CONJURINGS
Conjurings

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

Editor:
    Joe DeMattei
Faculty Advisor:
    Marilyn Fontane
Cover Photography:
    Joe DeMattei
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Family Story
By Catlin Bigham

At every family gathering my grandparents and I would eventually end up sitting in the family room listening to my grandfather talk about his past life experiences. The family room wasn’t like the one we had at our house, with a TV, comfortable couch, and artistic decorations my mom paid top dollar for at Pier One. My grandparents’ family room was completely different; instead of a TV there was a large record player, the couches were far from comfortable, and instead of decorations there were pictures of people. The pictures may have been able to tell the story alone, but my grandfather’s stories linked them all together. A small black and white picture of a young man in military uniform is the first one to catch the eye. It is obviously very old and worn and tattered. This picture is of my great-grandfather in his military dress during World War I, making the picture some eighty years old. My grandfather doesn’t talk a lot about his dad; he was apparently a good and hardworking man that struggled to pay bills throughout his life. I have been to my great-grandfather’s grave, a small stone off in the country near where his house stood. My grandfather described it as a two room house with a dirt floor whose location required him to walk to school two miles each day when he was growing up. My great-grandfather apparently went to sleep in a chair inside that floorless house and simply never woke up.

Next to that old picture of my great-grandfather in military uniform is a slightly newer picture, still in black and white, of my grandfather. If the differing quality of the pictures didn’t give away their age, the two men could easily be mistaken for the same man. He was a marine in the Korean War; he talked about how he wasn’t drafted, but that it was only months away when he decided that if he had to be in war, then he would at least pick his branch of service. He doesn’t talk much about his experiences in the war, and when he does, it’s hard to even determine if he is telling the truth or not. He once told me that he never left the U.S.; that he was part of a chopper fire crew that responded to plane crashes at a base in San Diego; however, my grandmother has told me that he was stationed in Korea and I’ve seen combat medals that he was awarded. It is obvious that the Marine Corps meant a lot to my grandfather, from the Marine bumper sticker on his truck to the fact that he is the captain of the local American Legion chapter. It’s often confused me by how different we view the military and I assume a large part of it has to do with generational differences. The thing that stuck out to me most was when he told me that he enjoyed boot-camp cause it was the first actual bed that he had slept on; he had apparently slept on a make-shift cot the first 18 years of his life in that two room dirt floor house two miles from his school.

Next to the picture of him in his Marine’s uniform is another black and white picture of him in an old fashioned football uniform ready to attack. My grandfather loves sports and this is a subject that he is always willing to talk about when asked. He was All-State in 3 sports, football, basketball, and baseball. His senior year of high school his football team was undefeated, the only team at the school to ever do so, and when he graduated, he was at the time third all time for points in basketball. He played both football and basketball for the man who the current sports arena in the town is named. He was giving a sports scholarship to a local college that has since been closed. He said he never even got to play any sports; a teacher refused to pass him as he struggled to keep up with his school work; he dropped out of college, and that’s when he joined the military. Only recently had his muscular body began to give away, only 5 to 10
years ago, when he was in his 60’s. I can remember him playing catch with me and showing me how to shoot a basketball with arch while he tried to block my shot with a broom.

Moving farther down the row of pictures there is a color picture of pretty young women in a nice dress. The picture is also obviously older, but it is in color and of better quality. This woman is my grandmother. She apparently did not grow up rich, but she grew up far from a two room house with a dirt floor. Her father was a successful sheriff and farmer and did well for himself. Their upbringing shows just how different of people they are. They seldom get along; she is always scolding him for something such as eating candy or falling asleep while we all sit around. There is however a caring aspect to the scolding, much like a parent’s ranting; she wouldn’t do it if she didn’t care. He seems to understand this, or years of similar interactions have worn him down into acceptance. In the picture her outfit is impeccable and shows signs of how high strung and perfection motivated she is. Her kitchen always shines and meals are chosen based on health benefits.

The next picture is newer, likely taken in the late 70’s, and it shows a young woman wearing a graduation cap and gown standing proudly in front of the house. This is my mother and she had just graduated high school. She has both her parent’s characteristics but looks slightly more like her father. She’s talked about her childhood often. Her stories of growing up in a small one bedroom house in town before moving out to the larger and nicer current one, of how my jolly ole grandpa used to be quite the disciplinarian, and of how little she saw of him growing up as he worked sometimes two shifts a day. If the pictures on the wall tell a story, then the photo of my mother is the tipping point. It’s never been stated out loud, but she is the reason the rich pretty girl in the dress from Northern Illinois married the poor boy in the military uniform from Southern Illinois. From my understanding, my grandmother became pregnant and a shot gun wedding was undertaken. They moved into her father’s house and the struggle began. My great-grandfather was apparently not a fan of my grandpa and didn’t talk to him for several years, only wrote out a list of things that he was supposed to do around the farm. Things were tough for several years; they eventually moved back to his home town, into that small house in town my mom says she grew up in. These early hardships and my grandparent’s characteristics have been hardwired into my mother. She is one of the strongest people I know, always putting away money into savings, and always doing whatever is best for her family. She became an X-ray technician after her parents gave her the option of that, a nurse, or a teacher. She became successful over time. I remember her doing school work when I was doing my grade school homework as she went back to school for degrees in business and nuclear radiology. She raised me by herself after taking me, her sickly child, away from an abusive husband and situation. She dealt with all my medical problems and turned me into the person I am today.

The next picture is the only action photo on the wall. It shows a tall young man playing basketball. He’s jumping into the air to block an opponent’s shot. His arms are out stretched and his hand is smashing the ball against the backboard above the box, some 12 feet into the air. This is my uncle. My uncle played basketball in that gym named after the coach that my grandfather played for, and the stories I’ve been told say that he filled the gym with people. When he graduated, he was the all time leading scorer at the school, had been to the state tournament three times and had won it twice. Pictures of those winning teams hang in the gym, and my uncle is there in the back towering over everyone. He was 6’8 and as athletic as his father; he first dunked in grade school and as a freshman in high school became a local legend when he came off the bench in the state tournament to score 38 points in the second half. He has always represented a happier time in my grandparents’ lives. He was born 10 years after my mother,
after those 16 hour days at the mine had put money in my grandfather’s pockets, and after they had moved out of that small house in town. I know his life has been far from perfect and he represents the bridge between how my grandfather and I see the world.

The next picture is of all four of them smiling as they pose for a professional photo. My mom looks to be around the age of 18 and my uncle around 10. Both my grandparents look proud of their family and what they have accomplished.

Grandma’s Hand
By Misty Collier

Grandma’s hand provided the warmth
And comfort that everyone searched for
Grandma’s hand, so warm and soft
It comforted me during sad times
Grandma’s hand seemed to
Make everything alright

I held on tight to grandma’s hand
When I was a little one
How I loved that hand
If I had known then what I know now
I would have never let go of grandma’s hand
I would have kept it closer

Grandma’s hand is gone now
It is resting peacefully
I like to think that I can still
Feel grandma’s hand in mine
God I would do anything
Just to hold grandma’s hand one more time

Kwansaba
By Mitul Gandhi

I testify but I am not guilty
I stepped up to the podium sweating
The judge stares with his mean eyes
The bailiff is waiting to jail me
I am frozen my heart is stopped
The jury proceeds to decide my fate
We find the defendant guilty as charged
Charlie!!!
Bre Dunsworth

Sitting in the back seat of any car between two other people is never fun. It has got to be the absolute worst spot to sit in a car for a long road trip. I was with my Aunt Laura and Uncle Charlie and two cousins, who are all practically my second family since birth. I was squished in the back between Lauren and Ryan. Lauren and I are only one year apart so we were brought up almost like twins. My cousin Ryan is several years younger than we are, and we were hitting the road for his hockey tournament in Indiana. Road trips with the Hodges were always eventful, so I was waiting to see what kind of comedy would most definitely unfold.

The trunk of the SUV was packed with suitcases and hockey gear, so the three of us kids were overlapped and sleeping on top of one another. Being a light sleeper, I woke up to realize that my uncle was making some sort of fuss over a mysterious noise. Despite the fact that he was driving, he kept trying to figure out where the noise was coming from. I was sort of confused because I could not hear anything over the radio and the windy sound of the highway flying by. He struggled to reach in different pockets of the door or under the seat or in different compartments. My aunt, who was in the passenger seat, started to search, trying to get my uncle to focus on driving. "Charlie!" she hissed. "Watch the road!" Of course, he did not listen to this suggestion.

Uncle Charlie could not let the noise stop bothering him. He undid his seat belt to try and reach farther. Slamming the glove compartment a few times and hitting the air vents to get the rattle to go away was unsuccessful. He stretched over the steering wheel feeling towards the windshield. He kept saying how the plastic from the dashboard had to be where the noise was coming from. Continuing to mess with the plastic, we started to swerve a little and our speed fluctuated from breaking to accelerating. By this time Lauren and Ryan were awake, too. We all sat in the backseat a bit confused about what was going on. All of a sudden a loud holler came from Charlie. "OOOOOWWWWW!" he screamed.

We tried to crane our necks to look towards the front of the car. All I could see was Charlie still leaning over the steering wheel with one hand stretched forward and one steering. Laura started frantically asking what was wrong. "Pull over! Stop the car!" she yelled. As Charlie veered right towards the shoulder, his hand didn’t move away from the windshield. His voice gave away that he was in pain as he continued to shriek and he finally got out that his fingers were stuck. Stuck? How were they stuck? I could only imagine how he managed to get his fingers stuck somewhere in the car while driving. Only Charlie...

When we eventually came to a stop on the shoulder, Charlie continued to yelp in pain. His body was now completely over the steering wheel trying to free his stuck fingers. Laura leaned towards Charlie’s fingers, attempting to help, but in reality she was just in the way. Charlie yelled to get a crowbar from out of the trunk. Lauren, Ryan, and I sat in the backseat bewildered. We just stared as this crazy scene unfolded before us. Quickly, Laura hopped out of the car and went to the back. She popped open the trunk and started to throw luggage and gear out onto the road. Blankets and snacks flew to the ground, too, since her only priority was that crowbar. She eventually got to the compartment and quickly ran the tool back to Charlie. Charlie was still stuck and was becoming more frantic as the pain increased. He grabbed the crowbar and worked with it for a short period of time. Suddenly, a sigh of relief was let out and Charlie slumped back into his seat. He inspected his fingers which were red from being smashed for so long. Laura grumbled about how she could not believe that had just happened.
There was not any blood and there didn’t appear to be any broken bones, so we eventually loaded the car back up and went on our way. As we flew down the highway, Charlie noted that the sound was still there. Laura reached for the volume and flipped it up so the radio blasted our ears. “Can you hear it NOW?” she yelled with an irritated edge in her voice. Lauren, Ryan, and I glanced at each other and started to smile, but we quickly hid them. It was probably a little too soon to laugh at the humorous charade that just developed before our sleepy eyes. Seriously, only my Uncle Charlie...

Essence of a Soul

By Libby Herman

Five simple, straight lines,
With white spaces in-between.

Seemingly random lines, dots, and holes,
Connected or broken up,
Splattered across the page.

This swirl of black and white,
This mess of symbols,
This outwardly monochromatic chaos,

May make no sense.

But to a musician,
It is not just a splash of ink,
Thrown onto a page.

It is a lifestyle.

The notes and rests,
Weaving up and down the staff,

To a musician,

Makes all the sense in the world.

Eighth notes, whole rests,
Key signatures, accidentals,
Dynamics, codas,

These fill the musician’s soul,
Sweeping him up,
Overpowering his senses.
With one stroke of the bow,  
A strike of a key,           
A deep intake of breath,   

Powerful pitches,        
Daring dynamics,         
Beautiful beats,         

Saturate the air,        
Reaching every open heart and every open ear, 

Satisfying all those who crave,  
Proving its versatility,    
And power of unity.

Facebook

By Michael Feller

The site prides itself as a way of staying in touch
    But people are on it way too much
Connecting and sharing is so easy to do
    You can even plan and create a page dedicated to you
Keep a watch on your family and stay in touch with friends
    Wow can you believe the pictures of his great new Benz
So many good features that come at no cost
    Like bumper stickers or Tetris: time is sure to be lost
This site has helped me pass hours in class
    I’m sure that someone has logged onto it during mass
So much great stuff at the touch of the mouse
    Someone is logged on as I speak at their house

But this site also has some bad
When it doesn’t recognize my password it makes me mad
    I hate when people I don’t know ask to be my friend
I ask myself why if I don’t know you, do you want to be my friend
    But I accept these requests anyway
Because I wouldn’t want to make someone have a bad day
    In the end the good outweighs the bad
And you can always use it to stay in touch with dad
Overall, Facebook is the ultimate way to waste time
    And it will never cost you a dime
The Cat Who Could Read  
By Caitlin Kroeger

There was once a cat that could read,  
she was quite an unusual breed.  
Half tabby, half Siamese; if she pleased,  
she could read long books with ease.  
She spent all her time in the library,  
yet the books she read barely did vary.  
For she only read books of mystery,  
and old books of history.

Recipe for the Perfect Day at the Beach  
By Ripple Patel

1 scoop of sunshine  
an umbrella and a beach towel  
flavors of cool breeze and waves  
1 Hot swimsuit and shades  
Some sand  
1 friend

Cone made of sprinkles of sand  
Filled with 1 scoop of sunshine  
with flavors of cool breeze and waves  
dripping on your hands  
more toppings of an umbrella and a beach towel are in line  
pour on a hot swimsuit and shades to make it look fine  
to top it all off add a friend to make it all sweet.

Time just keeps ticking by  
By Hannah Tucker

The time just keeps tick ticking by.  
I sit and study for the big test.  
But I can’t help to wonder why,  
The time just keeps tick ticking by.  
I just want to let out a sigh,  
Still I try to do my v’ry best.  
The time just keeps tick ticking by.  
I sit and study for the big test.
The Good Luck Charm
By Shana Jones

My friend and I started our day going on a canoe ride in a river nearby our homes. We soon realized that the waters were not calm enough, and we should have been in a raft. After struggling through the waves and rapids, most of our equipment tipped overboard and floated away. Every single expensive navigating map we owned was gone. The only thing that was left in our canoe was a skinny, old fishing pole. This fishing pole was worthless and I have no idea why we brought it. I wanted to throw it away so many times, but my friend insisted that it was a good luck charm. I sure hope that the good luck helps us out today.

We continued downstream quickly, and my friend continually screamed right into my ear and prevented me from thinking, so I just screamed with her. We went faster and faster in the rapid waters. For a split second, our canoe began to fill up with water and we ran into something that almost knocked both of us flying into the air. Startled, we looked over the side of the canoe to find a huge rock sticking out of the water. Of course, it punctured holes in our canoe and allowed even more water into the boat.

I started freaking out about then, because I felt like there was no way out of the canoe. My friend’s pale face just stared back at me. Somehow, our old fishing pole survived the collision with the rock, and I wondered if there was a way that I could use it to grab onto something nearby. We managed to move the boat to be closer to the river bank but many rocks were in our way. I got really worried and had no idea what to do. My friend got the bright idea to hang on to one of the rocks to make sure that the canoe did not go any farther downstream. She grabbed onto the rock for only a second before she slipped away and almost fell out of the canoe. The canoe kept filling up with water, and I was trying to throw it out of the boat, but it was filling faster than I could get rid of it.

Luckily the water started to calm down and it was not splashing in our faces as much as before. The first thing that I saw when I looked up was a waterfall. I thought about just jumping out of the boat in hopes find something to grab onto, but I thought of a better solution. I decided to throw the hook of the old fishing rod out towards the trees and plants. I waited for it to grab onto something, but it just landed in the water. I tried twice more and on the third try the hook dug into the skinny tree right next to the river. Okay, I thought, now what am I supposed to do? The fishing pole is not going to hold the boat in place. I had to find a way to get out. My friend was just sitting there trying to be motivation, but she was still not much help.

I yelled in her direction to get her attention. She ignored me for a while then she looked at me and tried to understand what I was saying. I told her to grab onto the string and walk on the rocks to get to the river bank. She said no at first, but she gained the courage to climb out of the moving canoe and walk on the rocks. She slipped and almost fell into the water, but she got on her hands and knees and crawled to the river bank. Now it was my turn. I decided to stick the pole in one of the holes of the boat so it would not fall out. Before I took my first step out of the boat, I slipped and fell down so hard that my leg felt numb. I sat there for a minute and then regained my balance and just jumped out of the boat. I looked down and knew that I was going to land in the water. So I put my arms up in the air and grabbed onto a small rock to keep from drowning. Slowly, I made it to where my friend was sitting. I sat there looking at the sky so thankful for getting out of the boat alive. After watching the boat crash into some rocks and quickly sink, I realized that there was just one problem. I had no idea where we were, so which direction should we go?
Friday Night Butterflies
By Bryan Willett

Adrenaline rushing through my veins
Endorphins flowing block the pain
3rd down and 15 yards to gain
As I walk to the line of scrimmage

Body’s covered black and blue
Callus starting to bleed through
But nothing else I’d rather do
Than win this football game

Seven-thousand in the stands
Hard to hear QB’s commands
Heart beats fast and lungs expand
As sweat rolls down my face

Get in position and set my feet
Look across and our eyes meet
That’s when I know I’ve got him beat
Before the ball is even snapped

A Changed Life
By Josie Millard

I will admit that, yes, I, Jane Anderson, was on the path to a major breakdown. Though my last name implies power, it also comes with a great deal of stress and sleepless nights. No one would ever guess that my life isn’t exactly utter happiness because, obviously, no one knows what it is like to be me. The maintenance I must undergo every single day of my life to ensure my prestige is downright exhausting. Leaving for the office at seven and not making it back until almost five places me right on the couch after I finally make it home.

I will admit, though, that I thought I had everything I wanted. Right out of college, I married the prestigious CEO of a booming industry, and together, we made a life full of luxury and wealth right in my birthplace of Austin, Texas. Charlie and I have the life we have always dreamed - a huge house, expensive cars, a private pool, and the list goes on. But lately, I have felt as if something were missing from my life, like a hole. It wasn’t until after my mother, who also happens to be my best friend, was hospitalized last week, that something changed inside of me. The report from the doctor didn’t sound hopeful, and I knew her days were limited. Going to see her on the weekends almost made my heart stop. Watching her lie so limp and fragile on the hospital bed instead of her once, ageless body sent chills down my spine. There, she peacefully clutched on to her burgundy rosary all alone in her little cubicle.

She was always a devout Catholic, and she had mentioned to me about going to mass a few times. I usually just changed the subject, and she never pushed it. Thinking back to when I
was a child, church seemed to be the most pointless hour of my week. I dreaded it every Sunday, and although Dad was allowed to skip whenever he wanted, Mom made all of us kids go and suffer. She explained that it would make us better than Dad, and we wouldn’t regret going when we got older. But as I did get older, I lied and acted like I went to church, but I just slept in instead. After I graduated from college, I probably went a total of ten times, and that was only because I had gone home for the holidays, and there was no chance of skipping then. Charlie and I were married in a church, but that was about it. He doesn’t have a strong sense of faith either, so we really don’t make a point in going. A normal Sunday for us is doing catch up work at the office of everything we couldn’t finish during the week.

But while I walked into the hospital one Saturday evening, I couldn’t help but feel guilty and ashamed. I had only visited her once this week, and her vitals only seemed to diminish. I had another stressful week at the office, but that was no excuse for letting the company take priority over my own dying mother. I cursed at myself as I made my way into her room. My dad was there, hovering over her bed, crying as usual. Opening the door with a slight creak, both of them slowly looked up at me with tired eyes. Kissing me on my forehead, my dad left us to have a little mother-daughter alone time. I could tell my mom had taken a turn for the worse, and a lump formed in my throat as I listened to her breathe. Forcing her hand up with great effort, she motioned for me to come and sit on her bed. I sat down as gently as I could and nestled my head in her neck like I did as a child. She tried to stroke my hair, but I knew it took too much energy. I heard her whisper my name, so I turned to look into her kind green eyes that I had grown to love.

“Janie, I don’t know how much time I have left, but before I go, I want to give you one last gift,” she softly spoke into my ear. Opening my hand with her bony fingers, she placed her burgundy rosary into my palm. “You know what this means to me, and I want you to have it. Please don’t worry about me; I know I am going to be taken care of when I pass on.”

Wrapping my hands over the glass beads instantly made me cry. I didn’t want to take the one object she most treasured, but she made it clear that leaving it wasn’t an option. Whispering in my ear, she asked me one last time to find my way back to church again. I gave her my word, and she gave me her rosary. That night she took her last breath, and the next morning I walked into church.

For the past five years, I have been faithfully going to mass every Sunday along with my husband and father who haven’t missed as well. Losing my mother has forced me to evaluate my life and realize that work and money aren’t everything. Church has become a major part of my life, and I feel it was the exact strength I needed when I was at my weakest. Finding out that I was expecting became a life changing event. A new baby would bring quite a few sacrifices and a whole new lifestyle. For the first time in our lives, the company was put on the back burner, and Charlie and I promised not to raise our first child while being cooped up in the office. And when I am all alone, I secretly draw out my mother’s favorite rosary from my drawer and hold it tight to my belly. I introduce my unborn baby to the best grandmother he or she will never get the chance to know.
Ballad
By Minal Amin

He walked around outside limp and weak
Went a few days without anything to eat
Accustomed to the usual sneak peaks
He lay out on the side of the street

He watched the usual people pass on by
As they pretended to not see him there.
But one young man stopped by where he lie.
He just stayed and continued to stare.

But rather than giving the man some change
He walked right off without a word.
The poor man thought this was strange
As he just laid there watching a little bird

Hours later the young man once again appeared
This time with a suitcase in his hand
He put down the suitcase and suddenly disappeared
The old man did not understand

He opened the suitcase
But, he found no money
He found some clothes and a letter in its place
And all of a sudden, things were sunny.

The young man offered him a job
And also a place to live
Change is good for only one meal
So, he didn’t think money was enough to give.

