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the **Crucible**



THE LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY LITERARY MAGAZINE

• FALL 1994 •

the Crucible

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FALL 1994

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the *Crucible*



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Francis Wayland
"the improbable seahorse"

"yellow as a flashing caution light,"
taking their colors from the rainbow,
they swirl their prehensile tails
and twist their independent eyes,
these chameleons of the deep.

fishes, fishes, fishes.

as if from a dream
they sail under the ocean surface
"from Canada to Tasmania"
the mythical wonderers keep trying
to reproduce more than they are dying.

fishes, fishes, fishes.

Susan Sarvis

Sonnet of Genetic Engineering

Erasing genes with enzymes nasty tastes,
Biology's dream is a nightmare sea.
Gigantic red tomato will not waste
Prospected clonings of endangered me.

To cure disease's nasty violent paths,
With guarded genes from virile virgin weeds.
The skill and brains of those inspired by math
And science will end babies' deaths with speed.

And then with eyes so blue and skin so white
Their minds so strong with thoughts beyond adults,
They'll smirk and spit upon us with much spite
Not knowing of the ones they do insult

Because *their* dads and moms don't have their eyes.
From plants and bugs is what descendants means.

Susan Sarvis

Techno-Hee-Haw

Air-conditioned tractors
freestyle in free
flying chickens' eyes, as
sky scrapers tear through hazy
corn-dust air,
selling their shadows to barns—
brick-red and lime
stone,
while
migrant workers squat,
picking potatoes from
clods of clay and lawyers
axe fugitive chickens,
making dinner for their bird-
mouthed children.

Timothy Burdick
Bathroom Banter

I am pissing on
the white porcelain
of the loo
an' that's
when I
see
the
phra
se
"Aliens
live
among
us!"
I
snicker
silently
to myself
until
I turn
and spy
the guy
in the
urinal
next to
me. An' he
licks his lips
with hissi lvery
serpent's tongue.
Yesssssssss..
SSSSSSSir,
Isn't it
a
s
c
r e
a m.

Susan Sarvis
Energy Sucked

We sat on your
beer-stained
love seat,
'watching Star Trek,
blinking lazily as
our
energy
seeped into
dingy cushions
the "Enterprise" drained
us, keeping us
motionless
and stagnant...
puddles
of rain from
your leaky
roof.
My mind
ventures down
through cushions of grime,
wondering
who filled this indentation
before
I was.

Karin Croucher
Thoughts of the Tequila Worm

The worm:
asleep at the bottom of the bottle,
he dreams of Uncle Tom and Dave,
yet most of all, of cousin Amber.
She is in another bottle,
spinning at the bottom.

Last he'd heard,
she was bought by a man in
Atlanta, Georgia.

He pictured her going down his throat
and having a worm cardiac arrest.
Who would begin CPR?
Not the Phys-Ed teacher,
nor the man in Georgia:

She would die an unkindly death.

The worm cried continually
because he would soon be on the same path,
yet a different throat.
GULP!!!

Francis Wayland
Boy in the Bottle

No one can foresee the terror
a young child will remember;
memories connect strangely when
the past and present collide
with the tormented fury of love.

Twenty years later,
a scar survives above my left eye,
bringing back the memory of
a brick striking mother's windshield,
releasing thousands of messengers
with strong voices and inverted meanings,
showering her infant son with diamonds
dancing, flying, falling, cutting

Mother sighs and says,
"He really did love you,
he just had. . . a problem."
Yet, I can't remember bleeding, father,
why?

Ben Clark
The Reason I Fear God

She says it was an angel,
an angel that shattered the sugar bowl, sent a cup
crashing, and smashed her wedding picture.
It was an angel that screamed, cursed, and shouted. "I don't
give a shit about those fucking kids!"

An angel who fights demons
demons who smear his head rot his liver
and make his heart forget.
demons that drive him insane,
that blacken his wings.

An angel, gentle, that bloodied her nose, split her lip,
made her hide. An angel that sleeps all day and disappears
at night.

Jennifer L. Fors
Smalley's Is a Bar

It was dim in the bar, the way bars always look dim so you're not quite sure who is there and who isn't. This was only the second time I had been to Smalley's. I was up visiting my brother who has a house right on Long Island Sound. He's really my half-brother, but we've been pretty close for years. I wanted to get away from school for the weekend because I'd been thinking about things too much.

