

The page is framed by a highly detailed, colorful border. It features a repeating pattern of stylized floral and foliate motifs in shades of red, blue, green, and orange. Interspersed within this pattern are various animal figures: a bear at the top center, a monkey on the right side, a lion on the left side, and a lioness at the bottom center. The background of the border is a light beige color with a fine, repeating floral pattern.

ANTHOLOGY

Volume 16
A Publication of Tarleton State University

Anthology

A Publication of
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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Students enrolled at Tarleton State University are invited to submit their work for publication consideration online at **www.tarleton.edu/anthology**.

Anthology accepts work throughout the calendar year and is published annually in April.

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Anthology 16

Editors' Choice Award

Our Editors' Choice Awards honor four individuals who have contributed outstanding works to this volume. The range of talent demonstrated by these students exemplifies the breadth of creativity at Tarleton State University.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR:

Mike Fraley

With submissions accepted in art, photography, prose, and poetry

OUTSTANDING POET:

Will D. Mayfield

OUTSTANDING POEM:

Rachael Mayfield

With special recognition for "White"

OUTSTANDING FEATURE WRITER:

Mandi Roberts

Creative Arts Day Speaker

Lou Berney

Screenwriter or Fiction Writer, that is the Question?

When I tell someone that I'm a writer, the invariable question is: What kind? I explain that I write both screenplays and prose fiction, but this is not strictly true.

The more precisely correct answer would be: One part of me writes screenplays, another part writes prose fiction. And rarely the twain do meet, at least not without it turning into a heated argument.



Preparing for Take-Off

A screenplay is all about moving parts and meshing gears. Screenwriter Me, especially if he's on deadline, constructs an insanely detailed pre-draft outline. He breaks down the narrative and calculates how many pages each component part – act, scene, beat – will run, and how many amps each will draw. If, for example, you blow your circuits in the middle of act two, you won't have anything left for the big finish.

Fiction-Writer Me dreams up a fairly detailed pre-draft outline too, but Screenwriter Me would roll his eyes to hear it described as such. It's more impressionistic and asks as many questions as it answers. It includes notes like, "Maybe some kind of confrontation here? Or a love scene? But does she love him? See what feels right at the time." (Screenwriter Me is rolling his eyes again.)

The Helluva-It Principle

When you write a screenplay, you're living in a room with four walls and square footage set in concrete (only 112 or so script pages), so efficiency is crucial. Every scene, character, and description must serve the story. If it can be cut, it probably should be. Screenwriter Me is a ruthless, cold-eyed assassin who enjoys his work. Faulkner wouldn't have to tell him to kill his darlings, because those darlings are already dead, dismembered, and neatly buried in the backyard.

When you write a novel, you've got all the elbow room you need. You can add a scene, a character, or a description just for the helluva it – just because, in other words, the addition might help create a richer, more textured fictional world. Fiction-Writer Me likes to throw parties and invite the whole neighborhood. While writing my novel, *Gutshot Straight*, I happened to read an article about the creepy, fascinating, wonderful “international marriage business.” So I found a way to work that in. Why not? The more the merrier! Just bring beer.

And the Winner Is

There are a lot of other differences between the two kinds of writing. I could probably write a book (but probably not a movie) about them. To sum up, though, I will state unequivocally that it's a lot harder to write a screenplay than it is to write a novel, and vice versa.

A screenplay's defined limits can comfort but also confine. A novel's wide-open landscape can liberate but also disorient. It can be relief, in a screenplay, to be responsible for just the writing and not the acting, art direction, or cinematography. In a novel, by contrast, you have to light the cobbled streets of Casco Viejo in Panama City at midnight, and you need to provide your exotic dancers with watermelon-scented body spray. But how cool is that, that in a novel you get to do, to be, everything?

In the end, I think writing screenplays makes me a better fiction writer, and writing fiction makes me a better screenwriter. Because even though my split writing personalities don't really get along at all, they can occasionally be coaxed to – grudgingly – read the other's work and provide a few helpful notes.

John Briese

The Fall of the Moustache Rangers

these choices bounce around in my brain
like a superball in a steel room

yes, no

now, later

WHEN???

all day, every day questioning my decisions

wondering what is right, what is wrong

these choices turning my mind into a melting

pot of options, I hate it, I love it

make it stop, I never want it to end

these choices haunt me like a ghost

in my days, in my nights, in my dreams

running every aspect of my life

I remain living, unable to move on

these choices will be answered soon

in one quick instant

a moment uncontrollable by me

I have no option but to sit and watch

yell and scream, questioning the result

but it is done

when it's over, it's over

no looking back, no arguments for change

the choices were made, the answers were given

I lost.

John Briese

Redemption

The branches of the apple trees bent low with the weight of their fruit. Justin sat on the front porch rocking chair smoking a cigarette watching the kids play with the dogs in the front yard. He could hear his mother Karen's voice through the screen door, "Come on y'all, dinner's ready!" she yelled.

As an adolescent, Justin seemed like he sought out trouble wherever he would go. He was first arrested for public drunkenness at the age of 14. He served a six month stint in prison for stealing a neighbor's car at 17. After prison he began dealing drugs and cooking methamphetamines. Living in a dilapidated trailer house on the far end of the five acre lot he had grown up on, Justin brought nothing but pain and misfortune upon himself and his family.

Justin had enlisted the help of his younger cousins Brett and Jimmy to help cook up and distribute his drugs. One evening the three boys were drinking beer and playing pool in Justin's house when an unexpected knock came at the door. "Who is it?" Justin yelled crudely.

"It's Jamal," the man replied with a deep stern voice.

"I don't know no damn Jamal. Get the hell outta here," Justin yelled as he grabbed a gun off the kitchen counter.

As Justin walked towards the door it sprang open violently and ten armed men burst in yelling.

"Get down, put the gun down right now! Get your ass down on the ground!"

Justin, realizing he was outnumbered, put the gun down, and the men threw him to the ground. They searched him, then ransacked his house taking anything they thought of value and breaking everything else.

"Where you been cookin'?" Jamal asked.

"What you talking bout man? I cook in the kitchen." Justin said with a smirk on his face.

"OK smart ass." Jamal kicked Justin in the chest. Justin laughed, coughing out "That all you got?" He wouldn't have been laughing had he known where they had just come from.

"I found it," one of the other men yelled from the back. Jamal and a couple of his men walked to the back of the house.

"See, I told you it would be back here. We didn't even need to go in that big ol' house up there," one of the men told Jamal.

Right then chills ran down Justin's back and looking out the window, he noticed a large fire coming from his parent's house. He knew immediately what he would have to do. With the bulk of the men in the back room smashing up his meth lab, Justin grabbed the man left behind to guard him by the ankles and pulled him down to the ground. Following his lead, Brett and Jimmy did the same. Shots rang out as the men tried to fight off the three boys who eventually got the best of them. Brett grabbed the gun out of the man's hand and shot him in the shoulder. Right away, Jamal and the rest of his crew ran into the room firing.

"Kill that white boy!" Jamal yelled out to his men. Brett was shot three times before taking out four of Jamal's men. "That was not smart," Jamal said angrily to Justin as he threw him back to the ground. "Now I'm gonna have to kill you and your little whitebread friend here."

Jamal walked over to Jimmy who was quivering on the floor crying, aware that his young life is about to come to an end. "This is on you son," Jamal said to Justin as he put three slugs in Jimmy's chest.

Justin began to cry at the realization that he was next.

"You been stealin my customers for a long time now, I was just gonna rough you up a bit, maybe see if we could make a deal, but then your dumbass momma had to go runnin her mouth and whippin out kitchen knives."

"What did you do?" Justin yelled with tears in his eyes.

"Son, I just did what needed to be done to shut that woman up," Jamal replied.

"I'll kill you if you did anything to my momma."

“Really? You’ll kill me? How you plan on doin that with yo ass down on the ground and me holdin the gun?” Then the whole room jumped as a shotgun blast tore holes all through Jamal’s chest and blew him back to the floor. Before the remaining men could realize what was happening, Justin’s father, Kenneth, opened fire. Justin grabbed Jamal’s weapon with a vengeance. Between the two of them, they finished off the rest but not before Kenneth took a bullet to the stomach.

“Dad!” Justin screamed as he ran to his side.

“Call an ambulance and go take care of your mother,” Kenneth said gasping for air.

“Dad, I’m not gonna leave you here like this, I’ll carry you”

“Boy, they shot your mother. Now go help her NOW!” Kenneth yelled.

Justin sprinted as fast as he could the 500 yards between him and his mother. He found her lying in the grass with his 16 year old brother Stephen holding her and his 15 year old brother Chad trying to put out the fire. “They came in and asked us where you were cookin. Then momma tried to stab one of ‘em with a damn kitchen knife so they shot her,” Stephen said.

“Here’s my phone. Call the fire department and an ambulance,” Justin said. “I’m gonna see if I can help Chad.” Right then sirens and flashing lights began coming up the dirt road to the house.

“I already called them. Where’s Dad?” Stephen asked.

“He’s at my house. He saved my life,” Justin said as he was running to catch the ambulance. The ambulance approached, and Justin told the paramedics the situation, that both his mother and father had been shot.

“You two help her,” the ambulance driver told two of the paramedics. “We’re going down there.” Justin stayed with his mother and watched as the firemen began to put out the flames, when all of a sudden,

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Justin’s house exploded and flames shot 100 feet in the air. “DAAAAADDDDD” Justin screamed as he fell to his knees

crying. The ambulance had not arrived there yet and reversed its course as it was being showered with flaming debris from the explosion. Justin ran towards his house still yelling, "DAD!!!!" until he was stopped by one of the paramedics.

"You can't go down there boy," he said. "You can't go down there. Whatever was there is gone now. You have to stay and be with your mother." Justin collapsed to the ground and was crying uncontrollably.

The ambulance transported Justin's mother to the hospital with his two brothers riding along. The firemen were able to put out the blaze and save half of the house. The police officers escorted Justin down to the station for questioning. The crime scene investigators determined that the cause of the blast was due to the improper mixing of the chemicals used to make methamphetamines. Justin was charged with manufacturing and the distribution of narcotics and later sentenced to eight years in prison.

Justin's mother, having been released from the hospital, had some hard days in front of her. She had to arrange to have what was left of her home salvaged, along with the burden of having to bury her husband and two nephews all in the same week. As *Amazing Grace* was sung at Kenneth's grave site, Chad, with tears running down his face, turned to his mother and asked, "How is it you're not crying?"

"Your father is helping me son," she turned and said to her youngest son as she put her arms around him. "Plus this is a time to be strong. There is a lot of work to be done." She spent the coming weeks hassling with insurance adjusters and trying to get her family back on track.

A few months passed, and the family was still adjusting to the sudden changes in their lives. "Are we gonna go visit Justin, Momma?" Stephen asked.

"Not right now. Your brother has a lot of demons to conquer by himself. You boys need to focus on your school and getting into college. Don't you go worryin about your brother." What her two sons didn't know was that she was visiting Justin once a week in prison. He was being held in a facility just over an

hour away, and when Stephen and Chad were in school she would go see him.

The first visit was hard. She went in there with the intention of disowning her son, blaming him for the death of his father and cousins and for the horror that had been brought upon their family. As she saw him come to the window dressed in that orange jumpsuit, she broke down and cried. "Momma, momma, don't cry, please. I'm so glad you're here. I didn't think you would come," Justin said.

"Why? Why did you do it? Why did you bring this upon us? Why? Do you know what my life is like? Do you know what I have to go through now? It's all because of you." Justin quickly wiped away tears from his face.

"Momma, they can't see me cry in here. I can't be doing this. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry for what I did, I can't say that enough. I can't tell you the guilt that I have to live with. It's so hard in here, I have looked forward to this for days, but I can't do this if I'm just gonna cry, I can't do that momma, I can't do that." Justin said in a whisper.

"What happened to your face?" his mother asked.

"It's no big deal. Don't worry about it. I'm fine"

"No, that's a big cut. What happened?"

"Momma, don't worry. I'm fine," Justin said trying to convince her. "Now how are the boys doin'? How is the house?"

"The boys are OK. They ask about you a lot and want to come see you. They planted three tiny apple trees in the front yard for your Daddy, Brett, and Jimmy. The house is almost done. They just have to finish the roof. I'm so tired of hearing drills and saws all day I just want it all to be finished. "

"Oh ya, did they do anything different?"

"Ya they made the kitchen bigger and built me more cabinets, so I have room for everything. It's actually gonna be very nice when it's finished."

And before the two of them knew it they were carrying on a regular conversation like nothing had happened.

Five years had passed, and Karen still visited Justin as often as possible. The two had always had a strong relationship. Even when Justin was dealing drugs and getting into trouble he always had a soft spot in his heart for his mother. She allowed her two youngest boys to come visit with her once a month until they both went to college. Everything was going well until the two boys came home to go with their mother to visit. It was a cold rainy Saturday morning when they went in to hear the news.

"Ma'am?" a prison guard asked. "You're Justin's mother aren't you, ma'am?"

"Yes, and these are his two brothers," she replied.

"Ma'am, I'm gonna need you to come with me."

"What's wrong?" she said with worry in her voice. "Did something happen?"

"Ma'am, just come with me please." They were escorted into a small meeting room where they waited until the Warden arrived a few minutes later.

"Hello, I am Warden William P. Hastings. Thank you for meeting me here," he said as he shut the door behind him. "There has been an incident, and Justin has been hospitalized."

"What?" Karen, Stephen, and Chad said in unison.

"Is he OK? When did this happen?" Karen asked.

"It happened yesterday. We were going to inform you late last night, but I saw your name on the role of visitors today, so I wanted to wait to tell you in person," the warden said. "Justin was jumped by four men and was beaten very badly. His spleen was ruptured; he has four broken ribs, a broken jaw, and a broken arm. He is still in the ICU, and we won't know exactly the prognosis until later on this evening."

"Oh, my gosh," Karen gasped. "Where is he? Can we see him?"

"He is at St. Thomas, but I wanna warn you now. He's gonna look a little rough when you get there. I just wanna tell y'all how sorry I am about this. Justin was one of the most reformed

inmates I have ever seen. He was so close to finishing his degree," the Warden added.

"What? Finishing his degree? What degree?" Karen asked.

"He only had one more class to take to finish his Associate's Degree in Accounting; didn't he tell y'all about that?" the Warden said puzzled.

"No, as far as I know he never finished high school," Karen replied.

"I guess he wanted it to be a surprise, but he finished his GED a few years ago and has been studying accounting for a while now. He spends all day reading and studying and takes the tests on the Internet."

"Well, he'll finish it as soon as he gets better," Stephen said.

"I hope so. I sincerely hope so," the Warden said as he opened the door to leave.

Karen and her two boys went to the hospital to visit Justin and arrived at the ICU in shock. Justin was unrecognizable with his face as swollen as it was and with tubes running in and out of him. The doctor came in and explained the situation and said that if he made it through the night, he should be OK. Karen made Stephen and Chad go home while she stayed with him. The two boys fought the decision but reluctantly followed their mother's orders. Karen didn't sleep a wink all night, staying by Justin's side talking to him. He never moved or made a sound, but she was convinced he could hear her. She said that she forgave him for what he did and that if he could just pull through, he could come back and be part of the family again. She spent the bulk of the night with her head lying on his leg, holding his hand.

The next morning the doctors came in and examined Justin. They said that he was improving, and that things were looking a lot better. It took two days for Justin to eventually wake up, and when he did he couldn't speak because his jaw was wired shut. Karen never left the hospital the whole time and woke up every sleeping patient around with her shriek when Justin opened his eyes. He was held in the hospital for three weeks,

which Karen loved because it was the first time she was able to hug her son in over five years. After being released from the hospital, he was held in a minimum security prison for another month until he was released on parole.

Justin went home to live with his mom and began to adjust to life outside of prison. One of the first things he did when he got home was walk with his mother down to where his old trailer house used to sit. Only a few weeds grew over the area of land that had been burned. Evidence of the fire was still in the trees and the surrounding areas. Everything that had been burned never grew back. Justin broke down and cried when he saw it and repeatedly apologized to his mother for what he had done.

