



# The Crucible

*Passage Through Time*

2010

# The Crucible

*The Literary and Arts Journal of  
Lock Haven University*

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## *Preface*

Time does not exist; it is an illusion of the human mind.

Without writing or art, society's history would be worn away by the harsh ravages of time. Great works of the past that remain with us today do so only because someone somewhere encapsulated them for the ages to come. Though years pass, these works will continue to withstand the test of time.

Enclosed in this literary and art magazine are new pieces which have not yet been subjected to this test, but with any new work comes the possibility that it may change lives, change perspectives, or change the future. In this way, all writing and art has the opportunity to conquer time.

The decision of what survives in the literary or artistic world might appear to be decided by editors, publishers, curators, and critics, but ultimately, the audience is responsible for deciding what works have the potential to survive. We now pass these works on to you. Read, enjoy, and preserve.

## *Purifying Poetry*

By Tasha Englert

You filthy, useless creatures  
worming your way onto my page,  
escaped from the dark, dirty hole  
drilled deep into my heart.  
Why can't you stop screaming and sing  
in a calming cadence, carefree  
like the river rippling down  
the mountain, water whispering  
words inaudible to the wilderness?

Why aren't you beautiful,  
perfectly arranged  
like a bouquet of blossoms  
carefully constructed  
into a masterpiece,  
until the complementary colors  
create a blend of emotions  
arising from the heart,  
a release from suffering's binds?

No, instead you mangle my art  
into a mess of ink blotches  
bleeding out my misery,  
sorrow sticking to sentences  
covering the page with tears' torment,  
the stain sinking through the paper  
onto the reader's hand,  
marked with my affliction's fluid  
draining and seeping out of my wounds.

Drown yourself in the wonders around you:  
stand beneath the waterfall's mist,  
walk along the ocean's tranquil tide,  
experience nature's comforting hand  
as she carefully cleanses your wounds  
through her healing waters washing  
away the blood from your injuries.  
When hope's light sparkles on the scene,  
illuminating others' lives in nature's serenity.

# Childhood Memories

By Brien Edwards

"Tell your mother I said hello now. Don't hesitate to come on by again, Anne, dear," Mr. Gomez yelled with a huge grin on his wrinkled face from the counter of his small convenient store. "Thanks a lot, Mr. Gomez."

A wave and cheery smile were given to Mr. Gomez by young Anne Jackson as she walked out of the store with the bell jingling at her exit. Anne was an eleven-year-old southern girl living in Atlanta, Georgia. Her father was the pastor of the local congregation, and her mother was a maid for a wealthy peach plantation owner. She was a stereotypical only child that gets smothered in love by her two parents and showered in praises.

It was the summertime, Anne's and most Georgia children's favorite time of the year: weeks of school-free days and plenty of time on her small, adolescent hands. She had just left the store after buying flour and eggs for her mother, to make her special Peach Upside Down cake. It was a special occasion; her mother had just received news of her pregnancy. The prospect of having another child around made Anne ecstatic. She had always wanted to have someone to play with around the house. This was a very special time for the family.

Mr. Gomez's convenient store was about a half mile away from the Jacksons' quaint home. This was the first time that her parents had trusted her to walk all the way to the store alone. Her mother would always have to accompany Anne, but it always made Anne feel like a baby. Walking alone made her feel grown up and responsible. So Anne's feet continued to softly walk along the side of the dirt road. Her sandals crushed against the tiny rocks and dirt with every step. The sun was beginning to set and turned the sky into a beautiful array of fiery hues. It was a beautiful day, as it usually was in Georgia during the summer. It had dawned on Anne that the drape of night was beginning to fall. It frightened her, but she did not show it. Humming a childish melody eased her nerves and brought peace to her mind, until...

The eggs shattered on the hard road and the flour hit with a thud. Everything was happening too quickly for her small eyes to grasp. Anne had fallen to the ground and smacked her head off a nearby tree. Her eyes instantly shut, and when they opened, all she saw was white hands all over her body, groping and gripping her body as if she had something concealed within her clothes.

"W-w-what are you doing?!"

Her voice was shaky and uneven, with fear influencing the decibels escaping from her mouth in shrieks. There was no response to her question. All she could hear was the deep breathing of these figures. Men. They were two men. They persisted with their violation of her and kept touching her frail eleven-year-old body. They began to tear her clothes off her body, like lions tearing the flesh off their next meal's bones.

"STOP!!! PLEASE!!! NOOO!"

Anne screamed at the top of her lungs to be relieved of this torture she was now experiencing. Their belt buckles and pants buttons opening echoed in her ears. The pain started to ensue. Tears flooded her eyes as she clawed at the surface with her fingernails, hoping that it would coast her through this devastating event. Her face was shoved into the dirt road, muffling her screams for aid. The rocks scraped her beautiful face as the two men continued to stay mute: heavy breathing and muffled young cries.

It was finally over. The two men had let go of Anne and started to walk towards their vintage pickup truck, decorated with the red, white and blue of the old south. Anne lay on the ground, silent. She could not respond at all. The tears had been drained from her eyes, and all she could do was lie in the dirt road, shocked. The pickup truck rumbled to a start, and country music blared from the stereo. Anne decided to try to get up from her coiled position on the ground. At that moment, heavy footsteps came towards her, and white hands gripped her neck tightly. A rope was tossed over a thick branch of one of the many peach trees in Georgia and wrapped around little eleven-year-old Anne's throat...



Zena Barry

*Classic*

## *Don't Say a Word*

By Luke Busch

Hush now little baby.  
Your premature birth leads to a premature death,  
but don't you worry, the devils gonna get you a mocking bird.  
Two years is a mockery of a pre-determined plan.

But you must not hate, worry, or fear.  
These lullabies will correct  
what your mother couldn't, my dear.  
And tonight you acquired quite an audience upon your exit.

A simple lick of a flame;  
saliva, glistening on a fingertip could have put this burning to rest.  
Quick actions and slow thinking,  
lack of thinking and no actions, this could have been prevented.

This is the last time that house will smell burning sulfur,  
the last time it will see a candle melting  
the last time it will see a smile forming.  
This is the last time that house will feel alive.

A small flame flickering in the seemingly motionless air,  
deadly snake dripping off of the candle holder,  
quick elbow from child's play—  
the candle plummets with a fiery arrow head.

Caught mid-fall by the fingers of this tasseled curtain,  
the candle convinces the curtain to catch fire.  
The looking glass that momma once bought breaks.  
Kick. Scream. Cough. Get on the ground. More air down there.

More air to feed the fire. Take a break. Fall asleep.  
A little saliva could have kept hell in its place.  
Lack of thinking, and no actions,  
firefighters now fight into your place.

Windows spit fire. I watch from another rooftop in 'meth'lehem.  
The body levitates from the door to the ambulance,  
but I don't say a word, my lack of actions meant more.  
Jaw dropped, awful thoughts, awe-stricken.

As that house and home fall down  
you'll still be the sweetest little baby in town.

# A Different Kind of Love

By Amy Burke

The halo of hall light falls harshly  
on my sleep-ridden lids as my  
door creeps open  
slowly, slowly.  
My body contracts;

endorphins  
slink over my skin,  
lubricating my thighs.  
My muscles clench and tighten;

daddy's balding melon peers in.  
I squint my eyes,  
desperately  
pretending to be safe in dream-world,  
clinging to teddy  
and balling my fingers into fists.

Change jingles in pockets;  
daddy tiptoes closer,  
closer.  
He tells me he loves me,  
that I'm daddy's big girl  
as he begins to unzip.

"Big girls can keep secrets,"  
his sweaty mantra between heavy breaths.

Hot whiskey on my face,  
too much weight on my chest;  
he falls, weak.  
My tummy feels weird all over  
but my lips can't help but curve upward  
as I drift back to sleep.

Pinching my cheek,  
he reminds me that I'm a big girl.

Big girls can keep secrets.



Andrew Richards

Cloth

## I Met You in December

By Shannon Glynn

After my last night of hollowing myself out  
over my parent's toilet,  
you held on to my hand longer than you were supposed to,  
sighed over your scone, spit bits and pieces down the neck of your sweatshirt,  
but I chose to love you,  
and every bone that tried to cut through pale skin.

Now, I spiral, staring at myself in the mirror,  
scowl at my morning body and naked wrists,  
seeping and still  
outside rain is broken on sharp grass  
as I stumble, hardhearted,  
seething in hot anger, boiled blood spilled on frozen pavement in the inner-city.

I pray for strength  
underneath storm clouds that stretch their fingers  
across my sky,  
grab at my benedictions and destroy them,  
but last night I saw no stars,  
which led me to believe that not only are you gone,  
but you are nowhere near.

You died two days after Valentine's Day,  
cadaverous,  
before pudge had the chance to put its arms around your waist,  
or tuck in your ribs, twenty-four children sound asleep.

I am yellow again,  
but not as daffodils,  
bananas or baby chicks.  
I am the other sort,  
the yellow of urine, malaria and healing bruises.  
But I have warm skin to yellow,  
and you are cold and dead.

I don't think I'll ever leave my recklessness,  
even with you,  
eighty-four pounds piled on my back and shoulders,  
knotted like the roots of Grandfather trees.

## Ex-Lover

By Miranda Johnson

Wet tongue flicks over needy lips.  
A seductive bite and an intense gleam in your eyes  
as you gaze into his,  
remembering the way they used to devour you whole.

Turning away to catch your breath,  
less than a minute passes before you feel  
one warm exhale on your shoulder:

the words  
fall  
into  
your  
ear  
like pennies  
into  
a  
wishing  
well.

Trapped,  
you have no choice in the matter except  
give up ...  
or give in.

