Conjureings

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To call or
   bring to mind.
To evoke.
   To imagine.
To picture

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Hope

By Patrick Harper

He gently blew the steam away from his coffee and watched it roll and rise into the air. His eyes followed the soft cloud skyward until it crossed paths with a falling leaf that looped and swirled in the breeze before resting gently on the bench beside him. It was a perfect day; just cold enough to make him appreciate the coffee, yet just warm enough to make the breeze welcome. Of course, every day was perfect when he came to the park. Thirteen years of perfect days had passed; almost enough to make up for the three years of hell he’d lived through after she left. But that was behind him now. This was all he needed, and he’d spent too many hours convincing himself of that to turn back now. After so many years enjoying the comfort of coming home every evening, it was leaving each morning for his walk that brought him solace these days.

Every day started the same. The alarm went off at six o’clock with jogging clothes and tennis shoes soon following. A muffin from the corner bakery was the perfect complement to a takeout cup of fresh brewed from the Tin Roof Diner. He was always there to say good morning to the old Middle-Eastern man as he opened his newspaper stand and smile at Rosie as she wiped down the sidewalk tables outside her café. Then it was into the park, past the fountain and the rose garden, and down the gravel path to his bench near the duck pond. The park ranger always made his way across the bridge on the opposite side of the pond at about 6:45 as he completed his rounds and less than five minutes later a young woman on her morning jog would round the corner of the trees behind him, smile brilliantly and wave as she shuffled by, and then disappear down the path again. Who knew monotony could be so enjoyable?

So here he sat. His coffee was as flavorful as ever, and it washed down the last bite of his muffin oh so well, as it did every day. The soft putter of the ranger’s small work truck echoed across the water as he crossed the small stone bridge across the way. He smiled and took another sip from his cup, delighting in the comfort these mornings brought to him. He was never unsure; never in the dark. His best friend these days was the warmth of knowing what each day would bring. There were no surprises; no more unexpected hurt. It wasn’t like before. He never wanted that again.

He turned back over his shoulder with a welcoming grin, ready to acknowledge the presence of the young woman who completed his mornings these days. His eyes followed the path down to the corner of the trees and rose up slightly, coming to rest on… nothing. There was no jogger. He shook some uncomforting thoughts from his head and decided to wait. She would be here. She wouldn’t let him down; wouldn’t leave him. That wouldn’t happen again. It couldn’t. Not after how far he’d come since she left all those years before; not after all the time he waited. That was what caused the most pain… the waiting. Each passing minute accompanied by the unusual sensation of both anticipation and heartbreak in unison with each other. He couldn’t take that again.

So he sat. And he waited. It was something that he swore he would never do again, because he knew what happened when he waited. He would eventually have to stop waiting. And he remembered what happened the last time he stopped. She was gone, along with all of his hope.
Maybe that’s why he waited now. His wife was gone; taken. She would never be back and that fact was made worse only in that he knew it was true. But with his jogger it was different. He would wait, because he didn’t know. With uncertainty comes fear. But there is also something else. Down underneath the darkness was what he needed most. There is hope.

**Lost**

Where am I?
Who am I?
Does anyone hear me?
Is this real?
Imagination takes control,
No logic,
A tangled mess in my head.
They say I shouldn’t,
I couldn’t, I wouldn’t,
So I don’t.
But who are “They?”
Do “They” control me?
No,
I won’t allow!
I need someone to hear me.
But whom?
Only He will listen,
So I confess.
I am found.

Lindsay Marlo

**The Snake**

The sneaky, scaly, snake
moved through the slough
quickly, quietly, carefully.
There it would sit
still, looking for a kill
sniffing and wishing until
it silently, violently spied
a snared hare somewhere by.

Ashley Ross
I Want To Show Them Jesus

When I look at their smiling faces
But I look deep within their eyes
I can see that there’s a longing
One that they don’t even realize
For they’re so busy with their studies
And all the things they have to do
They don’t know there’s more I could give them
Than just a kind word or two

I want to give them Jesus
In more than just the words I say
I want to let them know that they
Could live their lives a better way
I want to say He loves them
And died so they could be set free
I want to show them Jesus
With every breath I breathe

Sometimes I feel so helpless
As I watch them struggling through their lives
Knowing I have the answer
To their emptiness they feel inside
Cause I know that only Jesus
Has the power to break their chains
And if they only knew they’ve got nothing to lose
But all of Heaven to gain

I want to show them Jesus
I just can’t let them remain
And tell them to repent of all their sins
And be baptized in Jesus name
I want let them know that they
Can receive God’s Spirit too
I want to show them Jesus
That’s what I want to do
We need to show them Jesus
When they look at me and you

Jim Heil
Happiness

That person you like smiles at you from across the room
A field of flowers in full bloom
Not knowing a problem, then it suddenly clicks
Making a cake but only eating the mix
Reaching a deadline that’s been worrying your head
Laying down in a freshly made bed
Receiving a gift but you don’t know what it is
Leaving sherbet in your mouth and letting it fizz
The sound of rain tapping on the ground
Opening an old purse and twenty dollars found
Being woken up by the sun
Eating a big, sticky bun
Staying up late to watch the sun rise
Entering a charity raffle and winning a prize
Diving into a still pool
Lounging with friends, acting like a fool
Watching a video you’ve seen a thousand times before
Kissing for hours, but still wanting more
The smell of a brand new car
Walking for hours, not going very far
Buying a new pair of shoes on sale
Passing the test you expected to fail
Chewing bubble gum and getting it stuck on your nose
Receiving a long stem red rose
These simple things bring us happiness
They will get rid of all your sadness
So when you’re feeling down
Don’t put on a frown
Just look around
and you will be bound
to find happiness

Jill Baker

Haiku

Running down the street
Fighting for each breath I take
I’m so out of shape

Stephanie Pieszchalski
Unjaded

Books cover my desk
My mind is disconnected.
Popping pills to live.

Youth and innocence
Unjaded in this dark world
She smiles sweetly

Dark cloud hides blue skies
Show your face and make my day.
Tear down my curtain.

Lovely in ringlets
Lie down flat, still breath taking
Adorn with plastic

Jenna Brinkman

The Woods of Wonder

By Jen Sestak

I finally got to work after almost being killed; a car came out of nowhere. I was being a good civilian… driving below the speed limit, when this girl pulled right out in front of me. She was a prettier girl, probably not going to be an old maid like me. After taking a glance at her, I disliked her. Her appearance would have bothered me by itself, but the almost hitting me really set me off. I hate pretty girls, especially blonde ones.

I came to work…ready to set for the grueling task ahead for me. I spied a co-worker of mine who was looking mighty handsome today in his striped white shirt and dress slacks. He was a man who was a very bright chemist, and we would often talk about our best subject, chemistry. I smiled my best smile, and we had a chat about Kleenex and the structural components of them.

Eventually, I had to head down to do my job for the day. I had a concept that I had developed, which was commonly known as “having everybody else do the work.” I had a lot of responsibility on me, and I believed that the people I worked for should be doing more work than I should have to do.

I came into work, and I stared around me. Thousands of faces stared back at me…but for a minute, the faces started to flicker. I thought to myself, “Oh God, not again!” The faces began to change into trees, such tall trees, and I was drawn back into my past.

I remember it well, getting lost in the woods. My parents had several children, and one day they told me that my dad and I would go into the forest and pick berries. I
was very excited, because I never got the opportunity to do anything with my dad. I set out with a smile, and we went into the woods, just me and him.

Eventually, he told me to go down the path alone for a little bit and he would catch up with me. I never questioned my dad...so I set down the path. I never saw my dad and family again. I always wondered what had happened to him...if a hunter had shot him, or if he got lost as well. I couldn’t face the truth. I couldn’t face that my father had left me.

The trees were what scared me the most. They swayed back and forth, sometimes violently. I was a tiny girl at the time, and I was always afraid they would fall on me and kill me. I wondered how I would survive.

Eventually I found a family of bears. They caught food and I ate it, raw. At first, I was very afraid of them, since bears were always feared in my town. While they had no idea of the kindness they were doing me, if it wasn’t for them, I would have starved to death.

I began to study the woods I lived in, and eventually some of the trees were cut down. They built a school in place of those awful trees. I attended this new school, and fell in love with it. I decided that no matter what, I would never leave this school that rid me of some of those hideous trees.

Now here I stand, staring at the trees looking at me...looking at me and judging me for leaving them. “I didn’t mean to do it!” I shouted. “Please don’t hurt me!” I ran outside the classroom, surely trees couldn’t follow me there...But they did, they followed me. I started to get defensive. They were not bringing me back to that forest or woods! Who cares what it is suppose to be called, they both had trees. The trees... that follow me everywhere I go. I wanted to get a chainsaw and cut them down. I ran to my office, but they continued to pursue me. I couldn’t get away. I heard someone scream “You’re fired if you leave...it is in your contract,” but I didn’t care. The trees...I had to get away.

Family

My family is a can of coke, tasteful with delight
Dad’s the caramel color, that makes us look all nice
My mom is the caffeine, always awake and ready
My sister’s the carbonation, anything but steady
My brother is the serving size that limits what you drink
And my dog the aftertaste, always leaving a stink
Well I would be that breath of awe that comes with every sip
Altogether we taste so good you keep us on your lips.

Nathanael Stephenson
Facing the Truth

My heart is racing.
The truth, I’m facing.
I’m in love with a boy
Who thinks that I’m his toy.
How could he treat me like this?
I fell for his disguised kiss.
He doesn’t really love me-
I’m beginning to see.
How could I let this be?
Your heart is so empty.
How could you not care
About the times we shared?
I feel so used
My emotions, you abused.
I want to be free
Of this endless misery.

Sara Knapp

Wacky Wednesday

By Danielle Adams

Mr. Straussner is a very well-liked businessman; he is the Vice President and CEO of a major corporation. He is always very busy, and usually doesn’t have time to joke or laugh with any of his employees. Mr. Straussner is a very nice man, and he is actually very personable; however, most people don’t realize this because he keeps himself very busy and doesn’t allow himself to waste any time at work.

When Mr. Straussner is at home, he loves to play with his precious daughter, Abigail. He brings some of his work home with him; it would be impossible to leave every thought and every bit of paperwork at the business. He would practically have to live at the office to do that. Nevertheless, Mr. Straussner makes time to watch his daughter in dance class, and he makes time to do all of the things he wants to do with his family.

One day, Mr. Straussner and his family decided to buy a new car. They had spent an entire day looking at every dealership in the town. They were finally at the last dealership of the day when he saw the vehicle that he wanted. It was a Cadillac Escalade, and it had enough room for everything he would need, especially a few beautiful ballerinas that could practically practice ballet inside the car! Mr. Straussner had a very good negotiating tactic that worked every time; so as he worked his magic, his wife, Alexandria, and Abigail looked around. Abigail was not shy at all and was a very observant child. She kept asking her mom about her father’s socks. Alexandria didn’t
know what Abigail was talking about, but she kept telling her to be quiet while her dad
was talking.

Abigail was persistent and she just kept on, and finally yelled out at her father,
"Dad, your socks are funny, and they're hanging out of your pants!" As soon as she was
finished, Mr. Straussner looked down to notice something pink hanging out of his pants.
He continued his negotiations, but Alexandria dove on her husband’s leg to retrieve her
very kinky hot pink panties, which had apparently become attached to her husband’s
pants in the dryer.

To this day, Alexandria has always wondered how many people in the town have
seen her unmentionables. Although her husband seemed calm about the whole issue, she
knows that he was more embarrassed than she was about the whole matter.

Abigail, on the other hand, told her mom that she wanted some socks just like her
daddy had, but her mom just tells her that it will be a few years before she would need
those kinds of socks!

Amazingly, this all happened on a Wednesday, and it will forever be known as
"Wacky Wednesday" to the Straussner family.

This Woman’s Life

By Irene Anthony-Jones

First I was a daughter, then a woman.
Later I became a mother
happily with four
lovely, bright and active children.
Sons, there are three
daughters, only one.

Joyously I have won
a fiancé. What a lucky woman.
A big wedding to be with three
bridesmaids. A mother
in-law that loves children
and is happy that there are four.

The reception starts at four
o’clock. I will begin dressing by one
o’clock. Family will help with the children
because I am becoming a married woman.
Standing by my side is my mother.
Her daughters, there are three.
Wedding over by three
o’clock. Partying by four
o’clock. Across the room I see my grandmother,
sweet, intelligent and a kind one.
She is the most perfect woman
I know. Standing there with her great-grandchildren
in tow. Oh how she loves her grandchildren,
for she is a grandmother of twenty-three.
This makes her such a happy woman
and her love is so forthcoming. Just being around her is wonderful. Everyone should take after this mother.

Someday my daughter will be a mother,
raising her beautiful children.
Making me a grandmother to one,
two, maybe three.
I will sit down and have a talk with her. For
soon she may be a lucky woman.

Four generations of women, three mothers
with children, a woman with her husband,
all standing together to make one happy family.

Fight

Fight
The urge
To nap and sleep
Try and try, you’re so weak
Close them tight
No sight
Sleep

Jenna Brinkman
Just Them Three

The little bunch consisted of three.  
The boy at six,  
and the girls at four.  
Sharing crayons in a box of ninety-nine.  
After many broken pieces, they were down to two.  
Oh, how their little hearts ached.

Who to give these to?  
the girls whined.  
There’s not enough for three.  
I know what to do before  
you cry. Let’s just break  
them into six.

Six?  
What are we going to do that for?  
We have three,  
and there’s only two.  
Let’s start to break,  
please don’t whine.

Okay, said the two.  
Let’s go do that by the tree.  
Right by the rake?  
Yup, said the boy at six.  
Just hold my hand, they stood in a line.  
Why? I’m a big girl, I’m four

She said as she stood next to the two.  
They held onto the crayons they wanted to break.  
“Yay,” screamed all three.  
They all ran out giggling until one tripped on a vine.  
Oh, what a mix  
One clumsy, one smart and one that’s just four.

It’s always been them three,  
ever just two.  
They never needed a break.  
The boy at six  
vowed to always be there for  
the two at four.

Always being together until they’re ninety-nine.  
Never will one leave the other two.  
Always and forever, just them three.

Kai-lye Hsia
FEAR

By Brandon Eldridge

What is the one thing everyone has faced and defeated but no one can ever truly conquer?  

Brandon was a 6’3” husky guy. In his heyday, he was a lot skinnier and sported a rather muscular frame. He was successful in all the sports he tried. He had a bright future, as he was accepted to an elite school for his brain, not his brawn. He had dreams of a lucrative future, and he was right. He was fearless.

Along with a few fraternity brothers, Brandon found a nice house in the outskirts of St. Louis. It was a little bit of a haul from his school, but Brandon and his buddies did not care. It was a smaller house. It was three bedrooms with one and one-half bathroom, but with a converted basement, the house held five men. It was their haven away from the hustle and bustle of school. Even though they were living asses to elbows, as they often liked to say, it was their party house. They had no neighbors, no worries, and no fears.

Brandon, while not getting the best pick of the rooms, had a situation he really liked. He had his own bedroom, his own half-bath, and an adjacent office to call his own. He was very secluded from the rest of his roommates, so he did not have to hear their music, answer their questions, or deal with anything. Perhaps picking the upstairs bedroom was not the best idea, but regardless, he was as happy as he could be.

The boys lived in the house together for the entire summer with no problems. The parties were crazy, the girls were plentiful, and the problems were minimal. School started back up in August, and the summer fun was drawing to a close. The boys were gearing up for school, fraternity events, and long nights of studying.

Brandon did not have to study as much as the other roommates did. He was naturally gifted. By only listening to a teacher talk, Brandon fully understood all aspects of a subject. While the other guys were busting their tails the night before an exam, Brandon sat back, pretended to study, and held a firm grasp on the material.

With an abundance of time on his hands, the wayward roommate needed a hobby. He longed for the days when he could throw a baseball a good 300 feet or soundly kick a 40-yard field goal, but those days were behind him. Those opportunities were gone. Aside from work and the occasional binge drinking episodes, Brandon really searched for something he could do on his own to bide his time in between going to class and going to sleep.

After searching the internet for a while, Brandon decided to purchase a new personal computer. He looked long and wide and decided to go with a budget system from the manufacturer Dell. The system was smoking, and he got a great deal. With a few upgrades and merely 900 dollars spent, Brandon had a top of the line system with the sky as the limit. Dabbling in photography and picture editing, Brandon easily got bored with the random stuff he attempted. He became rather proficient at turning a seemingly innocent picture into a disgusting burlesque picture worthy of the top-notch smut magazines sold at the corner gas station. Soon, Brandon abandoned the world of photo editing and yet again looked for something to waste his time on during his free time.
During a lunch break at work one evening, Brandon was browsing through the electronics department when he saw it. The box was emblazoned with the cartoon image of an adolescent girl. Her black hair was draped over her head as if her world were shrouded in a sea of mystery. The raised lettering on the front said one word, “F.E.A.R.” The girl was surrounded by flames. Her world was on fire. Something about this simple game perked the interest of Brandon. It was forty dollars. Brandon grabbed the game, headed to the register, and quickly made the purchase brandishing his debit card as his weapon of choice.

Arriving home at 10pm, Brandon quickly loaded the five CD set onto his computer. The installation took about 45 minutes, but all the while, Brandon read the game’s manual and became excited about becoming immersed in something as adventurous as a first person shooter. The premise of the game was quite simple. You play as an unnamed drone that is a part of an elite group of government operatives known as F.E.A.R., which stands for First Encounter Assault Recon. You are more myth than man. You sport reflexes that test off the chart; so much so that you can almost stop time on a dime while keeping everything in sight. You cannot use this skill at all times, it must build up; it comes in handy in dangerous firefight with the clone enemies you face throughout the duration of the game.

After learning fully the background behind the game, Brandon decided to hit the old dusty trail before stepping onto the field of battle.

“Well rested is the best way to face an insurmountable challenge,” he convinced himself.

The next day, Brandon rushed home from school in anticipation of a great adventure taking his mind off his troubles of the day. After a quick bite to eat, he rushed to his darkened office, where he turned up the volume and booted F.E.A.R. for the first time. From the moment he saw the visual beauty of the game, he was hooked. He quickly fired through the first level in which you are dropped off in a secret military facility, which has supposedly shut down, named Armacham. Faced with less than good odds versus thousands of cloned soldiers, huge tanks, and super soldiers covered in Kevlar making them even harder to take out, he plugged away for hours diving deeper into the soul of the game and the secrets of the facility.

Throughout the game, the player is haunted by terrifying images of sadistic surgeries, human cannibalism, and visions of the young girl in her vibrant red dress walking through explosions of fire. The soldier’s psychic abilities are coming to fruition with each impending vision he sees. The alarming images continued to spring out at a more frequent pace bringing Brandon to the brink of his own sanity and, all the while, forcing him to continue forward to unlock the secrets of the unknown player, his visions, future, and even past. After his first session of 6 hours, Brandon left his computer chair in a cold sweat with chills running down his spine. He had found the fear he never had in high school, and he loved every second of it.

For the next few days, Brandon found himself on edge. He heard the sound of reloading gun clips as he walked to class. He saw the clone soldiers peering at him from around the corner of the buildings he had walked into and out of for his entire college tenure. The visions of the young girl petrified him as he flashed to them walking to and from class and while sitting in a bored stupor during his courses. The game was beginning to consume his every thought. Running home each night after class, he rushed
to the game, feeding his addiction to it like an insatiable hunger.

As he played through the game further, secrets about the game opened up his eyes to the twisted world within. His terror level rose with each minute. Brandon was taken in by the game and the aura it emitted.

At night, Brandon found himself unable to sleep. He attributed his restlessness to his high caffeine intake, but deep down, he knew it was due to the dreadful images haunting his thoughts as he attempted to drift off to sleep. After some time, he began to hear things at night. These disheartening noises sounded like horrible howls in the night. Sometimes, the sounds imitated scratching and clawing as if a frightful creature was trapped in the small attic space above his bed trying painstakingly to get in his room. After inspecting his ceiling thoroughly, Brandon convinced himself that the scratching was just squirrels playing on the shingled roof.