He spent his first few weeks at home helping his mom around the house, planting new grass and flowers in the cemetery at his father's and cousin's graves, and spending quality time with his mother, something he hadn't done since before he was a teenager. The two grew very close. Justin then went on to finish his degree in accounting and got a job working as a junior accountant for a large toy company in town. He eventually cleared all the trees out where his trailer house used to sit and cleaned up all the land around it, so that he could build a house there. When his mother asked why he wanted to build a house right there, he told her he never wanted to never forget what happened.

Years passed, Justin married a pretty young secretary who worked for his company. The two had three boys, who grew up 500 yards from their grandmother. Every Sunday Justin, Stephen, Chad and all their families would come to Karen's house for dinner. Every week Justin would sit on the front porch and watch the wind blow the three apple trees back and forth.

"Come on y'all. Dinner's ready," Karen yelled.

"Kenny, Brett, Jimbo, come on—let's go eat." Justin smiled as he followed his three young boys through the door.

Chrissie Cooper
The Cycle

I am the moon and you are the earth.
I am constantly in the presence of your company.
I am always in sight.
And I know at the end of the day, I will see you.
I start out small, hiding, showing only a sliver of my soul.
Then the more I see you, the more I reveal myself.
Until I am full, yours for the taking.
But I know I must not reveal too much.
I do not want to be hurt.
Your gravitational pull keeps me beside you.
I cannot come any closer.
You do not allow it.
Every night is the same.
I come out, open up to you, more and more as the days pass.
But it does not last long.
I retreat, showing you only a little, waning piece of my heart.
Months pass like this.
I come out, hoping that this could be the day when I join you.
Then reality sets in and I am gone.
Not completely, however.
I still want to see you.
Why do you torment me this way?
This cycle is my own hell.
Every day I dream of the moment where I will be here to stay.

Chrissie Cooper

Drive By

Walk the streets alone.
The darkness surrounds.
Cars drive by not noticing.
Music and laughter floating in the air.
The heart pangs.
Sadness floods in.
All happiness drives away with the car.

Chrissie Cooper

Silence

My soul is screaming.

It is trapped inside.

My body, a vessel.

It yearns to escape, to live.

To live.

How simple.

Everyone believes I am alive.

I am not alive, only existing.

My soul needs to live.

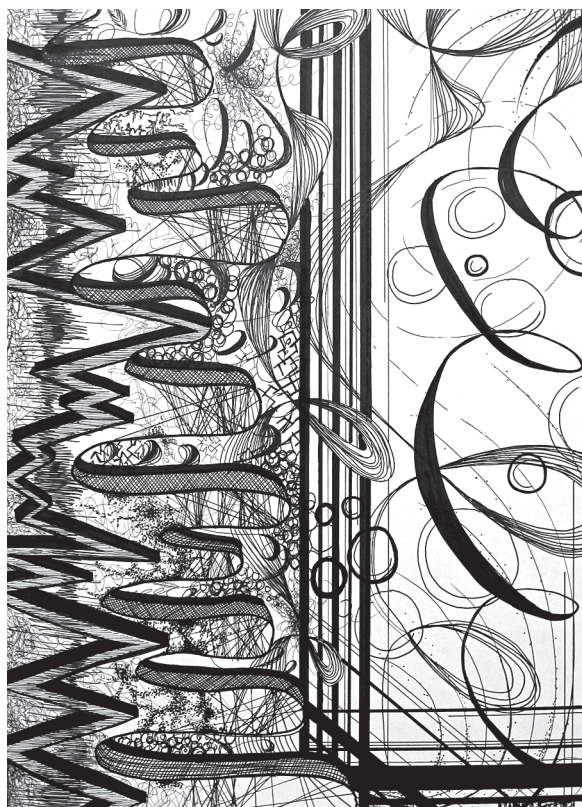
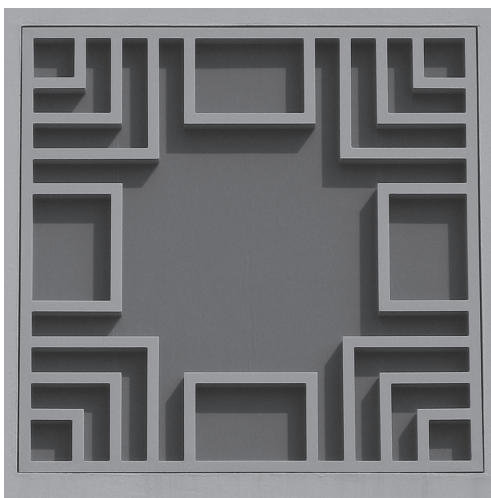
In order to silence my soul, I need to scream.

Mikka Dean

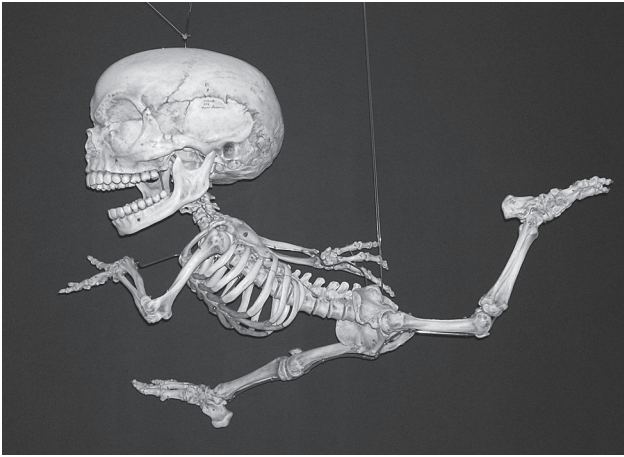
The After Party

The night is void of noises, bar the owl crunching the vermin,
When the thunder of your footsteps shakes around me like a sermon.
Pry apart my wooden shyness; let the moon expose your sin.
You say you're here to save me with a preacher's trusting grin.
Past the pews and down the stairs there waits a secret home you've built.
You gently lay my body on an unsuspecting quilt.
The slab is cold, or so I'm told, it gives my bones a chill.
Kiss my cheek before you take a peek inside the still.
Place the straps upon my body, use the scalpel too.
The rust has covered all the pipes, so nothing will get through.
You want a souvenir from me to keep you all the day.
I could have used my heart to love you, why take the thing away?
You rip a page from Proverbs; you fold it tight and square.
Will you tuck it deep behind my mouth, to show me that you care?
Make a clean incision Darling, stitch it up with thread.
Now place the love note in my throat and ideas in my head.
You slowly light the wicks and bring them close so you can see.
If you close my eyes, I can feel your heart beat inside of me.
My fancy husband you will be and I your quiet wife!
I can love you until you die, but you can not love me back to life.

Andrew Johnson
Art Deco



Monica Escatel
Bipolar



Paige Stanford

Running Man



Melissa Bilby
Back to the
Basics

Rachel Dudley
To Bryant, the Writer,
Waiting in America

Preface

**To Bryant, the Writer, Waiting In America:
A Letter and Poetical Response to
"To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe"**

As I read William Cullen Bryant's poem "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe," I became enthralled in his vivid use of words to Thomas Cole. His words were as invigorating as Thomas Cole's paintings. Each was on the same path embarking upon the same journey in hopes of reaching a shared destination – cultural independence. The only difference between the two was the medium of expression they used: Bryant used literature where as Cole used painting.

I understand and relate to change. Bryant and Cole were attempting to change the dependence on foreign culture into an independent culture filled with individual authentic American experience. Change is difficult for many and resisted by others; nevertheless, Bryant and Cole continued in their endeavors. And, I admire those who stand for positive change and refuse to shrink back when faced with adversity. Cole was faced with adversity while on his voyage to Europe, and he responded by painting an American masterpiece of nature called the "Oxbow." Bryant was faced with adversity when his "kindred-spirit" departed for Europe, and he responded with an encouraging poem dripping with idealism expressing their common goal entitled "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe." I too have been faced with adversity. I suffered a stroke resulting in partial ambulatory paralysis and speech loss, and I have responded by refusing to give up. I continue... Cole continued... Bryant continued ... Change took place.

As I sit nestled in the country town I now call home, I smile as I read and re-read through Bryant's literary work. I can relate. Nature is priceless, and sometimes in the name of "advancement and modernization" we lose sight of the very element that started the need for advancement. Once again, I do not want to be misunderstood, I am thankful for indoor restrooms, running water, and electricity, but I must admit when I wander down into the woods behind my country home, I breathe. Unencumbered by the "noise" of advancement, untouched by the machines of modernization, untainted by man's improvements, I simply enjoy the blessing God has afforded me in the awesome beauty that penetrates my civilized eyes.

I am inspired to continue...Still on a journey, I want to contribute through a reply poem to Bryant's, "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe." Attempting to write in the style of Bryant with the voice of Cole, I began to write as though I was Cole and had just stepped off of the ship onto European soil. I attempted to express the potential shock Cole may have encountered as his eyes searched for nature, but found it buried beneath the houses, buildings, and sidewalks.

Letter To Bryant:

Response to "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe"

My Dear American Friend:

I wanted to reciprocate your encouragement with my own poem through the mutual feeling of kindred-spirits. However, as I write through the lens of a kindred-spirit, I find that I too am filled with sadness. I miss the tangible camaraderie of my fellow American friend who understands and contributes to our common cause – cultural independence. Therefore, I tried, as he did you, to offer encouragement and hope. Even though I am on European soil and you my dear friend Bryant have remained on American soil, we continue to journey together toward independence. We continue ...

Rachel Dudley
Violated

Buried Beneath
Pain of yesterday
I keep silent...
Stalking Shadows
Penetrate my memory

Whispering Winds
Reveal my secret

Faintly Feeling
On the floor

Groaning Gasp
My lifeless form
Keep silent forevermore...

Ed Eldridge
Battle Scene

The battle raged on and on, every day without stopping,
the bombs burst, and small arms popping.
Not even a break, in the sundown hour,
continued to drop, and only sour.
Once was even peaceful, for a brief moment,
then would break the silence, with all its torment.
When fading love, hits the bottom,
broken hearts tinted, until broken.
The countless insults, like bombs and grenades,
pursuit to win, the battle raged.
The children witness, their world to fall apart,
the damage done and broke their heart.

Ed Eldridge

Texas

Well saddle up your donkey, or your horse,
 you are always welcome, to come along of course.
Put on your hat, and grab some grub,
 you're gonna' have some fun, with your bud.
We'll cross the rivers, and come to some lakes,
 it's always wise, to watch out for the snakes.
There are lots of prairies, and mountains too,
 we'll see numbers of animals, even some in the zoo.
With buffalo and long horns, they're everywhere,
 and ducks and geese, just to stop and stare.
There are new tall buildings, and ghost towns too,
 lots of brick homes and a log cabin or two.
There are beautiful flowers, sometimes as far as you can see,
 Texas wild-flowers, are as countless as can be.
So are you ready for some fun, or for doin' business,
 Just grab all your stuff, and come to TEXAS.

Morgan Emerson

Blue Eyes

blue eyes searching
a sea of faces
but all they see
are empty spaces
pale eyes wander
through the rows
everyone wonders
but nobody knows
they look for a face
they're looking for him
but the more they search
their hope grows more dim
he didn't show up
he isn't there
he asked if it'd matter
i said i didn't care
but now i'm searching
for his soft blue eyes
i thought i saw them
i saw only lies

Morgan Emerson
Laced and Intertwined

palms press together
fingers lace and intertwine
like two birds of a feather
the stars align

just for a while
all worries fade away
therapy of a new style
keeps worldly fears at bay

you holding my hand
means everything to me
nothing plotted nothing planned
i hope you would agree

keep me warm all night long
with your hand in mine
cause nothing is wrong
when fingers lace and intertwine



Elizabeth Reed
Castle Window
in Gondor



Elizabeth Reed

Arch of Triumph



Andrew Johnson
City Landscape



Elizabeth Reed
The Coliseum

Mike Fraley
The Box

A Box arrived
on my doorstep today.
Battered, Ragged
Corrugated, and Sealed.

Like a tiny coffin,
It waits
for Me
to Respond.

I keep Boxes
for Boxes like these.
Closed, Sealed
And Welded shut.

No return address.
No known address.
The entire Remnants of
a Wasted life.

It's too late
I realize
to respond
To the only gift my father ever sent.

Mike Fraley
Himalayan

The DJ warns-
Keep your hands
and arms
inside
The Ride.

Revolution allows
loss of control.
Rock Rumbling,
Blushing Bodies,
Crushing,
Rapidly
Motoring,
Ferocious
Loop of Thumping,
Vicious Delight.

No destination
No looking back.
No reverse of direction
stretching into
the Past.

Mike Fraley

Love Injected, Snorted and Smoked

It courses through veins.
Stuttering-sta-stammering,
the heart skips a beat,
murmuring: I CRAVE-
I CRAVE.

The Wave
ebbs and flows
to the crescendo
of ruinous rumination.
Save, please save!

When you left I withdrew.
Delirious appetite-
no desire for food.
Shaking, trembling-
for you, only you.

I need a fix-
a dose of your soul.
To inhale
your saccharine essence-
and end this dull ache.

Is there another
as dependant on you?
I'm begging:
PLEASE-PLEASE-PLEASE-
please tell-me-who?

Chemical reaction
consumes rational thought.
This drug can't be love-
yet I hear myself SCREAM:
PLEASE GOD, I WANT.

Mike Fraley

The First Love is the Sweetest

The First Love is the Sweetest
The Chase is on.
Bitter air sears my lungs
as I run-
faster.

the Crunch of snow tires
warn of impending Doom
as the Cutlass looms
closer.

Pictures had been Burned or returned.
No Lessons Learned.
What is it about this brown-eyed girl,
with Curls?

I don't see the snare,
cloaked in her Cashmere lair.
Wild musk prevails and Overwhelms
my senses.

Her Dark eyes look up at mine
"Just one more night,
Just one more night?"
I might.

Crying Baby on the floor
Fist through doors
I can't take anymore.

Mike Fraley
She Could Not Stay

It was in her DNA;
bleak, Blood stained memories
steadily crept
through her
despondent consciousness
as she cowered
and waited
in the corner.

This particularly
virulent strain
forced her to
desperately seek the keys
to rationalization
that would begin
the final phase.

I often have wondered
which song played
while the engine idled and
the incessant colorless memories
begin to fade
to Purple and Black.

All I could say
to the young boys
who were left behind was:
"You're mother loved you dearly
but She could not stay."

Mike Fraley
Knock Knock

BOOM! BOOM! The knock against metal door reverberates and rattles inside my sensitive skull. The suddenness of the unexpected banging disturbs and disrupts, and my eyes open wide. I survey the surroundings and take solace in the fact that I should feel much worse. My body seems to be adapting to an ever-increasing rate of consumption. Without lifting my head, I reach for the bottle of generic aspirin that is stationed permanently on the bedroom nightstand. *God, I'm thirsty*, I tell myself and reach for any available liquid before downing a handful of aspirin with an unfinished beer from the previous night's binge. Should have checked for cigarette butts, I wonder, but I'm lucky... this time. The dull throbbing headache is almost unbearable as I begin the morning ritual of sifting through the haze of yet another alcohol-induced coma. I run through a mental checklist; like a detective, investigating and analyzing sketchy facts that don't add up. Increasingly, I am not able to piece together the events from a long night of heavy drinking. It's no use this morning; the fog isn't lifting. I know I'm home, in a tiny apartment, alone. Beginning to come out of a stupor, I try to push back the only memory that remains: the same one from last night, the night before, and every night during the past three years. But it's becoming faded, murky, like the vague feeling of *déjà vu*. Maybe the alcohol is finally doing its job. I rise from the bed and recall the loud knock as the strange feeling begins to pass. Still, I can't help sense a deviation from the standard routine...

It is a scorching summer Sunday in the Lone Star State; heat and intense sunlight force the need to draw the blinds, close the curtains, and turn the central air to freezing. Living alone allows certain freedoms: sleeping late is one; being hung-over is another. *What's wrong with enjoying an occasional drink?* Okay, lately, just maybe, it's more than occasional, but I do enjoy the numbing sensation as the alcohol begins to work its magic.

