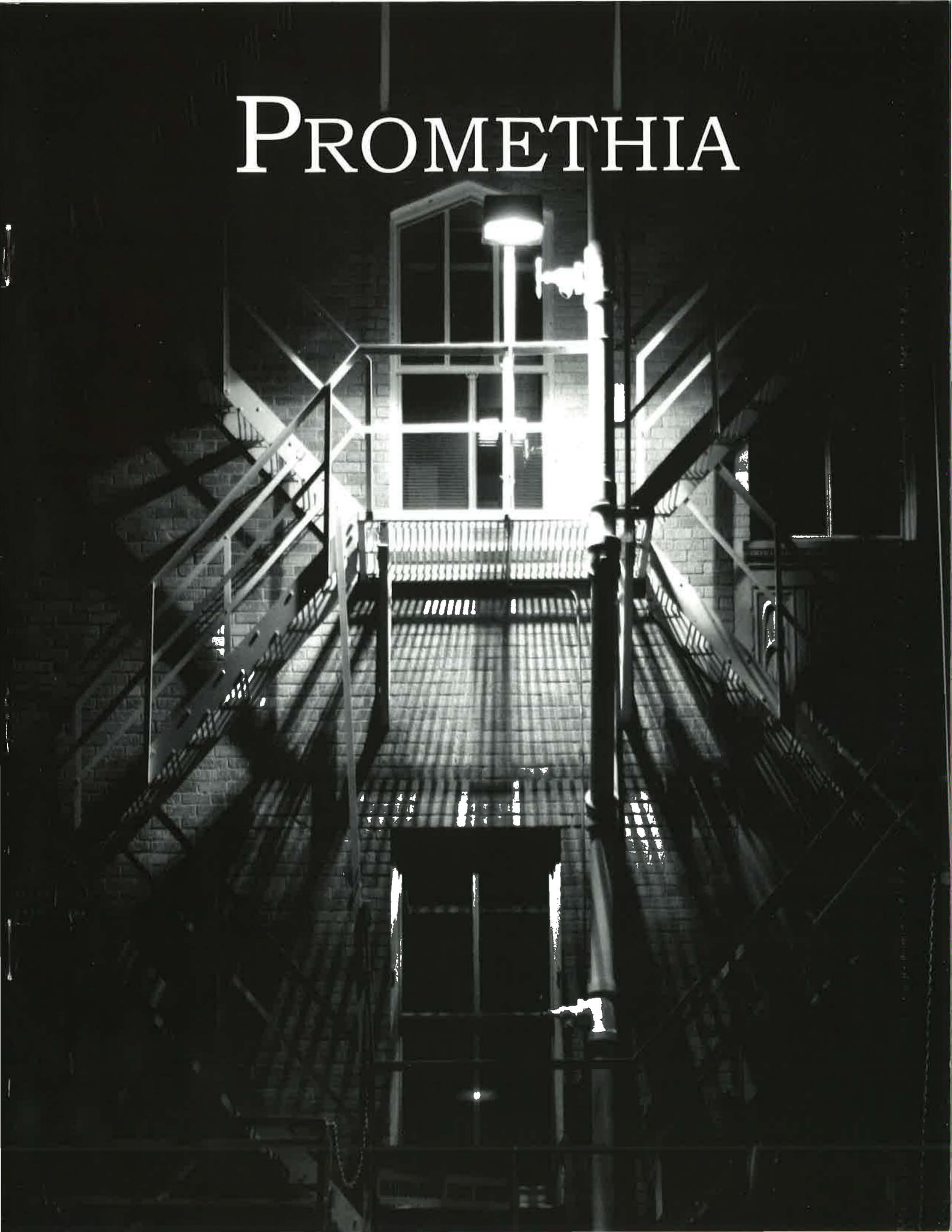


# PROMETHIA



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P R O M E T H I A  
2007-2008

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# Editors' Notes

The test of true art is whether a piece can stand as a living organism. T. S. Eliot said it well when he wrote, "What a writer does to people is not necessarily what he intends to do. It may only be what people are capable of having done to them." True art is dynamic. It can have as many interpretations as the number of people who are exposed to it, but its dynamic nature does not stop with merely one exposure. A single work can have multiple meanings to a person throughout his/her life.

It is in the spirit of this definition that I set forth to edit and design this edition of *Promethia*. I hope the poems, essays, stories, and photos keep you picking up the journal for another read.

Samuel R. Stephens

When I read words on a page that are written with creative intent, I want to know that the writer is not merely fitting words together. I want to get a sense of that writer's soul or spirit. I want to know something deep and personal about that writer. Creative writing cannot be forced or contrived. Creative writing should be, first and foremost, the writer's best attempt at honesty. Not all honest pieces of literature are well written, but honesty should, nevertheless, be the starting point.

After honesty, the most critical sign of good literature is its ability to convey a relatable or familiar theme with freshness. A work of art bearing this quality gets me excited because it makes me believe that life is anything but boring or predictable. The writer who can do this must be read. He/she must, at the very least, treat cliché as if it were a clock that no longer ticks.

My goal in editing *Promethia 2008* was to select works that were honest and as original and creative as possible.

Zachary Gomez



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*Mike Deen*

# GAUDIUM RUBRUM MEUM (MY RED JOY)

Aimee Raile

The autumn maple stands  
Out from the dull grove  
A flame framed in the glass  
Red as my shiny clutch,  
Grandma's potted geraniums,  
And the brake lights in my way.  
A scarlet epiphany on the monochromatic  
Landscape of my imagination,  
It demands the shoes from my feet  
And the cynicism from my thoughts.  
Out of a phoenix's metamorphosis,  
Eternally expected yet striking,  
Its fiery exuberance feather-like falls,  
And each leaf joins in the rustle  
Of a breezy dance beneath the autumn  
Maypole.



*Seth Brock*

# NON-UNITED PARCEL SERVICE

Donna G. Kelley

Over the years, my family had interfered entirely too much in my giving of gifts. This time I had elected myself to serve as Selector, Purchaser, Wrapper, and Deliverer. Blue shorts and a matching crop top did little to fight the blazing May sun, especially for a pre-teen body of stocky proportions. Yet, I would not renege on my self-imposed mission.

"I'm not too keen on letting you walk home," my mother said. "You could ask the clerk to put my gift in a bag so I wouldn't see it. That way you could still ride home."

"Just trust me, Mom." Little did Mom know that a bag would not have covered more than one foot of the gift.

"Take this money to buy the gift," Mom suggested.

"Then you might as well label your gift 'From myself to myself,' Mom," I pointed out. "I'll use the money I earned for doing extra jobs around the house."

As I entered the hardware store, our green Pontiac nosed away from the curb to head home. Facing a walk of six miles, I felt stranded—like a puppy dumped off along an unfamiliar road. Wide-eyed innocence claimed my sweltering features.

"I'd like to see the ironing boards," I told the clerk. Choosing from three styles made me feel like an adult shopper. I carefully compared all of the features of the latest ironing boards.

It did not take long to discover the challenge in transporting on foot an ironing board in a long, cardboard box. If not balanced perfectly, one end or the other would plunge toward the road. Every few feet I had to stop, rest, and rearrange the cargo to my other side. There are only so many ways that one can carry an ironing board. Gradually, my steps became less purposeful in my weariness.

A choir member called from her car. "I'll gladly take a load off your feet."

I choked on my words. "No, thank you."

Closely-spaced houses appeared along the business district three miles from home. Several of my mother's friends stared at my slow progress. I would not have been surprised if my mother had posted spies along the homebound trail. If only I had duct tape, I could cover the large, black letters on this box. In the small town of Parkton, Maryland, one has to guard a secret with one's life. News travels over the grapevine faster than reporters can relay news to the media.

The volunteer fireman bellowed. "You look as if you could use a lift in my pickup."

"That's nice of you, but I can manage." How tempting, though!

Once I paused to admire the patterns of roses winding around a trellis.



Tantalizing aromas from kitchen windows assailed my nostrils as lunchtime rolled around. My mouth tasted cottony, just the way it did when the doctor packed my nose during a nosebleed. Cool drops of condensation on a castaway soda can made me swallow my skimpy saliva.

The young newlywed called out to me. "Your package is bigger than you are. I could have you home in a jif."

"Not this time, thanks," I blustered. Any of these familiar townspeople would have provided me with transportation. No...what I start, I finish.

On and on went my uncomfortable walk with heavy merchandise. At least I would have the satisfaction of knowing that I had carried out this transaction single-handedly. Aching muscles told me so.

Relief rippled over me as I turned into our farm lane. I hid the cumbersome rectangle behind the dairy until the designated day. Aunt Alma greeted me in the hallway. "I've picked out a shawl for you to give your mother."

Coinciding with her spinsterish ways, Aunt Alma had selected something that she must have wanted for herself. Maybe she had even expected to borrow it sometimes.