After a few more sleepless nights, he was on edge. The frightful images continued to haunt his day while the dreadful noises kept his nights equally uneasy. Yet, he continued to drudge through the never-ending game; all the while knowing it was responsible for his shaky demeanor. Late one evening, tired from lack of sleep and groggy from a few popped Benadryl, Brandon had had enough from the noises. Grabbing his fraternity paddle off the wall, he rushed to the window with intentions to swat anything and everything he saw. He opened the window on the eastside of his room and peered over the ledge towards the roof. His visibility was limited due to the rusted gutter that surrounded the home. With a flash, he removed the screen to give himself the ability to lean out and gain a better vantage point. As he leaned out of the window and looked skyward, he saw something that scared him down to the core of his being. He only saw it for a second, but that was all the newfound gamer needed to nearly soil himself. With every ounce of strength in his right arm, he swung the paddle with all his might at the creature whose head looked about the size of a football. The creature darted back towards the top of the roof not to been seen again. The noises that night were minimal. Already confused from the Benadryl and the experience altogether, he quickly drifted off into sleep...haunted yet again by thoughts of her.

The next few days were rather busy for the college student. Midterms had arrived, and he actually spent some time studying. The time spent studying had somewhat taken away from his time playing the game, but he still managed to squeak in a half-hour here and there. The intensity of the action in the game had turned itself up a notch. The visions of the girl in the mind of the character had not diminished, but the psychotic screams of innocent victims had waxed to the point of needing to decrease the volume level on his computer. Also magnifying in occurrences was the amount of “dart-outs,” as Brandon called them, produced by the game. Dart-outs were moments that seemed eerily calm only to be interrupted by the quick motion jumping on screen, whether it is a friend, foe, or dreadful creature, hell bent on making you his next kill. Still yet, he drudged through the game with relentless fervor.

The noises in the bedroom somewhat subsided only to be replaced with another sense which was more intense. Brandon began to feel piercing cold chills in his room. The chills consumed him for a split second only to return within a few minutes; striking him at absolute zero, the chills made the hair all over his body stand on edge. The goose bumps ran up and down his legs and arms. Occasionally, he believed he heard inaudible whispering in his ear. Once again, these were attributed to the surroundings or an
impending illness.

Late one evening, Brandon lay in bed watching television before attempting to slumber amidst the chills, whispers, and thoughts that berated his psyche. He watched a rather disturbing documentary on the presences of ghostly specters running rampant in the homes of everyday people. The thought of such things drove him mad. Being an analytical person, and very skeptical on top of that, he questioned the mental competence of those that staked their claims of visitation from the underworld. He found solace when a group of researchers from a nearby college stepped into the picture shooting down every “visit” presented by the show’s subjects. Smoke, mirrors, and the art of suggestion were all that fueled the fires behind these hauntings. As the show concluded and he turned off the television, he was once again visited by a chill. This chill was much more agonizing than any he had encountered before. This chill threw his body into a deep spasm as if he were having some sort of seizure. The grips of the frigid chill were released after about ten seconds of intense pain, felt both physically and emotionally.

As he relaxed from the episode by trying to catch his breath and forget the experience entirely, he heard a slight tapping noise. At first, he ignored it entirely and merely closed his eyes a bit tighter. The sound was quite faint and quite distant. In his mind, he believed the noise to be coming from the street, perhaps a car running over some sort of debris. In reality, it sounded more like a hard object being tapped on glass. The sound was likely coming from elsewhere in the house and traveling up the ventilation for his room was on the second story. While there was glass to rap at, there is nothing that could reach it or tap at it in the first place. The noise became a little sterner over time, yet it held no real rhythm. Like pebbles being thrown at a window, the sound had no meter or rhythm whatsoever. In the pitch black of his room, he was yet again haunted by a whisper in his ear. The inaudible whisper slowly came to a recognizable tongue. He heard the whisper say to him, “I’ve got something to show you.” Opening his eyes to what he believed nothingness drove him to sheer madness. In the window, directly in front of the foot of his bed he saw a figure. The creature’s downward facing hand could plainly be seen as it was pressed upon the right side of the window, one finger tapping as if to say, “Look. I’ve got something to show you.” Five fingers, pale in color, were blocking only part of the head of this frightful image. Only seeing the silhouette peering in at him, he was completely aghast and terrified. He could not make out a face on the beast; he could only see the outline due to the unrevealing darkness. Yet, because of its proximity, the hand was completely visible and not of this realm of thought or existence. The fingers were long and narrow like thin twigs attached to the hand of a giant. The immense hand looked disproportional to both the head he could make out in the window and the football-sized skull he had seen on the roof a few nights prior. Wanting to see more of the beast, he glared in its direction, still gripped by panic and shock, trying to see its face, expression, and size. After what seemed to be like an eternity of eye-to-eye contact, but what only amounted to about five to six seconds, the flood light in his back yard lit up as it does at random throughout the evening. The creature looked upwards towards the light, and obviously startled, made a dash upwards towards the roof. Squeaking on the glass as it darted away, the hand left a print on the window revealing the true immensity of what had just paid a visit to the rooftop. The beast made only the sound of three immense footsteps as it disappeared over the rooftop and into the night. Startled by the experience, he refused to move from the comfort of his
bed other than to retrieve his cell phone. In a frantic call to the police, Brandon alerted them to a possible break-in attempt and requested that they come over and look around on not only the roof of his home, but the rooftops of the condemned buildings flanking his house on each side.

The next day was a shaky one. Yet again, Brandon was scheduled for work, which turned a short day's worth of class into a ridiculously long adventure ending with a few beers and a much-needed cigarette. Brandon had not smoked much in the past – only a few cigarettes here and there. Since his encounters with both the terror in the game and the horrifying images instilling themselves in his mind, he picked up the habit to calm his nerves and allow him to continue without a severe mental episode. It was fourteen hours from the time he left his home to the time he was pulling into the driveway. What made it much worse was the fact it was a Friday night and his body was pulverized from the long day. He did not want to go out. He simply wanted to return to the safety and sanctity of his own home. As he pulled into the drive, he quickly found out that his roommates were not at home. Both their vehicles were gone and no signs remained that they had been in the home recently. The lights were off, and the house was shrouded in the darkness of the rain-cooled summer night. He flew up the steps in two giant steps in a rush to get inside to his cold beer and awaiting smoke. As he opened the door, he was shocked to find the door unlocked and somewhat ajar. His roommates must have left the door unlocked in their haste as they rushed from the home to wherever they were headed for the night. It had happened before, and he thought nothing of their carelessness. Just to completely eliminate foul play from the equation, he called out in the house for a response. As he first thought, the lights were off, and no one was home.

After quick bite to eat, a few beers, and his last cigarette, Brandon retreated to his office where he made plans to conquer the game, unlock the mystery of the girl in the red dress, and rid his mind of the horrible thoughts that embraced him every day. He sat down at his desk in the dark, with the volume once again turned up to increase the satisfaction of defeating the dreadful soldiers standing in between him and his sanity. He drugged through the last few levels, replaying a few due to the insurmountable odds that stood between him. The images in the mind of the player began to all come together. The story was finally coming to a close. Brandon found out the secrets behind the girl, the clone armies, and the unyielding force holding her hostage. The storyline came to a halt once the great conspiracy was uncovered. The young girl held one of the greatest psychic abilities the world had ever known. She was capable of inflicting droves of damage and pain upon any person at any time with merely a blink of her eye. This secret was discovered by a covert government agency, and the girl was taken hostage. She was entombed beneath the surface of the earth and subjected to mind numbing experiments. Seen as a freak of nature, once all the information possible was retrieved from the 12-year old girl, she faced a much more horrible future. She was used as a surrogate mother for the clone army battling the unknown soldier throughout the game. Given high doses of fertility drugs, she ushered out droves of genetically engineered forces with heightened senses, super strength, and psychic ability.

In the final scene of the game, you return to the surgical room encountered in the beginning of the game. This time the blood on the walls is not as horrifying as it once was. Brandon had become accustomed to the sight of the faux blood running down the walls. One thing remained different about this vision. This time, the sound of an infant's
cry was heard. As the soldier opened the doors to the operation room and entered, he saw her lying on the table. She had just given birth to a child. As the infant is ripped from her clutches, she began to shout. With her rising tension and extreme emotional distress, objects began to fly around the room. The gurney was hurled like a stone through a closed window into an adjacent room. The dividing curtains erupted into flames. Suddenly, the vision ended and the object of the illusions became painstakingly real and evident. The unknown soldier is one of the children of the girl in the red dress.

Shocked by the realization that all the fighting he had just done in the eyes of this soldier to only return a son to his mother surprised Brandon. The game ended in a huge explosion and little discloser on the whereabouts of either the soldier or the young girl. Brandon sat back in his comfortable computer chair in complete awe and disbelief that he had finally finished the game. He had defeated the forces and saved the girl from the pain that was being inflicted upon her. Shutting his eyes to see her in his mind one last time, Brandon nearly fell asleep due to the longevity of his day and the weight that had been lifted from his shoulders in completing his daunting task. As he leaned back in his chair, he heard the sound of breaths behind him. The proximity of the breath sounds alerted him that he was not alone in the room. He did not allow himself to become startled. He sat motionless in his chair, pretending to be completely unaware the sounds were being made at all. In fact, the terror shot through his veins faster than the adrenaline could suppress it. He did not know what to do as it was obvious the sounds stood squarely between him and his only escape route...the stairs. He weighed out his options, and his only decent plan was to turn and fight. He remembered the paddle lying under his desk from a few nights prior when he encountered the figure on the roof. He leaned forward in the chair and grasped his paddle firmly in his right hand. He heard the breathing behind him increase in intensity and frequency. He knew he had to act quickly before whatever was behind him made the first move. Like a flash he stood straight up, hurled the wheeled computer chair backwards toward the humanoid figure, which was behind him climbing out of the extra closet, and yelled an incomprehensible phrase of swear words and death threats at the figure. The intruder batted away the chair, and as it fell to the ground, the intruder continued to make its way from the overfilled closet. As it continued to emerge, Brandon cocked back the paddle with the intent to swing with all his might. Just as the figure stood up completely to reveal a frame that stood around 7 feet tall, Brandon cut loose a mighty blow upside the creature's head.

Wounded, and knocked unconscious, the beast fell to the ground. Brandon was completely stunned by the situation and more frightened than he ever thought imaginable. He suddenly was overcome with a feeling of nausea. His stomach felt as if it were coming up through his esophagus and out of his stomach. With a resonating, “ralph” he threw up the entire contents of his stomach directly at his feet, right next to the defeated beast. Unable to stomach what had just happened and the putrid smell emitted by the unconscious beast, he descended the steps to the living room and immediately called the police. The operator believed him to be insane, but dispatched squad car nonetheless. The officers arrived within a few minutes, expecting to find an insane young man. Instead, they found a shocked young man, who was white as a sheet, sitting on the front porch puffing on a cigarette. They approached the young man with a bit of skepticism and asked him the story. After explaining what happened, one officer entered the house and found the steps. As he climbed the steps, he was both shocked and appalled by what
lay at the apex of the steps. He screamed down to his partner to take the young man into custody. He then screamed into his radio unit a request for a “bus on a rush.” After placing Brandon into the police car, the second officer found the steps and raced to the steps. He did not climb the steps; he stayed at the base. Scared that the stories were true he stayed silent as he watched his partner aiding whatever lay on the floor in the boy’s office.

The ambulance personnel arrived and rushed through the house to the dwindling life in the office. The words spoken by the paramedics replayed in the minds of the officers for the rest of their lives.

“We got a young girl up here covered in her own blood. She has been struck by some sort of blunt object. She has lost a lot of blood. We are losing her. Hold on dear. Tell me about your pretty red dress.”

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**Light of Darkness**

Imagine a world of darkness.
Loneliness engulfs the heart.
Skies become like ashes,
As the one you love steals your soul.

Remember.
Tears of laughter,
Tears of hatred,
Compiling a time of togetherness.

Broken now, are the ties of two.
Is life worth living anymore?
Will we ever be again?
Only time can tell the knowledge of God.

Weakened with sadness,
Withered away to almost memories alone,
She looks to the heavens.
There is light.

Lindsay Marlo
What Am I?

I am the feeling inside your trembling voice,  
I am the force behind your shaking hands,  
I am the reason you’re experiencing a rollercoaster on the inside,  
I can take away all your sorrow and pain,  
I can make you dizzy,  
I can give you promise of a better day,  
I can show you a whole new world,  
I’m the reason for every stupid thing you have done and said lately,  
I let you know the worst is over,  
I can make you feel warm even on a cold winter’s night,  
I come only once a lifetime and  
I take no time to get.  
What Am I? I am First Love.

Dan Kistner

Wishing, Waiting, Hoping

Wishing for a friend   
   To be with ‘til the end  
Wishing on a star  
   Dreams so distant and so far  
Wishing turns to wait  
   To wait for something great

Waiting for someone new  
   To be with through and through  
Waiting on a love  
   As peaceful as a dove  
Waiting turns to hope  
   To hope for some way to cope

Hoping love won’t pass her by  
   To leave her there to cry  
Hoping on a chance  
   Life—a wonderful dance  
Don’t spend life hoping, waiting, wishing  
   So many things you will be missing

Alexsis Diveney
**Pfizerceutics**

*By: A Third Year*

I don’t understand what you’re saying.
For this class I can’t believe that I’m paying.
   No one is here.
   I really want beer.
To Tom’s we should go. You are paying.

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**It’s Not Our Problem**

*By Kim Ly*

I’ve never been so nervous in my life. I wiped off the sweat dripping from my forehead. My heart was racing. I looked at myself in the mirror one last time to make sure I looked like I had it together. I looked like a nervous wreck, but I don’t think there was much else I could do. Tonight was the night. I was going to ask Megan to marry me. It was her 24th birthday, and I thought this would be a good birthday present for her. I’ve been wanting to ask her to marry me for weeks now, but I just haven’t found the right time to ask her. Tonight was a good night. I would take her out to dinner, and she wouldn’t expect anything. She would just think that the special occasion was for her birthday. I never thought that I would fall in love with a person like her. We were complete opposites, but I loved her outlook on life. I’ve never met anyone who had such a passion for life and cares for all around her.

I arrived at her house, and she was already outside waiting for me. That’s another thing I loved about her. Most girls take forever getting ready, while the guy sits in the living room waiting. Megan wasn’t like that. I was nervous the whole ride there. I knew she would say yes, but I was still overwhelmed with nervousness.

“What’s wrong, Kevin?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I replied, as I reached for her hand to give her a kiss.

Of course, she didn’t believe me. She knew me too well. We arrived at our favorite Italian restaurant, and we sat in a private area outside on the patio. My hands were still trembling as I held onto the ring tightly as if I was going to lose it. I couldn’t keep my eyes off her the whole night. She was beautiful. I loved the way she looked as the gentle wind brushed her silky brown hair against her cheeks. Her beautiful green eyes sparkled as she looked at me. I finally got myself together and proposed to her. Her reaction was priceless. She was overwhelmed with excitement as tears of happiness ran down her face. After the proposal, I still felt uneasy. I don’t know why. It was as if I was expecting something else to happen.

As we were leaving the restaurant, we noticed a couple arguing outside.

“Give me the keys!” she said.
“No, I’m fine to drive. I’m not drunk! I can drive!” he shouted, as he staggered to his car.

I’ve always been a firm believer in “minding your own business.” I can’t say the same for Megan. Again, we were opposites. She always wanted to help others, even if it wasn’t her place to.

“Maybe we should go over there and help them,” she said, “the girl looks like she’s having a hard time keeping him in line. He’s obviously drunk and in no condition to drive.”

“Megan, it’s not our problem to fix. We should just mind our own business. Let’s just leave. They can handle it. He’s probably fine.” I said.

The guy was obviously drunk, but I was trying to convince her otherwise so she wouldn’t persevere. I won this battle and finally got her in the car. She seemed a little upset with me for not wanting to help the guy, but I just didn’t think it was my place to say anything. I dropped her off at her house and headed back home. I was exhausted. I got home and fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow.

The next morning, I was awakened up by a phone call that would forever change my life. It was Megan’s mom. She had called to tell me Megan passed away last night. My stomach was in knots, and my heart shattered. I couldn’t believe it. I was just with her last night! How could this be? Her mom said that she had gone out to return some movies after I dropped her off and got into a fatal accident. She was hit by a drunk driver. Later that day, I later found out that it happened to be the same drunk driver Megan wanted to stop outside the restaurant. I couldn’t believe it. I was devastated. I felt like the broken pieces of my heart had just been ripped out and crushed into dust. I felt empty and overwhelmed with guilt. I’m not sure what hurts more; the fact that I lost Megan, or the fact that I could have stopped it. If only I had stopped him that night, Megan would still be here. If only I hadn’t “minded my own business,” none of this would have happened. Happy Birthday, Megan.

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**The Best Thing in the World**

Someone in much faith you have  
No matter what life might bring your way  
Always an ear that listens to you  
To hear your troubles, trials,  
Burdens, along with your joy, happiness, and fears  
Who often makes this life so worth living

It never is a game of getting or giving  
For it’s understood what is best to have  
And there would be many tears  
Should I ever have to see the day  
We say good-bye after so many miles  
Having spent with you
Indeed the best thing in this world is you
And often why I think life is worth living
No one will ever know how many times I smile
When thinking of all the fun we have
And the many adventures we have had along the way
You have helped me to overcome my fears

Despite my stubbornness and tears
Supportive of all that I do
Encouragement to me every day
Simply by being there and giving
Of yourself; often letting me have
My way even when it’s not your style

Through the turmoil of life all the while
Staying by my side as we shift through the many gears
Of life, hoping in the future to have
The path we have taken filled with memories, values,
And love. If we only had an inkling
Of what the future held, I daresay

It would be filled with less work, more play,
And with more people for whom we are thankful.
Life is too short for fighting
With people who are not sincere
Or who have been untrue
Right now we should simply cherish what we have

No matter what the future holds, you are all I want to have
Of being single along the way I have no fears
Because I am giving my life to you

Addy Elbl

Haiku

The telephone rings
She runs to check the I.D.
Not talking to him!

Kylie Clark
-Thistle-

Long traveled the man for his wild flower ..
he climbed mountains and swam thru rivers ..
he rode the tides ..
and endured great shivers.

He left his home
he sailed the seas
he flew the skies
he climbed the trees.

He battled many warriors
he lost many wars
he sank to the ocean's floor
he bears many scars.

Long traveled the man for his wild flower
only to return home without a trace
then from a distance he saw a blossom
bringing a sole tear to his face.

For he ventured .. for he lost .. for he strove at every cost
he assumed he must travel to find
this very flower that resided by his door
staring at him -- as if he were blind.

Amera Ahmad

?!?!?!?

By Amy Basler

As I opened my eyes, I was overcome with the most intense pain I had ever experienced. It was excruciating. I thought that perhaps I had gotten a hold of some bad whiskey, because this was not your average hangover headache. The pain was radiating from my forehead, suggesting that I may have had some sort of run-in with a brick wall or at least something twice as hard. The last thing I remembered was offering to buy the entire bar another round. I must have been far gone at that point, because everyone knows I don’t usually throw around money like that.

Assuming that my trusty friends had placed me safely in my apartment, I got out of bed and began to stumble through the darkness in the direction of the bathroom. I soon ran into what seemed to be some sort of metal cart. Although I was completely
blind to my surroundings, I could tell that it was on wheels because it went flying across the room and crashed into the opposite wall. “What was that?!?” I thought to myself. It was then that I realized that the floor beneath my bare feet was cold and hard like concrete, not the old familiar shag carpeting I had in my apartment. This confusion only worsened my already diminished mental state.

I turned around and felt something brush against my face. After a brief and somewhat hesitant inspection, I concluded that it was a pull for the light. As I clumsily yanked down on the chain, the room became flooded with a painful radiance, revealing a completely terrifying setting. I was in what appeared to be an old tattoo parlor. The cart I had run into earlier was covered with all kinds of painful-looking devices and several bottles of ink. My eyes quickly darted around the room, searching for anything that seemed familiar. Then I spotted something, it was my own reflection in the mirror. Just as I was about to continue my anxious investigation of the room, I realized that there was something different about my face. As I stepped closer to the mirror, I was overwhelmed with fear and disbelief. I remember thinking there had to be a mistake because the reflection staring back at me had the words “SEX OFFENDER” written across his forehead.

Hoping to reassure myself that the job had been done with paint or perhaps a marker, I reached up to touch my aching brow. The pain worsened as I ran my fingers over the rough letters. All I could do was hope that I was having the most convincing nightmare of my entire life. I ran to the door, which was conveniently unlocked. Once I was outside, I spotted a bright orange bus pulling up to a stop across the street. I remembered seeing the same bus in front of my apartment building the day before. Thankful for this apparent coincidence, I quickly ran across the street and hopped aboard. I stared down at the floor as I slowly made my way to the back of the bus. I sat down in the very last row.

