Conjurings

Literary Magazine
of
St. Louis College of Pharmacy

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“Poetry is what gets lost to translation” ~ Robert Frost

“Write to be understood, speak to be heard, read to grow” ~ Lawrence Clark Powell

“Life is what happens between drafts” ~ Dennis R. Miller

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Disappointment’s in Demand

With the snow came misery
And blinding white uncertainty
Under all these circumstances
I’m just glad for second chances

My inverse prayers spoke in the darkness
I pray for death or happiness
So if I cannot end this sorrow
Then please don’t let me wake tomorrow

Will destiny have sympathy on the lover’s heart?
I saw this wreck comin’ from the start
With a heavy heart and bloodshot eyes
I hit my bed of concrete lies

This eats at me through constant pain
My memories evoke self-hate
You will never know what you meant to me
From this mistake I’m never free

My cheap lines can’t reverse time
I’ve tainted love, can’t bear your eyes
Although I try, you’re on my mind
And without you, I’m dead inside

Will destiny have sympathy on the lover’s heart?
I saw this wreck coming from the start
With a heavy heart and bloodshot eyes
I hit my bed of concrete lies

If the right words came easy
Well, then we could all be happy
For now it’s just reality
And everything that’s ending

Author: Nick Farrar
Eloquence

I was only a student. I wanted my good grades to fall like ripe and fragrant fruit into my lap. All I wanted in life at this moment was to have a graded test that was as white and pristine as a cloud, lifting me up to 4.0 bliss. Everyone else in my school is like me, busy living a life pre-set by homework and exam dates. The only person who did not live to the same beat of the slave drum was one of my friends, and it was only because he was busy pursuing aliens.

“They’re EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE FORMS!” He spouted indignantly next to me, tinkering with his alien-summoning device.

Indeed. He was too busy pursuing extraterrestrial life forms.

He was the only one I knew who actually worked on communicating with extraterrestrial life. And for a twinkling moment, I thought he had actually succeeded in getting one to come. She was a magician of words.

I first met her in my English class. Her eyes bored into mine as she said these words to me. They flashed like obsidian glass marbles, and I had to look away. My mouth couldn’t form the usual trite, automatic responses that she had gotten from our classmates.

Perhaps she was not an alien, but merely a strange person. She chose her words carefully like ripe fruit, turning it over in her mouth instead of her hands. Upon selecting the right ones, they flew out, flocks of fluttering birds to land on someone else’s upper story.

Every class period, she inched closer to him until their desks were touching. Every word about UFOs or strange cosmic happenings in his book brought her nearer. She nodded vigorously when he discussed the possible language of Alpha Draconians. In the hazy Sunday sunlight, I watched them as they discussed the possible intentions of Amphibians if they were to land on earth while our ice cream cones dripped into the concrete gutters beneath.

He could barely choke out words without stuttering. His sentences were like his plans to bring aliens to earth. Short, choppy, and they stuck to the edges of your consciousness, long after you parted. Once, when she narrated her own version of the fall of Julius Caesar, I thought I heard power behind the words. Drops of punctuation splashed into the flow of sentences. The class was enraptured.

My friend’s laboratory was in his father’s garage. After the first school day, I always saw him working on his alien-communication device. It was a massive thing—solid, silver polished metallic satellite dishes merging into wire, fiberglass and steel.

“It will never work!” I protested at his refusal to form a study group. “There’s no such thing as aliens. There’s simply no solid scientific evidence to prove it. You should know that.”

He smiled enigmatically while one of his gears started ticking. “Why don’t you watch me when I’m done? Maybe you’ll learn something.”

I shrugged. Why not? Exams were over and done with until next week. I could spare a few hours to watch a fool make his own train wreck.

It was mid-December when he finally finished. Obviously, she had to come too on this outing. We were standing in the middle of a field outside of town, in the pitch-black darkness. It was bitingly cold, the chill licking with a cold rough tongue on my nose and face. “It is SO cold!” I looked around and flung out my arms for dramatic effect. “Couldn’t you have summoned these aliens in a place a little warmer? Like Hawaii, for example?”

He sighed. “For the last time, they’re EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE FORMS. Not aliens.” His mumble about great acoustics was lost as I sighed heavily, wondering why I was here instead of doing chemistry problems. Ah well. At least with the flashlight I had, I could study some of my biology notes.

I plopped down in the wheat next to her, watching the wind blow as he turned on the machine. He pressed a few buttons, watching it light up like consecutive lights in a house. It made a frightening
whirring noise, clanking, snapping, and smashing its metal organs and pieces, fitting like puzzle parts. As the grinding and noise of the machine came to a close, the machine let out a sonic boom and I felt the ground vibrate and shake beneath me. Suddenly, the wind stopped.

Moments ticked by. I looked up at the bright lights of the night sky, and seemed like they were all twinkling, like snowflakes. Then, it seemed as if a dark shadow was eclipsing the stars in groups. I felt its presence nearer and nearer by the hairs standing on the back of my neck.

We stood there gawking at where we thought it was like idiots. A thought wandered into my mind. “If you want to make another life form reveal itself, you must speak its language. Only then will it trust you enough to make itself visible.”

He had told me that in class when I was bored enough to actually listen. I looked at him standing there, frozen. I grabbed his jacket sleeve, shaking him frantically. “Hey! Do something! Say something with that translate-thing there!”

He looked at me and then fumbled for his translator. He tried to speak into it, hoping that his words translated into radio frequency might mean something. The shape merely hung there in the winter air.

We felt it start to recede. “No! Wait! Come back! I have so many things to ask you!” He started running after it, waving his arms wildly.

It must have meant gibberish to the aliens, because we felt them move faster, the air becoming slightly warmer. Right as the shape started to disappear, she grabbed my chemistry notes and started running after him and the black outline. “Hey now! I need those for next week’s exam!”

She flashed me a quick smile, and rolled up the packet of papers into a cone. I’m not exactly sure what happened next, mostly because I didn’t believe it. She started speaking into the cone, her voice elevated, musical, almost singing a lilting melody. A flash of light, and everything was gone. I don’t remember walking back home, chemistry notes folded neatly in my pocket. I don’t remember calmly kissing my mother good night on the cheek with an excuse about studying at a friend’s house late and then laying down in my bed to wake up surprisingly early the next morning.

They were both sitting at their usual desks the next day. My words came in out in a gushing torrent. “OH MY GOD! Where were you? What did they do with you? Oh my god, guys! What happened?!”

He just shrugged and said, “Nothing. We just...saw what they looked like. Same as you. Pretty awesome, huh?” He smiled with a lopsided grin and turned towards the teacher.

Whatever. I don’t have the time for such nonsense. I have a biology exam in two days and I’m not even half-way done studying.

She never spoke much after that, despite being so talkative before. I’m sure it was alright. Her words are reserved for aliens and people who don’t know what to say.

Author: J-Chan Ling
Overcoming Nothingness

Your life is as insignificant as a spider's.
Someone or something suddenly squashes you
You are nothing and you will not be remembered.
But if you weave a good web
Then you enlarge yourself exponentially,
And can catch a hold of something great.

Author: Stephanie Chen

The Getaway

Waves quietly roll into the white sandy shore
Surfers sail over the white caps
The location's somewhere off the map
The sun sets in the west
Darkness slowly creeps in from the east
Slipping into unconsciousness...
Brrrrring, goes the bell
Throbbing pains of reality strike my brain
Flinching reactively
Sandy beaches are replaced by drugs and diseases
Another class begins, so another vacation takes flight
I'm out like a light
Italy sounds just right

Author: Ashley SooHoo

Sweet Reminiscence

Yes, I felt it with you
A touch very few and far in between

It was an electricity of hands
Secretly embraced

Within a single breath
The moment unfolds

You and I are so close
Yet so far....

Author: Lisa Kim
A Sweet Calling

At midday I hear the calling like that of a gentle breeze
Enchanting me like a cast spell
A beautiful calling that is hard to resist

A song un reproduceable by man alone

I give in, reach out, and listen to it
Appealing to the soul and not merely to the flesh
Seducing me from afar
Oh how hard it is to turn away now
On this long voyage it allows me to rest my weary body
Though the sweet melody is deceptive in nature
It pulls me in without mercy
What it is I do not know
But it calms the nerves to my spirit’s delight
The sounds drew in our ship as well as my interest
We were eventually getting closer and closer
I had been hearing the sound for so long that I finally see land
Our boat edges closer and closer with no stopping in mind
We arrive at a place foreign to all
I look up and realize they have bodies like that of angel
Winged maidens they be
I gaze upon them as they entice me with their charm
They seduce me with their music and beauty
Diverting out everything else around me
This goes on for so long now I cannot remember
Oh how I have become lost in time
All of a sudden I am down to one last breath
I then realize they have taken the souls of men so many times before
Death beseeches me now

Author: Kevin Niedbalski

Uplift

Rain is falling down
Washing away the sadness
From the broken hearts

Author: Bre Dunworth

Broken

I wait for your love
How long should I pursue her
Is it worth it all

Author: Mitul Gandhi
History at Forest Park

Henry Homes was considered by some to be a high school genius. He breezed through four years of high school making straight As in all his classes barely cracking a book to study. Actually, he enjoyed reading, but textbooks were not his first choice when it came to subject matter. Being somewhat of a couch potato, he was not much of a sportsman. However, he did try out for the soccer team in his junior year because he was advised that participating in a team sport would look good on his college application. Surprisingly, he made the team and wasn’t too bad. All those years of sitting on the couch playing Nintendo FIFA soccer finally paid off.

Fast forward through his senior year and Henry found himself in somewhat of an academic predicament at the prestigious college that was his first choice in higher education. Much to his surprise, his strategy of not reading class material or studying for tests no longer worked in college. Relying solely on brain osmosis to absorb lecture material resulted in failing tests scores in most of Henry’s classes. Although he was smart, it took him a whole semester to realize that if he wanted to stay in college, he would have to learn how to study. He had to pull up his grade point average or pull the plug on his career plans. A flyer offering individual tutoring caught his eye as he sat cross-eyed in the library trying to study for an upcoming test. He called Sammy, the tutor, attempting to arrange a time to meet. Not getting an answer, he left a message on the answering machine saying that he would be studying on Sunday afternoon in Forest Park outside of the Jewel Box if Sammy would like to pick up a few bucks tutoring that afternoon.

Sticking to his plans, Henry brought a backpack full of books along with a knapsack full of snacks to Forest Park on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. He parked himself on a blanket near the Jewel Box, one of his favorite sites at the Park. He was contemplating his history assignment when a dark-haired, slender girl wearing pink Adidas tennis shoes and a blue button down collar shirt with a business suit blazer interrupted him and asked him if his name was Henry. He stared at her noticing her coal black eyes and lipstick red thin lips. She had slightly pointed ears with dangling studs in her pierced cartilage of her right ear. He laughed aloud when he realized that Sammy the tutor was a female. The computer generated voice on Sammy’s answering machine mistakenly gave him the impression that Sammy was a fellow male student. Actually, Sammy’s gender was a pleasant surprise and this afternoon was looking more promising and enjoyable than expected. Henry offered Sammy a soda and some Doritos and together they waded through Henry’s notes and polished off his history assignment within a few hours.

