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

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First place winner of the 2007-2008 Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Contest

**Oncology**
*Brett Venker*

It was happening again. He looked at his pale, naked body. It was different though. He had a sort of remote view, looking at himself like an outside observer...with different eyes, not his own. His skin gleamed, reflecting the light coming in from the window as he sat up slightly in his bed, elbows propped up, holding his weight.

As he looked at himself with those eyes, he saw something now in his hand. It too, gleamed in the light. A knife. A good six inches long, serrated at the bottom, then, halfway up the blade it became smooth, like a simple paring knife.

He watched his face look up to it. No facial expression, no surprise or wonder at the knife. His lips thinned out in determination and brought the blade down with a driving force at the soft of his stomach. No! He thought, just as the knife touched his belly button.

I'm not going to tell you again! GET UP! she screamed. He woke, startled, and looked at his stomach, his belly button, and dragged his hands across it. God...you little piece of shit... He heard his mom mumbling as she walked out of his room.

Scrambling out of bed, he quickly threw some clothes on and tied his shoes. He scraped his keys and pencil off his desk and shoved them into his pocket, then grabbed his backpack and tossed it over one shoulder. A tall mirror stood by the door and as he walked out, he got halfway through the doorway and pulled back, gazing at himself. He saw his matted hair from the bed, dark sunken eyes, and an overall shaken appearance from the dream.

Another day at school, he thought, scraping his hand across the gray lockers as he walked through the hallway.

Hey, John! Wait up! He turned and saw his best friend Maria. She had brown hair with dyed streaks of blonde running through it, dark green eyes, a little button nose, narrow torso, and thin, fragile legs. It was fall and she was wearing a sweater for the first time.

Hey, like the sweater.

Yeah? She smiled. I just got it. Hey, what's up, you look a little, she paused, disheveled? He laughed.

Nice word. Yeah I guess I am. I had that dream again last night. He shook his head. Really weird.
The one where you almost stab yourself in the belly button?

Yeah.

Well let’s talk about it in contact time, we gotta go to class, but I’ll meet you in the café?

Yeah, see ya there.

John couldn’t concentrate in Calculus. His eyes kept wandering to the window where he saw a small squirrel sitting on a branch. It didn’t move. It simply sat, shaking its tail back and forth like an old time metronome. John wished he could be like the squirrel; careless. Able to sit in calculus class not worrying about his mom, his grade, but instead flick his toe to a catchy tune.

And what can we get from knowing the second derivative, Mr. Appleman?

Shit, he thought. Ummm, I don’t know sir. I’m sorry.

So you had it again huh? She said, elbows on the table, leaning in, close.

Yeah, but it’s just so weird. I thought it was just a nightmare or something but now I don’t know.

You don’t think it is? She furrowed her brow.

I don’t know. It’s just like every time I have it, I have it for the first time. I mean, awake I know it’s the same dream, but I never know what’s gonna happen when I’m in my dream. I’m looking on myself and I see me look at the knife, and it’s like, holy shit! And...well...I just wish you could be there because it’s so real. Even though I’m looking at me, I can feel myself holding the knife. I can feel the texture and the sweat on the handle. I feel myself drive down the... He trailed off. Sorry, I don’t know what I’m saying.

Don’t apologize. This is serious. She grabbed his forearm, gripping hard, but not too hard. You need to do something about this. You can’t just ignore it every night. Talk to your mom. Tell her you wanna see a doctor or something. She stared into his eyes, never looking down.

That’s a fucking laugh, he said throwing his head back and looking at the ceiling. My mom would really help me out with this one.

At least try.
John had dated Maria once. Way back in sophomore year. They went to some cheesy romantic comedy. She turned to him halfway through the show, haired tied up in a bun. Let’s leave.

Really?

Yeah, this movie sucks. So they did. They left and went to Forest Park instead.

I was thinking, started Maria. She was lying with her head in John’s lap.

Yeah?

Do you think we could scrap this whole dating thing and just be friends? He was shocked at first. John had really thought he liked Maria. Not just liked her, desired her. But the more he thought about it, the more it made sense to him.

I guess so...Now that I think about it; I think that’s a really good idea.

Me too. She said, turning on her side, placing her right hand on his thigh. Me too.

When John got home from school, his mom still wasn’t home from work yet. He had the house to himself, like usual. He did what he normally did after school and any other time that he should have been doing homework. He read.

You should really read Catch-22. John was talking to Maria on the phone. It’s really, really good.

You always read these weird books. What’s so good about this one?

Well, basically the main character Yossarian is stuck in this life in the army during World War II. He keeps trying to run away...to get out of the war. But he can’t. He’s just stuck, going in circles trying to escape, he can’t get out.

There’s just nothing he can do to escape?

That’s just the thing; he finally does in the end.

How?

I don’t know...I haven’t really figured it out yet.

Hey, she paused. Wanna meet me at Starbucks in like twenty minutes?

Yeah, I think I can, I’ll call ya back.
He descended the stairs, and as he crossed the doorway into the kitchen, the smell of Southern Comfort burned his nostrils. Five thirty. Nothing like getting started early.

She sat at the wooden kitchen table with her back to the doorway he had just walked through. Glass of whiskey on ice in one hand, cigarette and a card in the other. The table was completely empty except for the ashtray and line of cards she had out. She was playing solitaire.


Uhhh, I was wondering if it was okay if I go to Starbucks for a little bit.

No. Her back still to him.

Why not? He said it slowly, trying to sound as polite as possible.

Dammit! Do you have to question everything I say? It’s a fucking school night! There, happy?

He was making his way upstairs before she even finished. No he wasn’t happy. He was miserable. When he got to his room, John kicked the metal bottom of his bed as hard as he could.

Fuck, he thought. That was dumb. His foot pulsed pain every second, but he didn’t care. John picked up his phone. She’s drunk, he texted, not going to make it. Catch-22 finished, he picked up Plainsong.

At school the next day they decided to go to Starbucks after school to avoid the possibility of John’s mom saying no.

D’you get my response message last night? Maria asked, Give me a call?

Yeah, sorry about that, I just wasn’t exactly in the mood. Kinda pissed off. She was being such a bitch last night. She told me I couldn’t go because it was a school night. But she only said that because I asked her why I couldn’t go. That’s all he said. He didn’t like complaining about his mom to Maria, she had heard it all before. John wished he could just make her disappear forever. Vanish.

I’m really sorry John. That really sounds like it sucks.

Yeah, it does. But what are you gonna do, ya know? She was sipping on her tea, looking down, hair falling on her face.

I wish you wouldn’t say stuff like that. She was still looking down.
What? What are you gonna do?

Yeah. You just make it sound like it isn’t a big deal. Twirling her hair with her hand.

It’s not that it’s not a big deal. There isn’t anything I can do. Who could I tell? My dad’s been gone since before I can remember, our family’s out of town, and what would they do anyway? This problem doesn’t have an answer.

It just doesn’t seem fair. You shouldn’t have to put up with this.

I know, but it’s not so bad. I’ll be fine. Don’t worry about me.

I do. She looked up at him.

Again. Looking at himself. The pale body. He noticed it didn’t even have hair. Then he saw it, a flickering of light. Clutched in his hand, the knife. NO! This time he remembered. Don’t do it! His body looked to him. The pale face, deep blue eyes. Then, he looked to the knife in his right hand, held it over his head. His left hand went up also grasping the handle, knife pointed down right at his stomach. The determination was stronger now. More fierce. It came down with lightening speed, just getting to his belly button....

John startled awake, slamming his arm into the wall next to his bed. He looked to his clock. 9:30. He looked at the posters on his wall, Pink Floyd, Radiohead, and a drawing of John Lennon that Maria had made him. His mom walked in.

Oh good. You’re up. I was thinking you could rake the yard today. I’m gonna go out with a couple of friends. She had makeup on, big hoop earrings.

I was gonna hang out with Maria today. He mumbled, rolling on his side to face her.

Well, she can wait while you rake -- you know I don’t like her anyway. She still hadn’t looked at him. She was looking over him, at the wall. It’s not like there won’t be time after. Oh, and clean the kitchen? You have a good day, honey, she said in her fake voice, I’ll see you later. She walked out of the doorway.

Great. He thought. Another great day. John stumbled to the bathroom and took a hot shower. He knew he should just wait until after the raking, but he liked the warm water trickling down his body.

The mirror fogged up when he was in the shower so John couldn’t see himself when he got out. He dragged his towel down across it, creating a narrow band to see his face. Then, shaving quickly, he hurried down the stairs to clean the kitchen.
It was littered with cups and cigarette butts. I guess when you’re that drunk, an ashtray just seems stupid. The black and white tile floor was cold and gritty on his bare feet as he walked back and forth from the kitchen table to the sink. He looked into the cups and saw a sticky film on the bottom of each one smelling of whisky. How could someone drink so much?

Once he was done, John decided to call Maria and ask her if she wanted to rake leaves with him.

Uhhhh, Yeah! She almost screamed it. I’m on my way.

John had already started in the front yard when Maria pulled up in her Honda. She parked on the opposite side of the street. Cut the engine, got out, and pretended not to notice him, but stared up the bare trees lining the street. John had stopped moving and was simply staring at her, leaning on his rake.

She approached him slowly, crossing the street with a smile creeping across her face.

Hey, stranger. Need some help raking your yard?

He smiled now too.

Yeah, that’d be great. He said, picking up the extra rake he had brought out and handed it to her. Sorry about this. By us hanging out I didn’t exactly picture yard work. My mom just wanted me to get it done.

I’m happy to help. Seriously. A golden piece of hair came loose from behind her ear. He could tell she meant it.

Thanks, I appreciate it. I really do. They were silent then. Each working together to form one massive pile at the front of the yard for the leaf collectors. He couldn’t believe she was really there helping him. Keeping him company.

We’re almost done, she said finally breaking the silence. Making one last hard stroke against the ground, Maria pushed the last of the leaves in front of her onto the pile in front of the street. Her nose was turning pink from the cold and her ears turning red. He didn’t know why, but he thought then, it was the most beautiful he had ever seen her.

Together while raking leaves, they decided to see a movie, one Maria picked.

Stepping into the dark theatre, she walked into the back row, the seats in the farthest corner.

I love this spot. She said. John couldn’t even see her face it was so dark.

Are you sure? He heard her laugh.

Yeah. It was another romantic comedy.
Halfway through the movie, she set her hand against his, and looked over. He could see her face now with the light from the movie and could tell she was trying as hard as she could not to laugh. Her smile was growing larger and larger, bursts of air escaping her lips with each held back laugh.

John.....I’m sorry but, let’s leave, she finally sputtered, laughing out loud. He laughed too, took her hand that was on his, and walked them out, laughing all the way.

Again, they went to Forest Park and again they lay again on that same bench, her head in his lap. He combed back her hair with his hand, tucking it behind her ear. He found that he couldn’t stop smiling. She rolled her head, facing him. Her ears and nose turning pink again, her dark green eyes, greener than ever, looking into his. He felt like today was the first time that he had ever seen her face. He simply smiled at how beautiful she had become to him. She was the best person he knew, so much better than her. He looked up and thought about what she might be doing. Drinking. A sad feeling began creeping upon him.

Maria had been smiling up at him while he was looking off.

What are you thinking about? She half whispered.

Nothing, he said looking down at her, feeling the happiness again. Nothing. When looking up, he had seen the dying golden grass and barren trees, but not really.

John didn’t even know what time it was when he finally dropped Maria off. Much past twelve. They were parked in her driveway and she was staring at her house, the golden streaks of dyed hair up in a bun again. Rocking her head and body back and forth a couple of times, she turned to him.

Will I see you tomorrow? He was thinking about tomorrow. What his mom would do about him coming home this late. What she would say.

I don’t know. He didn’t mean it to sound harsh, but it was.

Well I want to. Her eyes were large as she stared at him. John looked out the window of the car. The dead tree in her yard.

Anger was building up in him, but he didn’t know why. He tried to fight it. Beat back the monster growing in his mind, but he couldn’t.

Look, he said coldly, I’ll just call you tomorrow. He hated himself. He continued to look out the window as he heard her open the car door.

Maria... He wanted to scream it: I’M SORRY! But he couldn’t. The anger had taken him. She gently closed the door and walked into her house.
The anger had left him somewhat when he finally got back to his house. He crept through the front door and stepped into the kitchen, but his mom was waiting. She sat in her spot at the head of the table. He faced her.

So you decided to come home. She wasn’t looking at him, but staring into the cup at the cold, dark stuff. She took a drink.

It’s only one fifteen, I knew you’d probably be up anyway. He tried weakly.

Oh! She screamed, suddenly flaring up. So that makes it okay?! Still pouring into the bottom of the cup. Never looking at him.

Sorry. He crossed the room, and as he passed her, she caught his forearm, gripping hard, digging her nails into him. He stopped and bent down, looking her right in the eyes.

She glared at him, gripping harder. He held her gaze for a moment, then shook her hand off his arm in a quick motion. He crossed the threshold of the kitchen and suddenly felt better.

We’ll talk about this tomorrow! She screamed, getting in her last word. He climbed the stairs to his room and fell onto his bed, suddenly exhausted.

It was much different this time. The remote view no longer existed. John saw through the body’s eyes, his eyes. He looked down consciously now at his pale body, his hairless figure. The light coming through the window over his bed.

He wasn’t surprised with what he felt in his hand. He wasn’t surprised when he looked up and saw the knife. John was finally himself in the dream.

He looked down his belly button. Saw what he didn’t see before. There was a little of it left. Sticking out of him. Without hesitation, he pulled it up with his left hand, and with the knife in his right, sawed at the cord. He gritted his teeth in pain, curling his toes and arching his back. Slicing through the unwanted anger and pain existing in it.

He finished, panting, sweating, and threw it.

She was finally gone, no more a part of him. John relaxed, put his head on his pillow, and slept.

John woke with a clear head. Some giant weight had been lifted off of him. He quickly showered and changed clothes. He knew exactly what he was going to do.
Maria, he said through the phone.

Yeah, she whispered back. He had woken her, and felt a pang of guilt, but continued.

Sorry for waking you. Can I come get you? He knew it sounded ridiculous, it was only nine-thirty, but he needed to see her.

Of course, but aren’t you in trouble from last night? No hint of pain from his actions the night before. Only concern for his well-being.

God, you’re such a great person Maria. So much better than I have ever been to you. It could have gone better, but everything’s fine. I figured it all out late last night. I’ll be there soon.

John walked down the stairs and into the kitchen. His mom was slumped over the table, sleeping on her arms, glass still in hand. Normally he would have tried to creep by, but he no longer cared. Keys jingling in his hand, he trotted past her. As he crossed through the opposite doorway, she called out to him.

Where do you think you’re going? You’re grous... She wasn’t able to finish. John ignored her. He had walked to the front door, opened it, and left her.

It was a good drive to Maria’s. He drove with the windows open. Letting the air in. John didn’t think about what he was going to say to Maria, he simply drove and enjoyed a feeling he could only describe as freedom.

He parked in her driveway and stepped out of his Toyota, music still playing from his iPod. Maria was already walking to the car and looked puzzled when he began walking to her.

Are we staying here? She scrunched her forehead. He didn’t respond. John just smiled at her as he walked up the brick path. Staring into her eyes. Deep green. She smiled back, her hair was down, falling onto her shoulders. Golden streaks.

John, I don’t... He approached her, and put his arms around her neck, pulling her close to him. His nose was pressed against her hair and he could smell her shampoo.

John pulled his head back a little, but kept his arms around her. He put his mouth up to her ear.

I hope that you can forgive me for how I acted last night. I should never have treated you so cruelly. He whispered it.

It’s not your fault. I know you have a hard time with your mom and everything. Sometimes we have bad days. Her neck was against his shoulder, he felt her throat vibrating the words against him.
That’s no excuse for the way I treated you. You didn’t deserve any of it. But I have good news. That’s all gone now. It will never return. I promise.

John... She pulled back holding onto him with her arms around his waist, looking at his face and saw his smile. She looked confused, but smiled too.

There’s one more thing, he said slowly, pulling her close again. He liked her like that, close, against his body. I think I’ve realized that you are the best person I know. I just want to be with you all the time.

I know, and not just in a best friend sort of way. I would do anything for you, John.

I know you would. It all came swirling together in his mind then, the golden streaks, deep green eyes...pink lips.

---

**My New Car**

*By Catlin Bingham*

The candy red draws  
Your eyes to the slick lines  
and quick curves flow down the body  
The big thick tires were undoubtedly made for speed  
Your thoughts place you behind the wheel on the interstate hitting 90  
You know that you would look good, might even stop traffic when you fly by  
Sure the insurance would be bad, and the value would drop by half when it’s off the fancy show room floor. The guy with the slicked back hair, he tells you that it can be real cheap if you pay over 14 years. With his encouragement you sink into the plush fake leather seats and play with the gear selector. You smile when you look at him. I’ll take it you say. I all my friends will be impressed with my new car  
Away you go  
Fast  

Off you go  
Fast
Violence at the Library

By Nathan Brockmeier

Sirens rang out through the night, and the students studying for finals in the library all looked at each other wondering together when the city would finally be quiet. They just knew it was some low-class scumbag that probably shot someone for drug money or beat his wife for fun.

The library at this private school was the last place that people like that could be, and they were thankful for that as they waited for the sirens to pass. The sirens, however, were unrelenting. They seemed to be headed straight for the library.

Moments later the sirens stopped moving, and the bright reds and blues of police lights shone through the windows of the library as the sirens were finally silenced. Many of the students immediately thought that someone must have been mugged right outside the library and rushed down to the entrance to see if it was one of their close friends. The students indeed saw one of their friends, Jessica, in the back of the ambulance. Blood was everywhere!

The students immediately began berating the homeless and rift-raft when they saw something that surprised them. Jessica’s best friend, Ashley, was being escorted out of the library by the police in handcuffs!

When the students asked what had happened, the police said they could not comment, but the next morning on the news the speculation would be put to rest.

“Late last night a college girl was stabbed by another student in the Washington University Medical Library. The weapon was a pair of scissors that were being used to cut note cards. Apparently, the two young ladies were arguing over the use of therapy for dyslipidemia in the elderly when the argument spilled over into violence... further details at six o’clock.”