Smalley's is a bar right down the street from my brother's house. It's a one-room joint with a long bar and a few tables against the wall. I liked it because it was small and drew an older crowd. I wasn't in the mood to be around college-age people. I get enough of that when I'm at school. There were three older ladies sitting at a table with a small light overhead that revealed the smoke over them. Even through the darkness, I could see that they all had heavy make-up on; they looked like they had been drinking since mid-morning. A few older men were sitting at the bar staring religiously at a game of the Knicks versus Detroit Pistons. I guess since Connecticut doesn't have a professional basketball team, people get into the New York Knicks. I'm not much of a sports fanatic but I wanted to sit at the bar. I ordered an Alabama Slammer and pulled out the stool in front of me which was next to an older gentleman sitting by himself. The way he sat there, shoulders hunched over a bit, tan and rough-looking hands clasped around his drink, and a fine-boned face, reminded me of my father. Even though my father died when I was four, I still remember him. He used to be a writer and also worked in advertising. I have a picture of him on my wall at school when he was in the paper, advertising the newest model of the 1974 Hoover vacuum cleaner. Even though I didn't know him well, I still think about him and miss him. I guess just because I wish I had known him. He was a good-looking man and intelligent, from what my mother has told me, but he was an alcoholic and died of a heart attack when he was forty-seven.

I sat down and took a sip of my drink. It was pretty strong, but that was fine with me. The man next to me turned and smiled, then brushed some lint off his shirt sleeve. I reached inside my pocket for my pack of Marlboro Lights and took out a cigarette. This was part of the reason why I had come out. My brother doesn't appreciate me smoking in front of him, and I really needed a cigarette. I watched intently as the flame lit the tip of the paper, and I savored the first drag. I had been trying to quit but it hadn't happened yet; I hoped the man next to me

wouldn't start lecturing me on the hazards of smoking. He turned to me, smiled at me again, and waited until I returned the friendly gesture before he stopped looking at me. I was beginning to think I had sat down next to a creep.

"I hope you don't think I'm being pushy, but you look like someone down on her luck. That's a mighty strong drink you've got there," he paused to let out a cough, which he muffled with his left hand.

Here we go, I thought.

"No, I'm fine, thanks," I replied. If he had something profoundly interesting to tell me, I would have been more than happy to listen to him, but I wasn't in the mood to be picked up by someone who could be my father's age.

"You know, I never used to drink Jim Beam much. Seems like I've been drinking more of it each weekend. I'm Bill by the way," he said as he extended his right hand to me.

"Jennifer, nice to meet you," I returned as I shook his hand. I hoped he didn't think I was being overly friendly, but he did look harmless. I wanted to point out he was drinking a stronger drink than I was, but I didn't want to be rude.

"Jennifer, you look like a thinker. Are you in college?" he asked and then took a sip of his drink.

I definitely knew this guy hadn't visited any college campuses this decade. Three quarters of the people I go to school with don't know the meaning of the word, "think."

"Yeah, I go to college. I go to Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania, and sometimes I think too much; maybe that's the problem," I replied, and I tried not to exhale smoke in his face.

He looked like he wanted to tell me his story, so I took another sip of my drink, relaxed in my seat and waited. Older people fascinate the hell out of me because I usually learn something I didn't know or hadn't looked at in a certain way. He proceeded to tell me how he was just thinking about the woman he married in 1968, when he was in his early thirties. She had just recently separated from an abusive husband. Gayle, his wife, had four children with her ex-husband and she had to leave them with him because she didn't have a job. She found a cheap apartment and eventually a job at a children's clothing store in downtown Chicago. She drank quite a lot at first because she didn't have much else to do, and she didn't want to think too much about her situation. She went downtown at night to some small local bars. Bill met her one night at a bar called The Recovery Room when he was extremely drunk. She was sitting at the bar with a long black skirt and a white high-collared sweater on. She had black, short hair, like a night with no moon, that curled around her ears. He had asked her if she

would like to dance—and they had spent the rest of the night, drinking and dancing on a wooden floor with no shoes on their feet. After the bar closed, they had sat on a bench overlooking Lake Michigan and talked about their lives, while pulling splinters from their feet.

"I knew I loved her the first night that I met her," and then he paused and asked if he could bum a cigarette.

I handed Bill a cigarette and a pack of matches I had picked up at the A-Plus on my way to Connecticut. At this point, I trusted him for no particular reason. He didn't seem too buzzed off the booze, and he seemed to have something interesting to tell.

Bill continued to tell me how he and Gayle got married eight months after they met. She never got her four children back because her ex-husband won the court case. The children wanted to be with their mother, but her ex-husband was extremely manipulative. Gayle then discovered that he was sexually abusing her two daughters. Bill and Gayle spent two years in court fighting him, but they lost. They soon had two children of their own, a son and a daughter. And seven years after they were married, Gayle had a heart attack on the living room couch, right in front of their son.

I felt awkward at first, like I had invaded Bill's privacy, so I lit up another cigarette and adjusted my legs because they had gone a bit numb, but I noticed that Bill didn't seem to be too down when he finished his story. He kinda had a matter-of-fact attitude and looked relaxed in his chair while he sipped his drink.

"Do you ever wonder what the point of everything is?" I asked, not really knowing what else I could say; plus I wanted to know his opinion because he seemed to have a grip on his life.

"Jennifer, have you ever read Thoreau's book called *Walden*?"

"Actually, I am an English major and have studied a few of his pieces this semester, but I never read that one."

