

Misericordia University

Misericordia Digital Commons

Instress: A Journal of the Arts

Digital Collections

2024

Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1999

Misericordia University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress>

Recommended Citation

Misericordia University, "Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1999" (2024). *Instress: A Journal of the Arts*. 54. <https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress/54>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collections at Misericordia Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Instress: A Journal of the Arts by an authorized administrator of Misericordia Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mcech@misericordia.edu.

Instress

1999







Contents

The Builders	poetry	K. L. Shellenberger	1
Independence Day	prose	Joeleen Cooper	2
Easy	poetry	David M. Engelhardt	4
Honorable Mention			
Executive Lunch	fine arts	Robin Wilson	6
First Place			
So Very Personal	poetry	Megan Weber	7
Unsoundness	prose	Lee Ann Glowzenski	8
First Place			
Purple Plum	poetry	Naomi Martin	12
Noveau Rondeau	poetry	Amy Dunaway	13
First Place			
Homecoming Cafe	prose	Bill Jeffery	14
Honorable Mention			
Wishing	prose	Jenn Naugle	17
Nest	fine arts	Dr. Stevan Davies	18
Pinball	poetry	Lee Ann Glowzenski	19
Second Place			
Night	poetry	April Masters	20
No Change	poetry	unsigned	21
A Couple of Fools	prose	Retta Radin	22
A Wall Once New	poetry	Leighann Willams	26
Angel	fine arts	Nicole Dixon	27
Second Place(Quartet)			
Confused in '63	poetry	Robin Wilson	28
Angel	poetry	Sara Race	30
Behind Closed Doors	poetry	Michelle Lawler	31
Current Resident	prose	Lee Ann Glowzenski	32
Second Place			
The Essence of Life	poetry	Linda Roulinage	35
Bark and Leaves	fine arts	Nicole Dixon	36
Second Place(Quartet)			

Independence Day

When I woke up that dreaded morning, a sense of fear had begun to overwhelm me. I decided right then and there that I was not going. I didn't care what my parents said. They always thought they knew what was best for me, but this time I was convinced that they were wrong. I was not going to listen to them. I was not going to school.

A problem arose when I tried to convince my mother of this fact. My 5-year-old language could not withstand her pervasive elder tone. She was very stern in saying that I was going to school because I had to, and there was to be no further discussion on the matter. I had failed and was forced to get on that big yellow bus heading to "Destination Unknown", to a place I had heard the grown-ups call "kindergarten". Just the very mention of it sent a chill down my spine. Nevertheless, my mother said I had to go, and I had not yet mastered the art of persuasion that I would hold so dear in my teenage years. So I had but one choice, to obey her.

She walked me down the street to the bus stop. I had hoped over and over in my mind the bus would not pick me up, all to no avail. After a few moments of waiting, that ugly yellow bus came. It saw me standing there, helpless. As it pulled up to the curb, it made a horrific hissing noise, like a snake ready to strike its prey. The door opened to reveal a stairwell. I was convinced that this vehicle was not a bus at all. It was a hideous beast just waiting for me to step inside. Then it could snap its jaw shut and enjoy the newly acquired fresh meal. I stared into the mysterious doorway, and decided again that I was not going.

My mother must have been able to sense my insecurity. She turned on her charm and told me in her motherly voice, "Go on. Get on the bus. It's ok." I looked at her for a moment, bewildered. Then suddenly it all made sense. She was trying to get rid of me. She wanted the big yellow monster to eat me up. I could imagine her reaction in my mind. The moment I got on the bus, she would smile and cheer that I was finally gone. Then she would run home and tell my father and they would invite the whole family over for a party, celebrating my demise. I was not about to give her that satisfaction, for even in my early years I had a hint of rebellion. So, I backed away from the bus.

I had made my decision, and I was not going to this place they called "kindergarten", but perhaps it wasn't a place at all. Perhaps this word "kindergarten" was the name of this monster waiting to devour me. "She's

going to kindergarten”, my mom had said with a mischievous grin on her face. Oh that was it; there was no way I was getting on that bus.

I turned back toward my mother, a tear forming in my eye. She stooped down to my level and looked me straight in the eyes. “Honey, be a brave girl. Go ahead get on the bus. It’s ok,” she said in a very reassuring tone. I was brave, and I knew it. All of a sudden I felt as if I could do anything, like I was Wonder Woman. I could use my supernatural powers to defeat this grotesque yellow monster. All I had to do was go up the stairs. I gave my mother a goodbye kiss, and climbed the stairs, never looking back.

I had made it on the bus and I was still alive. The driver told me to take a seat. I looked around to find the best one. As I walked down the narrow aisle, I noticed another child. He was sitting alone in his seat. His eyes were red from the tears that still flowed from his eyes as he clutched his G.I. Joe lunchbox. For a split second, I almost felt sorry for him until I realized his pathetic nature. I had conquered my fears and made it on the bus without shedding a single tear. I was braver than he was. As I walked by him, I stuck my tongue out at him, boasting my superiority. I then proceeded to my seat.

I sat down, looked out the window and saw my mother standing there. Suddenly, my super powers vanished. I put my face against the cold, hard glass of the window and waved goodbye. I missed her already. I watched her image as we departed, and kept my eyes on her until she disappeared. I was all alone now. I clutched tightly on to Sarah, my Cabbage Patch Kid, knowing that she would always be there to comfort me. The tears began to stream from my eyes.

But I looked around and realized I had made it. I really was brave. I had conquered my fear of this unknown beast and was on my way to the dreaded “kindergarten”, but I wasn’t afraid. I knew I could handle it. From that moment on, I knew I could do anything I set my mind to. In that split second, sitting there in the sticky green seats of the yellow bus, I became independent.