BLAH

Organic is giving me pains
Retrosynthesis, IUPAC names
Aromatic or not
To me doesn’t mean squat
And I think I might blow out my brains. PH
The Treasured Teddy Bear

By Shana Jones

Not long ago, a teddy bear arrived at the local toy store where many toys were waiting for a home. Rupert was a teddy bear that had seen too many homes in his past and his time was slowing coming to an end. Rupert was a special bear. He had a special sign on his leg that made him one of a kind. He was dressed in a button up shirt that fit him perfectly. He felt so handsome in that shirt. It had black and blue buttons all the way down on the front. He felt so special but no one else saw that extra spark in Rupert yet. He sat on the shelf in the window at the store and watched all of the young children walk by and point in his direction. He wished that those children would walk in and hold him in their arms. He missed that so much. The boy walked around for a long while before finding Rupert. Rupert sat quietly hoping the little boy would come in his direction. The little boy saw Rupert before he left. Unfortunately, the mother grabbed the boy by the hand and asked him to leave the store. Rupert did not know what to think.

Rupert continued to sit in the window for weeks, and after no one seemed interested in him, so he was sent to the back of the store and replaced with another toy. Rupert could not believe it. He wanted to stay in the front of the store but there was nothing that he could do. He sat on the highest shelf.

One day, he sat on the sticky, short shelf as usual looking at all of the other toys. He wondered how long they had sat on that shelf. Shortly after, Rupert saw the same boy who came in looking at him weeks ago. Rupert did not pay attention at first but he soon became very excited. The boy was looking everywhere and took out every toy on the shelves looking for something. Rupert just sat there and felt that the boy was not looking for him. How could he be? The boy left shortly after and Rupert understood why. But something caught Rupert by surprise; the boy looked up and saw Rupert. His eyes grew wide and he started to jump up and down with excitement.

Could it really be? Could the boy be looking for Rupert? The boy did not take his eyes off of Rupert the whole time until the owner climbed up and took Rupert off of the shelf. The boy was able to hug Rupert. Rupert felt loved again and that made him happy.

Rupert went home with the boy. He sat on his bed and waited for him to come home from school every day. Rupert had never been happier but one day the boy started packing all of his stuff. Rupert did not understand what was happening. Bags were coming in and the boy left one day and did not come back right away. Rupert sat on his bed waiting. Rupert will never know where the little boy went but can only hope that he will return soon.
Ichiban

By Heather Collins, Sarah Smith, Nathan Brockmeier, HyunSuk Lee

Characters:

Nicole: Nicole is 17 years old, gorgeous with long, dark brown hair.

Cassie: Cassie is 17 years old and is going to enter college on a scholarship.

Simon: Simon is 22 years old, Japanese and about six feet tall. He doesn’t go to school but works at Ichiban; he is a chef there. Five days a week he cooks both lunch and dinner. He has many friends whom he socializes with after his long nights of work.

Enrico: Enrico is 22 years old, very good looking, vain, selfish, and of mysterious background.

Setting:

Ichiban: an Asian food restaurant where Simon works as a cook as well as a bartender

Bailar: a salsa dance club where everyone is guaranteed a great time

Ariake: a Japanese food restaurant

Cassie and Nicole walk up to the bar at Ichiban...

Cassie: Can I get a Midori Sour?

Simon: I’m going to have to see some I.D.

Cassie gives a pretty smile and acts like she is digging through her purse when Enrico walks up to the bar.

Enrico: I happen to have one right here.

Simon makes the drink and hands it over.

Nicole: I’ll have a starry night. (to bartender)

Enrico smiles at Nicole then at the bartender. Simon makes the drink and slides it to Nicole. There is commotion coming from the kitchen. Simon quickly rushes toward the disruption. A substantial fire is now visible. Simon runs out of the kitchen pouring water on the fire. The three turn around to observe the mess; the fire alarm sounds. Enrico quickly gets an arm around both of the girls and casually leads them to an exit.

Nicole: Oh my gosh, you saved our lives.

Cassie: What about everyone else?
Enrico in all his masculinity says: I’m on it.

He swiftly turns around and walks back to the building searching the floor for anyone else that could be stuck inside. He spots Simon surrounded by fire. He looks for an escape route to help the bartender but can’t seem to find a way. He runs outside and finds the girls throughout the commotion.

Enrico: The bartender! He’s stuck inside! I can’t get him out.

Nicole stares at Enrico for a second before starting toward the restaurant.

Nicole: Hello? Is anybody in here?” she yells through the fire and smoke.

She hears a muffled cry for help coming from the kitchen area.

Nicole: ‘The firemen should be here soon.... But it won’t be soon enough...’ she thinks to herself, trying to reason if she should just let the fire department take care of it.

She takes the best deep breath she can and heads into the fire.

Cassie looks distraught, frantically searching for any sign that Nicole and Simon are exiting the building.

Enrico: Where are they? What could they be doing? Where the hell is the fire department?

Sirens are heard wailing, and the fire department arrives and is in the building within minutes.

After what seemed like hours....

Cassie: Do you think they’re okay? Do you think they’ll make it out?

As she’s finishing her question, the firemen walk out of the building, carrying body bags. Two of them.

Their hearts sank. They knew who was in there.

Cassie: Maybe we should exchange numbers so that we can talk to each other about this. I just lost my best friend, and I will probably need someone to talk to about all this.

Enrico: Ok, my number is 555-555-5555. What is your number?

Cassie: 666-666-6666

Later that night... Ring...ring...ring....

Cassie held back tears long enough to answer the telephone.

Cassie: Hello...
Enrico: Hey girl. I was just thinking about what happened today, and I really need to talk to someone. Do you want to go get a drink or something?

Cassie: I don’t know. I’m kind of worn out from everything, and it probably wouldn’t be appropriate after my friend just died.

Enrico: Awww c’mon, it will be good to get your mind off of everything. I know a great salsa bar that makes their drinks strong and plays their music loud.

Cassie: I don’t know, maybe some other time.

Enrico: You’re not getting rid of me that easy. Enrico hangs up the phone.

An hour later, Cassie sees something moving outside her window.

Cassie: AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Enrico approaches her window with a wry smile, and he taps on the window to get her attention.

Enrico: Hey girl, it’s just me: your superhero. I’m here to save you from this boredom.

Cassie: Are you insane? I told you some other night!

Enrico: Oh c’mon, tonight is as good as any other night. I couldn’t wait to see you.

Normally under these circumstances Cassie would resist the temptation to go out with Enrico. Lately however, Cassie has been in quite a slump when it comes to dating.

Cassie: Oh okay, but just one drink. I don’t know if I’ll be able to get in the bar though.

Enrico: It will be fine. I know the owner. Don’t forget to wear your dancing shoes.

Cassie: Okay, I’ll let you in while I get ready.

Cassie opens the window, and Enrico swiftly climbs through as if he’s done this a thousand times.

A few moments later they arrive at, Bailar, Enrico’s salsa dance club where things are about to “heat up.” The new friends enter the bar and sit down at a table. They share deep conversation, and they have had their fair share of drinks from the bar.

Cassie: Whew, I’m drunk!

Enrico: What happened to only one drink?

Cassie: Well, the company has been better than I expected... Oh, my God this is my favorite song!

Enrico: Well, would you like to dance?
Cassie: Of course. I have always believed that a great dance partner makes a great...

Enrico: (Excitedly) A great?

Cassie: ummm.....boyfriend.

*Enrico shudders at the thought of commitment, but he really likes Cassie so he leaves the possibility of a relationship as an option. The two make their way to the dance floor, and Enrico begins to show Cassie the finer points of salsa dancing.*

Cassie: *(Immediately entranced with Enrico’s moves)* So, are you dating anyone?

Enrico: No, I usually like to keep my options open, but I am reconsidering that policy.

Cassie: Oh really? Why is that?

Enrico: I’ve never met anyone that I would consider settling down with until I met you.

Cassie: That’s crazy. I feel the same way.

*As the two finish their slightly awkward conversation, a slow song begins to play. Enrico takes full advantage of the opportunity, and he pulls Cassie in close. The two share a moment before heading outside hand in hand.*

Cassie: It is such a beautiful night out tonight. Look at all the stars in the sky!

Enrico: Let me stop by the car and grab some blankets, so we can lay out and watch for shooting stars.

Cassie: Aww, how romantic. That sounds nice. Let’s go.

*Enrico spreads out the blanket and coaxes Cassie forward. They snuggle up in each other’s arms.*

Cassie: There’s one. Oh look there’s another! Aren’t you supposed to make a wish when you see a shooting star?

Enrico: Of course. You can’t tell me what you wish though or it won’t come true.

Cassie: Ok, ok. You’re so superstitious.

Enrico: That star over there is especially bright. I think I’ll name it after this beautiful girl I met: “The Cassie.” You’ll always be able to see it no matter where you are. See, it is right next to the tip of the Big Dipper.

Cassie: I’ve never had a star named after me before. There has to be a first for everything though. Thank you. That’s too sweet.
The lovebirds carry on whispering sweet nothings into one another's ear until they doze off under the open sky. It seemed to be the perfect ending to the perfect night.

Enrico is dreaming about the previous events that day...

Enrico: The bartender! He's stuck inside! I can't get him out!"

Nicole swiftly turns around and starts walking toward the building. As Nicole walks back into Ichiban, Cassie looks worriedly at Enrico. She yells at her friend to stop, but Nicole seems determined to help those trapped inside. Enrico had already been in once but decides to follow Nicole back in soon after.

He heads straight for the building determined to get those two out.

As he enters, he sees a ton of smoke but no sign of Simon or Nicole. He begins searching, covering his face from the smoke. He cannot seem to find either one. He spots Simon and quickly searches for a way to get him out. He spots a way and begins to walk toward the bar. He isn't sure if he will succeed. He looks around in desperation, but he is the only other person inside. Simon disappears behind the bar, and Enrico screams for him, for help, but gets no response. The fire is growing, and Enrico turns and begins to head out, feeling guilty but scared for his own life. He knew he wouldn't be able to get Simon out.

As he's running toward the door, Simon suddenly appears, blocking his exit, looking angry.

Simon: What kind of man are you?

Enrico: What do you mean?

Simon: You left me in that fire to die and have had no reservations about it since. Here you are lying with the girl of your dreams without a single care in the world. Let me remind you that I suffered terribly because of you.

Enrico: Man, I couldn't get to you. I tried. You think I meant for that to happen?

Simon: Whether you meant for it to happen or not, it did. You are the lowest of the low. You claim to be some big superhero to Cassie when in fact all you really are is a self-centered, good for nothing, waste of human space.

Enrico: Well that's a bit harsh wouldn't you say? I walked straight into that fire...

Simon: ...and you walked right on out of it too. I didn't. I burned slowly and painfully. You shall forever be haunted by this Enrico!!

Enrico suddenly awoke, drenched in sweat, next to Cassie. He decided not to wake her and tell her about the dream; she had had a hard enough day as it was. He lay back down, tried to relax, and drifted back to sleep.
A few months later...

Cassie: Where should we go dinner tonight?

Enrico: I want to try out this new place called Ariake. It is pretty close.

As they arrive Cassie spots someone walking back into the kitchen that looks awfully familiar. She gives a confused look like she just can’t recall from where she knows him.

Enrico: What’s wrong, babe?

Cassie: Nothing... she says, sounding unsure.

Later, Enrico: Wow, this is the best Japanese food I think I’ve ever had.

Enrico is gobbling down his food.
Cassie still looks a little perplexed because she feels like something isn’t right.
A rumble is heard from Enrico’s side of the table.....

Enrico: Excuse me... as he bolts to the bathroom.

The bathroom was across the restaurant. As soon as he saw a fire exit door, he took his quickest escape.

The door led to an alley behind the restaurant where Enrico proceeded to heave behind a dumpster.

Enrico feels a tap on his shoulder. He finishes heaving and turns around to come face to face with the barrel of a shotgun.

A faint gunshot is heard, ringing throughout the alley.

Cassie: After a half hour Cassie became worried. Where could he be?... Maybe he’s not feeling well.

She checks the bathroom, the bar, and other rooms in the restaurant before circling back to the table. He is still gone. She spots a side exit door and decides it is probably her last hope. She pushes open the door, and the police are standing over a body that looks an awful lot like Enrico...

Cassie screams.

After it was confirmed that Enrico was the victim, Cassie was hysterical. The police offered to give her a ride home. She is escorted by the police alongside the bar on the way out. The bartender gave her a sly smile, and as soon as she walked out the door, she realized who that man was: Simon, the cook from Ichiban.
Exotic Pharmacist

By Minal Amin

The crowd yells for her to perform,
Because her dance varies from the norm.
The loud music comes on,
Towards the stage, all eyes are drawn.
She is just a young girl,
But they watch her twirl.
Around and around that pole,
She goes with complete control.
She strips and flaunts
Giving them all their wants.
All are excited except for one,
Who can’t believe what she has done.
She doesn’t know what to do anymore
Her little girl has become a whore.
This young girl is now in a tight dress
And continues to have on less and less.
She is now one of the dance club queens,
That use to work at Walgreens.
She went from dispensing drugs
To impressing thugs
From a few years of schooling
To many years of men drooling
From helping those with an illness
To a crowd stuck in stillness.
Her job was to counsel her patients
And help them with complications.
Now her mission is to entertain,
As her mother grows more and more pain.
There is no prescription for this heartache
How can she make such a big mistake?

Ice Storm

By Shana Jones

A large falling branch
Covered in shimmering ice
Shatters on the ground
Alex in Wonderland
By Charlie Diehl

The key won’t fit into the lock. Do I have the wrong key or am I just freaking too hard to function? Oh no. Oh god. The keyhole turns into a face. It grimaces at me. Stop it! Where am I? How did I get here? Why is that bike giving me an evil look? Leave me alone. No, I won’t. No. No. Yes. Okay. Wait...why can’t I get through that door? Oh god, I’m peaking. I shouldn’t have left so soon. Now I’m stuck in my garage and it’s fucking freezing and my parents are going to find out. How long have I been here? God, chill. Chill. Alright, let’s try one more time. Take the key and put it into the lock. Am I moving or is the lock moving? Purple ants swarm from out of nowhere and everywhere. The purple ants aren’t real. Ignore the ants. Oh fuck. I can’t step on them. There’s so many. Please. Please. I’m sorry. The visuals are too strong. I close my eyes. Oh my god. That’s beautiful. Life is beautiful. Wait...where am I? How much time has passed? I must’ve been out here for a few hours now. Why are my hands wet? I wish someone was here. I’m all alone. This world is a depressing place. Thank god I don’t have a knife. The purple ants are gone as quickly as they came, but they’ll be back shortly. Wow, I wish everyone could see that. Whoa, it’s so beautiful. It’s so overwhelming. Shit. I need to get inside. I’m going to wake my parents. Chill out. Chill. Okay. The key finally turns the lock. Hurry! Hurry! Get inside quick. Now! Quick! I push the door open, scurry inside, and slam it shut as the ants appear again in the garage.

Okay they’re gone. I’m safe now. I begin to leak from my eyes. From fear or joy I do not know. Oh my god. Where am I? I can’t handle this anymore. I wish it was over. I want it to end. Alright, I’m going to go listen to Xavier Rudd. I bet that will sound so cool right now. Whoa. What happened to my refrigerator? What is that noise? Stop it! Stop it! The refrigerator slowly backs me against the cupboard. I stand, paralyzed like a deer in the headlights, waiting for fate to do its duty. It will pass. It will pass. Think happy thoughts. My mood is expressed through what I see. If I think happy thoughts I’ll live. The refrigerator won’t hurt me. “AAAAHHHHHHHHH,” someone yells in the distance. Did that noise come from me? Fuck. They’ll be in here in three seconds. Have three seconds passed? Be cool. Remember Carey.

Be cool. As my mind struggles to maintain control over my body, my body slowly slithers through the kitchen to the base of the stairs. How am I moving? Wow. This is fucking awesome. I’m floating. I bet Modest Mouse has been where I am. Whoa. What the fuck. Why is there snow covering the stairs. Man, if someone sees me they’re going to know. I bet I look ridiculous. I’m so cold and so wet. Why am I wet? I wish Brittney was here. She knew how to dry me last time. I stand. Spider webs hold my fingers together. Everything I touch forms a spider web. My hands are stuck to my dreads with a spider web. I shake my hands furiously to remove the webs. Get off! Stop it! AAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH! Whoa. Heehee. Wow. My hands leave trace patterns in the air. I chuckle and follow them for what seems like an hour or two.
The task of surmounting the stairs that now look like a steep snow-covered peak still lies ahead of me. A light turns on at the top of the peak. The light at the top of the stairway causes the Led Zeppelin song, “Stairway to Heaven,” to play in my head. I’m now invincible. My soul separates from my body and floats to the top of the stairs. **Come back here damn it. Get back inside of me. You know I can’t float. I’m trying. Yes. No. No, I say, no. Alright, I’ll try.**

“Alex, what are you doing?”

I’m halfway up the stairs in the fetal position, clutching the banister as if it was a rope that I was using to climb up Everest. “Just chasing dragons and butterflies off in a magical world I like to call Friday night. The real question is what is my kid brother doing up at 4:30 in the morning?” **Oh god, why did I say that. He has to know I’m fucked up now. Damn it. Fuck. He’ll tell mom. Fuck, I’m screwed.**

“Well first off it’s like 1:03 in the morning and I was using the bathroom.”

**Why is he yelling? Should I say something? Is he really yelling? I can’t tell. It can’t be 1:03. I was dropped off at 1:00, and it must’ve taken me a few hours to get this far.** He stares at me like I’m crazy. Maybe I am crazy. **I have to convince him that I’m straight. “Ricky, come with me.”**

“I need to go to sleep.”

“Just for a minute. I need to show you something.” His face starts melting. **What is happening? “What’s wrong with your face?” He doesn’t answer.**

“I’m going to bed.”


“You’re going to wake mom. Be quiet. I’ll come with you if you chill.”

I hoist up the rope and summit the peak. **I did it. I’m there. I’m chillin’. My soul is reunited with my body. The universe’s balance is back on track. Alright, be cool. I must convince him I’m straight. I’m not alone now. It’ll pass. I go under the glowing archway into my room.**

Wow. **My room is so bright. Who turned on the light? Everything is trippy as fuck in here. Wow it’s so beautiful. Life is beautiful. “Turn off the light, Ricky.”**

“It’s not on. Are you drunk?”

“Ricky, just turn off the damn light. I need to show you something.”

“The light is off.”
“Good. Good.” I turn on my lava lamp. It starts to manipulate itself into bubbles and swirls. Wow. That’s crazy. I wish I could always see these things. I put Xavier Rudd into the CD player. I sit on the bed as he stares awkwardly at me. He contemplates my actions and my mood. “Listen to the didgeridoo.” “Close the door.” He closes the door. “Lock it.” I can’t risk it. His childhood can’t be sacrificed. Well, he’s been drunk before, but I doubt he’s encountered anything like this before. Wow. Look at that. Whoa. The screen on the tube starts showing swirls and twirls of psychedelic color to the beat of the music. “Open my sock drawer. There’s a plastic bag at the bottom in the back. Pull it out.” He grabs it and opens it.