I don’t remember dozing off, but I certainly remember waking up. A large burly looking man had pulled me up out of the seat I was in by my shirt. I couldn’t tell if this was a new nightmare or a twisted continuation of the first. I spotted a young girl behind him whom I now assume was his daughter. The man must have thought I was an actual sex offender! Before I knew it, the brawny fellow had swung his fist in my direction, and it was about and inch or so from my nose when I woke up.

I was in my own bed – in my own apartment! It was the happiest moment of my life! My relief was soon halted as I realized my girlfriend was staring at me from the end of the bed with a look of complete horror on her face. She then said something that sent chills down my spine - “What the hell do you have on your forehead?!”

Haiku

The time is now spring
Most flowers are in full bloom
Listen to birds sing.

Irene Anthony-Jones
Religious War

A bible, a tool, a weapon, like a gun
Camouflage and robes cover and hide
Crawling, kneeling, to avoid the path of darkness
They plan and wade, he prayed
Mass is a war-zone
Congregation he must fight
Five boats cross the pool of innocence
Penetrate the helmets of war, and baptize
Eternal victory

Steve Grosch

How to Fall in love

Start with a wink
Then a smile
And throw in a little flirtation

Begin to chat
Feel butterflies
Add one first kiss
Feel all the sparks

The whole world stops around you
Now all is left is you and him
Until the next one comes along

Anna Gurevich

A Cow Named Roy

There once was a cow named Roy
Even though she wasn’t a boy
She was milked in the morn
But no milk was born
Their hamburgers no longer were soy.

Danielle Adams
Realizations of a Love Lost

I live this sad, sad life.
That cold shoulder could cut my heart like a knife.

I look for you at the end of the day,
Only to find out you haven't drifted my way.

Seems right that my relentless heartfelt might,
Only leaves me cold and lonely this dark, sad night.

Then I realize that there is no reason to believe,
That you may ever my love receive.

How can I keep going on living for this dream,
This love so crazy, impossible it seems.

That one day my gentle spirit may be found,
And she will want my love around.

But she deserves much more than I,
She should have another guy.

One who gives her all she needs,
Someone who looks nothing like me.

It’s hard to keep this feeling heart-bound,
And I see my happiness will drown

Dan Roth

Old Joe

Well Old Joe was always singing on the street
Playing his guitar not missing a beat
He had to go buy that thirty dime wine
He always told me it tasted so fine
All he wants is spare change not to have fame
He’ll play you any song as long as it’s not lame
So give him a dime he plays real fine
29 more songs and he can get some wine

Matt Hon
Million Dollar Smile

By Alexis Diveney

The little girl was standing by the ferret’s cage. She was standing on her toes smiling at the creature who was curiously looking back at her. The store keeper let her hold him. Her smile grew even bigger. Just then a man walked in. His gaze fell immediately on the empty cage. He had wanted that ferret to complete his dozen. He frantically searched the store. He saw a skinny little girl sitting on the floor holding his ferret. She looked so sweet. What was he going to do? The next ferret would not be in for another six weeks. Just then a tall, blonde business woman walked in

“Mommy over here!” the little girl exclaimed.

How could that tall blonde woman be that little, brown-haired girl’s mother? They don’t look anything alike. The man suddenly realized he worked in the same building as the woman. He remembered walking by her large, plush office that had a wonderful view on the way to his gray, cramped cubicle.

“I’ll buy the ferret!” he blurted to the shop keeper.

The shop keeper and the tall blonde woman looked at him with incredulous looks on their faces.

“You know I’ve been eyeing that ferret for weeks. I have the money now, and I am ready to take him home with me.”

“Are you telling me you can’t wait just six more weeks until the next one comes in?” the store keeper asked, motioning toward the little girl with tears brimming in her eyes.

The man thought about the blonde woman’s job, her office, her fancy car. All he wanted was revenge on her. The truth was he could wait six more weeks, but not if it would make the woman happy. Just then he felt a tug at his coat. He looked down and saw the little girl gazing up at him with her big, brown eyes.

“Here you go, Mr. I guess I can wait for the next one,” the little girl tried to smile as a few tears slipped down her cheeks. She handed him the ferret.

“Anastasia, that is very nice of you. I promise I will buy you the next one the day it comes in,” her mother told her.

The man’s heart sank. That tiny little girl had a bigger heart than he did. He could not do it. As much as he wanted to get revenge on the woman’s riches, he could not break that little girl’s heart.

“That is very nice of you, sweetheart, but you can have her. I think she likes you better anyways,” the man replied.

Anastasia’s big, brown eyes lit up. Her smile grew.

“Really?”

“Yes, really.”

The mother smiled at the man.

“Thank you. You have a kind heart. I am sure you will be rewarded for your thoughtfulness.”

She paid the shopkeeper. Anastasia was grinning ear to ear as she walked out of the store with her mother and newly acquired friend. The shopkeeper told the man he would call him as soon as the next one came in. He thanked him and left.
The next day the man trudged into work as usual. He walked passed the woman’s office, and a small amount of his envy and anger returned. He squeezed into his cubicle and sat down at his cluttered desk. There was an envelope on his desk with just his name on it. He opened it. Inside was a handmade thank you card. It was from the little girl. He couldn’t help smiling. Just then, something else fell out of the envelope. It was a check with a post-it attached. The post it read: *I just wanted you to know how much this meant to us.* He lifted the post-it. The check was made out to him for the amount of five hundred dollars. He almost fell out of his chair. He jumped up and ran to the woman’s office.

“I can not accept…”

“Nonsense. You can and you will. You don’t know how much your kindness made my little girl’s day. She said that you could come play with her ferret anytime you’d like,” the woman told him.

“Thank you so much! You tell your golden-hearted daughter that she and her ferret can come over and play with my other ferrets anytime they want!”

Later that day, the man was on his way home from work, but something was different. He no longer felt unhappy and troubled. He felt happy for once—not just because of the five hundred dollars, but because of that little girl’s million dollar smile.

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**Dating Dilemmas**

*By Addy Elbl, Joshua Jones, Neha Patel, and Jaime Wilson*

Randy—29 year old male youth pastor/preacher, single, day-job as truck driver, short tempered
Dr. Ed Patel—wealthy doctor who has one child and is recently divorced
James Patel—11 year old son of Ed Patel
Valerie—24 year old attractive woman
Rachel—Valerie’s friend

**Scene 1:** Sunday morning during services at the Faith Tabernacle of United Pentecostal. Dr. Ed Patel is sitting way in the back. Dr. Ed finds the atmosphere boring as usual, so he is gazing around instead of paying attention to the sermon. All of a sudden, he notices a beautiful specimen sitting in the front pew.

Dr. Ed (turning to his son in the pew beside him and whispering): Who is that gorgeous lady in the yellow sundress?

James (whispering back): I can’t see her because of the huge red hair in front of me. Why does our Preacher’s grandmother Phyllis have so much hair?
Dr. Ed: She has beautiful brown hair....

Dr Ed is interrupted by the preacher ending the service and dismissing everyone for the afternoon. Just then, she stood up and turned to face Dr Ed and his son. Her beautiful brown eyes caught Dr. Ed’s stare and he gave her a quick smile. They then turned to leave for lunch at Ed’s mother’s house.

**Scene 2:** Monday morning, 8:00am. Dr. Ed Patel stopped at the nurse’s station for a cup of coffee and to review some charts when the beautiful specimen from Sunday suddenly appeared from a room off to his left.

Dr. Ed: Wow, there she is again. (He quickly glances at the room where she had come from, making a note of the room number. As she walks over to the nurse’s station, she notices him sitting there and smiles.)

Valerie: You look really familiar.....do we go to the same church?

Dr. Ed: Yes, I believe we do. I noticed you came out of Room 312, are you related to Mrs. Smith?

Valerie: Yes, that is my mother....how did you know? Are you her doctor?

Dr. Ed: Yes, I am. She has been here for the last few days and she is getting better.

Valerie: She was sick with a cold for several weeks and then it suddenly got worse to where she was having a hard time breathing. That’s when I brought her here and found out she had Pneumonia. I was too scared of losing another family member since my husband died last year.

Dr. Ed: I’m sorry for your loss....I can relate because I lost my wife several years ago and it has not always been easy for my son and I....hmmm....would you like a cup of coffee or something? There is some here at the nurses’ station or we could go to the cafeteria where I am going to meet with my son for lunch soon.

Valerie: That sounds great...I have been here all morning with my mother and this would be a nice break before I go to work.

**Scene 3:** Dr. Ed and Valerie enter the cafeteria, get coffee and sit down

Dr. Ed: You mentioned that you are on your way to work...what do you do?

Valerie: I have 2 jobs because I am having to pay so many medical bills from my husband’s sickness, and now I will have my mother’s bills on top of that. I work full-time as a waitress at Applebee’s and part-time as a cashier at Wal-mart.
Dr. Ed: Wow, that must be hard to do, hardly any spare time I’m sure. (they talk for a while enjoying each other’s company when Dr. Ed suddenly notices the time)

Dr. Ed: Well, it’s almost time for me to meet my son for lunch, but I had a good time talking with you. Would you be interested in talking some more and going out Friday night? I know you are busy, so if not, I understand.

Valarie: Umm……(thinking to herself that she has another date)… well that would be great

Dr. Ed: How about I cook you dinner on Friday night at my place?

Valarie: That sounds good. (She leaves)

Scene 4: Friday night. Randy, the preacher’s, home. A knock is heard and Randy opens the door.

Valarie: I’m so glad to see you. It has been a long day (enters the living room)

Randy: I made you dinner it is in the kitchen. Help yourself.

Valarie: Thanks

Randy: What’s wrong. How come you are not eating. Do you not like it.

Valarie: I have a lot on my mind – I am worried about my mom and all the bills from the hospital along with the bills from my previous husband.

Randy: I really wish I could help but I just don’t have that kind of money.

Valarie: Thanks for the offer, but it’s been a long a day and I am tired, so I think I am just going to go home and try to go to bed.

Randy: Alright then, I will talk to you later. (Valarie leaves) (Soon after Valarie leaves, Randy calls her house to make sure that she made it home ok, but no one answers. He gets a little worried and then starts to wonder where she went)

Scene 5: Dr. Ed Patel’s home

Dr. Ed: We’ll be right there

Valarie: You have a really nice place (as the butler takes her coat)

Dr. Ed: It can get a little lonely when my son isn’t home. Are you hungry?
Valerie: I am starved. I can’t wait to eat

Dr. Ed: Well, right this way to the dining room. I hope you like Chinese

Valerie: I love Chinese. (They have a nice, quiet dinner and a good conversation – although Valerie could not stop feeling guilty for leaving Randy.)

(Valerie leaves. James Patel enters)

Dr. Ed: Wow, Valerie was so sweet and we had such a good time together...hopefully we can get together again soon....I can’t wait for the two of you to meet. I do feel sorry for her though; I really want to help her out with her medical bills.

James: Slow down dad, you guys have only been on one date. I mean, that’s nice and all of you to think of, but you really don’t know her.

**Scene 6:** Valerie and Rachel are walking down the sidewalk towards her apartment.

Valerie: I’m not sure what I think of this guy, but he seems really nice.

Rachel: Well, at least you don’t have to worry about financial problems with him-I’ve heard he is rich.

Valerie: Yeah, it would be no problem for him to pay all my bills and not even miss the money. I probably should not be dating him right now, but there are possible benefits; hopefully Randy just doesn’t find out.

(Suddenly Dr. Ed’s son James rides up behind them on his bike, but Valerie doesn’t know who it is because she’s never actually seen him. He, however, recognizes her from church but says nothing and listens to the conversation.)

Valerie: Randy and I have been dating for a while now and he is the perfect person, but Dr. Ed has so much money that I might be better off with him.

(James appears shocked at what he hears and rides around them to his house)

**Scene 7:** Saturday, the morning after Valerie’s date with Dr. Ed. Randy is on the phone, still trying to get a hold of Valerie.

Valerie: Hello?

Randy: Hi, are you okay? I’ve been trying to reach you since last night after you left…I was wanting to make sure you got home ok, but you never answered.
Valerie: Oh I had some business that I forgot to take care of.

Randy: Really? What kind of business?

Valerie: Oh don’t worry about it...it was nothing important...just some bills and stuff, you know, stuff that has to be taken care of.

(Randy thought this was weird of Valerie to be so vague and started to get suspicious and then he remembered about her medical bills...He had been thinking a lot lately of how he could help her out....There was the Emergency disaster fund that the church had...the church had not needed it for years....)

Scene 8: In the hospital near a nurse’s station

Randy: (at nurse’s station) Excuse me, who do I go to make payments on someone’s bills.

Dr. Ed: (comes around the corner): Well, good morning Preacher, what brings you here?

Randy: One of the ladies in the church is having financial difficulty due to excessive bills and I am here to help pay them off as a gift from the church.

Dr. Ed: Really? I know someone at church with a similar problem...I just paid their bills off this morning...if you don’t mind me asking, who is it you are trying to help?

Randy: Her name is Valerie. Her husband was very ill a couple of years ago, and after he passed away, she has been struggling to pay the bills, and now she also has her mother who was recently admitted.

Dr. Ed: Really? Well, that is really nice of the church to do, but I have already taken care of her bills, so the church can use its money to help someone else.

Randy: Are you sure this is the same person? How do you know who I am talking about? I have seen you a couple of times at church but you always leave so soon...I didn’t know you knew anyone there.

Dr. Ed: Well, I know this is going to sound a little awkward, but I just met Valerie for the first time last week...she came over for dinner and was telling me about having to work so much because of her bills...I thought I would help her out...I know I don’t really know her, but she seems like such a nice person.

Randy: Wow, that is really kind of you....not many people would do that for someone else.
Dr. Ed: Well, I am not lacking financially, and she seems like she could really use it.

(Randy says goodbye and leaves the hospital, his mind going crazy, trying to figure out what he just heard... he wasn’t sure what to think of Valerie but he knew what he was going to do.)

**Scene 9:** Dr. Ed and his son are walking in town and pass by a restaurant where Dr. Ed notices Valerie sitting with Randy

Dr. Ed: Look James, there’s Valerie and the Randy from church....that’s funny...I thought I told Randy not to worry about...

James: Oh yeah, dad, I forgot to tell you that I heard Valerie say that she was dating Randy and that they have been for a while... She also mentioned something about getting to know you because she knew you had a lot of money....

(Dr. Ed stopped hearing what his son was saying as he watched Valerie and Randy eat dinner together. He knew that things had seemed too good to be true about Valerie when they had had such a good time on their date... Well, at least he had found out the truth about her soon. Meanwhile, in the restaurant....)

Randy: Well, I found out where you were the other night, and I just wanted to tell you that I’m glad that everything worked out for you.

Valerie: What are you talking about?

Randy: You know, your date with Dr. Ed from church. I’m glad you were able find someone who could take care of your financial problems.

Valerie: What do you mean, my financial problems? I haven’t gotten anything from him. And who said I was on a date with him? He is my mother’s doctor you know.

Randy: Well, I talked to him, and he said it was a date.... and he also told me that he paid for all your hospital bills when I went to find out how to pay for them.

Valerie: WHAT!!?? He paid all my bills? What do you mean... why were you asking how to pay for them.... you don’t have that kind of money! I’m confused.

Randy: I was going to use the emergency fund from the church to pay for your bills since the money has been sitting there for years. I ran into Dr. Ed at the hospital and explained what I was doing. He then told me that he had just paid the bills for a lady in the church. After talking a few minutes, we both realized we were talking about the same person. That’s when I realized where we stand and I am breaking up with you. I wish you could have just told me yourself and been honest, but I see I had to find out for myself... I hope you guys will be happy. Good bye.
(Randy gets up and leaves the restaurant with Valerie running after him)

Valerie: No, no, you don’t understand...

(Valerie stops suddenly as she notices Dr. Ed standing on the sidewalk. Randy turns around and looks at her, greets Dr. Ed, and they both walked down the street.)

The curtain closes.

You Said

You said it would last longer
Knowing you, I should've known
That this capade would not continue
    Past the day that I saw

You said you wouldn’t lie
But in that, your promise was broken!
    Saying you won’t lie is one itself
I should have known...That is you

You said so many things
I should have known would not be true
    My expectations were too high
I guess honesty is an artifact

You said it was your fault
The guilt you gave me churned my body
    So I said, it’s not all you
And for no reason I took some blame

You said we could be friends
I don’t think that will happen
    Good luck in the future, you’ll need it
If the only things you say are lies

Doug Laramie
Snow Day

Snowflakes come a-tumblin’ down,
Smudging sky and
Burying town.
Traffic starts a-movin’ slow.
Less of their faces the people show.
There’ll be no school today.

White layers o’er the street,
Stopping buses their kids to meet
Cutting into the snow their path,
Instead of doing English or Math.
Snowflakes come a-tumblin’ down,
Held by the children in high renown.

Wrapped up in jackets tight,
Pants and shirts times two,
Warding off the winter’s might
Each foot in sock filled shoe.

Each boy then pulled out his sled,
Down the nearest hill he sped.
An icy morsel hit each tongue,
Enjoying life while being young.
Snowflakes come a-tumblin’ down,
Dressing land in ghostly gown.

Inside they go because of the cold
Mothers making hot chocolate they’ll hold.
Removing frosted jacket and boot,
Soon close to the fire they’ll scoot.
Happy at their day well spent,
Thanks to the ice the heavens sent.

But soon the rolling soldiers appear
Ready to assault this white frontier.
With crystal swords the snow they slay
Stopping the children’s fun and play.
The snow won’t return ’til another morrow
Until then the children are filled with sorrow.

Jordan Lippmann
Tests

What is better than taking some tests?
And comparing the grades to see who did the best
Filling in circles is like a cool game
And when you win you gain a little fame.
To be smarter than your average bear
But then again who really does care?

Jeremy Hunt

Fear

*By Lann Choi*

Sara was awakened by a thud in the living room, adjacent to her bedroom. She felt the adrenaline run over her, and her hands became clammy. She took a glance at her clock, which told her it was 3:36 in the morning. “Who can it be? Or what can it be?” Sara thought frantically as she attempted to pace her thoughts. She needed to decide quickly on what actions she should take.

She quickly jumped out of her bed, trying her best to not make a ruffle. The blinds swayed back and forth and they could be heard as they hit the glass window. Her heartbeats probably could be heard through the walls. She frantically looked around her room to search for anything she could use to defend herself. She couldn’t find anything since it was still pitch black. Sara crept up to the door hoping to peek out with one eye to see who or what was in the apartment with her. The time from when she reached the door to the moment she peeked out her eye felt like a leap year. She opened her eye, and to her relief, did not see anyone intruding, looking through her stuff.

The window was open slightly, enough to feel the chilly winter night breeze trickle in. Sara then remembered she had opened the window the evening before to let cool air in; she had forgotten to close it before she went to bed. She tiptoed cautiously to the window to discover the culprit of her unpleasant awakening. She saw that her decorative Christmas lights had fallen to the cold, hardwood floor.

Sara concluded that the wind caused the blinds to sway and eventually the decorations fell. She let out a great sigh of relief and was glad that she had only let the best of her imagination play out in her head. Her heartbeat started to drum softer and her hands were less trembling. She closed the window, and without turning back, she went back into her room, plopped down on her bed, and was fast asleep within the blink of an eye.
The Study Break

By Keith Doehring

Stu was taking a break from studying Neuroscience and began to visualize his future with his soon to be wife Kate. It was a long road to find the right woman; Stu had won and lost many battles along the way. As he was ending his break, he felt a warm hand on his shoulder. As he turned to find the owner of the hand, Stu went into a state of shock. He could not believe this gorgeous woman was back. The woman was Stu’s former high school “sweetheart,” Rachel; the two had dated all four years of high school. They had not seen each other since the night their relationship ended. Rachel had cheated on Stu, and Stu immediately broke up with Rachel. She had called Stu every day for the next month trying to win Stu’s heart back. Stu tried to forget about his first love, but he was never successful.

In the restaurant, Rachel sat down and told Stu she wanted to get back to the way things were back in high school. Rachel declared her undying lover for Stu at that very moment. What was Stu left to say?