Freedom
By Heather Collins

I am so ready.
Summer heat and happiness.
I am on my way.
What Goes Around Comes Around... Or Not
By Kristin Hagan

One day last year I found myself taking care of some business in a busy downtown St. Louis office building. As I was planning to exit the building, I noticed a small crowd gathering in front of a revolving door that led to an outside parking lot. Apparently there was some kind of delay at the door because no one was entering or exiting the building at that particular entryway. Being somewhat cramped for time, I moved to the side of the small crowd to check out the situation. After all, the building had several other exits and, if this door was broken, I wasn’t planning on hanging around waiting for a repair man. One quick look, however, explained it all.

Inside one of the revolving door’s cubicles was a bald, middle-aged man crouched on all fours with his panic-stricken face pressed up against the glass. Outside the door was his friend laughing and yelling at him to push the door forward. Experience quickly told me that we had an idiot, I mean victim, stuck in a revolving door. Now, I am not a fan of revolving doors. I’ll even admit that once or twice it took me several spins around to finally get out of one of the darn things. Revolving doors just seem more complicated than practical in my opinion. Nevertheless, here we had a grown man who should have known how one of these things worked. Honestly, he looked like a monkey in a glass cage frantically trying to claw his way out. Kind of funny....and pathetic at the same time.

Years of watching late night TV in a quiet house have made me a pretty good lip reader so I tried to decipher the poor guy’s muffled screams. Two is suck. What? Oh, ... shoe is stuck. His shoe is stuck! By now, his face is beet red from embarrassment and he is ferociously pulling his stuck shoe with every ounce of strength left in him. Finally, the door budes and the bald man is catapulted out into the parking lot. Everyone clapped as the poor guy put on his flattened shoe and ran like an escaped convict trying to catch up with his friend who was laughing like a hyena. The exit reopened and the crowd slowly filed out one at a time through the revolving door without further incident. The drama was over but not the laughter. So the next time you approach a revolving door, remember...what goes around comes around....or not.

School
By Heather Collins

Study all weekend.
Never able to catch a moment’s rest.
I am exhausted.

STLCOP
By Jacob Krebs

Little pills and tabs
The College of Pharmacy
Six years ‘til big bucks

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The Ugly Princess
By: Amy Basler

There once was an extremely ugly princess named Shirlene. She lived in an old dilapidated castle right outside of Tuscaloosa with her father and their 12 cats. Shirlene spent most of her days lying on the couch watching soap operas and game shows. Her father, the retired king of Canada, often surfed the net trying to find a suitable mate for his beloved daughter. He took this task upon himself because he had given up all hopes of her finding love on her own. See Shirlene was not only unsightly; she was downright unpleasant as well. Obviously, this made things tricky for the girl’s father, who had created a profile for his daughter on every dating site he could find. While the information he provided on these sites was loosely based on fact, he still had to do quite a bit of tweaking in order to make her profile seem appealing. With the help of Photoshop and a few carefully placed fibs, Shirlene seemed to be any man’s dream and before long she was receiving countless emails from her prospective companions.

One email in particular caught Shirlene’s eye. The young man seemed perfect in every way. He was tall, handsome, intelligent, charming, and even mentioned that he wasn’t concerned with physical appearance. He was looking for a girl who was kind-hearted and sweet. Shirlene was clearly neither of these things, but she decided to set up a date with him anyway. The next day Shirlene went to the mall and got a complete make-over. A new hairdo, lots of make-up, and a snazzy new outfit to wear on the date left Shirlene looking all right. When she returned back to the castle later that day, her father was amazed at the transformation. “You look kind of okay!” he exclaimed. Because this was the first compliment Shirlene had received in over a decade, she knew that her date that night would be a success.

Seven o’clock couldn’t have come any sooner for Shirlene. To say that she was excited about the date would have been an understatment, and even though her new look wasn’t really her, she hoped that he would like it. As the door bell rang, she sprang from the couch to open the door. Her heart sank as she stared in disbelief at the man who stood before her. Her dreamy internet hunk turned out to be a boy she had known in high school named Sherman. Sherman was, however, less than dreamy, but more than happy to see Shirlene. He looked nothing like his picture, but then again neither did she. Sherman had always had a crush on her and had tried to woo her in the past, but Shirlene repeatedly turned him down. This time she decided she would give him a chance. After all, he had gone through the trouble of stalking her online. The least she could do was let him buy her dinner. The two ended up having a lovely evening and before long they fell in love and road off into the sunset together.

Two very important lessons can be learned from this story: you should never try to change yourself for anyone because there is always someone who loves you just the way you are and never ever believe anything that someone tells you on the internet.
Some may say you matter
    I sit and think
was it just a chatter?
    I write, holding my ink
all through the night of cold
    looking for the light
time is ticking and I'm getting old
but still sitting, thinking maybe it just might
who says good is good and bad is bad?
    only God knows
people think I am just mad
    my thoughts still flows
in my head
    until I am dead.

My thoughts
By Amy Basler

I am not alive
I died twenty years ago
Pretty creepy, huh?

A Hurricane of Words
Raw thoughts
Candid emotions
Held by nothing
Other than the clenched
Pearly gates of my teeth

I tell you no lies.
I tell you nothing at all
Like you said it would be
Take joy in knowing
Your prophecy
Fulfilled.

The blades cut words,
And drown thoughts,
Filling the room.
With deafened roar.  
The whirl propels.  
Stillness.  
    No one moves.  
Heaviness.  
    Eyes glide closed.

**Summertime**  
*By Shana Jones*

Summertime is the best time of the year  
Endless camping, swimming, and laughing  
But when it comes to an end I shed a tear  
Sunny days and thunderstorms are here  
And staying up all night with friends is exciting  
Summertime is the best time of the year  
Thoughts of school and work are not near  
And days are filled with daydreaming  
But when it comes to an end I shed a tear  
The birds sing their song in my ear  
While I sit in the sun to read while tanning  
Summertime is the best time of the year  
I got visit my grandparent’s house to see the wild deer  
And eat my grandma’s grand prize cooking  
But when it comes to an end I shed a tear  
Time is running out and I have to get into gear  
School is about to start but where is the time going?  
Summertime is the best time of the year  
But when it comes to an end I shed a tear  

**Thief**  
*By Misty Collier*

The girl sat next to me  
She thought I couldn’t see  
She reached over and touched my purse  
I opened one eye and spit out a curse  
She stood up and started to flee
The Story of Barry Wolf
By Justin Boudeman

Just after graduating high school, Barry Wolf was hired by Dane’s Pest Control Services as a pest control specialist. His primary job was eradicating roach, termite and other insect populations from people’s homes. He slowly began building quite a name for himself as he got rid of pest problems that no one else could. One day, a call came in from a popular restaurant two towns over, complaining of a very serious raccoon problem. The restaurant used to be a joyous and exciting place to eat and gather with friends, but recently the raccoons had been sneaking down from the attic and pestering the patrons and employees to the point that it was becoming not only annoying, but very dangerous. When Barry heard about this, he decided he was going to be the one to save the restaurant. Hyrum, his boss, agreed and sent him on his way to the restaurant.

Upon arrival, Dane Rothgar, the owner of the restaurant and an old friend of Barry’s father, treated Barry to a delightful meal. While eating, one of the employees began to doubt Barry’s abilities and said that he wasn’t worthy of his reputation. Barry responded with tales of eliminating over 3,000 cockroaches from a church, and saving an orphanage from a terrible termite infestation. After the meal, Barry headed up to the attic with only a net and a hunting knife. After an intense struggle and quite a bit of commotion, Barry emerged holding only the tail of the raccoon. He stated that the raccoon was near death and slinked out of a hole in the attic to go to the dumpster and die. He gave the raccoon tail to Dane, who questioned why he would want a raccoon tail, but took it anyway. The restaurant employees and patrons rejoiced and showered Barry with countless treasures, such as coupons to the restaurant. They didn’t have much time to celebrate however, as a larger, angrier and very rabid looking raccoon emerged out of nowhere, and bit one of Dane’s best employees! The group sent the man to the hospital, and Barry returned to the attic and killed the rabid raccoon (DNA tests later found that the second raccoon was the mother of the first). Once again, the restaurant employees rejoiced, and Barry decided it was time to head back to his home town, and return to work.

Upon his return, he gave all of his treasures and coupons to Hyrum, who in return promoted him to manager. Hyrum, who was about to retire, offered Barry his job, but Barry knew that the position truly belonged to the boss’s son, who had been waiting to run the business for years. As Barry’s reputation spread throughout the entire tri-county area, he was becoming quite the hero. After a few years, Hyrum’s son ended up eloping with his secretary and moved to Calcutta, leaving Barry to run the pest control business. Under Barry’s ownership, the business thrived and the tri-county area remained rodent and pest free for 50 solid years.

Then one day Barry, now an aging man, got a very disturbing call. A local resident had built a shed right next to the den of a giant snake. This angered the snake and it was now slithering around the neighborhood, terrorizing its residents. Barry knew the task would not be easy, so he set off to kill the snake with the aid of his best pest control specialist, Will.

Barry used all of his strength and might to capture and kill the snake, and he ultimately succeeded in doing so. Right before finishing off the snake, however, it managed to bite him and inject its venom into his veins. Barry, now exhausted and moments from death, returned to his home, and died peacefully in his bed. The townspeople mourned his death, and buried him on a hill overlooking the town that he fought so long to protect from pests and rodents.
Maverick and Goose Save America’s Most Precious National Treasure
By Nathan Brockmeier

“I’m not going to let this happen to you Goose!” Maverick cried as he held Goose’s head above the icy cold water and began a modified version of CPR. Goose choked on the water as he regained consciousness. Spitting the remaining water out of his mouth Goose’s eyes lit up as he saw his reflection in Maverick’s aviator sunglasses.

“You saved my life, Mav.” Goose was overcome with emotion as the two fighter pilots treaded the choppy water while waiting for a chopper to arrive.

Rejuvenated by their near-death experience, Maverick and Goose finished the Top Gun competition with unmatched zeal. Maverick resisted the urge to do idiotic stunts and Goose stopped randomly yelling things out loud and generally acting like a drunkard. Yes folks, these two were on the path to greatness. At their graduation ceremony, Iceman couldn’t even offer his congratulations through his tears of rejection and sadness. Slider, Iceman’s wingman, smelled terribly as he was too heartbroken over the loss to even take a shower.

Shortly after the Top Gun graduation and before Goose had time to get sloppy drunk, the commander told the duo that there was a matter of national security which required their immediate attention. A plane full of hostages was headed directly towards the Wrigley Field. Our most precious national treasure was at stake.

Our heroes were in the air in no time. As Maverick saw the rogue plane, he quickly positioned himself in the airspace above the plane. Quickly and confidently Maverick then flipped the plane upside down above the hijacked plane so that the cockpits were facing each other. Goose then proceeded to use his masterful communication skills to write messages to the hijackers on paper which he then held up to the window of the plane.

“Great balls of fire!” proclaimed Goose as he finally reached an agreement with the hijackers. As Goose cracked open an Old Style beer, Maverick flew the plane to safety. A hero’s welcome awaited this talented flight crew. There were television cameras and rejoicing civilians everywhere. As Maverick got out of the plane and quickly found his lover turned flight instructor turned girlfriend, Goose sat there in the cockpit showering himself with beer as if it was him (and not the Cubs) who just won the World Series.

Many years later a wild-eyed-hot shot and his all too familiar drunken wing man serenaded a woman with the song “Great Balls of Fire” the night before reporting to duty at Top Gun. Though terribly confused, the woman was strangely turned on by the duo’s public attention.

During a break in the Top Gun training the next day, Goose looked across the beach volleyball court to the newest hot shot. His body glistened with baby oil as he wore jeans in the sand. Goose said to young man, “I once flew with your old man.”

School Day
By Sara Richter

Class’s end is near.
This day has been oh so long.
I want to go home.
Second Place winner in the 2008-2009 Apothecaries and Dreamers Contest

Love in Auschwitz
By Mital Shaw

"The human heart weighs about 10 ounces," I once read in a book. It never failed to amaze me how much my 10 ounce heart dictated my life. It is June 30, 1933 and I turn 22 today. Twenty-two years of my life had gone by and I still have not done much in my life. I was sitting at the local diner waiting for my mom when a man sat in the chair across from me.

"Pretend that you like me, please?" he whispered to me. This random stranger was about 6 foot tall and had curly, blonde hair. His eyes were blue and soft and his lips were luscious. The way his black shirt hung on to his body, I could tell that he was strong and well-built. He must have seen me staring at him because his lips began to form a smile.

I quickly looked away and said, "I'm sure anyone of these ladies would love to pretend to like you. Why can't you ask them?"

With his green eyes piercing on me, he firmly stated, "Because they are not as attractive and striking as you." This was the start of my love story. Many "flings" turn into epic love stories, and while mine is nowhere near an epic love story, it is the story of my life.

Eric, the diner stranger, was no longer a stranger to me. He became my reason for existence. After our many outings, it felt like I had known Eric all my life. At the age of 24, Eric was ambitious and ruthless. He loved two things in his life; one was me and the other was politics. He wanted to join the government ever since he learned about George Washington, and that was when he was 12 years old.

I was cooking dinner for my father when Eric called me. On the phone he sounded frenzied. "Eric, please slow down. I don't understand what you are saying," I told him.

"I gotta see you tonight Aaliyah. I have something to tell you!" he said to me. We decided to meet at our usual meeting place, the diner. When he saw me walk through the door, a smile grew on his face. As I approached him, he pulled a chair for me. "I already ordered food for you," he said. While we waited for our food to arrive, I asked Eric what the big news was. "I got a job! I joined the National Socialist German Workers Party," he explained.

"Oh! You...you got a job. What does that mean? Are you moving? Are you getting paid? Will we be the same?" I asked him.

"Whoa! Hold on there. One question at a time now," Eric said. "Aaliyah, I am not moving and we are still going to be the same. Of course, I am getting paid and you know how much I love politics so this job means a lot to me," Eric clarified for me. I did not know what to think or say but the only thing that I did know was that I was happy because he was happy.

It was January 1, 1933 and the weather was cold and icy in Germany. Every newspaper in town was focused on the elections and a man by the name of Adolf Hitler. Hitler was all over town and he was the only thing that Eric talked about. "The man is a genius. His ideas and beliefs are remarkable! His ideology, Aaliyah, is out of this world! I'm so excited to work with him and his party," Eric said to me during dinner one night.

"Ok," I said inanimately. I had heard about Hitler as well, but unlike Eric, I wasn't too keen on his ideas. Adolf Hitler's sudden popularity terrified me, and on January 30, 1933, my worst nightmare became a reality; Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party came into power. While the world rejoiced in this, my friends and I were scared for our lives.
That night, as Eric celebrated the victory of the Nazi party, my family and I talked about the weekly newspaper, Der Stürmer. "This is outrageous!" my father yelled, "These cartoons are...are insulting!" My father was referring to the caricatures in the newspaper of Jews. The papers were full of propaganda against the Jews. It was no longer safe for Jews to walk around anymore. I heard my parents talking about immigrating to somewhere safe.

As days went by, I saw Eric less and less. He was always busy working and I was busy worrying. Things had worsened in Poland. Gun shots on the streets were now common noises.

Over dinner one night, Eric told me that he was going to Germany on work business and would return in a few months. I dropped my spoon in surprise. The clattering sound rang in my ears. "You're joking, right? Tell me you are joking?" I pleaded to him.

"No, Aaliyah. I have to do this. Official business," he replied. There was a new sharpness in his voice, one that I had not heard before. I looked in his blue eyes, the ones that always had me in them. I suddenly froze. His eyes were dull and I could not see myself in them. Eric and I broke up the night before he left. I never got a chance to tell him that I was carrying his child.

I lost the child in a miscarriage. The sorrow of losing the child and Eric overtook me. I no longer felt anything.

Time is a rare thing. It sometimes feels like never ending and it sometimes ends too fast. But any wise person will tell you that, time remains still for no one. One day, Nazi soldiers came into our house. "Pack your things. You are being departed from your house," one of the men said.

My father approached the man and said, "This is my home; how dare you come here and tell me to leave!" The man shot my father without warning, without mercy. Even though I only lost my father that day, I still believe that I lost my mother as well.

My mother, my younger sister, and I were moved to ghettos. We shared our space with two other families and food was always scarce. The water was dirty and one of the kids living with us was sick. The clustered space lacked the necessary sanitation and all of us were suffocating. My mother was the first to get sick from us. Her face was pale and she coughed all night. I prayed to God that we would get a new place to stay.

The next morning, my prayer was answered. Soldiers came in the early morning and pushed us out of our room. My family was forced into a line with other Jews from our ghetto. The officers boarded us onto awaiting trains. I wasn't sure where the trains were headed; I don't think anyone knew. All around me, I saw terrified faces. Our boxcar held 200 people and we were forced in like animals. The trip lasted for 9 days. We were hungry, tired, and many people died in our boxcar. The smell of the corpses was revolting.

We finally came to a stop and were pushed out of the boxcar. The corpses were thrown onto a pile that was the size of a small hill. The soldiers separate the women and the men, and my mother, my sister, and I were shoved into the line. The next few moments were beyond my control.

We were forced yet again into a line. First, they stripped our clothes. They took away everything. Clothes, jewelry, identity...everything. Then they cut our hair and gave us numbers as a form of identification. They gave us a set of uniforms. We were in Auschwitz Death Camp.

That night they sent us to our rooms without food. We slept on the bed that they gave us and the blankets were barely thick enough. I felt blessed to be with my family, and I wondered if Eric would be able to find me. I was scared for my life and for the lives of those that I loved.

The next morning, everyone was rushed into a line once again. We then went through some sort of a "test." The soldiers sat on the chairs and watched us. As each person moved
forward, the soldiers would point them into a new line. There were two lines. My mother was in line ahead of me and my sister. When it was her turn, the soldiers moved her to the right line. Then it was my turn. I was pointed to the left line. Shocked and confused, I was separated from my mother for the first time in my life. My sister and I saw our mother for the last time that day.

My sister’s tears kept me up all night. The other women were crying because of the people they had lost. We felt paralyzed and helpless. There was nothing we could do.

I had a dream that night. I was little and my dad was reading me a story. A fairy tale. The prince in the end saves the beautiful princess and they live happily ever after. Where was my prince? Why couldn’t he save us?

Days started. Days ended. Months passed. Years went by. Every month there was a “test.” There were two lines. God answered my prayers by keeping my sister and me in the same line. I watched my sister grow up into a woman in a Nazi death camp.

One month, my sister and I were working in the fields. The soldier watching us saw my sister and called her aside. I went with her. “I didn’t call you,” he said gruffly.

“Wherever she goes, I come with her!” I replied sternly. He slapped me so hard, I fell.

“Get lost,” he said. He grabbed my sister’s hand and pulled her after him.

“Aaliyah! Please. Aaliyah!” my sister screamed, looking back at me.

I ran after her and the soldier stopped. He looked at me and said “Fine. You can come and watch. That will be your punishment.” He led both of us in an empty room where there were mattresses on the floor. He threw my sister on the mattress and came to me. I looked around and then another soldier came. I watched my sister get raped by 3 soldiers that day. Her shrilling voice, her cries for help stayed in my ears for the rest of my life.

I no longer believed in God. He wouldn’t be so cruel. He wouldn’t do this to his kids. He wouldn’t, but He did.

One day, new people were brought into the camp, and along with new people, new soldiers came too. Test day came early that month and the new soldiers ordered us into lines. When it was my turn, I looked up and saw a pair of blue eyes. The officer that was looking at me was no other than Eric. My Eric. The man I had fallen in love with and promised to spend the rest of my life with. He looked at me, and with a flick of his pen he pointed me to the left. My Eric no longer recognized me. I touched my bald head. “Why would he?” I thought.

To be continued....

My List
By Karen Obermann

Today I woke up and considered staying in bed.
My list is so long I’ll never get it all done!
“Just don’t show me the time!” I told my alarm.
But, alas, I feel the list will never end.
So out of I bed I roll and begin working on my list again.
The Day I Became Afraid
By Laura Krefi

Coming home to an empty house,
Where were my parents, sister, or brother?
The smell of the coffee pot filled the air,
They obviously left in a hurry

My grandpa walked in
He was white as a ghost
That was the day
We hurried to the hospital

I felt lost
People all in white and blue
Why did they cover their faces
I didn’t know, I was only four
My mom’s red coat caught my eye
I ran to her….instantly she grabbed me
I buried my face in her coat
The smell of her perfume always comforted me
My sister was sick
It was the beginning
It was the day
I became afraid.

Memory
By HyunSuk Lee

I lost a memory
I don’t have my old life
Though, pictures and letters
help me to remember

I find a picture
Caption with you and me forever
I see your smile
But I don’t remember

I find a letter
You wrote for me on a special day
I can see your true love
But I don’t remember
Haiku
By Ripple Patel

Music that makes you fly,
With soft calming sounds all over
Not a person in sight.

Freedom
By Cameron Schulte

The rooster crows upon the big blue,
no more black
night but rather the rays of red.
Higher and higher it fades to orange,
the dew clears away letting the green
lead the way. No more bright white

stars to lead the night. Stars still white
in between the blue.
Standing tall, massive and green.
Casting its shadow in black.
Up to the top where the orange
flames burn to red.

Fallen heroes painted fields red,
so others may hold the white
rose. Now we may let the orange
ribbon flow. Protected by angels of blue
that surf the deep black
sea. Land sheltered by men in green.

This present is shared if you have a card green.
Brave men put out the fire burning red
but all that is left is charred black
frame. All this created by the white
airplane. Now across the blue
seas we fight in the lands of orange

sands. Safety level now rest at orange
up from green.
United we stand waving the blue,
and the red
and the white.
Fear won’t keep us in shadows black.
We rise above the black
smoke up to the sun’s orange
rays. Remembering others with white
candle flames. Flowers fill the green
yard of loved ones lost. Safety level at red.
People became depressed and blue.