Together they devised a study plan for all of Henry’s classes and met regularly during the week for tutoring sessions. Henry’s grades skyrocketed into the passing range after just a few weeks of Sammy’s tutoring. Every Sunday, weather permitting, they continued to meet in Forest Park, but not to study. They took long walks through the zoo observing the animals or listened to lectures at the Art and History Museums. One Sunday afternoon, Henry taught Sammy how to kick a soccer ball as they came across an abandoned ball in the soccer field adjacent to the Park. In the winter, they skated hand in hand at Steinberg Skating Rink. In the Spring, they donned roller blades and sailed along the bike paths. Henry also sailed brilliantly through his classes that semester, thanks to Sammy’s tutoring. They met at the Jewel Box for a final picnic together before going their separate ways for the summer. The rest of the story is history, which by the way, ended up being Henry’s favorite subject that year.

Author: Kristin Hagan
End

There was a girl who had it all,
'Til her world slowed to a crawl.

Her speedy life no longer exists;
Her joy is lost somewhere in the abyss.

So, now she sits, wondering what changed,
baffled by how fast her life rearranged.

She looks sadly at the people she once knew,
And wishes so badly she could just bid adieu.

She couldn’t take what she had lost;
And it was all due to this painful cost.

Her world then suddenly perished;
She can no longer recover what she once cherished.

She accepted her bitter end-
It’s far beyond what others could comprehend.

Author: Melissa Palausky
Teddy Bear

Last night in the toy shop, I thought of the one thing that usually consumes my mind. When the owners locked up and lights turned off was when I figured out my need for love. Although I am just a simple teddy bear, my feelings go past my stuffing and thread. My friend Annie, the doll, is the only one that understands. Every night, I scoot myself off the shelf and waddle my way over to where she is displayed. We talk quietly about our need for love. Deep down I know that she loves me, but I want someone else too, someone like a human.

To tell you the truth, I know what the problem is. Kids these days don’t want me. They come crashing in and are immediately drawn to the newest, coolest toys, and I am left untouched on my dusty shelf. But it’s not that I am not lovable. I adore kids and enjoy being played with. Except if I am noticed, it seems as if it is only for two seconds, and then I’m dropped on the ground for a different toy that caught the child’s eye. Annie told me our luck will change, and one day, I will have the person I have always dreamed of.

See, I’m the type of teddy bear that used to sell out like crazy a few years back, at least long enough that I couldn’t count on one paw. But as time has passed, I am viewed as no fun, nothing exciting, and old school. And as more time passes, the more I can’t help but believe it. It is true; I am just an old raggedy teddy bear. My brown fur is becoming loose and tattered, and my left ear flops down from being dropped on my head so many times. But I am still the same old bear on the inside. I can love and be loved. I can provide comfort and security. I know that I have the ability to turn a child’s frown upside-down into a smile. And at that sight, I know my existence will be worthwhile.

Just yesterday my luck started to change. A young girl and her grandmother came in and browsed the shelves just like everybody always does. Smiling, the little girl pointed at me and asked her grandma to pull me down. Instantly, she held me in her arms, squeezed me extra tight, and jumped up and down with giddy delight. Her grandma seemed content that she found a playtoy but reminded little Gracie that they were there to pick up a toy for Ella’s birthday. Feeling sullen, Gracie slowly let me go from her embrace and went over to the dolls and picked out my favorite, Annie.

I couldn’t help but feel disappointed. I was so close to having an owner, but like always, I ended up getting excited for nothing. And this night was unusually depressing. Normally I had Annie to cheer me up, but without her, I felt as if I had no one. The darkness and silence only added to my loneliness.

Though the bright sun was shining the next day, I was in no mood to feel cheerful. I wanted a home – a place to feel welcomed and loved not just a temporary cold, metal shelf. I heard the bell jingle as someone walked in. Though my ears usually perk with immediate anticipation, I had no reason to feel upbeat about this buyer. Yet, I heard a familiar soft voice and my mood began to change. Telling the clerk that her granddaughter had come down with a case of the chicken pox, she wanted to get the one thing that would make Gracie feel a tiny bit better. She explained that she was looking for a particular teddy bear, and I heard her use the word “adorable.” The store clerk walked over to my area with Gracie’s grandma and asked if I were the one she was looking for. And for some reason, I couldn’t help but blush.

“That is the exact one. Thank you,” she beamed as she lifted me off the shelf and held me tenderly. She took me to the register, paid for me, and set my gingerly in the backseat of her car.

Arriving at Gracie’s house, Grandma Linda opened the door, and there was Gracie lying on the couch, watching a movie, and itching all over. “Now, now young lady, what did I tell you about that scratching?” Knowing that she wasn’t supposed to itch, Gracie stopped scratching at the sound of Linda’s voice.

“But I have to grandma!” Gracie protested. “It itches!”
“Well, if you can promise to be a big girl, take your medicine, and stop scratching, I will give you a surprise,” her grandma coaxed with a lighthearted tone. The word “surprise” made Gracie’s eyes pop open and attention catch. “What is it? What is it?” Gracie kept chanting until she would be answered.

Grandma Linda swiftly walked into the kitchen, grabbed me from the countertop, and brought me to Gracie who was still in the living room jumping up and down. At the sight of my body, Gracie ran over and hugged me with all of her might. And I knew in an instant, that I turned this child’s frown upside-down into a smile.

Author: Josie Millard

STLCOP

Awake for two days
Cannot see straight or even think,
Finals time is here.

Author: William Call
Chances

Life is a game of chance
Opportunities are thrown every which way
Now and then I take a glance
At the sight of the sunset bay

The golden, bright light
The blue sky and roaring sea
Birds sing as they take flight
Joyous and free

I take a dive
With no sight of a rope
Even if uncertainty seems to thrive
There is a glimmer of hope

I hit the water with a huge splash
Sinking to the bottom of the ocean floor
I close my eyes as my mind starts to flash
Remembering what could be waiting for me on the shore

Thoughts of the surreal
Premonitions of reality
Confusion of what to feel
In the face of mortality

As I begin to rise
I’m not sure what to expect
I reach the top and open my eyes
Ready to face the subject

Life leads me back to the sand
Ready to take one last stand
No matter what happens it’s for the best
Taking the chance is life’s amazing test

Author: Matt Respicio
Love

They are always needed, always,
Except for the time I do not move at all
Keeping my feet warm in the winter,
Shielding and enfolding my feet from hazard,
Sacrificing their tummies scratched against the ground,
They do not speak a word or complain
But just embrace my feet, and I
Sometimes appreciate them by saying, “Thank you.”
And it just completely soothes them.
Nothing more than that is demanded from the shoes,
Just like mothers give children an infinite love without expecting anything from them.

Author: SunHye Min

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time
love existed in my heart
but it was murdered by rejection

Once upon a time
hope kept me motivated
but it was washed out by reality

Once upon a time
trust was my best friend
but betrayal destroyed our relationship

Once upon a time
confidence defined my character
but it was stumped along with my dignity

Once upon a time
tomorrow was my inspiration for living
but now that’s no longer so because I killed myself today

Author: Marquita Martin
The Emergency Room

It was late that night. The moon was full and the eerie whistle of the wind was just enough to send chills down my spine. The last trick or treat had just returned home. As we began walking down the road, all of the lights went out; it was then that Grant noticed one light flickering from behind the trees.

Grant yelled, “It’s coming from the abandoned hospital; let’s go check it out!” Emily was very uneasy saying, “I really don’t believe this is a good idea.”

I caught a glimpse of Grant giving a sinister smile towards Emily. I defiantly wanted to check it out though, and I said, “We will be fine, Emily, and it will just be for a few minutes.”

The door creaked as we entered the old emergency room door. It was pitch black, but luckily Brockton had a lighter on him. As we made our way to the light switch, we noticed that Grant had disappeared. We began searching the many rooms looking for Grant, and we noticed something peculiar. There was a room that contained three beds, which seemed like they had been recently used.

“No that’s creepy,” Brockton said laughingly.

There was a metallic smell seeping from the room across the hall. We opened the door to check it out and saw many animals that looked dismembered, disfigured, and reassembled. They were lying across the operation tables drenched in blood.

“That’s it! I’m out of here!” Emily yelled as she ran for the door.

Before she could reach it, a stocky man with a cold, glassy stare stepped in her way. I was shocked and terrified. He grabbed Emily by the nape of the neck and covered her mouth with his red hands. That’s when Grant came strolling through the door. I was very confused. I couldn’t figure out what was going on, but I knew I had to get out of that hospital. It was too late though; before I knew it Brockton and I had both been captured.

And now what happened nobody could ever imagine. I still can’t believe I made it safely to the hospital, alive.

“It’s alright son; just finish your story for the police report.”

Ok, I’ll do my best...

My eyes opened to bright lights and a smell of death filled the air. I felt groggy, like after you wake up from a really good night of sleep. My body would not move; it was almost as if I was caged; the only thing I could move was my eyes. It was awkward because there was nothing holding me down. I searched the room with my eyes when I saw two men. They were wearing white coats and jeans; I think their name tags read Dr. Conner and Dr. Silverman. Beside me lay Emily and Brockton. Brockton was nailed to the table with scalpels protruding through his feet and hands. Emily’s skin was stretched out and stapled to the table. That’s when I heard Dr. Conner talking. Oddly enough he mentioned my father’s name and how he had failed him in Medical School. Then, Dr. Silverman said, “after this he will wish he would have passed us!”

I heard something coming from Brockton’s side. There was a loud “crack” and then a blood curdling scream. Limb by limb Brockton’s bones were snapped. As the doctor broke each bone into many pieces, he had a sly grin on his face, like the one Grant was wearing earlier that night. Bones were breaking through his skin and a pool of blood was forming beneath his table. He was helpless, and the screams were so gut wrenching I couldn’t get them out of my head. Some of the blood flew on my face, but I couldn’t move my hands to wipe it off. I moved my eyes towards Emily, and watched as her throat was being slit. Dr. Silverman was in the process of removing her voice box and tongue, so she would quit screaming. She twitched and his hand jerked, slashing her jugular vein. The blood was spraying profusely, like water from a hose. He grabbed some gauze to clot the bleeding for the time being. Then he placed her tongue and her voice box on her face to remind her she could never scream again. Afterwards he slowly ripped off her arms and legs. Meanwhile, Dr. Conner brought in a box of
several severed limbs. He picked out new arms and legs to sew on her body. They began to laugh at all the different combinations that could be put on her. I discovered that I was finally able to move my arms and legs again.

Grant walked into the room and yelled, “Dad, the anesthesia has worn off of Dalton!”

Dr. Conner threw him a pair of enormous clippers, and he began to chase me. Trying to get away I slipped in a puddle of blood. He sat on the back of my knees and quickly snipped my Achilles tendon’s. I gasped with the pain, and tried to get up again. As I stepped up, my feet became detached from my legs. I had no way to escape, except to crawl to the door. I drove through the pain, because I knew it would be worse if I stayed. I grasped the doorknob just as I passed out.

And that’s how I ended up here. I still don’t know what became of Brockton or Emily, and probably never will. But thank you so much for saving me. I’m sorry but I don’t believe I caught your name.

With a laugh a man replied, “You already know it.”

Author: Jessica Bryant

Colorful Sunset
When the morning comes greeting me with its warm sunlight,
I think of your day and hope that it gives you the best.
As I go about my day with smiles,
I hope that wherever you are, you’re bursting with smiles too.
When I have a bad day,
I think of you and hope that you’re filled with thoughts of me too.
When the night falls and darkness surrounds me,
I hope it left you with a colorful sunset.