Before Stu could speak, Rachel made a request. “I have someone for you to meet,” she said. Rachel motioned to a young girl who was sitting with an older woman. Stu recognized the older woman as Rachel’s mom. The young girl was beautiful, with big puppy dog eyes and a little button nose. “Stu, I would like to introduce you to your daughter,” said Rachel. Stu’s jaw dropped to the floor. He quickly gathered his belongings and ran out of the café.

My Love

With all the love I have to give
And all the life I have to live
I pledge my life and more to you
Together is how we'll see it through

You're the first, the last, the only that's all
It's for you, my dear, I had to fall
Another year, a brand new start
It's my love to give, and I give you my heart.

Brandon Eldridge
Timeless Love

By Chris LaFleur

Herald wanted to go on a trip for his vacation but could not think of anywhere good that he had not already been. Last year he traveled for two months in Europe. No, not one country for a while and then another, he actually went to every city in every country throughout Europe. The year before that, he went to every Caribbean Island. See, every year for the past 19 years, he would take his 4 weeks of paid vacation all at once. He sometimes would have to take some sick days if he was having too good of a time and did not want to come back. Needless to say, he was in a bind. This was his twentieth big travel expedition, and he wanted to make it the most memorable. He thought of just trying to travel to every big city around the world, but that was not extravagant enough. Ah ha! He got it. Herald decided that he had seen everything that there was to see in 2005, and so he was going to travel to the past. That is right after he built a time machine, which was no problem for Herald, because he had already built one for the United States Government.

Every night after work, Herald worked on his time machine. At work, each free minute that he had was consumed with how he could improve and speed up the building of his time machine. One improvement was that he was going to give it was the ability to talk. While at work one Monday, he decided to give his time machine a name, KITT. While working on KITT he realized when he wanted to travel to. Herald was going to Ancient Egypt, the time before the plagues. So he continued to work with great fervor, and once KITT’s voice programming and artificial intelligence brain had been installed, he talked over the details of the trip with his time-traveling companion.

KITT wasn’t too thrilled with the choice of Egypt as a destination. He didn’t like the prospect of getting sand in every gear and cog and he was really concerned with the possible development of skin cancer from all of the sun exposure. Herald assured him that all would be fine on both levels. First, he had coated KITT in a protective silicone layer in order to prevent the intrusion of sand, and secondly, KITT was a time machine and didn’t have skin, so melanoma wasn’t a problem. Although still skeptical, KITT agreed to the travel plans.

The date of departure finally came, and Herald was very excited. He loaded his suitcases into KITT’s trunk, grabbed his hieroglyph to English dictionary, set the date and coordinates of travel, and they shot through the vortex of time with the push of a button. Now the vortex of time itself is a pretty cool looking place; the colors are vibrant, there are random historical objects floating around, and the whole place kind of smells like a new car. Herald was so caught up in the sights and sounds that he completely forgot to steer KITT, despite the machine’s constant reminding. Every time KITT said, “Herald, please grab my joystick,” Herald just thought KITT was making a pass at him, and he didn’t want to question the machine’s sexuality. Plus, Herald really didn’t swing that way.

So it wasn’t long until the inevitable happened and KITT collided hard into another vessel spiraling through time. He collided into Mr. Peabody [from the Bullwinkle show] and his pet boy Sherman in the Way Back machine. The collision sent Herald and KITT on a crash course straight to the period of the dinosaurs. After the
initial shock of the lack of pyramids and the presence of 200 foot tall creatures wore off, Herald began to explore his surroundings.

KITT warned Herald that they were in immediate danger since the landing site was in the middle of a common Tyrannosaurus hunting ground, but Herald disregarded KITT’s cautionary ways. This would be his best vacation yet. Yosemite National Park had nothing on the natural, seemingly untouched splendor and beauty of his new vacation home. KITT coaxed Herald into building some robotic arms out of some large pieces of oak lying about. Shortly after settling into his new vacation spot, a deafening, forest-rumbling roar echoed throughout the region.

KITT was right about landing in an unsafe area; by the low pitch of the roar, KITT knew this Tyrannosaurus was a hefty and hungry male. The footsteps of the T-Rex shook the ground beneath Herald’s feet, and KITT’s voice trembled as he yelped, “DANGER HERALD!” Herald knew what he had to do.

When the Tyrannosaurus approached them, Herald shouted loudly but in a kind tone, “Stop following me, please”

“But I’m friggin’ starving and my lips hurt real bad,” was the T-Rex’s reply. Quick on his feet, Herald reached into his pocket and pulled out a large stick of Chap-Stick for the dinosaur. “For me?” the dinosaur asked in puzzled manner.

“For you,” Herald replied. Herald popped the lid off and applied the Chap-Stick to the T-Rex.

“Gee, I feel wonderful now.” Little did the T-Rex know that Herald had found a way to deliver a miraculous drug transdermally.

This drug had not been invented at the time of the dinosaurs, but by today we call this magic drug, Cialis. Ten to twenty milligrams would do a grown man just fine. The 20-gram dose ingested by the T-Rex was going to make for some humorous nights and some cranky female T-Rex.

Alleviating the chapped lips of the T-Rex gained Herald and KITT immunity from certain death at the hand of the T-Rex for 48 hours as granted by the T-Rex himself. KITT alerted Herald that a hungry, horny T-Rex was not something they wanted on their tail, and urged him to take them forward in time to Egypt, the birth of Christ, or home! Herald agreed, and with a flash they were back into the vortex. Herald paid close attention to their destination this time. He once again saw Mr. Peabody and Sherman. This time he dodged them with excellent precision, but he was still awarded the middle finger of valor from the duo.

“Where to KITT?” said Herald.
“Back to the future, of course,” KITT replied.
Herald answered, “Indeed.”

They returned to 2005 to find that life as they knew it had changed dramatically. See, the reason that the T-Rex became extinct was because he could not “get it up,” and so he had a very difficult time reproducing. The Cialis that Herald administered to that T-Rex allowed him to reproduce with all of the female T-Rexes, and some of the female Triceratops, which made for a new super-species. This new species was called the Cialasaurus, and they became the controllers of the lands and would not let a little thing like the ice age to stop them from dominating the world. Now back to a much different 2005, Herald only knew of one thing that they could do.
He kicked started KITT and they were off. Back to the vortex of time and back to the past. KITT kept asking where they were going, and Herald just responded, “I’m taking back my country!”

They arrived at a very familiar land and time. It was where they had first crash landed, the original time of the dinosaurs. Herald knew what had to be done. They searched until he found his past self settled in at a familiar spot. Herald stood there for a moment in amazement; he could not believe what he was about to do. He snuck around and when the time was right, sprung out and stabbed his past self right in the heart. He was thinking that if he did this, then it would prevent the creation of the Cialasaurusstops. This was true; however, while Herald was sneaking around, KITT found true love. The original KITT and the “in the past” KITT caught each others photoreceptors, and it was love at first sight. They decided that neither of the Heralds deserved them. Therefore, they determined that they would leave and return to the time vortex together, to travel to any time or place, taking turns grabbing each other’s joysticks.

From Water to Land

Ocean blue, that’s what I am
to the outside world.
Calm and cool,
lively and strong.
Unexpected in every way,
adding enjoyment to a sunny day.
But inside, where none can see
is a deep brown earth,
warm and comforting,
blending in with nature,
so as not to be seen.
This is me,
both colors together.
Filling the world with me!

Lakita Johnson
Fall

Who set the trees on fire?
They appear bright red with desire
Red-hot embers fall to the ground,
And hit without even a sound.
Leaves go from lush green to red,
And the trees begin to look dead.
Dark skeletons now looming,
Where beautiful trees used to be blooming.
In the evenings a cold chill
Blows quietly over the old hill.
Pumpkins begin appearing on porches.
And backyards are lit by torches.
Birds begin to fly in formation
To their southern location.
Children jump in piles of leaves,
And wipe their runny noses on their sleeves.
Corn is harvested, fields are plowed,
The mice came inside while barn cats meowed
Fall, such an uncelebrated season
But it’s my favorite for so many reasons.

Amanda Painter

Cinnabon and Slot Machines: A Second-hand Account on First-hand Events

By Joe DeMattei

Vegas looks like a minefield of light as you fly in. Seeing the neon lights of the Vegas Strip from the sky makes them look smaller than your fingernail. Instead of making you feel big, it really forces you to realize how small and insignificant you are. These signs that would dwarf you in person are smaller than your cuticle. Then it hits you that even as your plane approaches landing, you can’t see any people. It makes you aware, for quite possible the first time, that when you’re on land, you’re invisible from the sky. Invisible.... non-existent to anyone up there....

You land, get your carryon baggage from the overhead compartment, and walk off into the airport where you’re laid over. As soon as you walk off the plane, you see the 25-cent slot machines. This is a most glorious sight, since you only recently discovered your lay over was in Vegas, and you had no idea there would be slots in the airport. Much to your dismay, the 25-cent slot machines don’t take change; they only take bills. Bills and charge cards- the slot machines actually take credit. You don’t even have to walk to the ATM to build up your debt anymore. You can just swipe your credit
card on the machine, and you’re good to gamble your worries and your paycheck away without ever looking back or ever leaving the terminal. You recall learning in school, in your elective class, that a recent year—exactly which year you can’t recall—was the first year in history that Americans spent more than they made. It makes you wonder if the convenience of credit plays a hand in this— the denial that debt can afford you, the ability to put off finding a way to pay until another day.

You lose your last $2 to the slot machines and then become irate because you discover that you have ample change, but none of the slot machines takes change. It would go to reason that if 25 cents is one credit, it would be possible to put in a quarter and play only one credit; apparently Vegas wasn’t built on reason. You then decide to get some pizza and a Cinnabon cinnamon roll on your credit card. While at the register, you exchange 4 quarters for a dollar bill. Then you amble about some more, looking for the right slot machine, and discover the magic of the nickel slots; a dollar can last forever in one of those.

After you’ve spent your last dollar on the nickel slots, you find a spot on the floor by your gate so you can eat your pizza— the Cinnabon can wait until you take off.

As you leave Las Vegas and the plane is climbing, you see the bright lights start to fade away. At cruising altitude, whole cities are smaller than the tip of your thumb. It then hits you; you’re quite possible more invisible than the people on the ground, because ground is the human’s natural habitat, and to those in our natural environment, you are the one who’s invisible. They probably can’t even see the airplane you’re in- the huge plane that holds dozens & dozens of people and is hundreds of times larger than you are. If a plane that’s hundreds of times larger than you is invisible and you are in that plane, does that make you less than invisible?

In this flying freak-show of sorts, this un-natural state of flight that you’re in, you’re not even visible to all the people sharing your strange journey. To those that can see you, you’re not a person—you’re an object. You’re not an actual person with a past, with thoughts and emotions, with loves and fears, with passions and hobbies, with reflections and memories; you’re just the object in the window seat near that back who doesn’t want any peanuts, who does want a drink.

All of this brings you to another epiphany; even to the people that can see you right now, you’re invisible. Without anyone you know on board or any way of communicating with friends, and no one onboard willing to carry on conversation, you’re just a stranger in a strange land. Waiting for the time when you’ll land... and become visible to someone again.
I Am Incomplete Without You

Lonely without your arms around me
Obstacles have no hold on my love for you
Valuable moments shared only between us
Evolve into hours, days, and months I will always cherish

You make each day new and special
Once you came into my life I finally understood the meaning of
Unconditional love and support

Just to know you are next to me, and to feel your heart beat with mine
Making me feel things I never knew I could feel about anyone
Every night I dream of seeing you, and every day my dream comes true.

Loretta Holmes

The Path You Choose

The path you choose
Says a lot about you
It will show your personality
And your sense of style
Like any path there will be forks in the road
And at times they will be blocked
You will have to choose whether to take another route
Or to struggle through
And continue on the path you chose.

Crystal Nihoris

Still a kid

Swinging crazy with a bat
Wearing a cool party hat
Children laughing making fun of you
If only I wasn’t twenty-two
Parents think I’m weird and crazy
Looking like a yellow daisy
I pity the fools who don’t like candy
Even though I’m old enough to buy my own brandy.

Jeremy Hunt
Coffee Run

By Addy Elbl

The other day, I stopped to get a cup of coffee during one of the delivery runs I was making that day for work. Unlike every other day that I stopped, today I was going to have to fight for my coffee. I had no idea what was in store for me as I pulled into the parking lot of a small strip mall where my favorite Starbucks was located.

I parked my truck on one side of the strip mall. I had a lot on my mind that day, so I was not very keen on my surroundings. All of a sudden, I was rudely interrupted out of my thoughts by a loud, hissing noise. I quickly looked up. A few feet in front of me was an oversized Canadian goose!!! It had its wings spanned out on either side of it and was snapping its neck back and forth, sort of lunging at me, all the while hissing nonstop. As it came towards me on the sidewalk, I was not sure what to do. I mean, what the heck was a goose doing in the middle of St. Louis area on this sidewalk next to a strip mall? And why was it MAD at me??? I had not done anything except mind my own business. I was still so confused by the mere presence of this goose at the strip mall parking lot that my reflexes were not anything to be proud of. In fact, it was rather embarrassing. I nervously tried to move backward and began to stumble because I was too busy watching the goose to see where I was going. As the goose got closer and snapped at me, I noticed that the concrete wall next to me had a short fence on top of it that was about shoulder height. I reached up and grabbed a hold of the fence, trying to steady myself. The moment I did so, the hissing suddenly got extremely loud. That’s when I looked up and noticed that there was a second goose right next to me on this concrete wall!! What was this? National Goose Attack Day and I had neglected to read the memo or something?? This goose was even meaner, lunging out at me so fast that I barely got my arm out of the way and almost got my face snapped off. I even ripped my arm on the fence in the process! I finally managed to get away from the sidewalk, but the goose on the ground was so upset with me by this time that it followed me out in the parking lot and refused to let me get to my coffee shop until I had made a complete circle around the parking lot!!

After I finally got my coffee and recovered from the initial shock of the goose encounter, I managed to get back to my truck without the geese attacking me. However, I noticed that one of them was still looking for me in the parking lot; so I took off after it in my truck, hoping to run it over. Of course I was not that lucky. Upon leaving the parking lot, I resolved that no cup of coffee was ever worth that experience and that I would probably not return here for a LONG time—next time I was going to make sure that the geese had flown south for the winter.
Through My Eyes

Here I am, trapped in this skin.
All you can see are wrinkles and lines.
I once rode bareback, galloping through the meadows
   My vibrant red hair streaming,
Hands grasping, holding on for dear life,
   But all you can see is this shell.
I once dove into an irrigation ditch
Deep waters swirling all around me
Swimming, struggling to stay afloat
   To save a child’s life,
But all you can see is this shell.
I once loved a man with great passion and devotion
   And in love, bore him two sons.
Then he was taken from me leaving me shattered,
   But all you can see is this shell.
I once married a wealthy man, to care for my sons,
Who beat me, despised me, and treated me unjustly
   Yet was blessed by two more children,
   But all you can see is this shell.
I once lost a son who was only a child.
My youngest, who would never
Get a chance to really live, to laugh, to love,
   But all you can see is this shell.
I once lived a life full of passions, tears, and joys,
A life outside of these walls and the confines of this bed.
If you would look deep inside at my soul
To really know me, you would understand,
   But all you can see is this shell.

Kelsey Jackson

Haikupeutics, pt. 1 & 2

I am crazy
Run naked in a fountain
E C T for me

My acetone breath
It’s ketoacidosis
Damn it, pancreas

Brian LaPlant & Matt Clifton
Sestina

By Joshua Jones

In the morning I check the cows
And feed our horse.
I also gather the eggs from the chicken.
Usually the dog
Chases the cat
Around the yard and around the truck.

I use the truck
To chase the cows
I watch the cat
Walk around the horse
And the dog
Begins to eye the chicken

The eggs that my chicken
Lays are great, but the truck
Can’t wait for breakfast, because the dog
Needs a trip to the vet. The cows
Need fed and the horse
Almost stepped on the cat.

So I rescued the cat
And put it beside the chicken
So the horse
Wouldn’t step on it. Now I take the truck
To feed the cows
And go to the vet with the dog.

The vet says the dog
Is fine and I should bring in the cat
I’m done feeding the cows
And the chicken
Is safe on the truck
From the horse

This afternoon I will ride the horse
And bring the dog
Along to run. The truck
And the cat
Will stay with the chickens
And the cows.

This is my day, riding in the truck and on the horse,
Feeding the cows and the chickens,
And the watching the dog chase the cat.

The Garden

Someone once told me love is a garden.

If you water it, it will grow.

If you tend to it and care for it, it will be fruitful.

We are still seeds, but we are destined to blossom.

I long to see what we will be.

Tom Mengwasser
Mickey’s Gone Mad

By Derek Palisch

Disneyland sucks! I’m so tired of walking around being constantly harassed by kids. Sure, it was fun the first few decades, but I can’t take it anymore. The worst thing about this damn place is that I have to wear a smile no matter how I feel. For example, just the other day I was taking a walk, trying to get away from everything when one of my deranged fan club members blind-sided me with a big bear hug. I flipped over a fence and landed head over heels. The injuries included a broken rib, a punctured lung (which later collapsed), and a badly beaten and bloody arm. Mr. Disney had to do one heck of a touch up job to straighten me out. As I was carted down Main Street, I felt obligated to lift my head, smile, and say, “Don’t forget to ride Space Mountain.” I couldn’t think of anything better to say to the attacker. “Thanks a lot you little shit!” would have fit better. I’ve clearly lost my mind.

Other than the kids, all of the furry animals and other cartoon characters are stealing my thunder and I’m fed up with it. I think Goofy is more depressed than I am. That’s it, tomorrow I plot my escape.

The Wrong Goal

By Brent Kassel

As I entered the gym, I heard the squeak of shoes on the gym floor and the smell of buttered popcorn filled the air. The gym was packed to the rafters with people because this was a very important game; the winner would be crowned regular season league champions. The game had already started, so I found myself a seat and spotted little Billy out on the floor. The game was close. The home team had just scored a basket and our team in-bounded the ball to Billy. He seemed to be confused when he caught the ball. He looked around; no one from either team was even close to him. Then, he looked up at the basket.

“Oh No!” I thought to myself, “He’s going to shoot it.”

He turned to the basket and executed a perfect drop step move and put the ball in the basket. Swish. It was the same move I had practiced with Billy probably a hundred times in our driveway. What he thought was a big score was actually points for the other team. Everyone in the crowd laughed and the coach even laughed a little too. Again, he looked confused, but his teammate soon told what he had done. I saw Billy look to the bench and his coach. Coach just clapped his hands and said, “It’s alright.” I could tell by the look on Billy’s face that he was extremely embarrassed.

The rest of the game, every time Billy got the ball, he passed to someone else on the team. I think he was too embarrassed to even take another shot.
Costa Rica

Clean air to breathe like the silence before the storm
Large swarming insects here are the norm
Lush green foliage everywhere you look
Taking it all in like pictures from a book
Water Falling from way above
Churns and froths, white like a dove
Leaning over the cliff to see down below
Fathomless pits formed by water from melted snow
Hummingbirds, bees, and tourists abound
All feeling small by the scenic surround
People disappear under the giant falls
From way over here they appear tall as dolls
The water column is massive stretching over a mile
Cars must transverse the gorge in single file
The road is only wide enough for one
Making the traffic not at all fun
Leaving here put a frown on my face
But in 15 months I’ll be back at this place.

Steven Mattli

Don't Drink From the Bottle

By Lakita Johnson

It had been one of the hottest days of the summer. The sun was going down, so it started to cool off a little. Everyday, the boys in the neighborhood would gather at 3490 Grand National to play basketball. On this particular day, they were playing a string of games to see who the best team was. After the shirts won their fourth game in a row, one of the guys, Mario, went into the house. No one noticed that he left. Minutes later, Mario walked back outside and sat down on the bench. Little Marcus ran up to his brother and told him that he saw Mario drink out of the orange juice bottle straight from the refrigerator. Well, Jeff was timid and shy, and he didn't like confrontations. Jeff decided to let it go until later.