"Well you should. Thoreau lived for two years on Emerson's *Walden Pond* and wrote the book because he saw how frivolous man can be in this world. We spend our lives worrying about who has more money, or a better house, and we don't really know the absolute value of living. We never take the time to appreciate the simple beauty of the world while we are here because we are too busy being a machine in society. You're so young, Jennifer, and you shouldn't get bogged down with the meaningless worries that, unfortunately most people in this world have. We've been given a great gift of life, and we need to appreciate it while we have a chance." Bill paused to let me respond or maybe just so I would think for a minute.

"That makes a lot of sense, and I do feel that I try to appreciate life, but I'm at this weird point where I feel like I'm just drifting in and out

of people's lives, you know, and I'm not sure whom I can trust in this world. I don't even know if I really know the people that I love, I mean really know, and that scares me. Everything could be a lie and I wouldn't know it," I said.

Bill looked at me for a few moments and then said, "Nothing is a guarantee, unfortunately, but I don't think that is entirely a bad thing either. It forces you to be human, which is what we are. It forces you to make choices, some good and some bad, and it forces you to feel love and pain. And most importantly, it makes you grow, hopefully into a better person. My life hasn't turned out exactly how I had hoped, but I've tried to take something out of every situation and see the good in it. The seven years I spent with Gayle were the happiest for me. We loved each other. Of course, there were some bumps in those years, but for the most part we were just happy that we had met, and we tried to appreciate our time together. After she died, it was hard to see things as clearly as that, but then later I realized I just needed to see the good that she brought to my life. She gave me two children and plenty of good memories. Jennifer, if I were in your shoes, with what I know now, I recommend five things for you. Have fun, keep track of all your friends, learn to run both IBM and MAC, read good fiction, and repeat #'s 1-4 again," he said and took the last sip of his drink. He then asked the bartender if he could borrow a pen. He wrote something down on a clean napkin and handed it to me.

"Jennifer, I have enjoyed briefly talking with you, and I wish you success in everything," he said as he shook my hand and got up off of his stool. He put on a grey flannel overcoat and turned to me and smiled, then walked out of the door of Smalley's.

I picked up the napkin and read what he had written with a fine black pen. It said:

I shall pass through
this world but once.
Any good therefore
that I can do or any
kindness that I can
show to any human
being, let me do it now.
Let me not defer or
neglect it for I shall
not pass this way
again.

I folded the napkin and put it in my pocket. I walked out of Smalley's feeling kind-of sad, like my father had just walked into my life

for an evening. And then that thought made me instantly happy. I lit up a cigarette and followed the sidewalk that led to my brother's house. Under the street lights, I saw this really old pop top on the path, so I just started kicking it as I walked. I couldn't get it to go straight on the sidewalk; it kept going up in the grass. It would have taken me forever to kick that pop top to my brother's house, but I wasn't in any hurry, so I just took my time and kicked that old pop top around.

Jennifer L. Fors
My Troubled Siesta

I sleep in sweat
Dripping
Like a glass of beer that has been alone
Sitting
Untouched by your ardent hands.

Gretchen Lukens

See Me

after "Discovery" by Rene Magritte

I am woman fair—my succulent breasts bare.
My eyes lie motionless
in their placid pools of brown
as my aristocratic nose

curves
down

to my plush lips.

Can you feel the almost moist glow of my skin?
Past the raised of his hand.

and rippled bruises

Raised ridges

descending down from
the face

over

my
breast
and
ribs

touching

my

t

h

i

g

h

Almost woodlike in their texture,
expressing his callus anger over everything.
The dog chewing his favorite loafer,
me forgetting his beer for dinner.
Everything has its own mark on my skin that no longer feels
the sting.

The model manikin of abuse, am I not still beautiful?

Christine Rodenfels

Not More Than Twelve Inches From Him

The deep red of inflamed cherries
coercing me, pulling me
closer like a marionette,
leading me towards my passionate surrender.
I gently inhale his bitter-sweet breath,
heavy and succulent,
wafting a familiar aroma of strong, black coffee.
I sense the fiery passion
as warm as cognac as it travels
ever so slowly down to the depths
of my stomach and
beyond.

Muted sounds of his saliva
hiss quietly, sliding over his
untrained teeth and desirous moist tongue.

I feel his lips crush my own,
probing for every sensual response,
his tongue intruding my mouth.

Owning what is mine, but what
passion will not let me keep.

Dignity skitters away while

I impatiently wait for the enticing touch.

His kiss is an antidote for the poison

I willingly take, it obscures

my taste buds in an ancient potion
called desire.

Jennifer Holgate
That Man's Legs

Long lean slabs of meat
stretched out before me,
enveloped in flesh.
Cilia-like hairs run
the length of them.
Thick thighs
presented on plastic.

The lumpy joint in the middle
juts out prominently,

but unites
smooth, etched muscles
that hug calcified bones.
The sinuous calf
slips away,
tapering,
into white wrapping.
These appendages are utilities
of movement to the owner
but extensively easy
on my eyes.

Amy Timko
Open to Interpretations...