Author: Virth Bathani
Where I'm From

I am from chopsticks, from JIF's smooth peanut butter and Smucker's strawberry jam. I am from the creak in a still vacant home. (Blank, silence ringing in my ears.) I am from the blush prickly roses, the pear trees whose budding fruit I unintentionally pick as if they were ripened.

I am from soy sauce and sleek dark hair, from Chau and Tang. I'm from the dress-to-impress and the comfy and cozy. From suck it up and let it out. I'm from the celebration of the first new moon from the lunar calendar and red pocket money I secretly peek into.

I'm from Peoria and China's Guangzhou, white rice and bubble tea From the business my grandfather sacrificed for western lifestyle the joy my cousin achieves with each successful performance. In my heart is a lifetime of events memoirs flowing through the vessels, faces of acquaintances and companions whose bonds are only as strong as they need to be. Seen the best and worst of people— These are the moments I lived—a kindred spirit.

Author: Cindy Chau
“Here for another trip, friend?”

“No,” he replied. It’s how he always answered him at first. “Why do you still haunt me?”

“Let’s not lie to ourselves anymore. If you did not want to see me, you wouldn’t stare so long in that mirror would you?”

“I told you the last time was my last. I’m done.”

He wanted to hate that creature, who always stood behind him. Just a hooded figure in black, always standing behind him, until he caved, and took his hand.

“I know everything that’s happened so far, friend. Please come join me, we’re wasting time. Do not displace your feelings on me; I am only here to help.”

He wanted to hate that voice. A growl, if anything, but at least a sympathetic one. If a demon could be compassionate, could love, might this be what it would sound like?

“There is so much I want to show you. So much you need to see. Please. Are we not friends, like you said? Why would I lie to you?”

“I just... I’m just sick of what I see when I go.”

“Your world is sick. I offer you light. Please take my hand. I only wish to help.”

And with that, like so many times before, he placed his hand upon the mirror that stood before him, closed his eyes and-----

Felt his feet on the cold barren wasteland that stood before him. A dismal view. Dried, worthless soil strewn as far as the eye could see. The only plant life, or life at all for that matter, was a few scattered remnants of trees with branches that looked no different than the assumed roots underneath them. The sky itself was dark and full of rows upon rows of gray clouds. They moved so rapidly, but he himself never felt any wind. They moved so much faster here. It was like a storm that would never come.

The most noticeable sights in his current view were the random mirrors that seemed to be suspended in the air. Mirrors of all shapes and sizes. Each gave a view into the Otherside, or at least another side; he was not sure how many planes existed, and perhaps the mirrors he looked through were just similar to the world he was from. Behind him stood the Otherside of his bedroom mirror. Through it he saw his own lifeless body lying on the floor. He thought about how frightened he was the first time he saw himself in that state; cold and catatonic. His alarm clock read 12:03, and he knew it would until he returned.

“Are you ready to go, friend?” the hooded figure gargled out of his throat.

“What do you have to show me this time? Another miserable sight to make me question the existence of a Higher Authority? As to why it would allow such cruel things to happen in this world?”

“I assure you, there are Higher Powers working as we speak, but mind you they are very busy, and cannot be bothered with such trifles as I have shown you. Would you like me to show you them sometime, friend?”

“I don’t think man was supposed to look into the face of God before his time.”

“Words on paper written by men hold no authority over you or I. But that is for another time. Now we must go. There is something I want to show you.”

“Fine. Let’s go.”

They began their march towards what sight the hooded figure deemed necessary to see. He could feel the loose earth below him through his toes as he took each step. Familiar and strangely warm.

“Tell me about the girl, how are you and her?” asked the hooded man.

“Good I guess.”

“You guess? You doubt?”

“No, just nothing out of the ordinary.”
“No more fighting; you trust her now?”

“Yeah.”

Silenced passed for a moment, but who can say what a moment was? Maybe in some other time, some other place, Millennia had come and gone.

“If you are so sick of your world, you could always stay here, friend. There are so many secrets to be unlocked, and so many things to see.”

“You know I can’t do that, everyone would know I was gone.” He never knew what to make of this dark traveler. At times it seemed that he was no more than a mere, lonely child, or like a puppy that lost his favorite ball and just wanted someone to play with. Other times he wondered what all deep seated knowledge was held underneath the layers of that jet black cloak.

“You’s a world filled with hate and wickedness; so painful but curious to watch. Why would anyone live there, when there are so many better places, friend?”

“We don’t choose.”

“I disagree.”

“It’s not that bad of a place for everyone.”

“It is for you. Look in the mirror, friend.”

What he saw was a familiar pink and red bedroom. Hers. The stuffed bears he bought her, little notes he wrote covering the floor. On the bed was something new. It was her, and a man he had never seen before.

The press of her lips, filled with such passion he had seen from her so long ago, promised to be reserved only for him, now shared with another. The arch of her back and her spine touched by fingertips that were not his own. The sight of two lovers, alone in their own world; both with equally guilt-free smiles on their faces.

It was a horror known to many, yet no language could ever convey how exactly it felt.

For a moment, he stood there frozen. But what is really a moment anyway? For him, it lasted an eternity, civilizations came and went, empires rose and then were gone. The spark of Life had begun and flickered out for him, all in his moment; but then again, his forever could just be someone else’s blink.

“It’s not real. It can’t be.”

“Why would I lie to you? I just want to help you.”

“This has to be some twisted game for you.”

“Look at me, friend, what do I gain from lying to you?”

The dark clothed man reached to the sides of his hoods, to reveal a face perhaps never seen before,

Yet it was one seen so many times before in his own mirror, before that dark Stranger had ever even arrived.

“There are so many of us on so many worlds, friend. Your world is but one drop of water in this universal tidal wave. I can save you before the crash.” His raspy words had become that of his own familiar voice.

He himself, as he continued to stare into that mirror, felt his own humanity drain out of his body. He felt hollow; an endless void now stirred, grew, and consumed everything inside of him.

“I’m done. I don’t care what happens.”

“Do not worry, friend, she is but one life in a sea of unimaginable numbers. Stay with me and we can leave this wasteland, meet the others who made it here, and be happy. When the End of Times comes, we may still live. Trust me; there are other worlds than this.”

Silence, for another hundred thousand years.

“You rage is building so fast in you, would you like to be rid of it, friend?”

“Yes.”
“Then take these,” the cloaked being said as he tore off two strips of cloth from his robe, “...and break what you see before you.”

He took the two pieces into his hand, and wrapped them around his knuckles, took a breath, and shattered the mirror.

The picture, still visible through the shards of glass, remained still. He had no idea what effect it had on the world, but he had hoped he had ended it. If this was the one time he could play God, he would be a vengeful one.

He ran through the wasteland, shattering every mirror he could see and reach with his fists. The ones he couldn’t reach were hit with rocks he threw until they shattered like the rest.

“You have but one left, and after it is done, you must watch.”

“Show it to me.”

He turned to face the now revealed man only to find the mirror leading into his room. Had his thoughts been clear, he may have questioned the ramifications, but as of now that world offered nothing to him, and didn’t think it ever would. Without second thought, he smashed the mirror. In a piece of the now broken mirror, he spotted his alarm clock click to 12:04.

“Watch, friend.”

He witnessed his last true existence in the world he used to be part of. His mother ran upstairs after calling his name a few times to find the lifeless body of her oldest son lying on the carpeted floor. Had he retained some of his former self after seeing the Scarlet act, he may have felt sorrow, but now, it was pity. Pity that they didn’t know how much better true life would be on this Otherside. His mother screamed for help and for someone to call 911, although her efforts were a lost cause.

“I’m sorry life so far has been so tough for you, friend, but trust me, this will be so much better. Vicariously we get to watch from an immeasurable distance, never to feel their misery again. Follow me please, your anger will soon subside. I promise you will find another here to make you happy. If you just follow me I can get us out of this barren landscape and into the luscious green hillsides where we belong.”

Now, with no options left after abandoning the existence he had come to know, and with nothing to lose, he said after a pause:

“Then let’s go, friend, I trust you, why would you ever lie to me?”

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**Pharmacy Master**

While I sit alone on this gloomy day
I think about everything that has happened
Looking at my books, I don’t’ know what to say
Missing my mother, in this lonely, cold place
I tell my books, “give me the answers!”
I am trying to be one of the pharmacy masters.

**Author: Kheelan Gopal**
Ball

A small, white round ball that brings both joy and anger to so many people. From weekend warriors to those that play every day, this game is meant to be entertaining, an escape from the mundane. It can be played seriously or it can be a social outing with friends and family. One thing is sure that the day could never end badly. As the old saying goes a bad day at the course is better than a good day at work.

Author: Mike Feller

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Finals

Finals are here now I want to stop studying God I am so tired

Author: Justin Boudeman
Afternoon Daze

It was October 24, 2009 around 4 P.M. in the boring and sweltering afternoon in my loft. I had just finished two or three dishes of homemade potato soup, maybe a dish of homemade fried rice, and about three-fourths of a pan of recently made brownies for dessert. All of those were eaten without a drop of water to help it go down. That dehydration probably contributed to my lightheaded experience, a strange event that I still remember the bizarre details of. As I was finishing up the huge meal, I was reading about acupuncture on the Internet while Kiss of the Dragon was starting on FX, channel 77. Soon I turned off and closed my laptop and just lay on the couch, content with watching some fight scenes. What ruined the movie was that the piercing sunlight from our loft’s windows was setting an annoying glare on the TV, causing me to miss what was on the screen. Too lazy to move the TV, I decided to block the glare by sitting on the coffee table in front of the TV. After about forty five minutes into the movie, the combination of my dehydration and the sun beating on my bare back for a long time started to get to me. I finally got the motivation enough to move the TV and place it on the coffee table. There was still glare, but at least I could see the screen closer. As I was watching the scene where Jet Li and Bridget Fonda’s characters are talking in the old Chinese man’s shrimp chip shop, that’s when it happened. At first, my head started having a dull thumping that was growing into a lightly pounding headache. Along with the headache, my vision started blurring a bit, and my hearing turned on and off repeatedly as I struggled to watch the movie. A fight scene in the shrimp shop was going on, and as I was watching Jet Li fight a couple of henchmen, stab a pimp in the neck with chopsticks, and fight another martial artist, my mind was completely focused on Jet Li’s movements and strikes; nothing else mattered at that moment. Then, as if someone slapped me out of a trance, I became suddenly conscious and aware of everything other than Jet Li, even though I saw all of the imagery. It’s like I was watching the fighting, then the next thing I know, I just realized that Jet Li was fighting in a shrimp shop that was being gunned and burned down. Anyways, for the rest of the movie, I kept drifting in and out of consciousness. Each time I came back, I wondered what was going on while my head kept feeling like it was being thumped on the inside. I couldn’t keep my thoughts straight and I was confused by the whole movie, even though I had seen it around six or seven times before. Finally, the movie ended, and I started to browse on Wikipedia through random articles, a favorite time-killing hobby of mine. Finally relenting to my thirst, I got up to walk to the kitchen to get a glass of water. Getting up, the lightheaded feeling rushed and burst in my head, causing my peripheral vision to completely blur out as I walked towards the kitchen. One strange thing that happened was that I felt like I was teleporting from place to place because I didn’t remember walking to the kitchen, just that I got there and got my glass of water. I also didn’t remember my walk back to the couch, just that I got back. My head was still pounding, and I also felt suddenly tired and sleepy. To keep myself awake, I got up and walked to the bathroom with my laptop. My teleport feeling came on again, and I never actually did anything when I got to the bathroom but sit on the toilet cover and browse some more on Wikipedia. I guess I went there on a whim. As I was reading, my mind became completely focused on every word, yet I found myself nodding my head as I came in and out of consciousness. After about fifteen minutes of this, I raised my head up as my consciousness came back and looked around to think, “Wow, I didn’t know I was in the bathroom. I can’t believe this.” I shut off my laptop, put it down somewhere, and ran to the kitchen for another glass of water. The next thing I knew, I was running around the loft for a long time (I lost track of the time after this), drinking water nonstop, looking at myself in the bathroom mirror, and laying down on the couch watching TV again. It was never-ending teleportation. I didn’t realize or remember it until I saw him, but my roommate was sleeping in his bed the whole time. Curious and paranoid about my state of mind yet eager to share it, I yelled his name about five times to wake him up. After he woke up groggily, he sat on the couch to
watch TV with me. For a long time, I was going on a nonstop rant about how I felt for the past two hours. He was completely bamboozled about what I was talking about because I was babbling the weirdest things during the rabble. We both are confused about what had happened. It was the strangest afternoon ever.

