



Volume 18

Issue 1 *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?* (2009-2010
Issue)


Article 1

5-1-2010

The Promethean, Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (2009-2010)

English Department
Concordia University - Portland

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Department, English (2010) "The Promethean, Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (2009-2010)," *The Promethean*: Vol. 18 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol18/iss1/1>

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2009/2010

Department: The Promethean, Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (2009-2010)

THE PROMETHEAN

THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL
OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND



2009/2010 ISSUE

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THE PROMETHEAN

The Literary Arts Journal of
Concordia University-Portland



Christina Busby © 2010 Pier at St. Kilda

The 2009/2010 Issue:

Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?

Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

-T.S. Eliot
"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

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The Promethean is an annual journal of the College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences of Concordia University-Portland. The publication of *The Promethean* is made possible with funding from the Associated Students of Concordia University (ASCU). The content is chosen by an editorial staff of faculty and student editors. The opinions expressed in the journal do not necessarily reflect those of the College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences of Concordia University. All works are copyrighted.

Manuscript submissions and correspondence can be sent electronically to promethean@cu-portland.edu or by mail to *The Promethean*, Department of Humanities, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, Concordia University-Portland, 2811 NE Holman Street, Portland, Oregon 97211. Manuscripts sent by post should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Since *The Promethean* uses a blind review process, contributors' names should *not* appear on their manuscripts; instead, they should be included in an accompanying email or cover letter.

The Promethean is printed by Natural Press on recycled paper with soy inks.

INVITATION TO DO I DARE DISTURB THE UNIVERSE?

NOTES ON THE 2009/2010 ISSUE:

The vision for *The Promethean* this year was a journal not afraid to be bold. Not afraid to disturb this universe that we perceive and expose reality. Leading the editorial staff this year as Managing Editor was not easy. My predecessors set the expectations high and have set a precedent of continual improvement; this seemed a little daunting.

As with every project of this caliber there were complications alongside wonderful submissions and miscommunications that accompanied deep conversation. I consider myself lucky when I look at my editing team. As a staff we are passionate about many styles of writing, about not only the finished product but the process every writer goes through and the impact writing has on those who read it.

As a staff we encourage all writers, whether a senior English major or a sophomore Business major, to submit their best work to *The Promethean*. This collection, we believe, showcases some of the best writers Concordia Portland has to offer this year.

This could never have been done by any individual and many people deserve sincere thanks. Many thanks go out to the editorial staff, contributors, and all those behind the scenes who made this journal possible, to all those who have allowed their writing to disturb just a little bit of the universe. On behalf of all those who have worked so diligently I present to you the 2009-2010 edition of *The Promethean: Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?*

-Cassondra Shaw, Managing Editor

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2009-2010 WRITING CONTEST

A letter from Cassandra Shaw, Managing Editor

Several years ago *The Promethean* decided to stage a writing contest for all students, faculty, and staff. The success and popularity of the contest encouraged our current team to continue the tradition in the 2009-2010 edition.

This year, instead of using ink-blot muses or playing off our theme, the staff decided to create a contest which focused on a specific challenge for writers: tell a story in 500 words or less.

Our Short-Short Story Contest received quite a few submissions. Concordia writers were up to the challenge.

Jess Bouchard, alumna of Concordia and a previous editor of *The Promethean* was our judge this year. While studying and writing in graduate school she found the time to select our winners. We thank her for sharing her precious time and energy with us!

A list of all winners can be found on the facing page. Comments on the winning place entries are provided by our judge, Jess Bouchard.

NOTE ON OUR JUDGE:

Jess Bouchard is an alumna of Concordia University and a previous Managing Editor for *The Promethean*. Currently living in Philadelphia earning an M.F.A. in poetry, she is enjoying the literary life. She has poetry forthcoming in *The Mad Poets Review*, *The Foundling*, and *WordRiot*. She plans to graduate in the next year and teach creative writing abroad. Spain and Argentina are her most attractive prospects.

NOTES ON WINNING ENTRIES

1st Place
Brie Sylviana-Clarno

Freely You Shall Receive,
Freely You Shall Give

2nd Place
Rebecca Carlson

Lonely Night

3rd Place
Benjamin Fitzgerald

She's a Woman

FREELY YOU SHALL RECEIVE, FREELY YOU SHALL GIVE.

This story captures a sincere voice that speaks poetry. The language is memorable because it manages to make the reader present, to imagine how loss can still have wings. I'm reminded how the written word has the ability to transform the mind -- how powerful language can be, and how trusting we are when handled by a writer with the ability to tear us open and mend us all in the same read. The themes in this piece may speak to a certain audience, but the voice keeps the reader grounded; the reader feels re-invented at the end.

LONELY NIGHT

The writing immediately comes alive in this piece. The writer does not hesitate to capture the reader's attention and command we, too, experience the call for help. The language is refreshingly bold and wise, as the story illustrates the need of connection, the need to be heard. Lines like "A twinge of old, buried love makes my throat tight" carry a weight that pleasantly haunts the reader. The writing is simply beautiful.

SHE'S A WOMAN

"She's a Woman" has a rhythmic energy that agrees with the opening line "I have the soul of a musician." The writing does not deceive the musical voice. Each line has a pulse. The reader feels the rhythm with each word read. Love and passion are subtle beats that aren't taken for granted. This piece calls for celebration.

Freely You Shall Receive, Freely You Shall Give

Brie Sylviana-Clarno

"I wonder what it feels like, being pregnant," I murmur. My eyes are half closed as we lay on Great Grandma Ruby's old quilt. The sky is that dark, inky ebony...the kind of black that makes the stars shine even brighter, the tiny twinkling eyes of a belly-laughing baby. The blanket feels soft and worn under my tender fingers, a quilt that knows a thousand slumbers and countless dreams. Mom turns to her side; the grass greets her movement with a soft groan, a quiet rustle. She reaches a slender, tanned hand across the gap and places it on my abdomen.

"It feels like your heart, deep inside your belly, thumping wildly before performing in front of a thousand people. It feels like a butterfly, trapped in the small, cupped hands of a child; beating its wings so hard and fast it seems like it might break free. It feels like hope; like true, honest to goodness love, buried under layers of memories and bone," she answers in a whisper. Mom never disturbs the quiet of the night, unless it's to run naked to the edge of the hungry ocean with a bottle of huckleberry-flavored vodka and her oldest and most faithful friends. Or unless it's to clasp hands with her soul mate at the edge of the vast, limitless Grand Canyon, howling together at the full, expectant moon. I open my gemstone eyes and stare at the sky. Where is the star that fits in the space between my collarbones? Where is the one that I cradle and caress, the one created by God and woken by me? The warm tendrils of the wind kiss my legs and flutter the wisps of my hair. I place my hand on hers. We feel the breaths in my vacant stomach lift and drop our stacked fingers.

"It's only been four years, sweetheart," she murmurs; her soft, auburn curls rest lightly on her cheek; one arm is curled under her head as she sees me. She still feels my butterfly wings in her belly. "You and Noam always planned to wait five." I turn away as burning, brackish tears well in my eyes and slide down my moon face.

"Yeah. I know," I reply as my full, pink lips quiver in anticipation of further wounds. I wrap my noodle arms around my broken chest. She slides her hand under my face; my eyes are closed as the tears flow like hot blood.

"God, Carina," she chokes. "I wish I could fix it with a simple kiss. I'm supposed to know how to fill the emptiness."

I remember how it feels to lose. The crimson rivulets dripped down my wet, shining legs. My joy disappeared down the shower drain in twists and Sweet Pea scented soap. Then the impossible ache invaded.

Vacant.

Numb.

I look at her and my pain is mirrored in her ocean eyes. I am not alone; she shares my abyss, only as a mother can.

Lonely Night

Rebecca Carlson

I need forgiveness, someone to tell me that it's okay—all humans are broken. So I call him late in the lonely night.

"Hey, it's me. Umm, sorry. I mean it's Anna."

There's a long pause on the other end. All I can hear is the rough in-and-out of my own breathing. I wonder, is this a mistake?

I had laid in bed, watching the bright numbers on the clock change in time with the hot tears that burned down my face. My pillow was damp before I got up and moved to the dark living room, curling up on the couch in a fetal ball.