In a general store in his town,
that has nothing "general" about it,
the faucet on a shelf (*memories*) is
broken, making a stream of water.
"I will fix the leak," Elvis' father says.
Did I break the pipe? (*a release, perhaps?*)
I tried to hide from Elvis, but now it is too late.

The scene changes,
we lounge on a couch.
His knee is bony. He should protect his
shins (*does he utilize past experiences? the book asks*).
And he is not himself in this place that is so
far from reality but is real.
As if someone had put a bicycle pump into
his mouth and pumped it full of air,
his skin is stretched into
a lumpy, bloated, swollen blob
with thick, puckered pink lips speaking
in a strange foreign accent
like an Irish balloon,
wearing tiny rectangular, rose-colored glasses.

I turn on the stereo; it plays
U2 (*We two?*)
"A woman needs a man like a fish needs
a bicycle..."

Jason Hagan
Acoustic Against a Wall

Upright and exposing
her side of thallus threads
sitting silently awaiting song.

Those long beautiful strands
running down her neck
awaiting that potent *press*.

Open hollow breathing, awaiting
yearning the right caress

Her center holding a soulless circle
inviting a rhythmic rising
you dream that you can fill.

With pretend of a poignant *precieux*
her acoustic adore will not answer.

Yet with flawless facade of faith she sings
to the ardent man of heart.

Joshua Z. Davison
The Drummer

I couldn't do it.
To stand before a dead crowd.
To sing words which hold great meaning to me.
I could be the drummer.
I could keep the writhing.
To stand before them all.
Pouring out my soul.
They wouldn't even acknowledge the flavor.
The bouquet would be too much for them.
I am so bittersweet, only an avid beer drinker
could enjoy me.
The flavor, so full.
All they want is the right package.
Not convincing passion.
That would be too satisfying.
Too mystifying.
Too sweet.
They are just a mass of heat,
Wanting to melt you between their suffocating thighs.
To hurt you.
Without feelings or senses.
I will be the drummer.
Making more noise with each stroke.
Droning them out.
Until I can't hear them at all...
Until I have found bliss.
The drummer.
The god in man's clothing.
So caressed and sacred.
The din is overwhelming.
I am free.

A. C. Bodek
The Piece

And I begin to play....
The music echoes in my head,
Stirring my soul from its deep sleep,
Structuring my feelings into music, long and flowing,
Played by the master musicians in my mind.
As I soar on the music,
I fly higher and higher on the wings of creativity,
Where ideas, imagination, and genius rule.
Suddenly, without warning,
I begin to fall, plummeting back to earth,
Finally crashing with a dead thud.
I catch my breath,
Exhausted, as the last note dies away.

Michele Smith
The Meeting on the Ceiling

Music notes taped to the ceiling:
I rise into their majesty of swirling
music. Eyes from behind dusty, finger-
print-smudged, scratched lenses
of gold-rimmed glasses stare into my being.

The eyes are green, gold, brown:
pots of gold at the ends of rainbow
thoughts filled of him and I rolling
in grass the color of the sea, of his eyes,
beneath gold rays from the sun, from his eyes,
running the tips of my fingers through
his hair so brown, hanging in his eyes.

He reaches out to touch me
like an old friend yet too filled
with passion to be a cousin or a brother.
I feel exasperated like a kid
in a grocery store that needs
resuscitating; I beg with my sky blue eyes
for him to reach my mouth and revive my breath
before I fall down into the scene
below us. He leans into my face
and then I see the spiders, the blackness
in his pupils, moving, dilating, crawling
into the center of my reflection
as if they will take over my wholeness
and the pots of gold and the rainbow thoughts.

Hearing metal clank against metal,
I blink and dying seems to greet me
as I fall back into my booth at Dee's Cafe.
My eyes focus on eyes staring
out of gold-rimmed glasses, and a smile
greet me hello from a familiar mouth,
my fiancé's. He slowly raises his finger
to the ceiling and asks me questions

with his eyes. I look to where he is pointing,
and the feelings reemerge of seconds before
when I was floating with music notes
and a man with eyes so bold and clear,
and I see a spider making its journey
slowly across the ceiling.

Jennifer L. Fors
The Spider Saves Himself

One morning I woke up and saw
your tiny body wiggling on your back
in the corner of two walls.
Your legs kicking in the air as if
for an audience of people, the bricks
are the seats of the theatre, the impressions
of concrete are those cheering you on.

But I just watched you,
wondering if you had been in my bed last night.
And I didn't want to get too close, I might hear
you screaming, but then
I imagined you were.
So I just left the room.

John Heath
Blue Lips

No one knows what it is like
beyond the brink of your mind
where only you may so vividly explore
a realm of life away inside, alone.
Such twisting decay
meltdown tears shed from this haven
destroying a thought range once
structured with order. I saw Jupiter;
it moves....they all move.

Douglas Bicket
Act of Remembrance

The whole evening
is an Act of Remembrance
for a land far away,
a time far away.
The air shimmers,
damp, cool, deep blue sunlit.
Autumn.

