



# PROMETHIA



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University English Department.

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# PROMETHIA

2006-2007

*Promethia* is Mercy Gallagher and Joshua Lacy, co-editors in chief; Dawn Drury, Kingston Jones, and Samuel R. Stephens, staff; and Keith Gogan, faculty advisor.

Special thanks to Roger Buswell, Chris King, and the loyal and true ORU English Department.

# ORCHID GATHERER

Joshua Lacy

I imagine better days  
When you were happy without the meds—  
The smiling-masked meds—  
Gathering orchids for the Seattle Summers  
That I never knew

I  
Never  
Knew  
Your revival tent laughter.  
When you winked because you wanted and  
Not because of the pills you kept hidden in your cabinet.

That frustrating smell haunts my nose and throat  
Like an illness and you carried it  
Like a burden but you were just a little girl  
With witting winks  
Those foretelling winks that broke me—  
Telling some story of a failed future.

Picking orchids again from the gardens you kept in my sleep,  
I could see a background of haze, green grass, and off-white siding  
From an unfamiliar cottage in a nowhere county

The dream bellowed like a bass drum  
My left ear, because you didn't even know where you were.  
And then a blast from a snare in my right—  
You didn't know where you were

And I called out to you but you were  
Busy picking orchids for the future from alongside  
Your majestic cottage where you hide, even still

And then you disappeared without trace of basket-flowers  
Or footsteps or even crinkles in the grass where your numb knees knelt

Those better days I imagined disappeared in the midnight blue sleep  
Along with your face and the hint of the orchids you carried.

# GARDEN

Mercy Gallagher

When you have returned,  
And brought back the groceries and set them on the counter  
And turned towards me, your soft eyebrows up,  
I will not see a question in your question.  
You will ask how I made it through,  
And I will stammer.

I would have trimmed the wicks, but they were all burned down.

If you are my bridegroom on a long home-hiatus,  
Then I am your wayward housewife,  
Letting the dishes crust in the sink,  
Stirring the batter, cooling the oven.  
I take the phone off the hook.  
I hope you will call.

This is not marital bliss, sir.  
This is not a Better Home and Garden;  
We don't have flowers, let alone a garden.  
When you come back, you will "shhh" through white granite teeth.

You are on a business trip.  
In your hotel you click your tongue and wink,  
And create a stock of clean underwear for the entire floor.  
You order room service and tip with twenties.

You are on a Scottish battlefield,  
A kilted General, slamming your helmet on,  
Banging the side of your head, your stout ribs.  
You tell the men to think of their wives.

You are on the London Bridge,  
Handing out hang gliders  
For the final collapse.  
The kids look like little Macaws.

You are on a backwards cotton candy mission for the world,  
Spinning fluff back into substance,  
And when you come home, you'll bring the bacon,  
The milk, the honey,  
The loaves, the fishes.



*Chris King*

There's a cool camera trick that you've probably seen in movies before — the dolly zoom or "Hitchcock zoom." It was in *Lord of the Rings* and everything.

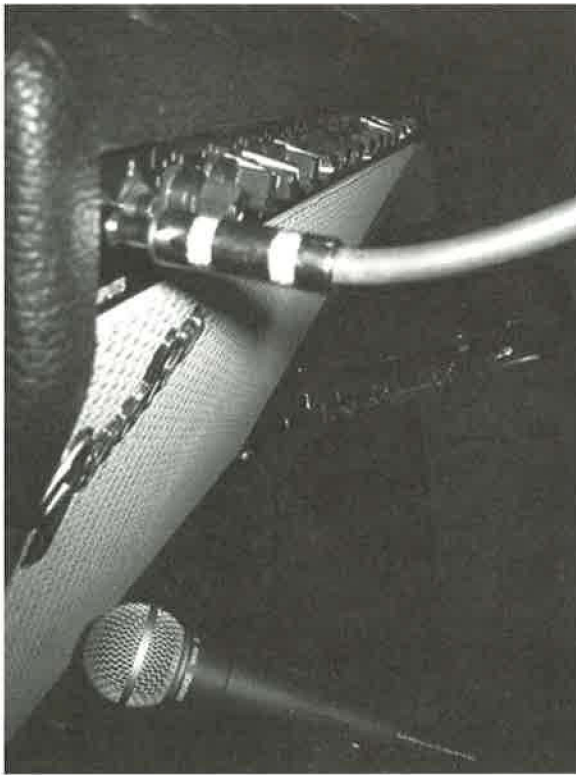
It's pretty straight-forward; you walk your camera away from something, while simultaneously zooming in. But the effect is extraordinary.

The background of the frame seems to fly towards you, collapsing inward yet still fitfully unbroken, while the subject of the frame is stationary, simple, unchanged. You're not sure what is really shifting—you or everything around you.

I think good writing feels like this. In good work, we see something truly, simply, and yet we see it spread before us — wide and rich and textured. I also think good writing is done like that camera trick: it gives its subject breathing room, and yet it leaps into it, rolls in it, pulls it close to us.

When we read something that is good, good for its craft and good for its subtle meaning, something shifts in our frames. When we take time, we are moved.

Mercy Gallagher



*Mark Horst*



# FIDES ET RADIO

Chris King

*Tenebrae tradidi primus lumen*

An unconscious sunrise summons sleep  
Under the mellifluous guise  
Of nearby aural waves  
Received by a bent antenna protruding.  
I listen from my car  
And I lend occasion to the fancy:  
Intrepid, traveling teaspoon dancer  
Crosses paths with the  
Cotton fabric-clad spaceship romancer.  
They glide along on a kinesthetic love song  
As I sit in 6:55 a.m. traffic.

Solitarily cold,  
My fingers  
Seeking warmth from vents made in 1993,  
Before we had been warmed, globally.  
My cerebral cortex  
Seeking a reason to believe  
Through crackling factory speakers.  
Seeking faith in my 6x9 inch box of airwave transmissions.

Music, she is  
A mimesis of the metaphysical,  
One strand beyond the biological.  
Music, she is  
Unearthly and wise.  
I find faith in my radio  
Like I find hope in your eyes.

# HOST

Keith Gogan

It's Sunday  
And the body of Christ is  
About the size of a quarter  
Refined, I presume, from wheat from Kansas or  
Rice from the South  
Embossed, packaged, and shipped from— Toledo, maybe?  
Now in my concave hand  
Christ as carbohydrate  
Wafer-of-a-man, thin and frail  
And supernova-magnificent

I can't take it in  
But I do take it in  
Hand to mouth  
This bread of life  
For a starving soul who too often  
Doesn't know enough to eat when he's hungry



*Chris King*

# LIKE APPLES AND ORANGES

Daura Drumgoole

They say birds can't fly in water,  
and fish can't swim in the sky.  
Like apples and oranges...

Because, lilies don't have thorns,  
and roses don't smell wonderful.  
Like apples and oranges...

So peppers can't make you cry,  
and onions aren't green with envy...  
And I guess angels can't see ghosts,  
and ghosts can't hear bells ring (because  
I can't say your name and you can't see my heart).

And even though light shines from your eyes,  
and heat flows from my palms, your sails  
will never feel my winds, and my wings  
will never grace your skies.

Like apples and oranges.

# A COLD-BLOODED ENCOUNTER

Samuel R. Stephens

Porcupines kill trees. It is as simple as that. They climb the trunk and strip it piece by piece of its only protection against the elements, leaving its pale, moist sapwood exposed like a naked woman scrambling to hide herself on the front lawn.

When we were kids Nicholas, my cousin, and I were the regular sort of mischievous boys. We poked our sticks into all the mole tunnels we could find. We had contests to see whose rock could skip the farthest out into the sea (I, of course, won every time). But our biggest pleasure came in playing with the homemade slingshots my dad fashioned for us out of a bicycle inner tube and oak tree branches that made a “Y.” With the oaken slings came two hard and fast conditions: first, the only ammunition permitted in the sling was acorns, and second, we were not to shoot any living thing that did not have roots. Well, those rules seemed to only apply to the yard and ranges visible by parents. It turns out acorns are very difficult to procure in pine forests. So Nick and I would go down to the shore and pick the best, bouncy-ball-sized stones we could find. The trick was to get the most of the right size. We would clamber over the rocks on the beach to beat each other out to the next right size.

I was the best shot—at least until that one Christmas Nick’s dad gave him an actual weapon. He got a real, store-bought slingshot. The kind that has its own handle and a brace that folds down on your arm, giving the shooter maximum range and the ability to inflict pain at close distances. Suddenly my self-engraved “oakie” was not so hot. Nick’s didn’t come with a “no rocks” policy. He got to aim rocks at all the seagulls he wanted, while I was stuck with acorns and apples.

Next birthday, I, however, surpassed his greatness by far. I was 13 and my dad got me a pump action BB gun; it blew Nick’s sling utterly out of range. It even came with a warning that said, “Not for use under 16 years of age!” That phrase alone was enough to strike fear and trembling into any 13-year-old’s mother, let alone his 11-year-old sling-shot-toting cousin. Now, I was not only knocking apples off the tree, but I was blowing them up from twice the distance. Forget about seagulls. Who needed to tap a bird when you could blow up an apple?

But Nick’s next birthday brought in an extraordinary haul. He got a real gun. He got a .22. With the .22 came the privilege of squirrel hunting, one rite of passage that had escaped me completely.

Nick and I only hung out when our families gathered for the major holidays, and my serious lack of firepower bothered me only when he was in town with his serious abundance thereof. One Christmas it all changed when I got a real life shotgun. Dad seized the opportunity when I told him I did not know what I wanted for Christmas. He got a 12 gauge shotgun, made in Russia and complete with a handcrafted wooden gunstock. I was officially a 14-year-old man-boy.

The next summer after that Christmas was great. Nick and I got the best treat we could imagine. He was allowed to spend an entire week at my house, just him and me, no pesky siblings, no aunts and uncles—for me anyway. We filled

our days with all the kayaking, canoeing, and exploring we could. We explored the woods and tracked a phenomenon new to me but old hat to Nick. Every few trees there was one whose bark had been torn from its body—a sure sign of porcupines.