"I had no one else to call, so I just thought I'd see if you were there. Sorry, I know it's been a long time."

I pick up my cell phone from the cluttered coffee table and cradle it in uncertain hands. My address book scrolls by in a blurred list of names. I reach the end. There is no one I can call, no one who'll listen when I'm not sure what to say.

Finally, I input the digits I still know by heart; but cannot quite force myself to call him. Is this even the right number? I haven't tried to call for three years; he could easily have changed it since then.

"I don't blame you if you don't want to talk to me. I know I haven't called since I left you. But you were always there for me, and I thought I could, should apologize for everything I said."

Before pushing the green-glowing call button, I hesitate for one final moment. It cannot hurt to call him more than my splintered heart already aches, so why has my stomach turned to stone? I hold in a shaky breath as it rings.

"I don't expect you to take me back; I just wanted to talk to you. We used to spend hours just talking. I miss that."

He had been the first person I'd think of to call, instead of my last chance. That was before my world turned grey and cold, a lonely island surrounded by people and places I could only strain to reach.

"I was stupid, I see that now. I thought the whole world was waiting and you were holding me back. I never thought...I didn't know...that it would end up like this."

I draw in a sobbing breath and brush away the new tears. I look around at the shadowy room, the curtains letting in arms of yellowed light that reach toward me. Then I try again.

"Thanks for listening. It shouldn't have taken me so long to call you."

I'd forgotten how good he was at letting me talk, spill out all the hurt and frustration that well up inside me—like boiling water in a too-small jar. A twinge of old, buried love makes my throat tight.

"Maybe I'll see you around some Sunday? I'd like that. Goodnight God."

She's a Woman

Benjamin Fitzgerald

I have the soul of a musician. I thrive on the vibrations of tightly wound nickel and steel over a solid-framed wooden body. A few notes, a single song, and my body will tingle for hours. My thoughts echo guitar chords and bass lines, drumbeats, harmonics and melodics and interplay, pitches and rhythms, the harmonica riff from "Love Me Do." My fingers sing the notes and progressions of the guitar frets in empty space, twitching and itching for a release, for a fret board and a guitar pick and a loud amp and plenty of time to practice, for heavy guitar chords and blues licks and walking Egyptian themes from old video games.

I can hear in my head the jarring high-fret E7-D7-A7 staccato progression that opens The Beatles' "She's a Woman." My body tremors and shakes with excitement; my shoulders tense and pulsate with the screeching, crashing, cacophonous sound. I hear the drums crash in and the bass line roll, and I want to scream, shout, holler, yell, squeal, sing, roar, whatever it takes to proclaim the message: "She's a woman! She's a woman! She's a woman!" McCartney's soulful tenor vocals wail "My love don't give me presents," while Lennon provides the ever-present clamor of his stuttered, grinding guitar.

STORIES

Unplastic Girl (Thesis Excerpt)

Department: The Promethean, Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (2009-2010)

Christina Busby

We swarm the mall like honey bees - buzzing from flower to flower, store to store, gathering pollen for the honey. Why do we move in circles like this, mindlessly bustling from store to store, sign to sign, clothing rack to shoe shelf?

We walk through the crowd. I feel bodies moving, floating, maybe. This moment - the sounds, the people - feels surreal. Everything trickles like sticky sap running down the side of a tree.

I was a mango and he scooped out the fat pulp and pit. It was a hard tumor inside me. Then there was nothing left. I was split open with juice dribbling and bleeding down fingers and lips. I was fulfilling, and I was fulfilled. I was opened wide, devoured, and then replenished again. It was brutal and painful, and then it was beautiful. Bliss.

Alex tugs on the sleeve of my shirt. I can't hear her over the music, but she jerks her head to the left, motioning me to follow her.

As we enter the store, we are bombarded with a series of high-pitched voices: "HI WELCOME HOW ARE YOU?" All of them, tall and lanky with huge smiles plastered on their faces. I hear their heels clicking as they scurry through the store, smiling and asking customers if they need any help. ANY HELP TRYING ON THAT SUPER CUTE TOP?

The mannequins wear skinny jeans. Each mannequin is adorned with a wig - Dirty Blonde, Dark Auburn, Jet Black. Their faces are blank, completely expressionless. Each stands in an awkward position - one has her hands on her hips and thrusts her pelvis forward, trying to emphasize the hip bones. One crouches, her face resting in her hand as she attempts to lean her elbow against her thigh. The third is off-putting, standing there blank as if dumbstruck with a huge, polyester purse dangling from her arm like a dead baby. They are merely replications. They are illusions of women, but still, something about them sends a chill down my spine.

Should I be afraid? Maybe these phantasms will spring to life. They know nothing about what it means to live, feel, love, or die. They know nothing about what it means to be women.

We weave in and out of the aisles. Whenever something catches my eye, I run my fingers over it. There are many things that I want: the jeans and the flannel and the ear rings and the head band. I want the whole matching outfit. I'm so typical. Am I?

Alex approaches with several dresses draping over her arm. She holds up a dress in front of me. It is deep blue and it reaches the middle of my thighs.

"It's a little plain, which is why you need this belt." She holds out a thick white belt and then wraps it around my torso, just beneath my breasts. It's tight against my ribs. "It'll be so sexy."

She places the dresses in my hands and I walk to the dressing room. The mannequin gives me a little piece of metal with '4' on it - the number of garments I'm going to try on. The dresses hang limply on the door. I don't want them. From the way they hang, I don't think they want me either. I look at myself in the mirror. I run my fingers through my hair, straightening my frazzled bangs. I put my hands on my hips and push my pelvis out, standing like the mannequin in the store's glass window. I have a face, but am I a mannequin too? I have feelings and emotions and thoughts and desires. Am I alive or am I fake?

The dressing room is an eerie place. At this very moment, there are women - and who knows how many there are - there are women just like me, and they peel layers of clothing from their flesh, exposing their skin to themselves in the mirror. There is the soft thudding sound as jeans hit the floor. Women stand practically nude beneath florescent lights, as if they are being born for the first time. The outlines of our bodies glow in the mirror. We are ready to be tied down to the operating table - carved open with knives, prodded with rods and syringes. I can't bear to hear the sound of limbs shuffling or the sound of the wind rustling through flowers and obliterating their delicate petals. We are delicate petals.

When in dressing rooms, we isolate ourselves in tiny boxes. Claustrophobia. Suffocation. We put ourselves on display simply for ourselves, but could it be that someone else is watching? Somewhere, eyes watch us. We morph from human beings into infants - flesh brand new and exposed.

I found the lime green caterpillar in the yard. It clung to a twig, rapidly devouring a fresh, green leaf. Its body scrunched in the middle as it moved and wiggled. I squatted low to the ground. My limbs were filthy from the dirt.

I scooped this tiny creature into my hands and placed it in a plastic jar. I put a twig in its new home. I gave it something to crawl on. Anything at all to pass the time.

Dress Number One. It looks like a tank top tucked into a high-waisted skirt. I see girls wearing these all the time. Tall lanky women with legs that walk for miles. *Miles and miles until finally, I wind up at your door.* It's pretty, and it's casual, but it's not enough.

My father said it was going to disappear. I didn't understand what he meant. He had a thick bushy mustache and it twitched when he said, "Shhhhhhhhh." When he did this, when he hushed me, I wanted him to take me into his arms and rock me like a baby doll. A beautiful baby doll.

We ought to be quiet. Human beings ought to lower their voices and listen to the things that really matter: a caterpillar building a cocoon and hiding itself from me and you.

I waited for days. I fed it leaf after leaf.

Daddy said when I am quiet, I will understand silence and that silence is not really silence at all.

Dress Number Two. Another high-waisted dress. Why is the old-fashioned 50s house wife look so popular? I couldn't imagine wearing such a short dress in the 50s. The sight of the flesh of my thighs would only confirm my label as the town slut. Alex, what were you thinking?

One morning, I woke to find the caterpillar was gone. In its place, a tiny, gray bulb dangled from the twig.

"What is this?"

"It's a cocoon." My father's voice echoed from somewhere in the house. His voice reverberated off the ceiling and tumbled into my tiny hands. His voice was faint, distant. Already he was leaving. He was here,

but he was already on his way. Where?