A couple of days later, the boys were resting at Jeff's house after bike riding the Cowabunga hills. Once again, Mario was thirsty. He went inside and drank from the apple juice bottle. This time, Jeff witnessed the incident himself. He stormed into the house and knocked the juice out of Mario's hands. Mario tried to get away, but Jeff grabbed him and punched him over and over again. Darrell, the oldest brother, ran into the house to break up the fight. When it was all over, Darrell turned to Jeff and said, "I didn't know you had it in ya!"
Karma

By Cortney Stroudman

Life had been going so well; I finally graduated high school and was able to get away from all of that drama, and had forced myself to forget all of the mistakes that I made. I somehow managed to make it through my entire freshman year at Drury University without any major qualms. I have always had a problem having girlfriends, I am not sure why. I will get a friend that I think that I can talk to and trust, and then for some reason, they always stop talking to me. I am sure that I am doing something wrong, but I have no idea what it is. I guess in high school, I did try to manipulate my friends and used them to get to boys, but I think that they did the same thing to me. Anyway, back to college life; I did make it through my entire freshman year with all the friends I started with. I didn’t do anything to turn any of them off of being friends with me, but as soon as I started my junior year, everything went down the drain. I haven’t really had the best luck with relationships in the past, and it was my fault that every one of them has failed. So, it completely destroyed me when a guy broke up with me when I had no idea that anything was even wrong.

Chad and I had started talking around March of my freshman year, and even spent a couple weeks together over the summer. Right before school started up again in August for my sophomore year, Chad and I decided that we wanted to be more than just friends, and we made the classic mistake, we absorbed all of each others’ time and started to ignore our friends. That is when I started to lose my girlfriends yet again, but I didn’t really care. Things couldn’t have been any better as far as I was concerned; I had Chad. He was a junior, on the basketball team, president of his frat, and very popular. I was even thinking about marrying this guy, so you can imagine how devastated I was when he came over one Sunday morning and broke up with me. It was totally out of the blue and the only explanation that he had for me was that I just wasn’t right for him anymore. I watched him drive away for the last time, and I knew then that I had nobody to turn to. I had already burned all of my bridges; I had no friends left to turn to. After a week of sobbing and not leaving the house, I started to wonder what it was that made Chad leave me. I asked him if he would meet me at the coffee shop just so we could talk things out. It took a lot of convincing but eventually he agreed. I thought that after a year together I at least deserved a little explanation.

We did the normal song and dance with all of the awkward small talk until I worked up the courage to just ask him why he left me. He used the line that all men use, “It wasn’t you, it was me.” I told him that I didn’t care what it was that happened; all I cared about was knowing the truth. Chad continued to beat around the bush and it became very obvious that he was not going to offer any information on his own; I was going to have to drag it out of him. That is when I asked him the thing that I thought would never be true; I asked him if he had been cheating on me. When he said yes, it felt like someone had just ripped my heart out of my chest and threw it on the ground. I didn’t even give him a chance to apologize; I just got up and left.

It was when I was driving back to my apartment that I realized why this hit me as hard as it did. I was realizing for the first time just how much I must have hurt my last two boyfriends. I cheated on them both. The first one was the first boy that had actually
treated me the way a girl should be treated, and all I did was cheat on him and hurt him. The second was the guy that I cheated on the first one with. I was actually satisfied with him for a while, but as soon as I got to college, other guys started paying attention to me and I couldn’t stand it, so I cheated on him too. Eventually I just broke up with both of those guys, and that is when I found Chad. I was faithful to him and had no plan on cheating, and I didn’t. But I guess he didn’t feel the same about me.

Now I just wish I could go back in time and tell all the people that I hurt that I am truly sorry and ask for forgiveness. I can’t do that though, because they have already moved on with their lives and are in happy relationships themselves; I am the last person they want to hear from. All I can do I sit here broken hearted and alone getting the punishment that I deserve.

*The Hunt*

I love to hunt,
Nothing can beat the sport.
Some think it is a stupid stunt,
The thrill sitting atop my treetop fort.

The forest is alive,
The trees wave in the cool breeze.
Battles between creatures to survive,
Everything from the buck to the smallest fleas.

Nothing is as great as the wait,
One can see an entire new world.
An experience not to be left at the gate,
It is like a chocolate shake that is swirled.

Some would say the kill is wrong,
Some need this food to keep afloat.
I say the kill is what makes one strong,
To be able to support another and then to gloat.

A hunt can’t be dismissed,
Next year will always evoke the past.
This year brings the big one that was missed,
The hunt will always be my first and last.

Clay Pingel
No Tresspassin’

By Alex Bryant, Steve Gorsch, Anna Gurevich, & McKenna Mezera

A man that lives down the road from my family pulled a rifle on me and my friend for fishing on a country pond that did not truly have an owner. We should have known better since it was Sunday, and we had been warned by our parents to never go fishing at that pond on Sunday. However, we were headstrong ten year old boys and it was a beautiful clear summer day. We tramped through the field and climbed the barbed wire fence into the woods where the pond was surrounded with large pine trees and the largest thorn trees you can imagine. We walked right past the homemade NO TRESPASSING sign and on to the pond, but not before we did some quick recon to look for the temperamental fellow that lived down the road.

We cast our line a few times into the pond and were starting to get comfortable when we heard a twig snap behind us; when we turned around, there stood a large man with a wide brimmed hat and yellow paned sunglasses staring at us with a blank look on his face and a large rifle in his hands. We were frozen in fear and were waiting to see what his next move would be. Then he said, “Can’t ya’ boys read the damn sign? What part of No Tresspassin’ do ya’ll not understand!!??” At which point we mumbled something to the effect of sorry and took off running like antelope through the woods for our lives.

We dashed home to tell everyone about what had happened, but no one wanted to believe us. Even the local sheriff thought we were full of crap. On the way home, we were filled with curiosity and at the same time were quite perplexed. Everyone thought that old man Smithers was a very nice fellow, and they were quite upset with us because they thought we were lying.

The evening came, and we gathered at the club house for a meeting. The whole crew was there. Since we had school in the morning, most kids had to be home, but Doug and I had already snuck out for the night. Filled with energy and itching for trouble, Doug said we should go back tonight. “No one is going to tell me I can’t fish!” I looked at him and with doubt agreed to go back. Walking through the woods, we could hear an owl hoot and crickets chirping as if they were in harmony. The occasional snap of a broken twig made us walk just a little bit faster. Finally, though, open field; through a few trees you could see the reflection of the moonlight on the pond. A brisk walk turned into a trot when Doug yelled, “There it is.”

We approached the pond only to see a dog barking and a man standing there with a hatchet. The moonlight glistened on the hatchet blade as if it was lit up itself. My pulse began to race and my mind went blank. “I thought I told you boys No Trespassing!” he said. The dog continued to bark, spitting saliva in the moonlight. In one split second I took off and Doug followed. We ran and ran until we could not run anymore. Where we were, we didn’t care as long as we were far away.

We stopped to catch our breath only to see the silhouette of a house on the hilltop. “Let’s go check it out,” said Doug. I quickly followed Doug into the old house and shut the door behind us. It was pitch black in the house. I stayed quite, but I could hear my heart racing. Doug managed to bring a flashlight on our trip. He turned it on and pointed the light at me. I felt a chill as I stared around the house. There were cobwebs
everywhere, and the house was filled with old broken furniture. “Come on,” said Doug, walking forward. I was scared, but I didn’t want Doug to know, so I slowly followed behind him. Doug suddenly stopped.

“What? What do you see?” I whimpered.

Doug didn’t move an inch; he raised his head up and pointed to the ceiling. There was writing all over the ceiling in blood. “It’s probably paint,” said Doug unsurely. We both looked up at the ceiling trying to figure out what was written.

“That’s not English,” I said to Doug. We both decided to call it a night and to come back to this house tomorrow. We turned around to exit the house when the door slammed in front of us. The noise startled Doug, who dropped the flashlight, which for some reason quit working after it rolled across the floor away from us. The room became pitch black; then out of the corner of my eye, I saw a light coming from underneath a door to another room. I stood there transfixed by the light until I felt something dripping onto my head. I put my hand in my hair to determine what had just hit me. I couldn’t quite see anything because it was still so dark. Then I realized liquid had been poured over me. Doug and I looked at each other and saw that we were each covered in blood. We screamed like girls and ran towards the door to the outside, but it was locked and would not budge. The light from the inside door became blinding as the building began to rumble. We grabbed a hold of the nearest object and threw it through the window. It was partly boarded up, and we ripped the boards right off the sill. We threw ourselves out from this haunted place and ran as fast as we could. The only sound I heard was the pounding of my heart.

We suddenly found ourselves on the gravel road that we originally took to get to the pond. The moonlight illuminated the road. We heard a rustling to the right, and out jumped old man Smithers with his blood hound and a shot gun. “I told you to stay off my land.” We screamed again and burst into a crazy run. It sounded like the hound at my heels was just waiting to rip my throat out. We got to the main road, and Mr. Smithers and the dog vanished. We looked at each other and realized we were only covered in sweat and not blood.

Perplexed by the night, we ran home and told no one of our adventure. They would surely think that we were crazy. Needless to say, Doug and I never attempted to go fishing at that pond again. Strangely enough, we never saw old man Smithers again, and no one else ever reported having any trouble with him. We had no desire to learn the truth, because honestly, we were both terrified, but declined to say it out loud to the other.

99-cent Tacos

A growling of a stomach
The Blues scored 6 goals
7 quarters
5 nickels
12 pennies
Trade the cashier
One small sack of tacos

Steve Grosch
The Mysterious Stranger

By Alisa Zevlever

In fairy tales I remember the villains all sharing similar characteristics: dark clothes, a hat, gloves, an evil smile, and crooked teeth. My villain was a slender built man in mid-thirties. He had dark hair and he wore big glasses to cover up his eyes completely. I must have been about five at the time, and just recently having fought with my best friends, I was looking for a conversational companion. Talking to him, this stranger that came out of nowhere, was going to be a decision that would affect my entire life. At that age I knew that talking to strangers was forbidden by my parents, but he did not have the usual appearance of a cartoon.

He had a pleasant appearance and his tone of voice was soothing, as he would talk slowly, stretching his syllables to get his ideas through clearly. To me, he was the doctor as he had introduced himself. He said he wanted to give me a check up to make sure I wasn’t sick; it was the basic procedure a doctor would do, press on certain nerves in your hands and legs, move around your joints and ask if there was any pain. Outside, the sun was bright as ever with the light breeze of the wind spreading its rays between the soft branches of the trees. I wish that I would have never wandered off into that cold, damp basement; I will never forget the hole in the door leading to the “other world”—the outside, the door which was the only thing standing between me and escape. There was an electrically charged box, the electricity control of the building, its metal surface covered in layers of fuzzy dust. I was always scared of standing next to it, because my parents told me that I could get electrocuted, but this time I felt different. I was not scared; he had a calming effect on my nervous system, and I do not remember much of what happened; I do remember that it was something that made me feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. He never got a chance to get too far because my grandmother came looking for me and calling out my name, which gave him the green light to run. If not for a sudden curiosity demonstrated by my grandmother that day, who knows how long I might have been standing in the cold darkness of the building’s basement, where I was trapped with what I later found out was a local child molester. The door was shut tightly, I looked at it so I wouldn’t have to look into his sunglasses and feel his deep stare back into my grass-green eyes. I felt that by thinking about being outside I could take my mind out of this uncomfortable situation; so I looked into that hole and tried to inhale the small amount of air that penetrated the basement through that opening. No permanent damage was done, and I still had most of my clothes on me. I stood there and did not know what to say or think. I knew one thing; my mother was to never find out about this unfortunate incident which was entirely my fault—I should have never talked to a stranger.

She looked at me pale and caught by complete surprise. It had been years and years, and finally I decided to confront my mother about that day. “Mom!! Did you ever know?” I quieted down as I realized I couldn’t pronounce any more.

Fortunately, she knew what was on my mind and she puckered her lips tightly together. And then she finally spoke, “I did not know that you knew what we were talking about when we mentioned our neighbor’s daughter being attacked in the elevator. I never meant to put this idea in your head that it happened to you. Don’t you think we
would have gotten you to a doctor? You must forget, because the truth is nothing happened, he did not have the time. I talked to your grandmother and she said it was a matter of seconds. Who would have the time?” As she recalled, absolutely nothing could have happened because my grandmother explained that within seconds that she saw me walk into the building with the stranger, she ran out on the doorstep and called me inside. She said most of the events stuck in my memory from that day, were a result of my imagination taking over, because I heard many stories circulating in my house about such accidents happening to other children my mother knew. I haven’t thought about the incident since confronting my mother. It is useless to analyze the subject. I may never know the truth, because no matter what my mother tells me it is always going to be about whom I trust more, my mother or my memory---she wasn’t there, I was.

**Friends**

What would I do without my friends?
They stay by my side through thick and through thin.
They’ll always be there when I need them the most.
They’ll even listen to a brag and a boast.

I’ve often wondered why God makes times so hard.
But then I realize it’s to let us know who our true friends are
True friends never leave when them you may need.
Good friends will take your hand, and away they will lead.

I am blessed in my life to have friends that do anything for me.
I am blessed in my life that I am able to see,
Just how very special my friends are to me!

Danielle Adams

**Haikupeutics pts. 3 & 4**

threw up blood today
bleeding through my varices
rubber band it now

I am very sad
Sleeping and Crying all day
S S R I please!!!!

Brian LaPlant & Matt Clifton
Can You Hear Me Now?

By Anica Bailey

I hear the doorbell-like “ding” of the drive-thru announce the arrival of a customer. The technician is ringing up Mrs. Gritzmacher’s prescription along with her basket full of groceries, with which she has a coupon for each item. It’s just passed ten and the next technician isn’t scheduled until noon, so as the pharmacist, drive-thru has just become my responsibility. As I finish verifying my third inhaler of the day and staple the bag shut, the customer in lane one impatiently presses the buzzer. After fourteen years of retail pharmacy, I have learned that the simple ability of literacy in mankind is rather limited. Rarely does one take notice of the sign located just above the buzzer which reads, “Pressing the buzzer is unnecessary; a technician will be with you shortly.” The company should consider revising it to say, “Patience is a virtue,” or even more directly, “HOLD YOUR HORSES!!”

As I stroll over to drive-thru with contempt for our visitor, the technician catches my eye as she sweeps her long auburn hair off her shoulder preparing to ring up two dozen candy bars for Mrs. Gritzmacher’s sweet tooth. Approaching the window, our unknown visitor finally reveals himself as a bald man sporting a Rams football jersey with what appears to be his wife glaring at my technician from the passenger side. I recall the fact that the microphone has been giving my technician trouble throughout the day, so it is no surprise that upon greeting our guest I am unable to hear his request and he my greeting. I mouth the words, “Just a second,” to the driver and begin to fidget with the microphone. Moving it upwards and downwards, I try to readjust the device. I tilt the base this way and that, increase the volume, but still I go unheard to my visitor. I try the telephone as a last ditch effort, but oddly enough, even that seems to be broken. A quick glance at the customer shows his increasing impatience and subtle frustration with me, but what does he expect, I’m a pharmacist not an electrician. At this point it has become a WWF Smackdown between me and the microphone, and I am undoubtedly losing. As I wrestle with the microphone, pulling and jerking, even mumbling a few obscene phrases under my breath, I plead for my technician’s assistance with the infuriating device.

The technician races over to examine the problem and with one glance at the base of the microphone, she seems to have detected the malfunction. The young girl skillfully reaches over and simply presses the “on” button. With a smirk on her face, she comments, “Maybe that’ll help,” and then walks back to the filling station. One look at the customer shows that he and his wife have both abandoned their impatient frustration for the amusement of my mishap and begin to laugh at my incompetence. Filled with humiliation and disdain for the microphone, I lean in and say, “How can I help you?”
~Mothers are Forever~

Mothers are supposed to last forever
This is how it works you know- Didn’t anyone ever tell you?
Forever-through each day and all of life’s endeavors
To hold my hand, be by my side, and to see me through.

My mother is a wonder-a treasure I hold dear
She is a special part of me that is always true
Losing her and going on is something that I fear.

It saddens my mind and tugs at my heart
To think of just one day without her that I may have to start.

I know she cannot live for always
Although that is fully in my plan.
But one day in the far, far future
She will hold God’s offering hand.

That is something I dread-selfish as it may be
Because God just doesn’t need her nearly as bad as me.

What about me, God? All the things I have yet to do
She must see graduation and certainly my wedding day
And what about all of the dreams I still have left to pursue
She has to see me graduate-a PharmD I will have to show
Feeling all the pride and joy only a mom can know

Her grandchildren have to know her-all that she is and more
Not just through pictures but by themselves that’s for sure
She makes the best gravy-to that anyone will attest
And how Mom gets so silly-boy is she a mess
She always has a good thing to say
Come rain or shiny day

By sharing one bear hug, Mom can light up the darkest day
Then you know it’s all ok-because my mother loves in an extraordinary way

So for these reasons and countless other ones
(Which are simply too many to name)
God, you may not have her yet
For it just wouldn’t be the same

So I will make a deal with you
One I promise to work hard at
If you let me have her for just 50 more years
I will let you have her for eternity after that.

Loretta Holmes
Screwed

By Jayme Wilson

Ethyl and Helen were two seventy-five year old women that had hung out together ever since their husbands had died a few years ago. They attended flea markets, auctions, and always did everything together. They really enjoyed one another’s company, but they both felt they needed more. So, they decided that a new car was really what they needed. They grabbed the local paper and clipped out all of the ads. They talked to some of their other friends to get some ideas, but nothing really sparked their interest.

The next day the old ladies were seen just sitting in the parking lot of Fast Eddie Motors. As the car salesman looked out the window, he noticed that the old ladies were just sitting in the car. They really weren’t looking at anything in particular, but just gazing around. It really didn’t matter because this could be the huge sale of the day. He walked out and tapped on their window. “Can I help you?” he asked.

Then, they both started smiling and said, “Yes, sir, you can.”

“Well, ok, How would you ladies like to test drive this new Lincoln Town Car?” he asked. Ethyl just nodded her head no and explained to him that they really had not come there today to buy a car.

“What did you come for, then?” he asked.

“Well…” she said in a cheerful voice, “We came because one of our friends told us that if we go to Fast Eddie Motors, then we are sure to get screwed. So, we have just been sitting here waiting!”

The Meaning of Life...

The meaning of life, does anyone know?
Perhaps some have theories, but are they true?
In a number of lives, it may not show.
It very well could differ for me and for you.
Could the people we live with impact us?
The friends that we have are numbered by few.
Simple as eating, our bodies to nourish?
Or climbing a mountain, just for the view.

Although these questions might not be answered,
One may realize true meaning with much strife.
I will tell you, this subject must be tampered,
For someone to actually understand life.
To reason is wonder, to wonder is thought,
The real meaning of life, by all, is sought.

Lindsay Marlo
When Charlotte Chose Anna

By Kaitlin McCosh

My existence began in a factory. There, each of my parts were made and assembled in an orderly fashion. My eyes and mouth were painted on, and my arms, legs, and head were inserted into my body. I moved down conveyor belts to stations where my long shiny brown hair was inserted, and I was dressed in a pink frilly dress and shiny Mary Jane shoes. Then came the vital moment of my inspection, where I would either be deemed worthy of a child’s love or would be tossed aside, used as spare parts for another, better doll. After what felt like twenty excruciating minutes, but what really was only about twenty seconds, I was approved and sent on to be put in a box labeled “Darling Dolly” and shipped to a place called Tinkering Toys.

When I finally reached the store, I was placed on a shelf with other dolls in similar boxes, none of which looked exactly like me, either with a different dress or hair or eyes. All of which were equally adorable. I sat on that shelf for what seemed like forever, before a little girl with curly brown hair and freckles set her big blue eyes on me and shouted out “That one, Mommy! Please, let me have that one!”

My heart jumped and I prayed that Mommy said yes. The truth was, I wanted the little girl, also. I just knew that she would love me and that I could make her happy. We would go everywhere together. Then, when she would start school, she would take me to show-and-tell, and introduce me as her favorite doll. It would be heaven.

“Alright,” the girl’s mother said, taking me off the shelf and placing me in the little girl’s arms.

Within minutes I was purchased and we were getting into the blue minivan. The little girl quickly removed me from my box and began hugging me and stroking my hair.

“Charlotte, what do you plan on naming your new doll?” asked Mommy.

“Anna,” responded the little girl. My name was Anna.

Delightful

Smooth, dark chocolate.
Invigorating.
Beat the blues.
Sweet, satisfying.
Just one bite.
This is it.
The last piece.