The next day Nick noticed that the trees with older wounds were farther from the house. The porcupines were on the move. Nick realized they were only gnawing apple and birch trees—the two sweetest species on the property. We walked back toward the house prowling from tree to tree in search of the barbed beast destroying our forest. Nick moved through the forest as though he had been apprenticed to Daniel Boone. Minus the coon skin and leather with tassels, he looked like his favorite hero from history. Although we could not find the porcupine, our hunt, following straight to the house, led me to realize the next probable victim would be the apple tree in our front yard. I was extraordinarily impressed with my great hunter's observation. I burst the second my dad walked in that evening from work.

"Dad!" I said, "I tracked the porcupine today!"

"Oh, really?" he said, "You tracked it all by yourself?"

The pain of sharing the credit was equal to a mile-long freight train screaming over me at top speed.

"No, Dad, Nick did most of it. But I figured out that he is probably going to destroy the apple tree in our front yard next."

"Good work, boys," he said with a tired smile, the kind he used when all the fresh ones had been given away at work already.

That night we turned the flood light on in the front yard. It shone on the next likely victim. It was a perfect ambush. However, the prickly prowler did not show up.

The next day Nick and I practiced our target shooting with the pump-action BB rifle we had been playing with all week. We both felt that night was to be a bloody one, and the anticipation was enough to make our lunch-time juice boxes flow straight through us.

The logical choice for the kill was Nick. He was the better marksman, and he had at least nine squirrel kills on his record. However, I was not completely out of the running. I was older, and it was my territory to protect, and, after all, I had predicted the next casualty.

We shot at apples all day long. We fired from 25 yards, 50 yards, and 100 yards. Alas, I could not hit the 100 yard mark. This was sure to seal my fate that night. No matter. When Dad walked in that evening and asked how our day was, I ran and gave him the biggest hug I could muster.

"It was great, Dad." I said, "Nick and I have been shooting the BB gun at apples all day. I even hit one from 50 yards away!"

"I hit one from 100," Nick said.

I washed my hands and ran to the table, eager to show how well behaved I was, and that roaming the forest of Lamoine, Maine hadn't turned me into a beast—not yet anyway. Nick took a longer time in the bathroom. I figured he had a little business to take care of before dinner; after all, we had

been allotted another mid-afternoon juice box. Instead, he arrived at the table fashionably late, with his hair wetted down and slicked to one side and his face still moist around the edges from the patches he purposely missed with the towel, lest anyone not notice his spotless cheeks.

Dinner contained no outbursts from either of us (we were both starving from all of the target practice we had racked up). Mom and Dad went on an after dinner walk, and Nick and I offered to dry the dishes, if my sister washed.

In what felt like hours later, Mom and Dad returned down the driveway with a deliberate step that crackled louder with every advancing move. Dad went in and got my Russian 12 gauge shotgun—a machine fragrant with the scent of cold, early winter days quietly spent in the snow and leaves. The floodlight awoke like an old man fuddling out of a deep summer afternoon slumber. There it revealed the largest mass of quills I can remember setting eyes on.

To my amazement, the prickly beast was not so beastly. He was waddling at the base of our apple tree hunting fallen apples to take home to his family. His eyes were soft and brown and his quills looked no more dangerous than the bristles on Dad's shaving cream brush. Then it happened.

I found myself violently awakened by a crack of thunder louder than I had ever heard, and a jolt that landed me looking at the stars.

Dad said, "That's all right, Sam. Just give me the gun."

Before I understood what had happened. I heard a second crack of thunder, and I remembered to look at my friend who was gathering dinner for his family. I fought with all the strength in my body to keep my dinner in my stomach, and all the concentration in my head to keep my eyes from leaking. Unfortunately, the latter proved a tougher task, as one lonely stream found its way from the corner of my eye to the bottom of my chin.

The porcupine lay lifeless at the base of the tree with a piece of his tail end missing and an unsightly hole in the side of his head. Dad gruffly corralled us through the front door.

The next morning my friend's body was no longer at the base of the tree. The only sign of the previous night's events was the solemn memorial the grass gave with the imprint of the fallen creature, and a few displaced quills that Nick quickly picked up as a trophy.

"Hey, come on, you're the one who shot him; don't you want a couple quills too?" he asked.

My nose started to tingle at the memory of my cold-blooded encounter. "Nah, with my luck the dog will find them, but I betcha I can beat you to the other side of the bay in the kayaks."

That week marked two firsts and lasts in my life. It was the first and last time Nick and I ever spent a week, just him and me—no siblings, no aunts and uncles. It was also the first and last time I stood behind a gun and aimed at another living creature without roots.

# MIRRORS, A HOMILY

Chris King

I have a small piece of broken mirror in my bathroom. It is about four inches long, conceivably fashioned like a wide knife, with the end coming to a point at the top, like an ill-defined, fat finger. It is basically shaped as you would expect a shard of glass to be shaped.

I have broken every hand mirror that I have ever owned. You see, my bathroom has a long history of housing brown recluse spiders. Whenever I see one, for whatever reason, my hand mirror is always the first firm object that I find to smash the spider. And my mirror tends to also get smashed in the process. I have also lost a couple of mirrors to the floor as a result of my own innate clumsiness. It may sound as if I must have very bad luck, or, at the very least, am asking for it. However, I believe that the problem lies largely in poor weaponry choices and in poor major motor function. At any rate, I always end up using the broken shards of the mirror to function as the whole hand mirror once did.

And so I take up this little mirror in my right hand, and hold it at an angle to the bathroom wall mirror. I do this so that I can look at the back of my head, in case I should have a tuft of hair sticking up, or out, or astray. This is, I realize, slightly narcissistic. But, as I have discovered, I have an obsession with looking at myself in the third person. Examining myself from various angles, as one might see me from differing vantage points in a room. As I have devoted a great deal of time to introspectively observing myself as pure subject, so I extro-spectively observe myself as if I were pure object. As if I could see myself as an "It."

I suppose it is a superficial fascination, and trivial, really. Looking at myself through a small, broken glass shard, trying to catch a glimpse of myself, of whom I might really be. Maybe if I detach myself to this vision, I can shed self-perceptions and see what I actually am.

But I see in a mirror darkly. On the road to self-discovery, I do not see myself face-to-face. All I see is a dim reflection in the broken shard that I have for a mirror. I am "a man who looks his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."

Having slapped my hair with water, gel, and a comb, I place my mirror shard in a drawer, for future use. I look at the wall mirror and give myself a kind of half shrug, smile with my lips pressed inward, and raise my eyebrows. Then something on the mirror itself catches my eye. It is a note, scrawled in my own handwriting: *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."*



*Adam Willard*

## SHARECROPPING

Kingston Jones

Courage is required  
 For brown soil, turned over  
 Dug deep and wounded  
 A seed placed in its womb

The soil, pregnant with life  
 With great care is touched  
 By hands foreign to moisture  
 Dark brown grain underneath the nails

The sun, all the while  
 Embraces the body  
 Running its fingers through coarse hair  
 Lightly coating the pigment of the skin

It's the skin that brings the flood  
 The burden and release  
 Forming on the forehead  
 Cooling the frame before the rain comes

And when the rain comes  
 The clouds convention together  
 Break their backs  
 And bless the land with the contents of their storehouses

The children of this land  
 Of many grain  
 Of many seed  
 Watch the glory before them

Knowing that tomorrow they wake  
 To start all over again  
 Held to a land debt  
 That grows like the crops



# THE EASY SELL

Mercy Gallagher

Billy Mays, the man who sells Orange Clean  
On television  
Makes clean counter tops seem worth  
Your first born child.

You are like that.  
I'll buy anything you sell me.  
I am convinced that you slice and dice and make great beef jerky,  
That you will give me the abs I've always wanted  
And I am eager to purchase your beach-front property in sunshiny Nevada.  
I beg you to cut through the grease in my oven.  
So we can melt together,

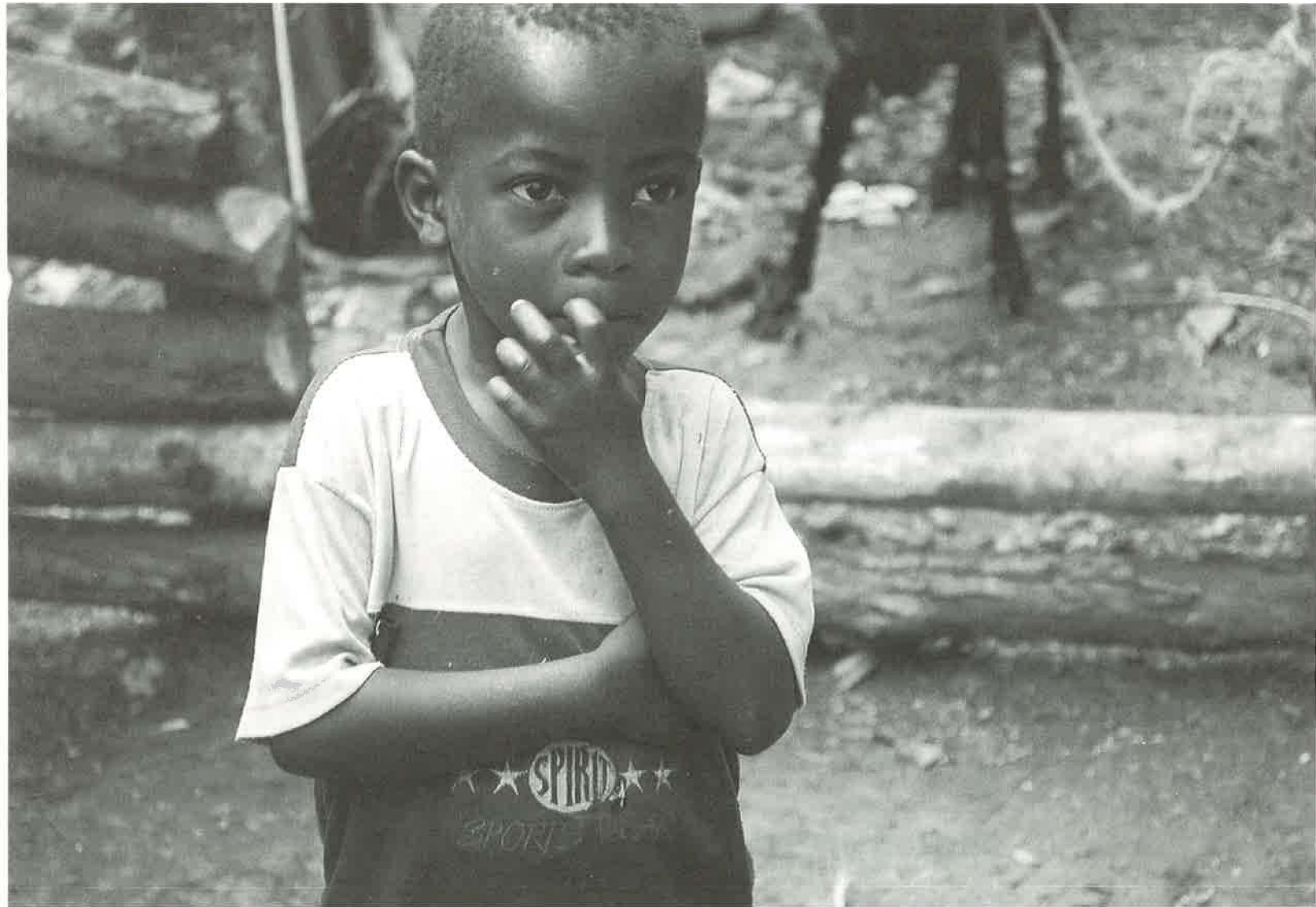
And function as a circuit.  
We do not and  
We do not.  
You're quiet lately.  
You kiss short and answer quickly.