Author: Dan Chang

You Didn't

You didn't ask anything,
You didn't ask for anything.
Whatever you gave,
You gave with your heart.
You didn't say anything,
You didn't weigh the pros and cons.
Whatever you gave,
You gave with a smile.
You're the warmth,
You're the shade.
I may not know much,
But this I do know,
You're one of a kind,
And you'll always be.

Author: Virla Bathani

Love-Hate

More than anything, she wanted Anthony to stop playing. She was sick of hearing about his name, his talent, his potential. He was two years younger than her, and whispers about his arrival abounded before he even enrolled. She didn't care—not about him, nor his music, nor his ambitions. Nonetheless, the night before his first performance on campus with the graduate symphony orchestra, she snuck in to hear him practice. He played Tchaikovsky: a composer well known for his grandiloquence, respected for his succinctness in expressing tear-jerking, heartbeat-rising emotion in just a few measures.

Anthony's fingers bounced effortlessly tap danced across the keys, gliding through the well-rehearsed patterns. His playing reminded her of the day her little sister proudly showed her the color-
by-numbers painting in which she didn’t once go outside the lines. Not a single missed note. Not a single note of passion.

She coughed, and he abruptly looked up. He flashed the same smile she saw on the posters advertising his performance.

“You’re two hours early,” he joked. More than anything, she also hated his arrogance. She shrugged. “I’m leaving now.”

“Hey,” he called after her as she turned to leave. “What’s your name?”

“Jo.” She paused, wondering if she should say any more, wondering if he might ask. What is that short for? He would say, and if she answered everything would stumble out of the bottle she had kept closed for so long—the bottle that his mere existence shook until it was ready to explode. Johannes, she would tell him, and then, instead of quickly changing the subject as she had done for the last five years she would add, I picked it myself. And then the bottle would burst.

She would tell him how, at 7, she had her first transcendental experience with Hayden’s No. 16 in C major. How, at 9, even her concert pianist father had to go searching for a better teacher for her. She would talk about how, at 9, she was invited to play at Carnegie Hall but couldn’t go because she got chicken pox. She would tell him about how as she spent that week playing piano at every waking moment—only the music could keep her from scratching—and how, after the ordeal, she became homeschooled in order to devote more time to her music. At that same time, she decided to change her name from Julia to Johannes, because to her there was nothing better than sharing the same name as the composer who had so beautifully combined the best elements of classical and romantic music. Julia was her maiden name; at that moment, she was committed to spending the rest of her life with piano.

And then, right before he would ask why she hasn’t become world-renown, she would tell him about the tumor that came at 16, the one that eventually needed a surgery that removed so much muscle in her lower arm that her fingers no longer had the strength to play. That’s why you haven’t heard of me, she would tell him, because now, I’m just another student. Then, she might tell him about how after all the crying and denial she threw out all her music and CD’s. The black Steinway she had gotten for Christmas collected dust in the basement, and her father would commute to a nearby school to play. He understood why she would never again ask him how his day was.

She would confess that she didn’t buy a ticket for his concert because it was still too painful to think about, and how much she envied his ability to play. Then, knowing he would understand, she would admit that ultimately, she couldn’t stay away—she had to hear him, to recognize that music was a driving force that she was but a small part of and could not to deny.

Then he would apologize that she came in before he was warmed up, and with a genuine smile this time he would play Tchaikovsky again, with so much passion that she would forgive him for succeeding where she couldn’t, and forgive music for marrying and then leaving her.

“Jo, huh? Bet that’s short for Josephine—that’s one of my favorite names.” The trademark smile was still on his face.

Author: Joseph Kang
Always Double-Down on Eleven

Vegas, Vegas, the city that never sleeps,
This is where I spent my spring break week.

I came, I saw, I conquered the strip,
I even held a thousand dollar chip.

When I was in Vegas I only slept a total of 4 hours and
On top of that I never even took a shower.

I couldn't waste time on such frivolous things,
I would rather play poker and win with a pair of kings.

I spent one night singing Mr. Brightside karaoke,
Sometimes I couldn't breathe 'cause it was just too smoky.

I came with only two friends, but left with more.
I even played my grandma's favorite card game; war.

A wise man told me if I spent my time chasing straights and flushes,
I would come in on planes and leave on buses.

My room was comped and my drinks were free,
My favorite drink of the trip was the long island iced tea.

I can't believe I threw away so much money on slots,
Even after I told myself before I left that I would not.

School started back up again the day I got off the plane,
I was so tired that I regret to inform you I missed the class of Mrs. Fontane.

Author: Dan Kistner
Midnight Confusion

The hour is ten past twelve,
All I imagine is that bed of mine,
However I must succumb my desire,
I want to enjoy infinite peace,
Piece of mind, mine in my sleep.
The hour is ten past twelve,
The sun begins to warm the room.

Author: Brandon Luong

Burning Daylight

Yellow is the sun,
Burning brightly in the sky,
Warming all below.

Author: Libby Herman

Addicted to Rehab

I used to get high off my life
Wasted from the meaningless pleasure
Of the nothingness
that consumed my existence
Buzzed from my inability
To care for anything
Eventually overdosing
On the meaningless echo
The beat made
In my hollow heart
But his love became my anti-drug
His affection was my therapy
He broke my fall
And now I’m addicted to my rehab

Author: Jerrica Rucker

Alcoholic

With that being said,
I take more than a few shots of life,
To the head,
Followed by a glass of reality,
Chased with a little ambition,
Drinking with hopes of getting wasted,
Enough to not remember
Earlier times,
When you were a lightweight,
And couldn’t tolerate your liquor.

Author: Jerrica Rucker

Haiku Syllables

The first line has five
The second line has seven
The third has five too

Author: Justin Boudeman
Too Late

One thing was definite, she was lost. The rain pelted against her windshield, obstructing her view. The windshield wipers attempted fruitlessly to clear the glass and provide a clear line of sight. The ominous, black sky above occasionally lit up with a strike of lightning, followed by a deafening roar of thunder. Madeline watched the speed on her speedometer slowly decrease as the road became saturated from the endless rain. Green road signs, blurred from the storm, flew by and offered no help. Normally, Madeline prided herself in her sense of direction. But on this eerie night, the pounding of the rain, beating in time with her heart, made her lose her way completely.

An intense feeling of nervousness began to envelop her. It was nearly impossible to concentrate on driving as tremors began rumbling through her body. The car began to swerve as beads of sweat bubbled on her palms, proving it difficult to maintain a grip on the steering wheel. As the shaking intensified, Madeline could feel her breath come in short, quick bursts. Lungs constricting, she knew it was incredibly dangerous to be driving in such horrid conditions. Cautiously pulling over to the side of the road, Madeline exasperatedly threw her car into park and flashed her hazards. Sinking in her seat, she felt hot, fresh tears welling up in her eyes. It was unstoppable. The tears leaked out of her eyes, streamed down her face, and landed on the black leather seat, softly splattering.

Glancing at the clock, Madeline was startled to see how quickly the day had progressed. However, the initial shock quickly wore off as reality sunk in. More tears now poured down her face, picking up fragments of make-up along their path.

All that she had been through, all she was still trying to get through, all she had to still do—after all she could not stay here forever—was meaningless. It was too late. She had faithfully promised her best friend that she would get to her mother’s home before they took her away to a “nursing home” for the emotionally disturbed. Madeline usually could do anything. It was a simple request. She didn’t have to stop them, although that is what she wanted to do. She wanted to at least see her, tell her that her own daughter was not part of the plot to put her away. Find out exactly where she was going and when she could be visited, so that when Sarah’s mother got out of the hospital, she could go find her and see what could be done.

Where or why did Sarah’s mother live in such an out of the way location? Why hadn’t she visited there with Sarah before so she would know where she was going? Well, that she could answer. Sarah was embarrassed about her mother, but now that there was no other choice, she had to confide and trust in someone else. Madeline was her best friend, and she was usually so competent. Not now. What could she do? The storm didn’t seem natural. Maybe it was the location, not her mother that was crazy. Madeline had never felt so alone and useless. But sitting here crying wasn’t going to help, even if sitting here was really all she could do until the storm let up. She wiped her eyes and tried to think. When she could leave, what should she do?

Looking up she saw lights in her rear view mirror. Someone else was out in this storm on this country road. Maybe she could get a lift? No, that would be stupid. Her car was fine; she definitely didn’t want to leave it. What help could she ask for? But even that question became irrelevant as the lights showed no sign of stopping or even slowing. The car zipped right past her. But as it passed, she noticed it was not a car but an ambulance. Surely that was the one that was going to take Sarah’s mother away. She must not be on the wrong road. Looking at the time, she realized she must in fact be very close. Madeline decided that she had to catch the ambulance. She turned her motor back on and swerved back onto the slick, dark highway.

She followed the ambulance as fast as she could even when the weather was so horrible. She thought to herself that it was important for her to get to Sarah’s mother’s house because it wasn’t like her to break a promise. As she followed the ambulance, millions of thoughts ran through her head. But as the ambulance went faster and faster, she struggled to keep up.
Finally it seemed as if the ambulance was getting closer to its destination and at that very moment she finally realized that she followed the ambulance to a complete stranger’s house. Great. What now? She was completely lost and wasn’t sure where to go. To top it off, the storm wasn’t clearing up. She started to cry again and lost all hope of getting to Sarah’s house. But then she realized that if she waited at the house, she would be able to follow the ambulance from the stranger’s house to the hospital, and then she would be able to find help.

An hour later, she reached the hospital, and at the moment, she felt a gust a mixed emotions come over her. She felt better that she knew where she was, but worse that she was running out of time. It took her a moment to regain her composure from the storm, and then she started planning about what to do. Her best friend would be so hurt if she never came, and even worse, she would be so lost without her mother. “Hurry, Madeline! Think!” she kept chanting to herself.