Lakita Johnson
“Damn it, I can not believe she just said that to me...I am done with her, man...I am not going to put up with her shit anymore.” Conrad slammed down the phone hard and punched his desk. Ethen looked on with sympathy but somewhat glad to see that his friend was finally done with his worthless girlfriend. All she did was complain and yell at him over petty things. Conrad looked at Ethen and said he needed to have a drink and get everything off his chest that he had been holding in for a long time. The only problem with this scenario was that the boys were only 19 and in a new city; so they decided to go out and try to find someone willing to buy them some liquor. It was early in their first semester of college, and the Midwestern humidity was at a high. This caused everything to be sticky and muggy as the sun had started to fade.

Ethen walked into a Chinese restaurant to get some food while Conrad waited outside. When Ethen walked out, Conrad was nowhere to be found. Ethen looked into a bar next to the restaurant and saw his friend drinking a whiskey drink at the bar with two Latino men. Ethen walked into the bar trying to act like he belonged there. Conrad saw his friend and introduced him to Felipe and Juan. The man introduced as Juan instantly started making fun of Ethen’s shaggy hair telling him that he could cut his hair for him and make him look fabulous. Ethen, being in a place where he only knew one other person, bit his tongue and just ignored the comment. Felipe seemed very interested in Conrad, and kept asking him questions about what he did and where he was from. They talked to the Latino men for a few minutes when Felipe started to write something on a piece of paper and extended it to Conrad. Then the two boys decided to take off and search for someone to buy their liquor for them. When they walked out of the bar, Ethen looked at Conrad and told him that he thought that bar was shady and the Latino guys were giving them some odd looks. Then he asked him what Felipe had written on the paper he had given him. Conrad looked at the paper and then tried to sneak it back into his pocket, but Ethen persisted and asked him what it said. Conrad just laughed and told Ethen that he could not tell anyone about it and then told him that it had Felipe’s name and phone number on it with a heart in the corner. Ethen almost fell on the ground laughing, and Conrad could not help but think it was a little funny.

They walked on down the road and came upon a bum that was trying to wash people’s windows with newspapers and Windex. He hollered at the boys, and they went over to talk to him. He introduced himself as Hawkins and asked the boys for some money to buy some “food.” Hawkins was talking about a mile a minute and itched himself constantly as he talked to the boys. The boys did not give the bum any money, but told him that if he would buy them some liquor, they would get him a couple of tall boys for his trouble. Hawkins quickly accepted the offer and told them that he wanted to walk to a grocery store that was almost a mile away and in the ghetto. The boys were out of options and decided to go with the bum knowing that they could watch each other’s backs. They followed the bum who seemed to be walking like he was racing in the Olympics, and the boys had to practically jog to keep up with him. The two boys could not help but laugh at the situation they were in as Hawkins whistled at all of the college girls as they walked by, who responded with a disgusted look at the bum and then noticed
Ethen and Conrad practically running to keep up with this guy, which thoroughly confused them. The humidity was really kicking in now and the boys were sweating profusely as they followed behind Hawkins.

Upon arriving at the store, Conrad told the bum that they wanted some Jim Beam—to which Hawkins replied, “Jimmy Dean... Ain’t that some sausage...” Both boys laughed and tried to explain that Jim Beam was whiskey, and Conrad wrote it on a piece of paper and gave it to Hawkins. Conrad went in the store to get a couple of Cokes to mix the drinks with, and Hawkins handed Ethen his newspapers and Windex to hold while they went in the store. Ethen stood outside the store holding the supplies receiving some cold stares and remarks that he only caught bits and pieces of, not really wanting to make eye contact with the passers by, who seemed to not appreciate his presence there. Ethen could not believe they had gotten themselves into this situation just for some liquor and just hoped that they got out of it without any major confrontation or anything. After what seemed like an eternity, Conrad emerged from the store with two Cokes and no Hawkins. Ethen questioned him and Conrad told him that Hawkins would be out in a minute. After what seemed like another eternity had passed, Hawkins emerged from the store with three Camo tall boys in his arms and what appeared to be no Beam. The boys were angry at seeing this, thinking they had walked a mile into the shadiest situation either had been in and still did not get any Beam. They questioned Hawkins and he told them to come around the corner to get their liquor because he did not want any cops to see him.

Tentatively, they walked around the side of the store and Hawkins pulled out the brown paper bag from underneath his arm pit and gave it to them. Then Hawkins offered the boys some advice telling them that it would be much quicker if they would go through the dimly lit alley on their way back. The boys laughed again and told him thanks but no thanks and took off down the road back towards their school. After crossing the road they looked back to see if Hawkins was sipping on his tall boy, but he was nowhere to be seen and had disappeared into the alley. The boys finally arrived back at their dorm, snuck the alcohol in, and proceeded to get drunk. Conrad cleared his troubled mind of his ex-girlfriend, and the night turned out to be a great experience for the boys. The two remained friends for years to come and would not soon forget about Hawkins and a night of Jimmy Dean sausage.

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Haiku

Early risers can
Stand and watch the morning dew
Wash all things anew.

Irene Anthony-Jones
Highway Hypnosis

By McKenna Mezera

How long had she been in here? The concept of time has long since disappeared; the winter sun is slowly creeping towards the horizon. The day has blurred into one continuous music marathon. She’s in autopilot mode now. The flat, gray, barren scenery fails to entice her senses away from the road ahead. Cruise control set on 80, she flies by an array of vehicles from all over the Midwest (West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Iowa). An invisible wind pushes the car into the warning track; awakened from the hypnotic coma she sets the car back in the lane. She begins to ponder if the alignment is shot, but a blowing piece of plastic buries her fears. Slowly the miles accumulate. The environment varies only by the usual array of restaurants that are present every forty miles (McDonald’s, Burger King, Subway). She’s driving toward uncertainty. The break from socialization has allowed her ponder everything; it’s a double-edged sword. Solitude has a sick sense of comfort. She’s left behind old memories in new places. The same belongings once again are rearranged in a new setting. She only identifies her memories with where she lived at the time. The CD returns to track one, and she effortlessly selects another from the visor above. Songs evoke memories of past times and seasons. Each song has a sense of nostalgia, a rather pointless moment of taking the long way home from work on a summer evening. Momentarily, she’s transported back to a time when life was much simpler but seemed oh so dramatic. She smirks at how her mindset has considerably changed but remained the same since then. A passing car snaps her back to reality. The same bottle of water is left untouched from the start of the trip. The candy bars on the passenger seat will wait until another day to be opened. Dinner was most likely going to be skipped just like lunch had been. Where is her mind at? As she gazes out into the windswept scenery, another countless white dash passes by.

The Rose

The thorns stayed sharp
through both life
and death.
The emotions it brings
cannot be described
There is so much meaning
wrapped up inside.

Jayme Wilson
The Puppy and the Raccoon

By Krista Fiedler

There once was a puppy named Pete. He was white with a brown spot on his back. He was very happy because his little boy, named David, played catch with him everyday.

One day, while Pete played in the backyard waiting for David to come home from school, he heard a big crash. He ran to the side of the little white house to see what it was. The trash can was tipped over and someone was in it. “Hey, get out of there,” yelled Pete. Just then, a fuzzy striped animal jumped out. Pete backed away; he was scared because he didn’t know what it was.

“I’m sorry,” the little animal said as she pulled a banana peel off of her head. “I didn’t know this trash can was yours. I was just looking for lunch.”

“What are you?” demanded Pete.

“My name is Lilly,” the little animal said as she began to smile.

“Ok, Lilly, exactly what kind of animal are you and where did you come from?” Pete asked nicely this time.

“I am a raccoon, and I came from the woods about three blocks away. What is your name?”

“First I need to know, are raccoons nice?” Pete curiously. He had never seen a raccoon before, since he had never been off of the block before.

“Of course we are nice!” Lilly giggled.

“Ok, good. My name is Pete. Lilly, would you like to play in the back yard with me?” Pete asked excitedly.

“We can play hide-and-seek.” Pete really wanted someone to play with; he had been lonely since David left for school this morning.

“Oh, yes I would!” Lilly squealed with excitement. They raced to the tree in the back yard and Pete began to count to ten and Lilly went to hide.

“8, 9, 10. Ready or not here I come!” Pete yelled as he ran to the swing set to look for Lilly, but she wasn’t there. Then Pete ran to the flower garden, “I found you,” Pete yelled to Lilly, who was smelling the flowers.

“Yes you did, Pete; good job,” Lilly said as they walked back to the tree. “Ok, I’m going to start counting- go hide! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Ready or not here I come!” Lilly ran to the bushes. She looked behind the first bush but Pete wasn’t there, and she looked behind the second bush. “I found you Pete!”

“How did you find me so fast?”

“Your tail was making the bushes shake.” They both laughed. Then Pete heard the bus stop in front of the little white house.

“My little boy is home,” yelled Pete as he began to wag his tail faster.

“Oh my, I need to go. Little boys scare me. I’ll see you tomorrow Pete!” She ran out of the yard and Pete ran to the front yard to meet David, but David wasn’t happy to see Pete.
“Pete!” David yelled angrily. “You made a big mess with the trash. Bad dog!” Pete began to cry as he walked inside to lie down in his bed. He knew there would be no playing catch today.

Later that night, David went to see Pete. “Hey, boy,” David said, “I’m sorry for yelling at you. I know you didn’t make the mess with the trash. Mom and Dad said a family of raccoons got into everyone’s trash today. You’re a good dog. We had the smallest mess in the neighborhood.” Pete jumped into David’s lap and began to wag his tail. “Tomorrow when I come home from school, we’ll play catch for a real long time.”

Snow Angel

Your love covers my heart like the majestic flakes cover the ground. Their purity only reflects the uncorrupted love I harbor.

Similar to the white blanket that smothers the ground, my heart is smothered with a sense of longing for your loving arms.

This task is daunting and seemingly overwhelming, only your love will guide me through this blinding blizzard.

Keep the fire in your heart burning bright with love, so that I might find my way back to you.

Tom Mengwasser

ACC/AHA Class L (for love)

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Brian LaPlant & Matt Clifton
It’s a Pigeon’s Life

By Obi Wan Canobi Patel

I better find a warm place to nest for the up coming winter. Those construction bozos thought it would be funny to ram an eight ton wrecking ball into my building. Who do they think they are? The impact of the wrecking ball obliterated my building and hurled the bricks, cement, and my nest flying through the air. Ahhhhh... Forget about it. Know what?? I think I am going to fly over to Tony’s. It sure is a nice day to fly here in the city. Unlike those idiot humans who are all trapped in their yellow metal cages, barely moving few meters a minute.

“Ehee, yo Tony” I said as I pull into his nest, which is perched above one of the finest apartment buildings in all of New York City. Tony is that type of a pigeon who likes to have nothing but the finest things in life. Like just the other day when we were out to eat, Tony would refuse to eat from the McDonald’s dumpster. He insisted that we would fly 20 minutes to go eat out of a Hardee’s dumpster. And when it comes to the lady pigeons, she better have feathers as long as the eagles’ covering her finely shaped body, and her tail feathers better be perfectly arranged or else forget about it.

“How you doin Pauly” replied Tony as he picked the dirt out of his long white feathers.

“Nuthin really. Just flyin around, defecating on statues, chirpin’ at the lady pigeons; you know the usual,” I said.

“Hey, speaking about pooping on statues, there is a new statue in the park of some dead guy. You wanna go inaugurate it?” asked Tony.

“You know what, I would like to do that, and maybe on the way I might even spot a new building to perch my nest on for the winter,” I said as I am still thinking about those construction bozos.

The Storm

Thunder cracked, lighting roared
Fear heard now as screams soared

The rain began a steady descent
As the hair stood erect I knew worse waited to present

The towering crane took the brunt of the storm
As the lights flickered, the room cooled, no longer warm

I began to fret, to cower
Deep in me, I found this power

My fear had subsided,
The storm raged on, but I, I stood strong.

Tom Mengwasser
Seasons of My Life

Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring
The sound of them makes me want to sing.
    Another year is slipping by
Like clouds amid a sunny sky.
I stroll through the waving wheat
And think, “Isn’t life just really neat.”
    I lie in the tall, tall grass
With my hands behind my head
And stare up at the starry sky
And thank God that I’m alive.
    Along comes the wind
Blowing my soul and setting me free.
I slowly walk as the breeze blows my hair
    Caressing my face.
Then the spring rains start to fall.
I raise my head and hands toward the sky
    As the tears of heaven
Pour down on me.
The winds of winter blow and chill
    Freezing the earth
Sending snow to the ground.
The sun comes once more to warm the earth.
The cherry trees blossom.
Spring turns to Summer and
    Summer into Fall.
Fall into Winter as
    Another year goes by
And my life slips away.
The spring of my childhood
Has faded into the blush of young adulthood.
With the fall comes my aging and tiring.
Along comes winter to take the breath
    From the trees and flowers.
As with nature, so too must I go,
    Not to wake in the spring.

Kelsey Jackson
Crash and Burn Part I

Addy Elbl

Susan and Beth were best friends who did almost everything together. They had known each other since they could remember and were always at each other’s houses since they only lived a few blocks apart. One day, Susan and her little sister, Dudie, were riding bikes when Beth came over. Susan did not even think twice when Beth said she wanted to ride with them. Susan took Beth over to where they kept their bikes. Although there were several children’s bikes, Beth wanted to ride Susan’s mom’s bike that not only was older than dirt, but also had the old-fashioned handlebars that you had to reach ten feet forward to grasp.

“Are you sure you want to ride that one? It’s really big and more difficult to steer.” Susan asked, but Beth refused to listen. After all, she was the oldest of the three and she should have the biggest bike, right?

As the girls got on their bikes, Beth seemed to be having a little difficulty but refused help when Susan offered. Susan and her sister lived at the end of a cul-de-sac that also connected to two side streets, both of which were dead-ends so they did not have to worry about traffic too much. After about 10 minutes of calmly riding up and down the streets, Dudie challenged Beth to a race to the end of the street. Beth could not refuse and took off pedaling as fast as she could. As the girls got closer to the dead end, Dudie slowed down and turned left on to one of the dead end side streets to continue riding. Beth, however, was having more difficulty. Beth had gained a lot of speed trying to race Dudie, and instead of slowing down, she frantically screamed out, “Where are the brakes on this thing??!!?” as she also tried to turn onto the same street as Dudie. This was almost impossible as fast as she was going, so she started heading for the driveway of the house that was directly on the corner where the two streets intersected. Susan watched in horror as Beth sped towards the richest house in the neighborhood. Susan did not really know these people, and sitting in their driveway was an expensive SUV and a brand new boat that they had recently bought—and Beth was currently heading straight for the SUV!!! In the nick of time, Beth swerved, missing the SUV, but now she was heading straight for the boat! Susan tried to cover her eyes to avoid seeing the accident but stopped as Beth swerved again, barely missing the boat. Just as Susan thought the danger had passed, Beth did not stop, but continued to ride towards the front of the house! She somehow managed to fly over the two railroad ties stacked on top of each other surrounding the neighbor’s rock garden in front. Susan was still trying to figure out how Beth had possibly ridden over two railroad ties with a bike as Beth rode through the rock garden, in between the house and a bush, got stuck (finally!!!), and fell over. Although concerned for her friend, Susan was laughing so hard that it was all she could do to drop her bike in the neighbor’s yard and crawl over to Beth to help her get unstuck. From that day forward, Beth was forever known as “Crash lady.”
Crash and Burn  Part II

Addy Elbl

Beth grew up, moved to another state, and was soon dating a nice guy. One day Beth decided to surprise her boyfriend by making him dinner. Beth got to their apartment after work one day and started making fried chicken while he played videogames in the other room. After the oil was heated and Beth put the chicken in the pan, she decided to go watch her boyfriend play Halo. Not too much later, smoke alarms started going off in the house and smoke was everywhere as Beth and her boyfriend ran into the kitchen. Flames were already to the ceiling. Beth’s boyfriend ran for the fire extinguisher and tried to put the fire out, but it was beyond hope. Beth ran across the street and called the fire department. By the time the fire department got there and put the fire out, Beth had nothing to show for her fried chicken dinner except a severely half burned kitchen that was owned by her boyfriend’s mom. Needless to say, Beth and her boyfriend’s relationship did not work long after this, and they both had to look for a new place to live. In addition to her previous title of “Crash lady,” Beth now had the official title of “Crash and Burn lady.”

If I Were a Candle

If I could be one thing, it would be a candle
Lighting the way so you can handle
Your life easier without worries
I’d help keep you from stumbling over things blocking your path
If I light your path, it is easier
Even strong rains won’t let me die
No matter what, I’m here for you
To cheer you up when you are blue
If things look down or rough,
Just remember I’m always here in your heart, close & near
I will help you in every way possible
My only request is that you don’t blow me out
But one day you may leave me behind
You may not need my light to shine
When that day comes, go your own way
And I will hope to see you again one day.
If one day I don’t appear,
Don’t worry because I am still in your heart
The light I gave you will not depart
I will be there forever
To always bring happiness & light your way
My last request…
Never forget those who lit your way.

Neha Patel
The Hobo

At the railroad the Hobo stands,
A tattered coat held in his withered hands.
A last train ride he plans to take
Before at dawn his final wake,
And death shall close his eyes at last
As all life’s turmoil and trials have passed.
One last ride is his bait.
One last ride will seal his fate.
A daring jump the old man thinks,
“Will it take me to the brink?
A traveling life I have always known,
A life without friends, a family, or home.”
A gentle jump the old man makes
To board the train, it is his fate.
The driver could not see nor hear
The old man as he fell beneath
The very wheels he loved.
A broken body bathed in blood
Stains the very rails it loved.
No one will ever shed a tear,
Or decorate his grave year to year.
A tragedy the newspapers will say,
But the old fool should have stayed out of the way.
A pointless, needless, heedless death
Took the Hobo to eternal rest.

Kelsey Jackson

Jesus
Equals
Salvation
Under
Saving grace

Addy Elbl
Red’s Tavern

By Brian Schofield

It was a cold night; so cold your bones hurt and spit froze before it could hit the ground. The sounds of the night echoed throughout the alleyways of The City that Never Sleeps. Caden Natorvic stood at the door of the bar rehearsing the plans that had been running through his mind for almost four months. Tonight would be the night that a group of men whom the courts had failed to bring to justice would meet a new judge. Caden stood at the door rehearsing his plan. His dark eyebrows sat low above his eyes, and he gazed at the door almost as if he could see through the barrier and into the eyes of the men he had come for. He clutched both pieces of cold steel strapped to his hip and took a deep breath to soak in the heavy mood of the evening. Caden put his toe against the heavy, wooden door and pushed his way inside.

He took a look around the bar and released his grip on his weapons, as he was in no immediate danger. A gloomy, red glow dimly lit the old tavern, and Caden felt the pressure of the situation suffocating him. The walls were red. The peoples’ faces were red. The floor was red, and when Caden was finished, the ceiling would be red too.

Before Caden filled the pub with straying lead pieces, he thought back to that fateful night that forced him to be here in the first place. He and his brother Kyle were hitchhiking down a long and lonesome road. The duo had had a hard night in Vegas and awoke roughly 40 miles outside of where they last remember being. A solid hour of walking had passed without the slightest glimpse of human life: no cars, no people, no anything. The two were so lost they weren’t even sure if they were headed in the right direction. They were simply trying to avoid being licked by the scorching tongue of the sun. Hours passed before they came into contact with what initially appeared to be a metallic demon. Stunned by the ghoulish figure, the men kept quite. After what seemed like hours of silence, the demon finally spoke up and had a proposition for the men.

He promised Caden and Kyle everlasting life and powers beyond the limits of human imagination in return for a favor. The conniving, money hungry men readily agreed, and the Demon explained to the men his problem with the city of Las Vegas. The city was so overrun with thievery and terror that the Devil no longer had anyone to tempt or depredate. Civility needed to be restored to the streets, but the Devil lacked the power to restore good. Rather, evil must be used to restore the balance in favor of the Devil. The men failed to realize what they had just readily agreed to.

The duo had been contracted by a Demon to clean up the streets of Las Vegas. As the Demon continued with his plan, both men thought the daunting task would require more than just them, but the Demon had his sights on the killing of one group of men. News of the mass murder would filter throughout the city, and the police would be able to regain control and fill the streets with justice. The pair shook the Demon’s hand before he vanished and returned to walking.

Days flew by like a fast train as Caden and Kyle decided on whether or not they had indeed made a deal with a demon. The demon sat back and watched as his master plan unfolded even with the pair’s inactivity. Writing off the incident as a bad memory, the two headed to Vegas to relinquish some stress. It was a normal Saturday night for the brothers, and they were out for a good time. The brothers were known names at the High
Rollers’ Room down at the Cabana, but this would not be a normal night. Kyle was heavily invested in a high stakes poker game with a little known Italian who went by the name Guido. Both men had gone “all in,” and the winner of this hand would take home over 500,000 in cold cash. A final ace was flipped and Caden was half a million dollars more wealthy.