In the meantime, I learn how to crystallize  
Into spikey six-sided quartz.  
I put myself in tubs and give them away at 5.99 each.  
(With 30% more free—  
But only if you call right now.)

I believe that Orange Clean  
Can strip 100 years of dust  
From a broken record,  
At 100 miles away,  
And scour my sink at the same exact time.  
But what I can't take is the metaphor.

I am in my real kitchen  
Looking at my real phone  
Waiting for your real call,  
And on my counter top is water-rot under the leak in the ceiling.  
It has gone through the plastic, and the mildew has bubbled underneath.  
The wood is getting soft, so

This problem will not wipe away;  
And though I want to believe you,  
You never really say anything.  
The wood is eaten by drip and drop and  
I wonder how long  
'Till it finally gives out.



*Anna Saah*

# SIMPLE MIRACLES

Joshua Lacy

I never asked for his name;  
Almost, I came close to asking, but  
Feared he would tell me.  
Some days and nights  
I feel I ought to have.

I felt heavy and displaced watching him do  
Simple tasks that would seem to be  
Impossible without a hand.  
My chest sunk in like a bear cave, hollow and dank

It was nothing worth paying to see  
But something *above* paying to see—a miracle.  
For the moment, in the moment, I didn't  
Know how not to expect  
A set of fingers and one  
Opposable thumb to pierce the air  
Where his stump was,  
Just so he could tie his shoe—  
I wanted him to tie his shoe

I almost asked him his name and  
Sometimes I wish I had.  
But I didn't, because if he told me  
I would know him, and I would  
Know the truth: I was the weak one.

# FERN HILL SALVAGE

Keith Gogan

I see no funerals here  
No graves, tombstones, epitaphs  
For these corroding corpses  
With their missing eyes and naked wheels  
Sandwiched, even stacked  
Into Bubba's backyard

Toolbox in hand, I mean business  
As I pick my way over plastic shrapnel and broken glass  
Through knee-high, dew-damp grass  
Hunting for a piece of metal  
My Holy Grail  
That hasn't seen the inside of a German factory since 1983  
And I find the only Volkswagen Vanagon there  
Gawking glassless at the sky  
Awaiting assault by flesh

So I enter through its only working door  
Settle into its belly  
And begin my plundering  
Hacking, prying, pounding, almost snapping  
A screwdriver in two  
And by the time the sun has arced a bit more in the sky  
I pull my prize  
Pack up  
Pat the corpse on the doorpost  
Pay a little too much for one of its organs  
And leave it to rust in peace

# VICTORIA FALLS GORGE

Michelle Scott

Standing on a precipice,  
my eyes follow the falling leaf.  
It floats by streaks of reds, browns, tans, and blacks of carved out  
earth-flesh.

Two hundred feet below,  
the leaf drowns under a torrent of water  
thrashing scarred walls.  
Nature's blood flows, pulsating over rocks  
like Father Time's heart thumps beneath.

Even the sun, that boiling gaseous globe, lowers itself like an old woman  
into the crevice,  
into the foaming rapids,  
into raw earth.

## EXCERPT FROM THE HAND ON NELL'S SHOULDER

Joann Furlow Allen

In this depression-era story, Nell, a seventeen-year-old girl from a small town in Oklahoma, is lying on her bed, trying to decide whether to go ahead with the secret elopement she has planned with her boyfriend, Glenn. The elopement is scheduled for the day after Nell's high school graduation, which will be the day after this reverie is taking place. Nell is fearful of deceiving her parents, but feels trapped by the spinster lifestyle that awaits her if she stays in the small town, gets a job and continues living with her parents. She pulls out her diary to help her decide. She begins to write about the way she and Glenn met, which to her was just like a fairy tale....

It had been a raw January evening. Nell had finished dinner with her family and had been in her bedroom dressing for a night out. She and her girlfriends, Heloise and Helen, had planned a drive to Tulsa, from their small town of Yale, to see a movie and to get a soda at Bishops. They were all seniors, and since it was a Friday night, they could stay out until midnight. Her mother didn't approve of young ladies going off like that, but had agreed to the rare outing. Everyone's family felt the effects of the great depression in 1935, so a night of frivolous teenage adventure was a treat. Heloise was especially thrilled at the prospect. Her mother was ill, and Heloise bore most of the burden of caring for her. Heloise had a beau of sorts, Otto, literally the boy next door, but he could not afford movie dates in the big city. Nell was to drive the family panel truck that served as a grocery delivery truck during the day.

Nell and her family lived in a white frame house on Jim Thorp Avenue. Her father owned the grocery store next door: one of the few businesses in town that actually made money. People had to eat--even in a depression. Not that times were always easy. Nell's father often irritated his wife by giving credit to folks who weren't likely to pay and by taking in-kind merchandise in settlement of bills. Nell's family had furniture that had been left behind by families who had vanished in the night -- too quickly to take heavy furniture. Nell had a ruby and gold watch that had

been taken in payment for groceries from a banker's daughter who had not married well and had needed to feed her children. Norman drove the grocery delivery truck for his dad during the day. At night he and Nell fought over who could have it to haul around their respective friends. They had been known to wrestle over the keys in the front yard.

That night after she had put on her navy blue skirt and was slipping her arms into her white blouse, she caught a glimpse out of her window of her brother making his way across the front lawn to where the panel truck sat parked in the driveway. She knew immediately what he was up to. Without even stopping to put on her shoes, she ran out of the house in her stocking feet, buttoning her blouse as she ran. She reached the truck just as Norman, keys in hand, was climbing into the driver's seat.

"It's my turn to have the truck," she shrieked at him, throwing open the passenger door.

"Dad gave me the keys," Norman replied feigning innocence.

"To deliver groceries today, maybe," Nell shouted, "not to go out tonight. You know that my girlfriends and I are driving to Tulsa, and Dad knows it too."

"Sorry Sis," Norman replied without sincerity. "I guess Dad must have forgotten."

Still holding open the passenger door, Nell shivered in the cold. She regarded her brother with the blind hatred known only to siblings.

"You'd best get back in the house," Norman advised smugly.

On impulse, Nell climbed in beside him and shut the door. "I'm not budging," she announced. "Wherever you're going, you will have to take me."

Norman looked sideways at her as she sat coatless and without shoes. "Suit yourself," he said as he started up the truck, which hesitated as though reluctant to go out on such a cold evening.

"He's bluffing," Nell thought. "He will turn around soon and take me home; he's just trying to teach me a lesson." Determined not to give Norman the satisfaction of hearing her beg him to return home, Nell sat stoically looking out the window, trying to silence her chattering teeth.

Pretending to be alone, Norman hummed cheerfully as he drove the few blocks from their house to the business district, such as it was, on Main Street. The only two places open on Friday nights were the pool hall and the cafe. Norman pulled up in front of the pool hall. Nell could stand it no more. "*Take me home!*" she demanded. It was one of the understood social taboos for any female, especially a "nice girl from a nice family" to enter the all-male lair of the pool hall.

Norman, still acting as though she weren't there and as if she hadn't spoken, climbed out of the truck. He paused one moment on the sidewalk to button his heavy coat and to make a show of putting the keys in his pocket before entering the pool hall. Shouts of "Hey Red" and

miscellaneous profanities greeted him as he joined his beer-drinking and pool-shooting pals. Red was the nickname they used for him because his hair was auburn. His mother, of course, called him Norman.

Back in the truck, Nell sat burning with anger and freezing with cold at the same time. She considered her options. It was unthinkable for her to walk the block and a half to the cafe. A young lady simply did not stroll shoeless into a public restaurant. Besides, what would she do once she got there? She had no coins for the pay phone, and her father would have no way to come for her. She would have to bum a ride, and in her current state of undress, that wouldn't do.

Her thoughts then turned to Norman, his treachery and her desire for revenge. Suddenly she had a plan that would get her home and get even with Norman at the same time. She would walk right into the pool hall! It would be worth her own embarrassment to see the reaction of Norman and his buddies to the sight of Red's little sister, shoeless and coatless, entering the forbidden territory.

She took a deep breath of the icy air and then made a run for the wood-encased glass door of the Yale Billiard and Domino Parlor. The bell on the door tinkled frantically as she dashed inside. There was a second of mingled voices raised in surprise, followed by a long moment of stunned silence as the dozen or so men and boys beheld the new arrival. Norman, who was bent over the pool table preparing to make a shot, looked up in annoyance as the bell interrupted his concentration. Seeing who it was, his mouth fell open, leaving a lit cigarette to dangle precariously from his lower lip.

"Take me home, *Norman*," Nell said.

"Are you crazy, coming in here like this?" Norman sputtered. "Mom will kill you when she finds out."

"She's not going to be too pleased with you either after I tell her how you left me in front of a pool hall, half dressed, to freeze to death!" Nell said confidently, thrusting her nose just slightly up into the air.