"That wasn't quite what I had in mind," I said with a snuffle.

Aunt Alma probed, "Then what will you give her?"

"Other years, people blurted the name of the gift as well as the hiding place," I said. "This year I want to keep it a secret."

"Well! Donna means business!" Aunt Alma said to Uncle Woody as he entered the hallway.

My uncle plopped a crackling package of wrapping paper in front of me but I gave it back. "Uncle Woody, this paper is for baby showers!"

The error became exposed in a timely manner. I could just hear the family razzing, "Wild paper, Donna!" No, a big lavender bow would decorate my lengthy gift. On her birthday my mother pretended that the gift surprised her. Even so, I suspected that it had been the talk of the town. "Do you mean you carried this all the way home on that hot day?"

"Your old one is so dilapidated, Mom." I savored the last crumb of my slice of coconut cake with buttercream frosting. "You deserve to work with better equipment."

Mom came toward me for a hug. "There's more love in this gift than meets the eye."

I stroked the cold, hard metal. "You deserved every bead of sweat, Mom."

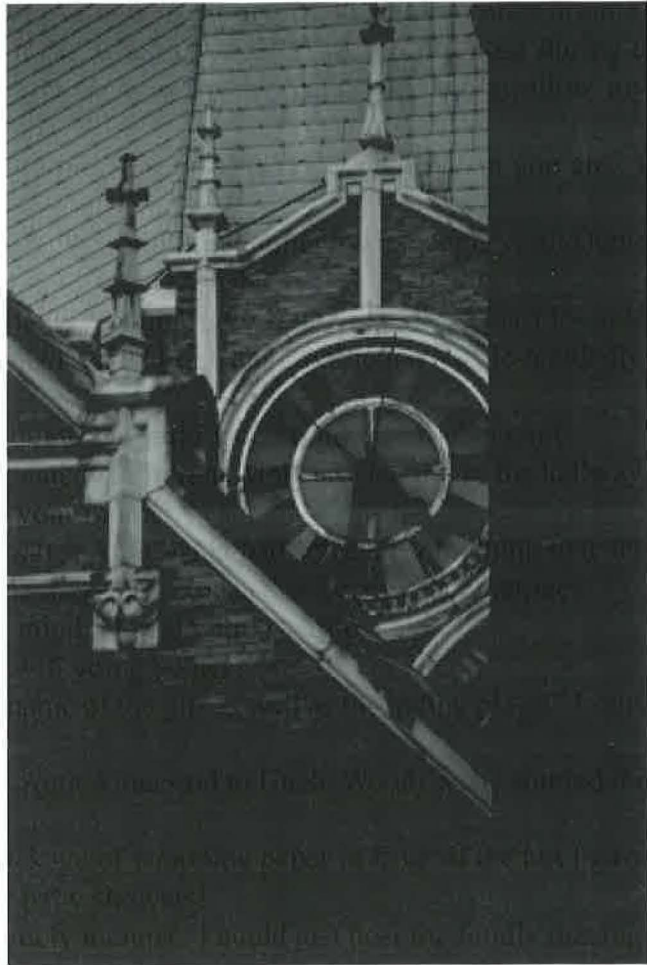


# WIRES

Keith E. Gogan

MySpace  
MyNews  
My, my, my  
It's all mine  
Everything but me, that is  
I don't know who I am  
Anymore  
(iPod; therefore, I am)  
I eat text messages and e-mails  
Like potato chips  
I blog fifteen pages about  
How my day went  
Because everyone needs to know  
About my flat tire yesterday  
I have 213 "friends" but  
I've never heard the voice  
Of one of them  
I have a TV as big as a coffin on my wall  
(Three-hundred channels of  
Hi-def, pixilated, high-fructose corn syrup)  
I can't sit still for five minutes  
Without the sweet i.v. drip  
From wires

I need to hear  
The conversations of birds  
See  
The smile of the sky  
Feel  
The tap of raindrops on my arm  
I need  
The darkness of dirt  
Underneath my fingernails  
Not the light of another sterile screen  
Elements  
Not filaments  
Someone please,  
Please cut  
These wires



*Seth Brock*

# GETTING HOME

Rachel Whitlock

I blinked with the weight of the last two years. She stood in front of me saying *Sorry*, but her eyes said *Bother someone else*. Her pin said Amber-Lynn. I cleared my throat and reiterated my request. “Ms. Amber-Lynn, I need a direct flight to Milwaukee. I know there is one available—the lady right over there told me half an hour ago that there was such a flight at 5:45.” I drew out each word—perhaps she would understand me better.

Two years of not coming home from college, and now the one thing blocking my way had the same chocolate eyes as my ex-girlfriend. Strange. It was clear that she didn’t know how to operate her computer from the way she asked for help every 5 minutes. I drummed my fingers on the ticket counter, contemplating my hairy knuckles. “Sir, we don’t have a direct flight to Milwaukee at 5:45. There is one with a layover in Denver, and it leaves at 7:15.” “Check again!” I snapped at Amber-Lynn and regretted it. Ella didn’t know her way around the computer either. It was humorous at times. Often the answer to her problem was something simple like “Hit enter,” or “Just let me do it!” But I didn’t miss her. The guilt-induced love that once beamed to me unrequited across the telephone wires from Milwaukee to L.A. had already stopped a year earlier. The last phone call had been about 6 months ago to say that she was engaged to a local bank manager. Too bad for her.

I looked up to see an older face, that of Amber-Lynn’s superior. “Sir, you’ve been booked on the 5:45 flight to Milwaukee. Sorry for the trouble.” The middle aged woman shoved the boarding pass and ticket in my direction. Her nametag said Dolores. Her eyes were glazed over even more than those of my Ella. After the incident, Ella wasn’t the bright lamp in a dark room I was used to. We were still together, but ready to leave the stickiness of what had happened. She moped over the phone about how California was too far, my inability to help her in Business French, and my “stupid college friends.”

I walked away from the ticket counter away from Dolores with two years of school, two years of Ella hanging on my ankles. In my mind I still held her hand, kissed her shoulder. Going to Milwaukee wouldn’t help. Each newspaper there seemed to show her byline. She had said that her new fiancée brought her peace. That and the writing. When she called six months ago, I hadn’t spoken to her in a year. My Ella. My beautiful Ella.

I took my luggage and myself to a plastic chair to wait. I was waiting for something, a phone call or a “Sorry for abandoning you” card. Something. I could have been waiting for a plane or for a sad song. I needed a song. I heard strains of an old lullaby drift in through my memories, and I suddenly had to cry. My parents would be happy that I was coming home for awhile. They still mentioned Ella, but in the way you mentioned a second cousin who did extremely interesting things; they wanted you to have a life. They hinted at it with thin lipsticked smiles and greased up thinning hair. Be more than us, was

the clear message. I tried to think about their faces to block out the tune swimming in my head. I wasn't tired, I was finally sad. But I refused to cry. Men may cry, but not when anyone is around. Airports are, after all, extremely public.

I had found out on a very nonchalant day. It was the summer before I would go to college in sunny California. On this sort of day, I could imagine I was already there. Ella lay in a chair beside me—we had always loved sitting by my pool. It was our place. She turned to me with half her face obstructed with those big sunglasses, and explained it so strangely. "I was pregnant, but I'm not anymore." What did that mean? "I got rid of it last week." I had always thought it was a person before it came out, she knew that. "I thought you should know." Good telling me now, of course, after I could do something about it. "You threw away a piece of the two of us. I don't even know how you could...could." My voice left me, replaced by a ball of tears in my throat.

I was supposed to board the plane, but I sat in my uncomfortable plastic seat for at least another hour. Milwaukee would have to wait, my parents would have to wait, Ella would have to wait. After pushing back tears for so long, my face began to go numb. Good. Then if I started crying on the plane I could pretend I had had a stroke and my left side was paralyzed. It really was. That's where my heart was, and where I imagined my baby boy had gone.



*Seth Brock*



# RACQUETBALL

Jordan Mccown

The wall cracked. Never in the history of the sport had the wall actually cracked. The numbers on the huge screens on either side of the court clearly displayed that the ball had been travelling almost 137 miles per hour as it had slammed into the wall. And the wall had cracked! Audiences worldwide held their breath and gripped their television sets as the ball careened off at a sharp angle to the left, streaking like a greyhound directly at the most famous sports-star in world history, Vlad Victorovia. Fans who were lucky enough to score court-side tickets to the match that day will swear on their life that at that moment, the Russian was smiling. He was grinning away as the fastest ball in recorded history was speeding towards him. For those of who were watching at home, it was only a blur as he swung. With a shout, we saw his right arm windmill, and suddenly the ball was back against the wall, was soaring high towards the rear wall, was pounding off of the ceiling, and unexpectedly headed straight for the floor, bouncing twice in rapid succession and catching Vlad's opponent completely off guard. The referee raised his hands, but the sound of the whistle was entirely drowned out by the roar of the crowd as they flooded the court. I still remember sitting on my couch as a young boy, literally weeping with joy as the adults in the room with me danced with each other and poured Champaign into each other's open mouths. The news stated that the rioting in the streets of Moscow went on for almost a week before the local police and National Guard were able to restore some semblance of order.