Freedom will rise just like the red, white, and blue.
Green lands will push through the orange flames and black shadows

The Big Bad Contractor
By Minal Amin

Once upon a time there was a mother with three girls. The three kids grew older so their mother told them, “You are too old to live here any longer. You need to go find your own house. But take care because this isn’t the best area. Make sure you lock your doors because you have heard about the recent raping incidents.”
The three girls set off. “We will take care not to let anything happen to us,” they said. Soon the girls found a contractor to build their houses.
The first girl’s house was built. She was very pleased with her new barn. She said, “I doubt anyone would come in and try to get me. It’s just not likely.”
“I shall build a better house than yours,” said the second girl.
“I shall build a better house than yours, too,” said the third girl.
The second girl and the third girl went on.
The second girl had her log cabin built soon after. It was better than the first girl’s barn because it had ADT.
She was very pleased with her house. “Now no one can get me,” she said.
“I shall build a house better than yours,” said the third girl.
The third girl had her Beverly Hills house built. It took her a long time, for it needed better security. She too had ADT, but also had a brick wall, a guard dog, surveillance cameras, and a security gate.
She was very pleased with her house. She said, “Now no one can get me.”
One night, a while after all three houses were finished, the contractor came to the first girl’s barn house.
When she saw the contractor coming, she ran inside her house and shut her door because she had heard on the news that he was the identified rapist.
The contractor knocked on the door and said, “Let me come in so we can play.”
“No, no,” said the girl. “Go away, I don’t want to play.”
“Then I’ll just use the key from when I made your barn.” So he opened the door and found her and raped her.
The next day the contractor went to the second girl’s house.
When she saw the contractor coming, she ran inside her house and shut her door.
The contractor knocked on the door and said, “Let me come in so we can play.”
“No, no,” said the girl. “Go away, I don’t want to play.”
“Then I’ll just use the key from when I made your log cabin.” So he opened the door, turned off the ADT, found her and raped her.

The next day the contractor went to the third girl’s house.
When she saw the contractor coming, she ran inside her house and shut her door.
The contractor climbed the wall, gave the dog a bone, and knocked on the door and said, “Let me come in so we can play.”

“No, no,” said the girl. “Go away, I don’t want to play.”
“Then I’ll just use the key from when I built your house.” So he tried but the key didn’t work because she had changed her locks after the house was finished. The contractor was very angry. He said, “I am going to get into your house if it’s the last thing I do.”

She said, “Fine I’ll let you in, just don’t break anything.”
The door opened, and facing the contractor was the girl’s father with a shotgun in his hand. That was the end of the contractor. The third girl was too clever for him.

Beagles
By Michael Feller

Beagles are the only hounds for me.
Their happy and kind manner along with their long ears and cute faces entice me. In fact, I have two beagles, one named Buster and the other Daisy.
I long to see these two, in
A week my dream will be true.

Chubbies
By Jacob Krebs

Oh, it’s been so long--
Perhaps some other year Cubs
God spare Chicago

The Best Game
By Shana Jones

The crack of the ball
The cheering of the large crowd
The most cherished game
Unusual Luck
By Ripple Patel

Friday night and the upcoming weekend is what every teenager looks forward to after a long hard week of classes and exams, and I personally fit into that category of teenagers. Generally, my weekends consist of just having fun while hanging out with my friends and then telling everyone the stories of our weekend the next day of class. However, during the summer that didn’t happen, and everyone would barely keep in touch with others. So when everyone came back to school in the fall, we all would share one of the most interesting stories we had from the summer. Last fall I would tell everyone about one of my luckiest weekends, and for me that was unusual because I am very unlucky and they all knew that so they all looked very anxious to hear about it.

Everyone wanted their story to be the most interesting and the best from the group, and you can tell that from how they would start off telling their story by saying something exciting or unusual and that would catch everyone’s attention. Just to make my story sound very interesting I started off by saying, “I had one of the luckiest weekends on earth; I know that’s hard to imagine because I’m so unlucky!” After that everyone was asking questions on what happened and why it was so lucky because they were shocked on how rare that it is for me to be lucky. So I started off by telling them it was Friday night and how two of my friends and I were deciding to go watch a movie, and obviously we wanted to go see Dark Knight because I was dying to see that movie for a long time. However, we realized that the tickets would be sold out at all the biggest theatres because that was opening day for that movie. Even then we decided to check the show times for the closest AMC theatre near us, and we realized the next show was going to start in 30 minutes, and we lived like 15 minutes away from the theatre, and we thinking is it possible for us to make it in time for the show or not, but we decided to go anyway. Instantly we got into the car and I drove as fast as I possibly could and we got there, but then we noticed that all the parking spaces were filled. Therefore I dropped my two friends off in the front and told them to get the tickets before they were sold out, and I decided to drive around till I found a parking space. I literally had 10 minutes left before the show started, but then when I was circling around, I noticed that this old lady was pulling out of one of the parking spaces right in front of the theatre, and I was thinking, “Wow, I am so lucky to find a space right in the front when it’s raining this badly and the show is about to start.” So I quickly parked and ran inside, and there my two friends told me that we got the last three tickets for the 9:00 show, and I was like, “OMG, wow can the day get any better!” Then as we were quickly running to theatre 6, I realized that we would get the crappiest seats and probably not even next to each other and then we were all sad. So as we got into the theatre, we noticed that the movie would start in like 5 minutes, and the whole theatre was packed and we could not even notice open seats. Then one of the theatre ushers came up to us and said do you guys need help finding seats, and we quickly said, “Yes!” Then luckily he found us three seats in one of the back rows and right in the middle, and I was like wow that is definitely the most luckiest thing ever because what are the odds that there would be exactly three open seats in one of the best places to sit in the theatre. So we sat there and watched the movie, and of course the movie was really good!

That was just a part of my unusual luck; then the next day I went to the bank to make a deposit in my savings account, and I noticed there was increase in my balance by four thousand dollars and I was just so shocked. At that instance I was thinking how could that be possible because I knew that I didn’t make that deposit, so I talked to one of the bank tellers and I told
her there was a mistake because I never made that deposit. So the bank teller told me that she would go check with the manager and see if there was a mistake. The manager came out and told me that someone might have made a deposit in the wrong account by mistake, but if they didn’t come within two weeks to claim it, then the money would be mine. I was just so shocked and really happy that I would get four thousand dollars just by luck. The incident at the bank was even luckier than what happened the night before. I was just so happy that weekend because I never expected that to happen.

After I told my friends at school about that lucky weekend, they were saying, “wow that was definitely some good luck right there.”

I was telling them that I thought so too, and then they asked if I got to keep those four thousand dollars, and I told them, “Yes, because the bank called me and told me that no one came in saying that they mistakenly deposited the money in the wrong account, so therefore I got to keep the money.” My friends told me that I was really lucky that weekend, and I felt really happy about it because I don’t get that lucky very often. Unfortunately that kind of unusual luck only comes around once in a while and even then it’s very rare.

**The Fox and the Crow**

*By Caitlin Kroeger*

The Crow lit into the tree, in her mouth a piece of cheese
Thought the Fox, "Tis for me much as I please."
He pad up to the tree,
his compliments three
"How glossy your feathers,
how bright your eye,
how beautiful your voice,
Please allow me a song,
though it is entirely your choice."
She would sing said she, but not for long.
She prepared to sing with great poise,
until she heard a startling noise.
This noise was the fox's bark,
and she flew away in great fear.
The Fox's target had been achieved;
As he saunter away with cheese,
he thought: "Tis for me; much as I please."

**Tribute**

*By Jacob Krebs*

It’s poems that I need
Authors like Shel Silverstein
Poetry indeed...
First Place winner of the 2008 Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers contest

Eden
By Xing (Ray) Yang

The ocean waves rhythmically crawled along the sand of the beach. Tired of its pursuit, the water receded back leaving its visitor standing with wet feet.

This visitor, a boy, stood alone on the sand. Standing tall with skin as fair as snow, the ocean breeze playfully lifted his neck-length blond hair. His eyes, the color of clear skies, stared outward towards the sea. His expression was that of one who never had enough sleep, or perhaps too much of it and had no energy for much else. His age can be placed in his early twenties.

He neither stirred nor flinched as the tides submerged his feet once again. Both sand and ocean weren’t real. Everything is a dream to this boy, including the very image of him standing alone. He is forever in a slumber, dreaming of the planet’s future: innovations, wars, and revolutions. Despite every outcome he can see, all possibilities had ended at a singularity: the destruction of the planet.

Nothing can stop it.
Is it here? Has it already come?
Is there hope?

Crumpled in the boy’s right hand is a folded piece of paper. Written on it are the hopes and dreams of those he had dreamt: the will to live on in a world in ruins. In another rush of ocean breeze, a vague whisper is brought to the boy’s ears: it was a baby’s cry, mixed with the noise of spreading fire. In that moment, his fist loosens the grip on the crumpled paper, when the breeze sweeps it up and outwards towards the endless ocean. And thus, the future begins to unfold. The sky closes its eyes.

Karen’s grip on the edge of the steep hill strengthened with her desire to end a relatively long climb. With one last breath, she pulled her slim frame till her eyes lay on the expanse beyond her hill: a city in ruins, located on an isthmus. The water that cupped the city was suspended in time. Within the city, towering office buildings have lost support to the uneven earth carved with countless fissures. Toppled buildings, abandoned vehicles with metal scraps, and glass debris decorated the uneven roads of decades past. Bridges were half demolished along with the collapsed interconnected highway systems that once elevated high above the roads that left the city. Most obscure was the frozen water that swept through parts of the city. Frozen seemed misleading, for these waves were not ice, but were at a standstill.

“How long has it been, Karen?”

A young man placed cold hands on Karen’s shoulder. Turning to face her companion, Karen found herself lost in Eden’s blue eyes and long charcoal hair that was massed in a mess. Younger than Karen by a year, but a head taller, Eden’s voice held a youthful note masked by intelligence and sharp calculation.

“You know the answer even before you asked it. What’s the point in answering?”

Eden closed his eyes and smiled as he took a step towards the ruined city.

“Fifteen years and counting,” continued Karen. The wind scrutinized her long blond hair as she worked to fill the silence between herself and her companion. “But...” she hesitated, but continued, “What are we looking for? And when will we find it?”
Karen’s despair only deepened to remember the ruins far West. Traveling half-way around the world, the non-permeable clouds colored the sky bile green. Seeing her companion walk towards the city, she picked up her pace. Each step was accompanied by the grinding of dirt and gravel of the earth.

“Will you believe me if I said I am searching for a dream?” Eden asked. These words echoed in Karen’s memory of her first encounter with Eden. Shrouded by a ragged cloak on the outskirts of the western continent, Eden came to Karen like a prophet in a crisis. At that time, Eden’s eyes were the color of autumn storms. His voice echoed the emptiness of false hope as he explained, “I am searching for the dream that will come to harvest.”

“Dream? What do you mean? H-hey, where are you going?”

Ever since that meeting, Karen has not been able to clarify Eden’s remark. Yet like a moth to a flame, she felt compelled to follow him in search of this dream. After all, they are two people left in this ruin of a world.

Another step brought Karen to halt behind Eden, who stood before the frozen sea that welcomed them to the city. Another step and he would have set forth into this timeless world. This city was like a rejected future, a possibility that has been abandoned. Eden’s fist clenched slightly, the lines around his mouth deepening from his constant frown. Karen, feeling the uneasiness in Eden, stepped back as if he radiated poison from his body.

“Karen.”

“Y-yeah?” Her voice stuttered at the surprised call.

“Within the old world, there was a person whose only purpose was to dream of the future. One day, he realized that the future is like strands of thread that separated from a singularity, but eventually entwined together once again at a new point. This point was the destruction of the planet.”

A long silence pressed on Karen’s chest. She couldn’t say a word to Eden. What was he getting at? Why tell this story to her at this time of all times?

“What happened to this dream seer?” Karen finally asked.

Eden stepped onto the frozen wave that coated much of the earth that barely supported the city. His back was to Karen, yet she felt his eyes on her, or so Karen thought. She stood silent, unmoving. Karen wasn’t scared of Eden, but felt his soul was an overpowering force.

“When he was murdered, he left behind hope in the form of his final dream. Even though his body has been left along with the old world, his intent has lain dormant, waiting to be awakened,” Eden explained.

“And are you trying to find that...dream?”

Eden continued walking into the ruins of the city. On his left were the remains of an automobile left under the remains of a fallen wall. Towers from above smashed into each other, creating an arch that welcomed guests into the ruin.

“I’m here to make sure that dream comes to harvest. If left to its own device, it will become another lost possibility just like the city before us.”

Karen trotted up to Eden, finally staying side by side with her companion. She observed the city with eyes of a predator. Ever since the population of humans had been decimated, other creatures have taken a step up the food chain.

After several minutes of walking, Karen took notice of a rag doll dangling from a human-sized fissure. Without anyone telling her, Karen understood the tragic story spelled by the existence of that rag doll. It reminded Karen of her own tragic past: a night when the sky opened.
to the destruction of countless bright futures. Karen looked up with a hand cupped against her ear.

"Eden," she thought. "Can you hear it?"

The wind picked up, bringing along the debris that decorated the city. Anyone who walked through this scene would experience the same scenario: the wind blows, and the dirt follows. However, hidden among this dirt echoed the voices of laughter, sadness, and regret of the voices long past.

**Wheelchair with Accessories**  
_by Heather Collins_

Kyle hated walking to school every day, and God must have heard his complaint as he read the lifesaving article. An electric wheelchair in excellent condition AND it had accessories! This was a match made in heaven. The next day he was rolling along to school and his front wheel began to shake before violently erupting off into the street. He ran like the wind in order to catch it before it went down the sewer drain, much to the amaze of all the onlookers who apparently thought he was handicapped. Everyone had these things nowadays didn’t they know? It was all the rage in St. Louis.

Once he got out of his dreadful classes for the day, Kyle set to work” pimping” his ride. This was going to be the wheelchair of all wheelchairs. All the others would certainly be jealous of its finesse. He attached spinners to the wheels and thought of what type of design he was going to paint on it. He decided on flames, what else? The boombox with a great subwoofer system would sit nicely in the lovely basket that accompanied his great buy. With the padded, furry seat he would likely never get out of that wheelchair! As he finished up the last touches on his masterpiece, Kyle simply could not wait for the ride to school tomorrow. His eyes failed to close the whole night, and finally his alarm sounded. Time to go!

As he strapped on his custom made helmet he tuned into his favorite radio station, Z107.7, fit for that particular morning. The sun was shining, and he was all smiles cruising down Euclid gliding easily over the uneveness of the road and those slippery grates too. Onlookers’ jaws were dropping as he careened quickly past them leaving them left in pure amazement. There was no need to jog across the intersections where the lights turned so quickly when he could simply kick it into high gear making it across in a flat three seconds. It was no doubt a record time as he considered sending it into the Guinness Book of World Records. That was exactly what he was going to do indeed. As soon as he got out of classes for the day and zipped home in all his glory, he would submit an application to the Guinness Book of World Records. However, would it be faster if he made the trip with his wheelchair straight to the headquarters? Yes, that was genius.

**My Dream**  
_by Sara Richter_

Organic with Katz,  
Physiology with Weck,  
What more could I want?
Third place winner of the 2008-2009 Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Contest

A Happening
By John Paule

It was a cold Wednesday morning as Detective Jacob Clearwater walked onto the scene of the crime. "Johnson...coffee." As he walked through the front door of the house, he wasn't prepared or awake enough for what he had just strolled up to see. Two bodies, one on the stairwell, one on floor, both were cut up so badly he thought the skin might've even been attempted to be ripped from the bones. "Jesus Christ, what happened here?" The house was completely demolished, tables overturned, chairs broken into pieces, scratches across the floor, and he noticed the front window had been completely busted out.

"Actually sir, we're not sure. We've got two bodies both obviously in pretty bad shape; all damage it seems has been done by numerous cuts and slashes to the skin. Victims, 23 and 25 years old, brothers, Jimmy and Josh Riley.

" Forced entry through the front window?"

"That's not what it looks like sir; we think that window was used as an exit by the assailant. The back door is the more probable entrance because of... well here, let me show you..." He walked around the staircase to the back of the house to reveal hundreds of wooden splints scattered across the floor and the back door almost ripped completely off of it's hinges.

"Whoever did this wasn't trying to be very subtle; the man next door said he heard the loud noise from the back, and by the time he made it outside he saw something run across the front lawn."

"Some-thing? They didn't know what it was?"

"No sir. The man seemed pretty frightened to tell me what he saw. You may want to talk to him yourself; he's out on his porch right now, been out there all night from the looks of him."

Johnson pointed to the house on the right, and the detective saw the man standing there staring at the lawn that was covered in glass and blotches of blood from whatever had run across it the night before.

As the detective walked over to the man, he was surprised to find him shaking violently as he still stared across at the neighbor's lawn. "Excuse me, sir, I'd like to ask you a few questions about what you saw last night. Did you get a view of the person's face as they fled from the scene?"

"Oh I saw its face." The man said a little more hysterically than the detective expected.

"Its face, sir?"

"That's right! I saw its face, and that was no man; that was a beast! A beast that killed those people."

"Detective." A voice yelled from inside the victims' house cutting the witness's story short. "Detective, I've found a boy hiding inside the house; apparently he's another brother related to the two victims."

"Johnson, get the boy some food and a coat and get him down to the station and away from here as quick as you can. Mathews, make sure to get all the information you can from the neighbor; I'm heading down to the station...I need to talk to the Chief right away."

It began to rain as Jacob Clearwater got out of his car and treaded into the station making his way to the office of the Chief of Police. When Clearwater entered the Chief's office, he was just getting off the phone. "I just got word of what happened at the Riley house; both of those
boys ripped to pieces, and the only witness report saying that it was some kind of monster? That man must have been on drugs."

"Chief," Clearwater cut him off. "I don’t think the man was lying. I saw the fear on his face, and the scene of the murder...I’ve never seen anything like it. Now I’m not saying some "monster" busted through and killed those two boys...but seeing all that happened down there, I’m not ruling anything out yet."

"Are you serious? Jacob we have to tell the press something about what happened last night; this is a small town and soon enough everyone will know that those Riley brothers were maimed beyond belief, and you want me to tell the public that we’ve got a...a...a monster attacking people?!!"

"Sir, just give me a little more time to talk to the boy, and I’ll try to figure this whole thing out."

"You’ve got 30 minutes...and you better find out something; I’ve got the entire department’s integrity to consider."

The detective quickly went straight to meet with the boy. "I’ll take over here Johnson." He said as he walked into the room, and the boy still sat there staring at his feet with his hands in his pockets.

"Good luck...I couldn’t get him to say a word all night."

"Hello, my name’s Jacob." The detective pulled up a chair and sat there for a moment, contemplating the boy. After a moment the boy looked up, and the detective was surprised to see the deep green colored eyes that were staring back at him. "What’s your name?"

"...Thomas."

"You’re not from around here are you Thomas?"

"No"

"Where’s your family from?" The boy put his head back down. "Thomas, you know I just want to help you and protect you from whomever it was that tried to hurt you last night. You can trust me." Thomas removed his hands from his pockets revealing to the detective a tattoo on the back of his right hand of some sort of symbol containing a cross and a design of triangles and in the other was a short blade made entirely of silver.

"I can’t do it!" He suddenly yelled, tears rolling down his face.

"What, Thomas, what can’t you do?"

"Kill him. It’s my job to kill it now, the beast. I have to kill him or he won’t stop hunting me; he’ll just keep coming until it’s done...but I’m scared."

"Calm down Thomas; there’s no one expecting you to do this. That...creature doesn’t know you’re here, and you’re with the police; we’ll keep you safe, protect you."

"No, you can’t protect me because you can’t stop him; only I can, and he won’t feel safe until I’m gone, so he’ll keep coming and coming and the only thing I can do is hide...I’m not ready!"

BANG!

They heard yells and screams from what sounded like outside of the building and Detective Clearwater went to the door.

"Stay here, I’ll-"

"No! Don’t make me stay, I have to go now."

"Alright...just keep close to me."
Clearwater and Thomas moved swiftly down the hallway towards the main lobby and the source of the noise. Checking around the corner, the detective saw it for the first time and his heart began to beat faster than it had his whole life. There he was, the creature, and the detective watched as it lunged through the front windows, and in the middle of the lobby it stood, taller than any normal man and completely covered in dark black and graying hair. Raising its head towards the ceiling and letting out a terrifying howl, it proceeded to attack the two guards closest to it. Shots began to fire from all around the lobby but none of the bullets seemed to be affecting the beast as it kept leaping from person to person ruthlessly hacking and slashing the bodies as it made its way through the lobby.

Clearwater reached behind him only to find that the boy was gone. He raced back down the hallway from which he came and saw the boy round the corner and run into Officer Johnson as he heard the continuing screams from officers who failed to flee or take the creature down.

“Detective Clearwater, what’s going on?” Johnson yelled as he grabbed on to Thomas.
“Whatever attacked the Riley brothers is here now trying to get to the boy. We have to get him out of here.”

They ran for the back exit of the station and only briefly stopped by the detective’s office grabbing two shotguns and then continuing on. When they rounded the final corner, they saw two more policemen fly across the last hallway before the exit. And then the creature turned the corner; stopped right between them and Thomas’ escape, glaring at the boy with a ravenous hunger in his eyes. The beast made yet another wicked howl before charging down the hallway towards the boy with intense ferocity. Johnson grabbed Thomas and headed back around the corner while Clearwater stepped in the path of the beast, gun drawn and aimed at the creature. The beast snarled and lunged at the detective and at near point blank range received the blast of a shotgun to the chest knocking him backwards with a wail of pain. Clearwater didn’t waste any time in getting back to Johnson and Thomas.

“Johnson, we have to leave now; nothing is working on that thing.”
“Outside...we can take my squad car.”

As Johnson ran for the front doors the creature leapt out from nowhere and in one swift swipe Johnson was dead.

The beast dodged another shot by the detective and launched him 30 feet across the room. It was now just the creature and the boy, and the beast hovered over him, a hysterical gleam in his eye.

Thomas mustered up all of the courage he could and pointed his dagger at the beast’s chest. Laughing, the creature smacked the blade out of the boy’s hands and suddenly began to speak.

“You don’t have it in you to kill me, boy...call yourself a Riley, Ha! You were even easier than your brothers, trying to hide from me...you should have just accepted your fate, but now it matters not. You are the last, and once you are gone I shall reign free. The Riley name ends with you!”

The creature lunged for the boy and he screamed, but before the beast’s claws could reach him, the detective dove onto his back and stabbed him viciously with the silver blade he picked up off the ground. Thomas ran out of the way and the beast was able to throw off the detective.