"I'm not taking you anywhere now." Norman said defensively, "at least not until I finish this game."

Before Nell could respond, someone spoke from out of the shadows along the wall to her left.

"Give me the keys Red," said a calm, authoritative male voice. "I'll take her home."

Nell looked quickly to see who had offered to rescue her. Her heart lurched with shock and embarrassment when she saw it was Glenn Dawson. He was older than Norman, probably about twenty two or twenty three. He had not been raised in Yale, but, rather, had moved there after a stint in the service. He helped run the store that sold farm implements, equipment and parts. He drove a nice roadster, and was frequently seen about town with various girls--all older than Nell, mostly single working girls. "Fast" is how Nell's mother would describe them. Nell and her friends all had



crushes on Glenn. Any new face in town, especially one with a job and a car, would be something special to these teenage girls of the depression. Glenn's face, however, would be handsome under any circumstances. He was big and blond and moved with an air of polite confidence. Norman and his buddies looked up to him. Nell had tried unsuccessfully in the past to engage Norman in a discussion of his friend Glenn. "Forget it, kid," Norman had scoffed, "he doesn't date school girls."

Without comment, Norman tossed his keys to Glenn. Norman seemed wary of what might lie ahead, but was relieved to have the matter temporarily resolved. Nell flashed him a triumphant smile before running out to the truck, where Glenn held the door open for her. Once seated in the familiar vehicle, however, Nell felt suddenly shy. Was this really Glenn Dawson sitting next to her in her dad's grocery truck?

"Where's your car?" was all she could think to say.

"Back at the boarding house," Glenn said simply. "No need to waste gas driving a few blocks."

"My stupid brother should be so sensible," she blurted, then cursed herself inwardly for sounding like such a brat.

"You two really go after it, don't you?" Glenn asked with obvious amusement.

The trip home was much too short. Nell kept her eyes out for any of her friends who could possibly be around to see her with Glenn Dawson. She had pretty much forgotten about Heloise and Helen and how they must be wondering why she had stood them up for their movie date. She couldn't think of anything except for the big, beautiful man beside her.

When they pulled into her drive, Glenn did the most romantic thing any man or boy had ever done for her. After walking around and opening her door, he glanced down at her stockinged feet and then at the damp, frosted grass of the yard. Without comment or permission, he scooped her up into his arms and carried her across the lawn and up onto the covered porch. She was too astonished to speak. "Hurry inside," Glenn said, "You'll catch pneumonia out here."

She started inside, but she paused in the open doorway long enough to stammer her thanks for the rescue.

"My pleasure," he said gallantly. Then he asked permission to call her sometime. She had never heard spoken more magical words. She ran straight to her room. She dove onto her bed, her hands gliding along the soft bumpy surface of the chenille until she came to rest, like a sledder on a flat surface. She reached out for her diary, which lay on the night stand. She would deal with her parents, her friends, and her brother later.

# MORNINGS

Elizabeth Staab

Sometimes I still wake before five. Now, in the finally silent college dormitory, there is nothing to do at four-thirty and no one to talk to. I calculate how long it will be before my alarm rings, and I go back to bed.

Once I had a reason to get up early. The winter that I was eight and a half was the first time I was responsible for any real work; I had a paper route. Technically it was my route, at least, but it eventually became a family occasion. Admittedly, my dad poured the most effort into it. Not only did he do the most work, but he had to see that I learned what to do and how to do it. It was Dad who read the map and gave directions, telling me which porches to drop a paper on and where to watch out for ice.

That first winter was a cold one. The cold went through my warmest corduroy pants until I thought my legs were cased in ice, but every morning I went out with Dad to give our customers their newspapers before six o'clock. For several weeks, Christmas lights made the empty streets a wonder that was private and, therefore, priceless. The cold became a part of the beauty.

By the time I was in high school, my family had three paper routes and a helpful system for dividing the work. Tuesdays were my days, when I had Dad and the routes all to myself. The best times were when we were in the car rolling more papers to throw; it was then that we talked. Sometimes we discussed the news in that day's front-page headlines—we were privileged to read them before most people—but more often we wandered into the past or future in a seemingly erratic way. "What really killed the dinosaurs?" was one repeated topic, as was where I was planning to go to college. No subject was too silly or too serious.

Ten years we had those routes. Someone always had to get up at four or five and go out, whether it was wet, icy, windy, or comfortable. Someone had to get those papers out by six—seven on the weekends—and we got used to it. Usually the sun came up as we were finishing and changed the world from black and yellow patches to the fresh, even gray that still makes me want to sing. Then it was time to be quiet—our customers were sleeping—but now I can't resist. I get up early when I can. Sometimes I still wake at four, without meaning to, and before I go back to sleep I remember the days when there was a reason.

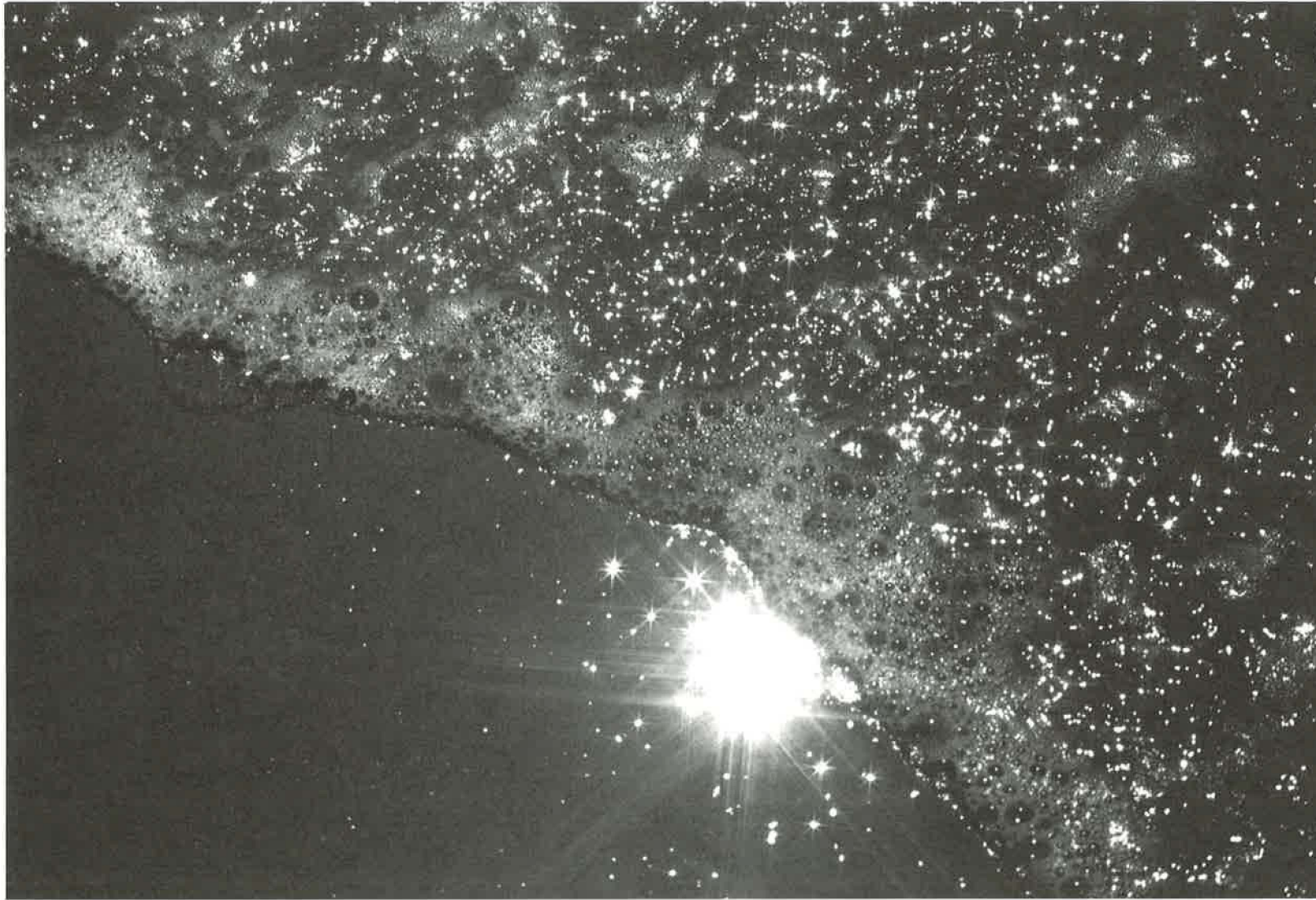
# ODE TO A CANINE DAUGHTER

Mary Alice Trent

Painted paws, trimmed with precision,  
Supporting her lean legs four,  
Snow-white fur dipped in black polka dots.  
A face with a curious splash of cocoa—  
Eyebrows standing as erect as a pair of stain-starched jeans.  
Embellishing her little soft-as-a-cotton ball body, a t-shirt, embracing the  
emblem,  
“Yuppie Dog lives here.”

When she shakes herself, the scent of coconut oil dances about the  
room in an energetic tropic way!  
Begging for delicious, daily doggy treats, she on her two hind legs  
fervently rests.

Though the cradle in the room adjacent to hers is empty—  
And there no baby has ever been rocked —  
To God, Momma thanks for her little canine daughter.



*Lauren Gibbons*

# NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Daura Drumgoole

Custom dictated that Julia Styles of 4401 North Equestrian Lane have a cup of sweet lemon tea in her floral print rocking chair every morning, while wearing a red silk overcoat given to her by her mother upon her sixteenth birthday. She would sip on her tea for fifteen minutes, long after the heat had gone away, and stare out of her window at a blue jay that would always perch himself on the branch in front of her window.

Today, however, was different. Julia prepared herself to go to the funeral of a dear friend. She got up early, brushed her dentures for five minutes, more than the norm, and pulled out her special wig, the one that didn't move so much. She was determined to recapture her former glory, and once satisfied with her appearance, she gathered her belongings and walked towards the door to meet her ride.

"I'm whispering because I'm not sure if I know what I'm talking about."

"Truthfully?"

Alaina quickly glanced at her girlfriend of fifty-seven years, who at one time, had been the most beautiful girl in the Chattanooga valley, then answered, "Uh-huh."