Standing on a beach, dipping the toes of one of his feet into the ocean. I see him standing there, silent and still, waiting for the earth to move and knock him off his feet. It did. Didn't you know? Something about the water pulled him down. Maybe it was the fantastic color - the teal, that sparkling blue-green. Or a siren song. It is enough to pull anyone beneath the surface. Drown.

Dress Number 3. I pull the thin, light material over my head. My arms fit smoothly through the thin straps. The dress is bundled tightly at my stomach. Tangled. As I pull it downward so that it may cling to the contours of my body, creating a sex vortex that will pierce the belly buttons of all men and reel them into me, I find I can't pull it beyond my hips. It's stuck. My fat ass can't fit into this dress. Thanks, Alex.

He was at the doorway and I heard his breath rasping. He stopped for only a moment, and then his boots continued on the hard wood floor. I wanted the house to quake with every step that he took.

I crawled out of bed and ran to my jar. My caterpillar. My cocoon. A beautiful creature lay rigid on the floor among the leaves. Where did this creature come from? How did it emerge?

Was it the silence that coaxed it to life? And did the silence scream so loud that it killed it also?

Human beings ought to be quiet.

There was a muffled sob somewhere in the house. I picked up the jar and shook it gently. Stiff. Rigid. Burst of color. Wings. Dead wings.

Dress Number 4. I run my hands over the dress, feeling the silkiness of it, smoothening it against the skin of my torso. I have become a different person. This dress cascaded over me. It was like water. Revitalizing. I am looking into a puddle on the ground, and, in it, I see the reflection of the sky. I become the puddle and the sky. I end and I begin. I turn to the left and then the right. Not bad, Alex. Not bad.

A muffled sob. I followed the sound with the tips of my feet. One moving after the other. My mother sat at the kitchen table with her head in her hands. Her body rumpled and lifeless.

Outside a car door slammed. The ignition coughed. He didn't hesitate. He was gone. We were alone.

I imagined the fluttering sound the creature's wings would have made. A whisper: it confirmed nothing, other than we ought to be quiet

*and that we are alone. Once upon a time, Samson, my father, said,
"Shhhhh." He rocked me like a tired, ragged baby doll.*

"Are you done yet? Which room are you in?" Alex's voice drifts over the door.

"Follow my voice."

A hand reaches beneath the door and grabs my ankle.

"Let me see you."

I open the door a crack so that only one of my eyes peers at her. "No."

She pushes the door with her flat palm, but my body resists against it.

"You'll have to wait until later." I close the door again and lock it.

"How much is it?"

"Twenty dollars."

"That's pretty cheap."

"You're pretty cheap."

Someone laughs several rooms down.

"What are you laughing at? Bitch."

"Um, are you like, talking to me?" A door creaks open.

"Yeah, I'm talking to you."

"Um, are you like, seriously talking to me?"

"Um, like, yes, I'm seriously talking to you."

I pull the dress off and snatch my jeans from the floor.

My legs plunge into the jeans, filling the empty space with my body.

Another voice floats from the other end of the dressing room. "Hi, can we not have a cat fight in the fucking dressing room?"

Another voice pipes in: "Yeah, can everyone just shut the fuck up for one moment so I can try on this super cute top in peace?"

I open the door and Alex is glaring at a blonde woman. She is wearing only a pair of faded jeans and a black bra. Her hair is tousled to one side and she is staring death into Alex.

Alex waits for me with her arms crossed. "That dirty blonde bitch," she says. "She's just plastic anyway." She walks away and grabs a top. I watch her hold it against herself,

coveting this piece of clothing. She turns around to face me.

"What do you think?"

What is plastic?

You. *You're plastic, Alex.*

It All Started with a Squirrel

Jeriann Watkins

It all started with a squirrel. Three squirrels to be precise. One would not think that three members of one of the cuter rodent families in the world would be responsible for so much chaos, yet that is precisely what happened.

It was, of course, a normal day in Portland, Oregon. The sun was shining, though it had been raining moments prior and would be raining again within the next quarter hour.

One of the squirrels previously mentioned was out gathering food and forage and doing the normal squirrely deeds when he saw two other squirrels. One was a fellow male. The other was the nuttiest smelling female his pheromone detectors had ever sensed. He instantly dropped his load and scurried to get a better look.

The two vermin were engaged in the typical mating routine. Female Squirrel was flirting and flitting about, playing hard to get, while Horny Male was chasing her relentlessly, willing to do almost anything in order to have his craving satisfied.

The two wanna-be fornicators ran about, unaware and uncaring that they were being watched. They scampered through the trees, across telephone wires, and over any surface that happened to be in their path. The wind whistled with them as they ran. They clattered over trash cans, producing a definite percussive thump. Their feet clicked against the bark of the trees and the concrete sidewalk. The sounds of their pursuit created the dramatic soundtrack for our shifty friend in the bushes to plan his attack.

The plan was not complicated. He simply had to take out the opposition and replace him in the chase. Female might not even notice, for surely chases of this sort were part of her daily routine. Realistically, even if she did notice, she may not even care, for she was as horny as both of the males, and all of this foreplay had her ready for some reward.

As the two passed him, Shifty pounced on the pursuer,

intending to take him out with a swift swipe of his paw and continue the chase in the same move. Instead, he and Horny collided full on, leaving both of them splayed out on the ground. As they recovered and rose, Shifty saw that Horny was realizing what had happened. The now sore and still unsatisfied squirrel looked at his assailant and took the only possible action. As Horny lashed out, Shifty jumped back and started sprinting for his life.

As the two squirrels dashed after each other, this action completely different then the running just minutes before, Female noticed that the attention was no longer on her. She spied them on an electrical wire and sprinted up the next telephone pole in order to intercept them. She leapt in front of them, and the three bodies flew toward the nearby transformer box. Female and Shifty landed directly on the transformer electrical output sources and were fried immediately. Horny, realizing the danger, threw himself downward and fell to the ground. He limped away to nurse his wounds.

The neighborhood around had no idea of the epic battle that had occurred. All they knew was that the power was out for hours, classes were cancelled on the nearby campus, and there were two dead squirrels spread across the sidewalk.

The Archer in Your Arches

Kaitlyn Montague

Mother always said that it was a tumultuous day when I was born, rain clouds rolling over the peaks of the sun-kissed mountains so dark and heavy that it could be nothing less than the Gods acknowledging my presence. Doubtful. More likely was the rest of her story, but not by much: servants bustling frantically, shaken by Mother's cries, and she says even Father looked stricken.

The great Telamon shaken by the cries of a mere woman? His composure shattered by a concubine? The idea was unthinkable, and I've always thought she exaggerated, but perhaps, once upon a time, there had been a point when Father had not been so rough, his voice perhaps softer, his blows not as hard. It seems difficult to imagine, and my older brother had never been one to help my musings when it came to our father.

By the gods, no. When talking to Ajax, Telamon was not simply a companion of Heracles, the great son of Zeus, or Jason, leader of the legendary Argonauts. He was their equal in every way. In fact if it hadn't been outright heresy to do so, Ajax would have claimed his father surpassed them both. An Argonaut and distant relative of Zeus, Father tried to measure out his accountability in reputation alone, rather than his deeds—as if his name and his associations made him an important man, never mind whatever it was he accomplished with that name. He had always been a companion on a quest, an associate. He helped Jason to acquire the Golden Fleece, but it had never been his quest. He resented that the quests had never been his alone, and yet used these associations to act as if he had done far more. It was not something to be mentioned—my Father was incapable of realizing his hubris. And I learned long ago that in the comparison of Telamon with his brother Peleus lay a similar sort of blasphemy.

After all, it wasn't every brother who married a daughter of the gods, much less a goddess herself. Father resented the fact, and thus Ajax did too.

Peleus had cheated, betrayed a sort of unspoken brotherly oath to never surpass his elder, and even worse, he had broken this shaky promise with the assistance of an immortal. Peleus had achieved the entitlement from On High that Father had always wanted, and what he never saw was that it was my uncle's deeds that made him a man.