But that's the power of racquetball. Racquetball, the sport of kings and peasants, of noblemen and slaves, of rich and poor. Racquetball, a sport replete with spectacle and globally-televised games (such as the 1967 Racquetball World Cup championship game mentioned above), but at the same time played everywhere, from filthy alleys behind sweatshops and brothels to jewel-encrusted mahogany floors in sultans' palaces. From the sands of the Sahara to the coldest reaches of the Siberian tundra, racquetball is one of the most-played, most-watched, most-just-plain-everything sports of all time. How can a single game hold the entire world in the palm of its hand?

Part of racquetball's universal appeal lies in its simplicity. What could be easier than two players hitting a small rubber ball, at a wall, with a racquet? The players take turns hitting the ball. If the ball bounces more than once before a player hits it, the other player gets a point. And that's it.

This is where the sport has such a huge advantage over others, such as, say, soccer. A sport that involves 11 players on each team, it's not surprising that soccer is a sport that has become relegated mostly to high school gyms in eastern European countries (honestly, had anybody even heard of "soccer" before the 2006 World Cup?). Football is equally



ridiculous, suffering from a vast overabundance of rules and regulations (many of which seem to be made up by referees on the spot). Even racquetball's kissing-cousin, tennis, requires a full court and a net to play. Racquetball stands as reigning champion of simple games, and as such, anyone can play it.

My own introduction to the glorious sport came in 1966, the year before the Racquetball World Cup. Victorovia was just a young aspiring player at the time, and my father took me to see him play and exhibition match at our local racquetball arena. The beauty of the curves, the simple geometry of the ball's trajectory, the squeaks of the player's shoes on the court; I was entranced. The next day I went to the gear shop and purchased my very first racquet. The next month I entered in the tournament at my middle school, and I have been playing racquetball ever since.

Racquetball has stood as a sport throughout the history of mankind. Hieroglyphics discovered in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamen depict the young royal playing an intense match against a Priest of Osiris. It is common knowledge that the 100 Years War began because of a disagreement between French racquetball player Jacque LeBeouf and British player Clive Oliver. Some Hebrew scholars even believe that the "scourge of small cords" used by Jesus to clear out the Temple in the Gospel of John was actually an early version of the racquet.

Even in our modern world, images of racquetball are branded into our collective memories. Who could forget the video of revelers playing against the Berlin Wall as it was being torn down? And name one person who has not seen the photos of that brave student at Tiananmen Square, staring down tanks with nothing but a racquet in his hand and the glimmer of democracy in his eye.

The sport is epic. The sport is ethereal. The sport is mind-boggling. The sport is divisive; the sport brings people together. The sport is terrible; the sport is awesome. There is a time to serve; there is a time to receive. Neither rain nor sleet nor hail nor snow can stop the racquetball. Ask not what racquetball can do for you; ask what you can do for racquetball. Luke, racquetball is your father.

Grab a racquet. Get out there and play.

# WEST

Joshua Lacy

Into the barren, back to the dust and  
Sand where the red ground battles the  
Forever blue and a bed is made in the backseat  
Of a 1974 Dodge Rambler—

I think I know why you want to head  
West, but you would never tell me:  
The heat is dry and  
The land is endless and  
The road is endless and the  
Sun never rises there and the  
Tumbleweed is authentic.

I would follow you there,  
though, I know you would have me stay;  
We could make an  
Arch in Utah our roof for a night and watch the  
Fog gather in the bay at San Francisco by morning  
Under the Golden Gate Bridge toward our Heavenly Pacific.  
We don't have to go too far North  
(Yosemite at best)  
instead we'll  
Drive backwards and float forever down the  
Colorado River—eating a canyon deeper.



*Mike Deen*

There will be no light pollution  
(We can't count the stars and start over)  
And no sound pollution and no  
Groupie pollution,  
Where The GAP is known only as the San Andreas, and the  
Coffee is made over campfires before dawn underneath the Mourning Stars;  
    I know your faith is gone,  
Left somewhere on I-40 like a  
Small child at a rest stop—tears without wails—  
    But lie on the Dust and sleep and dream that you  
    Were made from a Rib  
When you wake up without me know that  
    I would go West if you would have me.  
    I know why I want to head  
West, but it is never enough because  
The heat is dry  
    The land is endless, and the  
        Road will dead end at the Pacific, and the  
        Sun never sets long enough and the  
Tumbleweed is only caught in the barbwire.



*Seth Brock*

# LITTLE DANNY MEEKS

Kyle Erickson

He would often imagine that he had a crippling handicap that attracted pity from friends and strangers. It was never anything that disfigured his face. He knew that seeing his little face would encourage the pity. So he would imagine having a missing limb, or being paralyzed below the waist, or having terribly clubbed feet that forced him to use those little kid crutches. The idea of the crutches was his favorite, because they were big attention getters, and he would still be able to get around quite well on them.

"Danny?" Mrs. Trenton said quietly, standing next to him. But not quiet enough. A few of the kids around him giggled. "Do you know the answer?"

"Ummm..." Danny said. He hadn't been focusing, but thinking about his crutches. He looked at his desk, then at the marker-board with dozens of blue and red numbers scattered across it, then at Mrs. Trenton's pretty gray eyes. His face reddened.

"It's okay. Jenny? What is it?"

"24," Jenny chirped.

Danny liked Mrs. Trenton. She was pretty, thin, and friendly. He liked her red hair, and sometimes daydreamed of having a girlfriend that looked like her. Why did she have to make the others look at me?

Danny didn't have a mental problem and wasn't "off" in any way that he could think of. He was good at school and decent at soccer—he had scored a goal today during recess. He had friends. Nobody made fun of him or bullied him much. Except for the time that fat girl had called him "shorty," and Danny had called her "four-eyes" even though he was the one who wore eyeglasses. She ran and told on him, and Danny cried because he didn't want Mrs. Trenton to yell at him. He had hung his blonde head down and watched the tile floor become blurry as the tears filled within his lenses. Mrs. Trenton was nice, then. She had kissed his forehead and given him a hug. But Danny had to say he was sorry.

The last bell rang and finally school was out.

"Danny, Danny, Danny."

Danny looked up to see George running toward him. Danny liked the way George's fat cheeks made his eyes squinty. He also liked the way they disappeared when George laughed, which he did a lot.

"Danny, Danny, Danny. Wanna come over?" Danny breathed heavily and untucked his shirt with a fat hand. He held his backpack with the other.

"I have to ask my mom."

George had thin jet-black hair and a twin sister named Jessica who was fat too. She didn't talk much. She'd wiggle her nose to adjust her glasses every once in a while. She came



up behind George while he was talking to Danny.

“Ask her then.”

“I will when I go home.”

“Ask her when she picks you up.”

“No, she don’t like it when I ask in front of kids.”

“Okay, ask her when ya go home.”

“I said I was gonna.” Danny looked down at an orange plastic top he had picked up in the grass along the sidewalk.

“Waddya got?”

“Don’t know. It’s kinda neat.”

“Can I see it?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s cool. What is it?”

“Don’t know. Give it back. My mom’s here.”

“Ask her when ya go home.”

“I’m gonna. Bye, George. Bye, Jessica.”

“Bye.”

Danny walked across the drive and two houses down to George’s house. As he walked, he again thought of having a handicap. He began to practice different kinds of limps. He dragged his left foot and hopped forward with his right. He turned in his right foot and walked on the side of it, forcing him to bend his knee and walk awkwardly. He tried a couple of others and thought he liked the turned in foot the best—it was the most similar to clubbed feet.

“Hey, Danny. What ya doing?” George said. Danny was startled and began walking normally.

“Nothin.”

“You wanna play soccer?”

“Yeah.”

Jessica was in the front yard also, and she wiggled her nose as Danny and George approached. They all walked over the fallen leaves across the front yard and rounded the corner of the house toward the back yard. George opened the gate and held it for Danny, but he let it go before Jessica came through. She opened it and walked through. George had already gotten the ball out from underneath the trampoline. He kicked it over to Danny who let it go by him.

"What's that?" He pointed toward the trampoline.

"What... oh, that's our new trampolines."

"Trampoline." Jessica corrected him.

"Yeah, ya jump on it."

"What does it do?" asked Danny.

"It makes ya jump high," George said, grunting, as he pulled himself onto the trampoline with his fat arms. Danny started toward the trampoline.

