a few treasures,
Guarding them in my heart as purest gold,
Beholding them in awe as the best of you.

I ask you, what of man is so tenderly revered
Without a woman's grace?
The minds of fellow men seek to conquer
And crush the first flowers of the mind.
But I, in natural womanhood, saw
The sensitive places of your soul.
They were a gift you gave,
If unwittingly, and all that I beheld
Rendered only beauty.

Did I abuse your heart or make light
Of all that you held substantially delicate?
Did I laugh at your cares,
Or feed poison to your hungry soul?
If so, then I did not love you.
But love you, I do,
In all my oblivion
For you care not.



Venice Afternoon
-Greg Keck-

Wanting and Wishing

-Carissa Artz-

I want to wake each morning in your arms
comforted by your compassion
seduced by your knowledge of my ways.

I want to care for you
put lotion on your scars
watch your eyes close slowly like a
child's, heavy with the thousand things that
filled your day.

I want you to kiss me, let my hair messy
itself in your fingers

Tell me nothing needs to be done-
no clocks need winding

Let me steady myself in the arms of
a man who won't ask me to be
what he needs, but lets me exist
as I am

a flame
a hurricane

wrapped up in a tiny body
that will come into his arms like the
safest harbor for mending.

I won't call anymore
it hurts too much
my heart's like one of the most fragile cactus
flowers cast amongst thorny ribs,
so ready to be hurt.

It was the way a risk can run
down my spine that made my blood race.

And it was the way you took me with such
strength and stretched me underneath the
moon that made me crave you so.

All the words I wish your fingers could feel
all the times I've wished

you could know the silent sorrow lying stiff
in my throat like cold and broken teeth.

I wish you could hear the child that cries in my
flesh and makes my bones ache.

I wish I could speak to my fear

I wish you could hold me in your arms like oceans
And soothe what my muscles remember.

Snow Flaked Through the Window
-Father Michael Bryant-

Dusting the edges
Of my protective net
I became chilled.

Impossible to imagine
In this jungle of lush,
Winter seemed real.

With a drunken dream
I curled into the womb
To find an inner warmth.

Visions of crystal stars
Danced in my head,
Landing on my nose.

Could it be? Was it truly
Snowing in Maruca?
Would the ground be covered?

Eyes would be dancing
In wonder for sure.
Giggles silenced.

Quiet stilled sleep.
A spine-tingling shiver
Slinking up my back.

Tugging at the pillow
A person of ice
Embraced the palm trees.

A calming chuckle
Was born amidst
This equatorial fantasy.

Psyched by a muse
A new day was created,
Steamy hot returned.

Snow flaked through
The window of my world;
Comfort was mine.

A Modernist's Divinity
-Chris Kaster-

An authentic message no longer conveyed,
His teachings undermined by hypocrisy and
hidden agendas
A malformation of faith resulting in fear,
Existence and truth unable to be distinguished
Division and disagreement from within
A schism preventing unification
Ambiguity present infinitely
Camouflaging a genuine good
Churches nothing but organized avaricion
Priests and pastors parading vivaciously
Attendance is marked by justification
Serving as an inadequate junction
Over-embellished structures, further alienating
And exploiting those most in need
Believers blindly defend their familiarity
Remaining oblivious to what it is they accept
The Sabbath nothing more than a masquerade,
An excuse to wear a mask which is divine
The majority of worshippers daily break a
sacred rule,
The new age God flashes images upon them
They also forgot the one about judgement,
As their conversation ignores the few who
Recognize self-improvement does not come
materially.

Timiral Forest
-D. Hando-

I woke to find myself in Timiral forest
Hidden in the branches green
Left alone by wind and sorrow
And comforted by sun and rain
For in Timiral there is a patience due
To all who come in peace
To live a solace in the arms
Of crystal stone and trees.



(Untitled)
-Dr. Stevan Davies-



Twin Towers
-T.J. McGough-

On September 11, 2001

-Instress editors-

It was a long day that no one will forget. The tragedies that occurred at The Pentagon, The World Trade Center and in a small town in Western Pennsylvania bookmarked a page in history and changed the world forever. With humbled hearts, we dedicate this issue of Instress in memory of those who lost their lives that day and with hope to all for a brighter future. May the spirit of creativity lift your hearts and give you a new understanding of what it means to be alive...

[Where were you?]

-Cari A. Rose-

Where were you?

Where was I?

In a room full of people my own age that had no idea what was happening outside that room.

Not knowing that people were scared or hurting

That people were dying,

That more were going to die.

That's where I was.

Alone in a room standing open-mouthed in front of a television watching it all happen a second time.

And then a third time.

And then again as the whole world seemed to collapse in a massive implosion that closed mouths and spilled tears.

That's where I was.

Knees hugged tightly against sobbing chests.

Hands shaking, struggling to dial phone numbers of loved ones.

Sobs exploding at the sound of familiar voices.

That's where I was.

Waiting impatiently for answers to the thousands of questions that surfaced through the thousand different emotions that had never been felt before.

Waiting for the who and the why that for a time appeared to have no answer.

Waiting for something solid and recognizable to resurface so that there was something to hold on to until the answers came.

That's where I was.

Hurt and confusion held trembling hands with fear and denial

As hate and prejudice became twin thieves robbing us of hope and security

And attempting to divide a union bound by stripes of autonomy.

That's where I was.

Not knowing what to say or think or feel

Not knowing what would happen next

Not knowing if the sun would emerge on the edge of the horizon to shed light on the bewildering circumstances

Or if it would just shine on the tear-stained cheeks of those left wondering.

That's where I was.

Where were you?

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