Your heels click the pavement  
on the cold walk back to a place you once knew  
as well as you knew him.  
He clutches your hand,  
claiming you as his own ...  
but only for tonight.  
"It'll be our little secret,"  
he says, as he silently opens the door,  
like you should be grateful to him,  
as he pulls your shirt over your head  
and tugs at your jeans.

He kisses your collarbone, your neck, your mouth  
and his tongue tastes like guilt,  
yet you don't pull away.  
Feeling as empty as a newly-made casket,  
you stare into his eyes  
while guiding him to the bed  
where you once slept so soundly.



## Dr. Metaphor

By Abigail Smith

The burst of Dr. Pepper across my tongue  
reminds me that Ph.D's don't require subtlety.

It flows through my mouth,  
burning and insistent –  
even its sweetness carries fire.

Demanding respect, my sip of soda  
swirls between gaps in my teeth,  
slicing my taste buds with a thousand  
iron razors – a full swig  
would surely slay me.

The chilled carbonate caresses my nerve endings;  
they never felt so alive!

My esophagus threatens to shut;  
we both know that's a lie.  
I swallow the color –  
crimson and rust;  
my stomach demands consolation –  
bubbles bring burps of relief.

Last gulp down, my blood sings,  
weeping its relief as delicious caffeine  
swirls through my system,  
waking the dead.

But we all know  
I'm not really talking about soda.

## Stroke

By Emily Smith

The letters play  
double-dutch with their spaces,  
whirling in

and out of existence, catching  
breaths mid-jump  
with a semi-colon, mid-word,

whirring by enough  
times to make you dizzy as the day  
you trickled to the floor,

phone in hand,  
unsure how this whole dialing affair  
should work, gasping

for enough strength  
to mew "help" at a blank receiver  
until I dropped

our groceries at your feet,  
took you to the witch  
who told you your smile

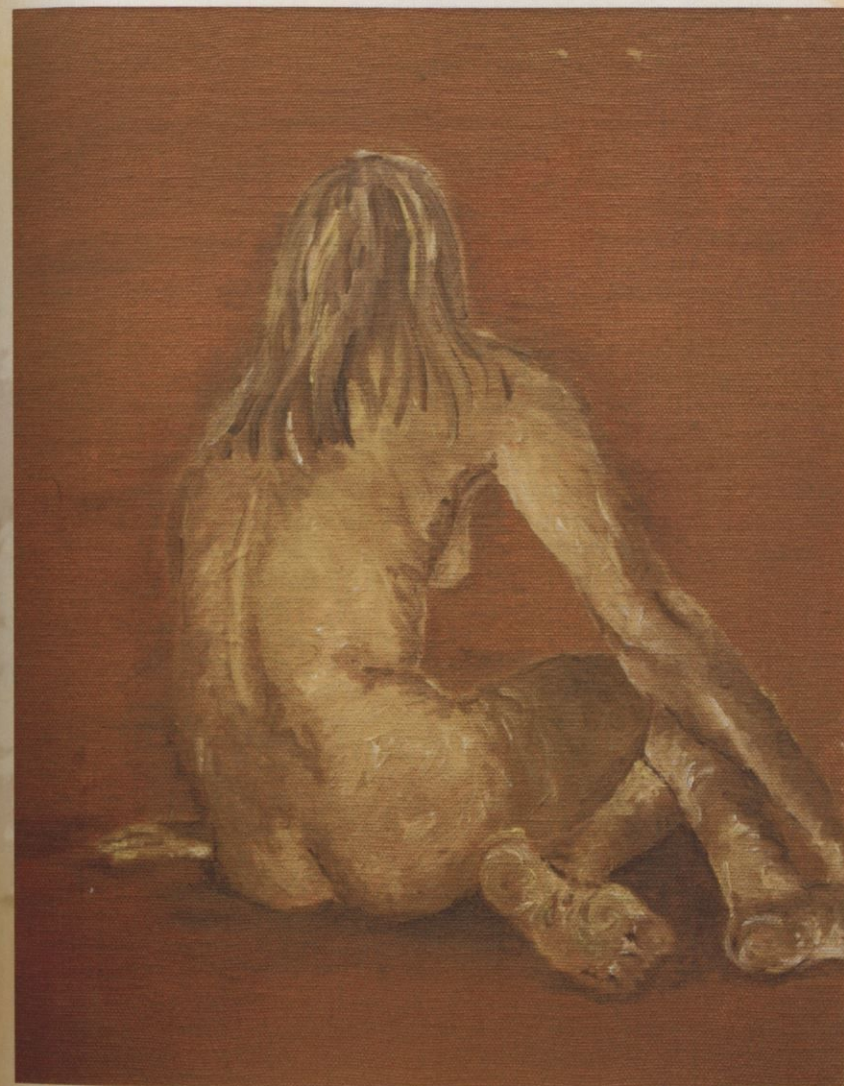
would always be this way –

crooked  
as my letters  
you can't read anymore.



Natasha Parker

Untitled



Zena Barry

Untitled

# Want to know how I got these scars?

By Brien Edwards

Curiosity and boredom are an interesting combination. Dangerous, I suppose. It is scary when your mind wonders about certain outcomes. I am a very curious individual. I wonder why things happen or how things may feel. Fire. Fire is hot. Very hot to touch, actually. Adults always tell you to stay away from it, but I had to determine it myself. I stuck my hand over the stove one day, and it was very hot. Now I know for a fact that fire is hot. My hand does, too.

I had a slightly less than storybook childhood. I guess it would depend on what kind of children's books you read. I read Dr. Seuss as a young child. I never had fun like the kids in those stories. I was more like the children from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* when they woke up with no gifts, but imagine that with abuse and dysfunction. Yeah. That story was awful, though. That Grinch was cruel. He reminded me of my father, except my father never grew a large heart. He died from having a shriveled liver instead. Before his death, I remember my father was... an angry man. Very angry. My mother just disappeared one day when I was young. She left a letter about her life being unbearable and wanting it to end. She always had chronic headaches. She was always taking a bunch of these pills. I hope she decided to go somewhere nice.

Back to my father of the year. He had a pretty good job. He would leave sad and come back not so sad. He always did smell like his favorite drinks. Any job that you get to leave all day and drink your favorite drink must be awesome. He liked to toughen me up. He said I was a wimp and unworthy of life. I figured that is why he would always pound on my head. Always hitting me and yelling. I needed to get tough. Grow some balls. He always called me a baby for taking my pills. I took anti-depressants. I am never depressed, though. Although I do take them every day, so I guess they work. I hate them though. They taste terrible. Water does not mask the bitter taste of the drugs at all.

Sitting in my room one day, I thought of ways to make the pills taste better. I sat and pondered for hours. Then it hit me, like he literally did on most nights. My father's drinks. He drinks them all the time. They must taste wonderful. Maybe I can take the pills with those. Home alone, I walked into my father's room and grabbed one of his bottles. Who is Jack Daniels? He must be a friend of my dad. I think he likes Mr. Daniels' drink particularly. So I took a sip. It was strange. It left a burning sensation down my throat, but it was a cool drink. Maybe it was magic. I drank a lot more, and I enjoyed it even more. I felt like I was floating. This drink was making me feel light on my feet. I swayed back and forth in my seat. Then I looked at my pills and remembered that I was supposed to take them. Hours had passed since I started drinking.

When I opened the child-proof cap of the medicine bottle, I scratched my head. I couldn't remember how many pills I was supposed to take today. I usually take two. Or was it three? Or do I take a bottle a day? Ugh. My head hurts. Whatever. I will just take a bunch. Too much of one thing never killed anyone, or is it the other way around? After awhile, I started to feel a bit weird. I don't know how to explain the feeling. I tried to get up out of my chair, and I dropped Jack's bottle. It shattered all over the floor. It was funny to me, actually. I don't really know why. It was hysterical. I got on my knees to start picking up the broken glass. One of the pieces cut my finger, but I barely noticed. I can't feel pain. Wow. I grabbed a large piece of glass and sliced a cut into my hand. It tingled a bit. It didn't hurt; it was actually a sensation. I decided to give myself a tattoo. Not an ink tattoo, a flesh removal one. I started to cut my name into my arm. It didn't hurt as much as people who have tattoos say. It looked amazing. It looked cryptic to me; whatever cryptic means, it sounds right.

I started feeling a bit lightheaded. I had to sit down again. I started to walk into the kitchen but I realized that there was blood dripping from my hand. I started to panic. My father would follow that trail of blood and find me in the kitchen. I ran back into the room and tried to frantically clean my mess, but I fell down into the shards of glass. I decided to just lie there. I was starting to feel tired. So I closed my eyes and went to sleep.

When I woke, all I could see was white. White walls, floors, and ceiling. Where am I? Had I died and gone to heaven? It was chilly in that room. I suppose that is why I had a white jacket wrapped around me. I almost looked like I had wings. I must be an angel in heaven.

## Lonely Bed

By Miranda Johnson

She lies alone  
on the queen-sized bed—  
the one she inherited  
when his mom moved in with her boyfriend,  
leaving him nowhere to go.

Two indents mark the shape of bodies  
long accustomed to the same spots.  
Like two spoons fitted perfectly together,  
their bodies once touched.  
Now she's a lonely spoon,  
the last left in the drawer,  
rejected.

He told her he didn't love her anymore;  
their metal shapes no longer aligned.  
He was slightly bent; she was still perfectly  
formed.

She can still smell him on the pillowcase:  
Old Spice aftershave and Suave shampoo.  
For now, his blue-striped comforter  
still couples with her bed,  
catching and holding all of her tears.

Tomorrow she'll have to give it back,  
watch him pick it up effortlessly,  
not realizing the extra weight it carries  
from a night of constant tears.  
He'll remain unaware that wrapped up inside  
lie all of the pieces  
of her  
crumbled—  
and broken—  
heart.