Pausing momentarily, "I think the color of the coffin matches her skin tone very well... or perhaps the aroma from the food in the kitchen is affecting all of my senses, but I'm pretty sure the color of the coffin and the hue of her skin are almost one and the same."

"Alaina, we are at a funeral for Christ's sa—Oh my, I think I just used God's name in vain. What am I to think of myself?"

Alaina batted her eyelashes, dismissing the latest of Julia's numerous attempts to present herself as a devout and holy woman of the South.

"I know very well that we are at a funeral Miss Priss, although why Charles decided to have his wife of forty-two years, and might I add, bore him ten children without a midwife," she cleared her throat, "decided to have her funeral in this old and run-down Victorian home filled with antiquated furniture, is beyond me."

"My hair will smell like moth-balls for a whole week's time."

Julia let out a stifled giggle. Her dear old friend was quite the ironic comedian.

She responded lightheartedly.

"I doubt Charles had the means for the decent service he had originally planned and hoped to give. Let's not have our dear-ol gal turning in her grave for our talking about her odd husband. His last entrepreneurial expedition almost ruined their life savings. How in the world could a woman have put up with such a man? Must have been all those midnight prayers."

"It was more likely the butcher knife she kept in the cabinet just below the kitchen sink. I believe she threatened to chop him in half a time or two...this old house has a lot of stories etched in these walls." Alaina patted the hallway wall that lead into the dinning room.

"I think we should sit closer...don't suppose those two seats on the second row in the center are reserved for anyone special."

Just then, a young man, almost five years shy of forty, squeezed into the same row. Alaina and Julia moved to the side and squeezed their thighs together to allow space to let him by.

"Oh, my, young blood, I'll have some please."

And that was it. Julia smacked her friend on the shoulder as a reprimand. Odd though, how her hand didn't show a red mark from the hit.

"Alaina, she said, "you look quite pale, substantially more than usual."

A nod was Alaina's only response.

The ladies cautiously and carefully moved up to the second row, seven feet shy of the coffin. It had been placed in front of the bay window in the living room. The light from the sun shown in, illuminating the casket, so much so, that if the elderly woman of seventy-eight years had not aged well or if her makeup artist hadn't been such an expert, she would have appeared as a vampire—a vampire immune to light.

"Now that we are in the front, do you feel more at ease my dear?"

"You know funerals have never been my forte. I'd much rather sit at home and read a good book."

Alaina crept up to the edge of her seat to get a closer look.

"Who picked that outfit? I'd die if I had to deal with such a man."

"Charles...Charles. Who else could put such an attire together that would make one of Chattanooga's beauties look like a neo-orange, over-aged farmhand."

Julia began to feel a bit nostalgic.

"We were beautiful back then weren't we?" She continued to fall deeper into her time-travel portal.

"Every guy and his brother would line up at the Great Hall dances for just a glimpse of us. Beauty doesn't fade my dear. It is slowly replaced. The ugliness inside overpowers the outside, and the face becomes the picture of that ugliness."

"Well, that would explain your situation, Alaina patronized, but as for me, who knows how such a thing could happen to such a Belle."

*Mrs. Harrington it's time to take your pills.*

Julia was momentarily knocked out of her senses. Had she heard right? She must have been daydreaming again. Death tended to knock people out of the realm of reality.

The funeral service began. However, that meant nothing to the ladies. They talked and talked....and talked—reminiscing on their glory years—when they didn't have to poof and tease their hair for two hours so that it would look as though they had more than two strands.

Julia had a sudden revelation.

“Alaina, as I recall, you grew quite jealous of me after we graduated from high school. I do believe I received the most invitations to be escorted to the country club’s spring formal—must have rubbed your nerves a time or two.”

She quickly glanced at her friend to see if she could catch some kind of an reaction that would betray Alaina’s emotions. Alaina had an uncanny ability to keep calm in almost all situations. Alaina had heard Julia and had been somewhat thrown off by the comment but her attention was focused on the coffin and the lady who lay inside. Julia followed to where Alaina’s eyes were set.

At first glance, Julia gasped. She took off her glasses, blew on them and used her handkerchief to wipe them clean, then looked once more. The face started to contort. The eyes began to sink into the skull, and the skin began to peel—layer by layer, showing the muscle tissue.

Julia jumped out of her seat. Everyone in the funeral service eyed her suspiciously. Alaina tugged on Julia’s skirt, pulling her back down into her chair. Julia tried to cling to Alaina’s arm for support, but for some reason, she couldn’t.

“Did you see her face?” she asked with a bewildered look.

Alaina whispered. “Julia, what are you talking about? Some of your screws are loose... I don’t know; something isn’t screwed in tight enough up there. You were always a little bit nutty acting.”

“Alaina,” Julia responded, “I know I just saw her face turn into some kind of monstrous, ugly, monster looking thingy. You didn’t see?”

“No, Julia,” Alaina responded with firmness, “calm down and pull yourself together.”

The service was coming to a close. The minister announced, upon Charles’ request, for loved ones and friends to come and give a few words of remembrance. Julia, now settled from the experience, tried to nudge Alaina to prompt her to speak on their behalf.

She whispered to Alaina. “Go say something.”

Alaina wouldn’t. She shook her head in protest. Julia glanced around the room, looking for a sign that someone was going to get up and say a few words. No one was taking the initiative. She scowled at Alaina, “Oh, all right, I guess I’ll say something!”

Clearing her throat, “It’s hard to find just the right words for a tragedy such as this. But, there brings to mind the time when us ladies, Alaina included, decided to take a trip to the water hole for some midday sunbathing. We were all striped and polka doted to a ‘t’—ready to enjoy the sun and the cool water. I remember her looking,” Julia pointed in the direction of the casket, “particularly beautiful that day. She was always the adventurous, outdoorsy type. Well, the rest of us ladies had decided to lie down on our towels and enjoy the sun and read books until it got warm enough to take a dip. But Miss Lady went exploring, hoping to catch some tadpoles.”

Julia’s breathing became slow and labored. She paused and then

looked up with an expression of terror mixed with bewilderment. She continued.

“When she didn’t return, I decided to go looking for her.”

Julia scanned the crowd for Alaina, but she had disappeared. Tears began to fall down her cheeks.

“And...” her silent tears turned into soft sobs, “...and that’s when I saw them.” Explosively exhaling, “I saw my fiancé and Alaina kissing under the big oak, lover’s tree.” Her face now turning red, Julia shook with spasms and let out a huge wail.

“Ohhh....why!”

She looked up at Charles and pointed her index finger at him.

“You, you cheated on me with that high-falutin floozy. You and Alaina didn’t think I knew. You thought that day was the first time I found out.” Her voice was rising with each pronounced word, and Julia was almost screaming to the top of her lungs.

A man began to approach Julia to try and calm her down. He touched her shoulder. She was momentarily knocked back to her senses. When her vision cleared, she read, Chattanooga County Psych Ward on the wall ahead. She blinked her eyes and then fell back under the spell. Julia looked down into the casket and saw Alaina lying inside. Rage rose from her belly and she screamed, “Why, why did you take my life away from me?”

Julia jumped into the casket and began to beat on Alaina’s corpse repeating, “Why, why did you take my life away from me? Why did you steal my fiancé?”

The psych ward attendant, who had come over to calm Julia down, called out, “Mrs. Harrington’s having another episode.”

Three other attendants rushed over and tried to help calm Julia down. She grew more hysterical and fought them back, wailing, “Why, why did she do it to me?”

“Mrs. Harrington,” one pleaded, “you are having another episode. We need to get you down to the infirmary so you can take your medicine.”

“Medicine, what,” Julia said, “I don’t need medicine. I need my fiancé back. I need my life back. She stole my life from me!”

“Mrs. Harrington,” the man said again more soothing this time, “we understand that, but we’re trying to help you. So if you just come with us calmly, we’ll get you relaxed, ok.”

After two minutes of trying to fight off attendants, Julia clung to one’s shirt, sobbing into his shoulder. She looked up into the eyes of the man to whom she was clinging, looking like a lost little girl who didn’t have a mom or dad. She stared into the young man’s eyes and then asked, “How long have I been here?”

Reluctant to answer, the young man looked at the others with a plea for help. He decided to answer.

“Fifty-two years.”



# LONG DISTANCE

Adam Douglas

She yelled tearful words into the receiver  
and my face felt hot  
The loud noise of the words dissolved,  
like sugar in coffee, dispersing throughout the bitter liquid  
streaming down her face

Silence is an audible drone  
When you're on the phone  
She waited for a response  
and as my mind raced through all the honesty I'd avoid,  
I silently wished my thumping heart-noise would suffice

We would never hang up  
Trapped in our stubborn vessel  
This is a long drive with a broken radio

# TWILIGHT ALWAYS FALLS ON HUNTER PARK

Joshua Lacy

Our sweat-filled, forgotten  
Dreams of touchdown home-runs accumulate,  
Animated against Hunter-Park-canvas—  
Drowning in crab grass and dandelion showers

Over by the green-as-a-tree fountain-pond,  
Blossoming slowly upon itself;  
Our childhood hopes of hall-of-fame have  
Faded, forked by humid-ending Augusts.