Never mind that Father won his second wife, his precious caged Trojan songbird and my mother, Hesione, by the hands of Heracles himself. They started that war on Trojan soil that we always thought would be the last, and would be left forever regretting the assumption. Doubtful that he or his eldest son would ever admit to this, at least without excuses. Heracles had been a mortal at the time, an Argonaut, and a fellow companion of Jason, and if nothing else, Hesione had asked for her plight. In defending her brother and her country, she became a concubine in a country far away from home, never to see her city again before its final fate. Instead, she was kept a sort of prisoner at home, with only one connection to the outside world. Me.

Of course, Father had known Heracles, sailed with him personally, and that should have been more than enough to persuade the fates to simply give him everything he had wanted: fame, glory, women, treasure, and a country to rule. In that argument, perhaps, he had gotten lucky. At the time. But later, when held next to his brother who had bed a goddess, it paled in comparison.

However, for the sake of truth, I had never been as easily persuaded in my parents' matters as Ajax. While my brother would be quick to notice Father's anger and validate it whenever he had the opportunity to agree, the world did not work on Telamon's terms. These stories of exploits were tales of heroes that were not my father. No matter however much he wanted them to be. He had been brave, and perhaps a lesser hero in his own right, but what he never realized is that his name would only live on in the fact that he was an entitled companion, a warning against jealousy without

real ambition. His terms meant little.

I, for one, adored my uncle Peleus and his goddess-wife, and their kindness to their brother's bastard son has never been forgotten. And the kindness itself, prone to wane as families have their own children to look after, only seemed to strengthen by the time Achilles was born. Knowing how Father's first wife, Ajax's mother, had reacted to the son of her "competition," despite the fact that she had produced the heir to the kingdom, and that I was only the son of a concubine and no real competition at all, I had expected no better than a pat on the head, a stilted sort of smile, and a desperate attempt to shove the responsibility of me back onto my mother.

As chance would have it, Thetis was no ordinary woman, nor one with a concubine to ridicule and grow paranoid of. She was a goddess, though what of exactly I still wasn't quite sure, though she did seem to know everyone, and every inch of her acted like one. She regarded her son's welfare with such seriousness it may have been thought she had the capacity to care for nothing else. However, Achilles' companions—which included myself, Ajax, and our distant cousin Patroclus—were far more like the other sons Thetis and my uncle never produced (unless Ajax really was correct about the accidents with her first several children—though there is little proof that Thetis could be so desperately callous, nor that Peleus ever would have allowed such a thing to happen). We were never simply "cousins" in Peleus' kingdom of Phthia, and I still have never had the chance to thank either of them.

Though Thetis is a goddess. Perhaps she knows regardless.

Thetis' husband, Peleus, acted as the softer of Aeacus' sons, perhaps not as ruined by fighting for his namesake. Father often called it laziness, in that bitter tone of voice, gruff around the edges, that he always spat when he felt particularly resentful. Though I would never tell him, I feel it safe to assume now that it was not by any trickery that Peleus won the favor of the Thunderous One.

He was simply the better man. He had taken Patroclus in when my cousin was at his darkest hour, and yet my Father threatened to throw out his bastard son for the slightest

My cousin had committed an act of murder, and yet my uncle only saw him for the person he could become. I would have been murdered in kind, publicly, made into a sort of grisly example of how our wrong choices are the only things that define us. After all, that was the only thing my father seemed to understand—everyone else's wrong choices. Nothing was ever his fault. It's a wonder he hadn't killed off all his countrymen as simple scapegoats.

In the end, what did Father need with a third wife, anyway? He had what he said he wanted. If he were as productive and industrious as he claimed, it would not be a necessary addition to the Kingdom of Salamis. It was a country of hard-working men, the same who needed no reassuring or entitlement from On High. My father, however, was just a man, and as all men, fell victim to fallacy. And considering how vehemently he opposed the Gods' favor and yet was so clearly jealous of his younger brother, hypocrisy always stood out, unspoken, as his most obvious fault.

This resentment, however, he would not keep to himself. If anything else, it was the legacy of his words, not his blood, that would outlive his cold burial underneath the wet earth. Ajax believed every word, up until his death. If it was not the very thing that killed him. Odysseus later said that he carried these truths with him, even into the afterlife.

Of course, he would not be my brother otherwise. And who am I, the silent party in the story of Aegina's sons? I am the one man they had always hoped wouldn't speak: the son of a king and his Trojan whore. The bastard archer, betrayer of his "true home," and the only son of Greece named after a founder of Troy. *Tenecer.*

On How I Am Afraid

Jeremy Richards

"Hello," I say into the phone receiver.

"Hey." Kevin's voice sounds intense, which is normal.

"Hey."

"So did you talk to her?" Whether it's watching a football game, ordering pizza, or prying into my personal affairs, the current moment is always of the utmost significance to Kevin.

"Yeah."

"Well, how did it go?"

I pause. I really don't want to tell him. "She gave me Leeland."

Silence.

"What?"

"She gave me Leeland. He's in the other room right now. I should probably go check on him soon." I stand up and stretch.

"What? This doesn't make any sense. You were supposed to break up with her and now you have Leeland?"

I walk from the kitchen, past the front door, to the living room. "Well, you know she's leaving for vacation with her family today—that's why I was going to break up with her this morning—but when she came by her whole family was with her and they asked me to watch their dog."

The window is open and the air smells like smoke—thick and hot. Maybe it's Gerald down the street. The burn pile in his back yard has been getting pretty big. It needs burning.

"You should have said NO!" Kevin is practically screaming at me now.

Leeland, a small Jack Russell, sits in the middle of the floor chewing on the leg of my coffee table. He looks at me and almost smiles. There is a patch on one eye that is black with brown in it. In the right light—like right now—it looks like he has a shiner.

"They were on their way to the airport, what else could I do? Besides, her family is nice and I like Leeland," I say.

"So she doesn't know that you know?"

"No."

"Why don't you just man up and tell her?"

"I'm not convinced that she actually cheated on me," I say, and then brace myself.

"But I'm the one who saw her!" Kevin's voice is quivering.

"I know...but I'm just not sure—"

"Look dude. I saw her. She came out of that bedroom with that douche bag Luke Gardner and her hair was all...it was all...she had sex hair."

"Okay, Okay, I'll admit that's pretty shady but—"

"Yes. It is shady and instead of going ape shit on her you're watching her dog for free?"

"No, they're going to pay me." I walk over and sit down beside Leeland.

"THAT'S NOT THE POINT!"

"Look, I made myself a really good breakfast this morning—with bacon—and then I took Leeland for a walk and the air was crisp. We saw Mrs. Harris, the old lady down the street and she says to say hello, and I'm having a pretty good day. I don't want to talk about it. Don't ruin my afternoon."

Leeland looks so happy. It's like he goes on loving everyone, not giving any thought to the person who apparently clobbered him—whoever it was—whoever gave him that black eye.

I don't care about the coffee table, I got it for free and it's ugly anyway. I hope he chews right through that leg and the whole thing comes crashing down.

Wylin

Joshua Urie

The small candle spluttered and flickered, slowly drowning in a pool of its own molten self. Darkness advanced forward, to be pushed back as the light fought against its death. Shadows danced wildly about the small, cluttered study and the hunched figure sitting close over a book, edging ever closer to the candlelight.

Wylin Smydier was not one to lose his concentration easily, but the candle was proving quite annoying in its final moments. He sighed, motioned toward the candle, and snapped his fingers. A skittering and scratching of many small legs, like a family of mice running across the floor, faded down the steps of the tower. Wylin pushed his book even nearer the candle, endeavoring to read the tiny script.

Soon enough, however, the skittering noise ascended back up the stairwell. It crossed the room, mounted the desk, and raced toward the drowning candle. The noise came from a creature, roughly the size of a small housecat. The creature was made of silver metal, with a dozen appendages protruding from a roughly circular center disc. It was impossible to discern which was the creature's front and which its back. Wylin called it his snagglar. He used it not only to retrieve materials, but also to clean the tower, keep watch on the doors, and any other task Wylin would rather not do himself.

The snagglar skittered across the desk to the spluttering candle and, in a blur of appendages, replaced it with the new candle it had claimed from the tower below. Wylin grumbled acknowledgement and absently patted his shoulder. The snagglar raced up his arm to perch, spider-like, on Wylin's shoulder as he read.