Nathan Fought

Sunflower

# Symphony of Abaddon

By Zachary Fishel

Strike the tinder and spark a fire, in the eyes of the children and the hearts of men.  
As women wail and begin to leap from the cragged falls  
the water churns to a foamy red.  
You can hear the force that drives all to the edge, but it doesn't push them over.  
You see, this force only takes you where you let it.  
We are so deceived.  
I am a man with an unopened door,  
but alas you never noticed the hinges were missing.  
The spark ignites and the fire catches  
the weaving nest of snakelike rubbish,  
a kick start to hell made from tiny budding trees, potato peels, and an apple core.  
Through the thickets you hear the calling,  
against the grain of a wind worn lean-to; you rest,  
but the sound keeps howling like dogs in the street  
left without food for far too long.  
You can't sleep and the whirlwind you've anticipated starts.  
The dissonance of discontent spirals in your temples like a fiddle off key,  
screeching out the banshee's song  
as you feel the blood rush from your nose.  
The Irish tenor is also off key and those four forsaken strings burn and pop in your brain.  
The ragged and dismembered melody travels through your blood stream hunting...

Like tax collectors trying to get your last dollar,  
every fluid motion rips holes in a cavernous heart canal searching for something,  
something you lost long ago.  
The fire rages, angrily destroying everything its lips grace.  
You feel it on your skin,  
10,000 hours of hell boiled and blistered into your skin.  
You weep silently, because in this forest of despair the only thing responding  
is the quiet lament of the whoop-er-will as it mourns her children.  
The sweep of angel feet on every blade of grass,  
dances joyously in a waltz of rebirth to the orchestra of evening bugs.  
Vibrato winged creatures humming to the key signature of frog sonatas  
and the gentle waving tremolo of firefly light shows.

The grey sky rises through the brimstone clouds of what you can't hide.  
"Jesus, look down on me," you scream...  
You can't sell your soul more than once.

So now at nights, as the peace of God comes alive in the forest to sing  
the saints a lullaby,  
you hear your soul being ravaged through the dance of the devil's hymn.  
The fiddles will always flay away at your skin, and you'll carry it with you  
time and again.  
Never able to separate the flesh and sin,  
recurring daily like hoeing gardens of dismay.  
The banjo will be plucked like your eyes and veins,  
each tightened to the point of snapping.  
The tension is never enough for Lucifer,  
he enjoys raking a hammerclaw across your sinews.  
His faulted song is beyond sanity,  
with a wrathfully pleasant voice he'll sing of your doom  
as you painfully hum along.

# Cruelty

By Jennifer Tanney

Small, brown-black creature,  
A six-legged insect,  
minding your own business, feeding your  
family.

The brilliant sun's heat intensifies,  
a soft breeze gives little relief.

Looking up, all you see is the sun,  
ten times its size,  
a large dark form hovering  
over you.

Could that be God  
or the end of the universe?  
Smoke.

Your skin burns;  
one little poof and you're  
gone.

# Fear

By Abigail Smith

It crouches in the half-shadows,  
tail twitching, paws shifting  
subtly, ready to pounce.

I see its eyes glowing,  
glaring, watching my every move.

I retreat back to the sunlight  
where there are no shadows to  
hide  
that feline, feral and ferocious.

I try another angle, across the way,  
but there it is again;  
how did it move so fast?

Again I retreat, a low, guttural  
growl  
mocking my every step.

The light stings its eyes, keeping  
me  
structured, safe, secure – boring,  
bound up in chains of comfort.

I never hated the sun so much,  
nor wanted the darkness more.



Natasha Parker

Untitled #2

# Regret

By Danielle Tepper

I thought those nights were bad ...  
my eyes were magnets, drawn only to you;  
I could barely stand to tear my gaze away  
for more than sixty seconds at a time.  
Caught between the glow of a campfire,  
and the sparkle of those shining stars,  
your smile spread warmth throughout me  
like that very first sip of hot cocoa.

Spending time in the simplicity  
of the great outdoors,  
the way I felt sitting  
next to you was  
anything but  
simple.

The flames sparked  
something;  
a blaze that burned  
its way straight to my  
heart and refused  
to cool. It hurt  
sometimes, but  
I didn't mind.

The stars have lost  
their twinkle now,  
but I lie back and  
stare at them anyway,  
silently screaming  
at them for not listening  
to my whispered wishes.  
My eyes are still magnets,  
but the attraction's  
not the same anymore.

*I hate to see you hold her  
while I'm freezing deep inside.*

# Pumpkin Pie

By Regina Gonzalez

Ashley places the bright orange symbol of fall on her newspaper-covered kitchen table in her small apartment. She stands back and looks over her workspace. The perfectly round pumpkin sits flanked by two twinkling knives. It's reminiscent of a medieval lobotomy procedure: the knives, a chisel and mallet; the pumpkin, the viced skull of a screaming sanatorium patient. Those aren't the thoughts in Ashley's head, however. Her mind is on pumpkin pies and pumpkin seeds, and all the good things a Martha Stewart clone, like herself, could turn this ordinary, everyday, pumpkin into. If she knew this particular pumpkin wasn't an ordinary pumpkin, her mind would have been on seeking safety and nothing else. She takes a step towards the table and peers down at her recipe. "First things, first," she says to the silence of the brownstone. "We have to slice that pumpkin."

She places a slender hand atop one of the long knives. As she does so, the wind outside the single kitchen window howls, sending the world into a frenzy. The foundation of the old building creaks, and branches claw at the walls, like desperate, dying hands reaching out for a loved one. She picks up the knife and grasps its faux wooden handle tightly. She angles the treacherous tip at the top of the unusually heavy gourd. As her steady hand moves the deadly edge closer to its intended target, the wind intensifies. Ashley ignores it and continues. The pointed tip touches the pumpkin's eerily smooth skin, creating a marvelous contrast of color and shade. She presses down and as the knife barely penetrates the pumpkin's shell, an electric spark sounds behind her, making Ashley cry out and turn to face the doorway. The room is flooded with darkness; the only sound is Ashley's labored breathing, quick gasps, in and out, in and out, like a twisted melody. She utters a nervous laugh as she shakily turns back to her work, the knife still clutched in her right hand.

What she sees stops those short breaths dead in her throat. The pumpkin is glowing. Its radiation tints the room orange, as if to complement Ashley's growing sense of dread. The young woman tilts her head and approaches with caution. She knows it's not really glowing, it can't be glowing. It's just the coloring in the dark, that's all, she tells herself, only this and nothing more, but as she lowers the knife, the glow grows brighter, as does her fear. With a sharp swallow, she pushes the point deep into the interior, closing her eyes as the knife connects with the pumpkin's spongy insides and expels a satisfying surgical sound. She then drags the point down towards the base of the pumpkin, leaving a dividing slice.

A continued squishing sound forces Ashley's eyes open. Before her is a sight only seen in horror movies, something not even Stephen King would dare dream about. The pumpkin, now split in halves, just like the recipe says, is covered with a thick, red slime that resembles, all too closely, blood. In the middle of this swamp of gore and science fiction is a visibly breathing creature. It too is red, an angry red. The thing's body is fat and snakelike, with four scaled legs that end in sharp claws. Its mouth is slightly parted as it slithers out of the pumpkin's insides and across the table, showing rows of pointed teeth.

Ashley's eyes, the ones unconsciously pouring tears, are drawn to an inscription on the horrid thing's head. There, in silver numbers, as if engraved, marred with spots of what seems like nightmarish afterbirth, but still very much readable, are the numbers 666. The thing goes out of sight and a mere second later, a repulsive slosh rings out. The thing is off the table. Ashley scrambles backwards and trips on her forgotten recipe book. The thing is back in sight. It sees her, too. As she sits on the hardwood floor, her back against the wall, she begins to recite a prayer she hasn't said since second grade.

"Now I lay me down to sleep."

The thing eats up the small distance in quick scurries. It's right before her now, staring at her with slanted eyes, its bizarre mouth still slightly open in a sadistic smile. It's daring her to finish the prayer, daring her to try to save her life with pitiful faith. With a shuddering whisper and closed eyes she finishes the prayer.

"I pray, the Lord, my soul to keep."

The last words of her desperate plea are drowned out by the thing's cynical cackle, a sickening combination of the caw of a crow and the screech of a car's tire as it narrowly misses a child on his bike. Then, everything goes black. All Ashley wanted was a nice slice of homemade pumpkin pie.



Kristin Bone

Autumn Corn



He Put His Arm Around Me  
And Led My Nose To A  
Cut Off Straw

By Shannon Glynn

I am falling with frozen fingers;  
my heart swells and sinks.  
I watch you carefully;  
three scraggly lines later  
I hear the snap-crackle-pop  
of brain cells, watch the  
explosions in your nose.

You motion towards me;  
my lips dance down your neck,  
but your heavy-lidded eyes stay hollow.  
Seventy-two hours later I know  
you will sleep though dinner and the holiday season.  
I hold on tight, refuse to lose you  
to the cold of winter or the warmth of off-white powder.

Your mouth, much faster than mine,  
whispers in my ear, drug-induced devotions  
nuzzling your nose against my cartilage piercing.  
You lift the straw to my nose,  
guide my head gently.

"To us!" you yell, and I shush you,  
giggle like a child, shake my head.  
"I think I've set limits," I say,  
swear that I taste the girls you  
swear you've never kissed,  
slide the straw between couch cushions,  
hope that you'll forget  
like you forgot about the syringes  
I hid in the shoebox under my bed  
until I could get rid of them.  
"Maturity's a bitch," I apologize.

In three days you might  
be angry but right now  
the firecrackers in your brain  
prevent those feelings.  
It is the 4th of July beneath your skull.

I breathe in the whiskey-whipped air between  
our lips, and hope that you  
don't believe crystal meth  
will keep you warm  
this winter.