"Here, Danny," Jessica said, carrying a small plastic ladder over to Danny.

"I don't need that," Danny said and tried to pull himself over the springs while George was jumping.

"Stop jumpin, George."

George lifted up his feet and bounced on his butt, till the surface stopped moving. Jessica waited until Danny was up before she got on. George started, his cheeks jiggling, jumping again. Every other time he went up, he either pulled his knees to his chest, or sat Indian-style in the air, or did a karate kick and yelled "Hiyaaa." Danny was trying not to be a chicken, but, at the same time, trying to get comfortable with the bouncing. Jessica did little jumps or skipped around the edge, until George jumped next to her and jolted the rhythm of the trampoline so that she fell down. She didn't say anything, but wiggled her nose, got up, and continued skipping.

"Hey, Danny. Hey Danny," George said.

"What?"

"Come stand in the middle."

"What for?"

"Just for a minute."

"What for?"

"I wanna show ya somethin."

Jessica sat down on the springs, Danny walked to the middle, and George walked to the edge opposite Jessica. Danny looked at Jessica then at George, wandering what was going to happen.

"Start jumpin."

"Why?"

"I wanna show ya somethin."

Danny started jumping cautiously and not very high.

"Higher."

"Why?"

"I wanna show you somethin."

Danny jumped a little higher. He could feel the wind more strongly. He liked the way his hair felt, going up and down. He laughed at how his glasses seemed to float then hit his nose when he landed. George was watching and flexing his knees to keep rhythm.

"Are ya ready?"

"Yeah!"

Danny was excited and having fun. He kept trying to jump as high as he could. He began jumping backward and forward a little, and tried half-circles and 360 turns.

"Ready?"

"Yeah!"

George jumped as high as he could and into the center next to Danny who was landing from his attempted spin. They landed simultaneously and rose simultaneously. George went straight up, but Danny was off balance and went flying higher than he ever had toward the edge of the trampoline. He felt a sudden pain against his leg before he flipped—his eyeglasses flying off—and hit the ground on his shoulder. He rolled over twice and opened his eyes to see the clouds slowly passing above the heads of George and Jessica looking down on him.

"Are ya okay?" Jessica said. George's eyes and mouth were wide open.

"Where's my glasses?"

"Umm..." George and Jessica began looking around.

"Help me find them." When Danny tried to get up, he felt someone kick him in the leg. "Oww! Oww! Oww!"

"What? What?" George and Jessica ran back to Danny. "Oh no! Look, Jessica!"

Danny's shin was no longer straight. Jessica ran into the house calling for her mom.

"Where's my glasses?"

"I got 'em. I got 'em. They break'd."

"No, Mom's gonna kill me."

"Does it hurt?"

"Where's the other glass piece?"

"I can't find it."

"Find it, George. I gotta find it. Oww, Oww, Ouch!"

"Stop crawling."

"I gotta find it, George."

"I'll find it."

When he woke, he was in his bed. His leg didn't hurt anymore, but he couldn't remember how he had gotten there. He felt a little cold and tried to pull his racecar blanket up to his chin, but it was taut, caught under the weight of his leg. He looked down and saw his cast. It scared him at first, but then he vaguely remembered going to the hospital. His mom wasn't mad at him, though she yelled at George and Jessica's mom and kept yelling about her all the way to the hospital.

He looked at his leg. It itched and he wanted to scratch it. He picked up his old pair of glasses that his mom had left on his night stand, and put them on to get a better look at his cast. It was so heavy. He pushed his leg over to the side of the bed and it hurt a little when he started to get up. Then he saw the crutches. They were leaning against his dresser. And for the first time, he couldn't wait to go to school in the morning.



*Mike Deen*



# BEHIND THOSE EYES

Rebecca Krueger

I didn't really know what to think when I first met Angie. She was a wispy, childlike woman, with long brown hair and big, brown eyes. Her cheeks were hollow, and her bones seemed to protrude through her pale skin. Her brown eyes told her story of sadness. They were like windows to her soul.

She was a librarian at the local library, books gave her a way to escape her circumstances, as she told me at our first meeting. We were introduced by a friend who knew I had worked with women who suffered with eating disorders. I had been successful in being a health coach for others and didn't think that working with Angie would be any different. I have learned through the years that each case is different. I do not mean that the women I work with are cases; they are human beings.

We had an appointment to meet at a public place, as Angie requested. She mentioned that she wouldn't feel so self conscious if she were in a public place. The restaurant was called Eggs and More, which was located in mid-town. It was noted for its decent prices and wonderful food. I found it interesting that we would meet at a restaurant, when Angie was suffering with an eating disorder. She said that it was her favorite place to eat, and we agreed to meet on Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. I wrote the time down in my burgundy day planner, so I would not forget.

The weather on Saturday morning was unusually cool. I wished I had put on my wool jacket before I left my apartment. The trees were beginning to bud, and I longed for summer to begin. I thought about my summer plans to stay at a friend's cottage in Montauk Point and smiled. School would soon be over, and I could spend the summer painting on the beach. A horn honked behind me while I daydreamed. I begrudgingly came back to reality.

This was the first time that I had been at Eggs and More, but it seemed unusually crowded for this time of day. The hostess put me in the corner as I waited for Angie to come. I could hear the clanging of plates in the kitchen and saw the metal door swing open. The waitress came with a silver plated coffee carafe and gave me a saucer and a cup. She poured me coffee even before I asked. *She must have coffee radar*, I thought. The coffee smelled unusually strong as I sipped the hot brew. It made me wonder if I was transmitting an "industrial strength" signal. Angie still had not showed up, but I did not care. This seemed to be usual for many people that I knew.

When she finally showed up, she hung her head as if she was scolding herself for being late. I told her that I didn't care. She didn't know that I was thinking about Montauk Point while I was waiting. The waitress came over with the carafe and poured a cup of coffee, after detecting Angie's signal. Angie ordered oatmeal with raisins, and I battled



with the idea of having a cinnamon roll. I guessed the “More” on the sign came from the famous cinnamon rolls that I had heard about. I chose soft-boiled eggs and toast instead.

The waitress came to fill our mugs, and I noticed her name was Meg. She was slightly overweight but had big, deep blue eyes. When the food arrived, Angie stirred her raisins and thought that it was fun to see the raisins follow in that pattern that they did. She was soft spoken when she finally started to speak.

“This swirling reminds me of when I was five years old; when we used to have oatmeal, raisins, and brown sugar. I miss those days of being five. Life was simple then.” She then proceeded to tell me about her family. She was one of five children and had an identical twin. She had fun in school trading places with her sister. Her oldest brother was a pastor, the perfect child in her parents’ eyes. The conversation was at a lull for a few minutes, when she continued to stir her oatmeal. She ate slowly, as if putting food in her mouth was something that she dreaded. But that was normal for someone with an eating disorder.

“Bet you won’t find someone more screwed up than I am. What are you here for anyway? Don’t you have anything better to do than hang out with someone like me? What makes you tick, man?” Angie said.

“So many questions. Let’s get this straight: I chose to be here, and yes, I have other things to do, but you are my priority. Your life matters to me. You have value and worth, that’s what makes me tick, man. Your life.”

The conversation slowed to a halt as we were ready to leave. We scheduled another meeting time and a phone call. I told her that my role in her life was to make sure she had more nutrition than two spoons of oatmeal and coffee all day. I was going to call her that evening to make sure that she had eaten more. As our relationship progressed, I would increase my presence in her life.

I prepared the lessons for my classes this week, graded some papers, but could not get the sadness of her eyes out of my mind. I pictured how I would paint those eyes on canvas. When I called Angie, she said she had coffee for lunch, but she did not eat. I jotted that down in my notes and recommended that she call me back when she had eaten something. I mentioned to her that coffee was not food. She said she would eat a peanut butter sandwich before she went to bed. She didn’t sound too convincing, but I told her I would trust her. We met a few times at Eggs and More, and our relationship improved. She asked me to go with her to the support groups she wanted to attend, which I agreed to do.

She mentioned that she met a man at the coffee shop across from the library. He did

not know that she was anorexic, but she wanted me to meet him. He met us at Eggs and More one Saturday morning. He seemed nice enough for her, but I was concerned. She could not take care of herself, let alone be in a relationship. When he left for the men's room, she asked me what I thought, and I chose my words carefully.

"You need to take care of yourself before you enter in a relationship."

"I am better now; I am eating more, and have gained a few pounds...that should be enough," she retorted.

John came back and sensed the tension. I had spent some time helping Angie, and now she wanted to move on. I really couldn't stop her or pressure her to want my help. She was making progress in her eating, but still needed more. After I left the restaurant, I called my friend who had introduced Angie and me. He recommended it was best to let her be. If she didn't want help, she didn't want help.