Then it hit her. She should go into the hospital and ask for directions. Maybe someone would even be nice enough to take her to Sarah’s house, but that was wishful thinking she thought. Madeline went into the hospital and talked to the nurse at the front desk. In the middle of telling the nurse about everything that was going on, Madeline could not hold her composure any longer. She broke down and began to cry. Luckily for her, the nurse had a kind heart and had already began to think of a way that she could help Madeline. The nurse, Ethel, pointed Madeline in the direction of the ladies room so that she could go regain her composure and get her face cleaned up. When she came out of the ladies room, she felt a lot better despite not having an answer as to how in the world she was going to make it to Sarah’s house in time. While Madeline was getting herself together, nurse Ethel had been doing some research of her own. She told Madeline that there was an ambulance leaving the hospital at 9am that was going to transport a patient to a mental ward of a state institution. This sounded like Sarah’s mother. It seemed as if a heavy weight had been removed from Madeline’s chest. The nurse suggested that Madeline camp out in the hospital’s waiting area and then follow the ambulance first thing in the morning.

Madeline was all ready to go at 8:30 the next morning. The kind nurse had stayed with her overnight and pointed her in the direction of the ambulance that morning. The weather had cleared, and Madeline was feeling much better. The ambulance took off promptly at 9 am, and Madeline followed closely behind it. About 30 minutes later, they were going down a long winding road, and finally they arrived at a small cottage-looking house. This had to be it; it looked just like Sarah had described it. Madeline got out of her car to see three women on the front steps crying. She went up and introduced herself as Sarah’s friend. They composed themselves briefly enough to introduce themselves as Sarah’s aunts and to let Madeline know that she was too late. Sarah’s mother had died that night from an overdose of sleeping pills. There was no note. Madeline was too late. Sarah’s mother would never know that Sarah had nothing to do with trying to send her away.

Madeline ran back to her car in shock. She grabbed her steering wheel tightly and began to cry. If only she had gotten to the house last night, her best friend’s mom might still be alive. Millions of thoughts swarmed through her head all at once. The one that stuck out most of all was if Sarah would blame her for what happened. God, what was she going to do?

Authors: Libby Herman, Rippel Patel, Josie Millard, Misty Collier
To Lose

I asked her:
"do you want to ride with me?
The war's not done,
I want to see this to the end.
My world's still spinning,
I'm losing touch,
I just need a friend"

She said:
"in another time,
Another place,
I would die to be with you,
But your shining armor's stained,
I don't think you'll see this through."

"Fine.
Leave me.
Should have known you'd be the same.
Always say you miss the sparks,
But fail to see the flame."

"It's not you,
It's me.
Put your heart back in your chest,
I've grown tired of this road,
And I just need to rest."

"so leave me here?
Left in the dark,
And stranded in the snow?
You were my only light,
How will I know which way to go?"

"I'm sorry that I leave you here,
Crestfallen and alone,
Surrounded by your demons,
I hope you can hold your own"

"I Can't"
I cried
"I need you here,
Standing by my side.
Listen, please, I'm begging you,
Give me one last ride."
"I'm sorry, dear,
I've given up,
Despite the love you've spilled,
It's for your best
I promise you;
I don't want to get you killed."

"Too few face death head on,
Accepting what has to be,
But I would have gladly die a thousand times,
If you had stayed with me."

"A thousand deaths means a thousand lives,
And you couldn't handle one.
I prayed you'd be my hero,
Why can't you see I'm done?"

"Then start your march,
Head back home,
I will not stop your leave,
But I tell you this:
I won't stay here,
I don't have time to grieve.
I know things will be tough,
For I relied on your sword and shield,
And you were always there for me,
When we were fighting on the field.
But staying here will not help,
I must finish what has begun,
And if I die it won't be in darkness,
It will be with my face shining in the sun."

Author: Colin Barry

Winter

A cold winter night,
So calm, peaceful and so clear,
Stillness in the air.

Author: Misty Collier
Miserable Life

How mad the heart is, how difficult it is.
For no reason, it places faith in someone.
Whoever falls in love here will make life miserable.
How can anyone reason with it? Love gives no advice.
What we call love, is not comparable to what it is,
Love alone, understands what it is and what it does.
In the loneliness of love, all one finds is restless torment.
He, who makes himself restless, makes life miserable...
Whoever falls in love here will make life miserable.
Love's greeting gifts are agitation and loneliness.
Memories came to my heart and my eyes filled with tears.
He, who waits for tomorrow will make his own life miserable,
Whoever falls in love here will make life miserable.

Author: Virta Bathani

Journey of Becoming a Pharmacist

Each year continues to test my strength;
and I'm thankful for the support from those around me.
I give it my all at whatever length;
and devote my life to attaining this degree.

The best things in life come with a price;
each exam requires nights and weekends of preparing.
I try to do my best, but passing will have to suffice
because my devoted concentration is wearing.

Thoughts of the future keep me holding on;
I believe there is a light at the end of this long
six year tunnel. I can almost see the break of dawn;
I need to continue to fight, I need to be strong.

Somehow, I find it in myself to persist
on my journey of becoming a pharmacist.

Author: Erica Schaeffer
The Pistols and Uzis of Outrageous Fortune

“CNN Breaking News: the president of the United States, Barack Obama, has died in his sleep. Investigators have been trying to determine the cause of death in this historic president’s short term in office. CNN news will be running constant news as soon as it is available 24/7.”

This was the breaking news from two weeks ago when the land of the United States would change forever. I have become the second president of the year, President Joe Biden, and I have been quickly pushed into assuming my role as head of state and begining the necessary dramatics and presentations that would accompany the likes of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. Of course, Michelle and family assume the role of the grieving family and have found comfort in the arms of Barack’s less well known brother, George Hussein Onyango Obama. It eventually was discovered that Barack died of a severe myocardial infarction brought about by potassium injection. I did not sign up for this job. Barack was the first Black president and I was his vice president, a glorified traveler, traveling the world being treated like a king and getting paid to do it. That is living the dream, but someone took it away from me. Someone wanted to ruin the cushiest job in America for me and put me in a position that requires way more work than I signed up for. This someone will be discovered and my retribution will be swift and furious. The fortune of this murderer will change as the president of this country has changed.

The ME’s report discovered the source of the heart attack. They determined no prior history of anything leading to a heart attack other than a history of smoking; they then discovered a small injection site with trace amount of residue with high concentration of potassium around the puncture. This normally would have been an untraceable murder; however the best of the best were put on this case to determine the cause of death of such a historical man. This was my only chance, only opportunity to revenge the man who was the only one that could have committed this treasonous murder. You see, President Obama was having his brother stay with him at the white house two weeks ago when the murder took place and President Obama was keeping it under wraps to prevent the media from swarming and questioning his brother George. George is a Kenyan man who surfaced as Barack’s brother in August 2008 and is a very simple man that Barack thought would be crushed by the paparazzi had they known he was in the states at the white house. Barack entrusted no one with this information, not even Michelle, and I just happened to have overheard a phone call between George and Barack when I was in the bathroom stall aboard Air Force One and Barack stormed in on the cell phone insisting to the person he was speaking with on this matter staying private. The stage was set for a private usurper looking to claim Barack’s life, if only I could be sure about such a federal offense to ensure my wrath is incurred on the right person. How would a simple Kenyan man devise such an elaborate scheme? I must be sure that George is the murderer before I pursue my revenge.

In order to ensure the killer was George, I need to encounter him and pick his brain about the matter at hand. My cake job shall not be lost without my revenge being taken. I decided to make my plan coincide with the showing of the play Hamlet showing at the white house Easter Party. The former president’s wife Michelle and brother George were ensured to be invited and coincidently have shown with one another. I kept appearances with them on my way to backstage. “Good evening Michelle, George, so sorry for your loss. I have reserved front row seats next to yours truly for the show.”

Arriving backstage I gathered the players around for a motivational word from the President of the United States. I encouraged them all to reach within themselves and play their part as a modern version of their character in the play. This would be an exciting twist for all the staff at the party. I had my secretary write this modern adapted script for all the actors to learn and perform with certain similarities to our predicament. This should catch the conscience of the only living Obama, as the injection of potassium was never made public to the press. The performance was enacted skillfully and masterfully. “Quite the show, eh George?”
“Ah, yes Mr. President, but you will have to excuse me. I seem to have fallen ill.” George Obama made his way to the restroom, with a member of my secret service carefully trailing. The word reached me that Mr. Obama was vomiting in a stall in the bathroom, confessions were hailing from his throat as if he were screaming his admission from a rooftop. I felt the red hot rage course through my veins. It was true that my luxurious job and my President were taken from me so this Kenyan could achieve his unknown goals. I was determined to find his purpose and destroy any chance of this happening, and right now I wanted to destroy this man with every fiber in my being.

My Armani shoes stepped on the porcelain floor as I signaled privacy to my companion. As this occurred I sensed that this room would go down in history. That this room would be one that neither of us would leave, and thousands of people would someday explore as the first historic bathroom in the history of the United States. “Whatever is the matter George, do you care not for the adaption to the play?”

“I apologize Mr. President, the similarities are strikingly similar to that of my brother and I cannot help but fall ill just thinking of the crime that had occurred. I mean potassium as a murder weapon, who would do such a thing at such a time?”

“Oh George, it seems your idiocy rings truer than ever. You see, the murder of our president Barack Obama was done with potassium: however, this fact was never made known to the public. Not even to his brother...” Fury filled my fists, I could not contain all the things I wanted to say so I yelled them all, “HOW COULD YOU KILL YOUR OWN BROTHER GEORGE! WHAT COULD EVER BE WORTH KILLING THE MAN THAT COULD HAVE CHANGED THIS COUNTRY FOREVER?” My blood boiled. How could I have gone from the best position in the world to yelling at this Kenyan man in the White House bathroom?

“I can explain... Joe, just let me explain. We can work this out, I mean, you are the President now Joe, you gained more out of this than anyone, right? Seriously, the President, the most powerful man in the world! My brother was standing in your way...in my way. He was always everyone’s favorite...mom, grandma, everyone. They all loved him more than me. Not now, Michelle has just agreed to be my wife; I am the only male lineage in my family, with Barack out of the way my life is perfect.”

From that moment it was all a blur. That was the last two weeks of my life. Planning and hunting a jealous brother who ruined my life, set me in history as a president who murdered someone in that famous White House bathroom.

“CNN breaking news: early reports show that the secret service has gunned down the president of the United States, Joe Biden. From what we have heard so far, President Biden had encountered George Obama in a bathroom of the White House about his late brother’s death. It is reported that George Obama was strangled to death by Joe Biden, and upon hearing the scuffle, the secret service entered and a bullet hit the attacker. More to come as we receive more information.”

Author: Nick Buchheit
The Woods

Walking towards the woods, Monica had no idea what to expect. She didn’t know what to think. She really even didn’t know what she was feeling. All she wanted to do was get away from this sunny place and breathe. She followed the path in the woods that she had come to love. Her feet were the only human ones that had stomped out the trail and her hands had ripped branches to clear the way. The trail turned and curved because she wanted it that way. This was hers. The trail winding in the woods had helped her through boredom and also through anger. It had been the only thing in her life that was reliable. The dark, cool shade and the fresh nature scent was the most peaceful thing that she had ever experienced. The best thing about her trail was that no one knew about it. Whenever she visited, she was always alone. The clearing she had made in the middle of the trail was where she would sit on the huge tree trunk that had fallen and relax. The only noise that was around would be the faint sound of a squirrel scurrying up a tree or of a light breeze rustling the leaves. Everything about the woods entranced her into a lasting calm. After a day like today, all Monica wanted to do was be alone and escape to her secret place.