Maybe I should have just one, a little hair of the dog. I glance at the immense round clock hanging above the small kitchen bar; it is well past noon. I tell myself it is five o'clock somewhere. I reach for the large, tilting decanter of whiskey on the bar and fill a small tumbler, neat, no ice, no water. There is nothing like the feeling of alcohol as it punches the back of the throat and enters the bloodstream. It trips troublesome switches in an emotional breaker box, resets the current, and allows for uninterrupted flow. I sit down and flip the television to golf; I begin to doze. *What was I forgetting?*

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! "Hang on, I'm coming." I thought I had only imagined the knock, a dream. Hadn't had any visitors for... *How long had it been?* Sluggishly, I pull on the handle of the recliner with my right hand, grab the falling remote with the left, and in one smooth move, I am in the upright position. I stand—struggling—feeling no sensation in my lower left leg. Hobbled, I restart the flow by slamming my deadened limb against the floor. The blood slowly drains from my head, down and through my leg, as I begin to feel the tiny electrical signals that indicate weight can be placed on my left foot. I stumble towards the door and kick the previous night's bottle of wine across the floor. The rapid movement generates an intense head-rush and with it, unstable equilibrium; the room begins to spin. I grasp the bar for support and catch a glimpse of my reflection in the mirror hanging below the huge clock. Shuddering flashes of familiarity spark formless memories, yet I am still unconvinced. *Who are you?... How long have you been here?*" I ask the reflection.

Although currently unemployed, a promotion allowed an escape to this city. Has it been three years? Considered the heart of the Lone Star State, Austin is not the typical "Texas" town. The locals—an eclectic collection of beatniks, hippies, and liberal thinkers—do not fit the stereotypical redneck, Bible-thumpin' mode. I have always felt I was above such labels, belonging to a smaller, more highly evolved segment of the population, one that doesn't allow sentiment to shape their persona. My surroundings help to regulate spontaneous emotions and are perfect for my solitary needs. Although it is a tiny living area,

the space is meticulously arranged with a black leather recliner positioned in front of a 42" state-of-the-art television. On the wall are black and white photographs of inanimate objects hanging alongside posters of music festivals and art gallery showings. I know they are pretentious, but these artifacts aid in keeping unwanted memories from infecting the atmosphere. Although efficient and organized, wine and beer bottles have begun to clutter the room. The mess normally would cause anxiety—I should clean—but lately I have not had the motivation. I wonder if I should straighten before answering the door?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! "Just as minute!" I realize the remote is still in my hand. I turn the already hushed announcers down to a whisper. They remind me of sycophantic mimes, praising Tiger for yet another 240-yard high fade that lands softly and trickles to within three feet of the flagstick. I faintly remember good times on the golf course. *When was the last time I played?*

I check my messages to see if this anonymous knock is someone I should be expecting, maybe a missed call. No, no messages, no missed calls, no text. When was the last time I received a call? I scroll through the contacts and choose the first number from the list, an Amy somebody; I can't quite remember her last name. I press Send nevertheless; just a busy tone. I choose the next name on the list: Becky; no clue who this is. It's ringing. . . . Finally, an answer, "*we're sorry this number is no longer in service.*" I try several more with no luck. Desperate now, I try all of the numbers in my contact list, only to get more of the same. I tell myself people only complicate your life. Chit-chat on the phone, responding to text, emails—who has time for the bullshit minutia of others. *When was the last time someone knocked this loudly?* I wonder. How long ago had it been since...?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! "Hold your horses!" Moving towards the door, I am distracted by the noise from the pool outside. Muted and muffled, the splashing and giggling rings in my ears. *Don't these idiots know how silly they sound?* Maybe this was the good-looking neighbor who had looked my way when I moved here. I can't remember exactly

where our paths had crossed. Can't quite see her face, but maybe she followed secretly from the communal mailbox. She could be standing at the door wearing cut-off shorts, a bikini top, and holding a 12-pack. "*Need some company?*" she says; I nod, then escort her to the kitchen. This helps to block the rising memory, the one I have been desperate to eradicate.

Before the move, I had broken off a two-year relationship with a beautiful woman who had two young sons. I wasn't ready for instant fatherhood and began planning an escape. A new job would take me to Austin. I told her once I got settled, I would call. I didn't. This was my ticket to freedom. She had asked me not to leave, but the plan was in motion; I would not look back. The decision was not easy. She had nice things: a beautiful house, an expensive car, and one hundred and fifty thousand dollars collected from a life-insurance policy after her mother's head had been blown off. The murder-suicide was no mystery. Her father had been threatening to kill the entire family for years; I guess he finally found the courage of his convictions to make good on his threats. At least he had the guts to finish himself off. She had been the one to find the bodies.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Unsettled, I consider the reality that most girls don't knock this hard. "Who is it?" No response. I approach the door and look through the peephole. The view is obscured by a looming shadow. A sensation washes over me, an unease that causes the blood to drain from my face. I shrink from the door, reach for the now half-empty bottle and top off the glass. I tell myself that living alone causes paranoia and uncertainty as I finish refilling the half-empty tumbler. Apprehension causes distraction, and I notice the whiskey spilling over the rim of the glass. My mind begins to race back in time. *How long have I been here?* The details are fuzzy; something strange begins to stir in my gut. Shit, thought that had been turned that off. Do not need this, right now, ever. I place the tumbler of whiskey to my lips and drink. Unquenchable, I begin to pour another.

I remember when she first knocked on my door, just a few days after her parents' death. She didn't really talk about the

“incident” much, and I didn’t ask. She did, however, express that she would never do such a thing, leaving behind a gory mess for her kids to clean up. Her depression seemed mild at first, but her perpetually sad face began to grow darker over the next two years. Drinking made the situation tolerable, but I began planning my escape just the same. Normally, this would have been hard to leave, but the money was almost gone anyway. One month after the move, I received a phone call: while her kids were away, she drove into the garage, shut the door, and left the car idling. A neighbor found the bloated, purple body several days later. Friends and family speculated about the cause. Most had been aware of her depression, and with the exception of her eighty-seven year old grandmother, no one expressed that I should shoulder any of the burden. *What does she know about depression? Her granddaughter would have gone through with it sooner or later, right?* I try to push it back; this has become a daily ritual. It is easy enough to escape: just pour another drink. *Has it been three years?*

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Seven rapid, forceful, violent knocks. I shrink from the door back to the safety of the bottle. I pour a third drink and knock it back, fast. It’s not working. Although I have wiped the rest of the slate clean, the memories of her are still clinging. I cannot rid myself of this ghost. *Why do they call alcohol spirits?* I wonder? *Am I losing my mind?* Just open the door—just put your hand on the knob and turn. I place my hand on the door; it’s trembling. Funny I didn’t notice that before.

Suddenly, a click, and all comes to an abrupt halt. The thoughts in my head, the trembling, and the knocking are all quiet now. Trying to convince myself all is well, I feel a pressure in the room and in my chest, something is about to change in my comfortable routine. I quickly turn the lock, open the door and...

It is eerily quiet, no wind, no sounds of laughter, no one there, only a yellow phone book, neatly placed, and wrapped in plastic.

Emryse Geye

Girl

girl:

i am not pregnant.
it feels like i never was.
the blood between my thighs
means more than the pregnancy
test i threw out with last month's
trash. it is a good thing.

my mama says good catholic girls wait.
i never said i was a good catholic girl.
and graduation isn't that far away.
i think i will be the first girl in my family
to walk across that stage.
so there. i am not backing down.

i am full of freedom.
but my life is ruined
by the secret that
choked inside
of me.

boy:

girls get pregnant.
guys just don't.

it's her fault.

she took off my clothes
she pulled me onto her bed
she pulled me onto her
she didn't ask for a rubber so
I didn't offer.

girls get pregnant.
she wanted this.
it sounds harsh, but

it's not my fault. and
 I don't want anything to do with
 her. or it.
 she can do what she wants. if
 she doesn't want it,
 she can get rid of it.
 it has nothing to do with me.

girls get pregnant.
 I am full of youth.
 I can't be tied down
 with this.

mother:

when I was sixteen,
 I met this boy.
 you have no idea
 what kinds of things
 my mother said:
 another black girl
 throwin' her life away.
 but I had a child.
 and she is
 the greatest part of me.
 but this is different:

she is mine.
 she is mine.
 she is mine.

I am full of love for her.
 but I have said all of the same things.
 and if I ever get my hands on that boy
 I will kill him.

girl:

i am pregnant.
 my belly is swollen.
 my pants no longer fit.

i vomit at the smell of
meatcoffeepplesicecream.

i am pregnant.
my body is no longer mine.
i gave it to a boy as a gift
and then he ran away.

i am pregnant.
the staff look at me
like my mother does.
the girls stare and point,
aiming pity and disgust.
the boys applaud themselves,
their gender.

eyes mark me:
whore.

i am pregnant.
my life is no longer mine.
it belongs to
the creature inside me.
but i will not let anyone
fill me with shame.

teacher:

They are so
naive
cocky
bored

I tell them that sex causes
disease
pregnancy
the end of their lives

I know everyone has sex.
Maybe not now.
Probably now.

I am full of lies.

If I say

condoms are your best choice
sex is a natural part of love
there can be life after childbirth
I'm gone.

Instead I walk the halls
ignoring the rounded bellies of the girls.
I cannot let them be my fault.

boy:

girls get pregnant.
but boys cause it.

i caused it
i've had sex with other girls but

i got her pregnant&
i love her. &our baby.

how cool is it to say 'our?'
how scary?

we're going to the doctor's tomorrow morning.
she tells her father tomorrow evening.

we can't hide it anymore.
i don't know if we can do it.
i don't think we are strong enough.
i am full of fear.

doctor:

I have delivered
three thousand
six hundred
ninety
seven
babies.

I have learned that
no matter
 how old
 how prepared
 how experienced
every woman that gives birth
looks too young.
They are all
 just as scared
 just as pale.

They all look like
this girl
discovering the joy of a baby's
 hands
 feet
 heartbeat

using it to smother the fear
of her own father.

No one glows.

 I prescribe
 I treat
 I bring life.
 I wonder if I am doing wrong.
I am full of doubt.

father:

I am full of love for my family.
I love my wife.
I have loved her always.
I gave my life to her.
I did not know her completely
until our wedding night.
In the name of the Lord.
To create a child.

We raised her well.
Instilled our values.
Loved her.
For her fourteenth birthday
I gave her a little silver ring:
True Love Waits.
I am not stupid.
I know
temptation
starts early.

She will fix this.
And if I ever get my hands on that boy.
I will kill him.

girl:

i am not pregnant
but i was
half an hour ago
my father waits
alone in the car
he will never tell
anyone about this
what God's people
do not know
cannot hurt them i
cannot be hurt:
i am full of empty

baby:

i am full of life.



Mike Fraley

Cruzín'

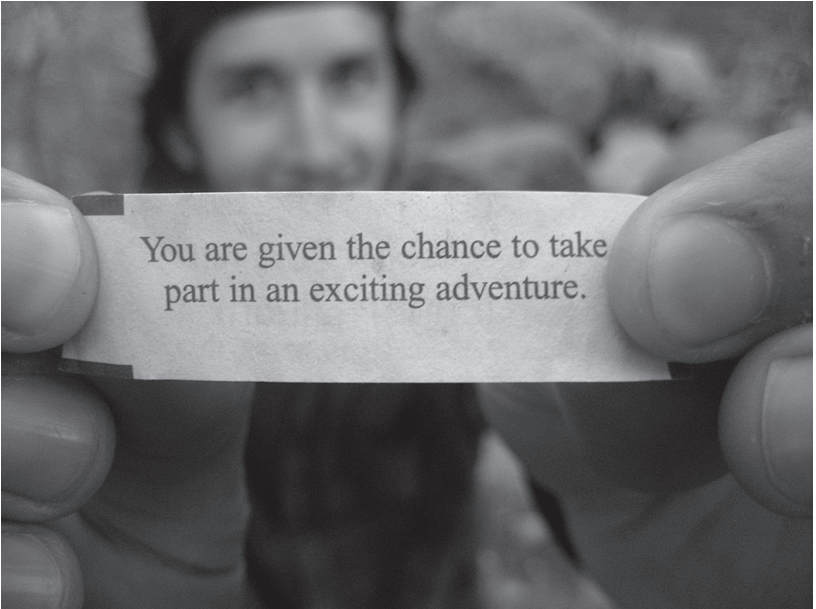


Andrew Johnson
Brother



Will D. Mayfield

Rest Stop



Rachael Mayfield

Fortunate

B. K. Helton

Fortune Cookie

Reaching into a decorative box full of fortune, I pull out my very own manufactured destiny. The paper which once abided in a cookie now has enough wear-and-tear to be deemed garbage.

My fortune reads, "A dark-haired woman will soon be giving you a gift." What dark-haired woman? And, what kind of gift? Such a vague fortune leaves so many questions to the imagination. This "woman" with dark-hair could be one in a billion of the female gender who has what I judge to be dark-hair. It could be black, brown, brunette, dark red, dirty blonde, or even gray! In fact, this dark-haired woman may have dyed her hair any of a variety of colors on the color scale.

And this gift that she will bring? What could it be? Let me tell you, it could be anything that I perceive to be a gift, whether it is good, bad, undesirable, or pleasurable.

O, to be the man who makes a living writing fortunes. I might become fortunate, or might be rather poor. I am willing to bet it is not a well-paying job and that the working conditions are not the most desirable. But, you know what sounds good right now? One of those cookies.

B. K. Helton

Vampire Vultures and Werewolves

Eagerly awaiting another death
the vultures perch behind a desk
waiting by the phone.
When a body is brought to them
they are filled with a twisted delight.
They smell the vulnerability
and they know there is more money to be made.
When the families arrive, the vultures smile and give their counsel.
They comfort their customers while their dollar-sign pupils dilate.
As soon as a family is in their nest the vultures know they are trapped.

Once the arrangements are made, the vampires work by night.
Sucking the blood from the body slowly, they lick their lips.
When they have drunk every ounce of life from the already dead body
they proceed to devour the organs, and if the body is to be burned
then they roast it in the flames of hell
and, afterward, crush the bones into a fine powder.
If the body remains intact,
they stuff it and dress it like a ventriloquist's dummy—make-up and all.
The mannequin is then given a bed that is fitting for a vampire
and prepared for the show.

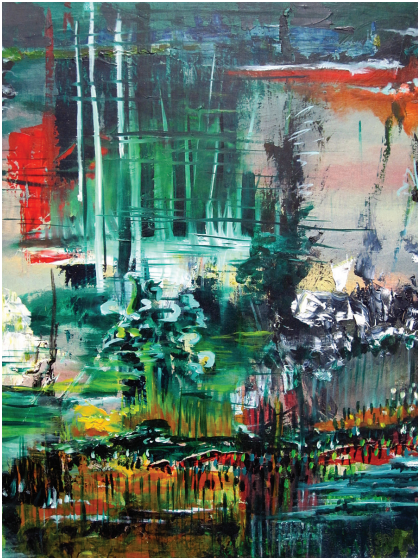
When the masses arrive the spectacle begins.
The vampire vultures usher in the company to their seats
and a werewolf, dressed in the wool of a lamb, takes the stage.
His deceptions are poured into itching ears,
and he dares not to bite the hands that feed him.
He promises that the lamented is in a better place; a state of euphoria.
However, the wolf knows nothing of the deceased
except that they are profitable to him, and that their souls taste delicious.
He tells stories of the departed whom he has never known
and swears by the authority invested in him,
quoting a book he cannot construe—but folklore he surmises.

Then the onlookers are invited to come forth and say goodbye.
Whether it is a last glance at an empty shell or a spooky photograph.
As they exit they comment on the works of the vampire vultures,
either to the death managers' achievements or lack of workmanship.
The guests are then corralled into an enclosure to ponder the life of the
perished, discuss the latest gossip, and to further reflect upon the pageant
as the family says their last farewells with sincerity and loving tears,
never knowing they have been taken advantage of by scavengers of death.
All the while, the pilgrims find temporary comfort in the assertions of the wolf.