A loud gurgle erupted into the study's silence. Momentarily surprised, he was about to continue on with his reading when the snagglar whispered something in his ear.

"Yes, yes," Wylin said, irritated. Without looking up from his text, he waved his hand toward the top of his desk, muttering, "Food."

Wylin had been ignoring his stomach for at least a day's time he thought, though it was difficult to say.

There was a soft popping sound and the desk rattled a little as something landed on it with a wet thump. Sprinkles of dark brown liquid sprayed onto the open pages of the book. Uttering a distressed curse, Wylin snapped his fingers again and the snagglar ran down the chair to fetch a cloth of some sort to dry the book.

Wylin looked at his desk and blinked, discovering a large slab of meat covered in thick gravy lying in the midst of his notes and ancient maps. He adjusted his spectacles in surprise. Then, focusing his attention a bit more, he repeated his command and, with another soft pop, received a new slab of gravy-covered meat in his hands. This time his meager concentration rewarded him with a plate, a fork and knife, and a few sickly looking vegetables on the side. The fork was rusted with too short a handle, while the knife had no handle at all, but it was better than nothing, and Wylin had no patience to try again.

The snagglar finished its work cleaning the text. It then set about dutifully cutting the meat. As Wylin read his book, mumbling and taking notes, the snagglar fed its master.

He reached for another piece of paper on which to make his notes, scribbled a few lines, and turned the page of his text. It was blank. The words stopped mid-sentence and did not resume. Maxten Sheb, the herbologist, had been describing the medicinal uses of Alacran seaweed and now, nothing.

Furious, Wylin checked the binding: Chreb and Cub. He should have known. He had never trusted their publishing house. And, now, 2,500 years later, they had the final victory. Though he was certain the publishing house had gone to dust while he was locked away in his Study, he was equally sure it had taken the money he had paid for the book with them.

Disgusted with his poor choice of booksellers, Wylin stood up from his chair to storm down to his bedroom. Promptly, the world wobbled as his legs gave out beneath him; his legs had long since fallen asleep during his most recent day long study. Wylin landed in a heap on the floor. Irritated, he glared up at the snagglar sitting on his desk.

The candlelight glinted off the snagglers' smooth metal body and Wylin saw a flickering, warped reflection of himself.

He was slightly troubled by what he saw, but mostly curious. He made no move to get up, but motioned the snagglers closer. When it was in reach he grabbed it and stared down at his reflection in the disc. The snagglers patiently waited on its master's whims, letting its appendages hang limply at its sides.

On the snagglers' body, Wylin saw reflected great white eyebrows over sunken eyes, which stared back into his own. His forehead was creased and wrinkled. His hair had grown long and unruly, along with his beard. And his nose had developed a large brown wart slightly off center on its ridge; indeed, the wart was the only thing keeping the half-moon spectacles from falling off the face.

He flared his eyes, blue-green like a choppy sea under a cloudy sky, as if it were the snagglers' fault. "Up!" he commanded.

The snagglers wriggled free from his hands. It landed on the floor, rocking from side to side, turning one way then another, unsure how to help its master up. At last it positioned itself behind Wylin's sitting figure and slid several appendages under his bum. Thrusting upwards it began to lift.

With a hoot, Wylin was on his feet, faster than he imagined, and was rubbing his sore backside. The snagglers were looking very proud of its ingenuity until Wylin threw the rusty fork in its direction, yelling, "How do you like that? Cold metal pinchers indeed." The snagglers grabbed the fork midair, clutching it tightly as a prize, and did a better job of hiding its pride.

Shuffling, Wylin made his way down to his bedroom, the circular stairwell curving right.

The bedroom was sparse, save the lavish tapestries hung on the stone walls to keep out the cold. They told the stories of ancient kingdoms, great battles, and noble families. Most dealt with Wylin's home country of Natton, which was a land of cool streams and broad meadows bordered by deep, green forests.

Wylin sighed, actually pausing to see the likeness of his homeland in he did not know how many years. Now that his Study was complete, cut short by dishonest booksellers, he longed to walk beneath the sun again. It had been a sacrifice – but knowledge had demanded it.

His bed was large, with a soaring canopy, upholstered in deep red. Beside his bed stood a full-length mirror, completely covered with dust. Years ago he had ordered the snagglers to stop dusting it, for it reminded him too much of what he gave up to see himself age day by day – a reminder that had just come back to him suddenly and with great force. But now, furrowing his brow, he looked at the snagglers and snapped toward the mirror. Immediately it darted beneath the bed and retrieved a rag.

Wylin went to his standing wardrobe, the only other furnishing in the room. When he had dressed himself in his finest – a flowing purple robe with a bright green sash – he inspected himself in the mirror.

"Fine. Fine," he mused to himself. "What do you think?" he asked the snagglers.

The snagglers darted up its master's body and whispered in his ear.

"Yes, yes, you are right," Wylin replied. "We really do not know what the weather may be like."

Going back to the wardrobe, he pulled out a long silver cloak and draped it over his shoulders, fastening it with a silver brooch shaped like a turtle. The cloak's hood hung nearly to his waist. It was soft and durable, but it would keep him warm.

"Much better," he said. "Now let us just..." Wylin had sat down upon his bed to rest his tired legs. Feeling the soft comfort of the bed, his body betrayed him and slumped over onto the mattress.

When the snagglers heard his snores it gently tucked its master in, then crept quietly under the bed and curled up amongst its rags and bits of metal, shiny souvenirs hidden from the eyes of its master. The fork was its latest proud addition.

Hours, perhaps days, later Wylin awoke uncertain of where he was, or why he was dressed in part for the king's halls and in part for traveling. Lying in the dark, pondering, he slowly remembered. His stomach growled, not wanting to be forgotten again.

He snapped his fingers and the torches roared back to life. It was a little trick he had learned from Dalon Tolcar, expert of fire, early into his Study; Tolcar's text had proved illuminating. Wylin saw the snagglers curled up by his side. The little silver creature did not move when its master stirred. Wylin gazed at his creation for a while before gently touching its central disc. The snagglers rose and stretched their appendages, two at a time, very much like a cat waking from a nap. It was trying to hide a comb and brush behind its body. As it skittered away Wylin touched his hair and beard and found every tangle smoothed away.

When the command for food was given and the pop of breakfast was sounded, the snagglers rushed back to feed their master. Instead, Wylin smiled and patted the pillow beside him. And as Wylin had breakfast in bed, the snagglers rested uneasy, unsure what to do. It contented itself with watching worriedly in case the fork ever missed its master's mouth and stabbed something important.

Breakfast finished, Wylin rose and said grandly to the snagglers, "It is time."

The old man swept down the remaining stairs, passing storerooms, sitting rooms, and a laboratory filled with unwatched experiments and plants run amuck. The snagglers' diligence had kept their effects contained to their level of the tower, but loathe to leave its master too long, it had let the laboratory satisfy its chaotic will otherwise.

Wylin gave none of this a passing thought. He may not have even seen it, but interpreted the floors merely by memory. He was too preoccupied with his desire to open the doors again to his beloved Natton and bask in the cool breeze of its stream-filled meadows.

At last the main floor was made. Wylin and the snagglers stood before two great wooden doors, intricately wrought with friezes of the Nattur landscape.

The doors were bolstered with worked iron bars and hinges. Wylin wanted a fine exit, with both doors opening majestically before him as he reemerged into Natton, but the snagglers convinced him it was impossible with only the two of them, and, anyway, there was no guarantee anyone would be watching the tower. Indeed, there was no way to know as Wylin had ordered all the windows boarded up centuries past to reduce his distraction.

Grumbling, Wylin waved the snagglers toward the right door. When it was in position, Wylin intoned somberly to the empty hall, "I have completed my Study."

Nothing apparent occurred, but the snagglers knew it was now possible to open the door. The enchantment protecting the tower was dissolved. As it unlatched the door and began to open it a crack, the snagglers were suddenly thrust back as the door crashed open, groaning on its hinges, and a wave of golden sand ploughed its way in. Soon enough it was finished and a small hill of sand sat boldly in the entrance hall, filling the doorway, and ending just before Wylin's feet.

The snagglers made annoyed chittering sounds as it crawled from the sand and extracted grains from its joints. Wylin just stared. That had certainly not been out there before.