“Is this pot?”

“Yes. Open the window. Light some incense. Face the fan towards the window.” I’ve crossed the line. There’s no turning back. His childhood is mine. This is going to be a helluva story of initiation. Oh god. Here it comes. The visuals are too crazy. I wish this would stop. Rudd is too trippy. I need something to chill me out.

“Whoa. Chill out, man.” He obeys my requests.

Is this going to be cool?

blurt...

blurt...

blurt.

Whoa. Whoa shit. NOOO. The floor on the right side of my bed starts to boil. I look up to see Rick light the incense. He doesn’t notice the boiling floor. Is this where life begins or is this where life ends? This is so unreal. What happens if you...whoa! What the fuck? It’s that fucking Grimer Pokemon. Holy Fuck. Holy Fuck. “Ricky, uh, umm...”

“Yeah.” He looks around his shoulder at me.

“...nothing man.” Chill out man. I need some chillin’ out music. The music is on the other side of the bed though. That’s so far away. I roll over and turn off the Aboriginal music. It was freaking me out. I put on some Neil Young. That usually chills me out. I sit on the bed waiting for Rick to sit next to me. The music is working. I’m chill. The blank screen shows a kaleidoscope of different colorful patterns swirling about to the low strum of Young’s guitar. That’s beautiful. I wish I could float in to that screen. It’s so pretty. I get lost in the waves of the screen. Rick mutters something. I turn towards him. He repeats himself. When he speaks, I hear only gibberish. God I hate when this happens. Every time I’m trippin’, someone has to speak gibberish. I should just act like I’m too into the music.

“Are you high then? Would you quit itching yourself?” I itch because I’m paranoid of bugs coming through my window. There’s a screen, but I still believe I’m itchy.
“It’s so beautiful."

“What is?”

“The world is. I wish I could share it with you. The world… I love you Ricky. You’re my brother. I love you more than anything else in this world. I love you so much. You’re very important to me. It’s so beautiful.”

“Your freaking me out.”

“Don’t fight it. It’ll freak you out. Just grasp it and fly away with it.” I start to roll a joint from the bag. I light it. I puff on it and hand it to him. “Just take as much smoke possible into your lungs and hold it there. Blow the smoke out the window.”

“Just into my lungs.”

“Yeah…” The pictures are so beautiful. The shapes remind me of a kaleidoscope. The colors are so bright. “Ricky…”

He coughs. “Yeah?”

“Right now I’m three hours into the weirdest mushroom trip I’ve ever experienced.” He gives me a blank look. “Do you know what mushrooms are? Not the ones you buy at the store, but the drug.” He shakes his head. I might regret this later. “Well, they are a hallucinogenic drug like LSD. They make you see and feel and hear crazy things; like earlier I thought the purple ants were going to attack me.”

“What the fuck?”

God I need the windows closed. I can’t close them till we finish the joint. The joint burns good. It’s good weed. I got it from Amsterdam.

“What do you mean you got attacked by purple ants?”

“Well on mushrooms about 20% of what you see isn’t actually there and you’ll really believe in it. It can be scary.”

“Why would you eat mushrooms if it scares you?”

Only part of the time it’s scary. Some part of the time it’s beautiful. It all has to due with your surroundings and your mindset going into the trip. He stares at me blankly.

“Dude are you okay? You’re lips were moving but no sound came out.”

I can see his words turn into bubble letters as he spoke. Everything slows down to a near stop. I hear my heart beat very slowly. Am I dead? What’s going on? His lips are moving so slow. He’s not making any sense. I have to concentrate. Concentrate Alex. Focus.
He’s staring at me. **Why is everything changing shape?** Oh my god. I just want it to end. I wish I was dead.

“Stop freaking out.”

I snap into reality. “Sorry man, I should be done peaking soon.” I look at the clock. “What the fuck? Does that really say 1:16?”

“Yeah,” he says as he finds me to be hilarious.

*He’s one of those stoners; the ones who laugh at everything. How did so little time pass? What is time anyways? Aren’t minutes and hours just arbitrary words that we assign to mean a designated amount of time? But what really is time? I can’t hold a minute or an hour. How do we know what designated amount of time has gone by? Actually, I can’t prove that the past or the future exists. In fact, they don’t. Only now exists. That’s why Thomas Lawrence said, ‘Be Here Now!’*

“Wow. Wow.” I laugh. *Life is good.* I put the joint out, and throw the roach into my baggie. “Are you high?”

“I think so.” “Everything feels weird.” “I don’t know.”

“Do you want to watch a movie?”

“Sure, which one?”

“Go get Alice in Wonderland. It’ll fit my mood. It’s really trippy”

“Alright, I’ll be right back.” He laughs and gets up. As he struggles to unlock the door, I think I see the Bob Marley poster on my door puff on a joint. I close my eyes. *I wish I could’ve smoked pot with Bob Marley.*

Crazy patterns roll and tumble across the backs of my eyelids. I see the music floating along a black tunnel filled with swirling colors. *This is why people do ’shrooms. These visuals are great. I wish I could draw everything I’m seeing. I’ve tried before. My concentration under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs is close to zero. I’m happy. This has been a good trip after all. I wish I could share this with everyone. I’m going to do mushrooms so much more. I get under the soft blankets and prepare a few pillows for Rick on my floor. My stomach hurts. As I close the portal to the parallel universe, Rick comes back up and puts Alice on the screen. That portal is like some Donnie Darko shit. That shit blows my mind. I can’t think about that right now.*

“That’s amazing! How did you get those images to appear on that screen? That’s magical. Wow!”
“I just put the movie in.” He laughs again. He begins to watch Alice endure a boring educational lesson.

Everything I do must be freaking him out, but I really do find it amazing that a video tape can hold thousands of tiny pictures and display them on a black box for my eyes to gaze upon. Technology amazes me. It is so complex. We as human beings in this society take so much for granted. We use these machines even though most of us don’t know how they work. Sure we know, well you press this button then that button and hit these two at the same time and it does this. That isn’t really understanding how something works. That’s just memorizing directions on how to manipulate the machine to get it to do what you want it to do. Oh shit. My upper right leg is on fire. Oh god. Why am I burning? “What the hell is happening?”

“Your phone is vibrating, dumb ass.” He pauses the movie.

“Oh god. Another piece of technology that I don’t understand.” Oh! It’s Bill! “Hello. Yes. I just smoked pot with my brother. Yea. I’m good. Well thanks, but this box that emits your voice is freaking me out so I have to go. Bye.” The movie resumes.

“I still don’t understand why you would want to be like this. Your pupils are as big as your eyes. What is going on in your head? Why did you eat mushrooms?” He laughs and stares at me.

I stare deeply into his eyes. “That is the question, isn’t it?” He’s baked. This movie has been playing for hours.

“So…you didn’t answer yet.”

“You don’t understand.” He gives me a hurt look. I think he decides to drop it for now. Why do I do mushrooms?

Wow. Those colors are beautiful. Alice comes upon the doorknob. That doorknob… let her in that door. Let her in. She’s just curious. She wants to find the white rabbit. Let her in. Please just let her in. My eyes are leaking again. I hate when they do that. No… stop. Please. “Turn it off. I need to go to bed.”

“Are you crying? What’s wrong?”

“Leave me alone.” He gets up and turns the movie off.

“I’ll see you in the morning. Good night.” As he closes the door behind him, he asks once more “Why do you do that to yourself?”

I lie down on my bed and stare at him. Leave. Close the door. Leave. Quit staring at me. Close the door. There you go. “Night.” I curl up under my blankets and enter a deep thinking stage. I’m not tired at all. I just want to think.
Why do I do this to myself?

Why do I use drugs to escape reality?

I use drugs to escape reality because it’s the only thing that makes sense to me anymore. Nothing makes sense except escaping. My life doesn’t make sense. The world doesn’t make sense. Nothing makes sense. Sometimes I want out. No, sometimes I need out.

My life doesn’t make sense. I’m scared. I don’t know what I’m doing. I have no idea what I want to do with my life. It seems I hurt everyone I get close to. I try to be kind to them, but when it comes down to it I’m a jerk to them. I know it. I don’t want to be. I try not to be. I am a jerk to them. I begin to leak all over my pillow. Life scares me. I have no idea where I’m going.

Earth is probably the craziest place in the entire universe. Nothing makes sense here. I hate it. People are mean. Everyone is driven by money and power and fame. I walk down the street and I run into a homeless person. I take ten more steps and pass a rich business man. Why can’t everyone just share everything with everyone else? I don’t understand why greed has conquered the lives of so many. Our world is becoming chaotic and no one is stopping it. I scream at the top of my lungs in a room full of deaf people. Capitalism is a terrible system. The rich are getting richer and the poor are dying. Why don’t people love people more than they love money? People love money so much that they kill for it. I don’t care which war it is or who is fighting it, but there are only two reasons that people fight wars: to steal money from other people or to protect the money that is trying to be stolen. Either way, the people supporting that war are saying that money is more important to them than people. It doesn’t seem like a big deal until you realize that the people dying in these wars are someone’s sister or brother or mother or father or daughter or son or friend or lover. How much money does it take to kill family or friends? Our governments spend billions of dollars every year fighting the fight that can’t be won. Those dollars could change the world. Those dollars could feed people in India or educate people in South America or house people in our backyard. I need to escape this viscous world using any means necessary.

Sometimes I wish I was dead. Sometimes it’s more than sometimes. I’m so small. I can’t do anything. The system is too powerful. People think that it’s human nature to be driven by greed. When I look at the world I think it’s hard to disagree. I believe it is not human nature but rather societal nature. I don’t know how to change it, but it can be changed. I don’t have the answers nor do I think one person does. We must work together as a society to turn this game of tug-o-war into hug-o-war. We must love our brothers and sisters. Instead of looking out for number one, why don’t we all look out for the one human family?

Why do I use drugs to escape from reality? It’s all the sense I have. I want to feel beautiful. I want the world to seem beautiful. For my own sanity, I need love. I turn on the news, I read the paper, I look outside, and I listen to the radio: all I can feel is hate. Racism,
sexism, capitalism, and totalitarianism are all filled with hate, and I encounter every one of these things everyday. Just love me. I already love you.

As I drift off to sleep on my tear-filled pillow, I wonder what the world holds in store for me tomorrow.

Expand
By Sara Richter

There are seconds,
Which turn into minutes,
Which turn into hours and days.
How many are there in a year again?
I feel like I've been in this place for too long.
I'm tired and cranky and just want to give up right now.
I study and read and look for an end, but there is none in sight.
Year one, year two, year three, year four; for many college would be over.
But no, I am stuck here in this difficult place for the longest six years of my life.

Sonnet for Tiger Woods
By HyunSuk Lee

Tiger was born in 1975 in December.
Started to play golf when he was three.
Always enjoyed to tee
Up the ball every time. He still remembers
How he started and kept playing and practicing forever
He won many championships including many Majors. Every golfer wants to be
Like Tiger, but can't even be the follower.

Winning every single tournament is tough
But Tiger had set the record of winning six straight Tournaments. Hard to get out from the rough Situation like when he is in slump, but he fights Himself to become the best.
Needs lots of effort to become the greatest.
A Pirate Dream
By Bryan Willett

“27 steps from the back porch and 15 steps from the dogwood tree,” growled Steve the Pirate in Sully’s dream one night. So the next day, Sully counted off the steps and began to dig. He dug until the hole was deep and the dirt pile was high. He kept digging. The hole got deeper and the dirt pile got higher, but Sully found nothing. He wondered if Steve the Pirate was tricking him. He continued digging until the hole was deepest and the dirt pile was at its highest. He sighed, “I’m too tired. I can’t dig anymore.” Then, he spied something poking its way out of the dirt! Sully became very excited. He reached down into the hole and pulled on the object with all his might. It was only one of Woofy’s bones. Instead of treasure, all Sully had was a dog bone. Sully was sad. But when Sully’s mother saw what he had done, she clasped her hands and smiled a smile from ear to ear. “Oh, thank you, Sully. I always wanted a rose bush planted just there. Here is $5.00 for digging that hole.”

I Need to Let Him Fly
By j.g.

I need to let him fly
I know I have to let him go
I know we’ll never be
I know I need to be stronger
I know I need to detach from all emotions
I know I’ll be hurt in the end
But I can’t be the one doing the hurting
It’s just not me
Drug Bust

By Minal Amin, Amy Ellinger, Bryan Willett, Cameron Schulte

Characters

- Jack is a narcotics agent for the city of Saint Louis. He is in his mid 30’s, tall and lean with a dark-brown receding hair.
- Mike has just turned 24 and has just moved here from Mobile to start a new job.
- Tom is a 7-11 gas station clerk. He hates his job but it’s the only one that he hasn’t gotten fired from yet. His one love in life is his tattoos. He has both arms already covered and is now starting on his back. Along with his tattoos comes the piercings. Both ears, the bull ring in his nose and one in his lip.
- Nikki is 19 years old, a freshman St. Louis College of Pharmacy. Her roommate hates her and is always in someone else’s room but Nikki doesn’t realize it is because of her.

Nikki: *(on the phone)* I am going to say what again? Sarah, I don’t know if I can do this. Okay I will call you back as soon as I am done.

*Nikki pulls into the 7-11 gas stations and sees a man with tattoos covering his body and a ring in his nose standing behind the counter. She swings open the door to her car and nervously walks in. She scopes out the gas station, making sure that it is safe to proceed. A man in a suit is standing at the soda fountain.*

Tom: Can I help you?

Nikki: *(walking up to the counter)* can I get $20 worth of premium on pump 9?

*Tom looks over the young girl for a few seconds, and then walks to the storage room, not saying a single word to Nikki. A few minutes later he walks back to the counter with a little zip-lock bag clinched in his fist. Just as Nikki hands Tom the $20, a tall, lean man with a dark-brown receding hairline walks into the door and stands at the counter behind Nikki. Tom quickly puts the bag into his back pocket as he notices the shape of a gun underneath the man’s shirt at his hip.*

Tom: Hello there sir, can I help you?

Jack: I’ll take 2 packs of Marlborough lights.

Tom: Yes sir.

Jack: So miss, what are you doing out here so late at night?
Nikki: *(nervously)* I was studying with some friends and I’m just stopping in for some caffeine; big test tomorrow.

Jack: This is a dangerous place for a young girl like you to be.

Tom: Here are your cigarettes sir. That’s $7.16.

Jack: *(hands the man a $10)* how’s business going tonight?

Tom: *(handing Jack his change)* Oh, it’s been pretty slow. The new QuikTrip across the road is killing us.

Nikki: Can I just get my coffee and go. I’m really tired.

Tom: Oh, let me get you a fresh brewed cup.

Nikki: Oh, okay. *(Tom comes out and hands Nikki a cup).*

Tom: I went ahead and put some sweetener in the cup for you.

Nikki: Thanks *(She walks out and in her hurry; accidentally drops the cup on the floor.)*

Tom: Crap!

Nikki: Oh no!

*Jack rushes over to help. As the cup hits the ground, Jack realizes there is no coffee in the cup as a small bag of white powder falls out.*

Tom: Grab it and run! Grab it and run! NOW!

Nikki: AHHHHHHHHHHHH! *(She picks up the bag and runs for the doors, continuing to scream.)*

Jack: *(Pulls out a gun)* Freeze! Don’t move and put your hands in the air! Both of you! Do it! Quick!

Nikki: Ok, ok. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. *(As her eyes start to tear up)* Please don’t hurt me.

Jack: I’m not going to hurt you. Just drop the drugs. *(Nikki obeys and as Jack moves over to pick up the bag, he notices movement out the corner of his eye.)*
Tom: I wouldn’t do that if I were you. You didn’t pay for that, she did. You drop it!

Jack: Son, you cannot tell me what to do. Do you know who I am?

Tom: Oh, yes I can and I don’t give a damn who you are. All I know is those drugs don’t belong to you. Now drop them or else!

Jack: Or else what??

Tom: This. (As he pulls a gun out from under the counter and points it at Jack. Tom wasn’t just worried about the little bag in the man’s hand; he was worried about his entire stash hidden in the back closet of the gas station.)

Jack: What are you doing? (Jack turns and points the gun at Tom now.)

Tom: (Grabs Nikki from behind and points the gun at her head.) Put your gun down! Put the drugs down or I shoot the girl. Who sent you?

Jack: I’m a police officer. We have been tracking you for months dealing out of this gas station. I know about the drugs in the closet. Now put down your gun. I have back up on the way.

Tom: Oh shit! Are you kidding me! (As he holds Nikki even tighter, he thinks to himself if the cops know what I’ve been doing, I’m in big trouble.) I’m not going down without a fight. I’ve been to prison once and I’m not going back!

Jack: Just put the gun down and let the girl go. She has nothing to do with this. Nobody has to get hurt.

Tom: She has everything to do with this. If she didn’t drop the cup full of drugs, you would have never known what was going on and guns wouldn’t be drawn.

Jack: I have known what has been going on here for some time. It was only a matter of time before you got caught. Shooting the girl is only going to make things a lot worse. You’re not thinking rationally right now. Just let the girl go!

A loud noise comes from the back of the store. Everyone looks over in that direction and finds a man standing behind a fallen rack of chips.

Tom: Who the hell are you and where did you come from (as he points his gun toward the man). Get out from behind the chips and show your face.

Mike: Okay, okay. I’m coming out. Don’t shoot!

Jack: Tom, take your gun off of that man. He is just a customer. Let him go.
Tom: No, he has heard every word we have been saying. He is as much a part of this as you are now (now pointing his gun at Jack).

Mike: Think through this, Tom. If you shoot any of us, you could be going to prison for the rest of your life. If you just let the girl go and do as the police officer says, you might only go to prison for a couple of years. You can still have a life.

Tom: But, if I shoot all three of you, then nobody will even have to know about this.

After hearing Tom say those words, Nikki became very frightened. She was beginning to think that she might not make it out of the gas station alive. She knew she had to do something. With all her might, she kicked back her leg right between Tom’s legs. Tom yelled out in agony as he fell to the ground and let go of Nikki. Nikki quickly jumped over the counter and took off toward the door. Jack looked for a shot at Tom, but couldn’t manage to get one off because Tom was in the floor behind the counter. Just before Nikki got to the door, Tom jumps out from behind the counter with his gun pointed right at Nikki.

Mike: No! Watch out! (Mike jumps out in front of Nikki just as Tom pulls the trigger. The bullet lands in Mike’s right shoulder as he hits the floor hard.)