The beast had been greatly weakened by the attack, but none of its wounds were fatal, and he stood upon the detective’s chest.

“Pathetic human, you think I could be killed by the likes of you! Argh!”
The beast went in for the kill as Thomas ran between them, dagger pointed upward, plunging it through the creature's heart. It writhed in pain and howled like a banshee as it fell to the floor, dead, dagger in his chest.

Thomas stood over the beast and an unexpected look of sadness formed on his face. The boy knelt down next to the body and started to cry as the beast began to decrease in size and loose its hair. The detective watched a face form from what used to be a snout and skin appear where there had just been fur, and when the beast ended its transformation, he saw a pair of familiar deep green eyes on the young man that had just been the terrible beast. Thomas cried over the man's chest, on which was emblazoned the same symbol as on the back of the boy’s hand.

Once Clearwater got over the shock of what had just happened, he approached Thomas and put a hand on his back.

"Thomas, are you ok?"

The boy stood up and Clearwater felt extreme heat coming from his body, so much so that he had to back away. Clearwater watched as the boy’s tattoo shone bright and then disappeared and reappeared on his chest shining through his clothes. The boy immediately fell onto all fours and ran out of the station with such speed the detective did not know what had happened.

"Thomas, wait!"

But as the detective reached the door, there was no sign of the boy; all that was left were the blood marked silver dagger and a new set of claw marks...

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**The Fall Race**  
*By David Baker*

The pastel trees dancing in the wind,  
And the fresh crisp scent of a blossom.  
A sudden crack of a pistol,  
The blistering battle to get the lead,  
The deep burn as you struggle to hold your position,  
And the dry, cottony, thirst for water.  
But the sweat, rich taste of victory,  
Is what quenches my thirst.

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**In Session**  
*By Heather Collins*

Shivering outside.  
School should not be in session.  
Whose bright plan was this?
Baby’s Birth
By Misty Collier

I still can’t believe it, but I remember it like it was yesterday. It was a snowy winter day, and boy was I not up to dealing with it. That was a day that I would just rather stay in bed and relax, but the chores had to be done. I even had to walk to the market to get something for dinner. On top of all that, my feet and back hurt horribly; this had gone on for the last couple weeks. I would definitely have to see the midwife soon. I got out of bed and began my day preparing breakfast for the men folk and sending them off to work and school. Once they were out of the house, I finished my work in the kitchen and went outside to milk Betsy. We had milk left over from yesterday, so thank God I didn’t have to go out and do the milking at 5 am. That would have been a nightmare for me that day, especially since I felt so horrible. After old Betsy and I were done, I bottled some of her milk to take with me to the market to sell. Everyone knows that Betsy has the best milk in town, and they form a line for it. On the way to the market, I felt a sharp pain down my back, but I thought nothing of it and hobbled along. Upon arrival I saw my good friend Pearl; she smiled at me and teasingly told me how big I had gotten. She helped me sell Betsy’s milk, shop for groceries, and take care of things at the market. Boy was I glad I saw her that day.

On the way home a terrible pain came over me. Thank God the midwife’s house was on the way home right up ahead. She would probably just tell me to lie down and rest because I had been doing too much. I walked in and lay on her couch, and to my surprise she told me I couldn’t go home. It’s too early for the baby to come I thought. She examined me and told me that it was almost time. Fear rushed over me; there were so many thoughts racing through my mind. Catherine, the midwife, sent word to my husband to come up from the coal mines. It seemed to have taken him forever to get there. Boy was he gonna get it if he had missed the delivery of our second child. Scott came in, and I was so happy to see his face. He calmed me and held my hand. Finally after what seemed like hours and hours of torture, a beautiful baby boy appeared happy and healthy and six weeks early.

Broken Friendship
By Dayoung (Christine) Kong

Can you be any more selfish?
I cannot stand you any more
Grow up! Stop acting childish.
You annoyed me to the core.
I love you but I just can’t
that is why we are the way we are
you made me feel like a given grant
people think we are best friends, isn’t that bizarre?
You said you changed, but you’re wrong
I slowly moved away, step-by-step
did not want to be with you yearlong
I thought it would be a good prep
Good-bye my friend, it will never be the same,
Maybe it’s me, but for now I am sure you are the blame.
Global Warming
By Mitul Gandhi

"On April 5th 2038 an unexpected event which I am sure all of you know about, hit the world. The largest Alaskan glaciers melted into millions of gallons of water, causing a vast part of the west coast to be submerged under water. Thousands of people were killed and many were injured." Tyler realized he had been making little eye contact with the class and decided to look up for a second. Some students had their heads down while others were playing with pencils trying desperately to pass time.

As he was about to conclude, Tyler had a gut feeling to finish his speech from his heart, and reveal to the class his true beliefs on the current global warming issues.

"Um... well," he cleared his throat, "as I was saying before, all the catastrophic events that have been going on around here seem to be almost misleading. There is yet to be any type of scientific proof to explain any of the phenomena. For this reason, I feel there may be an outside source causing the effects of global warming...besides carbon emissions."

"Are you crazy?" came an interruption from the class.

It was his roommate Alonzo. "How can you think that anything but the carbon emissions and pollution are causing the earth's temperature to slowly rise. It is us humans who are destroying the atmosphere with our factories and cars."

Tyler looked out and saw Alonzo sitting on the edge of his seat. How could his friend embarrass him like that in class. Tyler glared at Alonzo and then concluded his speech. The sound of applause along with obnoxious comments rang through his ears as he stormed back to his seat.

After class Tyler, infuriated at his friend, went searching for Alonzo. But he was nowhere to be found. That was odd. He was just there a second ago. Where could he have gone this fast. Confused Tyler decided to walk back to his dorm. Maybe he would catch him on the way.

When Tyler got back to his room, he could hear Alonzo on the phone speaking loudly in a language very unfamiliar to him. As he walked in, Alonzo quickly put the phone back into his coat pocket.

"How the hell did you get here so fast? Who were you talking to when I came in and what language was that?"

"Oh come on, you know I am in way better shape then you are," he said as he nudged his friend. "I was just talking to my four year old niece; she loves it when I talk in fake languages; she even makes up her own words and talks back to me," Alonzo said with a chuckle.

"I see," Tyler replied while watching his friend fiddle with his fingers in an awkward way.

"So anyways, what was with your speech today? Were you just trying to be funny, because that was pretty funny. I definitely got a kick out of it." Alonzo asked with an awkward smile on his face.

"No," Tyler proclaimed, "I wasn't trying to be funny. I am serious. I think something is really odd about the way things have gone down lately. I mean Houston Texas had 6 inches of snow for the first time in its history. And then on the other hand the glaciers melt in Alaska? Don't you feel like there is something really wrong with that? How can that be due to global warming?"
“Dude, you need to get out more and have some fun. Stop worrying about the world and all,” Alonzo said trying to change the subject.

At that Tyler angrily grabbed his laptop off of his bed and exited the room, slamming the door behind him.

He went straight to Alisha’s room. At that moment Alisha trampled into the room. Tyler was sitting on Alisha’s bed just talking to himself.

“What does he think he is. I’ll prove to him that I am right.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Alisha.

“Alonzo thinks he is all knowing; I will prove to him that there is much more to the recent disasters than just global warming.” said Tyler.

Tyler opened the laptop and proceeded to work when he realized it was not his laptop. Then suddenly he was awestruck. He blankly stared at the screen for a moment then motioned for Alisha to come look.

“Look at these emails that he is getting from this bizarre email address. It just sounds like a bunch of gibberish.” Tyler said in disbelief.

Tyler’s eyes then caught a peculiar looking device. He picked it up and plugged it into the laptop. Instantly the writing in the email turned to English.

Tyler began to read out loud, “Greetings Alon-26, this is the Captain speaking, just wanted make sure things were going as planned for the New York site. It is essential that you reach the city heat generator located under the Jefferson Bridge and set it to 93 degrees. After your mission is successful, the ship will be waiting for you.”

Music

By Catlin Bingham

When I was a little bitty baby my momma would rock me in the cradle
It was down in Louisiana, just about a mile from Texarkana
I was young when I left home, could’ve been out rambling round
I used to rob, steal, and gamble, and on the side I’d beg, so I mopped up.
Making love with my ego, I sucked up into my mind
At that point my sense of humanity had gone down the drain
Reading departure signs in some big airport reminds me of the places I’ve been
There is so much that time, time and memory and fade away
But now I am following the river down the highway through the cradle of the civil war
For I have reason to believe that we all will be received in Graceland
You ain’t a beauty but hey that’s all right with me
Roy Orbison singing for the lonely, hey that’s me and I want you only
And the walls that won’t come down, we can decorate or climb them
Remember New York starring outside, as restless winter made its way
Though I’ll never forget your face, sometimes I can’t remember my name
You can never escape, you can only move South down the coast
Doogie Howsier MD First Thoracic Surgery

By Adi Thaker

It was a very hot summer morning! The sun had been up for only two hours, and it was already 100 degrees. On top of that the hospital’s AC had stopped working, so everybody was sweating and praying to god that someone could fix the AC. Doogie Howsier seemed to be unfazed by the weather. He was on his 40th hour of his 48 hour shift and still had enough energy that he could go on for another week. Unlike most residents who dread the long hours of residency, Doogie actually enjoyed it and was feeling sad that in less than a year, his residency would end and he would become a real doctor.

For someone at 13, Doogie was considered to be a genius, yet he felt that he was just a kid. A kid who had the brains of Einstein. Doogie had just sat down on a table with a cup of coffee and some hash browns for breakfast. Suddenly, there were emergency alarms going off in the entire hospital. A nurse rushed to find Doogie. An incoming patient was involved in a gang shooting and was critically injured. The patient had been shot in the stomach and was bleeding profusely and would require emergency surgery. The nurse begged Doogie to do the operation since no other surgeon was around.

Doogie had been dreaming about such a day. He had no experience in operating an abdominal surgery, yet Doogie was the only surgeon around that could do this critical operation. Doogie entered the chaotic operation theatre with full surgeon attire. He had a green mask on his face, and a green surgeon’s uniform covered his entire body. Doogie stepped up on a stool and grabbed a scalpel and forceps. He inhaled and prepared himself mentally for the operation. The assistants and technicians wished him good luck.

The patient had been shot thrice in the abdomen. The first bullet was stuck in the parietal peritoneum above the intestine and Doogie removed it easily. The second bullet was stuck deep in the liver and it took Doogie some intense maneuvering to remove the bullet. The third bullet was stuck in the heart. Doogie calmly made an incision into his thorax and suddenly the technician yelled! “Doogie!! The patient’s BP is rapidly falling! He is sinking Doogie!! You can’t do this operation or he will die!!”

Doogie looked at the technician and said, “If I don’t remove this bullet, He will die for sure and I would rather take this chance.” Doogie calmly made his way into the pericardial sac and looked for bullet. He could not find the bullet on his heart. The patient’s BP had been sinking rapidly and Doogie did not have time to waste to guess where the bullet had been lodged.

Doogie was baffled. He began visualizing what would have happened to the bullet had it been stuck inside the heart, and then Eureka! Doogie knew that his heart would have pumped the bullet into the lungs. No sooner did Doogie realize this, the hospital lost power and the lights went out. It was pitch dark in the room, but Doogie decided to make the incision anyway. Instantly he felt that he had got the bullet and pulled it out. The power was restored and the lights were on again. But something horrible had happened. What Doogie thought was a bullet turned out to be a part of the Thymus gland. “Put it back... put it back...” yelled everyone in the room. Doogie almost panicked, but regained his thoughts.

Doogie dissected the pulmonary artery and found the bullet. He took it out. Soon the patient’s BP began to recover and normalized. It was an appalling yet thrilling experience. Yet, with a few booboos, Doogie had done his first thoracic and cardiovascular surgery. “Boy, that was sure something” said Doogie as he looked forward to his medical career.
Haunting in the Influenza Ward

By Libby Herman

I don’t remember much as to how I arrived in this hospital. I realized my parents were sick, but I was not aware of the severity of the situation. Day after day, I watched their health fail. Their faces became paler, their bodies became weaker and sickly, their coughs and moans become more pronounced. Assuming I was invincible, I dedicated my efforts to nursing them and managing their care. Unfortunately, it was not long before I too, was struck with this awful virus. At first, I continued my strenuous efforts, tending to my parents’ every need. As the days dragged on, I felt myself weakening. Fatigue cloaked my body, making every movement feel heavy and weighted. The coughs and sneezes rattled my through me, shaking me to the core. Wheezing, I could feel the air struggling to get through my lungs, but my efforts were futile.

The last events I can recall were not a pretty sight. I had just finished ladling soup into my mother’s open, dry mouth. I was dead tired. Walking back to the kitchen, a wave of vertigo overtook me. The room spun terribly and I felt the eyes roll into the back of my head. With a loud thud, I collapsed to the floor, the silverware and plates crashing to the ground. The world around me became encircled in black. I awoke sometime later, my vision blurry and my body aching. Slowly opening my eyes, a swirl of faces appeared, surrounding me. Their muffled voices penetrated my consciousness. I tried to speak, but my throat was too dry and incredibly sore, all that escaped was a raspy, quiet groan.

They transported me up to a large, open room, lined with cots. At one end of the room, a large fireplace was ablaze, crackling and popping, the flames burning a bright orange and gold. Light streamed in from the tall windows embedded in the surrounding stone walls. Terminally ill patients lay on the cots, moaning dreadfully. As the nurses carried me to on an open cot next to the wall, reality struck me with a powerful blow. Horrified, I struggled to be freed from the nurses’ vice-like grip. I thrashed about, hoping to startle them and be released, able to escape. I refused to believe this was my fate. I would not succumb to death here, in this miserable, dreary, desolate hospital. Laying me down, I became desperate. Attempting to fling myself off the cot and sprint straight for the double doors, I imagined my escape to the outside world. Those two double doors at the end of the room signified my freedom. Glowing every so faintly, I smiled as I envisioned bursting through them, the wonderful feeling of freedom coursing through my veins.

Regrettably, my frail body was no match for the nurses’ inexplicable strength. Exhausted, I surrendered. Lying back on the cot, the nurses covered me with a sad representation of a blanket and injected some kind of medication. Normally, the prick of the needle would have frightened me, but nothing seemed to matter anymore. It was not long before I became drowsy and sedated. Oddly enough, I felt at ease with the world and drifted off into a happy sleep.

I awoke hours later, confused and dumbfounded. It was a typical cold, winter night in Chicago. The whirling wind was howling outside and rattling through the windows of the hospital. The wind brought an eerie chill to the whole town, but especially to the influenza ward on the top story of the hospital. The room was as cold as ice, not much different from the temperature outside. The lit oil lamps flickered with gusts of wind and it was nearly impossible to keep the fire ablaze, the swirling wind blowing it out with every puff. Deciphering the blurred outlines of cots lining the entire room and the sickly patients lying on their stiff, bitter frames, this scenery looked oddly familiar to me. A feeling of déjà vu flooded through me, along with memories of the previous events. I realized I was among these ailing patients.
As I lay huddled under a cheap, thin, scratchy cotton blanket, chills swept over me. My whole body trembled, chattering my teeth and rattling my brain. Despite my burning forehead and sweat dripping down my face, I was freezing. My lungs ached as I wheezed and coughed, spluttering mucus onto the floor. I was incredibly weak and frail, a result of being in this hospital for an unknown period of time. I tried to find some source of heat, but everything surrounding me was icy cold. I rolled over in an attempt to become more comfortable and found myself facing the dead corpses of my parents. Skin shockingly pale and lips frothy blue, I could hardly believe this was happening. My parents, once lively and full of energy, were now lying stiff and motionless on the cots.

Pain stabbed at me like a knife, causing me to recoil. It was hard to believe that after all of my efforts and attempts to nurse my parents back to health and keep them alive, they still managed to die.

"Death waits for no one," I thought hopelessly.

Tears leaked out of my eyes and streamed down my cheeks, cleaning a small pathway down my dirty face. Collecting in a tiny puddle on the blanket, I endeavored to conceive of a life without my parents. Without their tender loving and nonstop care, my future looked bleak.

I closed my eyes and hoped sleep would somehow capture me. Images of dead bodies shrouded in covers being carried out of the hospital and dumped on the street invaded my mind and swirled around in my head. Fear swept over me as I realized this was the same fate to which I would surrender. I had never given much thought to how I would die, although I had reason enough recently. Even so, I could not have imagined it like this. I wondered what it would feel like, would it be extremely painful or would it merely pass? Would I know I was dying, or would it just happen? Most importantly, I questioned whether or not I would see my parents again. I hoped so, as I already missed them dearly.

A loud clang pulled me out of my thoughts. I was a little disgruntled and confused, but I realized it was just the overnight nurse. She had slammed the large metal door and was making her rounds throughout the ward. When she reached my bed, I pretend to be asleep. However, she saw right through my charade and handed me a glass of warm water. With the iridescent light of the moon streaking in from the windows, she looked like an angel. Her eyes glimmered faintly and a smile spread across her face as I slowly sipped the water. She caressed my arm as I lay back down, heat finally coursing through my veins. I heard her footsteps fade away as she continued to review other patients. At last, I felt fatigue arresting my body and waves of sleep rolled over me.

When I awoke again, the lovely feeling of warmth I had felt before falling asleep was gone. It was replaced by an uncanny chill. I refused to open my eyes, in hopes that I would instantaneously fall back asleep. Unfortunately, I could not shake the uncomfortable, ghostly feeling that was flowing through my body. Amused, I wondered if I had finally died.

"If this is death," I thought to myself disgusted, "it is not much more comfortable than what I was suffering alive."

Reluctantly, I forced open my eyes to examine the place to which death had led me. Hovering in front of me, incandescent and transparent, were two figures. I could not believe what I was witnessing. Deliriously, I rubbed my eyes in order to get a clearer picture of what I had just seen. Regaining focus, the outlines became clearer and I could see details that were etched into these shapes.

Horror seized me as I recognized these ghostly figures. They were my parents. Floating above my bed, my mother, Josephine and my father, Harold, stared at my frozen body. There
was no life in their eyes. Even though they were looking directly at me, it was as if they did not see me and were looking through me to the floor. Shocked, a blood-curdling scream erupted from my throat. I was surprised that the loud sound had emitted out of my mouth; I had barely spoken over a whisper in the past week, let alone produce a terror-filled scream.

As my screaming continued, the spirits of my parents faded into the wind. As my mind tried to grasp the most recent events, nurses flew in the ward and hurriedly mobbed my bed. Eventually, they quieted me and gave me some medication to help me sleep. Throughout the chaos, I strived to describe the scene I had just observed, but without success. Not one of the nurses would listen to me, let alone believe the tale I attempted to tell.

As the nurses exited the ward, silence filled the room again. I could not bring myself to look at my parents’ corpses or even open my eyes. I squeezed them tightly shut, fearing I would see the awful ghosts once again. If that was awaited me after death, I was in no hurry to meet it. Unfortunately, my efforts to block out any thought pertaining to my parents or their respective spirits were futile. The ghostly remains swam in front of my eyes, haunting my consciousness. Luckily, the medication began to take effect and my agony was cut short. I calmly fell back asleep without another thought.

**Life**

*By Shana Jones*

Life is filled with surprises  
And full of laughs

Life is filled with scares  
And full of tears

Life is filled with complications  
And full of struggles

Life is filled with hardships  
And full of rewards

Life is filled with beauty  
And full of pictures

Life is filled with memories  
And full of smiles

Life is filled with dreams  
And full of hopes

Take the Life that you have and give it your best,  
So Live, Laugh, and Love every moment of life
The Butterfly
By Karen Obermann

I am in the middle of the Integumentary System in my Anatomy book when I come across a foreign word: augment. Unaware of the definition, I stroll to our family's old brown bookcase to get a dictionary. The ten-foot long, five-foot tall antique bookcase contains well over 500 books accumulated over the years. One skinny, long book sticks out from the rest and grabs my attention. The big green caterpillar on the cover of the book seems familiar to me. The memories of reading with my mom flood back as a faint smile creeps across my face. I impulsively reach for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and open to the first page.

"In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf." I distinctly remember the bright, full moon visible through the window as Mom drew my small, toddler body close to hers. She carefully pronounced each word of the book as her voice rose and fell with animation. Her voice was hypnotic, pulling me into a trance and commanding my full attention. The whites of my eyes grew wide at the colorful pictures and my feet danced with excitement. At the end of my story I begged, "Please Mom, read it again!" I saw the corners of her mouth rise as she began the tale again.

"One Sunday morning the warm sun came up and—pop!—out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar. He started to look for some food." I hungered for more adventures as Mom's vivacious voice filled my room with a story nearly every night. I took the responsibility of selecting each of our stories from the big brown bookcase very seriously. I laughed hysterically when Amelia Bedila dressed a chicken in ribbons and bows, and cried when the little yellow birdie couldn't find his mother. Story after story unraveled, until one night Mom's voice echoed with mine. The sheer joy and immense satisfaction I felt from being able to read could not be concealed from my voice. Mom had to help me sound out nearly every word and remind me to pause at every period, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that I could bring the adventures in books to life all by myself. With the newfound confidence, my appetite for books was unceasing—I found no book too long and no book too difficult.

"On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry. On Tuesday he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry. On Wednesday..."

"Now he wasn't hungry anymore—and he wasn't a little caterpillar any more. He was a big, fat caterpillar." Eventually, *In a People House, Green Eggs and Ham*, and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* were stories of the past. I went through the *Babysitters Club*, *Goosebumps*, and *Nancy Drew* books in the blink of an eye. I stayed up an entire night hanging on every word of *The Runaway Jury* by John Grisham. Soon the space between my ears was packed with knowledge and adventures taken from books. I could sense this knowledge giving me wings of opportunity, lifting me towards a bright future.