As Monica made her sanctuary a little wider in the forest to settle in, she noticed a cloth torn on a tree branch a little to her left. She started to wonder if she was really going to get a chance to be alone. The last thing Monica wanted was to think about people and their skewed ideas of life. No one knew about the place she had made and everyone in town would never enter these woods so she let the thought go and finally lay down in her clearing. She closed her eyes and let the fresh air seep into her lungs as it sent a cool tingling down her body. With a sigh of relief, Monica knew this is where she belonged. A few minutes had gone by before she re-opened her eyes; it could have been a few hours, but it was hard to tell in the forest. Sense of time was meaningless to her here. When Monica finally arose with her eyes fully open, she realized another piece of cloth directly in front of her on the leafy floor. For a minute, she was dazed, thinking it was the same cloth, but as she turned around, she saw the other still hanging amidst the branch from before. Now maybe she had not noticed the cloth on the ground from when she first came, but Monica’s senses had never guided her wrong. She knew someone was here.

Apparently her secret place was not so secret anymore. She sat quietly for a few minutes staring at the torn pieces of cloth that mysteriously invaded her sanctuary and her peace of mind. Taking a deep breath, Monica slowly got up from her restful position and carefully picked up the cloth in front of her and then snatched the other piece off the tree branch behind her. She held both pieces in her hands meticulously examining the cloths as if they were pieces of evidence from a crime scene. Monica tried fitting the two dark brown patches of corduroy material together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, but their torn edges refused to mesh to her satisfaction.

Not wanting to further disturb her afternoon of solitude, she tucked the two cloths into her backpack and decided to walk down to the nearby stream. Maybe it was the eerie rustling of leaves or the unusually high level of animal chatter in the forest that gave Monica an uneasy feeling. Or maybe it was just her wild imagination set in motion by the mysteriously appearing cloths. Whatever it was, Monica soon found herself running through the forest, her heart pounding and her lungs gasping for air. Just when she thought that she was overreacting and needed to get a grip on reality, she saw something out of the corner of her eye. Almost afraid to look again, she turned her head and gasped.

Feeling both fright and despair gripped Monica as she tried to draw her eyes away from the horrible sight. Unable to move, Monica stared at the gruesome sight. Unsure of whether to move closer or continue running out of the forest, Monica remained still, but only for a moment. She heard the distinct sound of someone running out of the dense forest screaming. The words she could not make out at first, but as the man’s voice grew louder, she realized he was yelling to run. Still completely in shock, Monica stood as still as a statue with her eyes fixed on the place she thought the sounds were
coming from. Finally coming into view, Monica saw a man that looked like Grizzly Adams, rather large with a distinct beard and a beaver hat. As he struggled to get through the thick network of branches, Monica saw that he was running from a huge bear. At that moment, she turned and began running down the path and out of the woods, with this mountain man close behind.

As Monica approached the edge of the forest, she began slowing down and looked behind her to see the mountain man calmly backing out of the forest. For the first time, Monica was glad to be out of the spot she loved. Her relief was momentary though because the man quickly explained the situation.

The man's name was Paul. He explained that he had been stuck in the forest for many years now. Every time he would try to escape the bear would be there to counter him. He had no communication with the outside world. Paul said that he had seen Monica walking in the forest several times but whenever he tried to go towards her, the bear would be there again. So in lieu of this situation he used clothes to try to communicate with her.

At that Monica took out the two brown pieces of cloth and saw that in each corner of the square there were letters. When she put them all together it read "Bear Trap." Monica thought how on earth was she supposed to know what that meant, but because of Paul's present situation she did not feel the need to question him.

Suddenly the bear jumped out from between two trees and started charging at them. Monica yelled, "Follow me." The grizzly man complied. Monica knew this path like the back of her hand. She knew which way it winded and which ways hilly and everything. Monica and Paul ran with all their might with the bear in close pursuit. The bear was inching closer and closer and they both were getting weary from running. But Monica still had a plan. They just had to keep up their strength for a few more minutes. There, there it was. The big hole that she saw before. It would be perfect. As they were running, she motioned to Paul. Paul saw it too. There was a huge hole in the ground, but hanging above the whole was a thick rope. As soon as Paul saw the rope he knew what they had to do. They were approaching the hole and just before the trail ended, they both jumped and grabbed on to the rope. They both swung to the other side to safety. The bear was going too fast. It couldn't stop himself in time and fell into the hole face first. Without looking back Monica and Paul ran out of the woods never to look back again.

Authors: Bre Dunsworth, Mike Feller, Mitul Gandhi, Joseph Kang, Kristin Hagan
Homerun

The bulging man of fewer years,
Stepped up to the white talisman,
And eyeing the far off fence,
He rocketed a ball into the distance.

Author: Adam Carey

I Love You

I need you more than I thought I would
I care about you more than I thought I could
I think about you more than I probably should
But hey, that's love

Author: Alexandra Morgan

Sunshine

Beautifully the sun rises above the eastern horizon
Sweetly our love keeps rising
I look upon your face with all my heart's desire
In my heart burns a raging fire
Head not what others will tell
Simply stated as if in my arms you fell
This lovely night will come to bare
You and I lying on the grass and at the stars we stare
We imagining the kingdom above
Gentle and peaceful like the dove
As we spend more and more time together
I imagine stroking your smooth back with a feather
Relinquishing a bellow of laugh and scream
Caused by tickling the skin smooth as cream
My love for you was grand before
But henceforth will endure the ages ever more

Author: Kevin Niedbalski
Compilation of Six-Word Autobiographies from All Different Types of People

- A life understood is one uneventful
- Life only stops when you do
- Lies show you really never know
- I can wipe my own ass
- I know what I’m talking about
- I am for sure the shit
- I don’t want to be a cowboy
- I was blessed with two daughters
- A contributor to society and family
- I occasionally like to drink alcohol
- Frustratingly obsessed with the twilight books
- Weird, entertaining adventurous, emotional, lovable, active
- Live like there’s no second chances
- Life is like a box of chocolates
- Devoted to making my future great
- I am the coolest person ever
- I love traveling and meeting people
- Always available for completely irrelevant information
- Ashamed of being a spice girl lover
- Youth is wasted on the young
- Words will come in due time
- Home is where the heart is
- Best friends forever... until further notice

Author: Heather Ellis
Shades of Disillusioned Glory

Shades of disillusioned glory
Dust years lost in transit
Travel a walkers run, return to your former story
Lords call by name to your shell
Inside a peasant speaks to your humble folly
Cry black drops, sin stream from pores before me
Judge not a wonderer fully
You blacken the cloud as falsely
You corrupt servant of the horde

Author: Natalie Moore

A Heart

A heart
Journeys to the end and cloaks the disbeliever
Deaf to the banter
Oh heart you weak one
Fortified against all but fallen prey to just one
A heart
Journeys long to unveil the view it always had

Author: Natalie Moore
The StLCOP Blues

Summer summer where are you at?
I think this school’s gonna make me crack.

Biochem, Micro, Patho....what next?
How do teachers expect us to finish that test?

I study and study and study all day
All the teachers ever ask me is “where’s the A?”

I’ll go back home for 3 months and work hard all day
Then come back to StLCOP and wonder when it’s my time to play

Author: Anonymous

Request to Transfer

David’s time at STLCOP had been a blur
And with other schools he would confer,
  But to his disdain
His effort was vain,
  As his request to transfer was deferred.

Author: Jared Prine

Summer

Summer is so near
it’s time to jump in a pool
and work on my tan.

Author: Kathleen Tran

Tea

I like to drink tea,
It tastes oh so good to me.
Sweetened is the best.

Author: Kassy Picou
Dine and Dash

Walking up to the door, John’s hands were shaking. He had waited so long to take Rachel out on an actual date. They had been best friends forever, but John had always had a secret crush on her. It took him years to finally build up the guts to ask her out. To his surprise, she said yes. He had almost fainted from all the nerves and the final relief of Rachel agreeing to go out with him.

John had on a nice, handsome outfit because he had made reservations at one of the nicest Italian restaurants in town. In his shaky hands he held a single long stem red rose, which was romantic but not over done. Right after he knocked on the door, he heard the quick clacking of heels on hardwood floor. Suddenly, Rachel opened the door and John gasped. She is beautiful, he thought. Gleaming in the light, her blond hair flowed down her shoulders in gentle waves. Her dress was a deep blue just like the clear ocean and the satin lay softly against her body. John was speechless. Handing her the rose, Rachel smiled. Everything was going perfect.

Leading Rachel to the passenger door of his car, she kept saying how thoughtful and sweet John was. John blushed as he opened her car door. Managing a quiet thank you, John hurried to the driver side. The car ride was quick to the restaurant and the waiter immediately led them to their table. Opening their menus, the two tried to decide what to get. “What are you thinking?” Rachel asked.

“I’m not sure, maybe a filet,” John replied. “Get whatever you want, it’s a special night.”

Rachel eyed the menu and then gave John a suspicious look. “Well, I’ve never tried lobster before...” she said with a little persuasion in her voice.

“Get it! You will love it!” John exclaimed. All he desperately wanted to do was impress this woman who he loved so much. Maybe the lobster would make her like him more, he thought. By the ecstatic look on her face, he was thinking this was a yes.

As dinner went on, conversation flowed easily. The two long time friends always had something to talk about, which John had always liked. But this dinner was different from their regular “friendship” kind of talks. Conversation did not just consist of sports or gossip of friends, but goals and ambitions were discussed. They didn’t just talk about the present, but the future as well. John even managed to squeeze a few “we’s” in there, which Rachel always grinned at. John knew the night was going magnificently. Rachel actually seemed interested in him more than a friend and John did not want to do anything to screw that up.

The food came and everything was exquisite. The lobster and filet were outstanding, which was expected by the large price tags they came with. Rachel was amazed at how good lobster tasted and was so grateful to John to treat her to such a great evening. “Anything for you,” John said. Cheesy, he knew, but it seemed so appropriate. The waiter came to collect the plates and asked if they would like any dessert. Rachel said she was way too stuffed and John agreed. Instead he simply asked for the check.

Over and over, Rachel thanked John for this great meal. She was so happy he had asked her out and she could not wait to do it again. John was thrilled. Again and again and again he hoped. John enthusiastically agreed with Rachel. “Yes, how about next week?” he asked. He did not want to pass up another date with this beautiful woman while the opportunity was right in front of him.

“Of course. Why don’t we go see a movie or go bowling?” she suggested. “Why not something a little more low-key so we can be ourselves and relax?”

John nodded as the waiter returned with his bill. Reaching towards his pocket, John realized his wallet was not in his pocket. He broke out into a sweat, but tried to calm himself down. It has to be in another pocket, he thought. He reached to his other pocket, which he also found empty. By this time, Rachel sensed tension. “What’s wrong?” she asked.
“Umm... I seem to have missed place my wallet,” John said hesitantly.

“Not again!” Rachel yelled. “You pulled this same stunt the other day when we went to McDonald’s. Stop faking. I thought you wanted to take me out on a nice date because you actually like-like me. But come to find out, you just wanted a good meal and didn’t want to pay for it. I can NOT believe you. I was so fooled by your googley eye act. I know your wallet is in your pocket.”