-Joeleen Cooper-

Easy

Sitting in the big easy chair
Worn like old blue jeans

With stereo speakers like sentinels
Behind each receptive ear
Listening to a loaded tray of CDs
Not cassettes or vinyl
Though there is an abundance of neglected tape
And even still the aging vinyl collection
With the old turntable wired
Like a blue lipped terminal patient
To the nineties amplifier
Tonight CDs are cranking like time
On then new multi disc player

While having just read
From the tattered book of poetry
Lying gently in the cradle like lap
Meditating on metaphors
Twists of lyric language
And rhythmic rhymes
Open form spaces as small as a sea oat
Or vast like the azure ocean

Dozing off somewhere in tune
Between Celtic harmonies
Dreaming of her while napping

Sitting in the big easy chair
Worn like a path to the beach

She appears ethereal
Weaving in and out of visions
Like a swooping sea gull
Barefoot in the turquoise surf
Dressed in navy blue
As the night sky on the horizon
With the gleam in her hair
The color of the sunset

Suddenly waking hazily
To British rock and roll crying
Like the blues
And the urgent chirping of the sleek phone
Fumbling quickly to answer her call
But it is only
A WRONG NUMBER

Settling back again lazily
Listening to the bluesy rock and roll
Meditating on metaphors
And navy blue

Sitting in the big easy chair
Worn like skin

Honorable Mention

-David Michael Engelhardt-

Executive Lunch



So Very Personal

Fate's favor is my explanation, that
Hiding behind a wall I built with years of misguided and dreaming,
I mustered courage from my soul's depth and escaped
on the most trying path
Reluctantly giving up sleep in exchange for searching,
trying to organize thoughts into thinking,
Furiously balancing what I was and what I want, and
Trying to construct a whole being, out of the fragments that remained.

I let myself blur until I was almost unrecognizable,
And I couldn't cry because I broke my own heart.
But it was in my darkest moment that I was at my most beautiful,
When I surrendered my demons to the surface,
Bared my soul to an audience of one, and
Was not afraid of what I saw.

As the layers I built up for protection melted away,
I was astonished to find this did not leave me fragile,
but instead lucid and real.
Today I beckon the endless skies ahead; a challenge to wings I have grown,
So I will never need to worry if they are good only for creating the breeze
on which others soar.
Now with open eyes I dream, so it is clear that
Alone, I am stronger than I ever would have known.

-Megan Weber-

Unsoundness

The stage is set to represent a kitchen in a contemporary American home. The furnishings consist of a table and three chairs which dominate the middle of the set. A small sink is located in the counter behind the table with a clock above it. Cabinets line the walls above the counter on either side of the clock. A television is placed on a cabinet to the left of the table. A phone is mounted on a wall to the left. The colors of the furniture and walls are in muted shades of brown, white and gray. There should be as much background noise as possible without interfering with the narrator's monologues.

(The narrator walks out of a seat in the audience and stands in the center of the stage.)

Narrator: I'm the narrator. I'm going to assume you already know some things, like the fact that I'm standing in a kitchen. You know, I bet this kitchen looks a lot like yours. Newly remodeled, space saving, full of old country charm. One of those products of a two parent, two income upper middle class household. The other rooms, the parts of this house you can't see, they're a lot like this one. Typical for this part of the world, in this part of the country, in this part of the city. And the neighborhood--I'm sure that's a lot like yours too. Kids on bikes, cats on windowsills, not too exciting--just the way you like it. I'm sorry though, all that really doesn't have much to do with what I have to tell you and there's something really important you need to know before the action starts. There you are, sitting out there, looking at this kitchen, and you really don't know anything about this show. You're probably thinking it's some sort of family drama, maybe along the lines of Death of a Salesman, only not as long. That's a fairly accurate guess. But what you still need from me are some details that will help you understand what's going to be happening in a few minutes. Is everybody still with me? *(flicks lights off and on)* I know these extended monologues can be pretty hard to take. But if you don't pay attention to this part, you might get confused. And then if you start whispering to the person next to you it's gong to ruin the whole effect. Okay, here comes the important part. Everyone you're about to see, the man, woman and child of our story, has lost their voice. They aren't sick or injured or otherwise deformed. They've simply lost the ability to cause noise to come out of their mouths. Yesterday, they were just like you are right now. But in a few minutes, when they wake up, they're going to realize something is wrong. That's when we'll start watching.

8 *(looks at clock on wall)* Well, it's about time for me to get out of your way.

Just watch for awhile and I'll be back soon.

(The narrator leaves the stage and returns to his seat in the audience.)

(The phone rings. A man's footsteps are heard rushing toward the kitchen. The man enters and picks up the receiver. He appears to mouth the word hello but no sound is heard. He looks extremely puzzled and tries to clear his throat. Again there is no sound. He mouths somethings and then hangs up the phone. He redials the caller and attempts once more to speak. When nothing comes out, he drops the receiver allowing it to dangle off the hook. He goes to the counter, takes a glass out of the cupboard and fills it with water. He then takes some salt from the table, adds it to the water, and tries to gargle. Even his gargling makes no sound. He now appears more frightened than before. He looks around the kitchen, apparently searching for something that can help him. He considers a nearly empty bottle of liquor as he hears someone else approaching.)

(A woman enters. As she begins to struggle to utter something, it is evident that she has lost her voice also. She mouths some words at the man, apparently trying to convey what has happened to her. He points to his head, clasps his hand over his mouth, and makes other gestures in an attempt to tell her that he is experiencing the same thing. She looks around the kitchen, opens a cabinet and takes out a bottle of Chloraseptic. She sprays her mouth furiously and waits a few seconds, but sees that it does not help. Becoming more frustrated and angry, she tries to yell, but nothing happens. She starts to write a note. After watching her for awhile, the man also begins to write.)

(While the woman is writing the narrator leaves his seat and walks back onto the stage. The man and woman never give any indication that they notice his presence. The narrator now takes a seat on the edge of the stage.)

Narrator: She's writing him a note to tell him about a presentation she's supposed to give this morning. He's going to write to her about the telephone that he couldn't answer.

(The man finishes scribbling and walks to the sink where he finds a large pot which he throws to the ground. The woman glares at him.)

Narrator: Okay, right now he's thinking that maybe there was a sonic boom or something else that might have caused them to temporarily lose their hearing. But obviously that couldn't be true or they wouldn't be able to hear the phone or the water or the pot. She gets very annoyed when he does stupid stuff like that.

(The woman hurries to her bedroom offstage where she continues to get ready for work. The man stumbles over to the table, still looking confused/)

(A boy enters, listening to a Walkman. The music is so loud that it is audible to the man as well as the audience. He finds some cereal and begins eating. He makes no contact with the man and so is unaware of the condition of both his parents and himself. The man likewise makes no attempt to communicate with his son. The two remain seated at the table in silence except for the boy's loud crunching. The man buries his head in his arms as the boy continues to eat.)