"He built a small house, called a cocoon, around himself. He stayed inside for more than two weeks. Then he nibbled a hole in the cocoon, pushed his way out and...he was a beautiful butterfly!" A smile crept across my face as I gently closed the book and placed it back on the shelf. I would love to read it again, but my caterpillar days have somewhat evolved. Now the whites of my eyes grow wide at the intricate anatomy of the human body. My mind suddenly snaps back into reality as I pull the brown dictionary from the big brown bookcase and find the right page. "Augment: to make or become greater; to increase." I make a mental note of the definition and return to reading the chapter in Anatomy.
Match Made in Heaven
By Sara Richter

I yawned and stretched my arms up to the sunny sky as I stepped out of the van. The sign next to me read, “Welcome to Panama.” After 14 hours of arguments about when to stop for food and use of the bathroom, we had made it to our Spring Break destination. In excitement, we quickly unloaded our bags from the back of the packed van and headed to the hotel lobby for check-in.

I gave the concierge my information and in return, he handed me a key—a key to my freedom for six days. I was never more excited about being away from STLCOP. After wandering around the hotel, checking out the pool and the view of the beach from the lobby, we headed up to our rooms. I slid the key into the reader and a green light flashed. I pushed down on the handle and threw open the door, relieved to have a bed to sleep in after the long drive.

I immediately headed for the bedroom when I noticed a pair of shoes on the floor in the kitchen area. Then, I noticed food on the table and dirty dishes on the counter. Someone else was there. I was terrified and began to leave the room when out of nowhere, a man popped out of the bedroom. He was very attractive—young, tan, dark hair, and big muscles. I couldn’t help but stop in my tracks and stare.

He asked me what I was doing, and I told him that there must have been a mistake because I was told that it was my room. He immediately disagreed and told me he had been there for weeks already. After a few brief words, we headed down to the lobby to resolve the issue. The concierge said that there was nothing he could do and that there were no other openings in the hotel or in any of the hotels in the area. What was I going to do?

I sadly went and told my friends what had happened. None of them wanted to share their rooms with me because they said that they were already too full. I walked sadly back to the room to gather my belongings and start my search for a place to stay. When I arrived back to the room, the man, whose name I learned was Jack, had cleaned up the place and was watching TV. He turned to me as I sadly walked into the room and said that he was sorry about what had happened. I told him that I was leaving to search for somewhere to stay, but then he volunteered the room. He asked if I would want to stay with him.

At first, I found the idea a little creepy. Staying with a slightly older man that I didn’t know? My parents would definitely not approve. Then, I remembered that I was on Spring Break and that I could be free, so I decided to say yes and stay with Jack.

The next 6 days went by so quickly. Jack and I had so much fun together at the beach and around Panama City. My friends were jealous of my new friend, and I enjoyed seeing their envy after how mean they were to me when I was looking for a room to stay in.

On the last day of our trip, I was so sad to leave Jack. We stayed up talking all night long, and I really felt a connection with him. However, I woke up the next morning, packed my bags, and headed back out to the old van for the ride home. I didn’t even wake up Jack to say goodbye because I thought it would be too sad. However, when I got out to the van, not only were my friends waiting for me but I noticed a note hanging from the windshield. It was addressed to me, and I opened it up to find a plane ticket—from Panama City to St. Louis. It was from Jack.

I was so excited about not having to drive home and I quickly called a cab, left my friends and headed for the airport. I received the surprise of my life when I arrived there only to see Jack waiting for me with a bundle of flowers. He gave them to me and said that he wanted to
come back with me to St. Louis as soon as he could. He said he was going to find a job there and call me as soon as he got into the city. I could not have been happier.

Two years after my Spring Break to Florida, Jack and I got engaged, and I have never been so happy in all of my life. I left for Spring Break with the intention to be high on life during my break, but instead I found myself falling in love.

Retribution
By Amanda Hetland

The room I waited in was boring. Everything was dusty, the opposite of sunny or up-kept. There wasn’t any artwork on the walls either. Most waiting rooms have at least one hideous painting that you try to analyze, thinking, “Who would buy that... ever?” But this room was just plain boring. I didn’t imagine the hospital janitor frequented this nook; like I said it was dusty and probably hadn’t been vacuumed in days. I was driven crazy by the dull, monotonous hum of the vending machine across the hall. And on it, the 7-foot Tropicana bottle, cheerfully cocked to the side in a vibrant splash of lemonade. That pissed me off. I guess it was just the room; the mood was so dank and depressing. It’s not a fallout shelter; why would any architect think, “Hmmm, let’s not add windows to this one room”? I was in such a crabby mood, back aching, starving. I craved donuts more than anything. A Bavarian-cream filled, chocolate-iced Long John appealed to me most, and if the bakery was out of them by the time I made it back into the real world, my second choice was a fried cinnamon roll.

I glanced through the open door and watched a drone walk by. And another walking the opposite way. And then, a couple of catty, giggly nurses walked by, acting like they were both incredibly intelligent. I knew how this place operated, and I could see right through their act. Really, they were just two psycho, ignorant, gossipy morons who thought that nursing school made them Albert Einstein. Nurses supposedly hold the most “trusted” profession. Ha, I wouldn’t trust one of those bimbos to properly microwave a cup of Ramen noodles.

My gaze dropped to the floor, while I searched the carpet for patterns or hidden pictures. One array of stitching looked like a rat sniffing a piece of cheese. Mmmm, cheese. Then I noticed a drone in the doorway. I didn’t bother to stand up or acknowledge it.

“Mr. Atmeyer, would you like a magazine or something?” it said, cordially but transparently.

Mr. Atmeyer, would you like a magazine? I mimicked in my head. “No,” I told it. I looked up this time. It gave a smiley nod, then backed out the door.

I then realized I was breathing rather heavily, but I didn’t stop. I liked the sound of my own breath. After the drone was gone, I got up to stretch and extended my leg to kick the door closed. I didn’t kick it very hard, because it didn’t close all the way. I walked over to push it shut, but that’s when I overheard the nurses. Of course their conversation was nothing medically-related. Instead, they engaged in a game of ridicule. I heard their snide comments as they poked fun at one of the new drones. A man, a doctor actually. I had no idea who this drone was, but he sounded like a nerd. Probably was, but those nurses had no business anyways.

I got tired of waiting to see my son and walked out of the room. I wasn’t a lunatic, and I had no intention of becoming one with another minute in that dreary, pathetic space. I took a
walk around the hospital, through the hematology/oncology unit, into the maternity ward, around the fourth floor intensive care, and again through hematology, peeking into a few rooms. No one stopped me, but I was wearing a nice suit and tie. Of course no one would have the audacity to ask me what I was doing.

It felt like I walked around for only a few minutes, but when I came back, the drone told me I could finally see Tim. He had been out of his coma since late last night, but the hospital wanted to wait until his awareness returned before allowing any personal visitors. So early this morning I drove to the hospital to see him. The drones made me wait an hour. His memory was foggy, they said, and he had to wake up and go through some therapy before I got to see him.

His room had flowers from his grandparents. I didn’t bother to waste my money on anything; I’m not a bad father, but I figured he’d be knocked out the whole time, and when he woke up, I would be here to see him anyways. There was no need for a bouquet that would wilt and die anyways. That would be depressing. The blinds were shut so he wouldn’t hurt his eyes. An IV was hooked into his arm, and a central line punctured his chest. I felt tears. I missed Meredith, but I was glad that Tim had survived.

It had been four months ago when my wife passed away. People say “passed away” about their loved ones, because “died” sounds too direct, too brutal. But when people talk about stuff on the news, they say someone “died.” February 2nd, Meredith was taking Tim to a birthday party at a skating rink. I got a call from the cops a half hour later. It kills me thinking about arriving at the hospital. When two people you love so much are both injured, who do you rush to first? I did what any husband or parent would do. I asked where Meredith Atmeyer was taken, and a drone at the computer pointed me in the right direction. I tried to enter the emergency surgery room, but a group of drones held me back. “I’m her husband!” I screamed at them, but they refused. “I’m pretty sure this is fucking illegal or something! I have rights! I have... the RIGHT to see my wife!” I exclaimed. But I knew the outcome, no changing it. I got a glimpse of her mangled body on the table and I lost control. I didn’t think once about Tim. All I could bear at that moment was the thought of my wife. I lost her.

Since then I had become remorseful, bitter, and only loving towards my son. I felt like I had to make up for the parent he lost; now I had to play the role of two. It would be pretty tough to juggle a nine-year-old and the bills, but I managed easily to land a work-from-home job after the accident. When he finally came home, things would be different.

Everyone I knew before looked at me now like some kind of charity case. I know I deserve pity; I had watched the love of my life slip away, with no drone competent enough to resuscitate her. I really hated how everyone spoke to me in a voice like I’m a little boy, and every sentence was bookended by “I’m so sorry about Meredith. No one should suffer that kind of loss.” I can’t describe the angst. It was a mixture of gratitude for that people cared, but annoyance at how excessive the “I’m sorrys” became.

I held Tim’s hand. “Hey buddy,” I wept, smiling that he was awake and alive. I could hear his thoughts. I knew he was going to ask where Mom was. Here it was: step one. Must tell son that mother is gone.

I reconsidered. It might be better to give Tim the news when he was a little more stable, in a more welcoming place than this drab hospital room. I prayed to God he wouldn’t ask, maybe assume that Meredith was at work on a Saturday. And yeah, I still prayed. Nothing could turn me into one of those airheaded fools who lose all faith after a death.

Tim’s first words out of coma surprised me. “Dad, I’m sorry about the other day.”
I didn’t say anything for a second, trying to puzzle through his riddle. I gave up. “What? I’m lost.”

“The car accident the other day,” he struggle to articulate.

Some of what he said made sense. I understood right away; in his mind the accident was only a few days ago. Poor Tim had no idea how long he had been out. I felt sadder, realizing that a part of his life had passed that he would never get to experience again.

“You have nothing to be sorry about, okay buddy? It was all an accident. I would rather we not talk about it, and I don’t want you to think about it now. Let’s just worry about getting you home and back on your feet. I’ve missed going to Falcons games with you, so I’m gonna be counting on you. You better heal up, or else…” I joked. It felt good to joke with Tim again, and it even distracted me from all the heartache I’d had lately.

A drone knocked and came in without waiting for an answer. “You all set to go home, little guy? I bet your dad’s gonna be glad to have you back.”

Tim gave an audible “Mhmm” and a thumbs up.

Glancing at the flowers and balloons around his room, the drone continued, “Looks like you’ve been pretty popular, huh?”

“Look we’re ready to leave whenever. As soon as possible, I’d prefer,” I stipulated.

“Alright, let me just grab Dr. Montgomery and you can have a little chat, mmmkay?” She scurried out, clipboard in hand.

I turned back to Tim. He looked helpless, but I had confidence in his stubbornness. “You rest for just a little while. Then we’ll hop in the car and get out of here. I bet you’re craving a McChicken or four. Haha, just kidding. FIVE.”

“Actually, I’m really looking forward to just going home and being in my room, Dad.”

“Okay, sounds good to me.”

He was asleep before the doctor came in. He slept the whole ride home too—in the wheelchair to the car, in the car (even when some tailgating asshole honked at me to go faster), and on the way in the house. I rested him on the couch so I could keep an eye on him. I got him a glass of water and a can of Sprite in case he woke up thirsty. I put an ice cream pail by his side too, in case he had to get sick. I put a pillow under his head and the Falcons Hockey Rocks!! blanket he loves.

All of these chores reminded me of Meredith. She always did this stuff—made dinner, washed the laundry, took care of Tim when he stayed home from school. I was just the self-important working dad. I sat down on the coffee table watching Tim sleep. I broke into tears over Meredith. She was my wife, and they let her go. They couldn’t help her, and they broke a family.

The above concludes chapter one. The narrator goes on to battle his emotions over the death of his wife, often putting up a very bitter and vengeful front. Concluding the book, the narrator loses his mind, entering the hospital and going on a shooting rampage. Tim ends up in the care of his grandparents, who is introduced later in the book.
Assembly Line
By Joseph Kang

The telephone rang three times before the man realized. He rushed to the phone toppling over anything that got in his way. This could have been the phone call he was waiting for; the one phone call that could change his entire life career. Right before it hit voicemail, John was able to snatch the phone from his dog, Hoover. He kicked Hoover for playing around too much. John was pleased because this was the phone call he was actually anticipating. When he began speaking to the board member, he was pleasantly surprised, although this new job offer would really cause him to change his lifestyle. John lived in a small urban area in New York, where the air quality was poor, where the city was obnoxiously loud, where people would hassle him every day because he was trying to make something of his life while those people did nothing but beg. He despised people like that. He thought of them as worthless, even his friends. His friends would occasionally ask him for a favor such as finding them a job, and John being the only one with enough resources was easily able to do that, although he never did. John worked in a car assembly as the assistant manager, which meant he had all the responsibility. John thought responsibility was something neither his friends nor anybody in the town really had; even his manager. John always thought his “friends” were lazy oafs. In any case, he would be leaving them anyway so he was in part glad that he would now be the head director of a power plant division in southern Georgia. He would be making six figures and his new salary would be three times as much as he was making now. John never did say goodbye to his friends or his manager, but instead packed everything and took the first flight out.

John had finally made it to Georgia and was starting his new job in two days. He bought a cozy looking home near the plant, and was quite satisfied with the wide open living space he had just acquired. He thought anything was better than that cluttered apartment he had. Hoover seemed to enjoy it too, but John wanted to make sure he enjoyed it more, so he took the liberty to add everything he had ever wanted as a child. John even took out a loan and bought himself a brand new Ferrari. Open roads looked inviting for his top of the line model car. He spent most of his savings that way, but he thought he deserved it; he worked hard his whole life and plus, he would be making much more soon. By the time he furnished his living quarters and belongings, he went to bed excited for his job the following morning.

When he arrived at the plant, it was nothing like he imagined. He thought the job would be hard, although it was easier than his previous employment. The plant was spotless; everything ran efficiently, and the plant looked more like an industrial home with a kitchen and living rooms. All of his employees were exceptionally kind, and so were the CEOs whom he met personally. John was not surprised by the friendliness; their motto was “Lighting up your day in a new way” and was known in Forbes magazine for being an innovation in the industry as well as the workplace. The board members told him the power plant was one of over a hundred and they used alternative ways to power up almost half the entire state. They also told him he was running the main headquarters because the company had originated there. He was working for a multi-millionaire, and he was told he would soon meet him as well. John was in awe; the job was simple, everyone was kind and he felt he was on top of the world.

He finished up working that day, and after meeting everyone and figuring out everything to do, he was exhausted. After his employees wished him farewell, he went outside to his new designated director parking spot. Although when he got there, a ragged old man was walking by and stopped to admire his car. This total stranger began touching his car! John fumed and asked
what he was doing and the wrinkled prune dared to ask him if he would take him out to eat. The man was hardly dressed enough to eat anywhere, and the dirty looking man claimed it was because Georgia's weather could be devastatingly hot for a man his age. John screamed, "No, I will not buy you food nor will I let you keep touching my car!" and with that, he jumped into his car, and peeled out in front of the man. As he was driving home, all he could think of was that no matter where he went, there would always be bums asking him for things.

The next day, John arrived early to get a head start on his day before any of his employees arrived. He parked in his usual spot, and as he went to the door, the same man who approached him last night was standing there asking him if they had food inside. John wrenched because the man reeked. He was covered in mud, although his excuse was that he was roaming around, and a farm said they needed help in the pig pens. John noticed he was wearing the same clothes from yesterday. He told the man he was nothing but a bum and that if he did not leave right away, he would call security. Without refusal, the ragged old man walked away as John entered the building.

A week had gone by, and John was relieved he did not see that bum creeping around the plant. John worked diligently as usual and everything seemed to be running smoothly. He had made a few mistakes that the board had noticed, although being new, they let it slide. John had also become friends with some of his employees, but his views for good friends were mostly people who worked efficiently and who were kind to him and obeyed him. He liked being boss of a large number of people. He enjoyed his employee's caring attitude, while listening to him. The workers at the car assembly in his previous job used to talk behind his back, which he did not appreciate.

One day, John went to work a little late, while breakfast was being served because they so often did that on weekends to keep the employees happy. As John made his way to the buffet aisle in the kitchen, he greeted his employees until he stumbled upon that very same man who kept bothering him about a week before. John was sick of this man. He asked the employees how this man got in the plant, and they all started to chuckle saying he walked in. With that, John assumed they were mocking him and grabbed the old man and took him outside. He said, "Do not come here again because this is a place of business and you do not deserve to be here." John became stern to his employees because he felt like he was losing control. He left that night in agitation.

Going to work that Sunday afternoon (because they closed on the mornings), John went into work knowing he would not be greeted so friendly. He never expected what happened next. The old once ragged man was at his office dressed up in a suit. John was shocked that he was dressed so well and then the familiar stranger spoke. He said, "Do not come here again because this is a place of respect and you do not deserve to be here." John was stunned because he then realized who the man was. He was not a stranger or a bum; he was the multi-millionaire John worked for. John's employees were not making fun of him that Saturday morning, but were stating the obvious thinking he knew who the old man was. John felt miserable and knew he was fired.

Sick of everything that had happened, John was in debt and sold all his belongings to move back to his small urban area in New York. He went back to the assembly line seeing if he could get his old job back. When he arrived that day, he noticed some of his old friends working on the line as well as one of them being the assistant manager. He had lost his position and could not get it back being that he bailed out to leave for Georgia, although he did get a job on the assembly line.
**Snow**  
_By Nathan Brockmeier_  

It's bright at night  
Like a white light  
Makes everything white  
It's a dreadful sight  

**Scene**  
_By David Baker_  

I've seen the world as a blind man,  
I've seen the country become an ancient Rome,  
I've seen the highs of the world,  
And I've seen the lows of the world,  
Yet it is when my eyes are shut,  
That the world sees me.  

**A Recipe for Disaster**  
_By Mitul Gandhi_  

Take one group of friends  
Maybe 4 or more  
Add Alcohol as needed  
Mix it into 1 big party  
Wait till inebriated  
Take them out  
Put them in a car for 5 min  
Set speed at 70 mph  
Wait for the ambulance alarm  

**Writer's Block**  
_By Bryan Willett_  

It takes talent and wisdom and skill  
to compose a good poem at will.  
If your effort indeed  
does at first not succeed  
you can swallow a Vicodin pill
Mars
By Catlin Bigham

Joe was overly excited. He was about to walk on Mars. His entire life had been a build up to this very moment, all the years of study, exercise, and dedication to the space program. He was to be second out of the spaceship, the second man to ever walk upon Mars’ surface. Joe continued his duties, flipping buttons and communicating with ground control to navigate the landing of the ship onto the rough Martian surface.

“200 meters from landing,” called out Joe into his helmet.

“Just take her in as slow as possible,” came the reply.

The space craft slowly lowered as Joe watched the digital readout go from 200 to 10 meters above the Martian surface. The pilot then slowed the decent even more while Joe continued to watch the number tick away slowly. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and then before the readout could even say 1 meter, there was a loud noise and the spacecraft had made contact with the Martian surface.

“I guess we had a little malfunction with the computer’s ability to tell the distance on the landing, huh,” Joe joked with his fellow crewmates.

“We need you guys to run a full-systems check to make sure everything is ok,” came the request from ground control.

“Beginning full-systems check immediately,” was the dry response from Jack, the captain of the crew and the mission. Jack was to be the first man out of the ship and onto the Martian surface.

The ship’s computers sprung into action, humming and trying to process any problems that might be apparent in the ship. The crew sat in silence hoping that all systems were go, and the Martian walk would continue as planned. Finally, five minutes later, the computer screen flashed green for all systems showing that everything was in working order.

“Alright Joe, how about you and me go back and change into our gear and explore some Martian landscape,” Jack said as he got up out of his chair.

Joe followed Jack into the back of the spacecraft and together they put on their bulky and poor fitting spacesuits. Joe always felt extremely clumsy in his spacesuit, but was still happy that he would be in the history books as having walked upon Mars.

“Preparing to leave craft, opening door now,” Jack called over the intercom as he walked toward the door and Joe lined up behind him. Joe knew that his suit had a camera on its left shoulder to record the historical event of Jack being the first person to step on the Martian surface.

Jack was now beginning to walk down the stairs and Joe began to step out onto the first step while he leaned forward to make sure the camera could see Jack. Suddenly Joe felt himself lose his footing and begin to fall.

“AAAHHH,” he screamed into his helmet, terrified that somehow his spacesuit would be damaged and his oxygen supply cut off. Jack turned to his right see what was going on just as Joe begins to fall down past him to his left. The fall only took half a second, but to Joe it seemed like an eternity. When it was finally over, Joe was laying face first on the Martian soil while Jack, still on the ship’s steps looked down at him. Joe suddenly realized that he was the first person to ever set foot, or technically shoulder, on Martian soil, but also that the entire world had probably just watched him fall face first down a flight of stairs.
Mix-up
By Heather Collins

One day a cop pulls over my friend for speeding. My friend is a tad bit on the wild side doing crazy stunts that keep us all laughing on a daily basis. He is a "fly by the seat of pants" kind of guy that never takes a moment's rest. Jesten is by far the life of the party any day, hence I am not surprised at the flashing lights trailing right behind his car until he is forced to the shoulder of the road.

When the cop asks the Jesten why he is traveling 95mph, of course he answers that he is nothing other than a juggler on his way to do a show for a birthday party and doesn't want to be late. How he says such craziness and manages to keep a straight face I will never know. He simply has no fear whatsoever.

The cop tells Jesten he is fascinated by juggling, and if he can do a little juggling for him he won't give him a ticket. Boy, is he in a tight spot now. I hope he really can juggle or pull off some sort of entertainment for that matter.

Quick on his toes, Jesten tells the cop that he has sent all of his equipment ahead and doesn't have anything to juggle; otherwise he would have been more than happy to perform such a task.

"Not a problem," the cop says as he pulls some flares from the trunk of his patrol car. Jesten meanwhile turns to his friends and looks as though he is going to burst into tears. Knowing his puppy dog face isn't going to do the trick this time, he gathers himself together and frantically attempts to learn how to juggle in his brain. Meanwhile, the cop has lit the flares and is handing them off to Jesten. He begins carelessly tossing them this way and that all the while dodging catching himself on fire.

Another car soon pulls up behind the patrol car possibly in hopes of catching a bit of the show. A drunk gets out, watches the performance briefly, stumbles over to the patrol car, opens the rear door and gets in. The cop observes him doing this, and goes over to the patrol car to ask the drunk what he thinks he is doing.

The drunk replies, "You might as well haul my butt to jail, because there is NO way I'll pass that test."