When summer came, I went to Montauk Point, and spent the summer painting with my water colors. Angie's face became a portrait, with the emphasis on her big, brown eyes. The fall came too quickly for me, as I headed back to the city. The fresh smell of the ocean, and the way the sand felt between my toes as I ran across the beach at sundown would be imbedded in my brain. As for Angie, I heard through my friend that she married John a few days after I met him at the restaurant. We passed each other on the street while I was waiting for the bus. She looked up as she gave me a smile, but her eyes told me the same sad story that they had told me before.

# LEADVILLE, COLORADO

Keith E. Gogan

Denver's pride tumbles on a summer day  
Namesake omelettes grow cold on platters  
Nuggets strain for too-high hoops  
When The Mile-High City leaps twice its height  
In vain  
To look Leadville  
In the eye

It's all about altitude in Leadville  
Ten-thousand feet above  
The level of a sailor's home  
Lies this once-mining town  
Deferent only to the lithic skyscrapers  
Cranking out afternoon storms  
Of hail and wind so cold that  
Most Texans huddle in their rented red July Jeeps  
On the high passes

Yes, Leadville—where the Arkansas River  
Starts as preface and  
Flows out of the high country in chapters  
War-and-Peace river rolling on past Buena Vista—Salida—Pueblo  
Until its delta denouement and  
Fusion with the Mississippi  
Eight hundred pages from Leadville

Let the Broncos buck all they want to  
But nothing will shake Leadville  
Ten-thousand feet up  
Small and cool and high  
Grinning



*Mike Deen*

# DAVID WILDER

Zachary Gomez

You married a good woman.  
Her goodness, like a mouth-watering meal  
After a hard day of work  
Outside in the summertime, Texas heat.  
This goodness was not just one meal,  
But a lifetime of meals—  
A commitment.

Many times I was invited over  
To your small house with the faded, red carpet  
But it was not red, it was more like salmon.  
You talked a lot and teased your wife  
And she would give you this stare that said,  
“I’m really the one who puts up with you.”  
Then she would laugh this cute, girlish laugh  
And you would laugh from your gut,  
Sometimes so hard  
That it sounded like you would start coughing,  
But that was just the way you laughed.

Your voice was deep, distinct,  
Like a radio dj’s or a sports announcer’s,  
But almost like the voice  
Behind all those action/suspense movie trailers.  
Our conversations  
Were better than money in my pocket  
And your constant imparting of useless facts made me laugh.  
I hope I never forget your tone,  
Even though throat cancer robbed your ability to speak.



I hate cancer.  
I could think of many other foul names to call it,  
But all by itself, it is a curse word,  
Maybe the most profane.

Now the cancer is back and it has spread like nothing else can.  
You have been given two to four weeks,  
But I do not believe it's your time; you are not old enough,  
And your son is still so young.  
And I still want your counsel—wise words  
That always seemed more profound because of the way  
Your voice sounded. But they would still be profound  
Even without mouths or ears.  
That's why I think you should write books; I would read them.

If it is your time,  
I will not get to see you act like a teenager  
In love with your wife, but I will remember  
And it will be hardest for her.  
Though our sadness is like the grayest, coldest, winter day,  
There is no disease in heaven,  
And there will be no more wind for you to chase.

At your funeral, you would want us to tell jokes,  
Or those useless facts you told so readily;  
(Two out of a thousand examples could be: "did you know  
Napolean and Hitler only had one testicle" or "the Bible  
does not say there were three wise men, there were three gifts")  
You would want us to laugh.  
That's just the way you are.  
I, however, would rather you be the one causing us to laugh  
Deeply, like you did.

# THE STARS TOLD ME SO

Weltha Wood

My father was a science teacher, and in every school where he taught, he organized a group of students who studied the constellations, mapped the movements of the stars during the seasons, and braved cold winter nights to watch for comets. He called those students “The Stargazers.” My mother called him “The Stargazer” as she shook her head in puzzlement over why a grown man wanted to look at the stars when there was so much else that needed to be looked into: why my brother Bill was in trouble in band again, what could be done to fix our Chevy, and where on earth were we going to find the money for my piano lessons.

This made no difference to my father, who continued to gaze up into the night sky, who came to our Girl Scout pot-luck suppers and talked on warm spring nights about locating the Big Dipper, while my friends listened in raptures of awe that a mere dad could know so much. Lying on the newly grown grass outside the picnic pavilion at our Municipal Park, I daydreamed in the dark of being at home so I could watch The Beverly Hillbillies or read another Nancy Drew mystery or listen to my Paul Revere and the Raiders album. I was my father’s worst student and could barely locate the Dipper, never mind the constellations that he so earnestly pointed out. When I once offered, “That’s a really big star,” my father—in front of my friends—said, “Weltha Jane, you should know better! That’s Mars, and it is a planet.” That was enough for me, and I gave up on the stars forever, I thought.

After many years—too few to us—the Stargazer left. My brothers and I were sure our father had been the most intelligent being on this planet, a man of rare gifts, a priest of the solar system and we his adoring acolytes. He took the secrets of the stars with him as far as I was concerned. Christmas was hollow that year without his advice on where to hang the ornaments and what albums to play. I needed to look no higher than his chair in our family room to know he was gone forever. The emptiness I felt seemed as great as that of the heavens above me, and in odd moments, I vaguely wondered if he knew the stars’ true names and the constellations of other worlds. The night sky was colder and more unintelligibly foreign than it had been on those warm, distant nights when I ignored the Stargazer’s confident tracing of the patterns of the stars.

Then, one evening, I looked up into the night sky and saw a familiar shape. It was Orion—I knew that much from the Orion Films logo. It was the only constellation I had ever found for myself, and I wished the Stargazer was still here so I could tell him that I really could find stars, that I wasn’t completely unable to locate what he so carefully guided other children to see. Every night, I stalked Orion in the sky. For weeks, I went out just to find him. I found comfort in knowing that he would always wait for me.

Finding him was proof that I was my father's daughter and that his lessons had not been wasted. The stars in Orion were my link to a man I wished I had known better, valued more, and loved perfectly. Each one was my chance to make up to him for every time I didn't call, didn't visit, didn't take him to the lake to fish, didn't sit and talk to him while there was still time.

Over the months, however, just as I had assumed there was time and time enough with the Stargazer, I lifted my eyes to the stars of the evening sky less frequently, and one night, Orion was gone. Losing him was like losing my Stargazer all over again. I mourned the loss of the Hunter of the night skies as if he had been my father and had left me a second time. I stopped watching the skies; he was gone.

But one morning, a few months later, I arose early, so early that only the edge of the horizon was lighted, while the vault of the sky over me was still dark. I looked up into the sky where the stars still shined in the fading night. In that darkness, I saw Orion again. It was like recognizing a traveler who has arrived unexpectedly from a distant land without a word of his coming. He was there, and he was not gone.

This time, I learned the lesson of the stars. Orion had been waiting patiently on the other side of earth, waiting for me. The stars and my Stargazer were only hidden on the other side. And only for a while.

# A VERY STRANGE VALENTINE'S IN WHICH PALTRY GIFTS ARE NOT TOLERATED

Mercy Gallagher

Pretend I am just seven.  
It's Valentine's, one day after my birthday,  
And I, zebra-footed in new saddle shoes,  
Am making you a lovely paper heart.

I am careful with the symmetry;  
I want you to look and say  
"What a smart girl;  
Her IQ is probably 200.  
What a perfect heart—  
Such even curves."  
I want you to hang it on your fridge with your favorite children.  
I want you to keep a picture of me  
In a sterling frame on your piano.

(In the center I have written  
"I am so sorry"  
Because that is how I know to say I love you.  
I use red crayon on red paper,  
And hope you do not see it.)

But you do,  
When I hand it to you,  
Standing on your vast doorstep in snowless Texas winter,  
You say,  
"I need a real one now."



And suddenly I am 21, and taller,  
With black high tops and Saturday jeans and  
A shirt that smells like smoke from the bar.  
And I reach right-handed through my collar,  
Hawk-fingers clutching but  
The dull skin hits only skin,  
And under that rib and clavicle.  
The heart beats, beats  
Hidden and unmoved.

(Across my chest in a numb hand  
I will write, am writing  
"I am so sorry"  
In red  
Because that is how I know to say I love you.)

Unwavering God,  
I am silver-framed on your piano, but  
I sleep cold on your porch every night.  
There you tarry over me,  
Your huge, quiet face seeing,  
Your great, crimson hands empty.

# QUETIAPINE FUMARATE

Weltha Wood

I've met my dragon.  
He breathes—instead of fire—cold fog  
That turns my existence into a long, grey tunnel with damp cement walls  
And a broken light at the end,  
Where my once-clear mind is blurred by a milk-white mist.

All sound and song  
Have been dialed back  
To silence that muffles  
Every dream and desire.