An Ocean of Noise

Benjamin Fitzgerald

"...someone that's more for real." She sat quietly, listening to Elliot Smith play guitar through the speakers on her computer. She looked down at her feet, smiled as she saw her dainty female toes, the nails bathed in girly pink. *I like that shade of pink a lot. I think I'll buy it again.* "Sunshine 'been keeping me up for days." *I need to get some sleep.* The song ended. She reached forward, hit the repeat button, and lay down on her bed. "Sunshine 'been keeping me up for days."

She looked out the window. "Partly cloudy," her mother had said, "with a slight chance of showers tonight. How are you sweetie?" She remembered her mother pouring those words that morning, reading the weather aloud to her husband as she added milk to her daughter's cereal. *I don't care.* Rain. Sun. Clouds. *What are they anyway?* Weather patterns based off of ocean currents and the gravitational pull of the earth as it moves around the sun, a burning ball somewhere up there in the big black night. Up, ever up, always up.

The same words played again. *Why do I even care?* But she knew she had to care. If she didn't care, then she didn't have a reason to live. She would be like her brother—her father. *The way he treated*—she shook her head, chased the Jabberwock away. "But it's not worth it to you, 'cause you got to get high somehow." Her mind jumped. She remembered her older brother talking about how, when he was feeling stressed, he would cut his arms a little with a razor blade. He had explained that doing so released some kind of endorphin into his bloodstream. She resisted the memory. "There is no night time," she murmured. She couldn't grasp it. What was Smith trying to say? She thought about songwriters and their reasons, their vagueness.

She got up and flipped through iTunes until she found what she was looking for. "Ocean of Noise," by Arcade Fire. The singing began: "As if I had a choice." *As if I had a choice.* Somewhere, she had heard that there was always a choice.

"Now who here among us still believes in choice?" *Not I.*

Where had she heard that? Maybe it was in church, but that never made any sense to her. She was taught that everyone had free will, but that God knew everything that ever was, is, and will be, from the beginning to the end of everything. She remembered the burning bush, "I AM WHO I AM," and the Book of Revelations, Alpha and Omega. *Where does free will fit into that equation?* She had no idea.

"Gonna work it on out." The voice faded away, losing itself amid the chorus of string and trumpet. Her iTunes on repeat, the song was still playing. "As if I had a choice." *A choice to do what?* Somewhere, she knew there was an answer. There had to be. *What answer is to be found if choice is an illusion?* "No way of knowing what any man will do." She couldn't accept that. There had to be a way. But there could not be away. *For if there is a way to know, then free will is a lie, and if there isn't a way to know, then God cannot know.* It made no sense to her. Her eyes closed to the sleepy tones of indie pop. "An ocean of noise – I first heard your voice." His voice sounded in her memory like a siren.

She could remember the first time she heard his voice. It was a long time ago. She had been younger. It felt like a lifetime ago, but it was only six months. "No way of knowing what any man will do." It had only been six months. "You got your reasons and me, I got mine." Six months since she asked him to go steady. Six months praying her way through sleepless nights. Six months pleading her way through his coliseum of lies. *I wasn't the one who lied. Why should I work it out for him? Why couldn't he work it out for me?* Her brain meandered to the five stages. *Where am I now? Denial, anger, depression...* She knew it wasn't acceptance. Acceptance meant peace. Acceptance meant normality. It meant closure, and she had no closure.

She was sitting on a park bench, watching mothers push their toddlers on the swings. She remembered her mother doing the same for her when she was their age. It was little more than a fleeting recollection, more of a feeling than a memory. She couldn't actually remember sitting in the uncomfortable swing set. She couldn't remember being pushed back and forth, neither the giggles nor smiles, nor the

screams when she was pushed too high. But watching those toddlers, she could feel that it was something she had done, something she knew. She could feel, in her heart, the exhilaration of the ride, the terror boiling inside of her at being so far from the ground. She felt the love of her mother and her heart burned with yearning. *Sixteen years is too long to leave a memory. Maybe what I have is better.*

She was sitting on a park bench, watching mothers push their toddlers on the swings. The warmth of memories flooding her, she closed her eyes. She formed a picture in her mind, to search the archives of her brain. She looked around, opened her eyes. She had heard a voice—a man's voice, from out in the dark. There was magic in that voice. *The siren's song.* The voice — she heard it again. She closed her eyes, focused on the nuances of the tone, the timbre, the pitch. She closed one ear, and then the other. Words. She could hear words, murmured soft as sand beneath bare feet. Tenderness. Sexuality. Passion. *A promise.* She heard it all inside the gentle murmur of the breeze against her heart. *Who is this centurion of faith?* She rose, turned, and gazed.

Her eyes were open now, but she saw the past no more clearly than before. She couldn't work out what had happened. How it had happened. Why it had happened. That was what bothered her most; she did not know why. No longer on the bed, she paced in vague anger. *He had his reasons.* She didn't know what they were. She didn't care. "No way of knowing what any man will do." Even now, she didn't know what she had done wrong. *My love is my body. I gave him my love, I gave him my body.* He had corrupted the purity of her mind—her love. He wore his shoes in her temple. "Time to work it out for you." She remembered his words: "We'll work this out together babe." *Lies to buy myself some time?* "We'll work this out together babe." *Lies to buy himself some time.* "We'll work this out together babe." She had learned to detest those words; once an expression of affection, they later devolved into gross Parisian lust. *A broken promise.*

She had read a poem somewhere that said "every woman adores a fascist." She thought of her father, her brother, her boyfriend. He beat his wife. He beat himself. He beat her. She walked to her computer, turned off the music.

The Promethean, Vol. 18 [2010], Iss. 1, Art. 1
She was disturbed—she needed quiet. He crossed her mind too often, with too little provocation: a triumvirate of vampires. *He is one and the same.* She cast down her eyes, looked at her pink painted toenails. She liked painting her toenails pretty colors, girly colors. She liked her feet. They were well-shaped, slender and small. *He never liked my feet. Why didn't he like my feet?* She pounded aggravated fists against the wall, chastising the plaster for demurring words it never spoke, for clandestinely vindictive ideas never uttered but often communicated. Ideas watered and nurtured by the indifference with which she had been regarded. Ideas the tears of her heart had nurtured into tumors, ideas that chewed away her peace of mind.

She felt alone. Too alone. Panic rising, she called out. "Mother?" The absence of reply reminded her of her solitude. Alone. *He always left me alone. I have always been alone.* She remembered that Shakespeare once wrote, "There's daggers in men's smiles." He is the dagger. *He is Cassius, Cain, Chapman.* She hated Mark Chapman. "I could be bounded in a nutshell," she murmured. *But for this fucking nightmare!* Grappling her Nemean despair, she looked again at her toenails, the only refuge from her anxiety. The pink shone vibrantly. They were Ozymandius' ruins, a funeral pyre of smiles and songs, an ocean of flames. He, once her gallant knight, had become her headless horseman. Her boyfriend. Her brother. Her dad. *One and the same. He ran away.* They ran away. She remembered his words: "We'll work this out together babe." *He never liked my feet.* She pictured the words in slow motion, spoken to his other lover, to the sensual, vulgar harlot she imagined the woman must be. She knew how Othello was driven to murder. She longed for him to be herself, for him to be Desdemona and she instead the Moor; but he was Othello, and she his wife.

"Father." Quietly she implored Him to light her way. Her lips trembled. *Let him go. He is only a broken promise.* She faltered. To turn her back on him was to turn her back on love, to crucify it on a cross of redemption. She couldn't destroy him; he was her father, her brother—her lover. *Am I too scared to eat a fucking peach?* She realized she was shivering. She ran her left fingers up and down the goose bumps popping out of her arm. "Daddy...why did you leave Mom? Why did you leave

me?" She spoke to a ghoul, a memory with no conscious or conscience, praying for an answer she could never find. The key was in her hand; her spirit snapped. She twisted the key and opened Bluebeard's closet – she was too late.