Like New Zealand of my memories, years ago.
And the cool air of night's onset,
sees a bejeweled blanket
engulf this Northern Hemisphere town.
Orion to the left, Cassiopeia above;
but no Southern Cross, alas.

Aeoteroa:
Golden-haired lass in my arms.
I remember, as I look above now,
we looked above then,
saw the meteor shower's glory in that other sky.
At our feet, two rabbits watched, bore silent witness
as we kissed.
That fairytale wonder, first love, that spark in my soul.
Now I gaze up at the black,
recall these feelings, unique to time and place.
I seek again my own spark
among the stellar conflagrations,
think again of a lost sky, lost country, lost love.
Now I have a new sky, new home, new love.

But where is the spark?

Noelle Diadone
Rebirth

Once upon a time,
the stars lived in my eyes,
I was a celestial fool—I tell you.

At one point,
about-to-be-realized-dreams rained upon my soul,
I was a soaked lunatic—I admit to you.

Then,
winds of truth attacked what was
left of my common sense,
I was blown away by regrets—I swear to you.

Now,
the sunshine of my self-righteousness
beats upon my soul,
I am thoroughly illuminated by
the freedom—I promise you.

I have returned.

Amy Coulston
Old Schoolrooms

When it's dark and warm
In Rarensburg State Park,
a mountain lion screams to the stars.
He walks all night, wailing.
Sometimes I see him when I peer
Through the uneven folds of the dusty curtains
Which smell like old women and cigarette smoke.

I see him pause to scratch a tree,
Marking his territory as if to say,
"Stars, you don't belong here.
You and your siblings will always be
Too far away."

Michele Smith

Pondering Seasonal Futures

**(when sitting in cold streets on an eve
with no beauty i think of what's ahead before
some open mouths cause promises to end)**

1.

Daylight savings time ends
October 30, Halloween Eve.
The day gray ghouls walk the streets,
corpses wake and walk with beauty,
cavities rampant form in green, sweetened mouths
And my ticking and tocking is turned to the past not
ahead.

2.

My eyes penetrate into the darkened future ahead.
I wish to change myself before this life ends.
I recall nasty words, angry mouths,
that horrible Christmas Eve
when the white purity had no beauty
and I had to make my home the winter streets.

3.

Coldness controls people on the streets.
Only disaster, death, and horror lie ahead.
The people desperately search for anything of beauty,
but in the meaningless gray everything truly beautiful ends.
Even on a warm Easter Eve,
icicles hang from street peoples' mouths.

4.

Horror is met with gaping mouths
as a collision occurs in the empty streets
on a cold Independence Day Eve.
Through rain, headlights blind him from ahead;
one lost, lonely life agonizingly ends.
Red roses, closed caskets: such appalling beauty.

5.

The moon beams shimmer over the murky pond waters
with beauty
as on the dock, lovers touch with open mouths.
An explosion occurs; lives go, love finishes, happiness
ends.

No noise is heard on the lifeless streets.
There's only the silence of death; nothing's ahead
on this shadow-filled, wet autumn eve.

6.

Winds thrash through town on this wicked winter's eve
where horror entraps all that was once beauty.
Nothing but pure, bleak gray is seen ahead.
Persons flee with gaped, bloody, screaming mouths;
no one alive remains on the death-strewn streets.
All that was truth gradually ends.

7.

On this eve, screaming mouths
show no beauty on crowd-filled streets
and what lies ahead is the same as that which ends.

Douglas Bicket
Autumn

Autumn for me is a small-town wedding.
Church doors wide open,
brilliant sunshine bursting in
as the bride and groom, vows exchanged,
return down the aisle,
families and friends in tow,
setting off on their future
against a backdrop of falling leaves
beyond stained glass windows...
like heavy snow
on those magical nights
when sky and earth glisten
with silver and white.
But in my autumn the surface is red,
the sun pale yellow,
struggling now to warm its domain,
yet still challenging
the fiery earth's domination of the spectrum,
casting a bright, clear, curious ochre
peculiar to this season.
Strange, that.
Then, all too quickly,
the sky darkens,
the sun's last glowing embers slip off church walls
as my breath forms ever denser clouds.
And for me, autumn is over.

Joann Temons
Memories of Silent Autumns

Looking back over the years when the hills were alive with blazing colors of sunlight, dancing across the reds, yellows, and oranges of autumn, the pictures that are recalled stir the memories of warmth and tenderness once shared with someone who stopped my world and quickened my breath and heartbeat upon sight of him.

Little did I know that the brightly colored leaves that float to the ground could be compared to the thoughts and memories that float through my mind. The autumn winds beginning to make the journey into the subtle changes of each passing day shorten the life span of not only nature but also of a romance that has since fallen out of view and is sometimes forgotten except for the hurt and the anger.

There were happier times when all that was necessary was the touch of his hand, the smell of his flesh, the taste of his lips. Words were not needed; our hearts, thoughts, and minds were joined in unison along with the beauty of nature enjoyed on a warm summer afternoon, when, hand-in-hand, we would walk along a deserted stream, watching the water become alive with the colors of the gently drifting leaves flowing slowly down a highway to nowhere. We felt as though at that moment nothing or no one existed in our own private world, our universe of love, peace, and happy contentment.