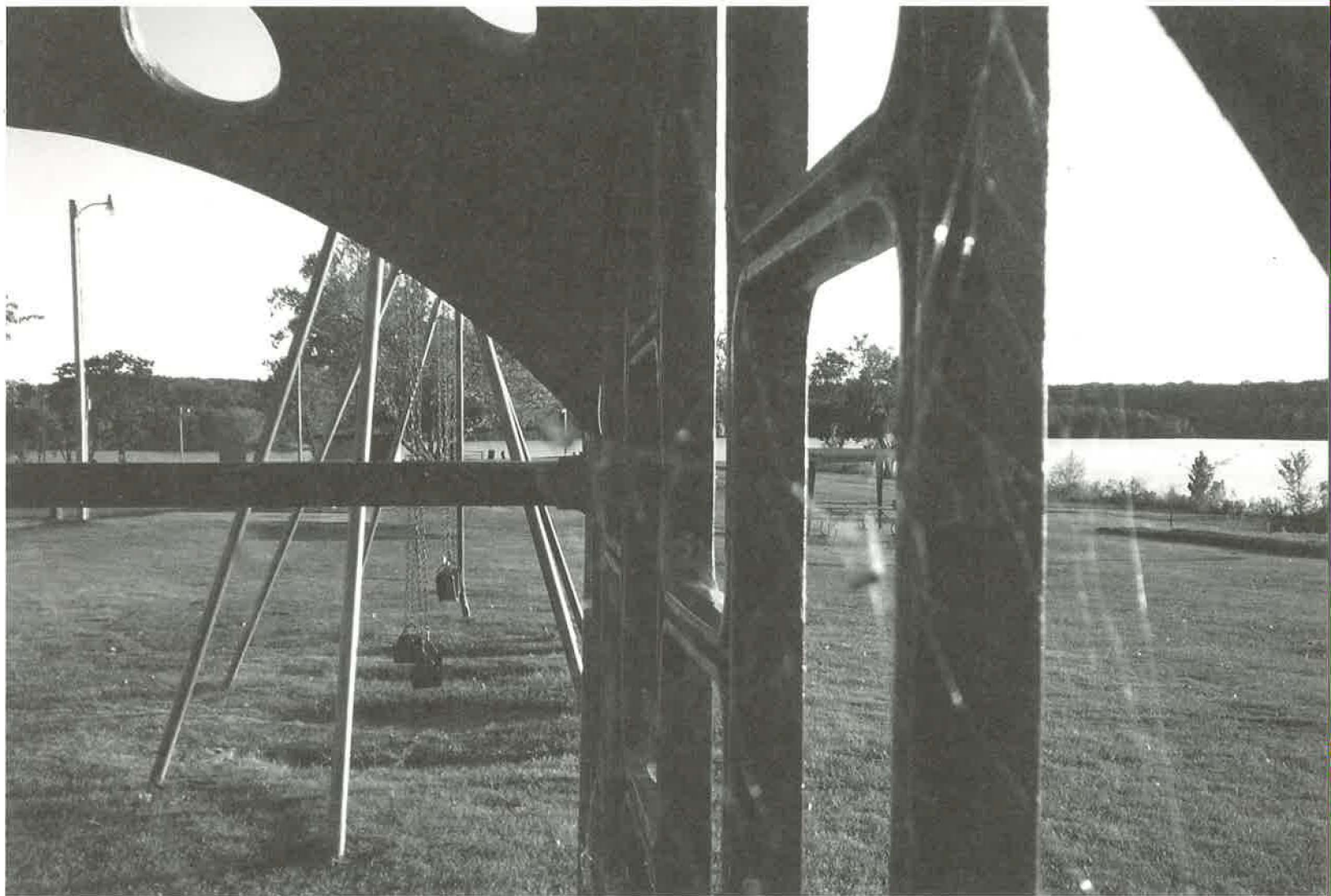
Sprinting heavy against the lofty winds of  
South Tulsa, we stretch for diving, pig-skin grabs,  
Throwing spirals through pinks and oranges of infinity with  
Never-ending smells of wood bats and football grass lingering;

We fight, but with quiet grimace, against  
Armies of allied insects and mole hill kingdoms for  
That single chance to live as only children can—  
Caught in moments of prized glory with mallard-crowds cheering.

We fight still, and reach through violet  
Atmospheres; we butt our sweat-brimming  
Brows against the twilight sky that  
Betrays our bewildered vision

But near the end of humid Augusts when  
Setting sun stretches its rays at seven or so and  
The mallard-crowds retreat to pond edges, we are  
Left; white dwarf stars are not enough after eight or nine.

Because twilight always falls on  
Hunter Park, our forgotten dreams stay that  
Way—dismissed on empty goldengrass hills  
Until greengrass Augusts and sweat-filled  
Evenings of Hunter Park Glory.



*Rebecca Krueger*

# THE VOICES

J. Y.

“Tell me.” The voice demanded answers, demanded attention, demanded a response into the silence. The anger wasn’t apparent in the volume or the tone but in the woman’s harsh look.

Her husband gazed at the beautifully original face before him: every jaw muscle was locked and her wide eyes steadily challenged him. No reply would come. Her face kept demanding him to answer. He was drowning in his words. He couldn’t tell her. The request was simple, “Tell me,” but the answer was complex, and a sea of words would never save him, only pull him further under. He looked out the large back window into the darkness and replied out of his helplessness, “Why?”

The emerald green eyes snapped closed like the jaws of an attacking tiger, then they slowly opened and continued to deliberately blink as if she were chewing his dead words with her eyes. She replied when she was ready, “Because I have a right to know.”

No reply.

“Tell me that you don’t want her. You can tell me that you love her, but don’t tell me you want her. Don’t tell me you want her close. Don’t tell me that when we are alone, you want her. Tell me you want me. Tell me you were weak. Tell me you were lonely. Tell me...” She paused in desperation, realizing she was in danger, like a tiger in an ambush. Her words were encircling her, while she was devouring her prey. A fierce power gathered in her chest... “Tell me the truth.”

She faced her husband, the hunter. He wasn’t looking at her; he was looking out the window into the darkness. The window was large enough to view the entire Pacific coastline when any light was visible, but tonight the clouds cut off the heavens from the earth, and the world was dark.

He was enveloped in darkness, and beyond it he felt the Pacific tide moving closer, just as he felt all of the words in his throat moving closer, “I wanted her.” He allowed the truth to choke him for a moment, then he realized that he had been choking for months and that saying the words, “I wanted her,” saved him. He could breathe.

She hadn’t taken her eyes from her husband. She had been afraid of this moment: the moment where metal and flesh meet. The fight was over. The truth hit her flesh. She stood motionless until she sunk to the floor.

He looked at her beautifully original face. The jaw was slack and the glazed emerald eyes were looking at him in wonder and release. The fight was over and a flash of lightening captured the both of them. They looked at the window. Light beamed and was gone. Their reflections in the dark glass was the only thing left after the flash. They looked at one another in the darkness, seeing each other for the first time in months.

# EASTER ON THE VIA DOLOROSA

Grady Walker

The last time I had seen Him, His bruised feet  
Were slipping off the down side of the cobblestones  
On the Via Dolorosa  
Blood-drenched feet, slipping, awkward off the  
cobblestones.  
Nerves tingle pain-waves to the blurred brain  
Of the Son of Man, a moving mass of rejection;  
Hair matted with spittle and blood and  
Urine-mud from the sandled feet of  
Roman bruisers, disillusioned with their  
Raft of sterile gods and not looking to  
Add another to their list.  
Blood-mushed face, not identifiable as a  
human feature.  
More like a rose dipped in acid flame,  
Smearred with human muck, smudge, smell.  
Reeling, stumbling, bruising on the cobblestones  
Of the Via Dolorosa, nightmare stick-figure,  
Straining in slow motion toward the hill, looming  
Like a gaping skull waiting to absorb His flicker of life.  
Past the weeping, black-veiled Marys, the incognito disciples,  
The smug Pharisees, the mindless rabble, He  
stumbles on, misery's mime, toward gaping Golgotha!  
Haunting sounds, floating back from the labyrinth  
of memory,  
Words echoing from the tomb of Lazarus:  
"I am the Resurrection and the Life!"  
Where was that life now? Ebbing away,  
Dreams dismantled, expectations expired.  
O, God! He's falling! Somebody help Him!  
It's Simon, that burly black tradesman,  
here to make profit from passover pilgrims.  
Screaming, taunting, cursing, shoving,  
mob-mind, vomiting out its dry-heave  
vacuum!  
Soundwaves moving down the  
Via Dolorosa as He passes,  
Crowd surging behind, shutting me out!  
I can't see Him now, but word comes  
down the line about the garment  
gamble, the big nails,  
and the prayer for their forgiveness.

There was some whispering about a  
 death wish.  
 It was the calmness, the awful reconciliation,  
 The rush to finish the blood business.  
 No more talk of prayer, a garden,  
 Sleeping friends, and pleas for the cup to pass.

Above the heads of the crowd-dragon,  
 Like a catapult storming a castle wall  
 A cross, His cross, swings into view  
 And then that awful thud that like  
 A drumroll begins a rumble, reaching  
 From midearth to core depth, shooting  
 Sound, rumble-thunder, earth tremble,  
 Cobblestones, blood-wet, cracking on the  
 Dark Via Dolorosa.

Fear-struck, mad multitude moving  
 Away from Golgotha flooding the dark  
 Via Dolorosa, rushing for hearth-safety,  
 Trampling the innocent and old, gluttoned  
 Now with the gore they craved, rushing  
 Home for Passover dinner but forgetting  
 to bring the Lamb!

Dismal weekend, empty Sabbath, like a  
 Locked door to an empty room.  
 Roman legions, loving the quiet,  
 snuggle in their wine-soaked dreams,  
 Dreams of Rome and home and away from  
 crazy Judea.  
 With its Messiahs and blood-lust.

Strong urgings to go back to the hill,  
 to throw His claim and promise in  
 His mangled face, but  
 they say He's gone, buried by friends  
 In Joseph's new tomb, tucked away fast, so  
 As not to break Sabbath law  
 Again (as He had been known to do).

Sunday morning! First day of the week,  
 Not-the-Sabbath, first day of a new  
 World!  
 Brightest rays ever cast over benighted  
 Judea.  
 No one saw Him come back, for

His body, after His mission  
In Hell, telling those suspended spirits  
How they could follow Him out.  
Aeriform, piercing the stone-door,  
Exploding the hell-gate, blasting its hinges  
forever.  
Swirling around Him, like bees in summer swarm  
Seeking a new hive to expand and enrich.  
Clustering about Him, invisible, until His  
ascension-trip.  
Limitless body, appearing in many forms,  
A gardener, a fisherman, a pilgrim to the  
Emmaus men, as Mark said later:  
“. . . he appeared in another form  
unto two of them.”

But it was Magdalene who saw  
Him first, not in majesty yet but  
as a gardener, a man of the earth.  
Then, suddenly, as I have heard it  
Many times told, a revelation of  
Who He was! A look from divine eyes  
That said in a second of millennium  
truth expansion:  
“I am the Resurrection and the Life!”  
and  
“I am He that was dead and  
am alive forevermore!”

She said something about eyes of  
Flame, feet of burning brass,  
Hair like wool, walking among  
Golden candlesticks, but she decided  
To let John talk about that later,  
-- his revelation!