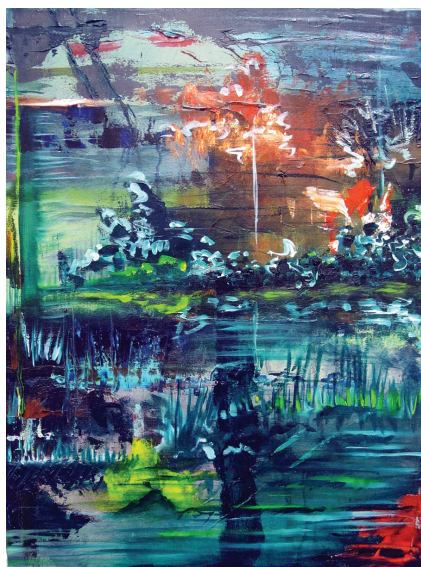
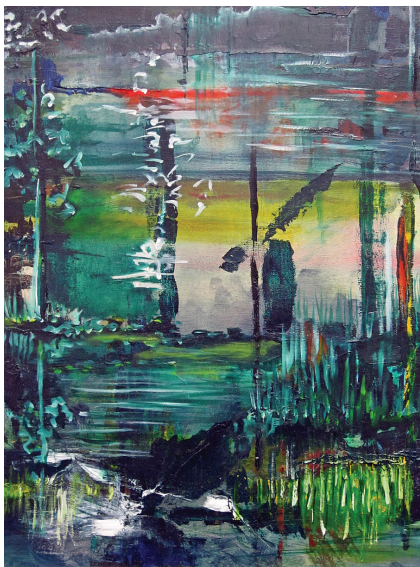


Melinda Smith

On Fire



Portia C. Elrod
Polyptyptic 1 – 4





Mark Martin
Imagined
Cravings



Ashleigh Haan

Primal Forces



Andrew Johnson
Urban Reflections



Andrew Johnson
Reflections



Mike Fraley

Salvation



Mike Fraley
This Way Out



Ashleigh Haan
Myth



Christopher Rushing

First Ride



Will D. Mayfield

Coordination



Rachael Mayfield

Skipping Rocks



Jade Fernberg

Tranquility in the City



Lilly Lovell

Farmer's Way

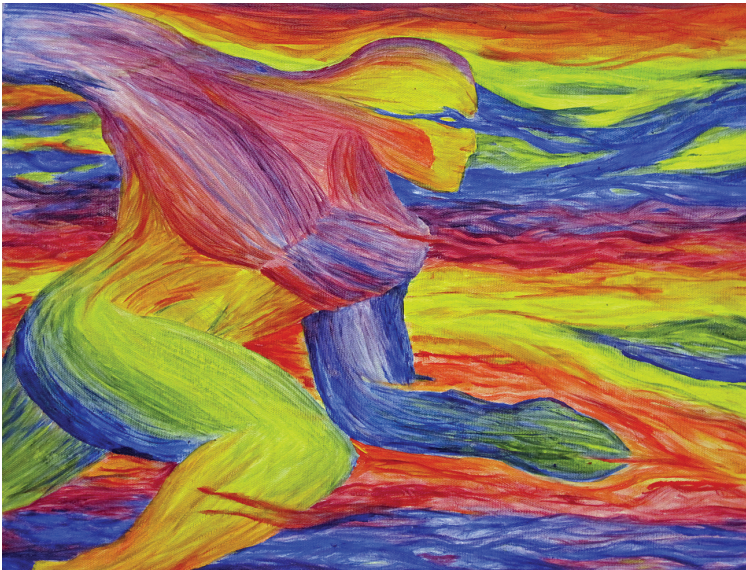


Lacey Anderson

Fall



Mark Martin
Chaos Gene



Sam Burnett

Speedster



Lily Lovell

A Moment in Time



Portia C. Elrod

Tree



Kate Godwin

McKenna

Leslie M. Lowey

Achoo

everything smells
everything hurts
 the face swells
 the head bursts

cedar and pine
eucalyptus and mesquite
 evergreen or vine
 bitter or sweet

florals and trees
spices and herbs
 most make me sneeze
 they annoy and disturb

necessary to distance
beautiful yet dangerous
 causing physical resistance
 inhaling is disastrous

Leslie M. Lowey
At First Glance

Woman ...

Coordinated chaos
 managed as a whirr.
Some may only see the
 frenetic energy as a blur
of sunset colors
 red, orange and pink,
tornado like strewn
 as a storm on the brink.

Fibromyalgia

anger, disbelief, disappointment
 emotions rushing in seconds
defend, educate, explain
 search for appropriate responses

real, debilitating, non-imagined
 diagnosed with true condition
tears, headache, sigh
 another doctor who doesn't listen

Leslie M. Lowey

Enough

Who decides who is enough?

What is enough?

Good enough

Tall enough

Skinny enough

Beautiful enough

Smart enough

Rich enough

Enough.

*{If any of us were enough
we wouldn't need a savior}*

Leslie M. Lowey

God Starts with a Whisper

Her own voice careened out of the open windows. Finally, on the road after numerous delays, she sang with the radio at the top of her lungs, overjoyed for her long weekend to finally begin. Although it was agonizingly late, she was confident her motivation for getting away would keep her awake while being guided down the endless black ribbon of open road by a breathtakingly full moon.

As she settled into a comfortable rhythm for the four-hour trek across a deserted stretch of the Mojave Desert, she felt confident speeding down the center of the simple two-lane road like Pac-man gobbling up all of the dashes. Being quite certain she could safely see if there were another car on the road from far off, she chose to speed, making up some time on the long drive out of town.

About a half hour into the trip, she saw a very small pair of eyes just off to the right side of the road. As she sped past, she realized this was a cute little desert mouse, apparently out enjoying the crisp full moon night. Not thinking much of this sight, other than that the little guy was cute, she continued on.

For about another twenty to thirty minutes or so, she pressed on, keeping this pace, making good time. Just then, a slightly larger set of eyes appeared along the right side of the road. These belonged to a jackrabbit. Obviously another bit of desert wildlife out enjoying the beautifully well-lit evening. And once again, she really didn't think much of it, so she pressed on with the same swift pace.

About another fifteen to twenty minutes passed when a much larger, third set of eyes appeared along the side of the road. Suddenly feeling the urge to pay closer attention, she actually slowed down a bit. Upon approach, she realized this was a coyote, and he was looking right at her! With a racing heart she sat straighter, slowed the car to legal speeds, and stayed in her own lane.

Suddenly she remembered a story her mother once told her: "God always starts with a whisper."

Leslie M. Lowey

J & B

A long, slow, deep
inhale of her
amber warmth
offers a remembrance
of comforting, and
an odd sense of security.

The taste is but a vague,
distant memory from
a mere drop on my
swollen gums.

Too young to identify,
too young to care
or realize harm from
the drop – only soothing.

At my clueless teen age,
I recounted this
indelible memory
of so long ago,
mitigated by my father's
desire to dig out
a crated bottle from
the deep recesses of the
lower kitchen cabinet
the long forgotten gift.

Leslie M. Lowey
Oh, to be Young

“But what is so headstrong as youth? What so blind as inexperience?”

—Charlotte Bronte

Oh, to be Young . . .

you don't know
what you don't know
therefore you know everything

nothing is impossible
all things are possible
therefore your possibilities are limitless

full of self-confidence
belief in self-worth
therefore you can accomplish anything

oblivious to reality
sheltered from hardships
therefore unprepared for inevitable failures

with the wisdom of age
and the experience of life lived
therefore deriving the impossible balance
between knowledge and innocence

Leslie M. Lowey

Sunshine

I saw the sun today
soft rays of dapples light
after days of overcast, drizzly rain.

I felt the sun today
vibrant, glowing, tangible relief
enveloping me in a warm embrace.

I heard the sun today
birds sang, bees buzzed, wildlife scurried,
all dancing in her glorious rays.

I smelled the sun today
magnolia sweet and honeysuckle vine
filling my head with dizzying fragrance.

I tasted the sun today
warm clover honey on fresh baked biscuits
with warm sun tea beckoning me to sit awhile.

I saw the sun today
my soul rejoiced
my heart sang
my mind danced
my body tingled

I saw the sun today!

Mark Martín

The Americana Jungle

Bathing in their own sunless filth ridden jargon they wield
their Neanderthal

One sided view of creation.

They sit scratching their ape like craniums masquerading
their betterment over the

world but alas they sit falsely in their royal imminence,
their throne set atop a state

In its own country, foundations set and barricades ready for the
intrusion of multinationalism and unique out spoken

free spirits, the two enemies most hated

They spout foul bile, full of false tongues and unintelligible
jargon directed at

Those in hopes they will win but, they sit, the clowns of the
worlds fair,

Laughed at in the streets, pubs and steps of every university.

Laughed

At by those whose global passings have gone beyond
their own ledges

Their offspring are pitiful carbon repeated, like a
broken record spinning

Scratched and distorted beating forward the farce of
their ancestors that

Set foot on mounds of ideas squishing the inventive like ants

Bashing their skulls like grapes between the toes in hopes

That the ideas will not infect others but wash away

In their victory drunken stupor

They load up their armor and travel east looking for

The first eclectic souls to steal from and maim in
violent ignorance

When they are finished the return faceless to those of open eyes

And spirits. Their names are as sands tossed in a storm and lost in

The millions of other unrecognizable grains whirling past

In a violent turmoil. They fear the leader of the free
World because his flesh is alien to their eyes but they do not
truly see their flesh
Is as his, their lungs and every cell equal from the
womb of mother origin.
They have shuttered their eternal window and locked down
every path to enlightened
Rooms of fertile growth. They pass the finger to those in
their way screaming
In their crude dialect in hopes they will be the dominate beast
of the Tar Serengeti.
Push and push again they force their way into the false super
sense of self
Seeking what they cannot from within but traveling outward to
the whore, ail and any lesser ranking savage of the same tribe
to impress upon and look superior too.
Feeding of those moments to fuel their lustfully
un fill able reservoir.
They seek the meekest of their own for breeding stock and
take them as a prize.
Beating them down like the pup of a heartless master
drown out in the rays of their
Glory and paraded like the trophies of mount Olympus. Taking
every last speck of soul out of their victim until all that remains
is a shell of decayed echoes long since buried with the kings
and queens of atlantian dreams.

Mark Martín

Follow Your Own Drum

Harkin unto me all of you, I beseech you
Seek your own path. Breath life into you dreams
And ignore the ramblings of those afraid to step
Through the door of personal, spiritual, truths.
Give birth to ideas that will tear the very fabric of
Mankind's soul. Do not fear the rhetoric of the mindless drone,
the soldier that takes orders every day from unseen masters
of past days.

Do not follow the beat of war drums, but instead follow
the beat of your own drum. O poor souls, stop the
blindness within
and seek the rhythms of your inner self, Make it so loud from
within and without the gods
will shake to their knees. Be the great and free spirit that
comes forth and
Hear the cry of freedom and take in how truly weak the mindless are.

Seek out others in a worldly view that does not
include a one way path that so many others have
Shed towards children of racial uniqueness
Be not so narrow to dismiss them as being less
Or inferior. Learn from one another and revel
In your uniqueness

Think about the ones who make so little and die
In slavery so that others may become richer from
The misery and suffering to turn
Around and sale to you those products.
Let that set in concrete with your conscience
And ponder about what things really cost you.
Was it worth that price?

Be creative in all aspects and never fear your own failures
Because from within those failures come the birth of
Your greatest achievements and those to follow

Grind in your mind the unimagined
Theories only known to yourself, and let it process
And grow bursting forth sprouting millions of branches to
Climb from and explore.

Thousands of years of archaic Academia and can try to beat you
into Submission
But I say strike back with a thunderous roar.
find your own beliefs, follow them to your needs and
Reach a great internal divine plane.

Take the time to hear the voices of the radical thinkers
And allow their words to unlock what you so desire
To release but have yet to find the keys
That will let you blossom outward in a infinite
Hymnal of words yet unheard of and so
Brilliant they will linger in the minds of generations to come
See the passion in unconventional educators
And honor their unique perspective,
Share with them your thoughts
Be active and brilliant in you responses

Stop along the road and see the earths many wonders
Take in from her bosom the fruits she produces for you
To grow from. Revel in what she gives you and give back
By caring for her.

Give generously to what you deem a good and sound
Cause and not to the detriment of those minds
You encounter along the way.

I say again follow the beat of your own drum
And release your soul my friend
don't stay trapped within a drone society
That has forgotten and fear the creative
Juices that flow from uniqueness.

Sarah Martín

Red Is the Color of Rust

"You are such a liar."

"No, I swear!" Black trees whizzed past the window as the humming of the engine droned on and on and on.

"I don't believe you."

"I saw one!"

"You did not."

"Did too! It was in a picture."

"Just because you saw it in a picture doesn't mean it's real."

The heat was suffocating. Open windows did little to stifle the rage of the sun as the air was just as hot rushing in as it was standing still. Outside one could see the horizon hiding behind clouds of dust. The grass was a sickening yellow.

"I promise!"

"They don't exist."

"Do too."

"Do not."

"Do too!"

"Do not!"

"Do *too!*"

"Hey! That's enough!" The man in the front seat glared. "Can you two settle down?" The rust from the steering wheel had stained his hands red. Even so, it was barely noticeable.

"Is it true? Are they real?"

The man glanced back for a moment, but then fixated his eyes on the road. He didn't say a word. The sound of nothingness invaded the car. Silence lingered like a rotting stench until it was almost unbearable. Minutes passed. An hour maybe.

"Hey," one began whispering.

"What?" the other said.

"They are short and round..."

"That's enough."

"... and pink and have a weird face," one began speaking louder.

"I'm not listening."

"And they have hooves and snouts and tails!"

"I'm not listening!"

"And they can run and they can jump and they're real!"

"Shut up!"

"They're real! They're real!"

"Stop it!" The man was yelling.

"Look! There's something!" the woman in the front seat yelped. The man spotted it and immediately swerved off the road and careened through a rotten fence. They tumbled down a forgotten pasture chasing the shadow into the blades of grass.

"Get it!"

"You're almost there!"

"Go faster!"

The engine roared but did not pick up much speed. The shadow was not fast enough anyways, and with a thud and a shriek they made impact with the shadow.

"Everybody out!" The man shouted. "It could still be alive. Don't let it get away!" He grabbed a knife off the floor and flung himself out into the barren world. Everyone else did the same.

They rushed around the fallen shadow. The man plunged the knife in without hesitation and peeled off some meat. He tossed it to the woman before he devoured some himself.

"What is it?" whispered the other to one.

"It's a pig," said one, grabbing what he could and stuffing it into his mouth.

"No way."

"Yep. I told you so," said one with his mouth full. "Pigs are real."

Sarah Martín

Not a Rain Dance

"Let's go!" she cries,
dancing with golden leaves
and a wind that loves to
twirl her in many directions.

She jumps the pinecones
and calls to the squirrels
"Where are you going?"
as they scamper up the trees.

She summons the song
of the fleeing birds
and dares the sun
to continue to shine.

And the trees, oh the trees!
they dance to her melody
as she commands the Earth,
wind and sky to her symphony.

Finally, her dance is done
and she falls into blades
of grass and fallen sun
and waits ... waits ... waits ...

Sarah Martín
Pink

I blinked and looked around. The glasses were in my hand, but I didn't believe it. *There are no glasses*, I told myself. *They shouldn't exist*. But there they were. Resting in my hand.

This isn't happening . . . This isn't happening . . .

Oh, but it was. Everyone around me was grey. They had grey clothes, grey skin, and grey personalities. But that didn't surprise me. I had known that.

But I wasn't pink.

My whole life I had thought I was pink. I had known it! When I asked others, they told me I was pink. They said my clothes were a lovely shade of pink, my hair was a hot and spicy pink, and my dreams, they were as pink as the clouds of a sunset.

I had no idea.