The blood...the body...the blade...my brother...my boyfriend...my heart...his lies...his fucking whore...my mother's tears, my father's note...my tears—mom's tears—the lies...the lies... It all became a blur. All the memories she had suppressed confused themselves and fused together in her hyperventilating mind. The blood-soaked visage of her dead brother arched his back over the naked body of her lover's flame. His last words—*the bastard's last words*. She fought herself. She lost. The memories were hyenas and she their prey, nothing but carrion to her own demons. "I don't love you anymore baby," he had said—*stuck in my head!*—the words growing louder with every inch the hyenas moved. There was nothing left to do, so she screamed. Years of pain sounded in her ravished wail. It was gone. Her father's note, her brother's body, her paramour's goodbye—he was gone. Her heart bleeped like a hammer as she struggled to control her breathing.

The front door creaked. Her mother was home. Quietly, limply, she made her way to the door, squeezed her head against her mother's shoulder, laughing as snot leaked onto her mother's blouse. They rocked together gently. "I love you mommy." "I love you too sweetheart." The door opened again, and closed just as soon; her stepfather hated walking in on awkward moments.

She sat in her room that night. She knew the demons would return. She knew the traumas would never go away. She knew she could beat them. *I've conquered the oven; I can conquer anything*. She smiled gaily as she looked down at her bare feet and pink toenails. She overheard the words being sung in the background: "Sunshine 'been keeping me up for days." She turned off her computer, turned off her lamp, said her prayers. And as she drifted off to sleep, she smiled.

The Eyes

Katelynn Barnhart

"What is that smell?" I asked the mortician beside me. He paused for a moment before saying, "It is the formaldehyde, Mrs. Williams."

"Oh," I said. It wasn't an intolerable smell, just—different. My eyes took in the surroundings. There were no windows and the walls were made of cement blocks. The body bag rested on a table. I took a deep breath and inch towards it.

The mortician stared at me and asked, "Are you ready?"

Is any mother truly ready to see the body of her child? My sweet, sweet, innocent Anna. I nodded. It was too hard to voice the words. With slight hesitation, he pulled the zipper. I gasped and took a step backwards, not prepared for what I saw. The muscles in Anna's face were relaxed and her skin was pale. Freckles dotted her petite nose. The bullet wound marked her heart. My gaze paused on her eyes: shiny, black, pupils dilated. They held many secrets—secrets that she would not and could not tell.

Anna: April 9, 2010 ~

I quivered in that dark room, my back against the wall, trying to make myself as small as possible. The room was stuffy; there wasn't a fan or even a cracked window to let in a slight breeze. The only thing that shed a little light was the street lamp outside that cast shadows of the furniture onto the floor. My knees were bent to my chin and I cowered behind them. The only two sounds in the room were the suffocated whimpers that sought to escape from my mouth and the scratching sound of Hayden's shoes against the worn Berber carpet as he paced back and forth. Every five steps or so he would pause and hit the wall that was quickly being covered with holes-- like a piece of Swiss cheese. With every punch, I jumped a little and my whimpering would jump an octave.

I struggled to distract my mind from the inevitable. I decided to dwell on the last four months.

Two months earlier ~

I slowly stroked the raised indents on the upholstery of the maroon sofa.

My mother said my name softly. "Anna?"

There was a huge weight around my neck, weighing me down. It took all my strength to raise my head and look at her. Her eyebrows were knitted together and her eyes were wet. She was ready to cry at a moment's notice. I sighed and rolled my eyes.

Mothers. I knew that I needed to say something and my first instinct was to be upfront and tell her the truth. "Mom, I...I love him. There is nothing you can say to change my mind..." I was tripping over my words. I was hoping that by talking fast enough she would believe me and get off my back about it.

Her eyes pierced mine as if trying to change my mind. Quickly sadness vanished and was replaced by frustration as she noticed the bruises peeking from their hiding spot under my short sleeve shirt. She pointed a finger at them, for they were fast turning from plum to a musty yellow on my arms.

"Did he do that to you?!" she demanded. I knew she had the desire to call him a filthy word, but she was against using such language even if she was upset.

I said nothing, but tried to cover them up with my sleeve. It was pointless to lie to her. I went back to stroking the abrasions on the couch; then switched to picking imaginary lint off my pants. I had to keep my hands busy. I could not show her how much her words affected me.

Her voiced softened a bit, "Anna? Why?" I knew she was desperate to get through to me, but I didn't want to listen. I knew what I wanted—him. Nothing could change my mind. She did not understand how deeply I loved him. I refused to let him go, I couldn't. My mind drifted to how we met.

My senior year began in a flurry of college applications to different universities. I was so busy with all of my extra-

curricular activities and homework and the 4.0 I worked so hard to maintain that I didn't have time to involve myself with the typical party scene that many of my peers were into.

I normally did not hang out with my friend Joanne, because she was very different from me. However, she invited me to go to a New Year Eve's party with her. I was under the impression that it would be a harmless little get-together with pizza and board games until the clock struck midnight. Instead, the party was the complete opposite in every way. The cup of "punch" that someone handed to me had a distinctive taste, but I liked it. Soon I was loosening up and shamelessly flirting with anyone who had two legs and a penis. I couldn't remember what happened that night, if my life depended on it. When the morning came around, I woke up next to a very cute guy. Shocked, I hopped out of bed and pulled my clothes on. Wow... I cannot believe I did this. But he is so hot. And it was so thrilling. And I kinda liked it? Wow. Before leaving, I grabbed a Sharpie out of my purse and scrawled my number on his chest; he didn't even flinch. I smiled a little then rushed out of the room.

He didn't call me for two weeks; I thought for sure he had forgotten about the moments that we had shared together. I was wrong. Even though we only talked for five minutes, I knew he was the one for me. He was my first real boyfriend and was like no one else I had ever met in my life. Some people called Hayden odd, obsessive, and intense. I considered him to be eccentric, attentive, and exciting. Hayden was over six feet tall, with shaggy brunette hair that always fell in his face and covered his eyes--those eyes that were so full of intensity. Looking into them, I was both captured and scared. Hayden did not go to school, but worked at the local mechanic shop. I did know that he wasn't on speaking terms with his mom, and that he always made comments about how much of an asshole his dad was. I remember when we met up sometimes he had bruises on his arms; whenever I asked how he received them, he always looked away and changed the subject. I felt at a loss about what to do.

Our blossoming relationship started in a whirlwind. We spent every possible minute of our day together soaking up each other's presence. My friends got a little annoyed that he was my main priority, but they were just jealous. They didn't understand. Well, that's what Hayden told me, although that didn't explain their reaction and the genuinely concerned expressions on their faces. But he was everything I wanted, and I could not imagine my life without him.

The first couple of months were incredible, but then things started to go downhill. What was once fun and exciting started to become frightening. I came home emotionally shaken, like a leaf with bruises on my skin. My mother noticed a change in my demeanor and the bruises that I tried to hide underneath my clothes. One afternoon, after coming home from school, she sat me down to talk. I'll never forget that haunted look she gave me when she questioned me about what was happening. It was the first time I felt trapped in a dream that I could not wake up from.

My mother said my name softly. "Anna?"

"Mom, I...I love him. There is nothing you can say to change my mind..."

"Did he do that to you?!" she demanded when she saw my bruises. "Anna? Why?"

One evening Hayden calls me. He always does if we aren't with each other at night; this is the first night in a long time that I've been alone. His tone is different; but I can't put my finger on it.

"Hey babe... What's up?" he asks. He wants my location and a play-by-play of what I'm doing.

"I'm at home. I'm finishing up the last of these Calc. problems. I have five more left and then I'm going to eat and watch a little TV." I hesitate. "Is that okay?"

There is a long pause as he calculates whether I'm lying or not. He finally says, "Yeah."

His voice roller coasters between roars and tears. I don't get it.

"I need you. Can you come over to my house?"

I look at the clock.

It is fast approaching eleven, but I agree to come over. I quietly sneak out of my house. It takes me barely ten minutes to walk the eight blocks to his house. I text him quickly to tell him I'm outside. Three minutes later, he opens the front door to let me in. I look into his eyes and instantly know that something is wrong. There is an intensity I am now familiar with. His eyes are bloodshot, and he jumps with every little movement I make. He grabs me roughly and pushes me down the stairs to his basement. I say nothing, hoping he won't hit me. I whisper, "Where is your dad?"

With a slight edge in his voice he replies, "He's at the bar."

I notice a bottle of Jack Daniels on his end-table. It all starts to click into place.