Time
By Jacob Krebs

The old man sat weeping in the brisk autumn night
Gazing through the window he spied leaves, just in sight
And so time carried on ever creeping – It was all he had left
Darkness approaches quickly with loved ones bereft
So the man fell to his knees and begged Father to turn back the hand
But who would wish such a thing? So close to our promised land
Golfer
*By HyunSuk Lee*

I am a number one golfer
I wonder how much golfers make
I hear people clapping
I see millions of dollars in my account
I want many trophies by winning
I am a number one golfer

I pretend to be a caddie
I feel like a loser
I touch the ball my golfer plays
I worry if he gets mad at me
I cry if he bites down on me
I am a number one golfer

I understand caddies have to follow a golfer
I say golfer is more important compared to the caddie
I dream of winning all matches
I try hitting balls ten hours a day
I hope of winning all matches that I play
I am a number one golfer

The Race not Run
*By David Baker*

With miles of road behind me,
I finally reach the front step.
Slowly the stairs help me to the door.
"Stairs will you help me through the door?" I ask.
No answer, I am all alone.
To break through that door with all I’ve got,
Or give up, because that’s all I know

Nature
*By Shana Jones*

The expanding park
Beautiful trees and flowers
Exquisite nature
Basketball

By Mike Feller

I'll show them this year, Bill thought as he looked at himself in the mirror. The coaches cannot tell me that I'm too short to start for the team. He was thinking about all the other great players that were his size: 5'9". Nate Robinson is shorter than I am and he plays in the NBA, Bill said to himself. All I want to do is show the seniors that I belong on the team.

Knock, knock, knock. Hey let's hurry it up in there, I've been waiting for ten minutes. Bill had completely forgot that there was a line waiting outside the bathroom. He quickly came back to reality and walked out, only to be greeted by an obnoxious kid he thought was about his age. “Hey what the hell were you doing in there; I've been waiting for 10 minutes,” said the kid standing outside the bathroom. Being the shy person he was, Bill simply apologized and walked away.

Thinking to himself that Barnes and Noble was way too big to ever find anything, he accidently walked across the new basketball book he was looking for. Just as he cracked open the book, he looked up to see that same kid from the bathroom. “Hey you; where did you get that book? I've been looking all over for it and I can't find it anywhere.”

For the first time Bill noticed this kid's Wade jersey, Ray Ban sunglasses, and throwback Jordan shoes. Bill responded, “It's in the next isle Wade.”

“The name's actually Kevin, but I don’t mind being called Wade. I've always wanted to play in the NBA someday,” responded Kevin.

Bill then struck up a conversation about basketball and found out that Kevin was also a freshman attending the same school. Bill realized that just like himself, Kevin so badly wanted to make the varsity team and show the seniors that he deserved to be a member of the team. After a short conversation, the two guys decided to head over to the gym to get some shooting in before tryouts the next morning. After a few hours at the gym they both decided to call it quits for the day and get some rest before the big day tomorrow.

Bill couldn’t sleep the entire night. He was both excited and nervous for the upcoming day. However, the opposite was true of Kevin; he was so confident in his abilities that he wasn’t at all worried about the tryouts the next morning. The only worry Kevin had was getting up to practice at 6 o'clock the next morning.

Both Bill and Kevin got to the gym around 5:45 and were the first two there. As they were warming up, the rest of the players began showing up. The coach showed up at exactly 6 and simply told the players that they would do nothing for the next hour except run, and then they would start practice later that day at 3. After running for an hour, the coach wasn’t happy with the players’ effort and decided that they should run for another hour. Both Bill and Kevin pushed themselves even harder during this run to show the coach that they would do whatever it takes to make the team. This hour seemed to last forever. Bill and Kevin were the only other players that kept up with Matt, the best player and captain on the team. Matt was impressed with these two freshmen, and put in a good word for them with the coach. All the players were tired after this strenuous few hours of running, but they were looking forward to the practice at 3 when they could show the coach their basketball skills. The coach had the guys running various drills and ended the practice with a scrimmage. Bill showed off his ball handling skills and three point shot in the drills, while Kevin led his team to a victory in the scrimmage game with his quickness and great passing. The coach was impressed with Bill’s pure natural talent, and Kevin’s poise on the court.
Tryouts continued for the rest of the week, and both Bill and Kevin continued to impress. At the end of the last practice, the coach announced the varsity lineup, which included both Bill and Kevin. The two guys were ecstatic and they couldn’t wait for the season to begin.

Should Have Studied
_By Sara Richter_

I sit in class and wonder what to do.
I can’t keep all this stuff inside my head.
I just do not know the answer, do you?

All this information old and new,
What was that the teacher just said?
I sit in class and wonder what to do.

With all the drug interactions, way more than a few,
Can’t I just tell the patient to go back to bed?
I just do not know the answer, do you?

Dry or productive? Cold versus flu?
Shouldn’t they just be lucky they aren’t dead?
I sit in class and wonder what to do.

I’ve been at this test for minutes, still on question two.
My grade at the end is what I dread.
I just do not know the answer, do you?

I’d be fine if I had studied and if I knew
Stuff like Senna can turn your pee a faint red.
I sit in class and wonder what to do.
I just do not know the answer, do you?

Lily
_By Paras Vakharia_

In the rainiest of rainiest days,
    Rises a small, little lily
In the beginning of May,
The thought of a flower is quite silly
    Through the rain and the thunder,
And the floods, storms, and darkness
    It is really quite a wonder
That there can be such happiness
My Father’s Eyes
Josie Millard

My father’s eyes I’ve grown to know
He’s watched me learn, he’s watched me grow
My father’s eyes are big and brown
I could pick them out in a crowd hands down
My father’s eyes are gentle and kind
Except when I got the look and knew to cover my behind
My father’s eyes are lined from living
He’s worked so hard and is so giving
My father’s eyes are the symbol of love
And now he watches me from above
My father’s eyes are now also mine
See, he’s part of me, until the end of time

Lawn Mower Man
By Catlin Bigham

He sat out on his old lawn mower to criss-cross the country
He himself did not know why, the others said he had a few screws loose
They named him Forest Gump, he reminded them that Gump ran across the country
The lawn mower moved so slow, he didn’t even upset a random goose.

He saw and met people from all over this so-called great country
Some of them were nice, others mean, some honked, while others flipped the bird
Early on, he wondered if he was crazy, it had taken 3 days just to leave the county
But time is one thing he had; he lost his job, his wife too after she had given her word

Time flew by, hours to days, days to weeks, weeks to months, counties to States
He drove on the side of the road, sometimes even cut grass as he went
The news started to follow along, give him attention; others just gave him hate
Finally he reached the sand and the ocean, he had made it and he was spent

Haiku
By Paras Vakharia

The sky drops many drops
Earth will sleep and replenish
The sun will come out
All I Want
_by Jessie Guise_

What I leave,
When you go,
What I see,
And what you show,
And what I guess,
And when I don't,
Is something you all ready, all ready know,

I can't live without,
All I think about,
All I want is you,
You're all I dream about,
I can't live without,
All I want is you,

The things I do,
I go through,
And all I see,
When I'm awake,
And what I make,
The shit that I take,
Is something you all ready, all ready know

I can't live without,
All I think about,
All I want is you,
You're all I dream about,
I can't live without,
All I want is you,

All I want is you,
I just can't live without you,
When all I think about is you,
And all I want is you

Sick of Winter
_by Sara Richter_

The outside is cold.
I want to be back in bed.
Where is summer at?
To Be Alive, Free and Light

By Breanne Dunsworth

Setting sun over the way about to
fall, almost. The last glimmer should be
disappearing soon. Darkness settles alive
while people grow drowsy and drift to be free.
To sleep. But little time passes and
soon there will be light.

The sun will creep back up and a ray of light
will wake the sleeping world. A little too
early for some, they linger in the covers and
struggle to stay in the dream world, to be
away from real. They still want to feel free
but not yet alive.

The alarm clock sounds and they wake to live.
Curtains are thrown back to reveal the light
of the morning. The birds are free
and dancing, while the coffee begins to
flow. The day needs a start to be
real. A new beginning for all and

a happy day ahead. The sun rises high and
people are more than alive.
Chatting and running and buzzing like a bee,
they flourish and grow as the light
suddenly begins to fall. They want to
stay alive, they want to stay free.

Struggling to defy the dark, to stay free
forever. No one wants to sleep and
doze while there is living to
be done. They want to stay awake and live.
The fading of the sun, the dimming of the light
arrives too early. It just cannot be.

Sleep settles in soon, they will soon be
asleep. In a dream world so free
to dream. But once again there will be light.
Once again people will wake and
a new day will unfold to live,
but so soon, sleep will come, too.
Limerick
By Karen Obermann

There once was a girl named Ashtyn
Who was stuck on herself and fashion
She once bought a dress
It all was a mess
The zipper in the back didn’t fasten!

The Beach
By Jacob Krebs

The air smelled of raw sand and ocean salt
Waves curling and bubbling in the distant horizon
A melody of noise as seagulls crow-
Crashing sand, children at play
Feeling the sun beating and water surrounding
Running free you feel the momentous energy of God’s grace
Butterflies fluttering in anticipation of what to come next

Fenway
By Cameron Schulte

It’s the field of dreams
It’s known for the green monster
Home to baseball champs

The Flame
By David Baker

Love lost is a fire.
At first it is like a towering inferno,
The flames dancing with love and lust,
Unwatched it gets out of control and someone gets burnt.
Soon the flames seem to die out,
You just watch in awh, not knowing what to think,
Until all that is left is smoldering ash.
Summertime Ups and Downs
By Sara Richter

Twas’ the last day of school
And all was astir.
All the students were happy;
Their last test just a blur.

They sprung from their classrooms
Just full of delight.
Their cars packed for home
Were entering sight.

They sped to their houses
With smiles on their faces;
Not thinking of STLCOP
But, instead, other fun places.

They wondered what fun
The Summer would bring.
It was time to relax
And party and sing.

They can have barbeques
And play ball in the sun.
Oh my, this summer
Is going to be so much fun.

But after three months
Comes the time that they dread,
The time full of stress
And less time in your bed.

It means back to school,
Back to the place
Where there is nothing pleasant
To put a smile on your face.

But just keep in mind,
The end is near.
Oh wait,
We’re only in second year.
Secret Love
By Misty Collier

The love I have for you dear
Goes deeper than you will ever know
I sit and gaze upon your face
All this love, you will never know
I dream about you night and day
You're forever on my mind, my dear
And my love you will never know

Sestina
Joseph Kang

I learned everything from him. He would say, it is Caleb and I
Not Caleb and me. He was always right.
Every time when that sun
came up, I knew he would start my day
with a hardy breakfast in a cereal box.
I would ask if he knew everything, and he would say no.

There was not anything he did not know,
He even knew when I was lying when we would look eye to eye.
I always knew he should have never given me that crayola box.
There it was. The trademark “Mark Johnathan Wright”!
He would say I am too old to be in day-care. Those days I would wish there would be no sun.

The days were long.........Who knew there was only one sun.
The sun would generate plenty of heat in Plano,
Texas. He did not care, especially mid-day.
He would work and teach, math this time about something called a radii.
I always looked to the books on the right.
There was still plenty of knowledge stacked in that cardboard box.

I understood he was smart and tough. He used to be a boxer. He knew about strength, intelligence, and religion too. Sundays we would pray together with left hand in right.
I always did, hoping to know
why. He said until I could answer the question, “Who am I”
I thought about that question in every way of every day.

The sun would come, the sun would go. I sure loved daylight savings. When we were done with the day, I would put away that box-full of books. I would spend the evenings with him with what I
enjoyed the most. We would watch every sundance movie because they were well artistically noticed. Because of him, I learned and loved how to write.

Years of passed and I have become a writer. I work writing about fiction to textbooks in the day. I feel I encase everything I know. I move around a lot, living from box to box. I do make sure I stop by the church every Sunday though and stop by home, and there is always something that catches my eye.

I place a daisy on that long hexagon box. I look at the boxcar we built, I think about how much I know, I work in the daytime and I miss the sun. With every no, he was always right.

The Tortoise and the Hare
By Caitlin Kroeger

At the tortoise the hare did jeer,  
"You will never beat me at that pace."  
The tortoise's eyes shone no fear,  
"I will beat you at this race."  
The wolf joined into their quarrel  
For there was nothing in the coop  
and not to be heard a single squirrel.  
So he challenged them both with no haste,  
for he hungered for rabbit soup,  
and the tortoise would not go to waste.  
As soon as the race had started,  
the wolf gave them a head start.  
And away the hare carted,  
for he knew of the wolf's desire  
to cook him over fire.

Friends
By Paras Vakharia

This girl sitting on the couch, was laughing hysterically  
The next minute, she was sobbing open-heartedly  
For a time she smiled, for the next she was saddened  
While watching tv, all of this happened  
What kind of a show could stir such emotions?  
What kind of show had so much devotion?  
The girl turned off the tv, yet her face still glowed  
The last Friends episode, had just come to a close.
Unabridged Infatuation

By Libby Herman

Madly in love with a married woman,
The chef found himself in a pickle.
Each day he wrote her a love letter,
Chewing through his words carefully,
   Writing with great care,
   But never sent it off.
The enormous pile sat on top of his counter,
Next to the single red rose he bought for her,
Standing tall and blossoming beautifully.
   Growing with each day.
She was the apple of his eye,
   His other half,
   The completion of his soul.
She was the napkin to his plate,
   The knife to his fork.
He craved her very presence,
   Longing to embrace her.
   His heart filled with joy,
As thoughts of her devoured his mind,
   Consuming his world.
   Her sweet scent of sugar,
Constantly lingered in his nose,
   Filling his senses.
   How he longed to see her!
To wink at her,
   To kiss her,
   To be hers forever,
Would be the ultimate joy.

If We Could

By Jessie Gulse

When we met it wasn’t supposed to be that big a deal
Three days and my friends all laugh at the humor
But I’m not laughing when they joke
And I’m not smiling at the possibilities

3 days turned to 365 and I’m still on the way back home
one year and they just don’t know
now there’s no joke to laugh at
I’m on the line and I just can’t say goodbye
Cuz all I ever wanted was what I found in you
the platform of an old happiness
But double lives and double standards
So what would you change if you could?
I’m caught in convenience, you’re closed in commitment
So what would you change if you could?
If you could?

Daily routines and now we’re living with new found lies
What they don’t know won’t hurt anyone but us
The oscar for best smile is the lie that the others audibly perceive
It is the chasm between what is them and what is us.

The mass is stronger than ever, but I am weaker than what they deserve
Their reliance on me is painfully close to collapse
For no matter the sound I create it’s in vain without you
And I don’t wanna heal from time cuz I don’t want us to pass

The 2nd 365 presents its new world of plights
Perhaps we weren’t prepared to tackle such things
The vexation that is matters of the heart
Convenience versus compassion,
Commitment versus our heart’s captivation

but in the stroke between my madness and my genius
are the folds of my bitter convenience
the double lives, the double standards, the joke of a false pretense
now I’m leaning on a post, not meant to hold my own weight
the grievances of what I can’t let go...this mistake....

And all I ever found is what I lost in you,
the platform of misplaced happiness
with double lives, with double standards over miles of highways lost
you’re here, and I’m there, and together we should...
but the irony smiles...so what would we change if we could?
If we could?

Haiku
By Paras Vakharia

Bad grade on her test
She’s sad and very somber
Give her some chocolate!
Mother Cupboard
By Jacob Krebs

There once was a little old mother,
Who sat right beside the tall cupboard.
When the clock on the wall
Surely did fall,
Nothing was left of my mother!

Kenny
By Cameron Schulte

White sandy beaches
It's the flip, flop, summer tour
Yeah it's summertime

The Little Child
By Paras Vakharia

Pondering, the little child stumbled to his feet,
Should he dare to? Or just take a seat.
'til he spoke to himself, "it is worth a shot"
"For if I stay pat, my life shall be for not"
Slowly he slumbered 'til he reached the table,
And he realized at last, that this was no fable.
Therein lied the glass jar of bliss,
The fulfillment in life that he'd had to miss.
A trapeze artist in motion, he swung to the top
A lion near its prey, he came to a sudden stop
Before his eyes, a hundred cookies there for him to eat,
He smiled, knowing his life was no longer incomplete

Tootsie Roll
By David Baker

Little tootsie roll
Chocolate piece of heaven
You melt in my mouth
A Day at Venice Beach  
By Kristin Hagan

I was flipping through the channels on my television.  
With two hundred channels, I couldn’t make a decision.  
Everything was boring. It all looked the same.  
I’ve seen it all before. Even “The OC” was lame.

So I went outside looking for a thrill.  
I strapped on roller blades and flew down the hill.  
I cruised on for miles and stopped to play some tennis.  
Then I got back on my feet and rolled into Venice.

Feeling kind of worn, I sat to watch the tide.  
Hoping that my boredom would soon subside.  
There were surfers riding waves up and down  
And girls lying on the sand trying to get brown.

It wasn’t very long until I had an unusual chance  
To watch three strangers who were different than at first glance.  
First a diva, then a beggar, and then a tourist incognito  
Together provided entertainment that I couldn’t veto.

As I gazed at the boardwalk, her orange glow caught my eye.  
Her skin reminded me of my grandma’s burnt peach pie.  
She had bleach blonde hair and shades as big as Texas  
And spinning around her finger was a key to a Lexus.

She flamboyantly moved her hips from left to right.  
Her nose was in the air flying as high as a kite.  
Her puffy lips framed her straight-faced smile  
And would only keep her looking young for a short while.

Her pin stripe suit and high Gucci heels  
Could feed starving kids in Africa their necessary meals.  
Dangling from her shoulder was a brand new Dooney.  
Spending that kind of money is outrageously loony.

From feet away I could hear the “Ring. Ring. Ring.”  
She flew to her phone as slow as a bird missing a wing.  
Then for several seconds she just stared at the screen.  
Soon she answered, addressing a man whose name was Dean.

She hastily paced across the boardwalk,  
And I could faintly hear her talk.
She flirtatiously twirled her fingers through her hair
And with that obnoxious giggle, it was hard not to stare.

I was listening to a soap opera in the making.
I pretended not to care, but I was faking.
She made plans with Dean Friday night at eight.
I thought to myself maybe it's a date.

From a distance I heard a man yell, "Lue. Lue. Lue."
She abruptly ended her conversation with Dean saying, "I love you."
She turned her head and looked into the eyes of the man calling her name.
I could read her lips as she said, "Honey, I'm so glad you came."

She gently caressed his chest, and I noticed on her left hand
A white diamond ring about the size of New England.
He kissed her hand and said, "I'm so glad you're mine.
Let's celebrate our union with some imported wine."

As the couple strutted to the restaurant, a beggar held a can.
He asked in a low, raspy voice, "Can you spare some change, rich man?"
Lue rudely replied, "Here's a quarter. Don't spend it all in one place."
But even then was a look of contentment on the beggar's face.

His hunched over posture was like that of Quasimodo.
While his hairy, bare feet reminded me of Frodo.
His frizzy, white beard and saggy, pale skin
Sat next to an empty bottle of cheap gin.

As he was peacefully leaning against a tall palm tree,
I noticed on his worn shirt a picture of Arlo Guthrie.
"Alice's Restaurant" is what the t-shirt read
And "Bring 'em home from 'Nam" is what his sign said.

His toothless smile caught the attention of every passerby.
But very few people would even bother to say, "Hi."
Beside him lay his faded red Folger's can.
As beaten as it was, it looked like it had fought in 'Nam.

His rather large ears were covered by a tie-dyed bandana.
But it did not cover the tattoo on his neck that said, "I love Anna."
As I stared at the tattoo, a shiny silver metal caught my sight.
Around his neck was a chain, which could be visible at night.

I followed the chain down all the way to his chest.
Engraved on the metal tag was the name, Lieutenant West.
The ocean breeze gently blew the tags across his body.
He tucked them back into his shirt as if they were too gaudy.

Then he pulled out an old guitar that was missing a few strings.
Not only could he play, but he could also sing.
I heard the familiar tune, "You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant."
It was played deftly by fingers ever so long and gaunt.

I could tell his act was his daily living
By the way the onlookers would start giving.
One man in particular jumped my gun
As he handed the beggar an Andrew Jackson.

Instead of just giving and quickly fleeing,
This particular tourist gave the beggar a greeting.
The beggar seemed to strike up a friendly conversation
That ended with a smile and a thanks for the donation.

The generous man walked a few steps away
As his camera clung to him like make-up on Tammy Faye.
He was stylin' with his new Venice lifeguard tee
Along with a revealing tan line just below the knee.

With a Jamba Juice in his hand and a fanny pack around his waist,
He fit right into a stereotypical tourist’s taste.
His khaki shorts with one too many pockets
Held several hamburger wrappers from Johnny Rocket's.

His gnarly fingers were glued to that trusty Kodak
As he took pictures galore, few would he lack.
When he removed his bucket hat to clean his lens,
I could tell he had not been using his Just for Men.

He paced across the boardwalk with his head hung low.
There was no one in sight that he seemed to know.
The bags under his eyes drooped like a dying rose.
And not to mention the thin, black hair that grew out of his nose.

He kept my attention. I couldn’t turn away.
He started to walk towards me. What should I say?
His chapped lips and crooked, stained teeth
Were sprinkled lightly with chunks of Heath.

He sat down on a bench that was next to mine.
It was then that I noticed his shorts by Calvin Klein.
As he leaned over and set his Jamba Juice down,
I observed a glossy badge the color of light brown.

I scooted closer and on the badge in big black letters
Read the phrase, “VB Police: Making the Community Better.”
He sat straight up, crossed his legs, and spread his arms
Like he had no one in particular to harm.

I could hear his gum smack from a few yards away
It would occasionally get stuck in his beard of gray.
He flung his big toe back and forth against his sandal
As his yellow toenail flaked like wax from a candle.

He pulled out his walkie-talkie but didn’t say a word.
He got up from the bench and sprinted across the boardwalk.
My eyes couldn’t help but follow him, but I didn’t want to stalk.

He continued to swiftly run into the sand.
But he was slowed by the mounds, which was not what he had planned.
As his worn and torn sandals finally hit the water,
I spotted him saving a girl, perhaps someone’s daughter.