Where did these glasses come from? I don't remember putting them on! But I suppose I've had them on for longer than I can remember. It's no wonder I've been getting strange looks from people. I've been acting pink. I've been thinking pink. I've been dressing pink.

But then he showed up. In his little brown book, he had the stories of so many people who wore glasses. Purple people. Orange people. Red people.

I tried to laugh with him, but he just looked at me. He said I had on glasses too. He said they were pink.

But I didn't believe him. I argued with him. I debated with him. I reasoned with him. But he insisted, so I doubted myself.

Later, on the bus ride home, I looked around. I touched my pink dress with my rosy pink hands. *Impossible*.

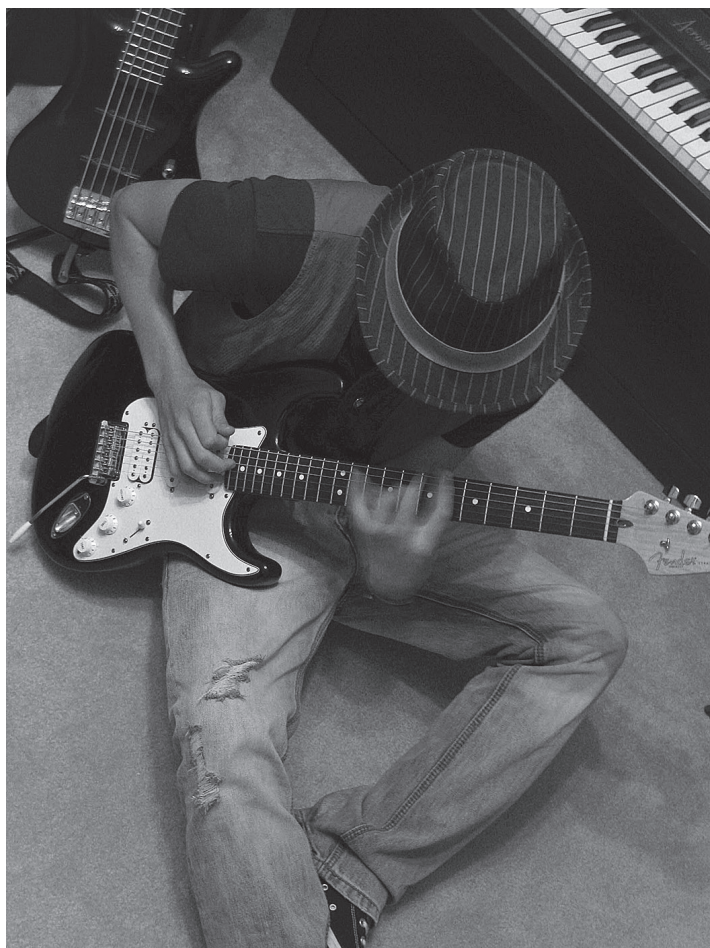
Very slowly, I reached my hands to my face. To my horror, there was something there.

A pair of glasses was resting on my head. I carefully pulled them off.

I blinked and looked around. The glasses were in my hand, but I didn't believe it. *There are no glasses*, I told myself. *They shouldn't exist*.

But there they were. Resting in my hand. And I wasn't pink.

I was grey. Just like everybody else.



Andrew Johnson

Sounds

Rachael Mayfield
dinosaurs

on our way to a concert
you put in a CD—
the film scores of John Williams,
your favorite composer.
the Jurassic Park soundtrack
played over the speakers
as we drove through
a construction site.

suddenly,
all around us were
industrial behemoths
raising and lowering their
arched necks
taking bites of the earth.
tree-top cherry pickers
made of steel.
we were silent,
transported
millions of years back in time.

Rachael Mayfield
downtown

it is 9:26 in the morning
and I see a man
running down the street.
it always makes me nervous
to see people running.
I don't know what
they are running from
or what
they are running to.
it makes me feel
like I should be running as well.

Rachael Mayfield
migraine

someone somewhere
has stuck a pin
in my voodoo doll head
giving me an excruciating pain,
playing nasty tricks
on my senses.

suddenly blinded
by the pounding behind my eyes
my vision fades,
objects begin to disappear.
the Cheshire cat dissolves
into a smile.

“a grin without a cat”

relentless throbbing,
lightning striking my brain.
the pain erupts without stop.
and all I can do is
sit here and wait,
writhing in my nauseating misery

after many agonizing hours . . .
the pin is removed—and I feel
slightly euphoric.
the amazing high
of a circuit breaker that has been flipped.
and I'm left

with nothing but a grin.

Rachael Mayfield

migration

walking alone through the creek bed
she felt an unusual silence—
as if she were being watched
by a million creatures
holding their breath.

a twig snapped below her foot,
breaking the silence
and disturbing the stillness—
thousands of butterflies
scattered from the branches.

winter was accelerated
as the leaves
simultaneously
abandoned the trees.

Rachael Mayfield
Mother's day

right now,
we are all in the same room.

me,
my mother,
my mother's mother,
and my mother's mother's mother.

a collection of
Russian nesting dolls.
generations of women
who carried inside them
little mothers.

Rachael Mayfield
October 29

as a child, I loved helping
my mother with the laundry.
I would bury my face in
the pile of hot clothes
fresh out of the dryer

today I am in
my frigid and sterile office,
copying papers for the millionth time.
I hug the papers as they come
hot out of the machine,
pulling the warmth close to my body
as I contemplate the meaning of life

Rachael Mayfield
ode to leg hair

I haven't shaved my legs
in over a year,
and it's been the best year
of my life.

no more rusty razors
no more rinsing the hair out of the tub
no prickly legs
or ingrown hairs
no more wasting water, soap,
razors, or time.
no slave to the shave
or to other people's
expectations.

I ride my bike home
wearing shorts
and feel the air
breeze past my hairs—
and it makes me happy.

I don't need Venus
to feel like a goddess.

Rachael Mayfield

White

the most unpopular crayon
the color my wedding dress was not
the sum of all the colors of light
and the absence of any pigment

a Beatles album and a Carroll rabbit
52 of 88 keys on a piano
the color of my blank sheet of paper
void of creative ideas.

white color white collar
the white elephant of a White House
with its little white lies
whitewashing the scandals
that stain our country.
whites always stay separate from darks
in the Laundromat of humanity

white trash, white eyes,
white coat, white ties . . .

the last color we see
when we throw up our white flag
against the darkness
of this world.

Will D. Mayfield

air

The air and the air
is all I know.
And in the air there's
coffee and lemon and
all those good things.

The air is all I know
with oxygen that
makes me rise—
and your breath
has only the slightest
bit of it left.

The air is all around and
all I know. It has
smoke and the dusty smell that
leaves make and spices
and all those good things.

And the oxygen makes me rise
and your breath makes me rise
and the air makes me rise
and the air is all I know.

Will D. Mayfield

Dawn who sits

Speckled dawn who sits and slides on wave crests;
she meets me half way and we linger lightly.
Slick smooth thin film water on gently sloped sand—
you can hold her there.

Later we'll weave up the hill in soft grown grass
and up top we will ask its name and permission
to sit and enjoy his face warmed with dawn's last look...
Lovers here drink wine.

Tonight lets come back and see the hill again,
but orange with fury he will refuse us.
That's fine, our eyes prefer the water's silk,
where rocks are hidden.

If you want we can lay in Hill's shadow then,
and drift on tired backs—await again for dawn.
Instead of bringing hot feet home and sandy,
put them, cool, by mine.

Will D. Mayfield
Giant's Parlor

Through the crisp clear water
I can see pebbles lying in their
dappled bed. The current distorts,
and conjures up thirsts
I've never known.

Diving in, the wavering surface
turns to a world with depth like
some giant's parlor.
I swim down to the bottom and do not
take my eyes off of the prize:
a spring of gushing, cold liquid—
inviting me with its slivering dance.

I reach the bottom
and open my mouth. Gulping
and gulping I become bloated
with the water of the source—
I expand with each swallow
until my form is round and
buoyant, one with the medium
of the pool.

Spying an arrowhead in the corner
by some rocks, memory of the
outside world invades with
the thirst of air.
Slap the arms and legs together,
rocket to the surface in a rising
column of bubbles and
breathe,
breathe the air and I know
that something in the world
is pure.

Will D. Mayfield

fly

Last night I think I found out
how to be truly happy.
Not in the sense of everything
being easy or perfectly arranged
to my every whim, but if I could get

that goddamned *fly*, the one
who buzzes between my hand
and my book and my glass of water.

And who flies between my eyes and
into the dark and back
and between every cell in
my brain until I choke on him.

If I could just get this fly out of my head
I could be happy. And yet
killing this thing may only bring
temporary relief or not even that.

I need a fly that would walk
down each word and terrorize my ears
while I get sleepy and yawn
and fall asleep and dream.

Will D. Mayfield
He's Dead

Oh my god he's dead I said. Oh my god he's dead he's dead he's dead. Are you sure he's dead? Look at him I said Look at him he's dead on the gravel. How is he dead? He's not moving he's lying there dead as dead. He's done, zipped, splat out on the ground and I don't know what to do. Why did this happen? It was just basketball. Basketball was all. I don't know what they'll do about it. We were just out after school and out and about and he's dead.

Look at him he's dead. His eyes are closed and he isn't moving and he's dead. What will they do to me? He's down there on the ground and he isn't moving. Nobody saw it either. Nobody saw and nobody knows that he's dead. I'd better get out of here. I'd better get out of here and go home and get out of here because he's dead and I don't think I can be here if he's dead or they will come. They will come and I don't know what they will do to me. I'd better walk out of here. I'd better start walking in this wind.

I'm walking and walking. Just walk because he's dead I can't go back just need to walk and get out of here. Go to the street go to the sidewalk and walk. Legs and legs. I can't believe it he's dead. He's dead because we played basketball while we were out and about after school. That's all we were doing. I remember he said "let's go" and I said "yeah let's go" and then we went to play. But now he's dead how did that happen? Just walk and there's somebody else walking past and it is extra bright even though there are clouds. Don't look at them man it is hard to walk. Just walk.

I'm so thirsty this is making me thirsty I'd better stop for a drink I know I have a quarter or two in my pocket. There's a store with a machine I'm going to get a soda. My mouth is still dry and he's dead. If he were alive he'd be thirsty too but I

might not be because he wouldn't be dead. I can't believe he's dead. Drink the soda because I'm thirsty and keep walking to get out of here. I need to go home. I need to go home because he's dead and that means there isn't much to do besides go home. It takes a long time to get home but it's all I can do because he's dead. There's a trash can and here's my soda and I smell the trash and now my soda is smelling with the trash. It is gone and dead like he is and he was my friend even more than the soda. I'm still thirsty.

Finally it is finally my street. I can't believe he's dead my street is here but my street is weird because he's dead I think. It is my street but it is now so steep and the air is now so dry even though it feels like it might storm and I'm glad to be home but it isn't a right home. He's dead and so it isn't like home because at home I can call him on the telephone to go play basketball and other things. We were just throwing the basketball around and that rock. It was a rock! A rock fell and hit him on the head and now he's dead. I can't believe it was a basketball. The basketball made the rock hit him and I think I threw the basketball. It was just an accident but I did it and I really want to rewind and do it again but not throw it at the wall. I can't believe it was a basketball.

It is my fault no matter what even if it was an accident it was still my fault. I know how sometimes there are people like my sister who never does anything that's her fault but she sure has a lot of accidents and so we blame her sometimes. It is because she always has accidents and sometimes they are big accidents or small accidents but it is like they follow her around and so we don't know what to think. Always we think that next time it will be her fault but it is always an accident that was not her fault and we can't blame her.

Finally here is the front door and the brown carpet in the hall just go to the room where it will be safe I hope. I hope it will be safe there unless they know it was me that had the accident.

The ball! The basketball is back there. It is back there with him lying there dead and waiting for someone to find it. It is my basketball and I forgot it. I forgot my basketball there with him and he's dead and someone will know it was me because it is my basketball and I don't know where it bounced after he was dead but it bounced away because I remember the sound of the bouncing after he was quiet and dead. There is the spot that I keep it in the corner between the bed and the shelf and it is empty almost the way my cap gun is empty because all the caps are shot and the way that I am empty. I am empty like I am hungry but I don't want food but dinner was ready because I smelled it coming in.

Goodness there they all are it's like they know but aren't saying anything because they don't know what to think or they just want to see what I'll do. But I won't do anything I'll just eat a biscuit and it is so dry but I will drink some milk and eat some fries with ketchup. "What did you do today?" and I did nothing. "Did you play after school?" and I'm stuck. I did play after school but I wish I didn't I wish I'd not played because now he's dead. I wish that I'd not played and if I could rewind I'd not play and so no, I did not play. I can't wait to stop eating and go to my room again and hope that nobody comes because he's dead.

They're all in bed and I'm so glad because nobody said anything and I think they don't know and nobody else came to find me. I'm just here and if I'm here until tomorrow how can they know because I'll have been here unless they know the ball is mine. I'll just have to go to school and he won't be there but I can't stay home or they will know I did something and come find me. I will have to go to school and that is all I can do. But I definitely won't go to play and I really won't go play basketball and if someone asks I'll not tell them I'll just say my sister made my ball flat and I can't play.

I'm so tired I can't sleep it is hard to sleep because he's dead. I can't believe he is dead. What will it be like? I don't know it

depends because they might find me and I don't know what will happen. I can't sleep because he's dead and...

I can't believe I slept because it is morning and I think he is still dead. I haven't asked and I'm not going to so it feels like when you think you might miss your turn going home but you don't know if you have yet and you keep going because you don't want to waste time going back because it is getting late but you also might have missed it. I think he is dead and nobody saw when I was there and my ball is still gone but I hope they don't know it is mine. I have to go to school I just have to.

There's the bus. I have to get on the bus because if I don't get on the bus they will know that I did something and they will find out about the accident and I will be someone who makes the worst accidents ever even worse than my sister. He used to sit in the seat two seats behind me and I sat by a girl but I know that he won't be there in his seat because he's dead. Maybe he is still there but how could he be I know that his mom would look or someone would see him and I know they must be looking for someone and I hope they didn't find my ball. There's the bus.

There's the stairs in the bus and the smell of the bus that I usually like but it annoying now and I have to climb them but I don't want to look where he would be but isn't because he's dead. He's dead back there and I must go up stairs and not look and go and sit by the girl and I have to look at "Jamie!"

"Hey! where'd you go yesterday? I woke up on the ground and I saw your ball but it was getting late and I had to go home. Your ball's at my house, but where'd you go?"

He's alive! Oh my god he's alive I said. Oh my god he's alive he's alive he's alive.

Will D. Mayfield
In a life of learning

Walking into the back yard
I came down the steps and sat to read a book.
It was fine—a warm sun gave me color
and Zuzu came to lounge with happy flicking tail,
using my legs for a perfect half-shade.

But then the very worst:
Zuzu got up and while walking into the yard
she began to morph into a crowd—
one full of all the people who ever tried to teach me.

Most of them were looking around,
admiring the landscaping—
or if they regarded me
muttered something about 'chicken-scratch'
or moving on to the next stage of
philosophical exegesis.

They milled.

Their talking, hardly a din began to rise and blend
and ever more into a roar.

Among them as always Zuzu slid phantasmal,
rubbing on legs and fists and everything.

I try to concentrate on my book.
I am giving it a close reading—
pressing my face closer and closer
so I can't see any of them now,
and my eyes are past the pages:
alone in the American Frontier
I'm running and holding the book high above my head,

crossing rivers,
searching for the clearing.

Finally there's the Fir
with a large rock underneath
shaped like a throne—
I will sit down to read and to
live on this rock for as long as I can.

Will D. Mayfield

jaw

Once on poor Yorick's
 JAW
 hung lips
blubbering

now it rests,
ours do not!

masticating
 mandible clamping
 incessantly
there's no place for it
to sit & rest
 no support

only a
 just as worthless and
 ever-slapping,
 rotting tongue
to keep it company

clench & release.
 to chew is to have
purpose & to rest.

 without resistance comes
only agony,
 the pain spreads from jaw to cheek to temple

and bursts from there
into a
 brain wiggling
 and wanting stillness
release comes not with
 simple sleeping.