(The woman returns briefly, glances at the phone and then places the receiver back on the hook. The man looks at her and appears as if he wants to tell her something, but he doesn't open his mouth or bother to write. The woman leaves the room again.)

(As the woman is leaving, the boy forms a square with his hands as if looking through a camera lens and watches her go. He then leaves and returns quickly with a video camera. He begins filming his father who appears to be sleeping on the table.)

Narrator: Kid thinks he's a filmmaker. Luckily, he does this sort of thing so often that his parents have gotten used to it. Personally I would go crazy, being taped all the time like that. I guess they just figure it's never going to leave the house. I'd have to agree with him. I mean, I support the NEA as much as the next guy, but those artsy films really don't sell.

(While the narrator is talking, the boy begins to film other parts of the room, including the audience. He walks around the set, filming from different angles, but he does not leave the stage area. He does not acknowledge the presence of the audience.)

(The woman returns, dressed in business clothes. The boy turns off his camera and leaves the room. The woman begins to write another note.)

Narrator: She's asking him to go to the drugstore and buy everything they have for laryngitis. He won't be going to work because all he usually does all day is answer phones, and obviously he isn't qualified for that today. *(The woman leaves and shortly a car is heard pulling away. The man is left alone at the table. He stands up, picks up his son's cereal bowl, pours the rest into the garbage disposal. He returns to the table, drinks the rest of his water, and after a few swallows, throws his head back and screams, soundless. He shrugs and turns on the television.)*

Narrator: *(stands and walks to the center of the stage)* So that's it. And you probably thought there'd be some huge catastrophe or beautiful revelation just because these people had one of those weird, Twilight Zoney experiences. But nothing like that happened. And tomorrow, when they wake up, everything will be back to normal--the same sort of normal as today I guess, only with a few words thrown in. *(sits down at the table with the man)* Now don't you worry about him. Tomorrow he'll go to work and explain the whole thing. His boss might be a bit suspicious, but nothing will come of it. In a week he'll forget the whole thing even happened. As for the woman, she's not going to be able to give her presentation today. Unfortunately, she's going to be demoted, but after a few months of eighty hour work weeks she'll make up for it. As for the boy, he'll make his film, but soon enough he'll find out that the good money is in the mass market, so he'll abandon the high art attempts. So they'll be fine, and tomorrow they won't even think about these occurrences very much. In fact they'll probably just blame it on some 24-hour virus--but we know that's not true. Today, something was definitely missing. But from where I'm standing, it doesn't seem like anything was missing at all. You know what I'm saying. But like I said, we're all finished here. I suppose you can go home now. You know if one of you could give me a ride, I'd really appreciate it. See, last night I had to take a cab and I'm not saying it *wasn't* my fault, but someone screwed up the directions and it took me about three hours to get home. Then I ended up having a fight with my wife, which led to our son walking in on the whole mess to give his all-purpose advice, *(mocking)* "If you don't have anything nice to sa-ay...". And I swear he does the whole thing in that unnerving singsong voice too, like he actually wants to draw attention to the fact that he just used the most ridiculous cliché known to man. It's not like I don't love the kid, but--oh, okay. You've all got your coats on, so I guess I'll take my cue and get off the stage. It's starting to get pretty hot under these lights anyway, so I'd say it's about time we call it a night.
(The narrator leaves the stage and joins the audience. The man remains seated at the table.)

First Place

-Lee Ann Glowzenski-

Purple Plum

I bought you home in the back of the car,
a burlap bag on your thimble thick trunk,
a pitiful umbrella without any cloth
a skeleton of branches with three pink petals.
I planted you beside my own front porch,
your burgundy leaves like toddling fingers
unable to reach on a too high shelf.

A sigh and a whisper, an exhale from Time.
Have you grown so full and so much?
Has so much changed in so little time?
Your branches they reach well over the porch,
if they wanted, your tips could easily tap
on my window from which I stand in such wonder
beholding you now from the second floor.

While I am nestled comfortably back on the porch,
I am certain I see, perched in your branches,
red feathered bellies blending quite well with your leaves.
Your flowers in bloom, a soft pink covered snow,
opening with tulips, crocus and daffodils.
Magnolias are out, yes, they are grand,
Yet it is you that I marvel, so simple. I know.

I look at you now, with each bending bough,
ascending with breezes as time toddles by.
Your leaves they are countless embraces on branches.
Your blossoms take wing, like child thrown kisses,
each bloom on a breath drifts into a curtsy,
then dances and spins pirouettes in midair.

Nouveau Rondeau

So hear this! The director has died and the people rejoice
as they are no longer required to follow and heed the voice
of artistic mandates. Leaping up from bruised and tired knees,
his actors tear down velvet curtains, no dictator left to please,
as the groaning stage collapses, flamenco dancers turn with boys

lost in the continent's relieving laughter. Crowds surround and hoist
the corpse to the pyre, his knuckles now marble still angled and poised
to lend critique, as his body disappears over faceful seas.
Let the bands play, the director has died and the people rejoice.

Burning scripted lines and props of imported alabaster, choice
reigns their thought, for free admission was but a calculated ploy,
as attendance always had equated to demand in deed.
Purged from repetitive weekly practices, his death frees
the people, lives now possible. See their eyes shine while growing moist.
Listen up! The director has died and the people rejoice.

First Place

-Amy Dunaway-

Homecoming Cafe

Sweaty fingers tapped nervously on the small table, stopping only to again wipe the condensation from what seemed to be an ever-foggy window. He stared out to the pouring rain outside; watching and waiting. The bitter, tasteless muck he could only assume was coffee did nothing to soothe the nervous pinch steadily growing in his stomach. His brow lifted at the sight of another taxi cab braving the night air. His eyes lowered in disappointment as the yellow car, like the others, quickly passed the modest corner diner. Modest, was of course, being kind. The air inside held the distinct aroma of cigarettes and seven-day-old urine pads, evenly circulated by rusty, squeaky ceiling fans.