This is my half-life.  
The flat stillness is punctuated by despair's screeching brakes  
And misery barks at my fugitive soul like a stray dog.

There's nothing for it.  
Pale dawn never becomes full day,  
And since the Almighty has fixed His canon against self-slaughter,  
Each day is the dripping, dripping of this broken tap.

Then, like St. George destroying the dragon,  
This maiden wretch-like-me is rescued  
As my Savior comes  
In the form of a small, salmon-pink pill

# A STORY OF SNOW

Andrea Brundage

Snow lay upon the ground. Flakes flickered in the air like free falling skydivers before they landed. Their landings crashed into the other parts of themselves, causing dislodgings and general discomfort, particularly to those on the bottom of the ever-growing stack. They would each strain to look at the sky, trying to anticipate the wayward motion of those who were to come. It didn't help, for at the last moment one would skitter over to land on a group that had thought itself safe. The only comfort available to those who had fallen was to remember their own journey through the air. The quick, swirling gust, the chilling rush, the slide and jostle and sparkle that marked the airborne flights from cloud to ground...it made being snow worthwhile.

In the midst of the stillness and winter dream, a new sound came. It claimed the attention of all. A person in thick, rubber-soled boots came down from the nearby porch, from the place where none dared venture. The former discomfort was forgotten as they waited, trying to picture what atrocities this person would have in store for them. They'd all heard the stories about those who were made into balls and hurled at objects: trees, cars, or, horror of horrors, another person. Worse still were the stories of how some were set up on each other, forming an unnatural wall that exposed them in mockery of their glorious connection to the wind. Yet the worst of all occurred when they were ensnared by the edges and trappings of a person and forced to enter the fiery place where it lived.

This person did not act like those in the stories, however. It gently knelt down and picked up a pile of them. Then, before any were melted away, it threw them up in the air to rejoin those who were coming down. This was a very strange person indeed. It had given them a glorious second journey through the air. They danced and shone as they had never been known to before. Far below they could see others that were being tossed after them by this person. And they smiled, as only snow can. They would tell this story to the others, to the neighbors they would eventually land upon. Few would believe it, but it would only take a few. The story would spread.





*Mike Deen*



# A CITY BLED CRIMSON IN 1921

Mary Alice Trent

The allegation, white on black in black and white—

Sarah Page screamed at the ill-fated touch of Dick Rowland, who stepped into the elevator of the Tulsa Drexel Building, May 30, 1921.

Some onlookers say Rowland stepped on Page's foot, throwing her off balance; then reached out to keep her from falling.

The next day, the Tulsa Tribune article excited a fatal confrontation between black and white armed mobs, lurking around the courthouse where Rowland was held.

The riot, black and white, that day bled crimson as the streets of Greenwood succumbed to the bloodstains of its victims.

The ruthless slaughter commenced in daylight, but surrendered to the twilight, then dawning of a next day.

In the aftermath, the air reeked of ashes of burnt bodies, homes, and businesses.

The tornadic forces of this man-made disaster destroyed 35 city blocks, injured more than 800 people, and killed 36 people.

That number grew to more than 300 dead.

Until not long ago, a conspiracy sought to erase the events of this dreadful day from its rightful place in history books.

But the people who lost their lives are not invisible, and their narratives must not remain voiceless.

The allegation, white on black in black and white, translated into the costliest, most horrific race massacre on American soil to date.

## Reference

"The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921." <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/hpolserv/VdeLaOliva.html>.

# THE ELOPEMENT

Joann Furlow Allen

In this excerpt from the depression-era short story "The Hand on Nell's Shoulder," Nell, fresh from her high school graduation, has decided to go ahead with her clandestine plan to elope with her boyfriend, Glenn. Nell hates to deceive her parents, but knows they disapprove of Glenn, who is several years older than she. Nell is afraid of becoming a small-town spinster, of spending her days at a boring job and of living in her parents' house forever. The depression, which has deprived her graduating class of a senior prom, pictures and rings, has also taken away her long-time dream of going to college. Her parents had offered to send her older brother, Norman, to college, but he had declined, as he was happy to work for his dad and live at home as a bachelor. She and Glenn have enlisted her friend Heloise and Heloise's beau-next-door, Otto, as co-conspirators in their plans.

On the day after graduation, Nell dressed in dungarees and a halter-top; typical picnic attire. She walked out of her bedroom and into the kitchen. She was carrying a picnic basket into which she had secretly placed her wedding clothes.

"Where are you going with that?" asked her mother suspiciously.

"Glenn and I are going on a picnic with Heloise and Otto," Nell said innocently (she hoped). "Heloise has the food at her house, but she needs to borrow this basket."

Nell's mother sniffed disapprovingly. She was a tall, big-boned woman of Scotch ancestry. Her hair was red, and her one good eye was blue. The other was a cloudy white, the result of an accident with her mother's sewing scissors when she was three. The eye wasn't usually noticeable behind her glasses, but she was self-conscious about it. She herself had "married down" to a handsome fellow from a "nere do well" family. She had never gotten over feeling superior to her husband, even though he had actually been modestly successful in the grocery business, while her own father had lost his money paying off her brother's gambling debts. She kept an especially tight reign on her daughter, for whom she wanted "a better life" than she herself had. She had pretty much written off any hope of civilizing Norman, although she continued to cook and clean for him.

"Go on then." Nell's mother stated flatly. She was glad that Nell hadn't asked her to provide the food for this foolish picnic. "Be back before supper" she instructed. She liked Glenn even less after dark. When Glenn drove up in his roadster, Nell's mother made herself scarce.

Nell climbed in the car beside Glenn, but was too nervous to meet his gaze.

He squeezed her hand, "We're doing the right thing," he assured her. They drove to Heloise's house where she and Otto were waiting on the porch, already dressed in their wedding clothes. Nell looked longingly at Heloise's pretty floral print dress. Otto wore a plaid sports coat. The two of them, more friends than sweethearts, were very excited to be included in such a clandestine and romantic adventure. As planned, the four drove first to the now-abandoned high school. Since three of the four had graduated only the previous day, they knew exactly which door behind the gym would be left unlocked. Nell and Heloise, carrying the basket, slipped into the girls' locker room, while the two men, carrying Glenn's clothes in a duffle, went into the boys' locker room. The co-conspirators hadn't been able to think of a better place for Nell and Glenn to change. It was stuffy in the deserted girls' locker room. Nell thought longingly of the Bridal Room of the First Baptist Church.

"Am I crazy to do this?" She asked Heloise.

"Oh no!" assured Heloise, whose own future looked bleak—at least as long as her invalid mother was alive. "Glenn is dreamy; everyone will be envious when they hear."

Nell liked that thought. She dressed in her "graduation and job-hunting" suit. In the discolored locker room mirror, she observed herself. "Not very bridal," she said ruefully. Nell was solid and curvy. She had wavy auburn hair and very pale skin that tended to freckle. Her mouth was full, and she had very expressive grey eyes. In later years, she would be told that except for her coloring, she looked just like Patsy Cline. On her wedding day however, she just felt dowdy. She yearned to be wearing something pretty and feminine.

When she and Heloise joined the men at the car, Glenn reached into the glove box and removed a florist's box. In it was a large corsage of white chrysanthemums with trailing white ribbons.

"I thought it looked right for a bride," Glenn said proudly.

Heloise thought a bouquet would have been better, but she kept that thought to herself.

Nell was touched. She looked appreciatively at Glenn, who looked very handsome in his navy blue suit. He seemed very much a man of the world to Nell.

"Now I feel like a bride," she whispered to Glenn as he pinned the flowers to her lapel.

Otto, looking slightly uncomfortable, nudged Heloise and said, "Can you believe they're doing this?"

Heloise sighed.



The four headed out of town. It had been necessary to get their marriage license in a county other than their own, to keep Nell's parents from knowing. Glenn had managed to find a Justice of the Peace in the county where they had gotten the license. He drove straight to the official's house, a journey of about twenty minutes. The four young people spoke very little; they were all a bit awed by their mission. The small farm house had a low-hanging roof covering the porch. On a support post hung two signs: **Justice of the Peace and Notary Public.**

The small, balding man who answered the door was in his shirtsleeves, and he had crumbs around his mouth. They had obviously interrupted his lunch. Recognizing Glenn, the little man said "I see you made it after all"—as if there had been some doubt. Nell looked around the clean but spartan living room. She tried not to think of stained glass windows or of Reverend Cox, the Baptist preacher. Otto and Heloise hung back slightly, not sure what to do. They could hear someone moving around in the kitchen. "Let's get this show on the road," said the official shrugging into a jacket and picking up a formal looking, leather-bound notebook. He stood with his back to the fireplace, in which stood an upright gas heating stove with darkened ceramic heating plates. In the winter it might have been a cozy setting. This, however, was late May.