The looks of love, of understanding, of acceptance were reflected in each other's eyes like the stream reflected the colors of the hills; a flicker of a smile at the corners of his lips, an amused expression on his face as I twirled in imitation of a leaf stirred by the gentle breeze, and I giggled at the sight I must have been.

Lying back on a soft warm blanket littered with the remains and scraps of the picnic lunch we had consumed, letting our eyes look at the sky darkening, and the stars emerging as our dreams were unfolding, we held each other. Communicating with a touch, a kiss, a caress, or just our breath falling in time with each other, no words were necessary; our hearts pounded out the rhythm that was to set the pathway we thought our lives would take, of the quiet oneness we would share.

Listening to the night sounds of autumn, the occasional hoot of an owl on a dead oak tree outlined by the rising moon, the chirp of crickets, the babbling stream, our heartbeats beating as one was all the language that was needed on those wonderful, peaceful, happier days when memories of silent autumns were created.

As the cool, crisp night air enveloped us, we noticed the fading pinks and purples of the evening sky; a gentle shiver of reality reminded us that love is like each new day; it has a beginning and an end. We knew then that we should grasp every moment, storing memories in our hearts and minds to be retrieved each autumn. We should embrace and cherish the warm, tender, happy moments as we brush a tear from our cheeks and momentarily grieve for lost love and those silent autumns.

Christine Rodenfels
Colored Nature

The sky challenges the sun.
Trampled daisy-yellow and bloody-scarlet
Scald the peaceful, Crayola-blue sky,
Melting the picturesque clarity
Into the dirty swarm of
A child's massacred finger paint set,
Invading into the virginal white clouds,
Forcing their billowing cotton figures into oblivion.
Beams fire off the trees of distinct height,
With Autumn's mystical leaves
Colored deteriorating hues of
Tan-crimson-plum-rose-marigold.
Each leaf constructing a totally different death,
Falsifying beauty as they wither.
Just as the sun dies each night:
First deviating to a glimmering orange-red,
Then fading to misty pink,
Before sinking into the
Black of night.

Laurie Dera
Morning By the Sea

Shafts of sunlight
pierce the ocean landscape,
illuminating the rocky bottom
of the crystal-clear salt water.
Sea creatures open their eyes and
emerge to bask in the morning rays.
Underwater plants of golden hues
wave in a repetitive motion
and keep time with the consistent beat
of the waves
as they lap against the shore.
Huge, silvery-granite rocks
lie scattered like debris
on top of one another,
placed there by the powerful effects
of time.
Those that border the shoreline
are stained a grayish-brown
by the depths of water
at high tide.
Some unblemished pure-white boulders
loungue like sunbathers
catching the scorching rays.

An auburn-colored dog
stands patiently by the ocean's edge.
Her pink tongue hangs lazily
from her mouth: a clue
as to how tired she is
from a hard morning of swimming.
Her paws immersed
in the shimmering water,
and her coal-black nose
and sweet, brown eyes
cause the most stolid of observers
to offer a chuckle or two.
A large mass of multicolored rock and soil
hovers majestically in the background,

as the reflection
of stately evergreen trees
shimmers in the gently pulsating water.
The sharp scent of salt
mingles with the soothing breeze,
and carries tender memories of moments shared
that echo again and again
through the caverns
of the mind.

Phileshia Dombroski

Fire.
Engulf me,
sing my bark as
your fingers of flame
darken me black as shadows.
Whip through my young, curved,
outstretched branches
and devour my tiny buds while
the scalding air feeds your appetite.
Twist and turn about me.
Tease me with pain until I scream.
Wilt my leaves with your dry, burning arms
of amber, gold, and red.
My humble core now singed with agony,
Fears certain defeat. The departure occurs.
Naked,
Charred,
& Twisted,
I ache to just pass on into dust.
Still and immobile, I clutch the ground.