He looked out to the night sky, silently pleading for the rain to end, trying to will the dark clouds to quickly pass. Nathan had tracked her down for years, long hard years, and feared the night would be ruined by the cursed downpour. His eyes diverted to the sight of yet another taxi pushing through the water-laced streets. His breath froze as this one slowly parked in front. He watched anxiously as a small figure stepped out with an umbrella. His right index finger continued to tap impatiently as the figure paused to seemingly talk with the cabby. Finally, the petite figure turned towards the cracked glass-framed front door and entered.

The woman closed her dripping umbrella, looking about the diner's regulars until their eyes seemed to instinctively meet. As she approached, her stiletto heels cracked into the sticky floor with each step. Upon reaching his booth, Nathan could see a fifty-year old face hidden behind a younger woman's make-up; a vain attempt to conceal or deny her years.

"You Nathan McCormick?" she asked as she began to light a cigarette.

"Yes, I am, Miss Ruben," he replied, failing to hide his nervousness, "please have a seat."

Miss Ruben sat across from Nathan in the tight booth to find a cold cup of coffee waiting in front of her.

"I took the liberty." Nathan explained with an eager smile. "It might be cold by now, but I can get you another if you like..."

"I like tea anyhow." She interrupted.

The tight clench deep in Nathan's gut grew even tighter. Their meeting did not begin as smoothly as he had so many times imagined.

"You can order anything you like," he answered politely, "it's on me."

Have you eaten yet?"

Nathan was taken back by Miss Ruben's apparent aggravation as she lightly massaged her sinuses.

"Listen, kid," she began, "it's been what you might call a busy night. Now, I don't know why you looked me up or what exactly you're looking for, but whatever it is--forget it. I got nothin' to offer."

Nathan felt his heart plummet deep into the wrenching pain almost unbearable in his stomach. The woman sitting impatiently across his table seemed to grow older right before his eyes.

"I've got my own problems," she continued, "this I don't need. Sorry if this is a little too direct for you, but I ain't got the time or patience. At the risk of shattering whatever fantasies you might've had about me, I'm just gonna get right down to it. All right?"

Any fantasies Nathan might have saved from his youth had indeed long since shattered beyond any hope of salvation as he summoned the strength to nod his head.

"Why couldn't you just let things be?" She asked. "Why do you think adoption agencies don't give out names? Hell, if I knew you'd come looking for me thirty years down the line, I woulda just let some damn doctor poke and prod me."

Her words echoed hard in Nathan's head, loosening tightly vaulted thoughts hidden deep within his memories. His tenth birthday...balloons, crooked banners, flaming candles on a rich chocolate cake--and his parents' silence. Constant silence. Silence that could take form and thicken the air. Silence that could last hours, days, or weeks. Only through their inevitable divorce was Nathan able to discover that they were not his parents at all.

"Miss Ruben," he began, forcing himself back into the present, "I don't know what I came for tonight, or exactly what I expected. Right now, I just want to know..."

"Why?" Miss Ruben interjected. "Is that it? Is that what you want? It ain't too complicated. I already had two brats I couldn't stand. I didn't want, and sure as hell couldn't afford, a third."

The thought of having siblings never entered Nathan's mind. The idea brought back a slender shred of his diminishing enthusiasm.

"Two other children?" Nathan managed through the shock.

"In my line of business," she began as she extinguished her cigarette with a twist in a chipped ashtray, "sometimes a John.. I mean a customer, slipped and popped a bun in my oven. It happened in those days. I usually took care of it. But I got thinkin', maybe it'd be good to have someone bring in a few more checks for the rent. Someone to take care of me in my

retirement years. That theory went to the crapper on a fast track. But to quench your curiosity, how about I fill you in on some good 'ol fashioned family memories, huh? Let's see, where to start... I guess the guy you can call you're brother, the moron that he was, got himself fried in the state pen a few years back for killing his wife's boyfriend. And your sister--hell, who knows where she is? Been bouncing around drug clinics since before she was old enough to drive. Most likely she's managed to o.d. herself by now."

It was a nightmare. Nathan was powerless to awake. The pain in his gut was spreading into his temples, throbbing mercilessly. He could hardly believe her apathy as she spoke of such horrors, lighting another cigarette in her wrinkled, lipless mouth.

"What about... What about my father?", Nathan asked; defeated.

"You just ain't gettin' it, are ya, hon?" She answered with an incredulous laugh through the smoky mist about her face. "He can be any one of a million guys in this city."

Nathan could only stare at this wicked woman before him, wishing for nothing more than for her to stop; wishing for nothing more than silence. As Miss Ruben began to fidget with her watch, squinting to see the time, he realized he had made a dreadful mistake, one that he may never recover.

"It's late, and I'm tired", she began with a huff. "Sorry this wasn't the teary-eyed Oprah moment you were hopin' for, but we both have our own separate lives to get back to. Let's keep it that way."

Miss Ruben stood from the booth, covering herself in synthetic fur as she readied to leave.

"It's usually twenty bucks for an hour of my time," she continued with a crooked smile, "but what the hell? You're family..."

Nathan stared silently as she steadied herself in her tight-fitting shoes and headed for the exit. Miss Ruben opened her umbrella at the door, preparing for the awaiting storm, and left. Nathan looked out his window, finding the cab that brought her was waiting at the curb with motor, and no doubt meter, still running. He looked longingly as Miss Ruben entered the downpour and headed for her ride, placing his palm on the water-streaked window. He felt its chill; its cold dampness flowing through his hand as the small yellow cab quickly disappeared into the wet night.

There he sat, staring with vacant eyes at the empty seat in front of him for what seemed like hours. Nathan couldn't even acknowledge the huge, mole-faced waitress as she refilled his empty mug with lukewarm decaffeinated coffee. As she waddled her oversized body back into the kitchen, leaving the bill, Nathan slowly awoke to his surroundings. The smell of the air, the rust spreading on the metal lining of his booth, the flickering

florescent lights. The empty seat... He couldn't remember just when he first arrived, but they had all seemingly vanished without a trace. He was alone, and didn't even notice. After a moment of reflection, a small smile crawled across Nathan's pale lips. A light chuckle nearly escaped him as he again wiped away the moist fog covering his window for a clearer look outside. Although he knew there was nobody to bare witness, he wished for nothing more to be out in the rain, the dark, pouring rain, so that no one could see the single tear dripping down his chin.