Nell was conscious of the same effect that one gets when the lights come on suddenly in a darkened movie theater. As the shabby room is revealed, the magic on the screen is lost.

"Places everyone," the official said cheerfully.

Nell and Glenn arranged themselves in front of the Justice of the Peace with Heloise and Otto on either side. Nell's hands suddenly felt empty. She realized for the first time that she should have had a bouquet and not a corsage. She glanced anxiously at Glenn, who smiled and took her hand in his. The ceremony took only moments. Glenn spoke his vows lovingly. Nell tried to make her shaky voice sound confident. There were no rings; Glenn had said they would pick some out together later. When they were pronounced Man and Wife, Glenn kissed Nell and told her that he loved her. Heloise started to cry. The official shook Glenn's hand, and Glenn discreetly handed him some folded cash.

As the wedding party made its way down the porch steps, Heloise remembered her camera. "Wait!" she exclaimed. She ran ahead to the car and retrieved her little Brownie box camera. "We have to take a wedding photo!" Heloise insisted. Nell and Glenn were instructed to stand in front of a spiraea bush that bloomed in the yard. The newly-married couple stood together, Glenn's hand on Nell's shoulder. They tried not to



squint in the bright sun as Heloise snapped a single picture. It was, after all, the depression.

“Oh Glenn,” Nell felt like crying “this is all wrong.”

The foursome then climbed into the roadster and drove to a nearby roadhouse for a late lunch to celebrate the nuptials. “I must look different,” thought Nell as they walked into the café. Nobody seemed to give them a second look, but Glenn announced to anyone who would listen that it was his wedding day. “My wife would like a cherry coke,” he said proudly to the waitress as they ordered their meals. “My wedding feast,” Nell thought numbly as she looked down at the chicken-fried steak and mashed potatoes. She was too worried about telling her parents to have much of an appetite. Otto didn’t know that he was supposed to propose a toast, so mostly they all just ate in silence.

They left the roadhouse and drove back to Yale. The drive seemed too short to Nell. Otto and Heloise were dropped at their respective homes. “Call me and tell me everything,” Heloise whispered to Nell as she gave her a quick hug for encouragement. Glenn, seeing the exchange, tried to reassure Nell. “In less than an hour, we will be making a clean getaway,” he tried to tease.

Their plan was to tell her parents as quickly as possible and then drive away from the fallout. Glenn had booked a cabin in a tourist court at a lake near the state line. They were to stay there for two nights and then return to Yale. Nell’s bag was packed and hidden under her bed. Glenn’s was in the trunk of the car.

“Let’s tell your father first,” suggested Glenn.

“Why him?” Nell asked, bewildered.

Glenn seemed startled by the question. “He’s the head of the household,” Glenn said, as if that should be obvious.

“That’s what you think,” thought Nell, but she put up no more resistance.

They drove to her father’s grocery store and hurried inside. “Yes sir, come right in sir; come right in,” greeted her father upon seeing Glenn. Nell’s father greeted all male customers that way. Spotting Nell, her father said “Well, Sis, what can I do for you?” Before Nell could speak, Glenn held out his hand and said, “You can congratulate me, sir; Nell and I just got married.”

Nell’s father stared stonily at Glenn, ignoring the outstretched hand. He was a dignified man with even features and very erect posture. His thick dark hair was combed straight back, and he had piercing blue eyes. These eyes betrayed nothing. He spoke to Nell, but continued to stare at Glenn.

“Does your mother know about this?” he asked Nell.

"No, daddy," Nell said meekly.

"You best go tell her," said her father.

As the couple walked out, the older man shook his head—very sadly.

Nell's bottom lip quivered as the two made their way along the well-worn path between the store and the house.

"Be brave Honey," warned Glenn. "After this is over, we can have our honeymoon."

The thought of the tourist cabin both comforted and terrified Nell. She was a virgin; Glenn most surely was not. What knowledge Nell had, she had learned from her girlfriends. Her mother seemed to find such matters distasteful.

Pushing open the kitchen door seemed to take all of Nell's strength. Her mother looked up from her ironing. Seeing only Nell at first, the mother's greeting was friendly: "Back so soon?" she asked. Her pleased look vanished, however, when she saw Glenn. The mother quickly busied herself with sprinkling clothes with a water can. Nell, feeling somehow emboldened by her mother's rebuff of Glenn, spoke up with just a slight tremor in her voice.

"Mother, Glenn and I have news: we got married this afternoon." Before her mother could look up, Nell added, "it's all legal and everything."

The mother slammed the iron down on the dampened clothes. When she raised her head, she was a fearsome sight. Her one good eye blazed with anger, and the blind one looked menacing. Steam rose up from the ironing table and made her face even more flushed. "THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, YOUNG LADY!" Nell's mother exploded. Then, as if she had rehearsed her speech, she added venomously, "You may be a high school graduate, but you won't be eighteen until August. You can't marry without my consent."

Glenn, who had been silent until then, said evenly "We already did; we have the license and everything; it's too late to stop us."

"Any paper you may have was obtained fraudulently," Nell's mother said coldly, soundly very legal all of a sudden. "I will see our attorney on Monday about an annulment," Nell's mother said smugly. A strong smell of scorched cotton rose up from the forgotten iron.

"Come on Nell," Glenn raged. "Let's get out of here. We will stay gone until August if we have to; she can't touch us then."

Nell slumped into a kitchen chair and cried like a tortured soul.

“Get Out!” Nell’s mother demanded of Glenn.

“Not without my wife!” Glenn thundered.

“She’s not going anywhere,” the mother stated confidently. “Leave now before I call the sheriff.”

“Nell...” Glenn started...but the girl in the chair wouldn’t look up at him. Glenn looked wildly around the comfortable kitchen. He was an intruder—an outsider. Could a man be denied what was his? He reached for Nell, but she shook him away and ran toward her bedroom. He didn’t dare follow. He walked slowly toward the back door, feeling the mother’s hostile eyes boring into the back of his head. From the doorway he glanced behind him, and for a second his eyes met those of Nell, who was also momentarily frozen in her flight. She would spend the rest of her life trying to forget his face—the hurt—the betrayal.

Two weeks later, Nell was at work at the switchboard in the phone company office. Heloise walked in, hesitated, and then handed Nell a photo. “I wasn’t sure what to do with this,” Heloise said timidly. Nell scarcely glanced at the photo before pushing it into her handbag. “Glenn is gone,” Nell stated flatly. Heloise wanted to comfort her, but she knew better.

That night, after writing in her diary, Nell removed the photo from her bag. Very carefully, using hair scissors, she cut as much of Glenn as possible from the photo. All that was left of him was a hand on her shoulder. “Glenn is gone.” She reminded herself. She looked one last time at Glenn’s image before tucking it into her diary. That way, she could burn them both at the same time. She slid the flat box that contained all of her photos out from under her bed. She buried the partial photo under the others in the box and piled forty seven years of silence on top of it.



# THE VIOLENCE IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE

Adam Douglas

Violent video games have become a huge topic over the past few years. They've come under both political and legal fire because of their increasingly disturbing content, which ranges from bloody fist fights to ravenous, gory murder sprees. The real tragedy affects the victims of this distasteful entertainment medium—the children. But in our protection of the children from this kind of violent imagery, are we getting ahead of ourselves? Video games are not our first stop on the road to reclaiming the younger generation from their now almost inevitable future of blood and rampage. Before we eliminate the video game threat, let's start with another genre of games just as disturbing, seedy, and ruthless in its corruption.