Mike: (yelling in pain) Run! Get out of here!

Jack shoots Tom in his hand, making Tom drop the gun. Tom falls to his knees in pain and covers the bullet wound with his other hand. Jack then walks behind the counter and kicks Tom off of his knees. He steps on Tom’s hand with his steel-toe boots, making sure that Tom feels the pain. Tom screams out in horror. Jack reaches down toward Tom’s face and rips out his bullring from his nose. Blood gushes out as Tom screams.

Jack: I told you to put the gun down. Now look what you did to yourself you piece of shit.

Tom: (yelling in agony) I’m sorry! I’m sorry! Please don’t kill me!

Jack: Oh, I’m not going to kill you...yet. First you are going to tell me who you get your supplies from. Then I kill you.

As Jack gets information out of Tom, Mike stumbles outside the gas station holding onto his shoulder. Nikki, who has been in her car calling for an ambulance, quickly jumps out when she sees Mike.

Nikki: Are you okay? I just called 911 and an ambulance should be here within 5 minutes.

Mike: Yeah, I’m okay. He just hit me in the shoulder. I should be fine. Don’t worry about it.
Nikki: Don’t worry about it! You saved my life!

*Bang! A shot is fired from inside the gas station. Both Nikki and Mike are startled. Before they can even react to the shot, Jack steps outside.*

Mike: You killed him? Why did you kill him?

Jack: Son, don’t worry about it. It is none of your business. You don’t look so good. Have you called an ambulance?

Mike: Yes, Nikki did. I thought you said you had backup on the way?

Jack: Haha. No, I just said that to scare him. I usually work alone. *(He looks at Mike as he walks to his car.)* Hope you make it okay. And girl, stay away from drugs. See what kind of mess it got you into.

*Jack jumps in his car and takes off. Mike and Nikki look at each other in confusion. The ambulance arrives along with a police car following behind. The EMTs rush over to attend to Mike. Mike insists he is okay and tells them about the dead body inside the gas station. The cops get out of their cars and go straight to Nikki. She knows she has a lot of explaining to do.*

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**Love at Flight**

*By Jacob Krebs*

I dream of Angels flying so high above  
Their song whispers of our perfect love  
A message upon their soft, sweet wing  
My love for you they gently bring  
As they begin a smooth descent  
A letter arrives that is heaven sent...

Can I give you my heart sweet Angel?  
Can I love you forever?  
Let me have you—hold you  
I want my love to reach ever deeply  
As deep as the ocean blue—
Hit by the Pitch

By Heather Collins

It was a smoldering hot day in the middle of July when I ventured out of my cool, air-conditioned home to watch my niece’s softball game. She had advanced in the league, now playing fast-pitch versus coach-pitch, and she was downright joyous. I watched as she loaded her oversized bag into the miniature sized trunk with the help her Dad. She waited impatiently as the adults gathered their lawn chairs and snacks to munch on during innings. The horn honked: once, twice, now three times. We all piled into the car and were on our way. There was talk of nothing other than how many hits she was going to get, flies she was going to snag from the air, and opponents she was going to throw out at first base. By the time we reached the park I was ready for just a moment’s peace needless to say.

By the fourth inning the game was well underway with both teams fairly evenly matched. I watched as the little blonde-haired ball of energy stepped up to the plate for the third time that day. Ball one came and went. Ball two. Ball three. If she had learned anything about the sport thus far she would know not to swing at this next pitch. She could simply have her base if the pitcher wasn’t right on the money. Here came the pitch. Wait... where did it go? I stood up, unsure of what had just happened. My niece stepped away from the plate, but I couldn’t catch a glimpse of her face as to what was going on. The coach started moving toward her from his coaching position at third base and continued to do so at a more rapid rate until he took her up in his arms. He threw her over his shoulders and failed to make it off the field before everyone in the park heard that deafening wail. Her face had taken the brunt of the pitch so it seemed as her lip resembled a platypus within a matter of mere minutes. Her battered lip was entwined and tangled within those braces that we were later told saved her from being toothless. The pain was overwhelming, and she made sure everyone knew it.

How could she have let that pitch hit her square in the mouth without even a flinch? Was she lacking in the area of motor skills? Did she not see it coming? Good Lord you could not pay me to stand in the way of that whizzing ball, not to mention with my head for Christ’s sake! She claimed the helmet must have been covering her eyes, blocking her vision because she was unaware the ball had left the pitcher’s hand. “Boy I hope so,” I think but keep my mouth shut as I could tell her mouth is not the only thing that had been hurt. Her pride has taken quite a blow as well. Nevertheless, she was out on the field within days determined to re-establish some of that unwavering pride.
Strike one
By Cameron Schulte

The day has finally come
It’s opening day for major league baseball
The fans are pouring in, buying up all the souvenirs
Beer, Hotdogs, Nachos, Peanuts and more quickly being sold
The grounds crew on the field, laying down the chalked baselines
The newly acquired players are warming up along the foul lines. Fans are lined up along the dugouts just waiting to see Albert Pujols and the shot for a signed baseball. The fans are painted red, ready to go, hoping for another championship year, only time will tell. The field is ready and the National anthem is being sung. The hats are over the hearts and we’re praying for win number one. The team takes the field and warm up pitches are being thrown. The umpire takes position, time to play ball
The wind up and the pitch. Strike one

The Dark Knight
By April M. Finke

Beneath the blue gray sky, she sat to cry
Bars in the way, she knelt to pray

Ten years old, the door she holds
For on the other side, an alternate life resides

A dark knight, claims his right
The reins he takes, many emotions he shakes

Slippery wet, he drowns in a bet
The road so slick, the time begins to tick

A bright light before his eyes
Lucky to make it home in one disguise

Five years later, a round too far
Sends him swirling to the bar

A charge too deep for him to bear
To the courts with his despair
This Is Not A Children’s Story
By Nicholas Goulden

Dear Reader,

My name is Tony Soprano and I am currently being held, much against my will, in the psychiatric ward of a hospital. They refuse to let me go because my ‘condition is unstable’ (see also: Too suicidal for their comfort.) I tried to off myself, so what? Gotta problem with that? You don't know the kind of pressure I'm under day in and day out, so don't be too quick to judge. Let me tell you a bit about my life.

I was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey (see also: Armpit of the Nation), pierced ears by eleven, and roaming the city streets by thirteen—I was a bad ass motherfucker. My father is the mob boss here and basically practically runs this state—he has all the politicians in his right pocket. I witnessed my first death when I was nine in my father’s rise to power. He shot my double crossing uncle Michael right in the chest—his aorta opened like a garden hose and a waterfall of crimson blossomed from his chest. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. It was also part of a life lesson my father wanted to teach me: "You can't trust anyone; even your own goddamned brother will cheat you."

While I was still earning my tough street reputation as an early teenager, my father also thought it was important for me to receive a proper education—something he never got. As he put it: "You need to learn Shakespeare and shit." In essence, I needed to be well educated and literate for when I took over the family business.

Growing up, I could never step outside of my father's massive shadow. It was always, "Hey, you're Anthony's kid. Pay my respects to your father." It really started getting old. After all, I was a tough guy trying to earn my own street cred and that was impossible when you kept being referred to as "Anthony's kid." I once stomped the teeth out of some poor fucker for calling me that—it was glorious.

So, why did I try and kill myself? I'm eighteen years old and I still couldn't step out of my father's shadow. Do you know how frustrating that can be? I even dressed myself in expensive suits and carried brass knuckles on me at all times and I still couldn't shake myself of the "Anthony's kid" title. I began to lose hope, started hallucinating wicked shit, and dove off into a severe depression. Eventually, all I could think about was taking a box cutter to my wrists and draining myself of the life sustaining blood that flowed through my body.

"To be, or not to be: that is the question." (See also: Hamlet Act III, scene I). In the end, I chose not to be. I took a razorblade to my wrists, slicing up and down the tender bellies of my forearms and watched in fascination as my wrists wept a trickling stream of deep red wonder. And that is where I lost consciousness.
I awoke to find myself in a hospital bed, heavy bandages coating my forearms and an IV tube leading down into my right wrist. My father was sitting in a chair next to my bed and when he saw me stir from my slumber all he could say was, "boy, are you fucking stupid?"

After they saw that I was well enough to be taken off the IV, they wheeled me into the psychiatric ward. It was there that these idiot psychiatrists diagnosed me as being bipolar and the incompetent nurses practically forced the nasty hospital meals down my throat. If it weren't so sad it would be hilarious how horribly unhealthy the meals were in the hospital—I thought it was supposed to be a place of health!

It was in that very psychiatric ward that I met Palindrome Bob (see also: spelt forwards and backwards). He was at least fifty years old and his jeans were sagging off his ass; he didn't have a belt and was forced to hold them up wherever he went. He introduced himself to me as, "Hi, I'm Bob. It's a palindrome, spelt forwards and backwards. B-O-B, Bob!" Nice to meet you Bob, you're out of your fucking mind!

One morning while eating breakfast in the common room of the ward Bob came, sat his tray down next to me and started eating some flavorless oatmeal. I tried my oatmeal and it damn near gagged me. I stuck to the flavorless scrambled eggs and the bacon of a cardboard consistency. It was then that B-O-B, Bob put down his spoon, turned to me and issued a profound statement, "This oatmeal tastes like shit!" He then turned back to his tray and continued eating his oatmeal.

Sincerely,

Anthony Soprano, II

The Beach
By Karen Obermann

The warm sand squished between my toes
the sun so bright, like staring into a flashlight
the waves crash and hiss at shore
the salty water, deep, deep blue
the washed up jellyfish rotting away
the pit of my stomach sinks at the thought
of the beach going on without me.
Snow Surprise (Children’s Short Story)
By Derek Palisch

I walked outside today. It was cold and cloudy and a chance of snow? What is snow? I wonder how it feels. I wonder how it tastes. For five long years I've been waiting to find out. And then it happened. I saw a single speck of white "dust" gracefully fall from the sky and land on the ground. It quickly melted.

Within five minutes, there were trillions of snowflakes about the size of quarters falling from the sky. I didn’t know what to do, so I ran. I ran inside to mommy and the warm kitchen. "You better stay inside for a while," she said.

"I will...It’s too cold outside." I replied.

I curled up on the couch, had mommy put in a movie, and fell fast asleep. I woke up at lunchtime and looked out the window at the back yard. Everything was white; my swing, my sandbox, my clubhouse, and the grass were gone. The snow swallowed everything. Mommy dressed me in warm clothes and told me to go play. I didn’t know what to do at first, but found the snow very fun after a while. I built towers, and bolls, and mommy helped me build a snowman. I played all day long until dark. When mommy called me inside, I realized that I had forgot to taste the snow. I had messed up the whole yard, so the search for good, clean snow was difficult. I went to the far corner of the yard and found something interesting. I didn’t know snow could be two different colors.

I picked up the while snow and put it on my tongue. It was cool and clean and made my mouth water. It was pretty good. Now, for the other kind. I put it in my mouth and let it melt. "Yuck!" What a terrible taste. It tasted almost like vegetables. I had to eat more white snow to get rid of the taste.

I went inside and mommy asked if I had fun toady. I replied by saying, "White snow is fun to play in and even fun to eat, it's the yellow snow you have to watch out for." After a little talk from mommy, I decided I liked summertime a little better than wintertime.

Guns
By Brian Schofield

I'm
Not sure why people dislike
Guns. Guns keep people in
Line. Would you rob me if
You knew I
Packed a 9
Millimeter
Ballad

By Adi Thaker

It was a clear night
Owls were howling
Trees swinging wildly
A storm was coming

I was walking alone
By the graveyard
I was scared to death
And hoped for a guard

I heard footsteps
Coming behind me
I stopped and looked
Nobody did I see

I started walking faster
but so did the sound
I tripped upon a rock
And fell upon the ground

I yelled out in pain
Hoping for aid
The sounds crept up
And I grew afraid
I reached out for a stone
To hit the ghost
And I saw a shadow
Near the lamppost

I passed out of fear
And when I awoke
I found the ghost
Surrounded by smoke

Please don’t eat me
Screamed I in fear
When I woke up
From a dream severe
Bitter Brownie Surprise

By Bryan Willett

Every day during summer break, Ashley woke up to a to-do list that her mom had made before leaving work. The daily chores usually consisted of things such as doing laundry, taking out the trash, watering the flowers, and unloading the dishwasher. The chores didn’t bother Ashley too much because it made her feel responsible and grown-up. She could do a lot for being only 10 years old. After she finished her chores, she was free to do whatever she wanted the rest of the day.

This particular summer morning, Ashley woke up and headed to the kitchen where the to-do list was always posted. Instead of a to-do list, however, she found a note that read, “no chores today – enjoy yourself, love mom.” Ashley was very excited to have the day off from doing work! She jumped back into bed and went back to sleep.

After waking up, she went into the kitchen to eat breakfast. Reaching for the box of Lucky Charms, she noticed a box of brownie mix. She took down the brownie mix and looked at the instructions. This doesn’t look hard to make at all, she thought to herself. She had never made brownies before, but she knew her mom would appreciate it if she came home from work to some fresh chocolate brownies! She grabbed all of the ingredients that she knew – the egg, the butter, etc. She then needed vegetable oil. She thought that it was very odd that a brownie recipe called for something with the word “vegetable” in it, but proceeded to look for it anyway. Looking through the cabinet, she saw a bottle with vegetables on it and knew that must be vegetable oil. She now had all the ingredients to make the brownies!

When her mother walked into the door from work, Ashley quickly ran downstairs to meet her. “Hi Mom, are you hungry for a brownie?”

Ashley’s mom looked at her kind of surprised and said, “You made Brownies? Wow that is really impressive Ashley. It sounds wonderful. Sure, I will have a brownie!”

Ashley ran back upstairs to the kitchen and grabbed the best looking one for her mom. She then grabbed one for herself and poured two glasses of milk. “Here you go mom.”

“They sure do smell good Ashley, her mom said cheerfully.” Ashley sat down and stared at her mom. She would not bite into hers until she had approval from her. Her mom pinched off a small piece of brownie and put it into her mouth. Her face turned bitter for a quick moment as she slowly chewed.

Ashley said, “well, how is it mom?”

“Oh it’s very good sweetie,” Her mom replied convincingly.

Ashley then dug into her brownie. She immediately knew something was wrong. It didn’t taste like a brownie at all. It was very bitter tasting. Ashley, not being bashful, spit out the brownie onto her plate. “EEEEWW. Something is wrong. Do you really like my brownie mom?”

Ashley’s mom began to laugh hysterically as Ashley looked at her in confusion. “Honey, did you put vinegar in the brownies?”

“Vinegar? NO, of course not, I followed the directions exactly as it said!”

“Well, it’s okay if you did honey; it is your first time making these. Let’s go take a look at what all you put in them.”
They both walked over to the kitchen where Ashley had yet to clean up any of her mess from making the brownies. All of the ingredients were still out on the counter. Sure enough, vinegar was sitting on the counter right next to the brownie mix. “But, I don’t know how that happened,” Ashley said. Then, she immediately knew what she had done. The vinegar bottle had vegetables on it, so she thought it was vegetable oil. Feeling disappointed, she looked at her mom almost in tears and said, “I’m so sorry mom, I was just trying to do something for you.”

Ashley’s mom looked at her and said, “Well honey, let’s just start over. We will make them together.”

Ashley’s tears dried up and she was now excited again! “Alright mom, but I’ll let you put the vegetable oil in.”

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Goal

*By Amy Basler*

I
am
quite
sure that
at some point
this will all make
sense, but for now I
guess I will just continue to
Stop. Start. and go my own way
like the rest of them. The
only thing I ask of U
is that you keep
to urself. keep
your distance.
and let me
be who
am
I
The Bullheaded Beast
By Sara Richter

The surroundings were wild, but my mind remained calm. It was the second annual town rodeo, and the excitement was about to begin. The horses and bulls were pinned in their cages as the other riders and I prepared for the adrenaline rush ahead. An hour or so had passed, and my turn was nearing. Sweat beaded down my forehead as the nervousness began to set in. I was startled as my name was called over the speakers, and I timidly made my way over to my station. I mounted the wild bull as he began to buck and groan in fury. His name—Rage—fit him well. My grip was tight on the reigns as I took one last deep breath. The gate was flung open, and within seconds I was on the wildest ride of my life. My body began to ache as the wild bull hurled me up and down on his spiny back. After a few seconds of things going well as planned, my grip went loose and I flew off the raging beast. My legs felt like Jell-o as I stood helpless in the middle of the arena.

There I stood face-to-face with my worst nightmare. Our eyes met as we starred each other down for seconds that felt like hours. Thoughts of waking up battered in a hospital bed, covered with scratches and filled with shattered bones flowed through my head. I stood still, afraid that even the slightest movement would cause the bull to charge. The bull stepped forward as I took a deep breath and broke for the gate. I sprinted towards the cheering fans, but my target never seemed to get any closer. I could hear the bull picking up speed and nearing as my heart raced and legs throbbed. Finally, I reached freedom. I climbed up the wooden planks of fence into the arms of the rodeo staff. The bull bucked wildly, realizing he had lost his shot at revenge against the humans who keep him locked up all day. The staff finally managed to get Rage back into his confining cage. I took one last look at the now exhausted beast, relaxed myself and left the stadium, heading back to my safe little home outside of town. I had enough excitement for one day.

Lady Love
By Jacob Krebs

Pressing my lips against yours--
    Eyes close gently, feeling the rapture
    Not a moment is left without sweet capture.
    Our emotions racing, not to skip a beat
    Feel the love from head to feet.

Your body so warm and pressing--
    Deep gazing eyes of green,
    The most beautiful woman I have ever seen.
    Rosy red lips always so sweet,
    Angel forever I bow at your feet.
    The most beautiful woman I have ever seen--
    Every moment together fulfils a dream.
Without You
By Brittney Cox

without you, our lives would be different
it's hard to even imagine.
for without you, staring us down from the wall,
our schedules we would not examine.

we would not rush, we would not stress,
our lives would not seem
like a constant test.

without you, we could stop and stare
and to pause for a moment
would not seem such a dare.

each day would go by,
but we would not care.
we would simply feel the difference in the changing air.

and if time passed, we would not know,
for all would be peaceful, relaxing, and slow.