Money in hand, the brothers called their limo and headed out for a night on the town. Kyle lowered the black partition and both brothers gasped. Driving their joyride limo was the Demon both brothers heavily owed. The Demon raised the partition and locked the doors trapping the brothers inside. After driving for short while, the Demon slammed on the breaks, and the limo came to a sudden halt. The brothers were back in the exact spot they had initially met their Hellish friend. The Demon threw Kyle from the car. Unimpressed by the brothers’ lack of action, he began torturing Kyle in front of Caden. Skin was ripped. Blood was shed and before Caden could overcome his initial state of shock, all that remained of Kyle was a bloody stump of human flesh. Caden ran to where his brother lay lifeless. A note lay on his body that read: Guido; Red’s Tavern; The agreement. Caden knew exactly what the note written in his brother’s blood had meant. Red’s Tavern was a known mafia hangout, and Caden was going to give Red’s a new paint job.

Caden slowly crept into the back of the tavern where broken English and half Italian were being spoken. He clenched the guns at his side. “For my brother,” he whispered under his breath. Caden pulled the guns from his sides and made sure the men knew he was there. The bottle of aged Tequila Reserve the men had been sipping blew into a million pieces in front of the faces. Judgement Day had arrived.

Bullets rang throughout the tavern. Caden had the element of surprise on his side, but he was heavily outgunned. Men were falling like their legs were simply giving out beneath them, and bodies were piling up on the floor. Eight men in all were killed that fateful night including seven mafia members and a vengeful brother. The demon laughed as Caden helped rid the city of sin.

It was two years before Red’s Tavern reopened. It’s rumored the blood stained wood was never replaced. The ceilings sure do look a bit more red than they used to.

Haikupeutics pt. 5

substernal chest pain
its five five five nine one one
i need a nitro

Brian LaPlant & Matt Clifton
My ‘Hero’

What was his name?
Crunch of sorts, maybe captain or cinnamon.

Oh yes, cinnamon toast crunch is my hero.
I could eat it everyday, in every way.

Dry, wet, upside down or in a jet.

I do, I do love my cinnamon toast crunch.
I love it the most, I love it a bunch.

Dr. Seuss was slightly mad,
But even he must a, should a, could a had,
A taste of that sweet little crisp

With just a teeny, tiny whisp
Of cinnamon sprinkled over top
It makes my taste buds go hippity-hop.

One day when the bag runs low
Off to the store shall I go.
Looking for that next big box,
That I can share with my friends – the mox, the lox, and even the fox.

Tom Mengwasser

Mirror

She is my mirror
My eyes
My soul
She shows me my flaws
My beauty
My wealth
She reflects my pain
My culture
My joy
She changes my behavior
My hairstyle
My clothes

My mirror has been left behind
Bringing sorrow

I was her object
Her son
Her baby
I was dependent on her
Her cooking
Her cleaning
I went to her for advice
Her wisdom
Her experience
I brought her happiness
Her memories
Her future

My mirror has been left behind
Opening new opportunities

Davin Patel
I Will Follow

The road You put before me
I promise I will take
For I am here to be led by You
And the decisions are Yours to make

God-You are the only one
Who knows the right way for me
To my future up ahead, I must go forth in blind belief
I don’t know what it shall hold—that’s for only You to see

Dear Lord, I do not doubt
All the great things You have in store
Sometimes I just wish it wasn’t so hard
To accept the things that happened and not being able to know more

Like when You took my Aunt Dianna
The sweet little woman that she was
Is now one of Your sweet little angels
Looking down on us from up above

Or why there is such a burden on my daddy
And why he must have so much stress
You surely know the answers—this is not in question
But where it all will lead us to—I can only guess

Since I know Your glory
And all of the things You do
I will just love You with all of my heart
Knowing that You love me too

That can be enough for now
On knees I pray and my head I bow
I guess that will just have to do—
To show my complete faith in You

I believe—in You and Your way
Therefore, I will listen to all that you have to say
But please if I could just ask of You one tiny question:
Do you promise to fill me in when I finally join you in Heaven?

Loretta Holmes
Stuck

By Josh Boudeman

It seems like only yesterday I was packed in my box, waiting for the light. All of my best friends, who stick with me through thick and thin, were waiting in anticipation for the moment when one of us would be chosen. You see, I'm a bandage. I was put in this box for one reason—to stop my owner from bleeding. So, every time we hear the baby cry or hear Mama shout a swear-word in the kitchen, we know there is a chance that one of us will soon be chosen. Every time the light comes, one of my buddies is taken to a better place, where he can serve his owner the way he was designed.

Just two weeks ago, I was hanging out in my box with my two best friends, Johnson and Johnson, when I heard the whimpering pout of a little girl enter the house. She said something to her mom about a bicycle and some rocks, and before I knew it, the light shone bright and I was plucked from the box. Mommy ripped off my plastic, squirted some Neosporin on my pad, and stuck me to the little girl’s palm. Finally, my time had come. I would show this girl how great of a bandage I am, right? Could I be stopped?

Apparently, I do have a weakness, and that weakness is water. I never saw it coming as the little girl put on her swimsuit (no, I didn’t look—I’m not a pervert), lathered on some sunscreen, and headed out the door. I had never gone swimming before, so naturally I was rather excited about this new experience. The little girl ran to the edge of the pool, jumped, and executed a perfect jack-knife before she smacked into the surface of the water. I didn’t stand a chance. Before I knew what was going on, I was falling slowly away from the light. I landed next to a maple leaf and a bright orange earplug, where I currently rest.

It seems like I’ve been down here forever. I feel like such a failure to my owner. Damn the light.

Snow

White, cold, extravagant
Shiny, dazzling, magnificent
It blankets the ground for only one season
It has no meaning, rhyme, or reason
No one flake is ever the same shape
It floats so freely just like a red cape
Then once again it’s gone at the end of the season
It has no meaning, rhyme, or reason.

Jeremy Hunt
Senses Set On High

By Alex Bryant

Finally on the road and away from the concrete cell referred to by some as a dorm room. Cruising down 44 towards our destination of Arizona - no need for sleep – we are on a time budget. Sun – rising in the desert… as we cruise in mentally on empty - is a near sensory overload after road hallucinations played tricks on our tired eyes as the miles passed the night previous – two days spent here with many new experiences burned into the memories… Hell’s Angels Mustang sending chills throughout with bass pounding speakers – superficialities prevail over most in Scottsdale… One warm - friendly face found in the realm of a paradise university by the way of the Windy City – From here onto San Diego to meet a friend of a friend from our starting point with a room at the Holiday Inn – a dog day at the beach – filled with Frisbee and cold brews – Sunburns prevailed from this day for two who winced in pain at every touch – the nite spent in Tijuana – a story within its self… Back in the US on a fragrant trolley - listening to free style rhymes executed by Juan Don with forty in hand and bandana covered head at sometime early in the morning - then on the road again to LA – wait no… why LA? There is nothing there - on to Joshua tree National – Nite spent by a Brushfire eating baked potatoes witnessing a pseudocircus with spinning flames in the desert – feeling the effects of a giant bottle of wine, we climb a massive rock and watch a painted sunset melt away like paint from God’s canvas… From a land of giant boulders in the desert to a boulder in the mountains of Colorado… Friendly faces here – by chance or by fate…a place to stay and food for weary travelers as our time and monetary budget began to run thin… All night conversation with a nineteen year-old grandmother from Canada who was laying low since finding her soul mate of twice her age in Montana… In a blur our journey winding to an end and we were on the road back to the point of responsibility - a newly refreshed respect for all people - and of what life has to offer when you go wandering around uncharted places with your senses set on high…

The Date

First, pick out a slow song
Making sure that it is not too long.
Then, cook his favorite meal
But don’t just go for the best deal.
Turn the lights down low.
And just wait for him to show.

Jayme Wilson
The Sweet Taste of Revenge

A young girl was playing one day
In a field that was covered with hay,
  But she didn’t know
  That a horse called Snow
Was about to ruin her play.

She was rolling around in joy
When she caught the eye of a boy.
  He was her neighbor
  Who was doing labor,
And working on his evil ploy.

She thought he was really cute,
But messing with him wasn’t astute.
  When she walked over
  To the boy, Trevor,
He let out a yell showing he was a brute.

He yelled for Snow to come running
And the look on the girl’s face was stunning.
  Snow charged forward
  After hearing the coward
Who executed his plan with so cunning.

Trevor greatly disliked the girl
As she once punched his brother Earl
  So when Snow slammed into her
  He avenged his brother,
And she flew through the air with Snow’s hurl.

The girl landed injured on the ground
And Trevor’s revenge had been found.
  He walked proudly away
  The girl got up with a sway.
Never again Trevor’s brother would she pound.

Tracey Hysong
War

As the moon lit the sky, his Bible covered his gun.
He prayed that no fighting could take place without the sun.
Kneeling beside the bed, his helmet thrown on the ground.
Thinking of the war zone that day and the mass of soldiers now buried in a mound.

Boots with holes and a very worn cross.
One thing in life that he vowed would not be lost.
His camouflage was tattered and looked more like a robe.
It told of his adventures all over the globe.

A surprise attack—while most men read.
As the wound began bleeding he crawled under his bed
To think of his baptism and what lay ahead.
The pearly gates were the next thing he saw.
He waded through the congregation in awe.

Danielle Adams

Tired

I am tired of fighting
Tired of missing, tire of crying.

Money is only paper
Our love has no monetary value.

Let’s not argue anymore,
All I want to do is love you forevermore.

For better or worse, till death do us part,
I meant those words from the bottom of my heart.

Tom Mengwasser
A Pink Shocker

By Jayme Wilson

A few weeks ago, my grandfather was having heart problems and was rushed to Barnes Hospital because they have more to offer than the hospitals at home. As I was driving along Kingshighway on my way to see him, I noticed someone very strange! There was a black man in a pink tutu strutting his stuff around and blowing a whistle. I didn’t know whether to just remain still or to drive on. This was definitely nothing like I had seen back home, but for all I knew, this could have been some kind of special police force or something that I did not know about. It was most certainly a shocker, and of course, I got stopped at a red light, so I was just forced to stare a little longer. As I was sitting there, he came and bent over right next to my window shaking his butt right at my face. He then twirled a sparkling baton around and would point.

“That is it!” I screamed out loud. I decided that I had enough of this circus, and if he wanted to act like this to me, then I would just have to do something about it! So, I put the car in park, hopped out, and ran up to him. I started screaming names at him, but he just kept on dancing and shaking his thing. So, I just tightened up my fist and gave him a hard punch to the face. Then, I took his baton and broke it over his skull. “That will show you!” I told him. He fell to the ground as people started to crowd around. I thought that they would be thanking me because, after all, people like this should not be allowed to just parade around on the streets, but obviously that was not the case. Before I knew it, people were everywhere screaming at me.

“How could you do this to Baton Man?” One woman shouted at me. I could hear shouts jumbled up in all directions that I could not really make out, but the parts I did hear, were definitely not in favor of me.

“Baton Man?” I wondered. “I did not know that this thing had a name!” When I turned around, I noticed that they were taking this man away on a stretcher. Then, I was being interviewed by the police and was arrested for assault. Reporters were everywhere, wanting to know more, but they just took me off to jail. Luckily for me, I explained my situation to the police about my grandfather, so I did get to go visit him. As I approached the room, I could hear the sound of Fox2News at nine blaring with the breaking news being myself. I did not know whether to run and hide or what to do. The thing was that my grandfather did not need to be bothered with this kind of stuff, so I just decided to drop it and not bring it up, hoping that he had not been listening to the news.

So, I entered the room with my grandfather’s heart monitor racing like crazy. He appeared to be going into shock, so I turned to call for a nurse. As I looked at the bed beside him, I noticed that my grandfather had a roommate. I turned to try to get his attention to find a man passed out, and on the side of the bed, there was nothing else but a pink tutu.
Lonely Night, Lost Completely

I look at you
Not looking at me
It looks like it’s another
--lonely night, lost completely

I want for you to see
Your life without me
Take a look at your life,
Sweet sadness and strife
Lovers apart, sadness from start
High times and infidelity
Could anything beat our chemistry?

I look at you
Not looking at me
It looks like it’s another
--lonely night, lost completely

You say you love independence,
But how does it feel without my presence
Crawling back to love I hear you shout.
We all know what it’s about.
I hear your cries,
It doesn’t make up for all your lies.

I look at you
Not looking at me
It looks like it’s another
--lonely night, lost completely

Your greatness and confidence aside
How can you let love so true be so denied.
We’ve been back and forth, love trying and true
It hurt every time that I looked at you.
Your cheating heart,
Readily apparent from the very start.
I look at you
Not looking at me
It looks like it’s another
--lonely night, lost completely

Dan Roth
Dreamer

Dreamer, don’t you wish on falling stars;
They only fall away.
They’re here for one brief moment,
Then vanish like the day.
If you must dream and make a wish,
Then hold to what’s steadfast,
And wish by the sun’s sweet golden rays
That were made to last.
But even time will kill the sun
And plunge its rays to darkness.
So, dreamer, what then’s left by which to wish
In all of nature’s vastness?
I tell you dreamer, there is nothing
That in this world will last,
Except the courage in your heart
To make your wishes vast.

Kelsey Jackson

Puppy Love

Daisy was full of delight,
It was love at first sight,
Little noises, such a cute face,
Curly tail. She was perfect.

When we got her home,
There was chewin’ and pooin’
Constant biting, so expensive.
When will this teething end?

Chewed through the cable cord,
Chewed through the carpet.
Pulled up bathroom tile,
And destroyed any shoe near her.

Even today, she’s still a little gremlin,
But we don’t care,
She’s still our little puppy,
And we’re still in puppy love.

Amanda Painter
Spring break

These college days bring crazy ways of coping with reality
Dates of due handed to you
Warn you of FATALITY
Making the grades strains your brain
Testing limitations
Find your kind, be yourself, enjoy those relations
All the places with different faces
Show signs of interaction
Socialize and never hide
What you find relaxing

No point to be uncomforting by those around you
Be yourself
It always helps in doing what you do
Take today into tomorrow
Help fight unwanted scenes
Learn from the past
Make memories last
Prevent unneeded sorrow

This break to spring up out of here
Gives me hope and makes my fear
Redundancy of daily chores
A loss of interest and often bored
I wonder what shall lie ahead
All is possible.

Anna Gurevich

Tom and Jerry

Irene Anthony-Jones

I can remember it like it was yesterday. My Cousin Charline was coming to visit me during summer vacation. It was her first visit because I always went to visit her, since she was the only child in her household. At that time we were living in Memphis, Tennessee. I was extremely excited. We called ourselves Tom and Jerry after the cartoon characters.
When she got there, I showed her around the neighborhood and introduced her to all of my friends. During the first few weeks we had a lot of fun staying up late catching up because we only saw each other over summer breaks.

One day we were walking to the store, and we saw some boys on the bridge. They had crossed over the railing and were walking on the ledge. We walked on to the store, but on the way back I tried to talk Charline into trying walking the ledge. She wouldn’t. Back at the house we told my mom what we saw and she told us all about the dangers of doing that. She made us promise not to be like those other kids because she didn’t want us to get hurt. We both promised her we wouldn’t do it.

A week later we were walking with some of my friends, and when we got to the bridge, they all started crossing over the railing to walk on the ledge. Everyone started yelling for us to do it with them. I looked at Charline, but you could tell she didn’t want to. I was able to convince her to do it by telling her Tom would do it to catch Jerry. After I crossed the railing, I stood there waiting for her. We both took our time and made it across safely. Everyone was excited and we went on our way to the store.

It started getting late and we had to get back to the house for dinner. We all thought that since we had crossed the bridge once, it would be easy to do it again. As we were crossing, Charline lost her footing and fell down into the creek. It was the most frightening thing ever, especially since she wasn’t moving. I ran home crying to tell my mom what happened. She called the police and ambulance and told me not to leave the house.

The hours dragged by. I kept looking out of the front window waiting for them to get home. I was terrified. The later it got, the more scared I became. I knew I was in a lot of trouble, but I wanted Charline to be okay. She was my only girl cousin and my best friend.

When my mom came home, she had Charline with her. She was walking and everything. After my grounding, I vowed to never break a promise again and as to this date, I haven’t.

Madeline

By Anna Johnson

Madeline walked the same path everyday; past the hot dog stand, along the sidewalk of the park, carrying her house in her hand. She walked past the schoolyard everyday at the same time, to see the kids at recess.

The children made her happy, with their boundless energy and silly games. Even though the children stared at her and sometimes called her “Mad Maddy,” she forgave them and loved them all the same.

Madeline’s house, as she called it, was a bag of all the worldly possessions she hadn’t managed to lose yet. Walking the streets everyday, she sometimes dropped things, or they were stolen from her at the shelter each night.
Madeline knew how she looked to all the people passing her on the sidewalk. She was dirty, and even though it was spring, she wore a heavy coat that reached past her knees and covered any curves of her body that might entice unwanted attention.

Ever since her mother died, Madeline had tried, with no avail, to reach her dream of being a dancer. She moved to New York at nineteen; her mind full of dreams and unfulfilled aspirations.

She went to every agency in New York, and time and time again was turned away. She “had bad ankles,” “was too fat,” and was many other insulting things that she never knew that she was before.

Eventually, with no other skills to get a job with, her landlord had had enough. He threw her out on the streets where she remained to this day. She thought about becoming a prostitute, but she realized if she gave away her modesty and her pride, just for money, she could never forgive herself, nor continue to live each day without killing herself.

So instead, she walked, determined to see all that she could see on the streets by herself, waiting for that one twist of fate that would give her the ability to get off of the streets. She didn’t ask for money, because she felt unclean when she did, and from the change she collected from the sidewalk each day she managed to buy enough food to keep herself alive.

Watching people on the street gave Madeline wisdom about how people really were. They all stared at her in her long coat and almost looked scared. She wondered if they were scared of her, or if they saw in her something that they could all become, with one unfortunate turn of the stock market.

Today she had seen many things: sweethearts kissing in the park, and babies not old enough to go to school yet toddling along beside their mothers.

When dusk came, Madeline returned to Hull House, the shelter where she stayed every night. She went to dinner first, the same old broth and stale bread as before, yet she ate and it tasted pretty good.

Madeline went to bed early, as always, to ensure that she had a bed this night. Some nights the house was crowded and some had to sleep on the floor.

The place was silent, as usual; all those present were lost in their own thoughts of despair. Sleep came easily, and Madeline drifted into darkness.

The next morning, Madeline awoke to the same cold silence and as quickly as she could, began her walk. Halfway through the park she heard a shout. One of the babies in the park had lost her mother. She cried and cried, shouting for her momma. Madeline approached the child, cooing and trying to calm her down. She looked about 4, with curly blonde hair and big blue eyes. Taking the child’s hand, they searched for her mother. Minutes passed with no momma. Finally, a distraught looking woman came over a hill. The child ran to the woman, and they both cried with relief.

Feeling like her job was done, Madeline turned around and started walking again.

“Wait!” called the woman, running up to Madeline. “You helped my baby find me, who knows what might have happened to her if you hadn’t. How can I repay you?”

“It’s really nothing,” Madeline said. “I couldn’t leave a sweet little child out here by herself, it’s just my motherly instinct, I guess.”
Looking over Madeline’s old and dirty clothes the woman said, “My name is Martha, and I would be honored if you would come back to my home with me. I can get you some new clothes and a shower and some home cooked food. How about it?”

“You’re too generous,” Madeline said, “I could never accept that sort of gift.”

“Then how about we make it a payment?” said Martha “You can be my new babysitter for Evelyn. You can work for food and shelter until I feel that I can trust you, and then I’ll let you have a regular paycheck.”

Amazed by the woman’s willingness to accept her into her home, Madeline exclaimed, “Why are you doing this for me?”

“I work part time down at the shelter that you stay in. I’ve been watching you; I even followed you on your walk once or twice. I see that you don’t do drugs and how much you like the children at the school. I figured that you needed help and were trustworthy and now that I’ve met you, I know for sure. I hope you will accept my offer.”

Madeline knew that her twist of fate had come. She told the woman she would be extremely grateful for the job and her hospitality.