“No!” John tried to get a word in. “No! Rachel! I’m so sorry!! I’m not faking! I’m sorry; I really have misplaced my wallet! I’ll find it! It’s probably in my car! Come back!” John screamed across the restaurant as Rachel got up and headed for the door. He raced after her and through the door to the parking lot. “Rachel, I like you so much, I have for so long! Please believe me!”

“Oh stop your lies,” Rachel said as she headed toward the road.

Suddenly, the waiter grabbed John’s arm and started yelling at him that there was no way he was leaving without paying. “I’ll call the police on you, don’t you doubt me,” the waiter sternly told John. He was stuck. His beautiful girl who he wanted to be his was walking away and this waiter was pulling him back inside. John sighed. He turned toward the restaurant.

“Okay, okay,” he mumbled as the waiter released his arm. With that John took off in the other direction towards Rachel. John yelled Rachel’s name toward her while the waiter yelled “Thief!” towards him. Rachel turned around to see John sprinting towards her. He finally caught up to her and grabbed her hand. “Rachel, will you please me mine? Will you please be the one girl in my life? All I have ever wanted is for you to call me yours.” John breathed heavily, out of breath from the run. As he looked at Rachel, she looked surprised.

“Really?” she questioned. “I didn’t know you felt that way all along...” she said, trailing off.
With that she quickly grabbed John’s face and kissed him with all of her might, right before the waiter tackled them to the ground.

Author: Bre Dunsworth
I knew I enjoyed going to the park for some reason. It was a beautiful day and that guy was there again. He came every Tuesday to read a book while I admired from afar. As my mind wondered I caught another boy out of the corner of my eye. I screamed, “Watch out!” What was that boy thinking? He was just about to go throw himself into that lake! I think the little boy was crazy, but I suppose at his age, it is hard to tell. I went up to him to ask what he was doing so close to the lake, but he didn’t respond. He just looked so upset. I figured something had to be wrong, but what could be wrong when you are 5 years old. He just looked at me with the most solemn face ever. I felt obligated to help him. Plus it was such a nice day, I figured why not. I asked him where his mother was, but he still didn’t respond. He just looked at me. It started to creep me out, but nonetheless, it was dangerous for a boy his age to aimlessly roam such an enormous park especially with a lake. Who would have saved him if he started to drown? Luckily, I was a certified lifeguard, but fortunately we didn’t have to go that far. We walked around for what felt like forever. I felt as if we had walked over a mile, which is enough for me. All the while, the boy kept pointing at things left and right. Everything that formed a circle was of interest. I figured he was learning shapes at school or something. In any case, I bought him whatever he pointed to, thinking maybe he would smile and then open up to me so I could find his mother. I felt like the park vendors were selling the oddest things. We collected oranges, balloons, doughnuts, and even scuba gear. I realized maybe he was hinting at me about something and also that this child may be deaf. With all this stuff that he and I were carrying, I bet we looked like fools. It was at this point when we rounded are way back to the side of the lake. Then we saw another person running towards the lake almost falling in. I realized it was that boy I always watched. What was with going to this lake? What were they looking for? When we came up behind him, he turned around and sighed in relief. He grabbed something out of the water and grabbed the boy. He handed him a rubber ball that was floating in the water. I found out it was his younger brother. He explained how grateful he was that his brother didn’t drown and wasn’t lost. He said he wanted to repay me somehow by taking me out to dinner, even with me looking goofy holding all the food and toys. I told him I’d explain at dinner. It was probably the oddest day, but the best day ever.

Author: Joseph Kang
Lunchtime

He sat down beside me
So close, yet so far
I open my mouth, speechless
He leaves.

Author: Susan To

Thinking of You with a Poem and Haiku

Buon giorno to you
Thought of you for this haiku
Wrote a poem too...

Met by accident one day on Facebook
My friend talked in my place
Screwed up the first impression, giving me a bad look
But I got to talk to you face to face
You, the friendly girl seeking help with chemistry,
Looked more naturally beautiful in real life than online
Wavy hair flowing like a serene sea
Face of dreams, surreal and sublime
Yet a smile that shone with bright reality
Lightheartedly laughing in a pleasantly rich voice
Your every action reflected your wonderful personality
Your very presence brought about an aura of rejoice
I'm fortunate that I got to meet you
Because now I'm your friend too.

Author: Dan Chang

Halloween Haiku

Tim wears a large box
Justin is a ghostbuster
That's an odd pairing.

Author: Kyle Amelung
Come to God, My Child

Oh come to God my child
He will make your paths known so that you may not stray into the wild
  Taste and see the goodness of the Lord
  Turn a blind eye to him and you will be in discord
  Praise God, hosanna in the highest
  The King of Kings which of whom is the mightiest
  Do this in memory of him, so that you may shine like the city set on a hill
  This pleases the lord most, so that the depths of your heart he will fill
  Come, follow him, and he too will make you a fisher of men
  Do this in accordance of will, so that one day he will remove all sin
  When he returns, from the clouds above he will descend
  Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward in heaven is great
  If you are able to see his face
  Remember that he’s your saving grace
  After hearing this, forget not, the name upon which all knees should bow

Author: Kevin Niedbalski

River of Love

A Fairy tale that brought two lovers together
the brilliant romance between two sorcerers of wizardry.
  It was their perfect brew of magic
  An ingenious process for such romance with chemistry
  Some may even call it the potion of science.
    A mix between his faultless marvels
    And a magical fire that revealed the rainbow of color
Even more fire with high temperatures was more tempting.
  It was science of love trilled with a little magic
    it was brilliant
    it was his perfect blend of science and sorcery
  Their secret potion to create the love of a lifetime.

Author: Rippel Patel
New Beginning

Death is not the end,
But merely a beginning.

It is not a time to mourn,
But to commemorate the life I once lived.

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
The reconciliation you seek
Shall not be delivered.

At the funeral do not cry,
Close the casket in which I lie
And celebrate.

For death is but another journey,
And certainly does not
Signify the end.

I am not gone forever.

While pictures fade,
Memories are lost,
My spirit remains.

When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the sweet uplifting rush.

I am in the wind that blows,
Gently, soft, and slow.

I am in the beat of your heart,
A place from which I will never part.

I am in the drops of rain
That splatter on the soil and sink into the grain.

I am in the stars that shine bright
Illuminating the dark night.

Forever in your heart I remain,
So do not worry in vain,

For though I have left the earth,
I did not die.

Author: Libby Herman
The day was almost over in the small town of Clover, Iowa. As the sun was setting, Jennifer contemplated what to do for the evening. Most of her friends were going to a college party at the University of Iowa, and she wanted so badly to go. After all, her crush of almost three months would be going too. But unfortunately, it was her mom and step-dad’s twenty-fifth anniversary, and they would be heart-broken if she didn’t attend the party.

Going to her sister’s room, Jen asked Stephanie for a piece of advice. Stephanie, being the favorite of the two girls, completely disagreed with the thought of Jennifer not attending. But Jen just rolled her eyes and told her to be real for just a minute. She explained this was her opportunity to finally get to know Alex, and plus, she didn’t want to miss out on all of the fun with her friends. Looking sullen after Jen’s pity party, Stephanie said to just go for a little bit and leave after Mom and Kenny had seen her for awhile. But starting at eight o’clock, the party would last well into the evening, and Jennifer would have no time to escape. Besides that, her friends wanted to leave at least by seven, and that meant she would have no ride if she went to the anniversary party.

Jen had a major dilemma. She thought about it for a while. She knew that her mom would be upset if she wasn’t there for the entire evening, but she also knew that the party was a great opportunity to get closer to Alex. Jen loved her mother, but she also like Alex a lot. If he saw her there in her new form-fitted skirt, he was bound to give her the attention that she had desired for the past three months. A light bulb went off. Jen came up with the idea that she would go to the anniversary dinner first and then lie her way out of staying for its entirety. She would tell her mom and stepdad that her friend Amy was on the verge of failing math, and that she had to go over and help her study for next week’s exam. Jen would have one of her friends come back and pick her up around the corner, and they would head over to the party. This plan was ingenious, or so she thought.

The time finally arrived for Jen’s family to leave for the anniversary party. As they climbed into the shiny black suburban, thoughts of her brilliant plan flooded her mind. Her heart beat quickened as she planned her perfect encounter with Alex. When the family car finally pulled into the restaurant lot where the anniversary party was being held, Jen leaped out of the car, eager to get the night’s events underway. The party passed in a blur. She was hardly aware of the people surrounding her; faces blended together and dinner flew by. Finally, the time came for her friend to pick her up at the convenience store down the block. Nervousness enveloped her body as she pushed through the crowd of people surrounding her parents. It was almost impossible to pull her parents away from the gang of people struggling to congratulate the couple.

Politely excusing themselves from the crowd, Jen’s parents followed her into a quiet corner of party room. Jen calmly explained the situation, profusely apologizing intermittently. Surprisingly, her parents were extremely sympathetic and allowed her to leave the party without punishment. Feeling as if she was floating on a cloud, Jen hurried out of the restaurant and down the sidewalk. At the corner, engine purring quietly, awaited her ticket to freedom. The silver Ford Focus glinted dimly in the moonlight. Jen swung the door open and fell upon the black leather seat. Her friend Katie pulled the car smoothly away from the curb as Jen pulled out a compact mirror, checking her make-up and carefully applying her new sparkling pink lip-
gloss. Katie chattered away to her left, filling Jen in on all the details of the events at the party. Jen’s heart began to pound almost audibly as the car turned toward the university. The ride had passed all too quickly, and anticipation was building quickly.

Jen leaped out of the car and was impatient waiting for Katie to get ready. But Katie had borrowed the car, left the party to help her friend, and wasn’t about to have anything go wrong with the car. Checking the doors for the tenth time, she finally was ready to walk with Jen to the house where the party was going full steam. It was now nearly 11:00 and the party had been going full steam since 7:00 at least. Jen gingerly stepped over someone passed out on the floor near the door. Apparently some people partied too heartily. At first she walked slowly and carefully, hoping to show her figure off to the best advantage. But after surveying several rooms full of people, she started to worry. Where was Alex? After all, she had done all this for him. Lying to her parents, leaving their party early, getting Katie to borrow a car and drive all the way back for her—in fact paying her best friend Katie to come back for her—and the main reason was to see Alex.

She continued to pace throughout the various rooms searching, searching. Finally she bumped into Katie again. “Why are you pushing from room to room? You look like a bloodhound tracing a murderer. I borrowed a car, drove back home to get you so you could enjoy this party. Relax. Have something to drink. Talk to someone. For heaven’s sake what’s wrong with you?”

“Oh, Katie, I’m sorry. As you know, I had hoped to see Alex here.”

“Well, he is here. At least he was when I left to get you. Stop and enjoy yourself. Let him find you. As anxious as you are, you’ll scare him off if you do find him.”

“You’re right.” Jen stopped and looked around calmer. I’ll get something to drink.”

But just then, a cop appeared at the front door, and judging from the reaction of those around her, another one or two were at the back door too. The one at the front door was in front of two others. He pulled out a bull horn and made an announcement. “Everyone please stay where you are. We’ve had reports of underage drinking. Everyone is to remain here. Please sit down. We will go around and check all your IDs. One by one, now.”