Honorable Mention

-Bill Jeffery-

Wishing

Seeing him for the first time, I watch his long, strong hands wishing they were around me. Moving from the table his hands grab the closest can, snapping it open with a flip of his fingertip. He mingles with everyone there and like he was on the beach, he searches for the best location. Seeing the chair positioned next to me, I asked him if he wants a seat. Smiling, he walked towards me. With my heart pounding he leaned over, picked up the chair and walked away.

-Jenn Naugle-

Nest



Nest Stevan Davies D. 11/1988

Pinball

GAME OVER

need a deposit-a big investment
dad can't make change so
try deep fleece pockets
dig past crushed candy
beyond tissue wads
nothing fills the hole
Come up empty
try the backpack
key chains-two sets
pictures-one mom/one dad
books of love
nothing does the job
Come up empty
try the Coke machine
ooh something sticky!
just a dime
nothing fits the bill
Come up empty
never mind now, time to go
so long dad-go to moms
play the game-switcheroo
nothing spans the gap
End up empty

Second Place

-Lee Ann Glowzenski-

Night

when gray white blue
are indistinguishable
sway
 like an ocean
swaying
 like a mirror
from a web of tossing
autumn waves

free

they possess everything
in white clustered
mellows of fog
carrying nights,
days of souls' of birds,
hearts of twilighted dreamers

how like the clouds
we are moved
in silence
through our habits (of cigarette smoking and Wal Mart shopping)
but mellow in incidence of leaving
all behind
let the air ease us
 away
behind the glowing crystal
beyond our eyes

-April Masters-

No Change

Mediocrity is no way to go
when your crawling from day to day
for once in your life
I succeed but then you push me away

I've searched for years and still sense no change
without having memories of what to hate
so I walk alone...in a landslide
that no one can escape (will I get wasted?)

All your hopes and dreams may cease
withered by the pouring rain

Slow suicide in my head again
fighting wars which I lose
but can one...ever escape
the flawlessness of grace (will I get wasted?)

Nowhere to take my hate
from one who could never see the end
so I don't want you to change the state I'm in... my friend

-unsigned-

A Couple of Fools

It was a hot and humid day in July. The sun beat down upon the grass and my house felt like a sauna. My brother was dressed in a tuxedo and yelling at me to make sure everything was going as planned. He told me to check on Jen (his bride to be) and not to forget the flowers. I don't believe in weddings, nobody stays together anymore anyway, yet I am forced to take care of all the minor details for this one, (I was in charge of the flowers, the caterers, the in-laws and anything else my family or Jen could think of). While running around, checking to see that everything and everyone were in their right places, my mother stopped me, and asked, "Is that what your are wearing to the church?"

I protested, "Yes". Sure it was a long black dress in the middle of July, and I am sure I will be hot, but who said you can't wear black to a wedding? "I am not the one getting married, and no one will be looking at me anyway." Why can't she mind her own business? I thought we went through this whole argument two days ago, when we were dress shopping. Sometimes I wonder if anyone really hears me at all.

I distinctly remember telling my mom at The Dress Shop that the black dress is my favorite. I tried on a lavender one with little flowers on it and I looked like the purple people eater, and I know it is true because even my mother said that the dress did not flatter me in a disgusted voice and smug face only a mom could get away with. I tried on another dress that was pale yellow, and though it went nicely with my olive complexion, I would have to buy shoes and a purse to match, so instead of looking like a big canary, along with being the miser I am, I decided not to purchase that one.

After buying the black dress, my mother and I went to lunch. She was all excited about the upcoming wedding, but mostly I think her enjoyment came from the relief she would have when my brother finally moved out. I, on the other hand, was upset that he was getting married. He has only known Jen for two years and they fight all the time. Speaking form a psychological perspective, they both have alot of issues.

"I know when you get married, everything will be so wonderful," my mom cried. "I look at wedding dresses all the time for you and dream about what color your bridesmaid dresses will be and where we'll have the wedding. Maybe in the backyard, in the summer, it would be so nice, right? I just know you will make the perfect bride." I just sat there with my head in my hands praying that it would end, that my brother wouldn't get married and

everything would go back to the way it was, when I would return home from college, and talk about boys, classes, and work. "Honey, are you listening? Don't you ever dream about getting married? You know it has been quite a while since you had a serious relationship. I think you are just the right age, but you are always and forever hanging around with those two crazy girls. That is probably the reason you will end up a hermit like your aunt, Dianne. Do you have a date for the wedding? If you don't my hairdresser's son is free. He is nice and handsome too. He is twenty-six and has his own pool business."

Does she really think I can't get a date for myself? Or that it is necessary and cute to pawn me off to her hairdresser's son? What year is it anyway? I thought that dowries were gone like acid washed jeans (only very few still believe they are still in style). Am I that pitiful? Since when did finding a date become so important, I wondered. "I would rather go by myself than with someone I hardly know," Thanks, but no thanks. It is no secret that whatever is on my mother's mind gets multiplied by thirty when we stress her (which is a good amount of the time) and she cannot concentrate on anything else-- If it was bill time instead of wedding time, she would be complaining that I have got to get another job because we have no money, and she would wonder if I was seeing some boy (in my spare time) that took away from the time I could be making money, or it could be exam time and she would tell me to quit my job, so that I had enough time to study, and I can just forget it, if I so much as plan a trip with my friends instead of her, so you can see there is never enough time, money, or feelings to be dispersed, at any particular, certain, standard time. There is usually too much of one and not enough of another and the proportions (of time, money, and feelings) never quite equal out.

Continuing the conversation, I said, "...And for your information, when I begin to examine all the relationships around me, I feel that they are necessary for human growth; however, they never really turn out the way they might be expected to. Unfulfilled expectations, jealousy and/or fear can drive people away from each other. Anyway I am not ready for those kinds of distractions, right?"

Ignoring my concerns, Mother replied, "I am not sure what you're talking about." Again changing the subject, she asked about my coupled friends, "So what's going on with Jim and Karen? Nick and Jen? Are they still like honeymooners? Oh, what about Hunter and Anita? I bet they miss each other. Where are they?"