Sheila Marsh
The Funeral

I died again today. The funeral service was lovely. Sorry you couldn't be there. There were flowers and music and lots of tears. Oh, not too many. Just enough to make it a truly memorable occasion. The minister delivered a most beautiful sermon. It brought tears to my eyes. No small feat considering I was dead at the time. What did I die of, you ask? Well, it's hard to say. No, I don't mean that they don't know what it was. It's just that the name of the disease is really hard to pronounce. It doesn't have a lot of vowels in it. The doctors said it was some kind of rare disease that I picked up in the deepest jungles of Africa. You know, I don't even remember being in the jungles of Africa. I've never even been to the zoo. I don't think a major trip like that is something I'd forget. Well, I do tend to walk in my sleep, but wouldn't I have woken up when I hit the Atlantic Ocean? Sorry, I didn't mean to go off on a tangent. It's not important how I got it anyway. Dead is dead. Right? It wasn't a long lingering death. In fact, I went pretty quickly. One last gasp of breath and then my face fell splat down into my mashed potatoes. (We were eating dinner at the time.) No one discovered my untimely demise until they cleared away the dinner dishes. It made me kind of mad. I had envisioned this truly memorable deathbed scene. I would gather everyone I had ever known and loved to my bedside. Then, as the tears streamed down their faces, I would utter one last "I love you" to them all, take my final breath of life, and slip into eternal sleep. Beautiful. Don't you think? I get misty-eyed just thinking about it. But, how did I go? I didn't even get to finish my meal. All I got for my trouble was a nose full of mashed potatoes and gravy in my hair. Not exactly what you would call a Kodak moment. But I guess no one really photographs moments like those...unless you work for a police crime lab where you take pictures of murder scenes so detectives can figure out who did it...I'm sorry. I'm getting off the subject again. At the cemetery, everyone was huddled under big black umbrellas. It was a stirring sight. I've always thought that it wouldn't be a proper funeral unless it rained. That's why I always have rain at mine. A nice steady downpour sets just the right mood for the day and gives the mourners the perfect motivation to express their grief. As usual, the police had to prevent some of the mourners from throwing themselves into my open grave. They just get so attached to me. They just can't bear the thought of my departure. It's nice to be loved, but I think that's going a little too far. Besides, it's a sign of disrespect. I mean, I'm the one who died. It's my day. They should be happy for me. They shouldn't try to steal my limelight. I can't

get too mad at them, though. It's easy to get caught up in the passion of the moment. All in all, it was a splendid funeral. One of the best I've had this year. I don't know how I'm going to top it tomorrow. I was thinking of something with a circus theme...You will come. Won't you?

Joshua Z. Davison
A Tribute

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Ben Clark
Reflections in His Silence

It's the quietness of their footsteps
and the stillness in their movement that surprises me.
Such immense weight on their shoulders,
yet, so quiet their feet. Thinking sound should echo the weight
or importance of a situation, really ...
as if a fifty dollar bill should make a louder noise when dropped
than a one.

It's the whisper of their sympathies that consoles me.
Their being brave for the brave that gives me strength.
With such a well of emotion rising just below the surface it's a
wonder that when one collapses we all aren't swept away.
It's the welcomed distractions and the distance, filled with
people, between me and him that keeps me sane, that
keeps my shaking disguisable; as though there's a pillar that
runs through my head, through my heart, through my gut, and
through my legs that's being severely tested by some enormous
strain. It's the silence of his breath and the stillness in
his heart that confuses me, frustrates me. I know him, I know how
he lived, and if this is the end, then it seems to me that he
should be wildly gasping for air as though reaching the end of a
race. Still, if sound should echo the weight of a situation,
then why doesn't he stand up and scream?

Jennifer L. Fors

On October 3, 1994, Laura You Now Feel This

Standing outside alone on the morning
grass like tiny droplets of dew
waiting
to be dried by the sun's mild touch
and I see inside the door,
my mother's arms flapping like birds
that have been scared out of bushes. She is pulling,
wrenching her coarse black hair
as the wire from the telephone swirls
in circles with her hands around
the kitchen.

"Jennifer, you must stay here." But I
do not understand. I watch the people holding
mother's arms, stroking her hair as her body
rocks back and forth
like Daddy's old chair.

I want to see. This is my house.
So I walk up the sidewalk, the screen door drags
open and I see you, lying still
as the red stripes
go round and round your blue
bathrobe like ribbons around a birthday
present. Your arms resting at your
sides, your legs long and thick,
Daddy, like a hundred old trees.

I will kiss your cheek before they
know I have come in here. Tomorrow you promised
you would take me to
the store to buy clothes
for my doll. "Daddy, will we still go?"
I am only four.

The next day, I am
alone
standing in our brown-boxed garage
watching the willow tree across the street
blow its branches like an angry octopus
slapping and strangling.
Mother wears her best hat and steps into a car
as the people in black now gently touch
her arms. But I stand
alone
and hold my naked doll close
to my heart.

Deb Daniels
One Lonely Night

My loneliness grows as shadows
Lengthen in my room.
The moon slides across the sky
Like the solitary tear
That escapes my pride
And glides down my cheek.
Stars, once beautiful in my sight,
Now pierce my tear-filled eyes like shards
of shattered glass.

"Daddy, you must stay here." But I
do not understand. I watch the people holding
mother's arms, striking her just as her body
rocks back and forth
like Daddy did that

I want to see. This is my heart.
So I walk up the sidewalk, the screen door swings
open and I see you, being still
as the red stripes
go round and round your blue
business like ribbons around a birthday
present. Your arms resting at your
sides, your legs long and thick,
Daddy like a hundred old trees.

I will kiss your cheek before they
know I have come in here. Tomorrow you promised
you would take me to
the store to buy clothes
for my doll. "Daddy, will we still go?"
I am only four.

Jason Shoff
5:00 A.M.

And still no sleep.
Collecting thoughts,
Almost like catching butterflies
With only a dixie cup

So many damn butterflies,
Too many to see with only my eyes.