Just then as they were first making sure everyone was paying attention, Jen noticed a door to what was probably a bedroom open, and out walked Alex and some other girl who Jen didn’t know. She was combing her hair and smiling. “Who is that?” Jen asked Katie.

“Who knows?” Katie was dismissive. The cops worried her far more than some girl she had never seen before. “Jen, what will we do if they arrest us?”

“Arrest us? For what?” But suddenly Jen realized the trouble she could be in, having lied to her parents to even come here. This was turning out to be a nightmare, first the cops coming and then seeing Alex with another girl, it couldn’t get any worse than that she thought to herself. Oh but she was wrong. As the police officer came up to her to ask for her ID, she was shaking and in complete shock and couldn’t think of any excuse to get out of this one. She stood there completely still thinking that her life was over, while the police officer went on demanding for IDs. He first asked Jen and Katie for their names and then he told them to follow him to his car.

So, they arrived at the police car and stood there while he made a phone call. Katie and Jen were trying to think of a logical story to tell their parents so they wouldn’t be in so much
trouble, but they could think of nothing and decided that basically at that point only a miracle would save them from being grounded for life.

Then the officer got off his phone, and he said that he was calling his friend because he recognized their names. Then Katie asked him who he was calling, and the officer said that he was calling his friend Ben. Katie screamed, “You said Ben, as in my brother Ben?!”

The officer said, “Yes, me and Ben go way back and I knew you looked familiar so I decided to make the call.” Katie was saying to herself, “OMG, I am so dead!”

The officer said that actually he talked to Ben, who said that if he let the girls go with a warning, that he would take care of it from there as long as something like this wouldn’t happen again. Both girls quickly said, “thank you so much, we promise we won’t do something like this ever again!” Then they went back to Katie’s house, and Ben told them that he helped them get out of this one and that he wouldn’t tell their parents, but he told them that he better not hear about something like this again anytime soon. Jen was so relieved that she thought to herself that she dodged a major grounding and after all what did she really know about Alex? After a night like that Katie and Jen were so exhausted that they decided to just go to sleep, as they thought how this will be a night that they would never forget.

Authors: Josie Millard, Rippel Patel, Libby Herman, Misty Collier

Snow man

A very
fine snow
day; It is winter time
So cold is my
Face; A healthy
Snack is
my nose;
Two
twigs make
up my
arms
2 layers my
Body does form.
3 buttons lay on my
big belly; In due time a
Bright sun will come and
I will vanish into a cold
pool. Till then enjoy my
wintery presence

Author: Mitul Gandhi
Piano

If there was anything she could ever want, it would be for Anthony to stop playing. She couldn’t stand that people were talking about him, and the reputation he started to obtain for his talent and his potential. He was three years younger, and there were whispers about his arrival even before he enrolled. She could care less about him, his music, and his dexterity in piano.

Nonetheless, she had to see it for herself. That evening, she walked past the grand hall where posters hung every 5 feet announcing his first performance with the graduate symphony orchestra on campus. The poster read, "Anthony Toberman: Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto". Ironic she thought, as she snuck into the school’s renowned auditorium. There he was, his fingers bouncing effortlessly off the keys while playing every measure perfectly. It reminded her of her little sister who proudly showed her that she had not once gone outside the lines in her coloring book.

The ball room was luxurious. Red carpet covered everything. It was like being at the Oscar’s. The chandelier hung from the ceiling and reflected its beauty into every inch of the ballroom.

"Wow! I have never seen anything like this before!" This is definitely a once in a lifetime experience! How lucky is Anthony to not even be in this university and still have the red carpet rolled out for him?

At the end of each song, the crowd showed their appreciation with long rounds of applause. Anthony had a commanding stage presence to accompany his outstanding abilities on the piano. As much as I wanted him to make a mistake to show that he was not as good as everyone wanted him to be, he played a flawless show. If only he was not so much younger than I am, I would not care that he was such a fantastic pianist. I tried to overcome my dislike of Anthony, that was based solely on the fact that he was such a fantastic pianist, by introducing myself at the reception that followed the concert. To my surprise, I did not have to introduce myself to him because he already knew who I was, and not only did he know my name but he also said how flattered he was that I took the time to attend his concert.

She herself at that time realized that she had spent so much time trying to hate Anthony that she did not even get a chance to know him. There she was standing with the great Anthony Toberman and no words could form. She tried her hardest to think of something to criticize him, but he was being so nice to her. And on top of all of that he had not made a single mistake. He played that last piece flawlessly. She finally mustered up the strength to spout of a couple of lines.

Janet said, "The pleasure is all mine. I loved that last piece you played. It was done so beautifully, and I loved the variations you threw in there. Those took me by surprise."

Anthony replied, "Thank you, but actually the variations are not my original work. I have an inspiration."

Janet was thinking hateful thoughts again. ‘Figures. Who was he to modify Tchaikovsky’s Concierto. He was good but not that good.’

Anthony continued, “Actually my inspiration came from a local talent. She has been here for many years before I came. She used to perform piano recitals every weekend, only to have a couple people attend her shows. She was very underappreciated. I used to go to all of her shows and just close my eyes and get lost in the notes. Not only did she have talent but she was unbelievably gorgeous. As she would stroke the keys, her beautiful hands would flutter like a butterfly. Her pretty eyes would float across the pages with great concentration. And after her magnificent performance she would get up and smile with the sweetest lips anyone as ever seen. She was like an angel."

Janet, really annoyed by now, stopped listening. She just rolled her eyes as Anthony continued relentlessly describing this amazing piano player. She thought in her head I am probably way better than this “angel woman.”

Anthony was finishing up when Janet tuned in again, “Do you know who that girl was?”

Janet disgusted said, “No!”
Anthony stared right at her and said, “It was you.”

Stunned, Janet mumbled, “What?” There was no way he was talking about her. Although she loved music more than life, no one had ever seemed to notice her passion. In a school full of talent, Janet had never been a stand out to anyone. Janet looked into the admiring eyes as Anthony stood next to her. She had never been told she was an inspiration. Again, Janet mumbled a quiet, “What?”

“You are my inspiration. Without seeing your enthusiasm and love for piano, I would not be where I am today. You made me who I am. You gave me the notes to my songs and I am forever grateful for that.”

Standing speechless next to her brother, Janet gave Anthony a hug because words seemed of little use at the moment. Janet felt bad for the jealousy she had felt earlier towards this kindhearted young man. She released her arms and took his shoulders. “Thank you,” she said. A grin formed across each face and they walked away together, anxious to talk to music together for the first time in their lives.

Authors: Joseph Kang, Mike Feller, Mitul Gandhi, Bre Dunworth, Kristin Hagan

Hero

Hero
Brave, Strong
Protecting, Risking, Giving
Defender, Patriot, Provider, Devoted
Caring, Loving, Supporting
Affectionate, Sensitive
Husband

Author: Erica Schaeffer
Sweet Dreams

I am awakened by the sound of shattered glass
I try to fall back asleep, but the threats pouring from my father’s mouth makes that impossible
She deserves better, I’m tired of this
Tired of him!
When I walk into the living room, there’s furniture everywhere
Her face drowned in tears, shirt dyed with blood
A handful of her hair is in his hand as he tattoos her precious face with his knuckles
“Leave my mommy alone!”
Both of them look at me and I can tell he’s drunk
“Baby, go back to your room, okay? Mommy is alright. Just... just go back to bed!”
I’m not listening to her
My eyes are glued to the man who calls himself my father
“What the fuck did she just tell yo’ lil ass? Go to your God damn room, NOW!”
I have no respect for this man and he no longer puts fear in my heart
“I said leave her alone!”
In the blink of an eye, he throws Mama by her ponytail, charging at me with full speed
“NOOOOO!!!!!” she screams
Every ounce of my bravery vanishes as it is replaced with fright
But Mama comes to the rescue before he gets at me
She jumps on him, drilling his back with her tiny fist
He’s strong though and tosses her off with ease
Mama stands up for round two, but his open palm sends her flying into the wall
She crashes head first and falls to the floor
He raises his foot to finish the job, but suddenly stops
I’m frozen with fear and shock
He’s pacing back and forth, cussing at himself
Then he leaves, Mama on the floor, the door wide open
When he’s gone, I find the strength to crawl to Mama
There’s a puddle of blood beneath her head
Mama’s asleep
I tell her to wake up, but she never does
She never did!
Grandma says that Mama sleeps in the ground now
Marriage is her nightmare
Death is her blanket
I’m still mad at Daddy because he didn’t let me kiss my mommy “Good Night.”

Author: Marquita Martin
Birthday Ballad

People singing and seeing birthday cards
I knew it wasn’t for me
I couldn’t stand how he got everything
He was only turning three
There he was in his favorite outfit
Jolly, jumping up and down
He couldn’t look anymore stupid
Him and his birthday crown
His presents were all wrapped
With bags and ribbons galore
All of a sudden someone tapped
And we realized it was at the door

Adorned with a big red nose
And polka dots all around
In his pocket, a squirting rose
This brat even got a stupid clown.

This clown called Bozo pulled out all the tricks,
With animal balloons a-float,
Slipping on banana slicks,
And mimicking all the corny quotes.

Presents lined the table,
Neatly wrapped and piled high,
This euphoric scene was no fable,
And instead of cake, the child insisted on chocolate pie.

In the world of three year old
He had it all, not needing anything more.
To him this was all gold,
but for me this was all a bore

Suddenly he turned to me, a big grin on his face
He ran up and hugged me, chocolate fingers on my shirt
"Tank ouu" he spit all over my face
"Ouu see cown" he pulled my hair until it hurt

He insisted I join and help him open up his loot
He wanted me to share his fun
I couldn’t ignore him; he was too cute.
I guess he really is number one!

Authors: Joseph Kang, Bre Dunsworth, Libby Herman, Rippel Patel
Frog Prince

We went out to the lake to swim and fish
When my hook caught something better than a wish
I reeled it in to take a look
And there it was, just like in the books

I had always read fairy tales as a child,
Where a girl would fall in love, and then go hog wild
I was determined not to be that girl
But I couldn’t help but give love a twirl.

I pulled the big frog off the hook
And closed my eyes so I didn’t have to look
Right after I kissed the big frog’s back
I heard a loud crack

The frog didn’t turn into my prince
At first, it didn’t make any sense
Then I realized that this is no fairy tale
I might as well be kissing a nail

My tongue tasted bitter
Like I just licked a giant pile of litter
I had to believe in the hype
And now I feel stupid like

Authors: Josie Millard, Mike Feller, Mitul Gandhi, Kristin Hagan, Misty Collier
False Reality

The trees shout with joy because the first rain is coming,
    Thunder rumbles in the background,
    Leaves rustle,
    Trees sway,
    And the grass tastes the warm, thick air.

The smell of wildflowers rises up through the air,
    The mist rolls in,
As the first drops of rain splatter on the trees,
    And the ground soaks up the rain.

Weak sunlight reflects through the plummeting drops,
    The trunks quake with fear,
    The bark trembles harshly,
    Falling to the ground.

The blue-white waves crash along the shore,
    Littering the golden sand with shells,
    Erasing footprints and destroying castles.

Yet the big red X in the corner is a symbol,
    A warning sign,
    Threatening the loss of paradise,
    With a single click of the mouse.

Author: Chelsea Pense