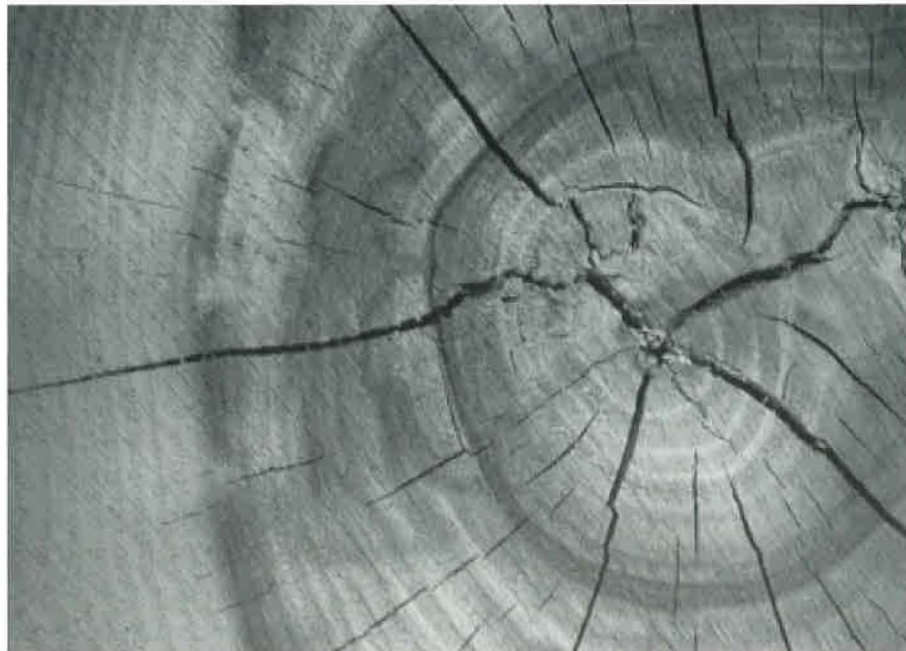
Board games have existed throughout human history in many forms across many different cultures. In the twentieth century, however, these games took a sinister twist. Last week, I came across several children enjoying all too well a game under the seemingly harmless title of *Clue*. Little did I know that what I thought was gleeful giggling turned out to be maniacal laughter—laughter at the imaginary murder of the innocent, and in turn the real murder of innocence. Not only were these children subjected to the graphic enactment of a grisly homicide, they actually laid hands on the plastic murder weapons with which it was performed. It doesn't end there; there are many more examples of games promoting this kind of suggestive behavior. In the game *Battleship*, children wear the cap of a deranged General raining death from the sky upon the war fleets of other children. *Operation* is a board game in which children actually remove the infected insides of a hospital patient. It may seem educational until one looks at the face of the victim. The hospital patient is forced to lie nude, wide awake and aghast as unwitting children are used to pick him apart from the inside out. It is a horrendous act that one can only hope these children never attempt to emulate in real life. As I see these types of games sold without restraint, I think that if only parents knew about this kind of foul debauchery, Milton Bradley and his cohorts would be locked away forever.

These board games are the entertainment empire that we need to take down. Because we as parents know little about this board game menace, it is up to the government to regulate this all-too-open media. A rating system based on the appropriate age at which board games should be played is a good start, but if we really want to get things done, we have to start by immediately ignoring this rating system completely. Because board games specifically geared towards adults do not exist, it is clear that all board games are and will continue to be marketed towards children by the sinister likes of the Parker Brothers. Can we really trust this thoroughly flawed rating system? Absolutely not. That's why it would be prudent to start court rulings on the



matter immediately. Soon after, the bans upon the more horrendous entries of this genre will be in place in toy stores across the country. No more will they subject children to appalling displays of depravity. This is the outline for loosening the board game industry's cardboard hands from the throats of this new generation.

Politicians and lawyers are often out to ban the violent video games that plague young minds, but there's a far more malevolent force out to turn our children into harbingers of armageddon. These board games cannot go ignored in this war on indecency. When it comes to steering our children into a madhouse of chaos and destruction, video games do not hold the monopoly on violence.



*Seth Brock*

# Vacation Land

Samuel R. Stephens

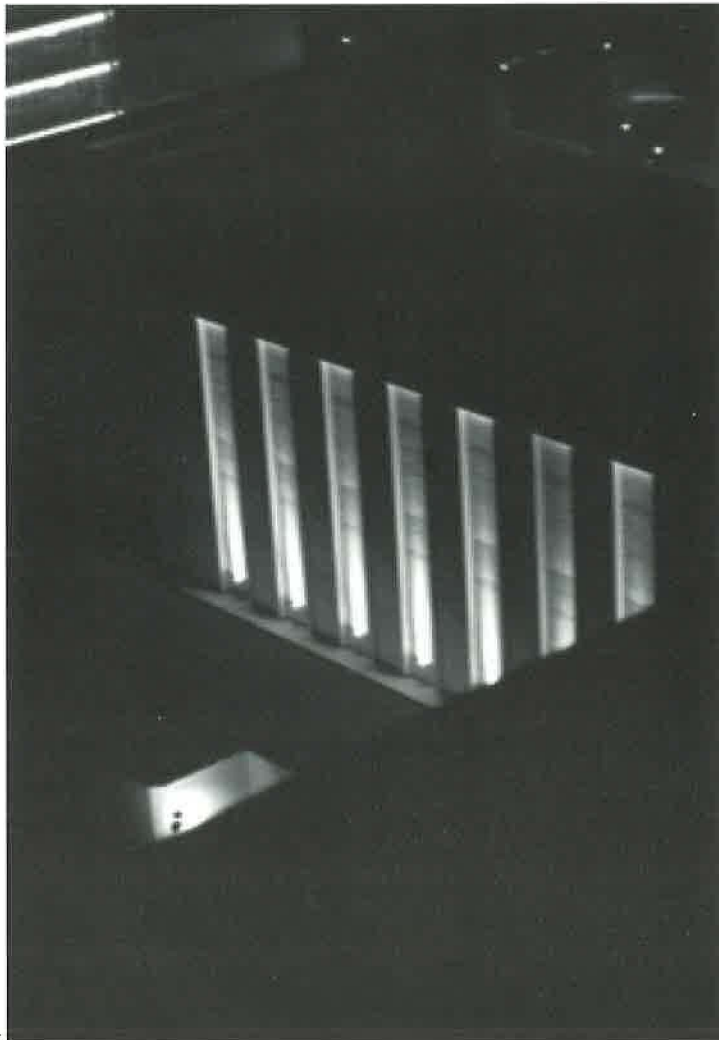
Maine, the state I come from, was recorded in the 2000 census as having an inhabitancy of roughly 97 percent Caucasian. So I do not have many personal stories of diversity in the traditional connotation of the word. That is not to say that my life has just been uncultured and bland. The diversity that I experience is more along the lines of class. Maine has the perfect ingredients for the clashing of classes. It all started back in the 1920s when John D. Rockefeller moved into town and bought the entire island of Mount Desert and all the workers who inhabited it, and he made them work for him. He moved there because he knew a good thing when he saw it. The landscape still holds some of that wild beauty that it possessed back then.

The Rockefellers donated most of their property to the National Parks Service and named the holding Acadia National Park—one of the top ten most visited Parks in the Nation, usually falling in right behind Yosemite and Yellowstone. This is where I grew up. The Rockefellers still live there, in the summer, along with a lot of other very wealthy people. This is no secret to most people who know a little about my state. However, what is a little known fact is that most of us who actually live there, we who drive on the icy roads, plow each other out of the 3-foot snow storms, who go to school, preach, teach, and work day in and day out, are not wealthy. Maine is, in fact, one of the most economically depressed states in the union. But every summer, the wealthy waterfront castle-owners fly or sail up the coast to their multimillion dollar “summer cottage.”

These people have a different view on life, and they attack it with an altogether different method of thought. Most of their problems can be solved with money, yet when you get to know them, they are very regular people. I have had the privilege of getting to know some very wealthy people through my summer job as a dock attendant. I tie up and watch over their yachts at night. I take out their trash and pump out their waste. I protect their million dollar toys from being scratched when they dock, and they tip me. They carry on small talk, but I’m also the guy they go to when they get in a scrape. Scrapes might include the cable not working at their berth, or the power going out and the refrigerator on their boat turning off, or even not getting to dock beside their best friend. While these seem like minor difficulties, they’re enough to show a person’s true colors.

My favorite groups to watch are the families. They really make a person realize how similar we all are when it comes down to the essentials. One family—a mom, dad, and three kids—is particularly fun to watch. One summer I witnessed the oldest getting into minor trouble with the law. The family reacted quite appropriately and disciplined

out of love. I tell you about this not to exploit a family secret, but to bring to life the reality of our humanness. So while children still act out of line, they still need packed lunches in the morning when they go out for the day. And all the money in the world will not keep a parent from losing his or her temper. The bottom line is, we are all humans, with human needs. Money, skin color, or ethnic background, age, religion, or gender do not matter in the grand scheme.



*Seth Brock*

# THE NEW ORBIT

Mercy Gallagher

I would like to build a Coca Cola igloo, now.  
I would like to change one thousand words for snow into  
One word for living well,  
And freeze my tongue to sweetness  
In the coolest place I've ever been.

I want to torch all my love notes.  
I would like to mix the ashes  
To make-love-not-war paint.  
I want to turn "war" over into "raw,"  
So I could eat it like sushi, & become a fighter.

I want to sling one sincere expression of apathy  
At the acutely sorry smile across the table.  
I want to be a sling to cradle  
All these broken arms.

I want to can this vibe so it never goes bad,  
So I can someday figure out what I mean.  
I want to funnel my brain into a seismograph machine.  
And watch my inner friction etch long Ws on a page.  
Wow.

I want a bright heart,  
So I can glow in the dark.

I want to shake off these small ankle weights,  
The knowing more that changes nothing.  
I would like a new orbit, please.

No, sir, no, I don't want that one.  
I want a Singer sewing machine,  
So that when I finally mend  
There will be harmony.





*Mike Deen*

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