Without thinking I blurted out, "Mom, quit it. You're always interrogating me." She drives me crazy sometimes. I just wish she would accept me

the way I am; I am happy. "I told you already, a billion times, I am not ready for such a commitment. I have seen so many marriages fail, and I am not sure I want to ever get married. I am content hanging around with my crazy friends, going to school and working on weekends. I do not have much time for anything else. Is it so hard to understand that?" I sat in the little cafe-restaurant, staring at the menu, waiting for her to answer me. I felt bad for being mean, but it seemed she wasn't understanding my point of view. She was overwhelmed by my brother getting married, and I guess she wanted me to have the same happiness as him, except mine came from a different place, a place where I was in control and didn't have to answer to anyone, a place that didn't tie me down to any engagements, a place I could escape and watch television in my bed while eating potato chips. A place I call home.

I could tell she was angry, although I questioned the true reason. Was it because I was so fresh? Was it because she would never see me married with children like she had always dreamed? I couldn't stand the suspense, so I asked, "Why are you mad?"

The waitress brought us our food and when she left, my mother responded in a low voice, "Maybe you'll understand when you're older." I felt that she was holding her feelings in and that there was a way I could understand now, except that she wanted to withhold the information. It is also possible for me to believe my mother was just playing the devil's advocate, and that she really would not be able to stand it if she had to let go of her little daughter. Perhaps that is the reason we let the conversation go. The rest of the meal we spent in silence, then payed the cashier and drove home. It was the kind of silence that seemed much like a mourning, as if we were going to a funeral.

My brother and Jen were at the house, fighting as usual. They can never get along. Actually, I don't think anyone can get along with him. I went in my room and threw on the tunes, tube, hair dryer, anything to block all the commotion in the living room. I couldn't stand it. I turned the hair dryer off. I would give anything not to go to the wedding Saturday. Maybe I could break a limb, or catch the chicken pox. I couldn't go on living like this. I wondered what happened to my peaceful room? Then I thought it would never be the same again; with that in mind I stormed into the living room, and gave them all a piece of my mind. "Shut up", I screamed, "I am sick of the two of you fighting. You are getting married in two days. Did you forget?" I thought of something else, but soon forgot because mother butted in.

where I stayed until it was time to get ready for the wedding. And I think I heard her (with my ear against my door) ask my brother and Jen what they wanted for dinner. I thought they were so rude. I wanted to cry, but somehow I knew it wouldn't make it any better. For as long as I can remember my mother has always favored my brother. He used to beat me up and she would yell at me to stop antagonizing him. On my thirteenth birthday, she went out to dinner with him while I stayed home with the dog. He had a total of seven cars (none of which survived his aggression), he has gone to a total of three colleges (of which he only has one semesters worth of credit), and he owes between ten and twenty thousand dollars to my mother and me. I, of course, would never be able to get away with such behavior. I bought my own car when I was seventeen, have maintained the same job for six years and have earned promotions. I am a senior in college with plans to further my education. Still my mother believes he can do no wrong, and in two days she is going to sit back once again, and watch him make a huge mistake. I wondered why she was so lenient, forgiving, and supportive of him. He's like an egg on the edge of the table, ready to drop at any moment, and what bothers me the most is that he doesn't care about the agony he causes her. I turned off the television and the light, changed the station on the radio and tried to relax on my bed. I must have been exhausted, because I slept until Saturday morning.

As if nothing happened, my mother woke me up. She opened my shades, placed my slippers by my bed and hung my dress on the door. It was like a nightmare. I would never be able to conquer the fear and I will be doomed to live and die with it; I know I am not the only one who feels it. My mom has got to feel it, she's intuitive and sensitive, and if she thought I was wrong she would have told me so. Forecasting that wedding was inevitable, I went to the bathroom, took a shower and got ready for the blessed event.

At the church wedding bells sounded and I stood in my black dress, in the hot sun, waiting for the bride's and groom's limos to arrive. I heard doves singing, and the passing cars honking to congratulate the happy new couple, as if they were already married. I thought again about the possible ways I could cancel the wedding, but none came to mind. It was at that time I knew I had to face the fear, try to forgive him, and enjoy the special occasion. I had to let my brother grow up and find happiness and security somewhere else, though I made a promise to myself that if he ever needs me in the future, I would be there for him. The limo pulled up and Jen climbed out. My mother shortly followed. A few minutes later my brother and the best man arrived, Intoxicated.

I walked up to my mother and she said I looked nice. Not sure why 25

she had a change of heart, I replied, "I am sorry for getting so angry the other day." She just smiled and told me to enjoy the rest of the day. I reached for her hand and we walked into the church, together. I felt in my heart that something had changed. We were no longer going to argue in the same way. My mother and I joined forces and, for the moment, I didn't feel any pain or fear.