Happiness
By Shana Jones

Happiness is a treasure that you cannot lose
Unless you decide to let it go away
You may use it as you choose
But use it wisely so I say

Spread the word
Dance to your own tune
Listen to the songs sung by a bird
On this brisk early morning of June

Smile at someone you do not know
Share the happiness that is in your heart
Don't waste another second, now go
Put all of your thoughts on a chart

So hurry and tell someone about this wonderful day
And share some flowers and love as I say.
Alumni Corner:

This issue’s guest is Alumnae Allison Harvey, Pharm D, class of 2005. Allison is now living in Nashville, working for the state of Tennessee. While a student at STLCOP, Allison regularly contributed both fiction and poetry to Conjurxings.

The Hero

Beads of sweat run off his head. 
Covered in stickers and colored gray, 
a star is born as he begins to play, 
the dashing cords of green, yellow, and red. 
As he joins the ranks of the Grateful Dead, 
he pulls on the neck and makes his way 
through Oasis, Weezer, and even The Fray, 
pulling the whammy bar to score points ahead. 
At the end of the night, 
the strap is unhooked. 
There will be no encore show. 
He smiles at his score with teeth so bright. 
In his mind he has already booked, 
ways to beat his low. 
With his fingers on fire, 
for the night he will retire.

the fork

OVERWEIGHT
overweight
DETERMINATION
no motivation
MOVING, TWISTING, WORKING, ACHING
sitting, lying, nothing, aching
MUSCLES GROWING, BODY SHRINKING
muscles shrinking, body growing
GOAL IS SET, RACE IS NEAR
goals never made, end is near
HEART IS POUNDING
heart is pounding
AdReNaLiNe PuMpiNg
CrOwD IS cHeErInG
TEARS OF JOY
tears of loss
Junkie

He crawled in the back of a car,  
to mark his arm with another scar.  
As he tightened the belt,  
his body felt,  
paradise sold in a jar.

MEMWARY

HELP US FLY OUR FLAG  
KILL THOSE PEOPLE UNLIKE US  
BET WE WILL FORGET

My Grandfather – Korean War

By HyunSuk Lee

The first thing that crosses my mind as I think about the Korean War is my grandfather. He would tell me the story I have heard so many times over the years, the sad story of his family who was left behind in North Korea during the war. My grandfather was born in North Korea, and he was the second and the only son in the family of four children. His father died right after he was born. Therefore he had to work on a farm to maintain daily meals for his mother and sisters at the age of nine. In 1950, when he was eighteen, the Korean War began. His mother told him to flee for safety first and she with their daughters would follow soon after. They decided to meet in Seoul, but because of the chaotic situation with all the screaming and the gun firing, they did not have enough time to set up a specific place. Firmly believing that the family would safely unite in Seoul, he left his family behind and hurried down to Seoul. This later became the biggest, irreversible mistake he made in his life. Not a single day passed without thinking about his mother and three sisters he left behind in North Korea. After the war ended, the days he spent searching for his family in Seoul turned into months. Unfortunately, not a single person recognized his family. Without any pictures of them, he gradually gave up. Several decades have passed since then. The guilt of leaving his family behind still haunts him, day and night. He tells me that he would never be free from the guilt.
Bob was the average student at STLCOP, completely miserable and downtrodden. Every day was an adventure, kind’ve like Indiana Jones, but in his adventures there was no treasure chest or ancient artifact, just more tests and quizzes. He awoke on Monday morning to his super annoying alarm clock buzzing at him that it was 7 am. He got out of bed, walked across the room and hit the snooze button and got back into bed. Seven minutes later the alarm once again awoke him. He turned off the alarm and walked to the shower, got in and turned on the hot water. Bob got dressed and threw his things into backpack, grabbed his coat and headed for the door. It was a 10 minute walk to school and Bob began to wonder what things lay in store for him that day. He looked at his watch; he would be about five minutes late to class, but that was ok; he was never on time. He arrived on campus right at 8 o’clock, went to Jones Hall and up the five flights of stairs. He was out of breath when he got to the fifth floor, entered the class room where the teacher was already talking about something self-centered and relatively unimportant as he made his way to the back of the room to his standard seat. The teacher was talking about how the only way to search PubMed was by his silly way, and he had come up with a completely contrived method of testing the students on this method. Bob was annoyed by this and extremely tired, so he put his head down on the desk and began to fall asleep. He found himself in deep sleep and a dream began to materialize. He wasn’t at STLCOP at all, but in the imagination land he had seen the previous night in the South-Park Episode.

But no sooner did Bob begin to dream, he began to snore, and that caught the attention of the professor. The professor told the student next to Bob to wake him up by any means because he could not tolerate any student sleeping in class. The student slapped Bob on his head, and Bob jolted out from the South Park dream into reality. The professor had Bob stay after class so they could have a “talk.” Bob was scared. He was just making the passing grades in classes and so he did not want to lose points over his sleeping in class.

After the class was over, Bob hung around the front of the room until all the students were gone. The teacher then walked over and locked the classroom door. Bob could tell that the teacher was very angry, and started yelling as he charged towards Bob. When he got to Bob, the teacher jumped up and dropkicked Bob squarely in the nose. Bob fell to the ground.

He got up quickly to retaliate. He knew it wasn’t professional to physically fight with a teacher, but he was not going to stand for this. He could taste the blood starting to drip down onto his lips from his nose and this angered him even more. He ran over to the teacher and pushed him with all his might. He didn’t feel bad. This was his teacher’s fault, for having such pointless and useless lectures about PubMed and boring the students to the point where they fall asleep. As his teacher rose from the floor, they could both hear students in the next hour class trying to open the locked door. Bob began to wonder if he should make a run for the
backdoor. Pushing a teacher was probably not going to look good very good to the dean, who hated the students anyway and would undoubtedly side with the teacher.

As I ran for the backdoor, the teacher yelled, "This is not the end. I will destroy you for sleeping in my class, and you can bet that you will not pass my class." I jolted out the door and headed down the steps. I quickly went into the library and sat in a cubicle to hide-out while I collected my thoughts. If I fail this class, I will get kicked out of school. I have spent almost five years at this hellhole, and only have one more year of this place until I graduate. I can't get kicked out of school, my parents would kill me! Not only that, but I have over $100,000 in loans to pay off, and there is no way I will ever be able to pay them off without a pharmacist's salary.

As I lay my head down on the desk, I knew that I could not go down without a fight. As I thought about my options, I realized that there was only one thing that I could do. I had to take the teacher out. I had to make it look like an accident. This way, he could not teach the rest of the semester, and he couldn't fail me. As I took out a piece of paper and began to devise my plan, I heard a familiar voice that startled me. It was the teacher, and he was talking to the librarian. He was coming after me! I had to think fast because it was only a matter of time before he found me. I stood up and took a quick peek in the direction of the voice, and saw the librarian pointing right at me! Oh no! The teacher and I made eye contact for a brief moment before I sat back down into my chair in the cubicle. He knows where I am! As I reached into my backpack and took out a pencil, the teacher came up behind me with something in his hand. With all my might, I took the pencil and went straight for his heart. He grabbed my arm before I could stab him, twisted it around, and jammed a needle in my vein. As he pushed in on the syringe, I became dazed. He took the needle out, sat it on the desk, and left. I began drifting in and out of consciousness. I tried standing up, but my legs were not strong enough to hold up my body. I tried to scream for help, but I couldn't even open my mouth. The teacher had poisoned me and left me to die. He had left the syringe on the desk to make it look like a suicide. My head soon became too heavy to hold up, and it plummeted onto the desk. My eyes closed and fell unconscious.

My eyes opened to a room full of laughter. I took my head off of the desk and saw a man standing over top of me. Am I alive? What is going on? I looked up at the man in a dazed confusion, and to my surprise, it was the teacher. He looked at me with a great big smile and said, "Well, I hope you had a good nap." The entire class busted out in laughter as my face turned red with embarrassment. The teacher laughed, patted me on the shoulder as if to tell me that it was okay, and continued his lecture. I looked to my buddy next to me and he said, "You were snoring." It was a bittersweet moment. Although I had just made a complete fool of myself, I was so relieved at the fact that I was still alive. Thoughts ran through my head for the remainder of lecture. Reality hit me as I realized what a pathetic little pansy I had been. I have been moping around for the past five years, making excuses and blaming everybody else for my problems, when in fact it was me that was the problem. As I sat there in class that day, I came to realize that my life wasn't really all that bad.
Self—
By Amy Basler

Held up
A single breath
Stopped at the lips

My wispy soul
Bearing no shape
In darkened
Night

By light of moon
Against distant headlight
Static is the pattern
In my eyes
Against the fogged
Rear window

Each lamp
A new dawn of the mind
Giving definition
To swimming words
Safety is not, but, a second away.
The gamble is one with
Time.

Will you be the
Empty room
Illuminated for all?
No color
Walls barren

Stop.
Reach.
Save the self
With the scratch of a pen.

Work
By Nathan Brockmeier

People yell a lot
Do I really want this job
I guess I do
Hunting Farm
By Catlin Bigham

The ad in the newspaper said “Excellent Hunting Farm” and I was pretty excited to shoot at some animals. I called up my best friend and hunting partner Joe Bob or JB as I called him and told him about the advertisement. The ad said there was a small house on bottom land with a natural mound with abundant deer and turkey. JB and I talked about how much we each liked deer sausage and turkey bacon for a while and decided that going to this farm in Moberly Missouri would undoubtedly be the thing to do. I called the number; the phone rang 5 times before somebody answered.

“Hello, this is the Smith Residence,” answered the phone.

“Hi, I’m calling about your ad in the newspaper about the hunting farm, and my friend and I were wanting to come down and shoot stuff this weekend; I was just wanted to see if the farm was available for us,” I told the man.

“Oh the farm is always available; it’s now reserved for you and your friend” said the man on the other end of the phone.

“Great, I guess I will see you this weekend then,” I told the man as I hung up the phone. JB and I packed into his prized possession, a 1983 Ford Bronco and headed to Moberly Missouri. We drove for several hours and watched as the cities and larger towns gave way to smaller towns and eventually just farm houses along the side of the road. Around 5 o’clock we arrived in Moberly; it seemed like a ghost town. Most of the down town stores had their windows boarded up. The houses along the main street looked decrepit and several had their porches falling down. The entire town seemed completely empty; either all of the townsfolk were staying in their houses or the entire town had moved away.

We continued down the road, following the directions to the farm. We drove down the country road searching for the farm. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a small hand painted sign that said “Hunting Farm” as it whizzed past. I made JB turn around, and we turned off the road where the sign was onto a small dirt road. We followed the dirt road for almost 20 minutes to the point that the path became surrounded by trees, and we talked about going back, but just then the woods opened up into a large clearing, and we could see a very large house on a hill. We followed the road up to the house, both wondering what this mansion was doing out in the country. We pulled up into the driveway and got out of our car. I could hear hunting hounds off in the distance.

We walked up and knocked on the door. A few moments later, a well dressed man, who was obviously a butler, greeted us and led us into a room that could best be described as a sports room. The outer walls were filled with animal’s heads, antique guns, and other hunting
associated trophies. In the center of the room there were well dressed men sitting around a long table. I was beginning to become a little freaked out. What was this huge house doing in rural Missouri and who were all these men?

“Hello gentleman, we have been waiting for you for some time and we wanted to go over the ground rules before we begin,” a large man at the head of the table boomed.

“You both will have a 10 minute head start; the hunting grounds are 25 square miles around the house. If you make it out of this area, you are safe and will receive 1 million dollars for your efforts,” the man continued loudly.

“What the hell are you talking about?” yelled JB

“Your 10 minutes is starting in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, NOW,” the man yelled. I turned and started to run for the door.

“Where are you going; these guys are crazy, but they aren’t going to shoot anybody,” JB stated.

“Well I’m not going to find out; you better just come with me,” I shouted as I hit the door. I was truly freaked out and scared. I got to the car, got in, and turned the key. The car didn’t even turn over; they must have cut some wires. I got out of the car and started running towards the woods. I reached the woods and slipped inside; that’s when I heard the gunshot. They must have shot JB. I told myself that I was going to die; I was being hunted in Moberly, Missouri when all I wanted to do was shoot animals. I ran through the woods as fast I could, tripping and stumbling as I went.

BOOOMM. I heard the shot before I felt it. My chest exploded with fire. It hurt so badly. My hands went up to my chest and felt the wound and the warm blood. I hit the ground, knees first, then my chest, then my head. I felt myself drift away.

In Session
By Heather Collins
Shivering outside.
School should not be in session.
Whose bright plan was this?
Kaley’s Journal
By Alexis Divney

Week 1

So I recently bought this journal because I can’t trust anyone to tell them some of the things I think. I am just going to write it all down. So here it goes:

I am perfect. I really am. I am beautiful. My long, blonde hair is always gorgeous. The guys all want me, and the girls all want to be me. My family is rich, and my daddy will give me anything I ask for. I am a senior this year, and I plan to rule the school. The first pom season is over. Football season went over fantastic. We, well I, did such a wonderful job. I didn’t get homecoming queen, but that’s just because everyone felt sorry for the girl who did, because her parents had recently gotten a divorce. I am guaranteed prom queen. I will flirt with all the guys, and I will get their votes. My younger sister is a sophomore so, everyone in her grade will vote for me too. This year is going to be awesome.

Okay, so today the principal informed me, the pom-squad captain, that we would have to share our halftime with the flags. The flags, the not cute, not coordinated flags? That is total crap. They have never performed during basketball. Why do they get to start now? Oh, well, we will take care of it. We will make their lives miserable.

The flag captains came to talk to me today. They said that we could coordinate, like they could perform some of the games that we don’t, and we could make sure we don’t go over our time limit before the game if we are both performing. Whatever!

I informed the principal today that we would always perform first if the flags were going to perform at the same game. He said that was fine. Ha! Now we can just run over our time, and they won’t have time to perform their entire routine. They will regret the time they tried to mess with my senior year.

Week 2

Our CD player for poms recently broke. We actually had two, but they were both junk and are broken. So, we “borrowed” the nice CD player from the band room. We are going to “borrow” this one until poms is over. Besides, what does a band need a CD player for?

Oh my gosh, today the flags accused us of taking their CD player! It was in the band room, and no one was using it so it should be fair game. We said we had used ours that we had always used, (even though we did take the one from the band room). They went to where we practice after school, and took the CD player back. I hate the flags!

Week 3

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To fix our CD player problem the principal decided to buy us a CD player and the flags a CD player. This CD player is better than the one we had before, but it’s cheaper than the one that the flags used. Ha ha ha! That’s too bad.

So the rest of the week has gone ok, I guess. The flags “practice” some during lunch time in front of people. Why would you do that? Everyone is going to know their routine before their performance. They suck anyway, so it’s ok with me. One of the girls on my squad is also on the flag squad. So, to help ruin their routine, we make her practice with us and do other things with us during their scheduled practice times.

Today, the flag captains came to me to tell what two games they were going to perform at. They thought they could perform at those two, and we could have the rest. Please! I told them we were going to perform those nights too. They said that was fine, but I know that made them mad.

Week of 1st performance

So tonight is the big night. We perform first, and then the flags are going to perform for their first time. Ha! That will be very interesting. They wore their tops to school today. I thought they were kind of cute, but I was not going to tell them.

Last night was the performance. We did fine, but everything turned out horrible. We did our routine, and everyone cheered and clapped as usual. Then, the flags came out to do their routine. It was a tribute to all of the troops. They held up real flags at the end. Everyone stood up and clapped and cheered. They stood up! They got a standing ovation! I didn’t even think their routine was that good. One of the other poms said it was a lot better than she thought it was going to be. I told her to shut her mouth. I am completely humiliated. Out of all the performances we have done, we have not gotten a single standing ovation. They got one their very first performance. I cannot believe this. Oh well, at least I still look better than them!

Students
By Karen Obermann

emotional, curious, worried, tense
children of God
friends and family
scared
love
hope
parents
a brighter day
Resident of St. Louis College of Pharmacy
Classes
By Jeremy Hunt

Is this a joke?
They say as they laugh and poke
    Hell no I yell out loud
This is our scores like a big black cloud
    It just gets darker and darker
No matter the hours or lines filled with marker
    It just gets worse from here
Which is my biggest fear
My dreams may be hard to reach
The teachers must go on and teach
The students must reach out and learn
    Or else they might get burned
    No matter the class
    No matter the test
We will always be the best.

Rookie
By Cameron Schulte, HyunSuk Lee and Heather Collins

Every day from early afternoon until the sun would begin to set, the same noise could be heard in the backyard of the little red brick house with the pearl white shutters. The sound of a metal baseball bat making contact with a red stitched, white leather ball. Soon after the loud ping you could hear the baseball crash into the chain links and echo down the entire fence row. One after another the balls would be smashed into the fence, hundreds and hundreds of baseballs would make this journey every single day.

Fifteen twenty-two Mulberry Lane was the lot which the red brick house with white pearl shutters sat on. A family of three has lived in this house just a little under ten years now. The husband and wife have a little son named Timmy, but every kid on the street knew him as Rookie. Rookie was responsible for all the afternoons when the neighborhood would be engulfed by the sound from the swing of his bat. No matter if Rookie was sick or if the sky was dumping down rain, you would find him outside every day.

After couple of years, he became junior baseball player. He practiced hard every day, and finally he became a good young baseball player. Sometimes, he practiced with his friends, but most of the time, he practiced by himself, because he didn’t want to waste time by talking to his friends while practicing. Even though he played and
practiced every day, he never got bored or tired swinging the bat. He loved to do it, and he really wanted to become a professional baseball player.

For five years his dream was to get to the MLB, play for the team that he liked, and he really wanted to become a good player that everybody in this country knew. He wanted to be famous also. He was young, but he had a big dream. By being on a team in the junior baseball league, he accomplished the first step of his dream, but still, there were long ways to go.

One particularly scorching hot day in the middle of July, Timmy’s team, the Bluejays, was set to play the toughest team in the league, the Gators. It was a sell out game with parents, friends, and even scouts sitting as close to the dugout as possible, yelling at the umpire when he made an unfair call. Timmy was 2 for 2, and he was up to bat again in the fifth inning. He dug his back foot into the dirt, loosened his arms with a few practice swings, and focused in on the pitcher. The tall, lean pitcher from Harrisburg was known across the state. His curveballs were unhittable and his slider made fools out of the batters. Watching him bring his glove in toward his body and wind for the pitch, Timmy was ready. The first pitch came and went without a flinch from Timmy. It was always smart to get a good look at where the pitcher was putting the ball. Strike one. With the next pitch Timmy turned his hips and threw his body into the swing. Crack! The bat broke and shreds went flying toward second base as he sprinted toward first, rounded the based and headed for two, then three, and was waved on home. The out of the park homer sent the crowd into an outright frenzy.