Some of the cobblestones have been replaced  
On the Via Dolorosa, but devout pilgrims  
Who retrace the steps of the carpenter-king  
Say the sun glints on the stones at times  
And a staggering pattern of gold appears  
On those once soaked by His blood.  
And some say that in quiet meditation  
On the old street they hear whisperings  
in the wind  
That say:  
“I am the Resurrection and the Life!”

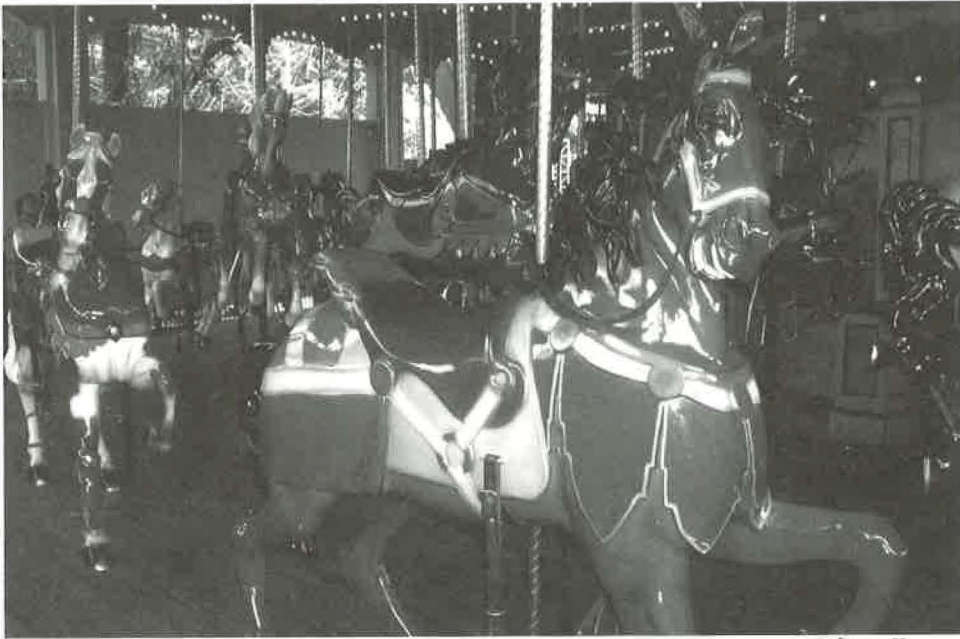
# THE BLACK ARTS

Amber Earls

Jazz swings  
Trembles  
Sings  
Kisses my ears  
Hips  
Lips  
Sips my fingertips.  
Rhythm is my mistress  
I am beat; a shrine to jazz  
I drink in the soul of the piano.  
I am music  
I am swing  
I am big band  
I am tempo  
I am meter  
I touch the sky in swing  
I dance in the  
Palm rooms  
With my ruby flapper dress  
And my mary-janes.  
The bandleader in his lemon zuit suit waves his baton.  
He says,  
"Come here, pretty girl.  
And dance like there's no tomorrow."  
So I walk to the floor  
And spin sin  
Sway seduction  
Swish sweet slander.

Jazz is my mistress,  
All hail the Black Arts.





*Rebecca Krueger*

# MY ASTRONOMY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HOME

Joshua Lacy

Oklahoma  
Condensed in a rearview mirror; I tell myself  
I'm nothing if not on the outskirts of home

On the outskirts of home  
Do the stars work the same—are  
The laws of physics changeable—  
Even when three hundred miles from home,  
In God's foothills  
(The mountains I bend my neck to look at,  
Underneath the stars I break my neck to stare at)

My favorite stars are always there—  
Make-me-feel-at-home-stars.  
In a checklist fashion I find them:  
Orion stringing his bow  
(Sometimes I think that,  
Perhaps, he is not hunting the bears and field mice,  
But daring them to come near, like a Lite-Brite-protector)

Cassiopeia, hanging upside down in the sky,  
Head spinning, blood rushing to the brain,  
Challenged to an eternal game of Hangman.  
For a moment, I forget her faults and replace them with mine  
What was Her corruption?  
Shouldn't I be there, holding the Bulky Ladle, dipping  
Celestial soup for Hercules and the Seven Sisters.

But I wasn't banished to the stars.  
They just comfort me on the outskirts of home.

I'm nothing if not on the outskirts of home

And when I think I will die on this mountain,  
(I should be so lucky; it is the closest to God I will ever be)  
Looking at the stars—my stars—  
Hopefully they haven't burnt themselves out, yet—  
I know I am safe, because  
I sleep under the same stars on this mountain  
That I sleep under in my bed, made in Oklahoma—they are no different

Just better



*Adam Willard*

# BIRDWATCHING

Kingston Jones

He arches his back  
Wide wingspan  
So he can move with the current

Orange chested Robin  
What's that dear?  
Well, it looks like a Robin to me

The orange chested Robin  
Is really a Pigeon  
And I am a fool

Red, inflated  
Like a Magnificent Frigatebird  
In breeding season

Ever awkward  
Double-striped Thick-knee  
I want to go home

You however,  
You love this  
Kentish Plover or Superb Fairy-wren

As far as I know  
These dumb birds make noise  
And take dumps on the Buick

That's fine  
It's great  
Beautiful

I just want my binoculars back  
And to stand next to you  
For a little bit longer, I guess

# BALD

Kingston Jones

My mother gave birth to me on September 5, 1984. I was a happy baby; at least that is what my parents told me. I was known to cry, spit up food, drool, drop the occasional poop, all the things normal babies do. My parents could not be happier. In fact, I'm pretty sure that on the occasion of my birth there was some sort of celebration that took place. Many calls were placed to many relatives. There was much crying and laughter, "oohs" and "ahhs" as several aunts and uncles fought among themselves to hold me. My young cousins, however, had no choice but to take pictures, since their parents were too enchanted with my babiness to do so themselves. "Oh would you look at that! He blinked!" Unfortunately, my parents had no idea just how jacked up their child was. While I appeared to be just like the other children in the hospital, there was something evil lurking beneath me. The kind of evil not even holy water and the touch of the Pope's hand can remove. The vile curse of Satan known as Male Pattern Baldness.

My dad is bald, so I have known that eventually this was going to happen. The thing is, my dad started losing his hair when he was in his thirties. I started losing hair the second semester of my freshman year. I remember rubbing my head one day after classes and noticing a small thin area of hair. After finding a hand-held mirror, I turned my back to the larger mirror in the dorm bathroom and began examining my head with the smaller one. From the mirror in my hand, I saw a grand reflection of horror. There was a round thinning portion of hair about the size of a quarter on the back of my head. My eyes cried out for relief, but I refused to stop looking. The genes my father passed to me had finally come around. Or did they?

I remember a friend telling me that studies show that Male Pattern Baldness (Androgenetic alopecia, androgenic alopecia, or alopecia androgenetica if you even care) usually comes from the maternal side of the family. This means that my hair loss would have to come from my mother's father, not my dad's. I was overjoyed. Until I realized that my maternal grandfather was bald too. Hopeless.

I tried to lie to myself, saying things like, "It must have been a bad haircut.," or "it's stress from finals." It wasn't either of those things, just a gift my family gave me. When I think about it, I don't remember whether my paternal grandfather was bald or not. He died when I was five, so there's not much I remember about him. I have thought about looking through old photo albums or just picking up the phone and asking my dad, but I don't really care that much. Going bald can't really be that

bad. Some of the most important and influential people in the world have been bald: politicians, televangelists, communist dictators, Sean Connery. The way I see it, I must be in good company.

Think of all the masses and their hair. The constant upkeep, the worry over whose haircut looks better. I would rather forget about all that stuff and focus on more important things; without any hair to wrestle with I can do just that. One of the things that my future baldness can help me with is sympathy. People don't care about a depressed twenty-two year old guy with a big afro, but they would shed tears if that guy were bald. They would say things like, "Look at that poor bald young man. Life sure has been hard on him, and you can tell because he has no hair. Here young fella, have a Mercedes." After a few months of hanging around the same areas of town, folks would start to recognize me and give me nicknames. "Hey, how is baldo doing today? You still don't have any hair, but you have your youth, for now." Comments like that would become normal to me. I figure I would end up spending a lot of time in the park or bingo halls, places where most of the patrons are hairless or too close to death for me to care about the state of their heads.

Of course, my future doesn't have to be that bleak. It is completely possible for me to live a fulfilling life without my hair. I can get married, have kids, live in a nice house, and do all the things the normal people do. Sadly, If I have a son I will have to prepare him for a possible adolescence without hair, but that is only if my wife and I decide not to adopt.

Most likely, by the time I graduate I will have lost a quarter of my hair. Maybe if I am lucky CBS will do a T.V. movie about me. Paul Newman would play my part. He may not be bald, the right age, or the right skin color, but I like the way his head is shaped.

# THE BRIGHT WANDERER

Roger Buswell

Angie came every Thursday and sat in the flood channel with me, and we looked at the moon when it showed and listened to the wind, or the sirens or the silent sky. She wore clothes with the names of bands written everywhere. I asked once if she had any tattoos. She said, "No," then offered to show me. All her friends had tattoos and piercings. She didn't even have an earring. When I asked why, she responded with an impression of her southern belle, Pentecostal mother: "The body is the temple of the Lord, child. Would'ya cut holes into your savior?"

Angie's skin was white like lilies, like she had never seen the day. Sometimes I would trace my finger down her arm, starting at her shoulder, following the delicate vein to her elbow. She usually shuddered and always pulled away, and I laughed like I was teasing, a guilty laugh, because I really just wanted to touch her.

In the summer Angie started wearing long sleeves. Even during the hot nights her arms were covered. I never knew where she got all of her clothes: a pink denim jacket, knee high boots, gloves up to her elbows. I always wore Levi's. I had three pair and they rotated for three weeks before being laundered. I always wore the dark jeans on Thursdays, and a tight t-shirt, a tight black t-shirt my friend had sold me. It was the only piece of clothing I had with a band on it, my friend's band, with the drummer who couldn't play. It was short-sleeved, and I always wore it even on the cool nights.