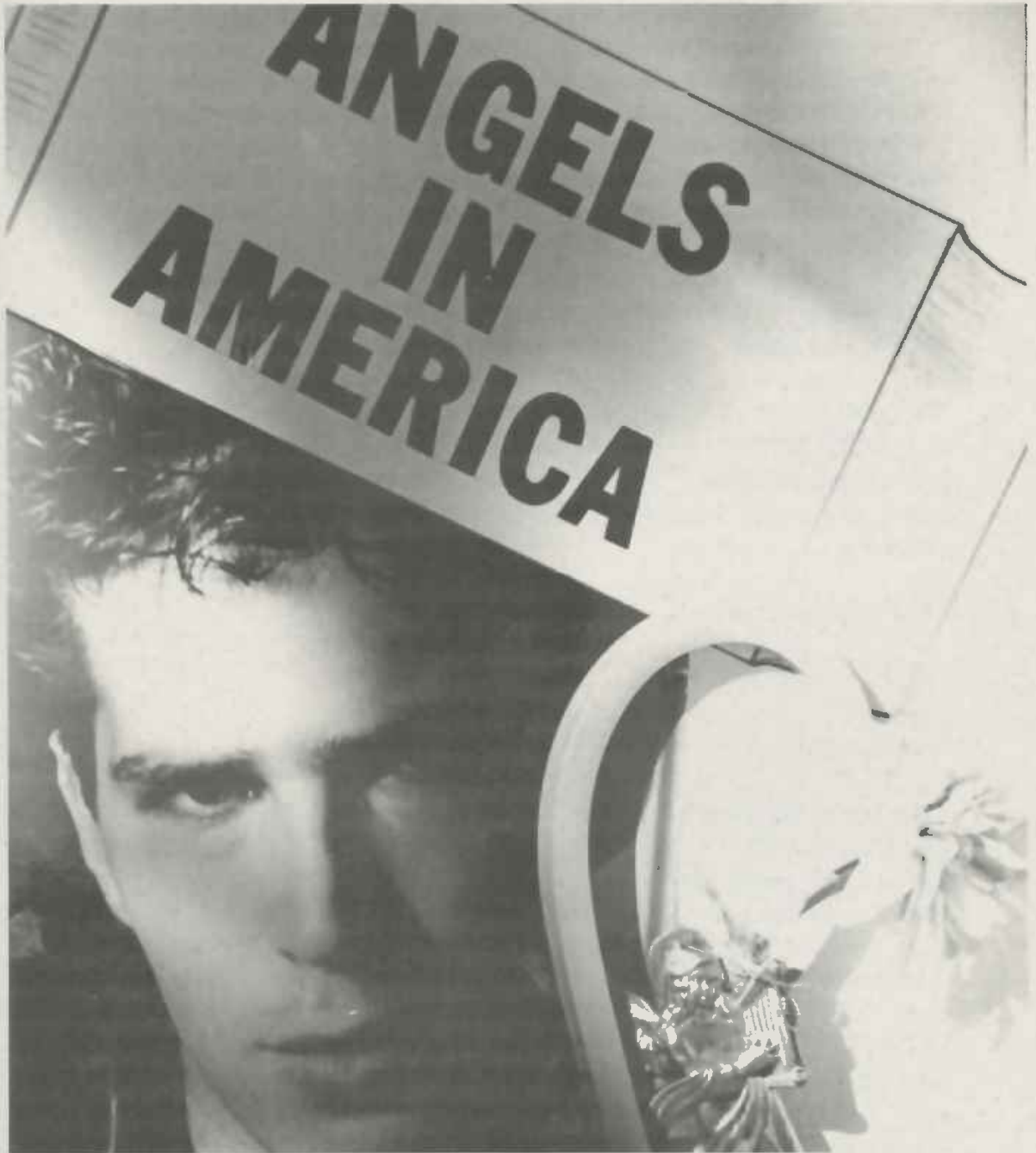
-Retta Radin-

A Wall Once New

Chippings blanket the floor
from a wall once new.
The insignificant wall confining
the secrets of yesterday.
Destroyed by the stresses of
the living.
Desperately clasping past
experiences.
Years pass, pieces plunge.
Portions of memories remain.

-Leighann Williams-

Angel



Second Place
-Nicole Dixon-

Confused in '63

Why are all the candy stores
closed?

It's only Tuesday.
The busy streets,
deserted,
like I picture them
when a BOMB hits.

My house is so weird today.
No comfort smells.
No Thanksgiving talk.
No "going to work" sounds.
NO CARTOONS!
Just Mom and Dad
sitting in front of the Philco
Watching crying.

I didn't know dads cried?

What's the big deal
anyway?
This isn't fair!

Does his funeral have to be on
EVERY channel?
Do ALL the candy stores
HAVE to be closed?
Why does Carol Harper have
A BOMB SHELTER
and
I DON'T
Why do the quiet streets frighten me?
and
WHAT does Camelot mean anyway?

Nobody told me
the world would be
different
when the candy stores
opened on Wednesday
and
What IS that old man
talking about on the
6 o'clock news?

RIOTS
BLACK PANTHERS
LSD
and
VIET NAM

Why didn't anyone
let me know
my world had changed
forever in '63

-Robin Wilson-

Angel

Why did she pass away,
Such a beautiful girl couldn't stay
Stay on the Earth with all of the hurt and pain
Now, she's an angel, looking down from the clouds of rain
When I'm down and feeling bad,
I think of her and the great times we've had
That beautiful angel in the sky, whispers in my ear that I can fly
Fly in life wherever I may go
She'll always be there to catch me on the down low
Years go by, and as I move on,
I always remember her at the break of dawn
The rising of the sun is filled with life,
The life she once lived on a place called Earth
Getting older and as I give birth,
Always remembering her in the heavens above
As I'm blessed with a baby girl, her skin so fair, as a pure white dove
So, what would be a more perfect name for my little angel here on Earth
Beginning again, with a brand new start,
Friends forever, and angels always in my heart

-Sarah Race-

Behind Closed Doors

She tells the collar her skin
She lowers her chin
As they speak
behind closed doors.

He says he loves his wife
He'd really love a new life
As he cheats
behind closed doors.

Her stomach increases in size
There's no man in her eyes
As she conceives
behind closed doors.

He sits behind the Book
He gives the girl a second look
As he lusts
behind closed doors.

We walk hand in hand
We don't understand
As we judge
behind closed doors.

-Michelle Lawler-

Current Resident

How things got to be the way they are now and why I'm leavin's got a lot to do with this. My mama named our baby sister Casserole Jean during one a her fits and somethin about it. If we had the chance, maybe we coulda kept the phone away from her til she come down off it, or at least gotten her to name the baby Jean Casserole. But once it was legal there wasn't no more left to say about it, and after time we just called her Cassie and didn't give no care after that.

You'd probably think a kid named Casserole would have to take a lotta hell in school, and sometimes she did. But as soon as everyone started callin her Cassie like we did at home, things was pretty much okay. The nice thing about the name Cassie is that everyone thinks (when they don't know the story) that it's short for Cassandra, and that tended to make old Casserole feel more glam-or-ous than she was. See, with a name like Cassandra, everyone has to say 'ah' when they say your name, like they just seen the queen or a real pretty picture. That's nothin like my name, Dick. That there's a worse name than Casserole, since you can't fix it. Maybe if my mama had me legalized Richard, or even if I didn't already have so much going against me, things woulda been different. But then I wouldn't be who I am. I suspect I'm a Dick instead a Richard cause a the guy who ended up bein half me, the guy who left mama a few days after he found out she was pregnant. Now mama never told me that's why she chose it. But still, if I were her, I probly woulda named my kid the only curse word that doubles as a name too if I got burned like she did, so I'm not gonna go blamin it on her.