Yorick make me laugh
 the clacking Jaw
 ever always
 smacks!

Will D. Mayfield

Lincecum

Tim Lincecum walks west through downtown,
dips through the Hayes valley
and into the panhandle,
smelling Eucalyptus.
He curves up to the Haight and,
barring minor distractions,
ascends Buena Vista in the guise of fog.

At the top of the hill Tim Leroy Lincecum,
inciting love, hope and victory
for a believing populace,
surges in power,
warrior of Brahman
expanding into moksha,
delivers ultimate mystical experience
to the people of San Francisco.

Sidearm, Cy Young, Cythereally guided
brother of bucking-breaking fastball
bound for the plate in laced fury.
Monk, priest, wiffle-ball wizard,
he climbs and is lifted above the city.
Extended into god,
he smiles, teeth and freak of fearsome grin,
and the women and police of the city weep
while the bridge narrows and twists in a faint salute.

Satisfied, Lincecum descends the hill in demi-light of divine,
turns east, and returns to the mound by the bay.
He stoops and feels the dirt between his fingers,
considers,
and refuses the catcher's sign.
Nothing more is needed.
He bows, product of the blessed gods,
and smiles out the projected light of Shiva.

Will D. Mayfield
Night Sky

Studying for a test
last night
you sneezed,
and created a night sky
full of twinkling stars.

The Leonids were out
and so was Mars,
comets and galaxies
and all of cosmology
sat atop of
pages and
pages
of Chemistry.

Haiku

vertical blood lines
form on lips cracked by windburn...
and a sudden smile

Raelin Oglin
Buckshot

No Hunting. The sign was splattered with buck shot, a faded red with faded black words barely legible through the bullet holes

I am a woman. A huntress out of my male preconceived natural environment, but this, now this is an environment. A cool October wind trying its best to break through the zipper of my camo jacket, the wet and boggy ground covering my hiking boots with the mud of the centuries, the smell of dew on the earth around me, and the constant awareness of the large rifle hanging on my shoulder. Yep, that rifle is my purse. I can survive with that rifle. That rifle is my purse, and these bullets are my meal tickets. This woman can get whatever she wants with this rifle and these bullets. At first, it is difficult when the realization sets in that you are a woman. Well, that is until your hair grows long and your body develops. I never was one for gussy`n up, but I am not bad look`n and I know it. This little trait has helped me sometimes through the years, but most is the awe of how intimidating a woman like me can be with a slight smirk, dirty hands, and a gun pointed and aimed to kill.

I've been on my own since I was twelve because being cooped up in some fat man's kitchen, doing dishes and cooking, ain't my cup of tea if you get my drift. I mean, who wants a man with hands so round he can barely make a fist reaching out every time you walk by and pinching or patting your butt like you were not even human—more like an amusement park if you ask me. He would just sit at the table like a pig to slop and spit and drool when he spoke—if speak`n is what you would call it. He was from somewhere across seas and treated me like a Negro girl. So needless to say that little predicament did not last long. At first, I was a little afraid. Wondering when the fat man would get tired of just the pats and pinches and try to take it further. So I devised a plan. It was going to be simple. When the fat man gave me his rifle to go hunt rabbit, I would ditch that cabin and head for the hills to live free, alone, and no longer worry about how or what I was

going to do. But you see, ninety-five percent of the time, plans do not work out like you have imagined.

My original plan was to have a bag stashed in the old barn, and when the fat man gave me his gun, I would hit the high road and never be seen or heard from again, but with every good and innocent plan, something went wrong. I do not know if it was just my body language that set him on high alert or maybe he was one of them physics or something, but that early Wednesday morning when he handed me his rifle and a box of shells, he gave me this knowing look. It was like he could see right through my act. Like he knew I was up to something, which at that age I was not incredibly good at hiding things, so I would not doubt it if something seemed peculiar with my behavior. I walked outside stretching in the morning dew and sun, and set out in the direction of the barn. I guess he had waited a minute and followed me out there because right when I reached down to pull my bag from underneath some old boards, I heard him holler my name. "Silly, now where on God's green earth do you think you're going?" Of course, not to have planned for this, I froze in my tracks like a guilty puppy. I remember turning slowly around and the fat man not being but five feet away from me. So I did what any desperate woman would do, I raised that rifle to my sights and let him know that I was leaving. The fat man was not having that. He rushed at me, and I let my finger slip down on that trigger and blew his left knee cap into the back of his leg. I ran from there and kept running. I knew I had to get somewhere and get somewhere fast because once the law heard that a servant girl just blew out a man's knee with his own gun, well the chase would be on. So I ran till I could not run any more. About lunch time I had run clear down to the river which ran east and west about twelve miles from the cabin. I knew if I followed the river east I would walk right into a town. So I decided to try the west. I felt like the outlaw cowboys I would read about in the dime store books. I felt the rush of the pine scent sink deep into my lungs. As the wind rushed by, the sound through the pine needles brought chills to my spine like a faint whisper from glass chimes. The river was running quickly towards the west, almost like it was trying to lead me into the direction of my freedom. So I walked for

what seemed like hours. I do not remember what I was thinking about then, but I do remember the backdrop of the environment. It was surrounded by trees and mud. Patches of wildflowers sprung up here and there where the branches allowed the sun to reach through. Alongside the river there were cat tails and tiny dragon flies circling the top of the water. The sun peaked over the frosty mountains in the south. The ancient mountains draped a dark shadow over the earth like a cloak. Parts of the sunlight and the mountain's shadow painted abstract pictures on the top of the water. It was beautiful. After walking for some time, my stomach began to get restless with me so I went on a hunt. It was good eating that day. Shot me a rabbit and built a fire and ate like royalty. It hasn't always been good times for me, but every now and again my luck changes.

After a good nap, I got up gathered my things and got rid of the evidence of my fire by pouring river water on top of it and scooping fresh dirt over it and covering it with leaves. Figur`in that was good enough, I hit the trail again and walked deep into the night. The realization that I was completely on my own started to sink in as I hiked along. What was I going to do for money? Where would I sleep? What would happen to me? These were constant questions flowing through my thoughts. I realized that the only thing I could do was, at first, steal or maybe trade furs for bullets.

As I let these thoughts bury themselves, it became very dark beneath the thicket of trees, luckily the moon had come out to see me. So I continued to follow the length of the river by moon light until my feet led me to an old warn down cabin set deep in the trees and brush. Cautiously, I walked slowly checking the property for any signs of life outside before I took a step inside. After being satisfied that this house was long since deserted, I made my way to the door. The boards under my feet creaked and moaned with age as I progressed to the door. Reaching out for the handle and swinging it open like a mad man with my rifle raised, I made my way into the house. Nothing. I stumbled around until I found a lantern and taking it outside so the moon could be used as my light, I reached in my pocket and grabbed my matches and lit that oil soaked wick. I slept like a baby that night, better than I

ever did under that man's roof. I do not know if it was me being so exhausted or just the fact that I was free, but I am sure I could have slept for days. I awoke around six the next morn`n with the sun just creep`n over the east window. I was shocked to see how torn up the house was. The table and chairs were broken and knocked over, and there was one old bed in the far corner. The quilt on top covered in a thick layer of dust. I searched around the inside and found some canned peaches, and then decided to search the outside. I needed something to help with my hunting and cooking. I walked to the front of the house and there was nothing there but a few spider webs, so I decided to try my luck in the back. Boy did my luck serve me well.

I found a mini-arsenal packed deep in the back of the dilapidated barn. I found an old long barrel 357 revolver and a half full box of bullets and even a leather holster to boot. I thought I was in heaven. So I added these items to my load, and then I kept looking. I ended up covered head to toe in dust, grime, and spider webs and came out with a hand gun, a pair of wire cutters, and a new shirt that was lined in fleece. I also found some lard soap and a cow hide folded up and pressed away in the small hay loft. I do not think I have ever sneezed as much as I did that day, but that little adventure was worth it. It was about nine o'clock when I got back to walking. Once again I walked till around one and had to set up a small pitch camp and hunt and eat my supper. I ended up shooting some trout out of the river and using the wire cutters to pull the head off and cut down the side, so I could cook it through and pay attention to the color of the meat. Could not afford to get food poison by a lazy mistake. After lunch, I once again covered my tracks and continued to follow the river. I walked for hours. I thought I was lost for sure. The dark was coming up quick, so I knew I had to find shelter at least for a couple of hours. It was too dark to hunt and too early to quite walking. That river was awfully peaceful, and I could hear the night critters coming out to scavenge and gather their food. I was about to give up and just sleep by the river when I saw a house just up the hill. It was a small wood house, and I could see the candles and lanterns shining their light into the darkness. It was like a lighthouse guiding me through. I walked up to the

fence line and climbed over. I was cautious once again, listen`n to the dark and trying not to make too much noise. I finally made it to a window, and decided to have a peek in to see what I was dealing with. As I eased my head just enough to peer through into light, there he was. He stood about six foot tall. He was a lanky man with scruff and a mustache. I could not see his eyes from where I was at, but something about his manner made me more comfortable than that of the fat man. So I decided to take a chance and knock. The worst he could do would be to tell me to get the hell off his property before he shot me; why not? I moved back from the window, shouldered my rifle, and walked around to the front door. I do not think I have ever been that nervous in all my life. I took a deep breath and knocked, once...twice... then a third time. I stepped back for what seemed like forever, and then I heard footsteps coming to door. I was shaken in my boots. He pulled open the door so quick that I thought the wind coming off of it was sure to knock me off of the porch. He walked into the open doorway with his rifle drawn. This time the gun was on me. "What the hell do you want?" I did not know what to do. I tried to speak but the words got stuck in my throat.

"I'm sorry sir," I said with a tremble to my voice. I guess it took him hearing my voice to realize I was a young girl because he slowly let the rifle drop into a less threatening position. Then I continued. "I saw your light on, my name is Silly. I was just wondering if I might bunk up in your shed over yonder for the night. Maybe wash up a bit if that would be alright?" He just stood there looking at me. Then he looked at my holster and my rifle. With a curious and cautious face he stepped out of the doorway and made a jester for me to come in. "I really don't want to dirty up your place sir, if it's all the same to you I'll just stay outside."

Then he did something no one ever did for me. He said "Nonsense, you come on in and wash up. I will make the spare bed. Where did you come from? Where is your family?" I do not know what came over me, but I walked in. We sat up that night and talked for hours.

That man ended up to be my first love. I think it was more of a brother-sister kind of love. He taught me to read and write, and

we discussed different aspects of life. He was a loner just like me. During those years I helped around the house and with the upkeep of the animals, and during the night time we would sit by the fire and by a kerosene lantern read poetry and fairy tales and anything else I could get my sponging brain wrapped around. I loved my life with him, my George.

One night around mid-July I had just finished cleaning the kitchen, and I heard what sounded like breaking glass. It startled me, so I ran outside to see what had happened. I looked around and did not see anything, so I walked around the back of the house. As I turned my last corner I smelt a fire, and when I finally was facing the shed, the whole damn thing was up in flames. I scooped the bucket off of the wash bin and ran around to the water pump, the whole time I kept hollering for George, but he never answered or even came to help me. By the time I got the third bucket-load of water, the shed was nearly completely collapsed. George was nowhere to be found. I stood there looking at the shed and realizing there was nothing I could do, but watch it burn completely, and then put out the coals. So that's what I did. I sat up all night and watched the shed burn to the ground. Occasionally, I would yell for George, but he never answered. Right at dawn the fire had gone down low enough where the bucket water actually did some good and by eight, I had the fire out. I flipped my bucket over and sat and waited for George, but by twelve he still was not home. That is when I started to get nervous. I looked through the house and found George's rifle and hat, so I knew he did not run off anywhere. I checked his bed and it still was made from the day before. I felt a knot swell up in my chest when I realized the possibility of George dying in that fire. I thought back to the night before and what had I heard, and when I saw George last. I realized then that it was George who started the fire, and the glass breaking was the kerosene lamp hitting something. Around mid-day I walked over to the crispy rubble of the shed and began digging through for any signs of George. After a while I almost gave up when I spotted them. There they were broken and bent beneath the roof support beam: George's glasses. I ran to them and scooped them up like a mother would to her child and began to cry. I think I cried until all of my tears were

gone. I was alone again, and the only man I ever loved was dead. I left that house the next day. Carrying all my belongings in a pack and strapped with my pistol and rifle. That was the last time I saw that house. Sometimes when I look at George's glasses I want to go back there to be closer to him, but that would only make me weak again. That would only make the memories of that night come burn`n and thrash`n at my soul again.

I walked for days after that—not stop`n to eat or drink, just walk`n in a livi`n dead daze of unparalleled sorrow. It seemed that my loss of George took the color out of the earth. Instead of the vibrant life of colors, it was a dingy and dull scene of black and white. Finally one afternoon, I came across a quaint little town, and I stopped by the inn for a wash and some food. The people were very nice, did not ask questions, and just gave me what I asked for. I traded some rabbit, fox, and raccoon hides for some food rations and some bullets. I did not stay long. After about three hours of rest I set out on my way again. I was just a weary traveler looking for my home.

Now I am twenty one years of age and still alone and free. I still feel a bottomless pit of loneliness, and I miss George every day. I do not cry, and I still feel like my heart is running from something. It is no longer the fat man or the thought of being stuck somewhere, but now I think it is more so the thought of settling down and growing old that keeps me moving. I walk every day still. I have seen many wonderful and beautiful things. I have traveled all throughout Alabama and the southern states; I have walked through all types of rain and sunshine. I have shot a man, who most likely died from blood loss that day. I can kill any animal and skin and cook it. I am not afraid to get dirty, and I enjoy being able to be lost in my thoughts. I carry a journal with me to remind myself that I am human and to keep my sanity from being lost to the silence. I carry around a couple of books, and occasionally find one that interests me and add it to my burden. So today when I ran into that bullet speckled "No Hunting" sign I had to leave my mark to let people know that I too was here and that I to do not give a hot damn about their rules or regulations. If they have a problem with me hunting for my food, then they can come find me. I'll be waiting.

Tessa Reynolds

Ben

I would like to write a poem that would hurt you

For you to find it on blades of grass and read

Your eyes would stop smiling

Your hands would stop reaching

You would fall to pieces

I would like to write a poem that would make me forget

For me to write it on fallen leaves and let it fly away on the wind

My eyes would stop crying

My hands would stop aching

I would fall together again

Mandi Roberts
Jerusalem

... and so the tradition goes that in 70 AD Titus leveled the wood surrounding Mount Moriah to burn against the limestone Old City walls, and Gethsemane's olives were chopped to aid the conqueror of God's city.

Olive roots never die
Though the thick, gnarled boughs
That cradled the sigh of anointed misery were roused
To siege the city.

Steep Old Walls, castle-cut
And stained with aged blood
And centuries, fought. But the olive-oiled fire exploded
The rock for Titus.

The West grafted itself
In the Gentile way
To roots of True wealth, as battles raged dirty with decay
And dark lamb blood spilled

Old, aching, violent Mount
Seized and long missing
The Man of account who really knew it, walked lamenting
Peace salted by tears.

Peace that will never come
Under its high Arches
'Til Armageddon through the stone-blocked
Eastern Gate marches
A new Jerusalem.

Until then, children, two
To a camel, ride
Barefoot and hoping, down cobbled streets mankind

claims, defiles,
Selling olive sprigs

For shekels, mere branches
Gain them a living.
Sprigs snapped from new growth whose ancient roots
felt Christ's wise weeping.
The tree Titus chopped.

It grew back reminding
Life after water-washed
Transgressions, brought in a dove's rainbowed beak,
warning the cost
Of future of fire.