Her arms were flailing and she bobbed up and down.
If not for this man, she surely would have drowned.
As more and more people quickly gathered all around,
I lost sight of the hero who leaped like a hound.

I looked at my watch. It was past time to go.
I got up on my blades and left this afternoon show.
What started as a day merely watching the tides
Made me think that life has many different sides.

People are not always just as they seem.
Each has a story, a history, and a dream.
The diva, the beggar, the tourist turned cop
Live in this world as it spins like a top.

We all play a role on earth’s motion picture screen.
Some are acting, and some are real; know what I mean?
Instead of TV, I tuned into real life drama,
Which was much more entertaining than MTV’s Yo Mamma.

The next time I find that I have a free afternoon,
I’ll think twice before I grab the remote and automatically tune.
There’s so much to life beyond what one sees.  
Grab a hold of life and give it a squeeze!

**Nervousness**  
*By Libby Herman*

Chills roll through my body as I wait,  
Anxiety consumes my consciousness,  
Sweat saturates my hands,  
And the violin slips,  
Slowly,  
Sliding out of my hand.  
But I grasp it,  
Keeping it from crashing to the floor.

My heart is pounding,  
Beating almost audibly,  
Breaking through my chest cavity.

My breath comes in short bursts,  
Not satisfying the need for oxygen,  
Every inhalation constitutes an enormous effort,  
Struggling,  
Trying to maintain a constant breathing pattern.

Knees knocking,  
It seems almost impossible to control,  
The intense nervousness,  
Devouring my body.

Lines of music run through my head,  
My fingers uncontrollably go over the notes,  
My foot taps out the tempo,  
Repeating the practiced motions.

My throat constricts as the girl before me finishes her piece,  
It becomes difficult to swallow as I watch her take a bow,  
Knowing my time has come.
Memories

*By Jessie Guise*

If I could I would do all of this again
Travel back in time with you to where this all began
We could hide inside ourselves and leave the world behind
And make believe there's something left to find

Now we've all grown up, gone on and moved away
Nothing I can do about it, nothing I can say
To bring us back to where we were when life was not this hard
Looking back it all just seems so far, so far away

We'll be miles apart
I'll keep you deep inside
You're always in my heart
A new life to start
I may be leaving but you're always in my heart

I'd give it up for just one more day with you
Give it up for just one more day
I'd give it up for just one more day with you

I need you now, we're miles apart
I'll keep you deep inside
You're always in my heart
I need you now, we're miles apart
I may be leaving but you're always in my heart

First Snow

*By Jae Yeon (Jessica) Kim*

I woke up in the middle of the night
Quite white noises were everywhere
I opened the window for the sight
And I close my eyes for a prayer
‘Please let it snow more...!’
While my little puppy barked with fright
Childhood
By Melissa Paulausky

I sit on the swing I had once swung on many years ago.
There is an eerie silence around me;
No one is here.

No one has played here in years.

The hopscotch lines have faded;
Dust and soil cover its once beautiful design.
The cracks within the sidewalk have mutilated it.

The merry-go-round no longer spins:
The red paint no longer exists;
Rust envelops its simplicity and beauty.

An occasional wind gently touches these objects of childhood.
I can hear the gentle creaking of the swings
And that of the ever-so-slowly spinning merry-go-round.

I marvel at the decay of my once childhood play yard,
wondering where the time has gone.

Have we all grown up?
Are we too old to enjoy life’s little playgrounds?

How long have we ignored our inner child?

Long enough for the memory of simple happiness to fade away,
And never visit them ever again.

Coffee
By Dayoung (Christine) Kong

Addicting coffee
Bittersweet, magic liquid
Ball of energy
Tangled Up in You
By Jessie Guise

You're My World
The Shelter From The Rain
You're The Pills
That Take Away My Pain
You're The Light
That Helps Me Find My Way
You're The Words
When I Have Nothing To Say

And In This World
Where Nothing Else Is True
Here I Am
Still Tangled Up In You
I'm Still Tangled Up In You
Still Tangled Up In You

You're The Fire
That Warms Me When I'm Cold
You're The Hand
I Have To Hold As I Grow Old
You're The Shore
When I Am Lost At Sea
You're The Only Thing
That I Like About Me

How Long Has It Been
Since This Storyline Began
And I Hope It Never Ends
And Goes Like This Forever

Morning Coffee
By Jae Yeon (Jessica) Kim

Bittersweet aroma tinkles my nose, waking me up.
It surely feels louder than my alarm clock.
So I get out of the bed with a smile.
Thinking of a warm cup of coffee
That will make my day.
Whirlwind
By Melissa Paulausky

The world is a blur;
It won’t stop spinning!
I am getting dizzy,
But I can’t seem to stop!

Round and round we go!
Hold on tight;
We don’t want to lose you!

I’m struggling;
I’m begging them to slow down,
But they keep spinning,
Faster and faster!!!

My fingers are slipping;
My stomach is sick.
Is there nothing I can do to make it stop?

Then,
Just as I’m about to let go,
Someone stops me.

He pulls me up.
With one hand on the railing,
The other reaches into his pocket.

He pulls out a piece of candy,
And hands it to me.

He says it will make the ride smoother,
Even if the world keeps spinning.

I hold on tight with one hand,
And stuffed the candy into my mouth with the other.

Then everything stopped.

We all look at each other,
Stunned by the sudden change.

I look for the man who helped me up;
He is no longer there.
Come Back
By Dayoung (Christine) Kong

When you left home, I had a huge hole
Just wasn’t sure about anything
your presence was my soul
I wanted to hold on to something
I ran away from things that I loved
didn’t care if it was full of pain
even though my heart ended up being shoved
it did nothing but give a heavier chain
Please, come back now
I miss those days when I was content
happy just following your vow
those were the days I had nothing to vent
Feeling lost is not something I want to live by
it would be nice if you would just come by...

Speech
By Breanne Dunsworth, Kristin Hagan, Mitul Gandhi, Ripple Patel and Libby Herman

Oh shoot!!! How could my alarm clock do this to me? I was supposed to wake up bright and early to shower and prepare myself for the exciting day ahead. This was supposed to be the day that would change my life forever. But my alarm clock didn’t go off! I now needed to shower in five minutes and be out the door in fifteen. Even that was later than I had planned. There wasn’t any time for the nutritional breakfast I had set out or for going over my speech just one last time. This was horrible. Absolutely terrible. I wanted to shine on this day and forever be remembered by my classmates. Little did I know, but this day would be remembered for all the wrong reasons.

I ripped off the covers and stripped as I raced towards the shower. I jumped in as soon as the water came on, which was ice cold. Kind of a stupid idea, but I had no other choice. I rinsed my hair and washed my body. Shaving my legs was out of the question. I turned off the shower and hopped out and started drying my hair. I quickly rubbed lotion on my legs and ran to my closet. Thankfully I had my outfit ironed and ready so I was able to throw that on speedy fast. My skirt gave away my stubbly legs, but I had no other option. I quickly ran to the kitchen and grabbed a glass of orange juice to gulp down while I did my makeup. I quickly applied foundation and powder and dabbed on some eye shadow. Mascara and eye liner were all that was left besides a little perfume and deodorant. I grabbed my shoes and purse and headed for the door.

As I ran out the door, I headed straight for the car. Quickly, I realized that I had forgotten my keys. I can’t get anywhere without my keys. I darted back into the house and up the stairs in attempt to find my keys. Where were they? What could I have possibly done with my keys? I threw cover after cover around my room, digging for my keys. Buried under the covers on the
bed was my beagle, Berkley, with something shiny hanging out of his mouth...my keys. I grabbed my keys from my little angel and tried this again.

I opened the door to my '01 Ford and sped out of the driveway. It wasn't long until I heard sirens. This must be a new song on the radio. But then it hit me. I saw flashing red and blue lights in my rearview mirror. He was after me. What do I do? I remember talking about this in Driver's Education. I'm already late. Not now, not now. What do I do? I continued to drive until I found a shoulder to pull over on. At this point, I have tears about to run from my eyes. I hesitated to roll down the window.

"Ma'am, can I see your license and registration please," said the officer.
I didn't say a word and opened the glove box to look for my insurance card. When I opened up the glove box, napkin after napkin, lipstick, and jewelry all fell out. How embarrassing. It was probably illegal. I'll get a ticket for that too. It will just be the icing on the cake.

I felt around in the glove box for my insurance card. It was nowhere to be found. I started to panic. I could feel the officer's patience wearing away. I unbuckled my seatbelt and stooped down to the level of the glove box to get a better look.

The police officer alarmed at this move yelled, "HOLD it, Ma'am. No sudden movements!"

I instantly jumped back in my seat in an upright position. I could feel my eyes burning. They were yearning to leak out tears of frustration and fear.

I shakily told the officer, "I was just trying to get a better look."
He darted back, "well, did you find anything?"
"No," I said.
"Well, keep looking, I will be back." With that he left to go back to his car.

Just then I remembered exactly where my insurance card was. The whole conversation came flooding back to me. My dad just got the new insurance card in the mail. I was on the phone and he was yapping about putting it in the car. I said I would do it later, but, later never came.

What was I going to do? Can he take me to jail? I don't want to go to jail. I have seen too much T.V. to know not to ever go to jail. That's not a place for a girl like me. I would get eaten alive.

I looked around for a couple more minutes. Still nothing was found. I don't think they covered this situation in Driver's Ed. I had no idea what to do. Five minutes passed and the police officer still hadn't come back. I wanted to look, but I didn't dare turn back for fear he would misconstrue this as a "sudden movement" and put a gun in my face. I stayed put for another 10 minutes, and more panic struck me as I realized there was an open can of beer sitting right in my cup holder. Oh no, my brother must have had this car last.

All the worst possible things you can imagine were happening to me. Not only was I late, but I was probably going to get into an immense amount of trouble. I was wondering as to why it was taking the police officer so long to come back. It made me wonder whether he was trying to find many more ways to get me in trouble. Then finally I saw him in the rearview mirror, and he was getting out of the car with a few pieces of paper and that didn't look so good. I still hadn't found my insurance card, so I was even more worried, and then the officer came up to my car and tapped on the window to open it. So I slowly opened the window, and he started asking me if I had found my insurance card, and I nervously said, "no, officer I haven't. I think I may have left it at the house."
The officer in disappointment said, “Well, I have a list of reasons here for which you will be getting tickets. I notice that there were four tickets and I was shocked. I could not imagine what my parents would think when they found out about this and the fact that I had to show up in court; I didn’t know what to do besides go to class and enjoy my last day of freedom. I watched the officer slowly pull away. I glared at him angrily, but had no extra time to spare on such silly emotions. I drove carefully to school and pulled into the last spot available on the lot. Hurriedly, I rushed into class and slumped in my seat. Hoping the teacher wouldn’t notice, I quickly grabbed a pen and paper out of my bad and began hastily scribbling down notes. Unfortunately, all eyes were on me. I looked up, just now consciously aware of the fact that the teacher had stopped lecturing, only to see him hovering over me, a look of complete disgust on his face. “Tardy?” he inquired. A lump forming in my throat and my face burning of embarrassment, all I managed was a weak nod. I wanted to explain the situation, but the increasing weight of the situation continued to bear down upon me. Walking back to his desk, I thought I was off the hook. Assuming he somehow understood the emotions I was experiencing, I quickly breathed a sigh of relief. However, my feeling of liberation was cut short by a white detention slip that had appeared on my desktop. The word detention, typed in bold, capital letters immediately caught my eye. How could this happen? I was supposed to give my big speech after school, not sit in detention. I decided to ignore the slip. After all, I was not incorrigible. In fact, I never got in trouble at school. Plus, I heard stories about people skipping detention all the time, and nothing ever happened to them. The rest of the day continued without event. Thank goodness. I was beginning to feel more and more nervous as the day progressed, and the prospect of me giving a speech loomed ahead. The high-pitched ringing of the bell, signaling the end of the school day, was not its usual welcoming sound. My heart began pounding uncontrollably. The pace quickened with each step toward the auditorium, and I could feel beads of sweat forming on my forehead. Shakily, I opened the door to enter the back of the stage, and waited to be introduced. I took my place at the podium in the center of the stage, lights blaring down on me and faces eagerly staring at me. Fear flooded me. The confidence that I had felt earlier this morning was now diminished, only to be replaced by panic. As I began my speech, the nervousness consuming my body slowly eased. Abruptly, the doors backstage flew open and the sound of footsteps thundered through the auditorium. Startled, I whipped around to see who was interrupting my important speech. Another surge of horror coursed through me as I realized it was the principle, followed by two other administrators. Grabbing me by the arms, the principal announced angrily to the whole school that I had detention and would be unable to finish my speech. I wanted to die. Even through the numbness now consuming my body, I could feel the eyes of every audience member focusing on me. Embarrassment captured my body, and even through the thick haze in which I seemed to be momentarily encased, I could hear roars of laughter from my fellow classmates. Before I realized what happened, I found myself sitting in an ice cold desk, staring at the second hand of the clock, slowly ticking. As I relived the most recent events, emotions swam through my body. I was angry, hurt, embarrassed, and relieved, all at the same time. It was amazing that I could feel anything at all right now, let alone this plethora of emotions. Thankfully, it was the last day of school, and I would not have to face the taunts from other classmates. As I tried to block the horrible memory from my mind, the teacher announced I was free to go. I quickly grabbed my things and scurried out the door. Driving home, I marveled at
the fact that so many terrible events could happen to me in a single day. It seemed impossible. I guessed good luck was not on my side today.

As I pulled into the driveway, I felt a sense of satisfaction. The day was over. I did not even bother to take my backpack inside. I burst in through the door and flopped down on the couch. Exasperated, a sigh escaped my mouth as I lay there, sinking into the pillows. My only source of comfort was the fact that I would never have to see any of those mocking faces again. I was free, and that was all that mattered.

Exhausted from the day’s events, I finally fell into a calm, soothing sleep. A much needed rest after quite an entertaining day.

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Casey

*By Misty Collier, Michael Feller, Joseph Kang and Josie Millard*

Being grounded for something that I didn’t do is no fun at all. I have been cooped up in this room for the past three weekends. I’m almost tempted to go and tell mom that I’m not the one who broke her favorite China dish; it was actually Casey. Casey is my little sister who can do no wrong. She’s my parents’ little princess. Since Casey was born, my life has been hell. “Go get Casey’s bottle. Watch Casey while we go out. Let Casey have her way; she’s your little sister.” Yeah, she’s my little sister who’s always out to get me. I get in trouble for all of her mistakes; I am so tired of Casey. When will I get some special treatment? Sometimes I think that my parents love her more than me. They obviously give her more attention. Three weeks ago, my mom and dad went out for dinner, and I was stuck babysitting Princess Casey. They gave specific instructions for us not to fight or run in the house. Of course Casey never listens; she runs and plays around the house even though she knows she’s not supposed to. I asked the demon child to sit and calm down, but she doesn’t listen. She lets me know that I can’t tell her what to do; so I let her continue. What a stupid thing to do! I sat and watched television in the family room, and then I heard a crash, like a breaking dish. When I walked into the dining, I saw pieces of mom’s favorite China dish all over the floor. It was her favorite because she inherited the set from her great-grandmother on her wedding day. I scrambled to get it cleaned up so that we both didn’t get in trouble. Just as I was picking up the last pieces, mom and dad walked through the door.

Did they ask what happened? Absolutely not! They sailed in and scooped up Casey, kissed her, giggled over her and then looked over at me and asked why I had a dust pan in my hand. But before I could even answer, mom saw the pieces of the dish and said, “Jessica, how could you? You know that was my great-grandmother’s China. If you don’t care how I feel about it, stop and ask yourself how you will feel when you inherit a few pieces—not a whole set, mind you—of your great, great grandmother’s China? Then maybe you’ll see what you have done. Maybe you’ll realize how irresponsible you are. But until then, Jessica, I am going to have to ground you for the next four weekends. Now, what do you have to say for yourself?”
Unfortunately I was not speechless. It was so unfair. Casey just grinned. Mom didn’t even think to ask if she had anything to do with it. So rather than explain the situation then, I just said, “I don’t feel badly at all. Casey will inherit everything you value.”

At that point my dad entered the conversation—with a bang. “Jessica, don’t you ever, ever, talk back to your mom. Get to your room, girl. Don’t come out until you can keep a civil tongue in your head. Casey is your little sister. You’ve got to get over being jealous of her. Now get!”

So I got. I stayed in my room and cried. I had planned to go to a movie with my best friend, but I didn’t even have my cell phone to call her. When I heard the phone ring, I knew it was her, but apparently my parents told her that I couldn’t go. What could I do? My parents are unfair, but truly that is not Casey’s fault. So here I have been rotting for three weekends and facing at least a fourth. I’ve held it in so long that I can hardly go complain about it now. The interesting thing is that Casey had been promised an outing to go to the park and eat at Mickey D’s today. What will they do with me? Will I be asked to go? Or will they expect me to do without supper?

I could hear Casey in the other room begin to scream. I’m taking those screams to mean that our parents aren’t going to take her to the park or Mickey D’s; what else could she be so upset about. She began screaming again only this time her yelling lasted for about five minutes. This made me so mad, I couldn’t even say two to my mom when I was getting in trouble to defend myself, but here Casey can scream and yell at her for minutes at a time with no punishment.

“Jessica, get ready. We decided that it wouldn’t be fair to your little sister if we didn’t take her out today because we promised to do so,” my mom said as she walked by my room. Fair, I’ll tell you about fair, I thought; if I talk back to my parents, I get into more trouble, but Casey can yell at them and not only not get punished but get her way. My parents are so unfair, but every time I try to tell them that they let Casey run wild, they give me the “she’s just a little girl” speech. I could never win an argument with my parents, and now I have to spend the day in the park playing with my little sister because my parents want the two of us to be close. Isn’t that nice? Casey doesn’t ever listen to me and she always gets me into trouble, but it’s okay because my parents think all the time we spend together will make us close. But as long as I get punished for Casey’s mistakes, there is no way that we are going to get along. I tried to calm down and just enjoy the park, if that was at all possible.

I grabbed a few of my belongings like my sunglasses, a bottle of water, and of course my favorite magazine. I intended to just let Casey run through the park, swing on the swings, and go down the slide a few times. Just because I had to oversee her didn’t mean I had to play with her as well. After all, it was a nice day, and the shining sun invited me to spend a leisurely afternoon with no interruptions.

“Push me on the swings,” Casey kept whining at me as I sat underneath the shade tree. “Push me or I’ll tell mom and dad on you.” How annoying? Every little command I don’t tend to, the little brat threatens to tattle on me! And for what, I mean, she doesn’t even know how to pump her legs to keep herself going! But being the good sister that I am, I rolled my eyes and closed up my magazine. If I could just show her how to swing by herself, then she would not need to pester me every five minutes for assistance. I got her going by giving her an underdog and told her to “pump her legs in” and then “push them out.” She giggled with glee, and I almost forgot how much fun it seemed she was having. “I’m doing it! I’m really, really doing it!” she
screamed with excitement. Getting on the swing next to hers, I got myself going and felt the forgotten thrill wash over me.

There we were, swinging next to each other, and what would you know, I actually forgot how annoying she was. We had competitions on who could go the highest on the swings, and being the big sister, I let her win. She was really happy about that, and it seemed she would cooperate with me. I thought why not make the most of it. The rest of the day, I taught her all sorts of new tricks like how to go down the slide faster, and how to skip bars on the monkey bars. The sun was setting and she wanted to play some more. When I told her that it was getting late and the park was closing, she was reluctant and almost started her tantrum. Although before she began, I told her that I had more exciting things that I could teach her at home. With that, we headed back home with a little more respect for one another. She finally acknowledged me a little for the big sister I was, and I finally realized she doesn’t complain all the time.

First Snow

By Minal Amin, Sara Richter, Sarah Smith, Shana Jones

It was the evening of the last day in January and it was the first big snowfall since school began again. It had snowed before but it never stuck to the ground. Two college girls who had never lived near snow were so excited. They were roommates, one from Southern California and the other from Tampa Bay, Florida who had met at their freshman orientation. Their friends decided to take them out to play in the snow for the first time. They bundled up with warm layers of clothes. They had so many layers on that they were so hot in their dorm room. So, they hurried out into the snow late at night. The ground was white. The beautiful lights shined on the snow as it continued to fall intensely to the ground. It was a magical night for the two girls. They made snow angels and learned how to make snowballs. It all felt like a dream just running around like little girls, not a care in the world.

The girls never wanted to stop playing in the snow. More friends arrived and snowballs were coming from everywhere. Everyone had a camera and were taking pictures of the great time they were having and share with family when they go back home for the summer. They decided to make a big snowman and dress him up in the most traditional attire that the girls have always seen on television. The snowman was the best snowman ever made and everyone outside joined in on the fun. Both girls returned to their dorm room late into the night exhausted and hoping for no school the next day. They didn’t have any tests to study for or anything else to do for classes so they decided to stay up and watch a movie with their friends they met out in the snow. Unfortunately, they soon found out that classes were planned to be in session the next day and the girls could not wake up in the morning. That day in class seemed to go by very slowly and all the girls could dream about was having a snowball fight again that night.

As soon as class was let out for the day, the two girls went to the Cafeteria to have dinner. There, they talked to the friends that they had played in the snow with and they all decided to have a big snowball fight that evening. The two girls became very excited at this idea and as soon as dinner was over, they visited the girls in the room next door to see if they would ally with them so they had a better chance of winning. The girls agreed, but the fight wasn’t
planned until 9:00 that night. The girls went back to their room and began talking about how they would build their fort and who they would go after and who they would defend. As they were laying out these plans, they decided to start getting ready. They put on layers of clothes all over again, just like they did last night. This time, they had layers pants and shirts, and each put on 3 layers of gloves and 2 pairs of socks. They were going on and on about how excited they were, and planning out more and more of the evening.

After they were all ready, the girls headed outside for the fight. The snow was still piled high, and the quad was full of students ready for some fun. The teams all took their places and began the work on their forts and barriers. The two girls were determined to build a good defense, and their final product was one of the best forts on the quad. It stood four feet tall and six feet wide. After the structure was finished, the snowball making began. Within minutes, however, the fight started. Snowballs were flying from every direction. The object was not to get hit more than three times. On the fourth time someone got hit, they were out of the game.