These snowy months we will shiver  
naked in the back seat of your car  
in the dark an hour before  
my parents wake up;  
I will skip days of outpatient treatment  
to be with you and you will take me out,  
take me on a date to Olive Garden  
and race my lips to the middle of each strand  
of spaghetti on my plate.

This is the winter  
you will meet me  
halfway between our houses  
and hold my hand for the first time.  
You will call me yours, put your  
lips against my cheek in front of  
your mother;  
sit me on your lap in front of  
your friends, drinking Natty ice  
and smoking pot in your basement.

In January we spend  
my last night in Philly together,  
undressed on the same couch cushions where  
I have hidden your straw, and I feel for it;  
find it tucked away safely  
between fabric and dust.



Andrew Richards

Untitled

## Butterflies

By Amy Burke

The twitch of tiny crickets within my stomach,  
scraped my insides raw  
with infatuation.  
I convinced them to chirp and dance.

Yet,  
each time I ventured home,  
I supplied insecticide,  
product placement:  
reasons, excuses, and denial.

They gorged themselves.

My stomach—  
soon weighed down with the corpses of fallen foes—  
abolished my so-called love.  
The heinous chirping sluggishly quieted,  
the twitching slowed to a halt;

My head cleared.

Occasionally, a weak fellow hung on,  
begging for reconsideration.  
In his dejection was his beauty.

I listened.  
I considered him.  
I obliged him.

These sickly crickets—Oh, how they toyed with my mind!  
They reassembled their broken limbs;  
I nursed them back to health.

They whispered lethal thoughts  
and fondly spewed out past endeavors  
with a former so-called love.

The twitch-twitching tickled my intestines.  
Infatuation slithered down my spine.  
Reverting to contaminated devotion,  
festering within my stomach.

## Spiral

By Zachary Fishel

I hear him roll from his bed and his box springs creak like his breaking back.  
He pisses, and groans in agony like Christ before water came from inside of him, too.  
I can't understand this tragedy,  
a man who used to lift cars with only his hands,  
can't even lift himself to the toilet.

Cans of choice hops and broken dreams litter every flat surface we have;  
guitar cases, tables, counter tops, and even the bathroom sink.  
On top of that clutter rests an even coat of dust,  
resting like a band-aid on a burn.  
Hank Williams, Jr. plays on his tired radio  
as Dad's tired voice sings the songs I have always scoffed at for being redneck.

I struggle to find the strength to look him in the eye, or even speak to him  
like the man I loved more than anything.  
Finding words for a man who spends afternoons in the VA hospital,  
going through testing and coming home with cases of amphetamines  
is like trying to bite your own tongue out.  
Discipline is hard to come by, he says,  
but you will find it in time.  
Each morning I do the same things.  
I make coffee, take my medication, and look at my bathroom mirror.  
I also see the same things each day, Zach.

He's a man with soldered and bleeding hands trying to earn his promised blessing.  
I always read in Sunday school that I should be quiet,  
earn my keep with the sweat of my brow,  
and mind my own affairs.

Why does God stay quiet to me?  
I see my dirty face in that dim bed light —  
and know that I'm returning to the dust.

He tells me three more times over black coffee.

## Precious Illusions

By Joshua Miller

*For all the other lonely people.*

Setting: In an office in Washington, D.C. There are two men: one Black and one White. The Black man, Alex Millar, is a reporter for a prominent New York City current events magazine. The White man, Representative Ian McIntosh, is a rising star in the United States House of Representatives. It's 5:45 p.m., January 15, 2010.

ALEX: You recently agreed with President Obama to send approximately 16,000 more troops into Afghanistan—not even half of what General McChrystal requested, saying that 40,000 more troops are needed to adequately handle the situation in Afghanistan. Given that now 67% of Americans believe we should end U.S. occupancy in Afghanistan—according to a new Gallup poll—and four out of five people in your own state of Massachusetts say that Afghanistan is another Iraq or Vietnam, are you still as strong on standing with President Obama on this issue as you were then?

IAN: Yes. Allow me to explain the reason—

ALEX: But Congressman, when people of your state express complete disapproval for this war, are you going to ignore that?

IAN: Absolutely not. Look, if we were to abandon this fight now, things would be far worse in the future. I mean, we're talking several bloody civil wars the likes of which this region hasn't ever seen. Let's not even mention the implications when you include Pakistan. Terrorists would gain the upper hand instantly. And remember, the fight was always originally supposed to be in Afghanistan—not Iraq. So while many Americans may disagree with each other on this issue now, in the long haul, it'll have been a responsibility worth going ahead and taking care of.

ALEX: Thank you, Congressman McIntosh.

IAN: No, thank you, Mr. Millar. You're doing a real service for the people of New York, and the American people as well.

ALEX: I'll assume your flattery towards me is off the record, Congressman.

IAN: You can stop calling me Congressman.

ALEX: What would you prefer me to call you, Congressman?

IAN: Everyone who knows me calls me by my first name.

ALEX: Congressman—

IAN: Mr. Millar—

ALEX: Congressman, you are aware that this interview is not over until I am up and off—

IAN: Let's hope so.

ALEX: I'm not one of your eager beaver interns, okay? Just because you're up in the polls, don't think you can handle me.

IAN: I don't.

ALEX: Good.

IAN: All right—

ALEX: Thank you.

IAN: You're welcome.

ALEX: Congressman—

IAN: Yes?

BEAT.

ALEX: Sign these, please.

IAN: (He signs them.) Is that all? Are you up and off now?

ALEX: Yes. But first, may I use your facilities?

IAN: Of course.

(ALEX goes off stage.)

IAN: You know, sometimes I think you say certain things to provoke me. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were working for Limbaugh. Does that editor-in-chief of yours know how you conduct yourself at these interviews?

ALEX: (Comes out and walks to IAN. He kisses him. Then IAN kisses back, pulling ALEX's body into his.) Does your wife know where you are?

BEAT.

(They both laugh.)

IAN: When does the article come out?

ALEX: First of next month, as you wanted.

IAN: Cover page?

ALEX: Yes.

IAN: Top headline?

ALEX: I'll see what I can do. (ALEX kisses him intensely and grabs the crotch area of IAN's pants.)

IAN: There is that. How long does it take you to get naked?

ALEX: (Laughs.) Hmm, twenty seconds.

IAN: Oh, well, that long...

(ALEX laughs and begins to undress.)

BEAT.

IAN: I wonder if this bill is gonna pass...

ALEX: (Takes off his pants.) You've got the Democrats and 18 Republicans on your side. That's more than the two-thirds vote needed. Not to mention you have the president in your back pocket—your tie please.

IAN: (Takes off his tie.) The president's numbers are down. You know as well as I do that anyone associated with the president, their numbers plummet—

ALEX: And yours haven't—

IAN: Yet.

ALEX: And I'll bet they won't go down, Ian. No one wants to challenge the man who finally brought health care reform to America. Don't forget the press is completely enthralled by your call for a formal bipartisanship forum—your shirt.

IAN: (Takes off his shirt.) Tell that to the senator of Alabama—

ALEX: Who hasn't got a leg to stand on. His own constituents don't want to reelect him. The Republicans are running out of gas. They've got to attack somebody, and it might as well be the new face of the Democratic Party.

IAN: Speaking of which, Tim Kaine wants—

ALEX: (He kisses IAN.) I want you to put your hands on me....

(The two kiss and embrace each other. Then, ALEX kisses IAN on both sides of his neck, then his collar bone, then the middle of his chest, and then around his belly button as he begins to unzip IAN's pants. Then, IAN speaks.)

IAN: I'm running for the senate seat of Massachusetts.

BEAT.

ALEX: (He stops.) And then he opens his mouth and says something stupid. I'm sorry, what?

IAN: Massachusetts is holding official elections for Ted Kennedy's seat and the DNC thinks it would be safe and advantageous for a Democrat to go ahead and announce their candidacy now to ensure that the—

ALEX: Yeah, okay. I get that! Why does it have to be you?!

IAN: What is wrong with you?

ALEX: What's wrong with me?! What's wrong with me?! What's wrong with you?! I mean, at what point, exactly, were you planning on telling me this: before or after I sucked your dick? Huh? I'm just curious.

IAN: These plans were being arranged during my second term.

ALEX: Unbelievable...what does your wife have to say?

BEAT.

IAN: What the hell is that supposed to mean? I told you, when we're together, you leave my wife and children out of this—

ALEX: Why? Because you don't want her to know that you've been screwing another man—

IAN: Alex—

ALEX: That I've fellatioed you hundreds of times!

IAN: Shut up, Alex—

ALEX: Or, that you're a gay man! You're a gay man living a false life!

IAN: I said shut your fucking mouth!

BEAT.

ALEX: How could you do this?

IAN: You have something you want to say to me, say it.

ALEX: (Silent at first.) How could you do this to us?

IAN: Now hold on, I will not be made out as the bad guy here. I have always been up front about the terms and conditions of our relationship.

ALEX: Terms and conditions? Don't treat me like I'm some legal document that you can just shove off your desk! This is me.

BEAT.

IAN: (Silent at first.) I can't believe you. Why are you doing this now?

ALEX: I don't know what you're—

IAN: You know exactly what I'm talking about! What you want is impossible...more so now than ever! You knew—

ALEX: I know that, Ian—

IAN: You knew, you knew, you knew, you knew! And yet you're still trying. What are you expecting, Alex?!

ALEX: I'm not expecting anything from you—as usual.

IAN: What do you want? What more do you want from me?! Oh, okay, I see now. You would like me to give up my bid for the Senate seat, resign as representative for District 8; and divorce my wife and children. Then what? Come live with you in Manhattan?

ALEX: You are such a—

IAN: Ever since Yale, there has never been an issue. In all our years together, not once did you ask if we might ever—

ALEX: I know I never asked, but I'm asking you now!

BEAT.