Three months later, Madeline was making a steady paycheck and she loved her job. She treated the little girl Evelyn like her own daughter and was happier than she had ever been in her life in New York.

Broken

Love is in the air,
and I’ve never felt so alive.
Life was a queen’s pride.

Fake smiles and I love yours,
soon clouded my thoughts,
wanting to cry and wanting to not.

Obvious lies like a flock of birds,
set on fire with every word,
and no backbone to stand.
No sign of help, anger and guilt
also at fault.

Lesser of two evils and
conscience still with me.
Who hears my cries
with no right to be.
Losing control,  
Twelve hour sleeps with no rest,  
bullets of irony, pierce the heart as it tore  
thru my chest.

Jill Baker

Alone

The memories crash through my thoughts  
Flooding every inch  
Leaving no tears uncried

Thousands of miles away  
And I still remember

I still remember you  
I still remember our friendship  
The unbreakable bond  
And I miss you

You were my everything  
Always looking out for me  
Always there...

Now I am alone  
In a foreign place  
With no one like you

No one with that love  
No one with that inseparable bond

I don’t think I can make it on my  
Own  
I need you

You keep me going  
Through the never ending days  
But you’re not here....  
And I’m alone...but I will still make it

Neha Patel
Crushed

By Priyanka Patel

Inserting a cold key into the ignition, Susan shivered with ambiguous emotions of anger, fear and cold as she closed her red Ferrari’s door. As the car started, she blasted on the heater and whipped the wipers into action, to defrost her windshield. Glancing back at the house that she had so dotingly bought with John, she decided it was time to leave it and all the wistful memories that resided within. Clipping on her cold metallic seatbelt, she drove about fifteen miles in shock of what had just happened. As reality should have flooded her mind, she couldn’t remember why she was driving in such haste. Her eyes darted towards the mirror as she overtook a Wal-Mart semi. Huge dark clouds had overtaken the evening sun, and large snowflakes were beginning to fill her sight. The unplowed fields looked like a giant bowl of chocolate chip ice-cream with extra whipped cream. She nervously tried to think what just had happened, but nothing seemed to enter her mind; only the song that was ending on the radio and some of the radio DJ’s forecast of the weather. Nothing made any sense. The next song stung Susan like a bee. It was “Can’t Help Falling in Love” by Elvis Presley, which had been their wedding song. Memories started to flood her mind, but it was impossible to piece them together into her life anymore.

She recalled the huge tree house she had made with her dad on the oak tree in their backyard, when she was six. Her memory suddenly shifted to her graduating college as Valedictorian, and receiving the red Ferrari as a graduation gift from her grandparents. The most exciting memory anyone could find in Susan’s mind was her first slow dance and kiss. She pictured herself as a youth, about fifteen, when she met Derek, a senior athlete with dark brown hair, and gentle soft green eyes. She remembered the exact moment when everything in her life seemed different. How her olive tanned skin had glowed under the dim lights, and how Derek had held her softly, yet firmly. But before she could think more, something else came to her mind—she recollected her mother nagging her about something. It was about her reckless driving, which was one of the most obnoxious topics that Susan’s mother annoyed her with. Being twenty-four, Susan was pretty sure about her driving because she trusted the government employees; they wouldn’t just hand out licenses to any wild drivers. She felt that her ripped, dirty-looking jeans were the prefect torture of her mother’s nagging. Even though, both mother and daughter found ways to annoy and torture each other, they loved each other dearly. Susan recalled their “baking-time.” They would bake everything that would show up on the Food Channel. Some of their best experiences were baking pies for the charity show that Susan had conducted for homeless people. Again her memory shifted to her shopping for the prefect white dress. She had met John, a cute blonde with almond-shaped eyes, during their last couple years of Business College; they soon realized their love for each other, like a new spring blossom. She also recalled the dancing floor, beautifully decorated with lilies, jasmine, and daisies, and was first touched by John and her with their song, “Can’t Help Falling in Love.” Suddenly, everything that had happened in past few hours came back searing her mind.
As Susan had entered her Victorian “mansion,” a five bedroom house, she could smell a sweet, tangy fragrance. She quickly removed her black high heels, and tiptoed into the dining room. Susan had arrived few days early so as to surprise John after her business meeting. She wanted to tell him the most important news, which they both had been waiting for three years: Susan was pregnant. No one except her mother knew. As she was laying down her suitcase, she heard someone walking like toddler; she mistakenly thought that her mother, gossipy, would have told John and there might be a surprise party thrown for her. As she peeped through the archway between the dining room and the kitchen, she saw a slender blonde girl in her early twenties crying with a bleeding finger. The cut did not look that big, but that was not on Susan’s mind. This girl was jumping around in a frothy bubble gum pink night gown, and was being tended by her husband, John. Due to her business mind, she decided to learn the situation before she would act; she suddenly changed her mind when she saw her husband give an affectionate kiss to the blonde. Angry as a raging bull, Susan smacked John hard across his face and punched him in his abdomen, and wished that she had not removed her high heels so that she could have stepped harder on his foot. Before John had a chance to say anything, Susan dashed out of the kitchen to her room and started packing her things hurriedly from here and there. With one last look at her room, she went down the stairs. While opening the main door, Susan could smell sweet Armani perfume lingering on John. John and his “girl” stared dumbly after Susan as she slammed the door in their faces.

Forgetting the direction of the roads, she kept on driving with tears streaming down her face. With heavier and heavier snow, the speed of the wipers had to be increased. Unable to differentiate between snow and ice patch, Susan hit the latter, and soon she was skidding and spinning straight into a Wal-Mart semi. Realizing that she was upside down, she tried to move but was pinned, helplessly, due to her seatbelt. Warm metallic fluid seemed to be oozing in her mouth. Her mind and heart were racing with multiple questions and worrying about her baby, but before she could think about possible answers, darkness and drowsiness started to surmount her ability to hold on to consciousness and reality. Her mind wandered to the sweet gentle fragrance of apple pie and the ending of her beloved song: “Take my hand, take my whole life too......For I can’t help falling in love with you...For I can’t help falling in love with you......”

Supremely Blessed

Never forget how much I love you
You keep my feet on the ground
And my heart flying high
Never forget...
Neither an endless earthquake
Or a pit of pythons
Could keep me from your side
Never forget...
I would do anything for you
Fly from Mt. Everest
Or walk across the Pacific
Never forget...
Never forget how unique you are
And the impact you have left on me
I try everyday to help you
As you have helped me
I am who I am
Because I have been blessed with you
I thank god for you everyday
Never forget...
You are my best friend
And I love you

Neha Patel

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**Seize the Day (Carpe' Diem)**

Verse 1
I can’t go on
Without you it’s rough
I’ve been through it all
And I’ve had enough.

I see you in the shadows,
Searching love once again

Chorus
And I seize the day
Pull myself up
But you drag me down
-Broken by love
Your hand was freezing,
I’m falling to pieces-

Verse 2
My heart will heal
It takes time you see.
Gave you it all
You threw it at me

You linger beside me,
I move on with my life

Chorus
And I seize the day
Pull myself up
But you drag me down
-Broken by love
Your hand was freezing
I’m falling to pieces.
Verse 3
I crumbled inside
Your love was just lust
Thrown down my heart
Just collects dust

Yet you still try to play me,
But it's my victory

Chorus
And I seize the day
Pull myself up
But you drag me down
-Broken by love
Your hand was freezing,
I'm falling to pieces-

Dan Roth
Search of Clarity Through Static at Seventeen

For the millionth time I listen to Clarity.
Memories of being seventeen
waiting for calls, but all I ever got was static.
This album was difficult to listen
to because of you.
Those memories grow softer

The candles illuminate the room softer
than the lamps. There's a certain sense of clarity
when there is only a piece of paper, a pen, and you.
Pictures and keepsakes from when I was seventeen
clutter the wall. I sometimes wonder if these times will ever be forgotten,
if these memories will just fade into static.

Even when I speak there is static,
a force that hinders my speech to make me appear softer
than what I truly feel. I wonder how life would be different if you had not gotten
into it. If I spoke out today, maybe I would feel some clarity;
but who can really decide what is important in life at seventeen?
Life is never what they tell you.

I realize that you
are terrified of change. Static
clings you to home, where you reigned king at seventeen.
Your tough exterior now grows softer
as the years pass. I peer out the window onto this moonlit night searching for clarity.
and the room darkens as one candle out of ten
dies. What will happen to all of us ten
years from now? Where will you
end up? Will I still listen to Clarity
with as much love for it as I do now? Or will Static
Prevails be my new favorite? Will we as people grow softer
and lead to our end? Will we forever long to return to the days of being seventeen?

I take this pen to the paper, like I did at seventeen
while listening to Ten
on repeat. Only now the pen strokes are softer,
my thoughts are contemplative rather than of pain and you.
My mind is still clouded with static
from other aspects of life. How I wish for some clarity

in this crazy thing called life. Clarity and Static Prevails playing on the stereo
still brings me back to the nights of you and me at seventeen, when we would listen to Ten.
The candle light grows softer as the night lingers on into the early hours with my pen in hand.

McKenna Mezera
Mental Times

By Melissa O’Neill, Jenna Brinkman, Stephanie Pieszchalski, Joseph DeMattei

Characters:
Nathan Mathis, a struggling single father
Isabella Mathis, his two-year-old daughter
Jarrod Morris, 28, pharmacist at Jarrod’s Apothecary
Ralph, 21, tech at Jarrod’s
Lord Henry, the Thane of Cawdor at Medieval Times restaurant
Lord Brutus, the Red Knight
Leah Lovelace, 25, restless, irresponsible woman with a slight Vicoden problem
Michael, big, blond cat
Cook

Stage: Front of stage is street. In back of it, on the right side of the street, is the Medieval Times restaurant. In the middle is Jarrod’s Apothecary, and on the left is the Midnight Oil filling station. As the curtain opens, one can see a man in armor pacing in front of the restaurant. He tries to sit on a short wall, but the armor is too difficult to maneuver. So he goes back to the doorway and leans there. In front of the filling station sit a man and a small girl. The girl looks bored, but the man, apparently her father, appears at a loss in finding anything to amuse her. There is a loud long crash and continuing rumble coming from the pharmacy as a big blond cat jumps out and runs up the street toward the little girl who obviously wants him. She grabs for him and strokes his long fur.

Scene I: Body of young man pushed out of the door of Jarrod’s Apothecary by Jarrod the pharmacist.

Jarrod: Get out and stay out. I can’t believe anyone could cause such a mess. Ralph, you’ve been worse than no help at all. I don’t know why I’ve kept you on this long. Guess I thought some help was better than no help, but you make work; you don’t do any. When I was in school and working evenings, I will admit I would sometimes do as little as possible, but I never, ever, ever purposely knocked bottles and cans off the counters. It makes no sense.

Ralph: Yeah, think about that. Do you really think I would purposely mess everything up? Who would straighten it? Me, that’s who. I don’t purposely go around and add boring chores for fun and games. It wasn’t me. It was that damned cat, that’s always sneaking around and slipping in every open door. Michael, I think they call him.

Jarrod: Sure, blame it on the cat. He’s sitting there in little Isabella’s arms as peaceful and beautiful as ever. How on earth could you try to fix the blame on that innocent animal? I suppose you want to blame Isabella too. Get the hell out, and don’t
come back.

Ralph kicks at Michael as he trots down the street, and Jarrod watches him go, and then sighs and returns inside the pharmacy.

Michael [jumps out of Isabella’s arms, walks to center front stage and addresses the audience]: Hi guys! Don’t look over there. It’s me talking, me, Michael the cat. You believe a horse named Mr. Ed talks and a cat doesn’t? Be serious. Let me tell you about these people. And don’t worry about that Ralph character. He’s a no-good loafer and deserves to lose his job. He’s a real dog. Yes, it’s true I did knock the stuff over, but not from maliciousness. I got a plan. You see Isabel? The cute little girl over there? She needs a mom. I got a plan to get her one. Getting rid of Ralph was the first step. But before I continue, I gotta eat. The Medieval Times has a good menu, and Lord Henry, who is supposed to keep me out, can’t move very fast in all that metal.

Scene II: Front of Medieval Times is removed to show inside of the building. Dining area is to the left. There are numerous tables set up and many children around them. The right side holds a stage. Michael scurries toward the rear of the Medieval Times, between the two buildings. He first rummages through the dumpster. He finds a couple of good chicken legs that he nibbles on then makes his way toward the back door. He disappears around the rear corner of the building, and a few moments later, there is a loud crash, a hissing noise and shouting coming from the rear of the building. Michael then scurries through the kitchen door and into the dining area.

Chef (from the kitchen): Get out, you stupid cat! I’ve told you a million times, cats are not allowed in here. We can’t have animals around the food. OUT! Lord Henry, What are you doing out there? Get this dumb cat out of here. Isn’t that your job?

Lord Henry enters the building to find Michael on top of a table trying to eat a whole plate of food.

Lord Henry: Foolish cook, you’re just a lowly serf. How dare you impede my nobility? There, the cat’s out; if you have any more problems with the cat, deal with it yourself.

As he makes his way toward the cat, Michael grabs one quick bite then easily scampers past him under a table and out the door. Lord Henry quickly turns his attention back to the lowly serf and begins preparing for the tournament on stage. Since Lord Henry is obviously preoccupied, Michael sneaks back in and finds himself a seat.

Scene III: Micheal is in a chair in the Restaurant

Michael: I sat down in the cheering section of the chivalrous red knight. The wenches brought out my food. Although I am a cat, the wenches still served me food; apparently
at Cawdor, they serve you as long as you are a noble lord (like myself)... even if you are a cat.

It was a festive gala with many wenches serving only the tastiest of foods. First, the wenches brought out vegetable soup in the finest of bowls. While eating our soup, the Thane of Cawdor- the noble, righteous, and just Lord Henry- announced his brother had recently been killed in battle, and he would have a tournament of the greatest knights in the land to choose his successor. At first, the knights engaged in petty competitions such as ring lancing and skill in horseback riding. While the noblest of knights were engaged in these competitions of skill, we feasted on roasted chicken and spare ribs. As our meal was almost finished, the great, chivalrous, wise Lord Henry announced the knights would now engage in combat to see who was truly the most skilled, courageous, and noble knight. The red knight, my champion, and the bringer of decorum, lost his second battle to the green knight, the chivalrous Lord Brutus. I couldn’t quite put my paw on it, but there was something about that Lord Brutus that I didn’t like.

The fighting continued until there was only one knight left, and that was Lord Brutus. He won the tournament and would be heir to the Thane of Cawdor. As the celebration draws to a close, Lord Henry and Lord Brutus announce they will be greeting guests, and I decide to introduce myself to Lord Henry.

Lord Henry: Heed fair cat, there shall be no felines in the great Castle of Cawdor.

Micheal: Meow

Lord Henry: Cease with your talk of witchery, or I shall slay you with Excalibur.

Micheal: Fair, noble Lord, would you slay a cat, as innocent, noble, and helpless as I?

Lord Henry: Cats are not noble creatures, but evil, plague bearing animals sent by the wretched king of France. Now flee cat, or I shall chase you down, slay you, and roast you; for that is the only true way to rid my castle of your wretched, evil spirit

Micheal: Now noble sir, I assure you I am a cat of reason not evil

Lord Henry: Not so, my mom told me that cats are evil

At this time the noble, courageous, and apparently deranged Lord Henry started to chase Micheal, alongside Lord Brutus, with a drawn sword. Micheal flees until he reached a nearby gas station. Several children follow the action to the station. At the gas station the attendant tries to save the cat.

Lord Henry: Wicked fire-breathing dragon, release the evildoer and I will let you live

Nathan: C’mon man, leave the cat alone

Lord Henry: You would rather lose your life die than just hand him over?
Nathan: Listen, just leave the cat alone

Lord Henry: You are indeed brave, fair dragon, but you have feasted upon your last knight, for now I shall slay you

It was at this point in time that Lord Henry takes Excalibur and slices Nathan's arm with it. Once Nathan has been "slain," he headed to the pharmacy across the street to purchase bandages.

Lord Henry: Noble Lord Brutus, my future heir, do you feel like you have learned a great lesson in dragon slaying?

Lord Brutus: Why, yes noble, wise, courageous Lord Henry I have, and I feel very blessed to be your heir

At this time, several children armed with fake knives jump out and start stabbing Lord Henry. He has a real problem with getting out of his Medieval Times character, so Lord Henry believes he is truly dying.

Lord Henry: Now my life is through, my reign is finished, my nobleness means nothing. Now I find that it is no Englishman, Spaniard or French knight that is the most fearless knight in all the land, for it is the wretched knight of death who fears no man. He hath secretly rode in on his black steed, and robbed me of mine life. Parting is such sweet sorrow. The Thane of Cawdor sleeps no more. Glamis sleeps no more.

Lord Brutus, who thinks Henry is merely joking decides to play along with the children and delivers the last not so fatal blow to Lord Henry who was devastated by this.

Lord Henry: Et tu... Brute???

Lord Henry collapses and “dies”, while the children chase Lord Brutus back to Medieval times.

Scene 4: Nathan enters Jarrod’s Apothecary to get some Neosporin and band aids, holding Michael in his arms. As they enter the store, Jarrod is frantic behind the counter due to his lack of help. When he sees Nathan in the store, he drops what he’s doing and runs to Nathan.

Jarrod: Nathan! Please tell me you’re still interested in the Pharmacy Tech job! I had to fire that no good Ralph this morning. Tell me you’ll do it.

Nathan: Well, what kind of hours are we talking?

Jarrod: Nathan, listen, 40 hours a week, benefits, and I’m sure I can top what they’re paying you over there at the Midnight Oil.
Nathan: Well, I’m sure Isabella would love a 9 to 5 daddy. I’ll do it… when do I start?

Jarrod: We’ll start training tomorrow!

*Just then something seems to spook Michael and he jumps out of Nathan’s arms. Michael runs up to a woman standing in line and starts to rub up against her leg. The woman reaches down to pet the cat, when Nathan realizes that she is a girl he knows from high school.*

Nathan: Leah? Leah Lovelace? Is that you? It’s Nathan Mathis…South Glenn High…. Remember me?

Leah: Oh my GOD! Nathan! Oh my God! How long has it been? Gosh what are you up too? Is this your cat?

Nathan: Well, Michael isn’t necessarily my cat, but my daughter seems to like him.

*Michael, distracted, scurries out the door and back toward the filling station.*

Leah: Oh… your daughter? Does your wife like the cat too?

Nathan: Well… I’m not married anymore… my wife died last year.

Leah: I’m terribly sorry.

*(awkward silence)*

Nathan: Oh thanks. Gosh Leah, I really am glad I bumped into you. You know I promised my daughter Isabel I’d take her to dinner tonight at Medieval times. Would you like to join us? I’m sure she’d love to meet you.

Leah: Well, sure I don’t have much else on my plate today.

**Scene 5:** Nathan and Leah return to Midnight Oil to find Isabella playing with Michael.

Nathan: See that little girl over there with Michael? That’s my daughter, Isabella. She’s two now.

Leah: Awww…She’s adorable. She sure seems to like Michael. They look like new best friends.

Nathan: Hmmm. If I know Isabella, I would say she’s not going to let go of that cat very easily. We might just have to take him home with us.
Everyone goes into the gas station except for Michael. He jumps on Lord Henry’s cold, pseudo-lifeless body.

Michael: Did you hear that? They want to take me home! My plan really did work. I got rid of that scum bag Ralph and got Nathan a new job. I even found Nathan a new wife and Isabella a mom. I mean just look at the three of them together. You can just tell that they are happy together. I can see it now; we’ll be such a nice little family. Everyone will go to work or school during the day and I’ll be in charge of the house. Then when they get home, I can calm them from their hard day. Oh it’ll be just wonderful. I can hardly wait. Then to top it all off, I defeated Lord Henry. Just look at him. He really thinks he’s dead, and he’s the one who thinks cats are dumb? I showed him. Now I can live happily ever after with my new family.

Mental Times, pt. 2: The Saga Continues

Viva        Lord Henry
Viva        Lord Henry
The Great Thane of Cawdor, noble
Protector of Medieval Times
Who has eradicated the cat,
slain the evil gas dragon
that worked at the gas station, and
who, in his very proudest hour,
was most foully murdered by his heir,
Lord Brutus. The Great Thane who
gave a noble speech on death shortly
before being unexpectedly stabbed
in his noble back by Brutus, his heir.

Joe DeMattei