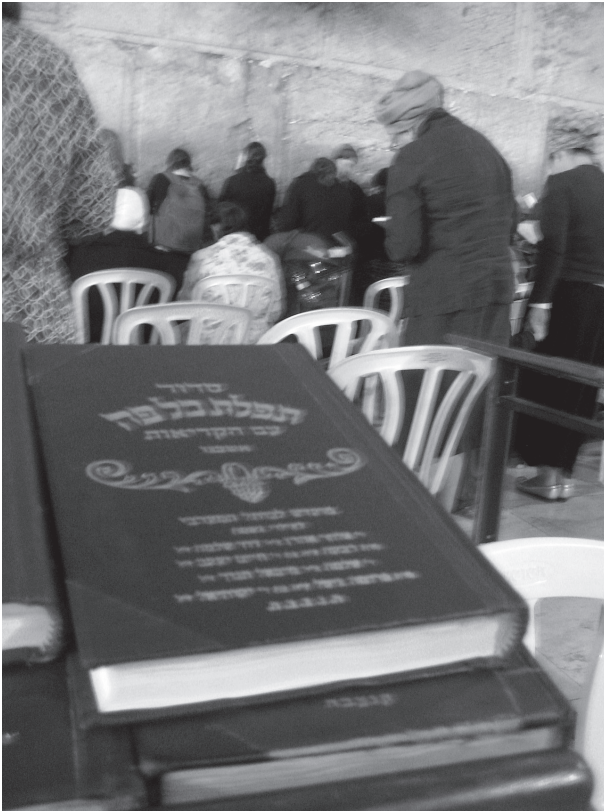
Olive roots never die.
But grow back wizened
And gnarled with life, living for the Eastern Gate opened
Fighting souls spring forth



New World Order



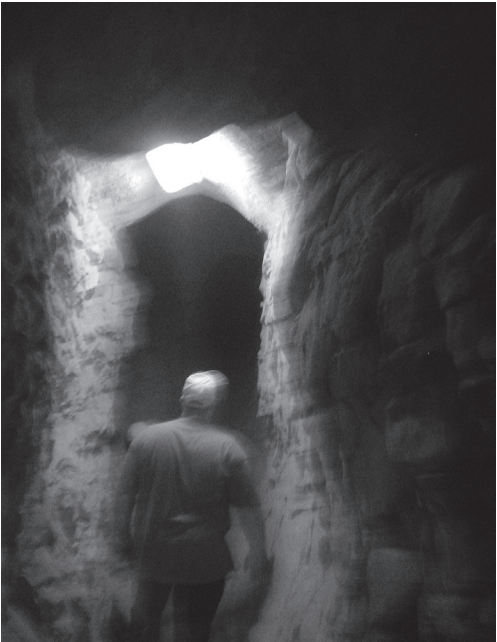
Gabriel



Sacrifice



Sheol



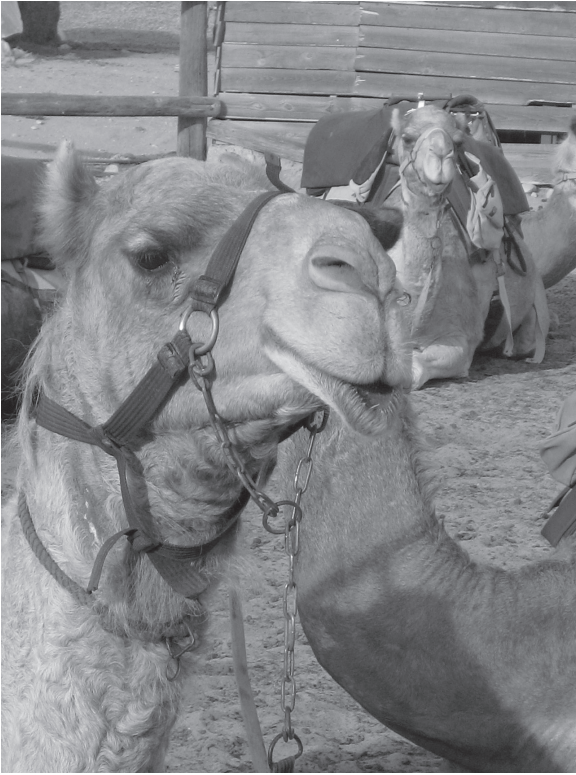
The Narrow Road



Judgment Day



Tradition



The Yoke



Fruit of
Knowledge



The Eastern Gate

Mandi Roberts

Perspectives of Israel

“Shalom.” I said it because it was one of the only words I knew in Hebrew. I wanted to get the sound of it rolling across my tongue. Peace.

I learned how to say Thank You somewhere above the Mediterranean. *Todah*.

And with my first breath of dusty air, I confessed my heart to antiquity.

“Ani ohev otach.” The final consonant of the phrase rumbled unfamiliarly, gutturally, lodging in the back of my throat. I love you. Now I had to rely on other connections I had with this land to explore it, as I had already exhausted every word I knew of its language. Peace. Love. I could only be thankful. Hope was as evident in action as the other two.

Israel. God’s Holy Land. Physical, mystical, it enlivened my every sense. As my steps crunched Ben Gurion Airport gravel, this first time I had ever left North American soil, I shifted all consciousness into observation, wanting to experience it all, watching, feeling, waiting for the completeness of the images I had started in daydreams to fill. I thought of how many had claimed this tiny plot of land; I felt elated to walk among them, refusing just to take, but also to give.

I had come to get a fuller picture of my religion. To expand the rough draft my Americanized brand of Christianity had begun. This was a land of olive roots—peace and attachment—for my soul.

My identification with this heritage had started twenty-three years ago, thousands of miles, an ocean and a different culture away in Bible-belt Texas. I had a lot of passion ignited. But I also had a lot of questions, a lot of stereotypes started, that the tangibility of Israel could mature.

The perspective shifts I would experience in the process were dizzying. I could only hope to absorb, to record, to photograph, to reflect later.

Now I shall give. To you, my American audience, in case you grew up as I did only seeing half simply because of geography, a sketched map outline un-fleshed. I wish to give you more to the image of Israel, of Christianity, of humanity.

2009. America was still in the War on Terrorism which soaked our perception of the Middle East with images of border riots and culture clashes staining ancient streets with blood, with whirling turbans and religious collisions with Western democracy. I had trembled as I was searched extra thoroughly at the airport, and stepped with racing heart into unknown conflict. On the other side of the globe from the only part of Earth I had ever touched, forgive me, but I was a bit shocked to see that Tel Aviv was a much modernized, orderly and thriving city. My sense of threat vanished, faded not because of the modernization—which ebbed or intensified as I criss-crossed the country—but because of the familiarity of humankind living there despite cultural differences. I fell easily into awestruck fascination as I traveled across the diverse wilderness, uniting past, present and future, and into Jerusalem where the faces of humanity were still rimmed in tasseled fabric, black Orthodox hats or circular Yamakas. There, the inner secrets of mankind still clung closely to tradition. There, the air smelled of lamb and mint, and the communities were split into four quarters: the Muslim Quarter, the Jewish Quarter, the Armenian Quarter, and the Christian Quarter, though they all merged in the Old City to worship or shop or sell at huge bazaars. Humanity in division, humanity in unison, mulling it over across laundry lines and pomegranate juice.

In the congestion, the air burst with Muslim prayer calls singing strangely in my ears over loudspeakers to echo over the valley, bathing the sacred stones of the Last Supper and burial place of the Davidic line. Who owns the air? Or the rocks it falls on? Once, an Israeli pulled out his driver's license

and revealed that his nationality was listed as Jewish; he felt it undermined his claim on this land. (In America, I am not listed under the nationality of Christian.) These things shocked and confused me; they were a testament to a greater tolerance than this land was often given credit, of a hostility in return infused like tattoo ink to guarantee they did not get too comfortable. Far out in the white-yellow wilderness, camels plod in long, roped progression, bearing their yoke with restrained dignity in the fashion of their owners.

The mixed Jerusalem locals lived in a sort of harmony which rippled with an undercurrent of tension that could at any moment break loose but did not, sharing holy sites and living together on blood-soaked, God-blessed land, threatened with the claims of so many nations, sharing insights with tourists. I felt a sort of longing, a type of envy that they lived on land with such a past, with such a future, even amidst a troubled present, and lived for higher goals than consumerism while still incorporating it necessarily into their lives. But everything they did seemed to hold a distinct legacy which reworked my accustomed view of profit. This was life. High goals happening. People living for principles; living with generations of tradition under their feet to remind them. They say anywhere you put a shovel in the ground in Israel will be deemed an archeological site; every inch of space has been lived upon, over and over. There is no blank slate, only a limestone bedrock and well-sifted layers of pen and pew dust.

The rush of life filling the lungs as the soul expands is its own kind of frenzy, its own kind of rapture away from the mundane and trivial. The effort of higher function stretches the confined wings of the immortal within the mortal so that for a moment, a human has a mind-splitting sensation of an ethereal grandeur buried within, waiting, insisting, luring with a sense of purpose, a meaning to it all.

The modernistic independence and superiority of my psyche re-shaped and embraced thousands of years of intertwined generations as I rode from the southern tip of borderland Eilat

along the Red and Dead Seas stacked with bright coral and salt pillars, along the ancient Spice Route of the Magi. In a day's drive, I passed millennia of history through the sandy peaks of the Sinai and Paran deserts dotted occasionally with Ark-ancestor Acacia and nomadic Bedouins hauling camel trains and new, portable water tanks past phone wires. On across the forests and rock-terraced valleys of David's childhood spotted with crumbling Watch Towers where humans spotted Angels, the nondescript pastures hidden where Saul's men marched against giants, the advanced agriculture of the once-desolate Jordanian Rift Valley now thriving with inch-and-a-half, molasses-sweet dates, and through tiny towns with ancient names, ancient women sweeping shops and ancient ground being broken back open with wells shooting deep like dark tunnels to Sheol. With a few other Americans, I pulled up a viper coiled around rope as we dredged a pail of water up from the depths in the fashion of Rachel and other women so many centuries ago. Some local boys had sat shirtless and ready for an adventure-plunge when we had arrived and disturbed their intentions. Their predecessors' promise of the Exodus copper-snake miracle hung ever-present in the breeze, still protecting them, and us, from the vipers' bite if we just looked up from our own plans and trusted in something greater.

Miracles. The air seemed ripe, sizzling with their potential: the placid waters of the Galilee overlooked by the temples of pagan storm and chaos gods, remembering the Man who calmed them; the rows of gravestones lining the Kidron Valley, climbing Mt. Moriah in hopeful homage to the Eastern Gate and the prophecy it holds; the lone cloud shaped as an angel appearing in the cloudless sky above my head during a Shabbot ceremony; and Gabriel walking the streets with little boys selling olive sprigs near Gethsemene.

The giggles of native children echoing in Hezekiah's water-swept, stone-chiseled tunnel like a pitch-dark, water-park ride still ring in my ears. The whispered complaints that Jewish Holy Sites might be given to Palestine in political moves of

Western civilization still haunt me. The chained caravans of camels still sway me to sleep. The prayer I pled in Hannah's footsteps at Shiloh still pours from my lips. And the images of Israel still fill my meditations where Bible text leaves off.

I sat far, far underground in a cave beneath the Holy of Holies. As I looked up, I saw a picture of Jesus spray-painted on the stone. This was Hebrew graffiti. Now that I sat here, it told the legend of God's interaction with mankind in a vertical alignment. God the Father in the Ark sat above Jesus the Son, above the Holy Spirit—God's newest promise within mankind—within me. It was Handwriting on the Wall. Mene Mene Tekel Uphasin. I thought of the bus station we as modern humanity had built on the spot Christ was crucified. Present the same as past, mankind had been weighed and found wanting, God intervened, and humankind hopes. And the rocks record; they are but film for a lasting perspective. The Israelites still live off these rocks. They build them into alters. Christianity lives off these rocks. These grains of sand are patterned as precious heartbeats, signaling life.

Near the Ramon Crater, an Israeli man told me my birthday falls during the parashah (the Weekly Torah portion read in the Temple) of Re'eh. I did not know what that meant. He replied that it was my blessing from my Father.

Re'eh means "see" in Hebrew.

I was given the blessing to see.

To see beyond texts, into life, into the supernatural.

To see new sides of my God, of humanity.

To see expanding images.

To see.

Today raba.

C. A. Schneider

A Hero

1. Bomb Threat

He couldn't help but be a little annoyed as he ran through the freshly deserted office building, papers blowing in his wake. A bomb threat? Really? He clearly had better things to take care of. Bomb threats were always just that: an empty threat.

Then his olfactory sensors picked up a trace of cyclonite. "Chief," He called over his comm., "I smell plastic explosive."

"You *smell* plastic explosive?"

"Yeah, olfactory implants. Doctor Blanchard installed them just yesterday. But let's save that for later, right now you need to get everyone away from that building. This is more than a threat."

"Copy that; be careful, Micah."

He accessed his VIZR sensors and traced the C4 trail. The bomb was projected to be on the 14th floor. He was on the 12th. He raised his left arm in the air and fired off three shots of superheated plasma into the ceiling, then shot off three more at the ceiling above that and launched himself through the resulting holes, jumping two stories as though it was a foot. He sprinted down another hall, getting closer and closer to the source of the smell. He crashed through the break room door and saw the bomb. He had half a second to wonder how they transported 250kgs of C4 up fourteen floors until he saw the timer. He threw himself through the window just as the building erupted. The shockwave blasted him through the plasticrete wall of the adjacent building, fifty meters away, into the cubicle of a very surprised architect. "Hi there," the Hero said, and promptly lost consciousness.

2. The Rising Dissidence

On the fourth story of the City Hall, a quiet meeting takes place. Mayor Ibdis looked at the hero, "The town is upset. They

feel that the loss of the building last night was directly your fault. They demand you be reprimanded for your actions.”

The Enforcer walked over to the window, looking out at the gathering crowd. “Whatever must be done, do it. Whatever keeps the peace.”

“Some of the more radical citizens are calling for the removal of either yourself or your powers, but that is obviously out of the question. We need you to keep defending Cyrano, at any cost.”

“Yes sir,” Micah replied, “I won’t let you down again.”

The Mayor could tell Micah was about to make a grand exit. “Call me when you need me, Ibdis.” He opened the balcony door, walked up to the edge, and jumped back to earth in front of the protesting crowd. As he walked through the crowd, people were in awe of him. These people who had just been holding picket signs saying things like “All Men are Created Equal!” or “Is the Enforcer above the Law?” Now they reached out a hand to touch him, trying to hide the symbols of their dissidence. Once Micah reached the center of the crowd, he recognized a city councilman. “Good to see you, sir,” the infamous Enforcer said, and then he kicked off the ground and sailed to the top of the City Hall, one hundred twenty feet up. From there, he saluted the Lady Justice Statue and leaped towards home. The fact that the dissidents had a city councilman on their side was extraordinarily disconcerting. He would have to talk to the mayor about this.

3. The Burglar’s Blunder

This was his big day, his first time leading a burglary. He’d been with the Cations for some time, but only as a henchman. Now, if he pulled this gig off, the gang leader would see that Alfonse was middle management material. He pulled on his yellow and blue hoodie and his Lightning mask, the hallmarks of the Cations. He checked that the rest of his team had followed suit, and they had. He handed out the semi-automatic rifles that were standard issue to their members but kept his

favorite 12-gauge for himself. They pulled the van around to the back entrance, shot the guard stationed there with a silenced assault rifle, and used his key card to get in. They walked in a few feet and shot all the guards in sight, bringing their total up to nine. Alfonse sent one of the more bloodthirsty juniors out to find the last remaining guard and sent the two tech specialists to the vault to get to work. He heard two shots, and his blood lust partner came back around the corner and gave him the thumbs up.

"Listen up!" Alfonse shouted. "You're all a part of this little experience, and I have a few tips to guarantee that we all walk away from this as happily as possible. I know that the tellers have already hit the silent alarm, so I want each and every one of you to call 9-1-1 and tell them to stay home and especially to keep their little pet, the Enforcer, out of this. If the cops try and stop us, or they send in any men, then hostages start dying. Call them, now."

The three dozen or so occupants of the bank each got out their cell phones and followed orders. He saw one child in the mix. "You," Alfonse pointed to the child, "you and your mother can leave." He may be a gang member, but he still had a conscience. He didn't want to take any innocent life if he didn't have to, especially that of a child. The mother and kid walked out the door.