ALEX: (Almost about to cry.) Goddammit, Ian, I can't keep coming here and going and coming here and going again! I can't come here and pretend that you're not affecting me. And I can't go out this door acting as if I don't want to stay with you anymore. Because I love the way you look at me...and I love the way you touch me. And I'm stuck. Okay? I'm stuck because I love you. I do. I really do love you. (Even closer to crying.)

IAN: (Silent at first.) I...

BEAT.

ALEX: Oh, God. Okay, you know what? I have to leave. I have a deadline in five days. I have to fly out to Paris next week, and I'm not even packed yet.

IAN: Alex, wait. Just wait, please.

ALEX: Wait? Wait?! Wait for what, Ian? Wait for you to finally introduce an anti-discriminatory clause for gay Americans into legislation? Wait for you to propose more gun control so kids won't keep shooting up their schools? Or are you still talking about my precious little gay pipe dream? Cause I gotta tell ya, Congressman, it's hard keeping track of all the shit I'm waiting for you to do.

IAN: Cut the Congressman bull crap out, all right?

ALEX: What about all your bull crap I've had to put up with this whole time? Huh? You are still the same closet-case coward from college. You never had the courage to stand up to your jock strap-frat boy buddies; just like you can't face any of these crooked politicians. God, you make me sick.

BEAT.

IAN: (Silent at first.) I have tried to do the best that I know how. But it hasn't been easy for me.

ALEX: You're kidding me, right? I go out in public, and I'm an uppity Negro, or I'm just another flaming fag—if I'm lucky. You go out and you're the new face of the Democratic Party, or Kennedy's protégé, or America's favorite son. Don't come to me about struggle, okay, Ian?

IAN: You just don't get it, do you? Jesus, Alex! Everyone can't live by romantic ideals all the time. If I wasn't living the way Americans expected me to...I'd lose everything...I am in a position where my duty is not to myself. And I have an opportunity to make use of that. I can bring some real groundbreaking legislation. I have a chance to make a real difference in this country. If I have to give up a part of myself to do that...if I have to numb it... I'll be whatever kind of man the People want me to be to save us.

BEAT.

ALEX: Do you love Rachel?

IAN: I'm learning to.

BEAT.

ALEX: You're really going to do this, aren't you?

IAN: Yes, I am...

ALEX: Then, this is really ending...

IAN: (Silent at first.) Yes...

(The two embrace each other for a moment. ALEX lightly strokes IAN's back. Still shirtless, IAN's back is to the audience. ALEX notices something abnormal on IAN's back. There are two large- and two medium-sized dark lesions.)

ALEX: I know the bill will pass...

(Slow black out.)

## Biographies

**Amy Burke** is a double major in philosophy and English writing and hopes to eventually work abroad with disaster relief. In the next few years, she hopes to achieve a triple major with International Studies and also to spend a year in AmeriCorps post college. She loves philosophy, camping, hiking, reading, writing, and long walks on the dike.

**Brien Edwards** is a freshman majoring in English writing. He also plans on having a minor in Journalism. After reading *The Crucible* from previous years, Brien wanted to introduce unique topics and style to this year's magazine. "Want to know how I got these scars?" is a piece written from the perspective of a clinically insane teenager who is delusional about the realities of his life and acts on his dangerous curiosity. "Childhood Memories" is a first person perspective of the sexual crimes young girls are faced with on a daily basis. It is also a view of the hate crimes committed against African Americans present and past. Finally, "Rehab" was written primarily about a girl in his life, but meant to be about women in general, too.

**Tasha Englert** is a psychology major with an English minor. She enjoys crafting poems, because not only does the process allow her to think more deeply about life, but also because readers are given the opportunity to contemplate the meaning in their own way and apply it to their lives. In her poetry, she likes to use nature imagery. She finds that nature's wonders inspire and comfort her when she is feeling down, so she tries to write about it in her poetry, in hope that the images will provide others with inspiration.

**Zachary Fishel** is from Janesville, PA, and currently is finishing his undergrad at Lock Haven University. He has been writing poetry and prose for about six years, and after graduation he will be pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing with the goal of being a full time writer and professor. Zach is a founding father of the Lock Haven Colony of Phi Kappa Psi and a Resident Assistant at his university. He also is a self-taught guitarist and on certain occasions has been known to improvise

on his harmonica. For fun, he goes out for coffee, gets tattooed, and tries to experience the fullness of life. He has a brother Zane, and a sister Cheyenne.

**Regina Gonzalez** is majoring in English with a writing concentration. She is a junior, and her planned graduation date, if she doesn't stay for her master's, is May 2011. It was a fall night when she received the inspiration for her piece. She thought it would be the perfect horror story for the season.

**Tasha Hartley** is a twenty-year-old junior at Lock Haven University. She is a double major in Secondary Education/English and English literature. She is also working on a minor in psychology. She will hopefully graduate in the Spring of 2011. "Oak Tree" was just a poem written around a line. She was actually in class and thought of the last few lines of the poem, and she had to work around those lines. The last two lines really give the poem its character.

**Joshua Miller** is majoring in Political Science with a minor in theatre and will be graduating from LHU in the Fall of 2010. "Precious Illusions" is his first written play. It can be about several things. For Joshua, it's about reality versus what we want it to be. People, namely Americans, he's noticed, have these desires of what their lives could be. For whatever reason, for better or worse, voluntary or obligatory, they will not or cannot bring their true dreams to life, which, consequently, turn into illusions.

**Taylor Potts** is a freshman at Lock Haven University, and she is majoring in Secondary Education/English. She has always loved to write, so being able to say that this is the second time that she has had her work in print is quite an accomplishment. Her ultimate goal is to get her stories published and become somewhat famous. "Returning" was done at a point in her life where she was being pushed into uncertain territory, and she desperately wanted to return to a life that seemed so much simpler. As for the rest of the poems, they were just done when she was first learning about herself, and she realized what she liked, which was being different and dramatic.

**Roxanne Reeder** graduated in May 2009 from Lock Haven University with a major in Secondary Education/English.

She is currently working at Moshannon Valley High School.

**Emily Smith** is an International Studies major in her junior year at Lock Haven who delights in pestering the campus squirrels and annoying her advisor by insisting on taking writing workshops whenever possible. Both of her works that appear in this year's *The Crucible* were written during a workshop with Professor Maddox-Hafer in the fall of 2009. She would like to thank all those who listened, critiqued, and found the voice to read what she could not.

**Austin Smucker** would first and foremost like to state that he is a forgiven sinner who wants to glorify Jesus Christ. He is an International Studies major at Lock Haven University. His poem came from a drill Professor Maddox-Hafer used in her poetry workshop. The poem is Michael Jackson addressing George Washington. Through the shadow of these two historical figures' lives, he is reflecting on America's society and where it has progressed from its infancy. He wrote the poem hoping it would provoke contemplation and questions and would not shine either a good or poor light on either of its characters.

**Jennifer Tanney** is a junior double majoring in English and business. "Cruelty" came from an experience with her younger brothers. She watched while they burned several insects with a lighter, but felt differently when they chose an ant to torture. They used a magnifying glass and watched as its little body disintegrated in an instant. She saw in that instant how fragile life is and how quickly it can be taken away.

**Danielle Tepper** is a communication media major with a print journalism emphasis and an English minor. She hopes to obtain a job in the magazine industry following her May 2010 graduation. She explains, "I developed a deep love of words at an early age; I've always known that I'd want to pursue writing. A high school journalism class brought the realization that I believe everyone has a story to tell, and I want to give people the opportunity to share theirs throughout my career. Creative writing and poetry may only be a hobby to me now, but it's how I tell my story."

**Mike Buynak** is a junior majoring in graphic design. Digital photography has always been a hobby, as well as creating art with Photoshop and other designing programs.

**Zena Barry** is a painting major, but also enjoys using other mediums such as pastels, charcoals, and graphite. She just recently completed a series of paintings with toothbrushes as the subject and enjoys representing commonplace objects in a new light.

**Natasha Parker** is a senior from Manheim, PA, and is majoring in athletic training. She plans on taking more photography classes in the future and is focusing on continuing her education.

**Andrew Richards** is a freshman this year majoring in the unknown. Working with mixed media throughout highschool, inspired him to pursue it further in college and hoping to one day advance from doing freelance work and find a career doing design with a well known organization. Modeling is another interest that he would also like to work into his further plans. For the time being he will continue to produce artwork throughout his years at LHU and hopefully find a well profitable way to spend his down time.

Untitled

Lee Timko





everything is black and white except for their colorful spirits.  
They wave, I choke, I cry, I nod my head and quickly pass by.

I need home, I need the warm brownies  
my mother always baked. I would die for that smell.  
I close my eyes and drop to the ground,  
fatally lying in a fetal position. I hope for home and wake up.

Still black-and-white in my home town, still dead.

Life is a plague;  
it rots our spirits.  
The only colors left in this scene  
are held by posies that are pinned, poked, stabbed

to the living's shirts,

some red, blue, and gold:  
personalities, places, stages;  
the color has no meaning.  
I am just foreseeing the beginning.

I watch little girls as they dance and  
sing "Ring Around the Rosy,"  
playfully taunting the sand man.  
I try to warn, worry, and wake these children,

for I see their pockets growing full of posies.

He waited for me with the tooth fairy,  
playfully frolicking in flower fields, picking and planning my demise.  
These children will not be our future. Their time will come.  
Tick tick, the sand man flicks the second hand.

Sunsets bleed with bloodshot eyes;  
children rub the day's activities away. He waits as a warning,  
pouring sand into the entrance of their souls, while  
laughing at the parents for providing comforting lies.

He never sleeps, blinks, or thinks.  
How many nights have I been warned?