“Rookie, Rookie, Rookie,” screamed Timmy’s fans. The rest of his team was elated. The energy was electric. They were so charged up that even though Harrisburg had their best pitcher throwing, the Bluejays continued to score. They won their game 7-4.

Better yet, the two scouts who were watching the game were able to see that it was Timmy’s skill that energized the game. Both came over to see him. Timmy was still in school and wouldn’t be able to leave the junior league for several years, but one scout offered him a scholarship to a summer camp run by their team, and the other scout said he should visit their farm team in the nearby city on a free pass whenever possible and prepare to try out for their farm team the day he graduated high school.

Rookie took both offers and realized he would indeed be a MLB player in the future.
Ballad
By Tanya Draucker

One day I went to school when I
Had an awful feeling.
The councilor came over the speaker
To help those with dealing.

I stopped in place, not sure what’s wrong.
I looked from side to side.
As many students were crying,
I thought someone must have died.

I soon found out that it was true
And he was a senior last year.
That a car had hit him head on,
And it was full of beer.

I wasn’t quite sure what to think.
I heard he was a nice guy.
If only he didn’t go out that night,
I wouldn’t be asking why.

America’s Pastime
By Cameron Schulte

Fresh cut grass
Chalk being laid
Hot dogs being sold
It’s a nine inning game

Infield being drug
National Anthem being sung
It’s the classic in the fall
Time to play ball
Kite
By Shana Jones

The
Bright
Sun and a
Strong breeze
makes for a perfect
day at the park with a
brilliant colored kite. Run
as fast as you can and try to keep
the kite high in the sky for
as long as you possibly
can before it crashes
to the ground.
Keep it
High
In

The
Sky.
Sun
and
wind
leads
to a
great
day
at
the
park

STLCOP
By Jacob Krebs

S
Study
T
Til you
L
Learn a
C
Cornucopia
O
Of
P
Pharmaceutics
Thoroughglobe

Julie Ann Koppel

Prologue: With the start of Genetic Perfection, men were removed from society and all power was seized by the women. Shortly after, women united the Earth into one global society by banning wars and money. Men no longer had names and were referred to as “Males” followed by a number that correlates with their given housing situation. At the age of six, they are removed from their homes and sent to barracks. (Only the Males that are classified as genetically perfect are allowed to reproduce – after being selected from a catalog by a woman.)

Women are classified at the age of eighteen to live on different continents based solely on their appearance and intelligence. Any woman who is seen as both unattractive and unintelligent is immediately sterilized and exiled to Antarctica. Those who are fortunate enough to be classified to better continents are expected to reproduce according to their classification. Between the ages of eighteen and thirty-eight, they give birth to anywhere between two children - for those who are moderately attractive or intelligent - to as many as possible for anyone who meets both qualifications.

Aloe’s test results came back from her Thoroughglobe exam reading just one word: “Africa.”

“Thank love!” Remedy exclaimed relating to her daughter’s placement as the word faded from the scanner. “At least one of my children gets to stay! I would rather die than have my family be reduced.” It only takes one word to either preserve or destroy a family’s honor.

“Africa!” thought Aloe, “Thoroughglobe’s most coveted location!”

Until global perfection is ultimately achieved, girls are classified into different contents based on intelligence and attractiveness. Though Aloe is the fourth generation in her family that qualified to live in Africa, there is no guarantee her children will be as gifted or fortunate. In the past 234 years since the start of Genetic Perfection (GP), women have been classified into groups in hopes of creating a more efficient and visually appealing gene pool.

“Aloe, dear,” Aloe’s mother interjected interrupting Aloe’s gleeful daydream. “Why don’t you go schedule an appointment at the Breeding Mall? You may as well start now.”

“Now?” responded Aloe. “Why? I still have twenty years before they disqualify me.”

“But don’t you want to contribute as much as possible to Genetic Perfection? If you wait a year to start, you might be limiting the perfection process. Imagine if I had waited a year.
I certainly wouldn’t have birthed Male One and I wouldn’t have necessarily picked your paternal genetics either. You would be a completely different Aloe.”

Aloe is the oldest girl of the twelve females in her family. When including Males One through Six, she is the second oldest of eighteen. However, all Males, once they reach the age of six, are sent to live in barracks in isolated areas until they are trained for breeding.

“Fine, mother,” Aloe responded as she drudgingly walking towards the scanner and turned it on. “Class Africa, for reproductions appointment,” she said timidly into the microphone on the scanner.

A picture of Aphrodite, a Greek goddess who was supposed to have encouraged sexual acts from a time before GP, appeared on the screen.

“Current age?” the scanner voiced to which Aloe replied, “Eighteen.” The scanner displayed a different picture of a new born baby under the salmon-colored words of, “Thoroughglobe’s Genetic Perfection Breeding Mall.”

Then the scanner sounded once again, “New Males One through Eighty-nine.”

The first picture on a randomly picked Male flashed onto the screen. Male Seventeen, high cheek bones, brown shaggy hair and a huge smile. He looked like a model from the time before GP. Then again, anyone who would appear on the screen would look like generic model. That was the goal of GP anyway. She read the physical conditioning part of his bio: can squat 350 pounds, bench 200 pounds, and do 97 pull-ups. “Impressive,” thought Aloe. Then she examined the intellectual commentary; Master pianist, speaks 6 languages, photographic memory, has composed 3 symphonies and is completing the 4th. “A possibility,” Aloe decided as she pressed a button to view the next candidate.

Male Fifty-three looked pretty much the same as Male Seventeen and he had similar qualities listed as well. He spoke only 4 languages but could do 138 pull-ups. He was also an artist so one of his paintings was displayed on the screen.

Male Nine, Male Thirteen, and Male Seventy-six were all alike as well. They could lift different amounts, had various skin and hair color, and delighted in various hobbies and also possessed different occupations. Other than that, they were prime examples of what GP was trying to accomplish, visually appealing and useful for society. Aloe randomly selected Male Twenty-two. He was a swimmer and Biomedical Engineer.

Three days later, Aloe arrived at the Breeding Mall. A receptionist, named Heal, told her to sit in the waiting room while a chamber was prepared. The waiting room’s walls were filled with of pictures of model-like, smiling girls playing on a slide, stirring flasks, and reviewing the layouts for a new school.
There was also a curtain covering the corner of one wall. Aloe knew what was behind it. Every girl knew what was behind the curtain because they hung in the back corner of every public building. There would always be a picture of something from the time before Genetic Perfection. Sometimes it was an unfortunate looking girl who was dressed as a house wife and being scolded by her husband. Other times it was a pile of money, a king, or a homeless man. Every picture made Aloe proud to be part of the Genetic Perfection society.

After staring at the blank walls and reading the fashion magazines in the waiting room, she wandered toward the corner and examined the room to make sure there were no little girls who might be upset and confused by what was on the other side of the curtain. The only other girl in the room appeared to be about twenty-five and would doubtfully be disturbed if she glimpsed at the picture on the other side.

Aloe sensed that her hands were damp as she touched the satiny jet black curtain. She couldn’t think of a time when her hands hadn’t been moistened from perspiration at the excitement of seeing what was on the other side.

Remembering the first time her mother let her behind a curtain stood out as one of her strongest memories. Aloe was six years old and her mother had dragged her along as she shopped for a new desk, which Aloe would use when she began school. The desk displays happened to be in a back corner of the room. Remedy noticed the little girl staring at the slightly warn-down drapery. She told Aloe that she could look behind the curtain if she wanted, but warned her that the image may be upsetting. Upon hearing this, Aloe sprinted toward the corner with the energy that only little kids seem to have, and flung the curtain to her left. It was a portrait of a soldier who was covered in mud and had a riffle flung over his right shoulder. Aloe stared at it for only a few seconds before her mother recovered the portrait. Though she never again saw that exact photo, Aloe could still recall the soldier’s firm expression clearly.

Now, in the waiting room of the Breeding Mall twelve years later, Aloe’s heart raced as she peeked behind the curtain to see the photograph of a man in a business suit who was talking on his cell phone in the back seat of a taxi. The man stared at her from the back window of the canary yellow sedan. The young urban professional of the past looked stern. His eyebrows were furrowed as though he was concerned about something. Aloe wondered why. Was he late? Did he just hear some upsetting news from the person on the other end?

Snapping back to reality, Aloe realized it really didn’t matter. He looked ridiculous and this situation couldn’t exist in real life. She tried to imagine him riding in a taxi on a busy street near her house. The idea was unfathomable.

She convinced herself that the man looked ridiculous. Though he was as attractive as every Male she had seen in the pictures in the catalogue, it was odd to see him in a car and in public. Males older than six were rarely seen in public, and when they did appear, they were always accompanied by two female guards. Women were the only ones who could ride in taxis.
“Aloe,” sounded a doctor from the open door which led to the hallways of the Breeding Mall. “Hello, Aloe. I am Dr. Ameliorate, and I will be your genetic counselor for the next week.” Aloe followed her through the extensive hallways of the Breeding Mall to a suite on the third floor.

“Aloe, love, please take a seat. There are some legal matters we need to discuss before I can introduce you to the Male you picked. But first, I want to congratulate you for your Africa classification. Did you know that there was a thirty percent increase in the number of girls sent to Africa this year? There is talk of finally integrating the Eurasia classification with the African classification. Try to imagine that half of Thoroughglobe’s population would be accepted as visually appealing and productive!”

Dr. Ameliorate glowed as she explained the most recent Thoroughglobe plan, “Just think, next year we will be half way to perfection!” Her facial expression quickly changed from excitement to concern. “Anyways, that conversation can be saved for another time later in the week. I need you to answer a few quick questions for me. Do you have any allergies?”

“Pollen in the Spring but no food allergies,” Aloe replied as she caressed the smooth leather of the couch.

“Were you born in Africa or did you just arrive?”

“I was born here.”

“Alright. Last question, Aloe, love. What is your goal or do you have one yet?”

Aloe looked puzzled.

“Let me rephrase this. How many daughters would you like to raise?” inquired Dr. Ameliorate.

“Umm, twelve I guess. There are twelve girls in my family and my mom will be disqualified in a few months. Male One from our family is about to turn twenty. Mother started reproducing right away.”

“That is a great goal and your mother is a very impressive lady. Twelve girls! What a great contribution to society. I just hope none of them will have to be reduced.”

“So does my mother!”

“I believe that. All nine of my daughters classified for Africa and my Males, both One and Two are in this Breeding Mall,” Dr. Ameliorate boasted as she adjusted her posture to appear more erect. “One last thing, Aloe, when you sign this form, you are promising every girl who lives in Thoroughglobe and who will ever be born that you will not let this Male convince you to do anything for him, let him explain why he should be allowed to live among women, or
allow him to break any of the Breeding Mall’s rules. This is extremely important for the survival of the human race. If you break this contract, there will be serious consequences.”

Aloe nodded her head and signed the contract. Dr. Ameliorate smiled and shuffled toward the carved, cherry wood door. “Pray for girls,” she said once standing in the doorway. “Pray for girls and you will likely conceive one.”

About thirty seconds later Male Twenty-two dragged his feet into the room, accompanied by a grinning nurse who tightly clamped his arm. The nurse smiled mindlessly as she tied a key around Aloe’s neck. “Please follow me to the door, love,” the nurse squealed in a sing-songy voice. “In order to keep him in here, you must lock the door immediately.” Aloe obliged and mimicked the nurse’s bouncy walk as she skedaddled toward the door and locked it.

“I haven’t seen a woman that dumb since I visited Antarctica two years ago,” Aloe chuckled as she sat on the couch. The Male stared at her with his shoulders back and beamed what was obviously a forced smile. She had never been alone with a Male before. Actually, there had only been a few times in her life that she had seen a Male that wasn’t a brother. “Do you want to sit down?” Aloe asked as she stared at this unusual being. The Male stiffly marched toward Aloe and sat on the couch cushion at the other side of the couch, leaving the middle cushion untouched.

“Look at me,” Aloe said in a rather embarrassing and whiny voice. The Male turned his head but his body continued to face forward. He reminded Aloe of an owl. “Male Twenty-two, do you talk? Your bio said you speak 9 languages. Is English one of them by any chance?”

The Male shyly responded, “Yes, Miss Africa, what would you like me to say?”

Aloe, offended by how the Male addressed her, cocked her head to the side and scrunched her face before responding, “Miss Africa? What’s Miss Africa? The last time I check people usually called me Aloe. I also respond to ‘hey you,’ but I still prefer Aloe.”

A semi-nervous but genuine smile appeared on his face to replace the formal and fake one he had been sporting the second before. Male Twenty-two timidly responded, “If that is what you prefer, I will call you Aloe. I was taught to call you Miss Africa because you were blessed and classified for Africa.” He winced a second after he said the word “Africa.” When Aloe inquired as to why he looked distressed, the Male apologized for his retort.

After talking for about fifteen minutes, Aloe asked, “So do you have a name?”

The Male looked at her and replied, “Male Twenty-two.” Aloe shook her head at his reply. “No, no,” she said, “We need to name you. What do you want to be named?”

To this he just shrugged. Aloe, now slightly irritated with him for lacking assertiveness and for boring her with his lack of conversation, decided on “Restore,” without asking any more questions.
Male Twenty-two, now named Restore, didn’t seem to care either way. He continued to sit stagnant. Aloe, now more bored than she ever remembered being before blurted, “Can we just make this baby now so I can leave?”

Slightly more relaxed but still rigid, Restore responded, “Whatever makes you happy.”

The next day after their first conception attempt, Aloe awoke to the smell of grease and strong coffee. She dragged herself out of bed and into the suite’s kitchen where she found Restore making scrambled eggs and Kenyan coffee. “Good morning,” Aloe groaned as she threw herself into a chair. Restore had set the table with three knives, three forks, and two spoons. The napkin was folded to look like a swan.

Aloe picked up the ivory colored cotton napkin and examined the origami folds. “Where did you learn to do this?” Aloe asked as she looked from the napkin to Restore, who was serving her the fresh coffee from a French press. “Here,” he said, “the barracks are connected to the Breeding Mall.” Aloe, slightly baffled by this new information asked, “But where is your physical training area then? I didn’t see it when I drove around the building yesterday. I figured it would be massive considering so many Males live here.”

“Everything is inside,” he responded.

Aloe raised her left eyebrow. “Everything? I mean this building is big, but not that big.”

“A lot of it is underground. There are dormitories, classrooms, training facilities and factories all connected to this building.”

“Wow!” Aloe replied. “How often do you get to leave?”

“We don’t leave.”

Aloe was flabbergasted by this comment. “You don’t leave? Ever? But I have seen pictures of Males hiking and camping on the side of mountains. There are no mountains indoors.”

“Please excuse what I’m about to say, Miss Aloe, but there are.”

“No there aren’t.”

“Yes miss, there are. About a century before the beginning of Genetic Perfection, engineers figured out how to build entire cities above mountain chains. That is why you have never seen a mountain, you have only read about them. The Atlas Mountains are directly under you. There were too many landfills and the land was becoming a wasteland of unusable garbage. In order to preserve the human race, they buried the lower altitudes so people did what they could to forget about them and move away from the pollution and disease.
“Only Males who are dumb enough for Antarctica, no matter how attractive they are, take the responsibility of cleaning the Earth at sea level. All other Males live in mountains. All Males with at least a moderate amount of intelligence but who are not physically attractive are classified to work in the factories and perform manual labor—actually they make up the majority of the Male population. That is why there were less than one-hundred Males in your age group to pick from in the Catalogue. No one else is considered good enough.”

“I never learned that. Why didn’t I learn that?” Aloe asked speaking more to herself than to Restore. “I knew that men were close to destroying the planet in the time before GP and women took over and put them in their place. But I never knew that Males were actually underground. I think they should let you go outside.” When she was done speaking, Aloe realized that her fists were clenched and that she couldn’t clearly see Restore behind her tear filled eyes.

Restore noticed her frustration and tried to calm her down by saying, “I don’t really mind it. We have an artificial sun that actually moves across the “sky” and the stars change positions. Thoroughglobe also has strict regulations to prevent us from climbing to lower altitudes and getting to close to the pollution.”

Upon hearing these words, warm and salty tears began dripping onto Aloe’s porcelain skin and slid past her freckle-free, zit-free, and wrinkle-free face. She stood up and clumsily scurried to the mirror. Her shiny green eyes stared back at her from the full length, free standing Cheval mirror. Honey colored curls framed her face, daintily dancing with every movement yet remained frizz free. “I’m the product of Genetic Perfection,” she whispered producing a temporary fog-like smudge on the previously unmarred glass.

Stepping back from the mirror while pivoting to face Restore she asked him in a raspy voice about what he remembered about being outside.

“Wind,” replied Restore, “I used to lift my arms above my head and close my eyes every time there was the slightest breeze. I thought I could fly.” He closed his eyes as he explained his childhood memory. “It embarrassed my mother every time. The last time I saw her is the day she dropped me off at the entrance to the barracks. She lifted her arms above her head and breathed out the words, ‘Fly away!’”

By this point, Aloe had returned to the table and was blindly staring at the wall in front of her, breathing heavily. “Let’s go outside,” she belted in a way that sounded more like an order than a suggestion. “You can borrow my clothing and put on a hat. No one will pay any attention to us because no one expects a Male to walk out the front door.”

Restore’s cheeks reddened as his head drooped and inhaled deeply so that his nose made a whistling noise and his chest cavity expanded before shaking his head. “That’s not a possibility. I am strictly forbidden from leaving and I wouldn’t be here unless you somehow assured the doctors that you would abide by all of their rules.”
“Does that really matter to you? What do you have to lose?” argued Aloe.

“My chance to reproduce, my status...maybe even my life.”

“Your life? You don’t even know what life is!” Aloe shrieked before closing her eyes and rubbing her temples to regain control. “Apparently, from what you explained to me at least, I can force you to do anything I want, so I am commanding you to follow my orders Male Twenty-two!”

With this, Restore dressed as he was ordered and stared at the door as Aloe unlocked it with a mesmerized, child-like gaze. Getting to the door presented little problem. They only passed two girls and neither one of them seemed to be paying any attention to Aloe and Restore. Rather than risking the waiting room, Aloe let Restore into a side door that was likely used by the nurses and doctors and led to a parking lot on the East side of the building.

“Ready?” Aloe asked in an airy and excited voice, her hands also clammy as if she was about to look behind one of the black curtains. She pushed and the door budged with little effort. Once outside, she continued to hold the door open and beckoned Restore to step through. “Come on,” she said. “No one is around and if you stand there long enough someone might see you and examine the situation.”