He hit his comm button, "Tech, how is the vault coming?" he asked.

"Great, we're almost through the software, then the hardware will be a cinch," one of the two techies responded. "There, that should get us through the—" There was a loud crash over the radio; then only static. Then the air was pierced metaphorically in the form of a scream and physically in the form of a body hurtling through it. Alfonse recognized said body as one of the tech-crew. Thinking quickly, he grabbed the nearest teller, a balding man in his late forties whose nametag said "Steve," and shoved his nine millimeter against Steve's head.

“Leave now, Enforcer!” Alfonse yelled. “We have hostages; you were warned!”

Micah took one step out of the shadows, and Alfonse snapped. He put a slug in the head of his hostage and started firing his 12-gauge randomly into the crowd. The rest of his crew followed suit, causing as much carnage as possible. Micah, momentarily stunned by this reckless abandon, shot tranq darts into the neck of each assailant. Alfonse dropped his weapon and felt for his neck. There was blood rushing out of it at a tremendous rate. He realized that the dart didn’t just pierce his jugular artery, but rather slashed it. His last thoughts as he slipped into oblivion were, *“So much for middle management.”*

4. The Vote

“Ladies and gentlemen of the City Council, in his debriefing, Officer Gerard Micah clearly stated that he was not aware of the calls to the police from the hostages but rather was passing through the area at the time and saw the van in the back alley with the dead guard outside when he entered. He obviously cannot be blamed for the following events.” The Police Chief finished his address and stepped down from the podium. Micah sat in the back of the chamber, watching the proceedings.

“The so-called ‘Enforcer’ allowed nineteen people to die, and left twelve more severely injured!” one of the city councilmen yelled, the one Micah recognized from the crowd the previous day. “He must be held accountable! Justice must be done!” His face turned red at the last sentence, as though to reinforce his statement. “I say we remove his implants! That we impound his armor!”

“I make a motion to put this to a vote,” another council member said, a woman this time.

“Seconded!” The red-faced man gasped.

“All those for?” the mayor called. Five hands were raised.

“The total is five for, ten against the removal of Officer Micah’s

implants. Officer Micah, you may retire. I know I speak for us all when I give my thanks for your service to Cyrano. ”

Micah nodded and left the room with the police chief following closely behind him. The deputy was waiting outside the doors for them.

“Thank God you’re here, Sir. We have a police chase in progress. ”

“Why wasn’t I informed earlier?” the Chief demanded.

“They wouldn’t allow me into the chambers to retrieve you, said what was going on in there was more important than anything out here. A man fleeing his house, where he supposedly murdered his wife and daughter, is on the run down ... I-22; I have a chopper for you chief, and they recommend that the ... Enforcer? Chief, where’d he go?”

“He was gone as soon as you said ‘I-22.’ God help that poor murderer; he’s got an angry hurricane coming after him. ”

5. Homicide

Officer Davis was driving down the freeway. Officer Davis was driving down the freeway at 120 miles per hour, chasing some freaking lunatic who apparently murdered his entire family. Usually lunatics drove nice slow trucks or something sedan-like in nature. The last chase Officer Davis was a part of was maybe 60 miles per hour; the suspect drove a Ford Taurus.

This guy drove a Ferrari. The police cruisers could barely keep up, but they were. And Officer Davis was right on his tail. The freeway had been cleared, the exits blocked, and Officer Davis knew that this section of the freeway was a straightaway, so he slammed on the accelerator and got alongside the Ferrari to try to spin the vehicle out. Just as he was about to slam his cruiser into the suspect’s Ferrari, the Ferrari slammed on its brakes. So did Officer Davis, and he spun around to try and block the suspect from continuing his escape, but he saw that the Ferrari wasn’t going anywhere.

The hood was completely crushed in, and a couple tires were bouncing down the freeway. Then the cockpit of the car exploded out, and two bodies flew through the ceiling. It was the Enforcer. He was clutching the suspect and screaming something at him. Officer Davis rolled down his window so he could hear what was taking place.

“—you or did you not kill your wife and your daughter!” The Enforcer shouted at the suspect. All the suspect could do was mumble and stutter back. Davis couldn’t blame him; he couldn’t imagine anything more intimidating than looking into the cold steel helmet of the cyborg who just destroyed your quarter-million dollar car.

“Yes or no!” The Enforcer screamed.

“Y-y-y-yessir. Please don—” The suspect was cut off by the concrete wall that suddenly rushed into his side. The Enforcer had thrown him into the side of the overpass.

Officer Davis jumped out of his cruiser and sprinted over to the suspect, pistol drawn, and pointed it at the Enforcer.

“Micah, I’m going to have to ask you to calm down. I know things have been tough, but you need to return to the station. Do you understand?” All the Enforcer had in reply was to do one of those kick-start jumps that launched him half a mile into the air. He left a small crater.

Officer Davis turned his attention on the suspect, and by now several other officers were on the scene. He felt for a pulse, but there was none to be found. Officer Davis started CPR, but he knew it wouldn’t work.

The Enforcer had murdered a murderer. Cyrano would shatter from this news. None of the officers spoke. They knew that a storm was about to strike.

6. Outrage and Retribution

Paul Crazinski was appalled. In all of his seventeen years on city council, and his five years in seat two of city council, he had never seen such brutality. The doctor—Dr. Schultz was it?

—had said that the victim, John Carlson, had every single rib in his ribcage broken. No, broken wasn't the word Dr. Schnapps used: it was shattered.

In the x-ray that he handed out, one couldn't even distinguish where the ribs might have been to begin with. The good doctor also said that the man suffered cranial trauma and hit his skull very hard against the wall. He broke his back in several places and some vertebrae in his neck, too. His femur was also snapped in two.

It was disturbing. But not quite as disturbing as the next picture Dr. Schnepf handed out. It was the crime scene photo of the victim, crumpled against the wall. He was clearly battered and bruised, and there was a spider-web of cracks in the wall behind the victim. The concrete wall. Paul wasn't listening when the doctor told the estimate of the force involved to do that, but he was sure it was a lot.

"That's enough, Dr. Schnitt—" Paul began.

"That's *Snyder*," the doctor interrupted.

"Excuse me, Dr. Snyder. We have enough evidence of Officer Micah's brutality to make a decision. I make a motion to remove the cybernetic augments from Gerard Micah."

"Seconded," called out Jackson, a red-faced, outspoken opponent of the Enforcer.

The Enforcer himself sat in the back corner of the chamber, still in his power armor. Even though his helmet sat in the chair next to him, the unmasked crusader's face was still completely inscrutable.

"All those for?" The mayor asked. Twelve hands were raised. The Enforcer seemed to slump in his chair, but that could've just been Paul's imagination.

"The motion passes, twelve to three. Officer Micah, please go to the specialist, Dr. Blanchard, at the police station to have your powers stripped. This emergency meeting is adjourned."

7. Opportunity

Franklin “Phantom” Chaplin was intrigued. The city had cast down its idol, and it would suffer because of it. He was walking away from a meeting between the three biggest gangs in the city, the Alphas, the Cations, and Phantom’s own team, the Poltergeist. They were going to hit nine banks, three a piece.

He made a few phone calls and made sure that his three “Ghouls” were ready to strike. The hits were going to go down simultaneously tomorrow at 3:00 P.M. They were going to hand pick ten “Ghosts” to work the bank, with the rest of the gangs’ members scattered on the streets to take out the cops when they inevitably arrived.

With the Enforcer out of the picture, Phantom really couldn’t see how this could possibly go wrong. He couldn’t keep from laughing as he walked out of the city call. It was a monument to the gangs’ power that they could hold their secret meetings right under the nose of the police without ever being caught.

Cyrano was going to burn.

8. Citizen Micah

Gerard Micah was just a man. No longer a police officer, he had no badge, no authority. He had scars. Scars that were the only proof of what he once was. And the way people treated him. The way they looked at him. He was ashamed of what he had done, and the city was ashamed of him. Cyrano would never love him like they once had again.

The waitress handed him his coffee. Black coffee. He hated black coffee. But he wouldn’t allow himself any pleasure in life today. He walked out of the diner and down the street. It was blowing cold and rainy, and while his overcoat protected him from the elements, they couldn’t protect him from the people’s icy stares. He pulled his hood over his head, acting as blinders, so he could only see the people straight ahead of him. He looked up into the sky, the rain spattered across his glasses. The sky was a field of grey, no distinguishable clouds, just like a dome of steel had surrounded the earth.

A glint of something caught his eye, and he saw a white cloak on the roof of one of the smaller towers. He instantly knew what it was: a Poltergeist. The building was the Trans-National Bank. He walked down the alley behind the building and unholstered his trusty silenced 9 mm. There were three large SUVs behind the building, all empty. He looked around the last vehicle at the door. The Poltergeist had left two rear guards to watch the door. Micah shot both of them without a sound and walked in, but not before picking up a silenced AR15.

The Poltergeist were known for their silent takeovers and no doubt were already working on opening the safe. Micah walked towards the safe room, silently taking out two more Ghosts in the hall. He walked into the room and saw five more Ghosts, along with the Ghoul, denoted by his grey cloak. Micah opened fire and shot down every single one of the Ghosts and then knocked down the Ghoul with the butt of his rifle.

"Who are you?" the Ghoul demanded.

"Gerard Micah. Heard of me?"

"Th-the Enforcer? How'd you know we were gonna hit this joint?"

"Call it dumb luck. I don't have a badge or any handcuffs, but don't mind as I call the police. Do you have any other men here?"

"N-no sir. There are some on the street, but I've already given the retreat order to them. They'll be long gone by now. "

9. Reinstatement

Police Chief Johanson was listening to the mayor's speech to the city council. Johanson was proud of Micah, and so was the rest of Cyrano. Their hero-turned-demon had just reconciled himself in their eyes, single-handedly stopping the slaughter that could have been at the Trans-National Bank. Only three lives were taken there, those of three guards, while the robberies at the eight other banks had caused heavy casualties.

At one bank, almost forty good men and twenty innocent civilians were killed because of this madness. And the Enforcer only let three die, all without his power. All without even a badge. Yes, the city was proud, and it was also forgetful. But for now, they would recuperate their losses and celebrate their victory.

The city council just voted, unanimously reinstating the Enforcer as Cyrano's lone savior. Chief Johanson smiled.

10. Reflection

The Enforcer sat on the balcony of the mayor's office, looking out onto the cityscape. His helmet sat at his feet, and he was comfortable in his armor. The mayor walked out of his office and onto the balcony.

"You know this won't last," Micah said. "Someday I'll mess up again, and these crooked vultures will once again be ready to swoop in on me."

"I know," the mayor sighed. "That's the problem with democracy: the people have the say, and the people can change their minds faster than their clothes. I'm afraid you'll always have to keep on guard. They can't wait to see you make another mistake."

"It's a love/hate relationship, but I swear I will always do my best for Cyrano, and if she says I must step down again, I will do so without hesitation."

"It's the curse every man in the public's eye must face. We are no better off because of our fame, despite what the people think," the mayor mused.

"Still, it is better to have lived in service, than to die in obscurity."

Gerard Micah, the Enforcer, the hero of Cyrano, gazed out on the city as the sun sank below the skyline. He would not die in obscurity; this was one thing he was sure of.



Andrew Johnson

Fields of Sacrifice



Kate Godwin
Young



Amanda DeBusk

Shimmer



Kate Godwin
Senior
Self-Portrait

Crystal Sims
Tiny Bell's Voice

Dedicated to those going into Education

Tiny Bell always tried to be silent. Her voice was so small that it embarrassed her. She was tied to the collar of a puppy that belonged to a little boy. But, because the puppy was an active puppy, she bounced around quite a bit. This made it especially hard to remain soundless, and since she was constantly trying as hard as a bell could to be quiet, Tiny Bell heard a lot. All around there were voices of other bells. Tiny Bell would listen with envy to the importance in each of the bells' voices.

Church Bells sang every Sunday morn, calling people to worship. Their voices were a musical melody in the still morning air, bringing the devoted to gather.

"Hear us ring,
Hear us sing,
Calling people
To the steeple.
Important are we!"

They were proud to summon people together for happiness. Their job was important. People flocked to the church when Church Bells sang.

Doorbell rang through the house, announcing visitors to the family. Each time Doorbell rang the puppy would bark excitedly, the little boy would hurry to the door to open it, and the family would smile at their wanted visitor.

"Answer the door-
Answer the door.
Someone is here,
Someone is here.
I knew it first!"

Doorbell took pride in being the first to know when a visitor was present. It was an important job. Nobody complained when Doorbell rang.

Town Clock Bell boomed out the hour throughout the day. He was an unfailing, strong, powerful voice that called to every house and every person.

“Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock
Boom, Boom, Boom
On the hour, every hour
I track the town’s time.
Reliable am I!”

There was no one who would forget the time as long as his steady beat sounded. It was an important job. Nobody worried about the time passing as long as Town Clock Bell tolled.

Tiny Bell also heard people saying:

“That puppy is so loud! His bell is annoying.”
“The puppy’s bell is too high pitched. It hurts my ears.”
“Who knew a little bell could be so horribly loud?”

Tiny Bell felt smaller when she heard these things. She tried harder to be silent, because she was not important. No one wanted to hear her voice.

One day, after the first heavy snow of winter, the little boy and the puppy went out to play in the fresh white stillness. It was cold out, and Tiny Bell was miserable. Her voice seemed extra shrill in the calm of winter. In the big meadow out of town, the boy rolled snow for a snowman. The puppy bounced in the snowdrifts. Tiny Bell’s voice was louder in the open field. She pressed herself to the puppy to muffle her own sound.

The boy finished his snowman by adding his scarf and hat. Smiling, he called the puppy and they started to walk home together. Tiny Bell still pressed herself to the puppy’s fur for silence. The wind had begun to blow stronger, and the boy became cold at the edge of the meadow. He sat down under a large oak tree and pulled the puppy close to him for warmth.

The puppy began to shiver and Tiny Bell could not hold herself still. The boy started to fall asleep, and the puppy did, too. They both were shivering. The wind was blowing around the tree. Tiny Bell was worried but did not know what to do.

Church Bells sang:

“Quick! Come along
A boy has gone,
Missing is he,
With his puppy,
You must find him!”

Doorbell rang:

“It is not he,
It is not he,
A stranger here
A stranger here
I wish it were not.”

Town Clock Bell tolled:

“Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock
Boom, Boom, Boom
Each minute counts.
I push them by,
An unwanted reminder.”

Tiny Bell heard the other bell’s voices. She knew where the boy was to be found. She knew he was in trouble, and so was the puppy. She wanted to sing, to ring, to toll. Tiny Bell let herself do what she was made to do.

She sang.

“Hear me ring,
Hear me sing!
Come to me,
Come and see,
I am with the boy.”

She rang.

“Please hurry,
Please hurry,
Someone find me,
Someone find me,
We need your help!”

She boomed.

“Ring-a-ling
Ring-a-ling
I’m trying so hard
For you to find me,
It’s all I can do.”

On the wind, Tiny Bell heard:

“What is that sound?”

“It sounds like a bell, really high pitched.”

“Quick, it is louder this way!”

A large man picked the boy and the puppy up in his arms and began running to the town. Tiny Bell sank into the man’s comforting jacket. Voiceless, she rested. The next morning, while the boy and the puppy slept wrapped in a warm blanket, Tiny Bell listened. The town was silent. She snuggled against the puppy’s chest, feeling no need to be quiet, loud, or important. She only felt the need to be herself.

Editors



Jahmicalh Dawes is a senior at Tarleton where he is pursuing a degree in fashion merchandising. He has aspirations of running his own sneaker shop. He is a connoisseur of sneaks, bikes, cardigans, caps, specs, and decks (long boards). He has enjoyed communing with the other editors and will cherish these memories FOR-E-VER! He bids you adieu trusting that you'll keep it cope (copacetic that is).

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We chose the flower motif for the cover because of the etymology of *Anthology*. The word *Anthology* comes from the Greek words *anthos* (flowers) and *legein* (gather). The definition, according to our dictionary, is a collection of prose, poetry, and visual arts.

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