Kristin Bone

Orange Lily



Robert Smith

Blondie

## Life After Death

By Luke Busch

Tick tick,  
with the flick of a hand,  
I have killed the sand man.  
Out of time in this world,

I no longer run from sleep.  
Cringing, hiding under a 1940's  
Suzie-Q Cadillac embedded in a river  
after a drunken prom night, I drift.

This is where my body will lie,  
twisted and tossed off that same bridge.  
The rain and river washed the sand out of my eyes,  
undoing his work:

that dreadful sand man.

A sneaky little man,  
eloquently placing small rocks  
in the corner of my eyes.  
He spent his life finding me,

blinding me, silencing me.  
Now I see his motives:  
an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.  
Tough mythical monsters will neither taunt nor haunt me.

I will see them all soon.

My soul is a feather floating upward:  
softly and peacefully, changing  
direction with the current.  
I rise out of the water to see an image of who I once was:

an image of a helpless body  
waving with the ripples of this river,  
a still life taken in black and white,  
a corpse lying confused, perplexed, disappointed,

a lifeless body that has never known the meaning behind life.  
I try to scream, but I'm one decibel too high.  
Some old friends exist with the living;

## Oak Leaf

By Abigail Smith

I watched an oak leaf,  
brown and broken,  
float by the window.

It spun on an invisible axis,  
muted sheen gleaming in the  
bright September sun,

reflecting a far greater glory.

It drifted towards the earth,  
neither furious nor calm,  
more right than down.

All the mysteries of the universe  
opened wide to me,  
manifest and obvious,

until the leaf

fell

out

of

sight.

## The Reason Unkempt Faces Shouldn't Be Questioned

By Zachary Fishel

Sometimes I sleep without brushing my teeth,  
for the simple taste of black coffee,  
its roofing tar stuck to the pearly shingles of my mouth.  
The rudder of this serpentine ship is stained with long nights of caffeine.  
We traveled to Long Island, Dirty Jersey, and tons of sweaty mosh-pits full of hardcore kids.

Scholars, with their ignorant eyes, puncture my ribcage burrowing deeper,  
into my thirsty stomach.  
Solemn incorrect judgments from these scribes,  
trying to reprimand my poor nutritional habits through wooden eyes of idolatry  
Not seeing the man who ate from dumpsters because their charity missed the mark.  
Too prideful to give in, an addict to a full syringe,  
knowing compromising my faith would be like stealing books from a library.

Covering my face with a mane of history and culture,  
allowing my beard to protect me from the embarrassment of human-kind.  
A veil keeping truth from the world,  
hiding within the confines of uncombed hair.  
Just a face that misses a razor  
like a deaf man misses his lover's voice.  
My face never looking in mirrors; afraid of the slaughtered mess that will look back,  
not realizing I'm as sacred as God.

My retinas are bursting, bloody fireworks of sleeplessness.  
A busy busy bee,  
flying through tasks like a sprinter just trying  
to find the finish line.  
These roaming eyes have seen more stories than anthologies can print.

Millions of minutes, each one getting longer than the next,  
reveal limbs that creak like birches in a tornado,  
flashing an appearance of slashed wrist.  
They pour out dying dreams on the burning wicks of desire while  
trying to rise above the ashes as cigarette butts litter the floor.

Medusa would be better than sex right now.  
Stone-faced solidarity, Autonomous Watcher.  
Leaving the sheep to die.

## Why I'm Afraid to Have Children

By Roxanne Reeder

He stands, sturdily at last,  
barefoot in the deep green grass,  
and begins to stagger towards my laugh  
and open arms.

I clap as he nears. He's nearly running,  
his eyes are almost closed in chortling,  
showing the white Chiclets  
barely jabbing through his tender gums.

Almost within my grasp, he topples,  
screaming. He crushed a black and yellow  
bumble bee with the delicate  
skin on the underside of his foot,  
now pinkened and swelling.

I scoop up his small wailing body,  
trying to console a toddler who  
is convinced that he is near death.  
I rock him gently in my arms, shushing  
and soothing, yet I know I can't  
take away even the simple pain of a bee sting.



Mike Buynak

Waterfall HDR

## Returning

Childhood innocence, slipping through time  
like sand through grasping fingers  
We try desperately, oh so desperately  
to recapture it  
because to lose it  
is to lose something precious

Childhood sights, smells, joys—  
blown away on the wing of summer's dream  
Goosey baked chocolate cookies coupled with soft kitten fur  
bundled together in a child's laugh

Who remembers fun as anything other than what provides amusement or enjoyment?  
Who remembers a time where we fought only for our enjoyment?  
We were our own masters, child kings and child queens in a world of adult consent  
and we enjoyed every minute of it

We grew up so fast, thrown into our own version of *Lord of the Flies*  
There was no Jack, nor Richard and Piggy  
but each and every one of us was a Ralph, Jack, and Simon  
each in a painful, yet completely beautiful, moment of growing up

Remember the stuffed teddy bear that we used to hold?  
We bought him and named him Emily  
Where is he now, our fuzzy white polar bear?  
Oh! Emily, where could you be?

Stuffed in a closet filled with old childhood dreams?  
You always were what we needed you to be  
But now there is no need for you  
childhood protector from shadows, dogs, and scary monsters under the bed

We have surpassed your strength of a smiling face  
and now have bigger things  
bigger fears to face, it's true  
But bigger trusts in smaller packages

When did our world turn so ugly and cruel?

The starry skies whisper things that so many wish to hear  
Return, to that precious gem of childhood  
Return to the soft folds of ignorance  
Forget the pain of growing up  
that changes who you are



Nathan Fought

*Morning in the Fields*

## The Difficulty of Believing

By Miranda Johnson

Our priest tells us, "He is loving and kind.  
When the load of our troubles is too heavy,  
He carries them and through Him –  
anything is possible."

The day my mom was diagnosed,  
she didn't cry until I started to.  
She told me to believe,  
that she was putting it into Your holy hands,  
giving You something back,  
the lump that You placed in her breast.

The sermon continues.  
The bright blue of our priest's eyes gleams  
like the heavenly light as he proclaims,  
"He died so that You could have everlasting life,  
so that You wouldn't have to suffer."

Couldn't You hear  
her groans and gags from heaven,  
from the chemo that burned  
skin as comforting to me  
as my baby blanket?  
Or see the top of her balding head  
as You looked down upon her,  
one of Your people?

Hands outstretched,  
reaching heavenward,  
like a yoga student  
in the flux of the sun salutations,  
the priest proclaims,  
"Be grateful to Him,  
bless Him,  
thank Him,  
love Him."

Curly cover her previously bald head  
and scars have replaced her angry red incisions.  
I still believe in You.

## M. Jackson to Washington

By Austin Smucker

Flash and swing,  
you don't know me, old friend.  
I can make a grown man hate  
and a small girl cry.  
I'm the new American Icon in a can,  
this life is about me in 3-D.  
Watch generations crave  
the glamour as my feet move.  
You're America's history, the father  
raising his child,  
embracing and teaching  
the steps of their youth.  
You led with moral  
and strength, but I'm another.  
I can put a twist to their hop and skip.  
I'll show a new way to sway  
the rhythm of our children.

## Protest at the Jury Fountain

By Emily Smith

I don't care to cross that path, but I cut  
through the circle,  
join the field trip on the other side  
where children, wide-eyed and bewildered,  
get higher educations than they'd bargained for.

I guard the left flank,  
an interloping chaperone shooting glares  
at the ladies with the bloody  
baby posters beside garbage.

All around us, shouts escalate  
to brimstone and the bass from behind me  
in choir singing, "Highway to Hell,"  
teeth shining like the rosary beads and gun  
in the holster of the improv bodyguard from campus police.

At the front, a girl loses  
herself in, "Long live the Father,  
Son & the Holy Spirit!" chanting  
faster and faster until she's dizzy,  
gasping to keep going until she falls,  
hiccupping whimpers,  
"Long live... long live..."

Whose footsteps fall beside us  
as we pray for the jury's  
Zen existence?

## Misting Shadow

By Taylor Potts

Misted shadow  
Silent night  
Screaming doe  
Silent fright  
Shadows move noiselessly  
Prey stay, they do not see  
What danger lurks  
Beyond the light  
Light disappears, no match for dark's might

Love so blind  
Sitting there so, so lonely  
Tail flapping in the wind  
Loved by so many  
But loving one only  
Thinking of him above the waves

Let me Hold On, a Little Longer  
I know that magic is a fairytale  
A place where dreams come true  
And books are just portals  
To places I never knew

And someday I must be serious  
And leave fairies and elves behind  
But let me hold on a little longer  
Before it becomes that time

Let me say goodbye  
To the dwarves and elves my friend  
Before I step out into the world  
And never come again

Let me cry with dragon  
When it comes my time to go  
And let his tears remind me  
That there's always hope

And let me take with me  
A trinket from the butterflies  
Just a small gem and promise  
That magic never dies

And so, though I leave this place  
For one of reality  
I'll give this trinket to another  
And hopefully it will come back to me

## Rehab

By Brien Edwards

My drug and primary addiction  
First taste and overdose  
Achilles heel with various definite  
Complexities and simple to diagnose

Permanently on my mind  
Never erased from my heart  
Forever branded on mankind  
Catches the eye like vibrant art