When Angie wore long sleeves I stopped touching her, but we talked like before. I was trying to cover up the fact that I read books, books unassigned by teachers, books for pleasure, and that I had only ever been to a couple concerts, both of them put on by my friend's band and that most of the names all over Angie were a mystery to me. Angie tried to cover up her family, her plastic salesman father, her housewife mother and her missionary older brother. And she covered up her arms.

Once she asked me, "Do you write?" I answered, "What do mean, like for school?"

"No, like in a journal. Like poetry."

"Never."

"Don't lie. You can't lie to a liar. I always see the stains from the ink on your finger."

"Fine detective, I write some. I can't help it if I'm cultured and refined."

"Is it brooding, full of teen angst, like, 'My mom won't let me drive her car, and I want to slap her and play punk rock?'"

"No, shut up. I'm not talking about this with the unwashed."

"Oh, come on I'll be nice. Read me something. I'll tell you that I like it."

"I don't believe you. I know your type. Ruthless, that's what you are. Well not today, sister."

"Tonight."

"Not tonight, sister."

"You don't trust me after all we've been through together?"

"What have we been through?"

"Fires, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, locusts, bad TV, and one outfit."

"I'll give you the last one, and shut up."

"You have to admit the bad TV, too."

"When have we ever watched TV together?"

"Fine, just the outfit. But that's a lot. It hurts me to see the way you only have one pair of jeans and one t-shirt."

"Look, my poor corporate executive father could only buy one shirt for his children to wear. I get to wear the shirt on Thursday. That's my day. My six brothers each have one of the other days."

"And we've been through that together." She said, leaning over and touching my arm. I could feel my heart accelerate and my pupils widen. I looked down so she wouldn't see. "Together," she said again in a joking whisper, but the hair on my neck stood up anyway. I couldn't move, because she was touching me, and she was sitting a little above me on the embankment, so if I looked up at her as she bent down to me I might see her body, and she might see me looking and slap me or cover herself with her hands like I had made her naked, and she'd move away. In any case, she would leave if I looked, surely. So, I sat paralyzed until she let go. Then she moved away anyway and sighed.

"Would you write me something?" She asked quietly.

"Like what?" I said.

"Like a poem or something."

"You'll just laugh."

"Just dedicate it to me. I can't laugh if you dedicate it to me."

"Sure you can."

"No. I would be too touched."

"Touched? Can you be touched?" I said. I meant it to be a joke. But Angie snapped back, "Write me a poem and find out."

"All right, if you insist. When's my due date teacher?"

"Just write it now."

"No, no. It doesn't work like that. I need time and privacy. I don't even have anything to write with."

"You have a pen in your pocket, Shakespeare. You always do. It's how I knew you were a sissy, I mean writer."

"Talk like that won't get you what you want missy. I also have no paper."

"Write on my hand," she said as she offered me her palm.

"No way."

"Yeah'huh."

"No, I'm not going to."

"Forget it," she said and kicked herself up from the concrete.

"Come on Angie," I said, "I'll do it. Just give me some time."

"Forget it," she said again, and walked away up the side of the channel. This time I looked up at her and saw her white legs disappear into the shadow under her skirt. I was angry, and my fist balled up. I didn't say anything and my face felt red, because I liked where things were going, but then they were going backward. I wrote something for Angie that night.

On Tuesday I walked up to Angie in the hall. It was the first time I had ever talked to her outside of the channel. It was the first time I had ever approached her. She had always walked up to me before. I was always sitting in the channel, and she came. I always heard her and held my breath as her boots scraped the concrete. I never looked. I always froze until she sat down next to me.

I had tried for two days to find her alone. But she never seemed to be alone. She always had boys or girls or people who didn't look like either. They were dressed like her with the names of bands on their clothes.

She was around her friends, and they were around her in a semicircle like an amphitheater with hungry eyes. I tried to ignore them. Angie looked at me like she didn't know me, and I felt like my neck was too thin. I said, "This is what I wrote you," handing her the little piece of paper, the paper my grandfather had bought me that didn't yellow with age, because it was made from cotton, the same as a dollar. I spent an hour working word by word to copy Angie's poem onto that paper perfectly. She took it in her little hands, her fingers bursting out of frayed cloth gloves. Then she looked three inches above my head and tore the paper in half. "Who do you think you are!" she said and tore the paper again. I turned and walked away; I heard her tear it into smaller and smaller pieces, and one of her friends said, "Seriously, who is that guy?"

On Thursday I went to the channel again. I waited for her like always. I wasn't afraid she wouldn't come. But I wore a flannel shirt and my neck felt thick and strong, and I wasn't playing a game anymore. She came.

"You're not wearing your family shirt," she said.

"No. I got one of my own. You're not wearing boots or gloves."

"No, I decided to try something new."

She sat down. She was wearing a tan skirt. It was long and light and covered her whole legs. She wore long sleeves and her hair was clean and free and fell in curtains as she bowed her face. She was hiding her eyes while she looked at me, but the moon seemed to make them glow. My senses were in her lap, but I thought I was being distant and cold, because she had struck me, and I was righteous.

We sat for a long time.

I wanted to say, "Did you tell them who I am?" or "How did you like your poem?" or something else covered in barbs, and I started to think about what I should say. I hardly noticed when she took something in her hand and snapped my head up when she spoke like waking from a deep bewildering dream.

She said, "I lost the last line."

I said, "What?"



She said, "I couldn't find the last line," and she showed me what was in her hand. It was the paper she tore mostly reworked with scotch tape.

"What does the last line say?" She said, handing me my work. I took and saw the jagged marks smoothed under plastic and letters blurred by moisture in small circles and tiny red stains, my work she had torn.

"Would you read it to me?" She said, "Would you read it with the last line?"

I said yes and read.

Why do you wear long sleeves?  
Birds don't cover their wings.  
There is no flight in secret;  
The air around you sings.

Is your father fearsome?  
Is your mother blind?  
Is your brother ashamed of you?  
Are their eyes unkind?

Cloth cannot match light and air;  
It cannot let you breathe.  
I can't believe you'd suffocate,  
Captured in those sleeves.

Let me run my fingers,  
Down your silky skin.  
Don't lock me out with sleeves and walls;  
I'm calling; let me in.

I miss the way the moon,  
Always made you glow.  
I want to forgive you everything;

The last line was missing. I stopped and looked up. She was rocking and I saw the strands of hair wetted together and dripping salty water on the ground.

"What's the last line?" Angie said, but she wouldn't look at me.

"Do you not want me to know?" I said. She stood on her knees and looked down at me. She put her hands on my shoulders then ran them down my back, laying her head on my shoulder. I felt her body shiver and she sobbed. I felt her breath on my neck when Angie said, "No, I don't want you to know."



*Chris King*

# ORCHID GATHERER

Joshua Lacy

I imagine better days  
When you were happy without the meds—  
The smiling-masked meds—  
Gathering orchids for the Seattle Summers  
That I never knew

I  
Never  
Knew  
Your revival tent laughter.  
When you winked because you wanted and  
Not because of the pills you kept hidden in your cabinet.

That frustrating smell haunts my nose and throat  
Like an illness and you carried it  
Like a burden but you were just a little girl  
With witting winks  
Those foretelling winks that broke me—  
Telling some story of a failed future.

Picking orchids again from the gardens you kept in my sleep,  
I could see a background of haze, green grass, and off-white siding  
From an unfamiliar cottage in a nowhere county

The dream bellowed like a bass drum  
My left ear, because you didn't even know where you were.  
And then a blast from a snare in my right—  
You didn't know where you were

And I called out to you but you were  
Busy picking orchids for the future from alongside  
Your majestic cottage where you hide, even still

And then you disappeared without trace of basket-flowers  
Or footsteps or even crinkles in the grass where your numb knees knelt

Those better days I imagined disappeared in the midnight blue sleep  
Along with your face and the hint of the orchids you carried.

# GARDEN

Mercy Gallagher

When you have returned,  
And brought back the groceries and set them on the counter  
And turned towards me, your soft eyebrows up,  
I will not see a question in your question.  
You will ask how I made it through,  
And I will stammer.

I would have trimmed the wicks, but they were all burned down.

If you are my bridegroom on a long home-hiatus,  
Then I am your wayward housewife,  
Letting the dishes crust in the sink,  
Stirring the batter, cooling the oven.  
I take the phone off the hook.  
I hope you will call.

This is not marital bliss, sir.  
This is not a Better Home and Garden;  
We don't have flowers, let alone a garden.  
When you come back, you will "shhh" through white granite teeth.

You are on a business trip.  
In your hotel you click your tongue and wink,  
And create a stock of clean underwear for the entire floor.  
You order room service and tip with twenties.

You are on a Scottish battlefield,  
A kilted General, slamming your helmet on,  
Banging the side of your head, your stout ribs.  
You tell the men to think of their wives.

You are on the London Bridge,  
Handing out hang gliders  
For the final collapse.  
The kids look like little Macaws.

You are on a backwards cotton candy mission for the world,  
Spinning fluff back into substance,  
And when you come home, you'll bring the bacon,  
The milk, the honey,  
The loaves, the fishes.

But I have to sweep the house alone and

Where do I lock the lock to? I twist the key;  
It does not click.

Where is the dog and when did he die?  
I do not remember him leaving the yard.

Where is your laundry?

I think I could fold it but

I cannot find the new garment.

All I find are my things.

You took your work jeans.

I miss the holes on your knees.

Where is the baby, yawning her mouth open,

Showing her teeth?

She was never born.

Open mouth.

Hollow pull.

Despite the photo albums,

I cannot picture you.

I sleep too late every morning.

Some sun-up, you “shhh” through white granite teeth.

You stand at the sink and fill a glass of water,

And your return turns the turning into tune.

The walls vibrate; the locks and keys and switches

Click and snap and twist and click and click and click.

Surge and pulse.

Every bulb is 700 watts.

You pull the curtains, spreading your arms like the opening earth.

Your hands leave the blood everywhere.

The pipes are mended,

The air slides through the vents.

The kitchen is clean.

The bed is clean.

This is another house.

I answer for everything.

You walk to the brown bag on the counter,

Reach in; the paper rustles like new leaves.

You pull my hand from my side,

Press a seed into my palm.

“Here,” you say.

“I brought you something.”



*Anna Saah*



The Literary Journal of  
Oral Roberts University  
English Department  
2006-2007