After an hour or so, the field of snowball fighters was dwindled down to about 15 people. The two girls were still alive in the fight. They were cold and tired from running all around the quad, and they were tempted to surrender themselves to a rush of snowballs just so they could head back to their room and drink some hot chocolate. However, the continued to fight strong, and soon later, the field was down to the two girls and their two allies they had made an alliance with earlier in the night. The friends were now enemies. The two girls built up a supply of snowballs and headed after their targets. Using all the strength they had left, the girls battled hard and were able to defend against their former allies. The two girls from California and Florida were crowned snowball fight champions. The girls decided that they loved the snow and made a pact to travel to a snow-filled country over the summer. Florida and California never felt less like home, but the girls didn’t really mind.

Life

_By Heather Collins, HyunSuk Lee, and Cameron Schulte_

It was supposed to be the biggest storm of the year. Buckets of snow were predicted to dump from the sky throughout all hours of the night. The girls had never thought the day would come when they would hope not to have a snow day. This particular school changed things about you. The jam-packed schedule left no room for interferences of any kind. If school were to close, their quiz would be canceled. Most people would be thrilled for such a thing but not these girls. They had already studied. They were prepared and ready to take on the world. Besides, if they didn’t take the quiz the next day, it would be pushed back to the following week along with three other quizzes. That was no kind of life.

Waking up periodically throughout the night, the girls were fairly certain school was going to be a no-go. At least they would get to sleep in a little longer, they thought. When they woke up, just to be certain they all checked the news to watch school closings. Every school in the entire area that anyone had ever heard of was closed due to inclement weather. Rightly so as the snow was piled exceptionally high making the unsheltered cars seem as if they were giant snowballs! But wait. Their school, the only school, was in session. Oh joy, time to get up.

Jenny got up, showered and went into the kitchen. Alice had already put on the coffee pot. When both girls were ready, they went out to their car. Jenny attacked the car with a broom
while Alice tried to shovel a path for the car across the ice barrier thrown up by the highway department when it graded the street. When it looked like they could easily get out, they grabbed their backpacks and pulled out. Once on the road all went smoothly and soon they parked in the half empty garage and headed for their class.

No one was there. They walked back to the cafeteria where several students were eating breakfast and others were doing class work. They found out they were on a snow schedule and worked out when their classes would meet.

When they entered the classroom the second time, many of the students were there. The professor looked over the group, counted them and frowned. "I can’t wait all day. You only have 40 minutes as it is." Several students groaned. Often you couldn’t finish one of his quizzes in 50 minutes. Another student entered. The professor counted them again. "Wouldn’t you think he could add 1 to the number he had before?" Jenny asked Alice.

The professor looked at his watch. "Only 35 minutes now."

"Then pass out the quiz," an anonymous student yelled, but captured the feeling of many in the classroom that day.

The professor rolled his eyes back in his head and walked to the beginning of each row to hand out a stack of papers.

"Make sure the person to the left and right of you have a different color quiz," shouted the professor.

"You know it would be so much easier on the professors if they weren’t so stubborn and just used the microphone," Jenny said as she leaned over to Alice.

Before Alice could respond the professor interrupted, "Does everyone have a quiz," and with no objections he said, "You may begin."

By the time the class was done waiting for the stragglers and getting the pre-test instructions, they were only left with thirty minutes to pull off their miracle quizzes. The grunts of many students could be heard throughout the classroom, "Why couldn’t school just be canceled?" Even Jenny and Alice were starting to wish their school would have been like all the others and just canceled classes for the day.

Finally, they got done with their classes and got back home. All the classes were only 40 minutes, so they hadn’t done many things in class. After school, Jenny and Alice were saying that there was no point to go to school on a day like today. It was short, and they didn’t learn anything new. Overall, it was yet another day to add to the list of crappy days at the rigorous school. So what did they do? Nothing less than have an awesome weekend of… even more studying.

The Answer

By Joseph Kang, Josie Millard, Misty Collier and Michael Feller

This was the only time of day when Kelly could be alone with her thoughts. The rising sun basked against the shore as she made it to her regular, cozy spot by the surrounding rocks that towered over her. She felt like it was her second home in the summer, the rocks always protecting her while the sun brought in a brand new day. It took about an hour walk to get there, but she always thought it was well worth the trip. The only thing she would ever bring was her pink hello kitty pencil along with her miniature sized diary. Kelly did not care if she got lost or was left stranded. She always thought that this was the best place to spend her time. The fifteen-
year-old girl would leave by 4 a.m., write for hours about anything, usually about her life, until 8 a.m. every morning, when she would start heading back to that miserable place called home. It was okay, though, because her mom wouldn’t notice that she was gone. Her dad, on the other hand, might rough her up a little bit, but he did it for fun, and she was used to that. No one seemed to care either way.

After arriving home on that warm summer morning, Kelly ran upstairs closing and locking her bedroom door behind her. She had a couple hours more before her mom got up. Kelly could not understand how she got parents like them. Her mom was a relapsing alcoholic, and her dad didn’t really seem to care much about what was going on in her life. Kelly knew that her parents loved her, but she longed for them to show her. She felt as if she had no purpose in this cold, cruel world and that the people in it were just “there.” An hour and a half later, Kelly rose from her slumber to go and begin her daily chores. She had no desire to listen to her hung over mom bitch and complain about a messy house. Kelly made her way to the kitchen, cleaned, and started breakfast. Although Kelly loved her favorite summer hiding place, she would rather have to go to school all year than be forced to stay at home every day. Her parents didn’t talk much anymore. She wondered if they ever were happy. What had caused her mom to make best friends with a bottle? What had caused her dad to lose interest in his family? She could not understand what happened to her family, one that should be full of joy and love, and she wished she knew how to make it all better. Kelly snapped out of her thoughts just as her mom hobbled in the kitchen with an empty bottle.

“There you are. I woke up earlier, and I couldn’t find you. I want this dump cleaned up...” her mom began, but stopped and looked around. It was clean, even the wastebasket of empty bottles had been dumped in the garbage outside. Kelly was frying bacon and had eggs out, ready to fix. Her mother stopped whining and sat abruptly down on one of the kitchen chairs.

She heard her father lumber down the stairs. At first it appeared as if he were headed out, but then when he saw the clean kitchen and smelled the food cooking, he seemed pleased to change his mind. “Well, how’s my little girl? Too bad you aren’t my wife.” Reverting to his wife, he snarled, “Nancy, I saw what a mess you left here last night.”

“How dare you? Who are you to complain? At least I stay home and try to get along with my family,” Kelly’s mom roared back with hate in her mouth.

“Ha, you just stay to torture us. You drink the money, mess up the house, and bitch about all of your problems. I’ve got news for you. You don’t have problems; you are the problem. Get out of that alcoholic fog and face yourself.”

Fuming, she yelled back, “John, you are the one who created this situation. You are the reason our son died. You are the reason we lost Patrick. If I could stand it, I wouldn’t drink. I only drink to forget—nothing more.” And with that, her mom dropped to her knees, clutched the kitchen countertop, and cried on the linoleum floor.

Kelly ached to be back in her special place. Why did she have to put up with these two? And who was this “son” anyway? She never met him, and she could remember when the family was happy. There were only the three of them—a happy three of them. Maybe her mom just imagined a son in her alcoholic stupor. Could it even be possible that her parents had a son and didn’t tell her about him? Kelly wanted to ask, but feared her parents would get violent with her. After a few minutes, it was all Kelly could handle. She had to know what happened to Patrick and why her happy home turned into hell.
Sheepishly, Kelly walked over to her mother and asked before her tongue would hold back on her. "Mom, please tell me who Patrick is. Did something happen to him that ruined this family?"

"If you want to know what happened to him, then go ask your father. He should remember it well," Nancy muttered coldly. "It was his fault Patrick died. It was your father that ruined this family!" her voice escalated, and she yelled with a deafening cry.

"Damn it; don't talk to me that way," cried her father with tears swelling up in his eyes. "I did everything I could to protect him. I loved him more than anything in the world, and you think you are the only one that wants to forget that day. I wish I could but I can't, and it isn't fair to Kelly for you to waste away. It wasn't her fault; it was mine."

With dark eyes, Nancy peered at John and replied, "You should have been watching him; he was only three years old. Why did you let him climb on those rocks?" Her last sentence came out in one slow gasp.

Kelly could hardly believe her ears. What was going on? Should she have a brother three years older than her? Did he fall in the ocean and never make it back out? Questions swam through her mind, and her head throbbed with confusion. Watching her parents cry in shame, Kelly left the kitchen unnoticed. Hurrying to grab her pencil and journal, she escaped to her one and only place where she felt at home. Through tears and heartache, Kelly began writing and didn't even stop when her hand and wrist cramped.

Though Kelly didn't want to leave, the sun had set, and she knew that she better be getting home. As she slowly got up, something a few yards away caught her eye. Blending in as just another rock, Kelly noticed some faint etching in the small boulder. She walked closer to get a better look and immediately started to cry. There, right in the middle of her favorite spot in the world, was the memorial for her deceased brother reading: Our dear, beloved child - Patrick Matthew Stellman - Born: May 2, 1991 - Died: August 15, 1994 - You will never be forgotten, and you will always be missed. Love your family. Barely being able to read the grave, Kelly noticed they had the same birthday. He was not just a brother, but her twin brother.

Beatrix

By Libby Herman, Bre Dunsworth, Kristin Hagan, Ripple Patel and Mitul Gandhi

Shivering from head to toe, Beatrix felt the ice cold rain penetrate the pores on her skin. Her normally beautiful, long, bouncy hair lay flat and wet against her scalp. Twigs, bark, and other pieces of foliage were lodged within the confines of the limp curls. The gorgeous blue ball-gown that once lay gracefully along her delicate frame was now ripped to shreds. The delicate jewelry hung from her neck, dangerously dangling off of her body, threatening to fall to the ground at any moment. Her previously perfect, flawless skin was scratched and scathed, numerous cuts infecting providing a pink tint to the normally pale complexion. The hand-crafted silk heels that once graced her feet were lost somewhere in the dense forest, probably gone forever.

Hearing the crunching of the leaves that littered the forest floor beneath her feet, Beatrix searched the forest wildly. Traditionally sparkling, her dazzling blue eyes portrayed a hint of hysteria and fear. Lost in a clearing deep within the forest, Beatrix collapsed onto the ground. Tears streamed down her face as her body trembled with each sob. Desolate, Beatrix stared up
into the sky, but her view was shrouded by the thick overhang of trees. It seemed odd that she had seen no animals throughout her voyage. The forest typically teemed with life, but today no creatures were to be found. The eerie silence weighed down upon Beatrix and enveloped her. Absent-minded, Beatrix gazed unseeingly around the clearing, unable to shake the overwhelming sense of unease.

Suddenly a loud thud was heard across the forest. Her head snapped toward the direction of the sound, hoping to see what had made the noise. All she saw was darkness. The forest was quiet again and a chill ran up her spine. Someone had to be here with her. She didn’t know if she should run away from the noise she had heard, or if she should search for who had produced it. Maybe it could be someone that could help her. Just maybe it could be her savior. Beatrix begged her mind to remember how she had gotten here. She hadn’t run out here alone, had she? Did someone bring her here? She racked her memory to try and come up with some sort of explanation for being in this dark place and in such bad shape.

Deciding that finding any person would be better than being lost forever, Beatrix headed in the direction of the thud. However, this was not an easy task. Branches yanked at her already torn dress and debris collected in her pitiful hair. She trudged on. Beatrix felt as if she was going in circles. Every tree looked the same. The leaves and dirt covering the ground did not show any evidence of her passing, so she had no idea if she was making any progress. All she wanted to do was take a hot shower and feel warm again. She began to doubt that she would ever find her way out this crazy sort of a maze. Suddenly the thud was heard again in the distance and she knew she was headed in the right direction. Picking up her pace, she grew anxious to find a person who could possibly help her.

Shoeless and sobbing, Beatrix mustered every ounce of hope left in her being and continued walking while listening attentively for further clues leading to her rescue. Dodging tree limbs and hanging vines, she stumbled along for what seemed like hours, but in reality were just several hellish minutes until she finally caught a glimpse of civilization. Not far away, a clearing stretched its welcoming arms and beckoned her into its safety. With every thump of her rapidly beating heart, Beatrix wanted to run with utter abandonment toward the small cabin nestled between swaying trees not far from the clearing’s perimeter. She wanted a savior to take her pain ridden body into his strong arms and tell that this nightmare was over. She longed to be warm and safe and dry again. Her vision of a tearful rescue, however, was suddenly interrupted by another loud thud.

It was in that solemn moment that she saw him, and he saw her. His rugged, cruel face flashed like lightning through her mind as he turned toward her releasing his grip on the shovel in his hand. Pieces of her memories quickly scrambled into place completing the sordid puzzle of her attack. The events of the previous day were quickly coming back into focus. The excitement before the dance, the ornate chandeliers that adorned the ballroom, the lighthearted and free spirited dancing, the fight with her jealous drunken date, her raging, solitary flight from the banquet hall, the stranger following her in his car warning that it was not safe to be out alone at night, his offer of a ride home... The horror of the attack and the terror of the night alone in the frightful forest as she lay frozen in fear all came flooding back to her.

Unfortunately, he was coming back to her also. Beatrix tried to muster the strength to scream a final plea for help, but her muffled cry fell upon the deaf ears of the forest. Her legs, paralyzed by fear, refused to move. Her body crumpled to the ground in surrender as her attacker moved in for the kill. Just as she was resigning her life to this awful fate, a soft, peaceful melody enveloped her mind. She lay quietly for a moment wondering if this was death’s welcoming
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prelude. Rather that shivering in dampness and fear, she felt safe and cuddled in warmth. Moreover, her paralyzed limbs were free to move without the fearful restraints that had previously bound her.

She felt her body becoming light as she floated up to the sky. This was it. This was the end as she knew it. She never pictured it would be anything like this. First of all, she never thought she would die at the tender age of 18. Secondly, she really thought there would be blinding pain. But it was as if she didn’t feel a thing. Even though she was stabbed in the heart by the drunken man, she was not in any sort of pain. Beatrix was now floating above her own lifeless body. She saw her soul float out of the deceased Beatrix and seep into her own spirit body.

Beatrix was now above the clouds. She was feeling more and more lighter as she got higher. Eventually she was felt like someone was pulling her up to the sky. She had no idea what to expect next. She only knew what she had seen on TV. So far there was nothing out of the ordinary. It was the cliché stairway to heaven.

A couple of minutes passed and she was now at the top of the world. Here clearly she could see the other spirits rising and making their way to heaven. The whole space was filled with these free floating bodies. Their bodies kept rising and rising. All the way through space and towards the sun. This was definitely not the way to heaven Beatrix thought. She was getting more worried as time went by. It was getting hotter and hotter as the she and the rest of the spirits were being sucked into the large blazing ball of fire, the sun.

It was getting too hot to handle now. It was also way too bright. Beatrix had to close her eyes. She was still free floating. She could feel every increase in degrees of heat as she got closer to the sun. The light was now so intense that even closing her eyes did not help.

Just then she started hearing the sounds of heavenly harps...

Mexico

By Michael Feller, Joseph Kang, Josie Millard and Misty Collier

They call me J, its short for Josh, but don’t even think of calling me that. It’s just J. I have been thinking over something and I came up with this. There comes a time in everyone’s life that he or she is faced with a major decision, but I did not think that my major decision would come so early in life. I mean I’m only eighteen; this type of pressure should never be placed on anyone my age. I have already skipped 7 days this year, and I am on academic probation. I’m not sure why they call it that because I’m pulling A’s in every class, well not in every class, well not in any class, but I definitely have a solid B average with maybe a few C’s here and there. Grades are no big deal at this point. I’ve already been accepted to colleges, and I know that my future is in line, that is as long as I don’t get caught skipping again. Apparently, my dean believes that I haven’t been sick any of the days I have missed. He’s right, but he’ll never catch us this time. Anyway there is only about a month or so of school left and this will be my last major time during my high school career.

I live right next to Marquette University in Milwaukee. In fact, there are a lot of people that think I go to Marquette, but that won’t be until next year. But anyway, I convinced a few of my buddies to go to Mexico for a few days. We’ll act like we’re leaving for school on Thursday,
then drive South to Mexico. At first, my friends didn’t know if they should go, but I convinced them that Mexico would be the trip of a lifetime.

My best friend, Will, argued that I shouldn’t go because I faced expulsion if I missed that many more days, but I told him I had that taken care of. Anyway, Will needs more excitement in his life, and he needs to get away from the books. His number one class ranking and 35 on the ACT ensured him admittance to almost any university he wanted to go to, but that came at a price; he always missed out on our escapades during the week. But not the trip to Mexico, I had to convince him to go.

We were supposed to hang out this weekend, just drive around and hang out in the school parking lot. Still thinking about Will and not wanting to go, I thought about how crazy he is. How could he not want to go, or more fitting, why did he not want to go? I mean, it’s not like this trip is going to affect his grades or anything. I decided to approach him about it again and see if his thoughts had changed.

“Will, have you thought anymore about the trip to Mexico?” I asked, waiting for a reply. I noticed him getting a little uncomfortable in the front seat. He shifted around, loosened his seat belt across his slim frame, and cleared his throat.

Nervously, he began to talk, “I really don’t know. I haven’t heard back from any of my schools yet, especially the important ones - Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth. They each promised to send a letter regarding my admittance around the same time we would be getting back from Mexico. How do you not understand that I really don’t want to jeopardize possibly affecting the rest of my life?” Will continued to carry on, and almost expecting this, I began to tune him out.

After I thought he was done rambling, I reassured him by saying Jim and Dan were already packed and they were banking on him to go. I told him how disappointed we would all be. I wasn’t going to let him get out of this one. Especially because this trip would be something we would always remember. It would probably even be the best experience of his whole entire life. Frustrated, I told him he was going to go and that I would even buy him a sombrero that could fit his tiny head. He didn’t really get a kick out of that, but I thought it was pretty funny. Anyway, I took him home saying he needed to go get ready for Thursday. It was already the weekend, and he didn’t have much time, and knowing how precautious he was, he would take a long time to pack.

The next few days, Jim, Dan, and I were stoked. It was so easy to convince Jim and Dan. With a little persuasion, they got caught up in the excitement. Will, on the other hand, was bringing me down. He did not know how much this meant to me. He complained how I don’t understand the importance of him getting into school, but being best friends and all, he should understand the importance of us hanging out once before he leaves me for good. Speaking of Will, I looked for him the next couple of days, but I think he was avoiding me. In any case, if it came down to it, we would kidnap him and take him with us. We called Will’s parents and let them know that he was going to be gone on a campus tour of one of those ivy leagues to see which one he really wanted to go to. Jim and Dan’s parents didn’t care and neither did mine for the most part. We all made up good alibis anyway.

Finally we made it to Mexico. By this time, Will had chilled out and was having somewhat of a good time surprisingly. We checked into our hotel and immediately went to check out the sites. There were so many beautiful girls; I felt like I was in heaven. Will had never had a girlfriend before. The guys and I teased him about this trip being the greatest graduation gift we could possibly give him because he might get lucky. I don’t think he was too happy with those remarks; his face turned beet red. We decided to lay off for a while and finish
our site seeing. Jim and Dan’s favorite was Mexican food; so we stopped by the Mexican market and had homemade quesadillas. After a long day of seeing some of the sites that Mexico had to offer, we decided to return to our hotel. On the way back, we saw the golden arches. A McDonalds in Mexico, we could not believe it. Of course we had to try it out. The menu was a bit different, but the food was awesome. Instead of partying our first night there, we decided to sit around and just talk about how life had been treating us. I told everyone about my academic probation and that I didn’t see what the big deal was since I was still making passing grades. They all laughed and teased that the teachers probably just missed their favorite student. Then all of a sudden Will had a serious look on his face; something was wrong. Will said that he had a secret to tell us.

He told us he probably wouldn’t be going to college in the fall. He told us his father had cancer. No one else knew because his father did not want it to be known. He did not plan to go through the treatments his doctor recommended. He knew his cancer had progressed too far to be cured. He knew that the treatments were miserable, just a form of torture, and since there was no chance of a cure, he didn’t want to suffer needlessly. At the same time he didn’t want to give up his job. He enjoyed it and thus felt it would make the pain from the cancer less burdensome. He also wanted to keep the money coming in as long as possible. Will told us that at first he had hoped for a full-ride scholarship so that he could go to college and it wouldn’t impact the family finances, but that he realized now it was silly. He said that just as I, J, wanted the four of us to be together at least one last time, he felt that he should remain here in Milwaukee to be with his father in his last months or years and then to be with his mother when she had to face being alone. He said he might enroll part time in Marquette, but that he planned to get a job. Rather than being worried about getting admitted to an ivy-league college, he was really worried about finding a position that would be both worthwhile and interesting. Going on this trip made him lose a good interview.

All three of us were dumbfounded. Jim and Dan were about as worried as I about getting into some college, but none of us wanted to go to Marquette—not because we didn’t like the school, but because it would mean living at home. None of us had any plans to remain in Milwaukee. This really was a good-bye party. We promised to keep quiet about Will’s father, and planned to continue our party. But even for us, it was too hard. How can you party when you realize your best friend’s father is dying from cancer? After one day, we gave up and drove back to Milwaukee. By taking turns driving all night, we got Will back in time for his job interview.

He went home to shower and change and just make it to his 10:00 interview; Dan and Jim went home to do who knows what, and I went home to sleep. But the minute I walked in the door, I realized that was not what I was going to be allowed to do. My principal was there talking to my parents. I was forced to sit and listen to them. I learned that being absent the last four days meant I had flunked out of school! If I ever wanted to take advantage of the colleges that would let me in, I would first have to repeat my last semester of school. I would have to remain in Milwaukee. I was devastated. Thank God my best friend Will would be around to be with me! If his job didn’t take too much time, we could probably get up some good parties—particularly if he did as he said and went to a few night classes at Marquette. It probably wasn’t such a bad choice after all. I could probably bully Jim and Dan into enrolling there too. Then all four of us would be together again. Maybe we could plan a real trip to Mexico next year!