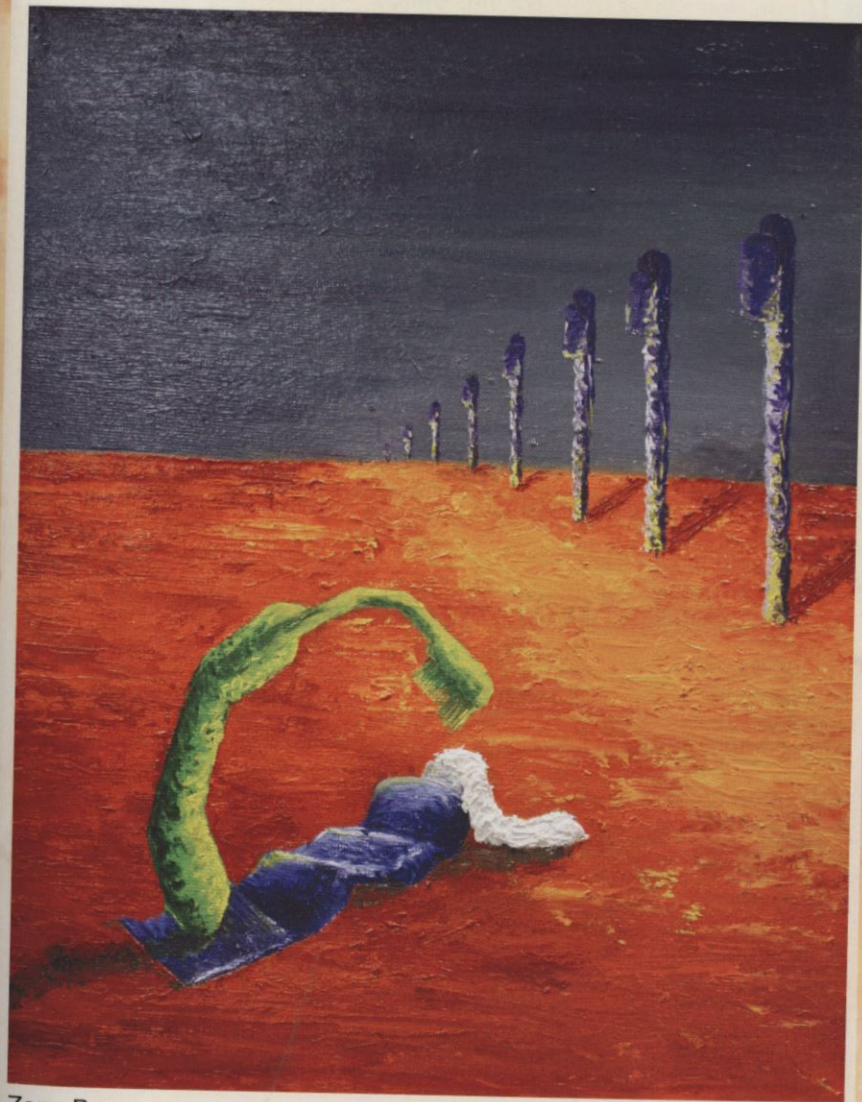
Perfect combination of Love and Hate  
Mind altering and forgetful  
The predator and bait  
Great thanks but regretful

Similar to companionship  
The substance to die for  
Evolution to dictatorship  
Cruel but impossible to ignore

We search a lifetime for its perfection  
An exploration set for failure  
Naïve to its poisonous infection  
Our voluntary life sentence of torture

Beautiful at first glance  
Hiding its truth with optical appeal  
This partnership leaves life to chance  
And your heart open to steal

Denial is futile and audacious  
Every man lives this sorrow filled tale  
Survivors are eternally gracious  
to escape the vehement female



Zena Barry

Toothbrush



## Helping Hands

By Tasha Englert

Tiny hands  
stained with blood,  
burning as each drip  
of salty sorrow  
sinks into the cuts,  
as despair drains  
after a violent betrayal.

These hands need  
someone to pick them up  
out of fear's dark clouds  
that surround a small girl,  
sitting silently amidst shadow,  
drenching her to the bone  
in nearly-frozen rain.

Shivering and shaking,  
the child's happiness  
is swept away  
with the storm,  
each icy drop  
stinging her skin,  
destroying her hope  
blow by blow.

Her hands attach  
to a body blistered,  
bruised, bloody,  
and broken.  
Won't someone  
hold her hand,  
comfort her,  
and lift her up  
to carry her  
away from the storm?

Whose hands  
are soft and gentle,  
a soothing touch,  
yet strong and firm  
to guard her security?  
Are they yours?  
Give her a helping hand  
or two. She needs  
several to pull her out  
of the rubble,  
out of what remains  
of her damaged hope,  
and wrap her wounds  
with love's warm garment  
until she reveals the  
shining smile hidden within.

## Working Class

By Zachary Fishel

It's really really cold.

Sun's still sleeping but your old irons are wheezing,  
and I can hear you try to muffle them in the bathroom as you get ready for another day.  
The running water tries to drown the surfacing mucus as you tie on a belt and finish filling a  
dirty thermos with dirtier coffee.  
I roll over and pretend I can't hear your weakening soul.  
I got to be up in three hours so I can clean the house before working a double shift at the mill.  
The money jar where we pretend to fill up for vacation keeps thinning out like my hairline.  
The tides of tragedy keep rolling in.  
Last week it was a deer that decided to tempt God with physics and a cavalier.  
Next week we have appointments and meetings with the Dr.

Dinner was normal tonight.  
We swallowed hot dogs and moldy bread, the turquoise specks growing painfully  
as we choked down our last stale attempts at freedom.  
The depression hasn't affected us,  
hell we haven't seen cash since Johnny died.

I hold your hand and remember our wedding, when there weren't  
calloused palms or black fingers  
stretching over the bony wrist that our child used to grasp as he swung through the yard.  
Now I look at your cracked and chipped nails and wonder how a man's hands can toil so much  
and have so little.  
Our son used to reach high up and see how far he had to grow to have your dinner plate palms.  
He lived a good 22 years before the coal shafts took him in and spit out a skeleton.

Let's keep singing our Lullaby, dear,  
it's the only thing that never hurt us.

# A Light to Renew the Earth

By Tasha Englert

Pure white petals fall  
from the wilting flower  
on a cold autumn day.  
They sit like doves  
in the brown grass,  
ready to soar upwards  
into the bright blue sky.

The delicate flower leans  
as the wind pushes against it,  
like a young horse's legs collapsing  
beneath the weight of its laborious load.  
While the dying flower droops down further,  
bows, and surrenders to the frozen earth,  
the breeze lifts its fine petals  
swiftly off of the stiff ground  
and carries them above the clouds.

Winter's chill creeps into the roots  
of daisies, goldenrods, and lilies.  
The fatal poison pollutes the blossoms,  
as each one withers from his icy breath.  
His frost climbs its way up the trunks  
of maples, pines, ashes, and hemlocks,  
until it reaches the topmost branch,  
and the trees have lost their last leaf.

A thick, solid layer of ice forms  
on the now weak and brittle branches,  
like the grave heaviness of a life's loss  
as it settles over the mourners' shoulders.  
The sorrow sinks down deep inside of them  
and tears a huge hole through their hearts,  
just as the pressure of winter's harsh hand  
forces the strongest tree's branches to break off  
or even the whole tree to snap and fall in pieces.

Spring's healing touch transforms  
that same tree which had fallen  
because of winter's choking grasp  
until it becomes bigger, stronger and sturdier  
as each dismal day brightens with the sun's rays.  
Spring's gentle hand tenderly  
nurtures the flowers to rise up  
out of the soil and live anew,  
joining a world made more beautiful  
as each of mother nature's children are reborn.



Mike Buynak

Untitled HDR

## A Night Transformed

By Tasha Englert

White and yellow lights  
in a sheer layer of illumination  
coat the sopping streets  
like the sun's image  
mirrored on the ocean,  
a small circle of light  
in a sea of dark waters.

Shining specks in the light  
spin and spiral downwards,  
sending a shower of tiny  
pieces, each carrying  
a bit of glimmer  
through the darkness.

They collect in the grass  
in frozen droplets  
on the sagging blades,  
covering all that surrounds us  
in fine flakes of  
pure white hope  
beneath the cloak of night.

## Spider Webs

By Zachary Fishel

Summer morning floods you with the smell of soft linen in your nose.  
You walk away.

Everything you loved is left in the sun,  
diminishing and melting like the clocks in that famous painting;  
you wish someone could smell you burning.  
Spider webs cling between the porch rails, just like the corners of every window.  
Your room, a monstrous cavern, fills slowly  
with despair, frustrations, and the mildew of tear-stained sheets.

House flies creep along the halls,  
snatched from the air and entwined in chains of silk.  
They leave you stuck with two options:

1.) Fight with everything you have  
until the air in your lungs collapses,  
dying satisfied and giving it all,  
doubtless of ever doing wrong.

2.) Relax and stay a while; the air web  
has you caught. It's only a  
matter of time before the venom  
melts the skin and bones to

Nothing.



Kristin Bone

*Pink and Green*

## Backyard

By Zachary Fishel

Clad only in my boxer shorts, I approach the mailbox.  
I'm proud to be from the town where dust is the only thing moving.  
As the trucks stir that dust into my lungs,  
I try recollecting the grandpa I never met;  
dust clung to his lungs, too,  
black as those tires racing down 729  
from the haunted mansion up to God's country.

Sitting on my paint-chipped-missing-railed-turned-lounge of a porch,  
I light a cigarette and plop onto my old couch, watching as a sentinel over the yard.  
I sip sun tea that caught rays all day from the walkway.  
A deer crosses the rusted swing set  
that is still sitting in the dump where all the state's trash eventually ends up.  
Sleek and silent, the animal picks at the fallen crab apples,  
then slowly blends into the weatherworn wood that fell apart as I grew up.  
Catching the scent of sugar and cigarette, the doe runs into the locust trees  
that line the yard like barbed wire I'll never escape.  
These trees just cut through  
The deer manage to get out just fine.

Dust blows by; the sawdust from the wood cut years ago for the swing set  
settles into my mason jar. I flick my smoke into the yard and laugh.  
Isn't it funny how the old stuff ruins the new?

Dumping tea back onto the sidewalk that brewed it,  
I wipe my feet on the steps, trying to scrape home off of them.  
Too bad calluses root deeper than the coal sleeps.