I give chase
And I catch one now and then
But only the twisted deformed
And ugly ones.

I try and try
For that big and colorful one,
But it just won't fit into my little cup.
Damn butterflies.

seen nineteen short years
produce the
blue

yearned for the worries
of backseat
passage

abused in the dark
another door's
open...

I've dropped to the depths
of a dust-filled
well

Nathan Thomas
Kindred Spirits

Where are you now, my friend?
In Philadelphia's brilliant lights,
You think of me, perhaps some nights.
Distance is not the end.

Another friend have I.
In Europe now, he meets his fate
Within the Roman city-state:
If only man could fly...

And what of people here?
They pass me by 'most every day,
Hurrying out...across...away....
I pause, but do not fear.

For from out these crowds there'll be
A person with a happy face
With thoughts like mine, who can erase
The state of lonely me.

John Heath
Let Me Out

I've seen the intelligent
side of a working
slave

tilled the earth
above my own
grave

fought the current
of life ending
volts

searching for answers
a tired man
halts...

I've felt your beauty
squeeze like a
noose

seen nineteen short years
produce the
Blues

yearned for the worries
of backseat
passion

abused in the dark
another door's
open...

I've dropped to the depths
of a dust-filled
well

heard the air breaking toll
of an inanimate
bell

tried Nature's path
to clear my
soul

still 'fraid of tomorrow's
life pending
role...

Deb Daniels
Down the Hall

Time is a corridor that stretches
Forever forward.
We all pass through that corridor,
Travelers in the mists of Yet-to-Come,
Ghosts in the shades of Used-to-Be.
We are compelled to go forward,
Unable to turn back.
A glance over the shoulder to find
Comfort in what has already been
Reveals that the realities of the past
Have dissolved into nothingness.
All that remains from yesterday
Are the pieces of memories
Held within our hearts.

And when our corridor ends,
We know our time on this earth is through.
Standing face to face
With that solid grey wall, we wait,
In dread or in relief,
For the present to become past.
Then we are swallowed up
By the empty ago,
To live on only in the grey memories
Of those whose paths
Have crossed ours.

Susan Sarvis
The Bon-Ton

Clothes' appendages
dangle, protesting
use of hot or cold water.
Denim, corduroy, flannel, plaid.

Fiberglass people discuss
tennis,
holding apple-round-green
balls and waffle rackets,

while the escalator
sucks toddlers
through its metal teeth.

Exit
at your own risk!

Phileshia Dombroski
Common Threads

Come in.
Come, with ritualistic form
To complete your task
Of laundering.

Hesitate before you tunnel your vision
Toward the screaming children,
Money-sucking machines, spinning garments,
And drunken stumble of the night janitor.

Explore this world.
Embrace the empty motions
Of patrons pouring their souls
And their quarters into cold tin boxes.

Listen to the screech of carts
And the whirl of machines
As they weight the air.
Hear the elevator's silence, which inhibits many.

Watch those of patience wait quietly
And study books, papers, and peeling paint
Until the cycle's echoing buzz
Shatters the air.

Souls of restless nature
Release their lives, pains, and ills
From the tattered green vinyl seats
Since the fee for an ear is cheap.

Folding liturgically, one by one;
The commoners complete their chore
In worn, torn clothes that speak truth
Unlike their prim and pressed Sunday best.

The scent of detergent
Lingers in the air
And cleanses the minds
Of outside evils.

Now, absorb this marvel into your image
Of America, Undiscovered.
Where, but in a place of cleansing,
Can one find a people most genuine?

Timothy Burdick
The Bumper Cars

"TURN AWAY"

the merciless voice booms.

Lines form. Everyone wants to
be a part of the sadistic ride. Whites,
Blacks, Asians, and Latinos crowd
the gate. Naive eyes peering over the

dirty metal mesh.

TURN AWAY FROM

the red robed one, the voice echoes. His glassy stare
encompasses everything. The warnings
unheeded as safety straps
slipped off like inhibitive clothing.

Inside the arena, children
cry, old women gasp as violent
youths plow into them. Black
tires burn. The graphite-filled air

hangs above the shiny black floor.

TURN AWAY

His tired face is calm. Uncaring, he
knows they must commit
the acts they are here for.

Hot metal. Blurs of bright green, blue,
neon orange, yellow, red
like chaotic flies circle the scene.

Screeches scream

TURN AWAY FROM THE WALL

His charred feet walk him
among the wasted empty machines,
Litter and debris everywhere.
The occupants are all gone. He

sighs and plods toward the anxious guests
eager for their turn, like children
enjoying a thrill but this ride
is real and he prays for the day

to end.

Susan Sarvis Epic of the Rotten Onion

Perched high on a stool in the Truck'n Tummy Diner,
a half-rotten piece of onion perfumes the air.

Half covered up by the sound of a dead cousin
hocking up phlegm, the fragrance
wafts west to Monroe Elementary School where

children eat onions happily,
wishing on validated drivers' licenses.