Restore puffed up his chest, looked behind him before sticking his hand through the open doorway. Nothing happened. No alarm sounded. No doctor seized him. Nothing. Aloe gently pulled back on the door as it closed to prevent it from slamming.

“Do you want to fly?” she said.

He shook his head. “No wind. We need to wait for wind.” The two of them weaved through the parked cars in silence before stopping at a lamp post which was illuminated even though it was close to noon.

Restore kept looking over his shoulder nervously. “We need to go back soon. I shouldn’t be out here.”

“No, you shouldn’t,” exclaimed a mysterious voice startling the pair who began frantically looking in every given direction. “I explicitly warned you so I feel no regret in what is about to happen to you.” With those words, fifteen or so girls sprinted toward them from seemingly every direction and tackled both of them.

Aloe, face down on the ground, started bleeding from the point of her chin. Two girls, both significantly stronger than she, continued to push her body against the rocky pavement.

“Hello, Aloe,” said the mysterious voice, only this time is sounded like it was coming from directly above her head. “You are about to be injected with Krebs Inhibitor 17.” Aloe finally identified the voice as Dr. Ameliorate’s. “The injection will be painless and will simply
prevent your body from needing oxygen for the next twenty-four hours. Enjoy Antarctica.”  The
clop-clop sound of her heals against the pavement faded as she walked away.

Aloe struggled but was only pushed against the ground more forcefully. “Listen, girly,”
sneered one of her captors. “The Male has been returned to his barracks and will be reduced to
the lowest possible level and will probably be poisoned by his surroundings within the next two
years.”

“Sea level,” thought Aloe, “pollution cleanup.”

“And you, my poor girl, will wake up in Antarctica with a face you won’t recognize and a
lower intellect due to the Krebs Inhibitor 17. No one will ever know what happened to you and
no one will miss you. You will hardly affect the completion of GP.”

Seconds later, a needle slid into Aloe’s leg. “Self-selection,” Dr. Ameliorate cackled from
a distance. “I knew we should have installed those voice recorders years ago.”

Only Yesterday (A Villanelle)

By Minal Amin

It’s like it was only yesterday
When we were caught up in a never-ending fight.
But it seems to have all gone away.
Now we’re all grown up and life has made us go our own way.
Yet, we are still so tight.
It’s like it was only yesterday.
I know our memories will stay
And I know everything will be alright.
But it seems to have all gone away.
I miss going out to play everyday
And somehow everything was ending in a stupid fight.
It’s like it was only yesterday.
I know everything will be okay.
I just think about old times each and every night.
But it seems to have all gone away.
I think about you each day
So for you I write.
It’s like it was only yesterday.
But it seems to have all gone way.
Dramatic Monologue

By Heidi Wang

oO that teacher is cute.
I wonder if he would be interested.
But who can resist me
When I put my charm out there?

After all, that boy fell right into my trap
And I got my way with him
We were caught but who cares?
I got what I wanted

He was in trouble
And I looked ever so innocent
“It wasn’t my fault
He forced me to!”

Everyone blames me
Cause girls and guys are separated
“They can’t sit together”
“Hormones will run loose”

Well I’ve moved on.
New school and new teachers
This one seems kinda cute
And he’s so friendly.

I’ve set my trap and I’m the bait
He’s hooked and now there’s no way out
I’ve recorded it all and now he’s stuck
No way out, nowhere to go.

But now he wants to get out?
No way, no such thing.
I decide when it ends.
Not him, not them, not her.

So what? You got your trophy wife.
You want to remain loyal
You should’ve thought of that first
Before you fell into my trap.

Now you shall pay
I’m done using you.
Let’s report this to the police  
They’ll know what to do with you.

And, once again, I’ve won  
Who cares what others think of me?  
They think I’m slutty and a skank  
But I could care less.

I got what I wanted.  
And he’s going to do time  
His poor little wife must be distraught  
That pitiful creature.

I wonder who shall teach us next  
oO this sub is kinda cute.  
I’ve found my new target  
And my trap never fails.

Scared
By Minal Amin

My cousin is in the bathroom getting ready to go to bed. We quickly sneak into my room, the room he is sleeping in during his stay in California. I hide in the closet with a little crack in the door, my older brother on a little kid’s chair in the middle of the room with an old Halloween costume on, and my oldest cousin on the bed. My cousin gets out of the bathroom and comes in the room. He turns on the light, not scared, and tells them to get out. Thinking our plan had failed, my brother and oldest cousin walk out of the room, but I stay without a peep. My cousin walks toward the closet and my mind goes blank. He opens the door and I forget to scream and scare him, but he lets out a piercing scream instead and runs out of the room. I laugh because it’s hysterical. I go out of the room and follow him. I find him in my mom’s room lying on the bed I sleep in saying he will sleep in here and not in my room. He was scared to death. Gathered in my mom’s room, we all laugh uncontrollably as he hangs on to my bed like a little baby. Although nothing went according to plan it all turned out to be a great success.
The Cask of Amontillado (Alternate Version)

By Catlin Bigham

The light coming through the top of the wall is becoming smaller with each brick that Montresor adds to the wall. I scream until my lungs burn, but the only person who can hear me is Montresor, that evil man. He lured me down here with the promise of wine, and then chained me up to the wall. I cry for him to stop, to stop this madness and let me go. I tell him that I will forget all about it, never tell anyone of this happening if he would just let me go. I promise him all my fortune, and all my goods, but the bricks continue to be added from the other side one by one. My head spins in the darkness from the alcohol flowing in my veins. I struggle against the chains, but to no avail. I slowly lose my senses and fall away into a drunken sleep.

I awake in darkness; my wrists hurt from my body being held up by the chains. I start to cry in despair and fall asleep again.

Again I awake, slowly realizing my situation again. This time I feel more aware and try to think of my options. I tug at the chains that are holding me to the wall. I realize that they are only tied to themselves, not locked. By putting both arms behind my back I manage to grab the shackles with the other hand and undo it. My arms are free. I use my arms to push on the freshly erected wall, but the mortar has hardened enough to make it useless. Oh that bastard, I asked him if he was a mason and he showed me the tool that would lock me inside a wall forever.

I slide down the wall, moving to my left searching for the end. Finally my legs walk into something; I reach out with my arms and grasp something. It’s cold, smooth and long. It’s a human leg bone. I’ve blindly stumbled onto a crypt. I shrink back in terror of the body before me in the darkness. I gather myself and then crawl into the crypt. I know where there is a crypt, there is a door. I push myself into the carved out box. I’m in the very box where this person’s body has laid for decades. I reach out in front of me with my hands and feel stone. I push and nothing happens. I wedge myself against the wall of the tomb and push harder. Slowly the tomb moves away and light streaks into the tomb. I am able to see the person’s skull a few inches from my face. I finally move the stone out of the way and crawl out.

I stumble out of the crypt. I begin to head for home when I realize the situation. I am supposed to be dead. I was never supposed to set foot outside of that wall again. I suddenly feel free. My grudge against Montresor can wait. I can escape life as I know it, escape the huge amount of debt I have, the nagging wife, the ungrateful children and all of the responsibilities. I head for the bank, take out my savings account and leave. I hear the South of France is nice this time of year.
Winston
By Heather Collins

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP! It was the sound of her alarm, and Krissy Kohlman yearned for just another moment's rest. Monday was here yet again, and she had to make her way to school. As she got dressed, Krissy let her mind wander to what her life would have been if she had gone away to school like the rest of her friends. They all seemed to be living the high life in the big cities of Los Angeles and New York while she was stuck here at home. Unfortunately, Krissy had had to resort to her fallback school and give up her dream of becoming an accountant when her family could not afford her so-called “dream schools.” She hated the fact that for the first time in her life she genuinely despised school.

Walking from the distant parking lot, Krissy spotted the usual: the dingy, unwelcoming buildings of Sanford Brown College with a mysterious figure leaning next to the door. He was there every day awkwardly positioned with a hood over his head and a notorious pack of Winston cigarettes jutting from his shirt pocket. Smoke would furl from his mouth as he lowered his hand from his face time and time again. It made for such an awkward situation. You never knew whether to say hello or to shuffle past with your head down. Everyone knew the kid, well knew of him that was. They called him Winston.

The day dragged by like every other day. She first had to sit through College Algebra despite the fact that she received full credit in high school. The counselor so kindly informed her that the credit failed to transfer by the deadline. What a joke. Then there was her monotonous history class. Even if she had wanted to listen she would not have been able to with all the snoring in the background. By the time lunch came around, Krissy was always sick to her stomach and ready to get the heck out of there. The poor girl was fed up for the day and decided to go home early. What was the point anyway?

At home Krissy found a letter addressed to her. It informed her of a meeting to be held that very afternoon in which her presence was required. She quickly changed clothes and fled through the front door. This was the most exciting thing to happen since summer break when all her friends were in town. Once she got on the road, traffic was of course a mess. After all, it was rush hour in St. Louis. Finally at the courthouse Krissy went inside to find her parents all aglow. Without the slightest hesitation they blurted out that a donation had been made in her name, and a large one at that. She had never seen a check written with so many zeroes! Was it real? The judge confirmed that indeed it was real, and would serve the purpose of sending her to the college of her choice. He quietly suggested she thank her donor as he motioned toward the furthest corner in the back of the room. All she could make out were those all too familiar Winston cigarettes.
Pills, doctor, card, co-pay, and free all day (a sestina)
By Nathan Brockmeier

I’m here because I need my pain pills
I think I that one’s from the clinic doctor
Make sure you put that on my red card
I never have to pay a co-pay
My hydrocones are always free
I’m pretty sure it’s been thirty days

I haven’t gone anywhere else because the bus ain’t free
I’ll just pay the cash price though I never have a co-pay
This pain is so bad I’ll never make it through the day
Maybe I can go to the hospital and get some from the ER doctor
Can you try once again to get it on my card
Dropped into the toilet on accident were most of my pills

Whatever you do I need the pills from the doctor
They have more appeal when they’re free on the card
I know 15 times a day is too often for those pills
I doubt they will cover it without co-pay
You see in the toilet they went just a week ago today
Can you tell me how long until they are free

My hydrocones are always free
I never have to pay a co-pay
I’m pretty sure it’s been thirty days
Make sure you put that on my red card
I’m here because I need my pain pills
I think I that one’s from the clinic doctor

Dropped into the toilet on accident were most of my pills
Can you try once again to get it on my card
Maybe I can go to the hospital and get some from the ER doctor
I’ll just pay the cash price though I never have a co-pay
This pain is so bad I’ll never make it through the day
I haven’t gone anywhere else because the bus ain’t free

I doubt they will cover it without co-pay
You see in the toilet they went just a week ago today
Can you tell me how long until they are free
They have more appeal when they’re free on the card
I know 15 times a day is too often for those pills
Whatever you do I need the pills from the doctor

Pills, doctor, card, co-pay, and free. These are the words I hear all of the day
Like I work at an ice cream stand that instead gives out pills
And instead of taking dollar bills I give it away free

Math
By Sara Richter

My favorite
Subject by
Far is math.
Many people think that I'm
nuts when I state such a fact
that I really do love all math.
Adding and
Subtracting,
Multiply and

Divide; it's all so fascinating to
Me. How can numbers come
Together to make such sense?

Fractions,     Ratios,
Angles,       Lines,
Solving the   Equations
I love        it all.
I don't        know

Why
People just
Have

To complain about math.
They would rather read a
Book In their free time, but

Me?
I'll take my
Math.
The Mysterious Caller
By Shana Jones, Minal Amin, Sara Richter, Sarah Smith

One late October morning seemed so strange to Amy. She woke up late, forgot her wallet, and did not get time to read the morning paper. The entire day seemed to be like that. Nothing worked out as it was planned. All she could dream about was making it through the day to get home from work; however, something caught her off guard. She was finally able to sit down for lunch when she noticed a group of people walking around her office which seemed to be odd since no one other than her coworkers were ever near her. She brushed it off remembering that a friend of hers was going to bring some people in to tour the place for possible job opportunities. Right then the phone rang, and Amy jumped out of her seat. The caller was silent at first and then in a scratchy, low pitched voice mumbled to speak with someone she had never heard of. She promptly told the caller that he had the wrong number and quickly put the phone down. A few minutes later when she was working, her phone rang again. The scratchy, low pitched voice was on the other line asking for that same person they asked for earlier. Amy promptly said it was the wrong number and hung up. This continued throughout the day and began to worry Amy. She continued with her work day as usual as possible and returned home early for once. Her dog was waiting for her sitting by an unusual package that was sitting on the floor by the back door. As odd as it seemed, Amy wondered why the package was on its side wrapped in brown paper. The dog refused to get very close to it and she hesitated to touch it.

After taking care of the dog and other things around the house, she opened the package to find a video cassette tape. Amy was scared. She hurried around the house to lock all of her doors, and then stood in the middle of the kitchen trying to decide what to do with the tape. Should she call the police? She should slide it into the VCR? Her heart was racing with fear. She decided to play the tape. She inserted the video into the VCR and pressed play with her shaking finger. Static covered the screen for a few seconds before a man’s face appeared. He looked extremely familiar to Amy. It was an older man, probably in his late sixties or early seventies. When he began to talk, Amy recognized his voice as the same scratchy, low pitched voice on the telephone at work. The man kept speaking of the woman, Mary, that he was looking for at the office. He kept on rambling about how he was Mary’s long-lost father. He told a story of how he was forced to leave the country soon after her birth in order to avoid being killed by a local gang at the time. He said he left for Mary’s safety and that he has regretted it every day of his life.

Amy was puzzled. How did this man get this woman, Mary, confused with her? Figuring there was nothing she could do, she took the tape out and placed it on the shelf next to the television and headed off to her room. She picked up the phone to call her mom and tell her about the tape. It took five rings before the machine picked up. Amy decided to leave a message about the event and was done with it. She didn’t want to think about it anymore for the night. However, this was not the case. Amy’s home phone rang. She picked it up thinking
it was her mother. But the same scratchy, low-pitched voice asked for Mary. Amy got scared. How did this man get her home phone number, too? She asked him why he kept calling and hung up on him.

The phone rang again. She picked it up and said stop calling. But, then a different voice answered. It was her mother. Her mother sounded worried. She asked why Amy said to stop calling. Amy explained everything again. Amy noticed a difference in the way her mother was now talking to her. Her voice was unusual. Amy knew her mother was hiding something from her. She asked what it was. Amy’s mother replied hesitantly. She began by stating that she met an older man who was in a gang while she was still in high school. They had a secret relationship. Amy’s mom then got pregnant with her first child, Mary. No one knew about her. She tried to hide it. She dropped out of school to raise her child. Amy’s maternal grandmother tried to help support her. Amy’s mother tried to find her boyfriend but learned that he fled. She didn’t know why. She assumed it was because he didn’t want to help with the baby. So, Amy’s mother and grandmother raised Mary alone. But, Amy was still a little confused. Where was Mary?

Amy asked her mother where Mary was, who she was, how old she was. Her mother was silent at first, seeming to not want to answer. “She’s dead,” she replied. Amy was stunned. She had an older sister that she never knew about? Her mother never even bothered to tell her? How old was she when she died? Why is this man bothering her, not her mother? “Why is he calling me, mom? How did he get my phone number? How did Mary die?” Her mother was silent, then decided that the man probably was mistaking her for Mary. She explained to Amy that Mary had died when she was a young child, that she became very sick with pneumonia when she was only five years old. Amy was listening to her mother tell this very sad story, starting to worry about what she would tell the man if he confronted her again. Her mother ended the story by apologizing for never telling her about Mary.

Suddenly, Amy heard a knock on her front door. She stayed completely still, thoughts rushing through her mind. She told her mother she had to get off the phone and slowly returned the phone to the receiver. She walked slowly to the door, seeing a blurry image behind the glass on her door. She paused, wondering what she would do, when there was another knock on the door. Amy’s heart started to race, her breathing slowed, and her eyes seemed strained open, staring at the door. She reached a trembling hand out, pausing with her hand on the door knob. Should she open it? What if he tries to kill her? She decided to open the door.

She slowly opened the door, not looking the man in the eye at first, but as soon as she looked up, she was instantly relieved. “How are you doing, ma’am?” said a teenager holding some pizza in a Domino’s uniform. “I’m alright, but I don’t think I ordered any pizza.” It turned out the boy had gotten confused and had the wrong house. He quickly apologized, and she shut the door, exhaling a sigh of relief. She was safe. At first she smiled, then she began to wonder what she would do if the man attempted to contact her again.
Dreamer
By Colin Barry

"You have a choice to make, Dreamer," the young man said with a hint of sorrow. "The secrets out, what will it be?" He stood before her, looking down at her youthful yet distraught face.

"It's all so sudden," she replied, her voice as soft as the ocean air that blew her golden hair in the night sky. "I just don't know what to do, you're all I've ever known," she said with all the sympathy in her heart as her eyes dropped from his icy blue stare. She could never make eye contact with him for long for fear that he could see to the center of her soul.

"You now know that's no longer true, my dear," as he approached her to run his hands through her hair. You know what answer I want to hear, but I also know the answer you should choose. I can't decide for you."

"...I know" she whispered. "Let me sleep on it."

"The irony of it all, to create, and to destroy, with something as simple as sleep" he said with a desperate chuckle.

They stood in silence for a moment; a moment they hoped would last forever. Their time was running short.

She ran towards him with tears in her eyes and fell into his arms embrace.

"You're all I ever wanted," she sobbed.

"Me and this Paradise you see before you," he said as her tears landed on the soft white sand below them.

"I have to go," she said and pushed herself away to run into the night. He knew not to chase after her; he could do no more for now.

When she was only a shadow in the night's horizon, an older man joined him from the small city behind them.

“What do you think she'll choose?” this new man asked.

“She won’t do it. She doesn’t have the heart to throw away all of this,” He said while panning his hands out towards the ocean. It’s where his eyes locked on to after she left. "You know what we will have to do."

The older man sighed. “I’m aware.” There was a brief pause. “I tried to explain to my four year old daughter how nothing was going to be here tomorrow. Have you ever tried to explain death to a child?”
“I can’t say I have,” the younger said, still gazing into the endless body of water before him. “Tell the city I’m doing it tonight, and go spend these hours with your loved ones.”

“What about your loved ones?”

“I’ll see her tonight.”

She slowed her pace to a walk. The sobs became less frequent with every new step on the shore as she composed herself. The aurora over the water seemed extra bright, emitting every color of the rainbow. The stars in the moonless sky were as many as the grains on the beach. She sat down to clear her mind. Her being on this beach was the oldest memory she could remember. How she got there, why she was there, and who she was, all a blur until today, when the truth had hit her.