# Ancestry

By Amanda Sportelli

They flicker,  
like stars,  
like candlelight;  
steady wicks crumbling,  
like the cake baked before bed  
beneath dim kitchen light.

We see them in the top bookshelf of our minds,  
leaping  
from one projected image  
to the next, flipping through  
channels (like the ones we saw  
each Sunday morning)  
and memories we've witnessed  
(like when Great Gramps first held our sister),  
stories we heard when tucked  
into bed.

Vivid  
as the sunrise  
after a storm,  
but now

they dim like the flame  
of our memory.

Fading –  
leaving

the same after-image  
of the candle  
we've stared at hoping,  
or the rerun we've watched

over  
and over.

What once was disappears  
in the smoke,  
the same as the sunset  
behind the endless sea  
so as to hide from the moon.



Robert Blackwell

Untitled

## Moon Love

By Zachary Fishel

Sitting on the inside of this bar, trying to get outside,  
but it's pretty hard when you can't find the door.  
Tonight the two of you are brilliant, sun and moon resting in the night sky.  
As I stumble, dance-like across the room to introduce my starry-eyed self,  
I collect the dust from the tails of every comet-like heart that fell from heaven  
at the sound of your voice shaking the universe to its knees.

The asteroid belts of cigarette smoke shoot back and forth in my bronchial tubes,  
slowly turning them into black holes sucking anything they can  
inside to fuel this old red giant.

Golden like the sun, your hair is the only warmth I see in this bar tonight.  
Reaching outward and across the galaxy, I would chase you to the brink  
though I'll never catch you.

At home, after moon walking through the rain-slicked streets,  
I crater into the pile of shed suits on my desolate floor.  
I'm a pioneer like Armstrong, and long to be the first  
to love you, and eclipse every wrong you've ever seen.

## The Alchemist's Daughter

By Roxanne Reeder

Her rough, thorny bear paws,  
their soothing cold chap,  
chilled my face as she held  
my weary head in her hands  
as if she was holding the world.

The cold takes me back to the days  
she spent away,  
slaving for a florist  
and the mindless nights  
she spent in a department store,

so Santa could bring her daughter a new bike.

My dates could never  
buy me flowers  
for the prom because  
Mom was better than any florist in town.

She wasted days planning  
the special night's flora,  
culminating in an afternoon  
spent indoors,  
working bony thumbs to bone,  
strangling out ugly green wire with florist's tape,  
arranging and rearranging,

so her daughter could hold something beautiful.

She revives my belief in alchemy  
when she soaks oasis and folds ornate bows,  
yet, I weep that such a talent

could go unknown.

## Death by Stiletto

By Roxanne Reeder

I awoke late,  
groggy and disoriented as one  
just beginning to stir  
from an eight hour  
coma.

I pulled on a pair of dark jeans  
and a new pair of beautiful black silk heels.  
I walked like a clown on stilts  
with tightly crossed fingers.

This was my practice run.  
Down stairs was harder,  
like dancing in Pointe shoes  
on a stage of life-size Legos.  
Just 54 stairs  
between me and physics.

I began the perilous descent.  
Jagged concrete rocks jutted  
out of the earth. The smooth,  
beautifully crafted 2 ½ inch right heel,  
sharp as an ice pick,  
caught on a seam  
between the sidewalk  
and the rigid concrete abyss.

My left foot was helpless,  
despite its desperate flailing,  
like the construction worker who lost  
his footing on the construction site  
of a skyscraper.

Liquid panic rushed in my extremities—  
tingling, burning, useless panic.  
The weight of my shoulders shifted slowly forward  
as if time had frozen,  
and I could see the future  
folding of my captive ankle  
and cracked ribs.

## Sky Line

By Amanda Sportelli

Those raspberry skies melt  
away as strawberry seeps  
in, morphing  
and blending  
with crimson and the smoke  
that surrounds you.

Already more considerate, you  
open the car windows and  
beckon  
that crisp midnight breeze to blow  
through with REO Speedwagon,  
who softens  
and further eases  
what should be  
awkwardness,  
but never was.

You breathe in  
the smoke you blow  
out and offer me some

through your mouth

breaking our cliché  
hoping the cops don't stop  
on their way past,  
closing our eyes.

## To Live in Space

By Taylor Potts

Sometimes I'm jealous of aliens;  
They get to live in space,  
and look at the planets,  
and fly past the stars.  
They get to understand  
how big the Sun is  
and how big Jupiter is.  
They see the Milky Way  
on a daily basis,  
and the rings around Saturn  
are just normal to them.  
The edges of the galaxies,  
are they like an atmosphere or not?  
And if not, then how do we stay apart?  
So if I meet an alien, beware

I have so many questions for you up there.

## Oak Tree

By Tasha Hartley

Peeking around the oak tree, she smiles playfully.  
"Come and get me!"  
Running through the crunching leaves,  
she tumbles and allows herself to fall.  
Turning her around,  
her smile greets him through the thrown leaves.  
Running again: "Catch me!"  
She runs and breaks free of the suffocating trees.  
Unsure of where to go,  
she slows down.  
She allows him to catch her.  
There they lie watching the parade of clouds.  
She turns to him and says:  
"When I'm mad, hold me tight,  
When I run, always run after me,  
When you hold me, never let go."

## Who I am Inside

By Taylor Potts

You ask me what I think.  
Who I am inside.  
You ask me this to link  
to those already gone by.

But I cannot be compared  
to those past and gone.  
For somewhere deep inside of me  
is nothing like you've known.

In my own little way,  
I'm different from those long forgotten.  
This is how I stay  
in this world so very rotten.

## Faithful

By Unknown

"He is a good man.  
I am his queen, and he worships me like a goddess.  
For years we have been inseparable.  
Our love was blazing like the inferno at the feet of Lucifer himself.  
Making love is like an erupting volcano  
that sends extreme sensation through my body for days.  
I love to view his profile, his face with perfect structure and skin at a perfect tone.  
The crevasses of his muscles are like Braille to my blind fingers.  
He makes me laugh hysterically and experiences daring adventures with me.  
Hiding from my parents, views and having sex in secret is exhilarating.  
His 'manhood' leaves my eye opened every time I am blessed with its presence.  
He showers me gifts and his monetary value seems limitless to spoil me.  
He listens to all of my issues and supplies me with wisdom past his years.  
I feel like a better woman every time I am in his masculine aura.  
I love him."

"So you must really love your husband?"  
the therapist replied, nodding his head in response to her statements.

"Oh...you wanted to know about *him*?"





Lee Timko

Still-Life

## The Fall

By Amanda Sportelli

Lapping ocean waves run  
their fingers down  
the thin engraved crevices  
that the cliff worked so hard  
to maintain, but were forced  
smooth and toned into the shadow  
of definition that once was.

(She's breaking him down.)

She doesn't mind  
and caresses him  
slower  
than before,  
teasing,  
begging.  
The cliff recedes  
from her touch;  
as the moon rises,  
the sky darkens,  
and she tumbles into bed.

She pulls sea shells and sand  
around her, as she goes.  
Cranberry apple skies reflect  
off of her and the cliff breaks  
down with her touch.  
He plunges into her.



Zena Barry

Hand

## Happily Ever After

By Danielle Tepper

Silly little girl,  
lying on your bedroom floor.  
Don't know why you're waiting  
anymore.

Your prince  
got lost  
on his way

to  
you.  
Search  
for love  
"true"

somewhere far, far away  
from this place.

Take off that dress,  
princess,  
dry your tears,  
and you'll be o k a y.

Silly little girl,  
lying on your bedroom floor,  
don't know what you're waiting  
for.

You'll find love  
somewhere far,  
far away,  
hidden from view,  
waiting for you  
to find it.

Get dressed,  
princess,  
let your hair down,  
and  
e s c a p e.

## Melancholy's a Season, Not Just a Word

By Dustin Geise

I gaze outside again,  
through these same glass panes  
that have always been here.  
It's so typical of me.  
I think of nineteen years of life that's passed  
much too fast for my liking.  
The buzzing in my ear:  
just the house fly I've always known.  
Does it miss the outside life as I do?

The wind still whistles my name.  
The sky is not the same powder blue,  
but sickly white,  
like loss of complexion and loss of life,  
longing for the summer clouds that held  
that warm, comforting rain  
drenching the flourishing blades  
and saturating them like  
a heart's new-found beat.

The trees have shed their coat.  
Now the snow will show  
the sincere colors in our eyes.  
Does this blue pair reveal  
what I really feel?

Don't worry about winter's lack of heart.  
I'll sleep away this dreary season.  
A passing thing's a passing thing,  
and summer isn't far.

## Beauty in the Eye of...

By Dustin Geise

I'm stuck in sleep and dreaming once again,  
my mind racing through dreams and twilight reveries  
like a grapevine of ripe thoughts.  
I dream of beauty:  
what exactly is beautiful?

Beauty isn't sea-blue eyes.  
Beauty isn't the curling locks that flow from scalps like  
the twisting roots of trees beneath the soil.  
It isn't a perfectly straight set of teeth.  
It's not perfect cheekbones.  
What is it?

Beauty is the profound laughter  
that can break the sound barrier in a silent feud.  
It's that quiet talk after a day's long work  
that helps put to rest that long, enduring search  
for comfort.  
Beauty is bullet-proof.

It can't be silenced  
or tamed.  
It's the silent charm that lifts you up:  
a child in the loving arms of a mother.

A mirror's reflection  
of an ear-to-ear smile:  
that's beauty.  
It's the relief felt  
when our hands interlace,  
and we find warmth in knowing  
that our hearts are still young.  
We're children yet,  
caught up in an aging world:  
the seeds prepared to blossom.

Beauty-  
it's not an image.  
It's an almost magnetic connection,  
two hearts that communicate  
and long for an everlasting bond  
together.

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