I protected Cass from the ribbings she did get when I could, but I'm a kinda skinny and my name is Dick, so a lotta times I ended up takin the beatin for her instead a reroutin it all together. Thing is, Cassie didn't get beat just for her name. See, we're poor, and everyone in town knows it. But Cass, she wouldn't just take it as the truth. She was always tryin to make like she was what she wasn't, and when your mom's a barfly and your dad's listed as unknown, that sorta act can get you in trouble round here.

When I say everyone knew our story, I mean it. See, this house here wasn't always a house. It used to be a truck stop before mama fixed it up for livin in. I guess that makes sense, bein as it's right here on the highway. And since it is right out here in front a God and everyone we gone to school with, I didn't think there was much use in us actin like we was better than anybody else. But Cassie thought different. And when she started up her

"I'm just as good as you all" act no one took it too kindly. That's why she was always gettin herself into trouble. If she woulda just stayed in her place, things mighta been different. But they ain't. I guess the only good to come outta all that bad is that once everyone knows you got a crazy mama who's making you live in a truck stop, they don't think twice when they find out you're named after a quick fix meal. So at least Cass didn't never hafta explain herself. Everyone already knew.

The only time I ever had to explain us was when I called up the funeral man to tell him what mama wanted chiseled on Casserole's headstone. Cass ended up bein killed durin the only week outta the year that old Mr. Clay, the regular undertaker, goes on vacation. So when I called the out of town replacement, he hung up on me when I asked him to make the tombstone read "Our Loving Daughter Casserole Jean We'll Never Forget You". He thought I was jokin on him till I made him look it up in the newspaper. After that he apologized, half cause he though I was Cass's daddy and might come down and beat him up, and half cause I was cryin. To make up for it he knocked money off the funeral costs, which really don't matter since mama never paid the bill anyway.

Mama was always a bit off the mark but she really went down the hole after Casserole died. What happened was Cass got hit by a truck when she was walkin home from school and the funny thing about it is that she walked that road almost everyday without so much as a scratch. So, what I think, and what I've been told, is that some fool doggin on her about her name chased her out there onto that road. Which is why I said before that everything is the way it is now cause a Casserole bein Casserole. But anyway, mama was home and awake when it all happened, and when she heard that sound of flesh on metal she went runnin. She never told me, but I think that sound's been goin through her head ever since then. And somethin like that will really drive a body mad. After she found Cass in the ditch, she dragged her into our front room and started jumpin all upon her. Now that right there already seems a bit crazy, cept I know she was doin it on accounta this game her and Cass used to play. Sometime mama would get so drunk we'd have to do the same thing, wake her up like, only Cass was already gone for good. And if that ain't what she was doin, then God help her. They say a woman's never right after she's buried a child. Now I wouldn't know myself, first off cause I'm a man and also cause I haven't even fathered nothin yet. But she wasn't right, not at all. She wouldn't let the police take the body out, not for three days. She kept talkin about this voodoo show she seen, and how Cass might justa been in a real slow heart-beat coma and fixin to wake up. But after a few days it was clear as day to 33

all us that the girl was really done for. I don't wanna go explainin how we knew, but I will say it was real warm out.

We didn't have the means to give Cass a good proper burial. Even if we did, nothin on this earth coulda made her look good. By the time the make-up lady got to her, there was no converin up the bruises. I don't remember mucha the wakin, but mama kept on kissin on Cass's body like she never did when the girl was alive. She didn't come home for days after they put Cass in the ground, and first I thought she went off on a bender, but from what I hear round town she was just sleepin in the cemetery. I don't know for sure since I haven't never seen her since then. She moved into the cemetery maintenance man's shack and I hear she's pregnant again. I hope it does her some good.

So, with Cass gone and mama as good as, that leaves me. I been livin in this here house for about two year since Cass left, mostly cause it's free but moreover cause I didn't have nowhere else to go. Truth is, I still don't but I don't care anymore. I'm sick a livin in this place. It's been bad news ever since I was born into it, and since I'm the only one left, I guess it's record starts and ends with me. But then don't let me be forgettin you. I hope you manage to make out better. I guess I didn't have to go tellin you my whole life story, but the way I feel is that it pretty much goes with the house anyway. The way I see things is that when you live in a place long enough, that place starts actin like you the way you act like it. You know, like how castles always got vampires in em. And so the only way I could figure to explain to you what this place is like is by tellin you about the people that live in it. But don't let all this scare you off now. Sure, you got this place and everything that goes with it, good and bad alike. But I'm not sayin it won't change with you instead a you changin with it. I don't believe in curses or nothin like that. So I wish you good luck in the future, and let me give you one piece of advice. Get yourself a good can a paint and a fence if you got the means.

Second Place

-Lee Ann Glowzenski-

The Essence of Life

The simple sound of water dripping is music to my ear
Knowing one drop follows another, trusting its eternal flow.
Such is my heart beating continuous and ever present
Only a moment of ecstasy causes it to skip a beat
but returning with even a stronger throbbing than before.

To count the joys of a promised metaphor of life like drops of
rain brings sadness and gloom yet restores the gleam of the earth
How we wait for that drop of hope encountering all that is
before and anticipating all there is after

But where is it now? Gone so quickly, dispersed its splendor in
an instant. Dare we catch it, only to say it is gone?
Yes, Yes, Yes.....for it can never be repeated, that drop of
life that is precious and oh so valuable.
Each is unique and makes its mark upon which it falls, no matter
how big or small.
Synchronized with time and space, never realizing its importance
Falling into the frame of existence together to make a pool of
wealth.
So sophisticated it becomes, one with all, connecting and
returning to its origin.
It is there it receives its strength and direction, only to
begin again the journey of eternal flow.

Open the gate, let the jewels of life-giving water flow through
you so as not to miss an opportunity to experience each drop as
it falls into your being!

-Linda Roulinavage-

Bark and Leaves



Thanks to the Instress Staff

Joeleen Cooper
Lee Ann Glowzenski

A Special Thanks to

Maria Degraba
Amy Dunaway
Kit Foley
Dr. Jeff Johnson
Jim Sabulski

Contest Judges

Prose: Dr. Richard Lynch
Dr. David Payne
Poetry: Dr. Jeff Johnson
Dr. Scott Blanchard
Fine Arts: Dr. Jennie Congleton
Dr. John Curtis

Advisor

Dr. Johnson

Editor

April Masters





Misericordia