“If he hadn’t died, I wouldn’t have to know,” she thought, while trying to keep herself from breaking down again. She turned to look at the city behind her. Buildings seemed to blink in and out of existence to her. She tried to convince herself it was just due to her stressed and tired state of mind she was in, but in her heart of hearts she knew what was happening.

She got up and headed towards her seaside apartment. It was only a couple hundred feet away. She had always wanted an apartment like she had now. She cut through the tall, swaying blades of grass. She had no fear of harmful bugs being in that grass. She always imagined living in a bug free world. As she reached the sidewalk, a car driving passed her seemed to change from red to blue in an instant. She ignored it and continued to walk towards her destination. She passed the grocery store where she had bought some flowers the week before. Lilies. She always wanted a store close to home. The apartment was silent. No one would be awake at this hour. She somberly climbed up the flight of stairs to the top floor. The elevator was working (nothing ever seemed to break) but she chose to take the 15 flights of stairs.

She crawled into her bed immediately after opening her apartment door, refusing to expend the energy to close her large bedroom window. The soft wind was now able to try to comfort her in her room. Sleep wouldn’t come easy for her tonight. After a lot of thinking, and some tossing and turning in her bed, she whispered:

“I wish you were here with me right now.” A moment passed when a few soft knocks hit her door.

“Come in.”

She jumped out of bed and ran to hug the familiar young man who stood in the now open doorway. “You’re here!” she yelled, holding him tighter.

“Are you surprised?” The young man said, looking down at her with the same tone of voice as earlier.

Her eyes locked on to his, but her gaze shortly met the floor. “I guess not,” she said as she stepped back away from him.
“Did you decide?” he asked her. A small gust came through the window.

“I chose,” she paused, “...I chose you, love. I can't leave you.” She said while looking down at her floor.

“I was afraid of that,” he said while he walked towards the window. “Now that you know the truth, this can’t last.” He stared off into the night sea as he was accustomed to.

“I don’t care,” she said turning to face the back of his head. “I don’t care how long we have together here, whether it’s only a few years or a couple days.” She started to break down again.

“Three years isn’t long enough?” he asked.

“A lifetime isn’t long enough with you,” she said through tears. “After yesterday...after watching you die yesterday I realized how much I love you.”

A long pause as the wind continued to blow through the window.

“If you hadn’t had appeared today I wouldn’t care what happens to me,” she said.

“But then now you know what this is,” he replied. “People can’t just die one day and be fine the next.”

“I know”

“Now that you’re aware, this place won’t last.”

“I know.”

“More things will blink in and out.”

“...I know”

“This world will fall apart.”

“Give me just one more day...please.”

Another long pause. He turned to face her.

“As we speak your memories are returning. All of this will fade, including me.” He was right. Her apartment started to become fuzzy and blurred. She prayed in her mind that she could have a little longer. The only thing that seemed to remain clear to her was the man she had fallen in love with.

“I don’t want to go back, love.”

“Your family misses you. They worry constantly about you. They have been told there is hope for you.”
“I don’t care.”

“It’s time to go, dear.”

“Hold me.” She ran to him, and he held her tighter than ever. She took one last look out of the window. No more stars.

“Close your eyes tight, Dreamer.” She closed them as tight as she could. She felt a small shove and before she knew it, she felt herself falling through the window. It was over. Everything was over.

She awoke to the feeling of sunlight beating on her face. As her eyes opened, she found herself lying in a hospital bed. Glancing around the room she noticed a picture frame on a desk beside the bed she was in. A lit candle labeled “Midnight Sea” sat next to the frame. It was a picture of three familiar faces. She finally put names to them. Mom. Dad. She, herself, was in the middle, looking three years younger. The thoughts of what happened to be only moments earlier immediately filled her head. She would never see the only man she had ever loved again. He only existed in dreams. A fantasy that could never hold her again. A small breeze hit her face. It came from an open window similar to the size of the last fateful window. Not the smell of the ocean, but of oil and smoke. She approached it. The hospital door flung open without a knock, as the people did not expect an answer. Two older versions of the people in the picture appeared.

“Baby! You’re awake!” her father yelled. She turned to see them, but quickly turned back to walk to the window. This wasn’t the life she wanted.

“Sugar, what are you doing?” her mother said.

She missed his hold on her.

“Don’t get to close to the window, baby.”

She missed his touch.

“Someone call a doctor”

She missed him.

In over three years she hadn’t spoken, until now.
“I wish you were here now, love.”

Many fast footsteps were heard echoing in the hallway and entering her room. She looked at the new crowd for his face but to no avail. She knew she wouldn’t find him there.

She climbed up onto the windowsill. Looking down, she was surprised to see a face she feared she would never see again. He was so far down and she was so far up, but she could hear him clearly.
“You called, and I’m here,” He said while outstretching his arms to her. “I can take you back to Paradise, Dreamer.”

“I’m coming.”

Baseball
By Cameron Schulte

The field will always be part of me
Remember the championships we would clench
But a player I will no longer be
Now just a fan in the outfields bench

Never would I play for the fame
Or for the numbers that made my stats
I played purely for the love of the game
So I could hear the crack of the bats

Coach pitch and tee-ball I did play
All the way up to the varsity team
Stepping on the diamond day after day
Making it to the majors once was my dream

Wanting to hit one over the outfield wall
The game that I love is baseball

You and Me
By j.g.

Open closed
Falling catching
Loving hating
Trying breaking
Relentless giving-up
Speaking silence
Stupid romantic
You & me
Third place winner in the 2007-2008 Society of Apothecaries & Dreamers contest.

Paranoid
By Patrick Harper

The wheels of bureaucracy turn ever so slowly, and this held true now more than ever as Mason Fields sat crossed legged in the waiting area at the DMV. He did his best not to dose off before his number was called, but the excessively warm building and the soft murmur of the wall to wall crowd made the environment very conducive to sleep. Eventually his eyelids must have won out over his brain, because it took the shrill calls of the ancient little government worker behind the counter to jolt him into alertness. He wasn’t sure how long he’d been unresponsive, but the woman’s scowl showed that it had been long enough to severely annoy her, although she struck Mason as the type that was easily irritated. He was pretty sure that lack of patience was a prerequisite for a government job. However, he pushed his distaste aside and approached with a smile to complete his business. All he wanted to do was register his new car and get the hell out of there.

Ah, his new car. Now that was a pleasant thought. In fact, it’s what got him through the miserable encounter with the disgruntled DMV employee. He still couldn’t believe he’d landed such a sweet deal, and on eBay none the less. His new black Jag fulfilled his every dream. It had the smooth leather interior, the sexy lines and curves, all the power of performance and the luxury of... well... luxury, not to mention a paint job so clean you could see yourself in it. It was perfect, like the woman he’d always wanted, except that the only baggage in this relationship would be what he packed for a vacation to the beach or the mountains or wherever. Plus, this car cost him a lot less than his ex-girlfriend ever did. He had expected something to be horribly wrong with the vehicle, based on the pittance he paid for it, yet he got the jewel that sat in his complex’s parking garage right now. He couldn’t wait to get back home, put on the new plates, and finally take his baby out on the town. Tonight was all that he could think of has he finally exited the Motor Vehicles building.

Mason was focused on his new plates and his big plans, which is probably why he didn’t see him. In fact, no one really paid attention to him. The man didn’t really stick out in the crowded room. He was sitting quietly in the back, newspaper in hand. His simple black business suit and tie dissolved him into the somber surroundings and his black sunglasses prevented any attention-catching eye contact. He was there, but no one noticed him. No one noticed that he never took a number. No one noticed that he never talked to anyone. No one noticed how he arrived shortly before Mason Fields and left just behind him, without ever doing one lick of business.

Mason peddled down the sidewalk so fast that those around him turned their eyes towards his trail, sure that some horrible force was pursuing the young man. They had no idea that it was what lay ahead, at home, that really pulled him in. He had never looked forward to something so much in his life, except maybe finally getting his law degree. That happened a few months ago though, so now the Jag was his pride and joy. Mason danced with anticipation as he rode the elevator up to his apartment. Once there, he threw his bike inside, grabbed a screwdriver and his new keys, and rushed down to the underground parking garage with his fresh license plates. The stairs screamed by beneath his feet and he almost ate the concrete
floor a few times, but he finally made it. He rushed to his spot, deactivated the car’s alarm, and threw back the beige cover with the majesty of a magician unveiling his latest illusion. But this was oh so real. There was his new baby.

Mason immediately set to work, first putting the rear plate on and carefully affixing the registration sticker. Everything had to be perfect. This car deserved no less. He then sat in front of the vehicle and started attaching the front plate. It was then, with his back turned towards the rest of the garage, that he first felt it. The tiny hairs on the back of his neck rose ever so slightly. It was that feeling everyone gets once in a while. Some call it a sixth sense. Some call it nonsense. Regardless, Mason knew what it meant. Someone was watching him.

He continued to work, attempting to glance around subtly with his peripheral vision or at least catch the reflection of something in his new car. Nothing. He tightened the screws on his license bracket very slowly and quietly, listening carefully to the echoing silence of the garage. Then, something. Were those footsteps that he heard? He couldn’t quite tell. There they were again. Mason kept tightening the screws, but faster now, the screwdriver slipping in his sweaty hands. His senses were on full alert. The soft thuds of steps were getting louder, closer. He just knew it. He could almost feel a presence upon him as he finished the last turn of the tool and then spun quickly around, hand clenched tight on the screwdriver’s handle, ready to defend himself if necessary.

No one was there. The garage was empty. Only his neighbors’ cars looked on. The only sound was the soft dripping of a leaky water pipe in the far corner. Mason softly chuckled at himself. His mind had been toying with him. Boy, he needed to get out more. He was so thirsty for excitement he was imagining things. “Good thing I have this ticket out of ‘Dullsville,’” he thought as he pulled the cover back over his new car. All he had to do was shower, shave, and change. Then it was off to the downtown strip with his new wheels to wine and dine with some old law school friends. He couldn’t wait. So Mason turned the car’s alarm back on with a “beep” and exited the parking garage back into the stairwell, the hairs on his neck still tingling ever so slightly.

“Fields. Mason Fields,” the young man quipped in his best Bond accent as he surveyed himself in the mirror. An hour and a half worth of primping and prepping had definitely paid off. There are some things money can’t buy. Style is not one of those things. He’d chosen this new Armani suit specifically to complement the interior and exterior of his new ride. Was it overkill? Probably. Did he care? Not in the least. Not every law grad landed a prime position in a respected firm just months after graduation. But that’s exactly what had happened to him. He had reason to celebrate. Nothing could bring him down off of this high. Or, so he thought.

He scraped the keys, his cell phone, and his money clip off of the kitchen counter with one fluid motion and tossed them into his pockets. One more quick glance at himself in the hall mirror and it was out the door and off to the evening he had fantasized about for so long. He whistled one of his favorite Sinatra tunes as he descended the stairs to the parking garage, where his chariot awaited. He kind of wished that he had lived back in the days of the Rat Pack. The era had a suaveness about it that he just loved. He knew he would have fit right in. As he continued to whistle and descend, a sour note caught his ear. It wasn’t his tune though, it was something else; something distant sounding, but growing steadily stronger. Then he recognized the distinct blare of his car’s alarm.
The remaining stairs were but a blur beneath Mason’s feet as he flew down the final flights to the garage. He flung the heavy metal door open as if it were weightless and sprinted to his parking spot. The young man’s jaw dropped open at the scene. The satin cover was half pulled off of his new Jag. The car’s horn was blaring, the lights were flashing in alarm mode, and the driver’s side door was wide open. Someone had broken into his car. But, as Mason surveyed the damage, he grew even more puzzled, because there was none. There was not a scratch or broken window anywhere. “How is this possible?” he thought. It actually appeared as if the intruder had a key or was at least a very talented lock pick. Mason leaned into the open door and looked around the car’s interior. The console and the glove compartment were both ajar, their contents spread amidst the floorboards. He shuffled through the mess. Nothing seemed to be missing. He just couldn’t figure out what was going on.

Then he heard the door to the stairwell open. He shot up over the dashboard just in time to see it slam back closed. Mason jumped out of his car and hurried over to the stairwell. He pulled open the door and peered inside. No one was to be seen, but he could hear the echoing steps of a quickened pace climbing upward. Looking up, he could just see one jacket-clad arm and a man’s hand clinging hard to the railing as he ascended. “Stop! Get back here!” he screamed, not sure what he’d do if the mysterious person actually obeyed him. That didn’t happen though. The thudding feet trailed away and Mason was alone again. He cautiously returned to his car, plumped down in the driver’s seat, and flipped open his cell phone to report the incident through the local police hotline. All he got in return was a busy signal. “Typical,” he thought.

After a moment of reflection he finally came to a decision. Although he was still a little rattled, he refused to have his evening spoiled. His car seemed to be fine and nothing, or at least nothing of importance, appeared to be missing. So he got out of the car and pulled the cover completely off. After one final check of the Jag’s exterior, Mason got back in the pilot’s seat, slammed the door, and started his baby up. The purr of the engine drowned out his anxiety and the euphoria of the first drive took over. He checked himself in the rearview mirror and his smile never shone so bright. “Fields,” he quipped, “Mason Fields.” Then the young lawyer squealed out of the garage and into the street, roaring through the city streets towards his rendezvous, and never noticed the pair of headlights behind that seemed to mirror his every move.

The night was all that Mason expected it to be. The food was great, the drinks were better, and his friends were knocked off their feet by his newfound success and status. Mission accomplished. The group reminisced of the past and dreamt about the future until the manager of the swanky, downtown club finally had to ask them to leave so he could close at 3 am. They reluctantly said their goodbyes outside, vowing to make this meeting an annual event, and then went their separate ways. Mason was all smiles as he stumbled to the lot across the street where his new car was parked. He was on cloud nine. It was definitely a mix of accomplishment and intoxication, but it still felt great. He unlocked the doors and climbed into the driver’s seat, laughing at himself as he tried numerous times to get the key into the ignition. The car was finally started and he was preparing to back up when he got a double dose of sobriety. As he rotated the rearview mirror, a shadowy figure came into focus in his back seat.
Mason jumped and screamed. Then man in the suit and dark glasses wrapped his arm around the seat and held Mason in place with incredible strength. "Hello Mr. Fields," he whispered very calmly into Mason's ear, "it's nice to finally meet face to face." The man's voice was eerily cool and monotone. Mason was sure he didn't recognize it.

"Who are you? What the hell do you want?" the confused young man squeaked.

"I'm going to make this very easy for you, son. I don't know what you've done with it, but I want it. Hand it over and you live. It's as simple as that."

"What? I don't know what you're talking about. Give you what?"

"Don't play dumb with me you little bastard!" the man screamed, showing his first glimpse of emotion. "It was in here when you bought this damn car and now it's not. That means you've taken it somewhere. For your sake let's hope you still have it, and the cops don't."

Mason was close to tears now. "Listen sir," he pleaded, "I don't know what you're talking about. There was nothing in this car when I bought it except the manual and stuff. I really think you've got the wrong guy!"

"Wrong answer, kid. I was hoping this wasn't going to get messy."

Mason saw the glint of a metal object in the mirror as the dark-suited man brought his hand from beneath his jacket. He didn't plan on sticking around to find out what it was. He bit down hard on the man's arm and shot out the door as soon as he was released, sprinting towards nothing in particular, just away from the invading stranger.

Mason had never run this hard in his life. At least, that's what it felt like now. As he rounded the corner at the end of a block, he glanced back over his shoulder to his car and his would be captor. He couldn't believe it. The burly man was right on his heels, moving with a speed that seemed much too quick for his size and build. Mason had never even heard him get out of the car! Mason swung his head back around, prepared to really pour on the steam, when he was knocked to the cold asphalt by a skull-splitting blow to the head.

The bad had just gotten worse. The brick wall came out of nowhere. Mason was so caught up in the closeness of his pursuer that he hadn't even noticed that he'd turned down a dead-end ally. The solid wall in front of him and his aching head were both definite indications that he had nowhere left to go but back, towards the threatening man who was hunting him. Movement of any kind was difficult as Mason fought to retain consciousness. He braced himself against a dumpster and got to his feet just in time to catch a kick square to the gut. The suit had caught up to him, and was releasing anger above and beyond what little he had displayed back in the Jag.

"So you don't have it, huh?!" He booted Mason hard in the ribs. "Well that's your problem kid. It was definitely there!"
A size thirteen heel landed square on Mason’s left ankle. He heard every bone crack and shatter under the force.

“Maybe next time you should think a little harder before you just buy a car from anyone like that! Why did you think the snake was trying to get rid of it?!”

The man picked Mason up like a sack of old trash and flung him against the wall he’d gotten to know earlier. He struck him hard and his wrist shattered as he tried to protect his head. Mason slumped to the ground, lacking the energy to do anything but stare up at the devilish figure before him through his swollen, bloodied eyes. He couldn’t help but start to cry. “Please, please mister. Please. I don’t know what you’re talking about. I don’t know what you’re looking for. I don’t have what you’re looking for!”

The man towered over Mason and stared down at him, still through his dark glasses. He reached inside his jacket and his hand reappeared holding a nickel-plated handgun. He pointed it at Mason’s forehead, and for the first time since their meeting in the car the man’s calm, monotone voice returned.

“Well kid... sucks to be you.”

BANG! Mason threw his hands in the air, screamed, and jumped hard. His sharp thud against the tile floor as his chair shot out from under him brought him back to consciousness. As he looked around, everyone in the DMV lobby was staring at him. His clothes were drenched with sweat and his heart was racing. He scanned his surroundings quickly, but there was no suited man, no gun, no ally, no nothing. The most terrifying thing in the room was the disgruntled DMV worker banging her hand on the desk and yelling, “Number thirteen! Number thirteen please!”

Mason looked down. That was the number he was holding. He must have fallen asleep. What a rude awakening. He wasn’t dead, but this embarrassment was almost worse. He slowly picked himself up off the floor and took the ‘walk of shame’ up to the counter. All he wanted to do was register his new car and get the hell out of here. The little old lady took her sweet time with his paperwork, but once it was stamped and signed he grabbed his new plates and made a beeline for the door. Mason was so intent on leaving that he didn’t even see him. In fact, after Mason’s little performance, no one really paid attention to him. The man didn’t really stick out in the crowded room. He was sitting quietly in the back, newspaper in hand. His simple black business suit and tie dissolved him into the somber surroundings and his black sunglasses prevented any attention-catching eye contact. He was there, but no one noticed him. No one noticed that he never took a number. No one noticed that he never talked to anyone. No one noticed how he arrived shortly before Mason Fields and left just behind him, without ever doing one lick of business.