Timidly I ask, "Hayden... what's wrong?"

He snarls, "I got fired from my job because I fucked up a fuckin' car engine." He glares at me, "Goddamn you, Anna. I fuckin' hate you. You've ruined my life." He throws me up against the corner of the wall.

"Hayden... what? Why?"

"You're worthless, girl. You are a fuckin' bitch and a god-awful girlfriend." The profanity that leaps from his lips doesn't seem to end. I freeze in place and cover my face, hoping for it all to stop. He continues to pace back and forth as my whimper persists.

As I cower in the corner, he stops pacing and looks directly at me. At this moment, I don't see the man I dearly love, but a lion— and I am the lamb. The next few moments feel like a scene from a horror movie, with me as the victim. He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a small handgun. A scream rises from some place within me. I try to make eye contact. He avoids my gaze. I plead for him to stop. He raises it. He cocks the gun. The bullet hits me. He raises the gun to his own head and pulls the trigger.

I could not move my legs or make my hands twitch. Any sort of feeling or emotion had dissipated. I did, however, feel a presence of someone leaning over my body; their hot

breath upon my face, looking at me and into my eyes. My eyes could not focus though—much less process what was going on around me. I felt like I was in a bad dream and in this dream, I knew that I had died. Except it was not *just* a dream. As I peered back into the concerned eyes of my mother leaning over me, I realized I was the one in the body bag.

Falling Stars

Chris Hix

My father never had many material things. In fact, when I was a child he never had a permanent residence. Sometimes when we stayed with him he didn't even have food. However, he was rich in love for my brother and me. He would do anything for his boys; we were his pride and lifetime achievement. In return we loved him just the way he was: with his unkempt beard, ragged jeans, stained shirt, and torn shoes. He was a kid at heart and never felt a need to be responsible.

People gravitated to my father because with him it was always time for a good time. He lived life like a rock-star and the people that knew him loved him for it. The party didn't exist before he got in; it wasn't even planned. This inner eternal fun that exuded from him was a bright light in peoples' lives.

At my father's funeral it was standing room only. As I arrived, "Danny Boy" playing on a Sony CD clock radio sitting on a plastic chair, a photo of my dad about 35 on the Feather River holding a salmon, and a potpourri of people, the only seats available were for immediate family. A long procession of friends, family, and ex-girlfriends or wives took the podium. Some sobbing and some trying do like he would have, making it a party. I took the podium like the former. Then my cousin stood at the podium, differently than everyone else and the room calmed as he spoke with a story teller's enthusiasm. He recounted a night we had spent camping with my dad.

The outdoors were one of the few places my father was truly comfortable. He tried to share his love for it with us as often as he could. The night is one that I also have never forgotten and still often think about.

It began one sticky, hot summer evening when my cousin had come with my brother and me to stay with my dad over the weekend. Upon our arrival at his house the woman my dad was shacking up with threw us out because she didn't want three kids staying all night in her house. So to make the

best out of the situation my dad decided to take us camping at the outlet on the Feather River. He said the King Salmon were biting really well there.

Without sufficient camping gear or food, we trusted the river to be kind to us. Between the four of us we had one sleeping bag, a change of clothes each and our fishing gear. We did manage to find an old blanket and some foam padding at the river's edge. My dad and brother would share the blanket and foam; my cousin and I would share the sleeping bag.

Thanks to the dam projects, there was an old abandoned road that got us to within fifty feet of the outlet. The road had been used by workers that built the fore bay and the after bay below Oroville Dam. The bays were used to make hydro power by pumping water through them. My Grandfather had come to Oroville to work on the Oroville Dam. This was a place my dad had known since he was a boy. At the outlet, where the after bay dumps into the Feather River, the ground was covered with the powdery reddish brown dust that is typical of Northern California. The outlet itself roared with the force of ten million gallons of water, drowning out all other sounds. A mist cast across the area making an oasis of green in an otherwise dry and brown landscape.

We arrived at about 6:00 pm with the sun solidly in the sky but quickly plummeting towards the horizon. After about two hours of fishing the outlet with no luck, it was time to go and start a fire. A ridge buffered the campsite from the overwhelming noise of the outlet. At the campground the river had already worn out its fury and whimsically swirled around making an ideal location to catch channel cats with live bait; we used crawfish. By now the sun was out of sight but still making its presence known over the horizon. We switched our fishing gear over for catfish then took a quick dip in the river before it got too cold out. Fresh from the river we made our beds, which consisted of a cleared area covered with tufts of grass.

Soon my father had finished his bottle of blackberry brandy and he and my brother were asleep. My cousin and I lay next to each other, cold because we were still wet, the

fire had gone out, and the night breeze was blowing solidly. The moonlight was casting bold shadows on the sand. The silhouette of the swaying grass played on the ground. Frogs chirped in the distance as snakes slithered hunting their night's meal. The sounds of the wildlife intertwined with the distant sound of the outlet making a haunting bounty of sound and silence. Cool night air equalized the sounds so the loudest and quietest were easily heard together. Lying there I could not help but feel a connection with my surroundings. All the things I couldn't see were easily felt.

Then, like the start of a fireworks show, the first shooting star shot across the sky. It was bright orange, yellow, and red. There was a tail that crossed the entire sky. Simply put, even at that young age it took my breath away. By itself it was amazing, but before the glow had completely faded another equally impressive shooting star screamed across the sky, then another, and another, and so on.

They came down so constantly my cousin and I started counting them. Late into the night we had counted one hundred and seventy two. This was an absolute once in a lifetime night. When it was all over we couldn't help feeling we had witnessed one of the heavens' most spectacular displays ever offered.

As my cousin spoke I had found myself emerged in that night and my dad was alive again. A smile had crept across my face for the first time in awhile.

After the service was over, all the condolences given and everyone was gone, the funeral director gave me the paperwork the cemetery would need to make sure my dad got his veteran's plaque.

As I drove down the serpentine road of the cemetery, I thought back to my cousin's story and that night which was so indicative of my father. Something that looked terrible would turn out to be something great. My dad lived his life like one of those shooting stars, letting gravity determine his destiny, creating a beautiful spectacle in its blazing destruction.

Out of Darkness

Salena Stopper

I hate thinking about my childhood; so many bad memories. Sometimes I struggle talking about my past. Other times I don't, especially if you ask me about my life in Idaho. It is like a small beacon of light shining through my dark past.

I *loved* Idaho. I loved the mountains. I loved the air that blew into my lungs and swept up my hair. I also loved our house. We had a creek in our backyard that split our land into two. In the winter, the water swelled up and become dangerous as it roared down from the mountains. During the summer, the water trickled by peacefully, calming my spirit. Apple and crabapple trees were our forts, a place for us to hide and forget the world we lived in. My life was fantastic. I was full of childish wonder.

I was a princess.

Maid Marion and Cinderella were only a couple of my many names. I went on adventures into the great unknown. Evil villains would capture me and take me to their lair located on the other side of the creek. I would cry out for help and my prince would come rescue me. He would sweep me off my feet and onto his horse, kiss me, and take me to his home in paradise. I would be his and he would be mine.

When I wasn't a princess, my younger sister and I played with our Barbies every day. Our imaginations burst at the seams as we came up with fascinating stories of our Barbies meeting and marrying Prince Ken (or Austin, as I so fondly named him). We dressed up and played house, our baby dolls constantly involved. I loved my life. I adored my brother, looked after my younger sister, and enjoyed spending time with my twin. My dad was my rock; my mother was my comfort and encouragement. I had something to live for; something to love.

Then my mom died.

We were robbed of her. Cancer slowly took her from us. I was almost seven years old- just a child.

I was lost and so confused.

I craved attention and love from my dad, but he never gave it. He was too caught up in his own grieving to notice much else, let alone our pain. Even if he had noticed, he didn't show it. He dated my mom's college roommate from Texas. He was constantly gone trying to woo her. When their relationship ended, He moved on to Karen. Without really asking for our approval or allowing us to grieve our mother's death, he picked us up, moved us to Oregon, and married her. Only a year and a half had passed.

I couldn't believe it.

I was forced to leave my home, my fields, my fantasies, my forts, and my heart. I went from a place of serene and delicate memories to a place of dread and hate. I was miserable. Gone was the sunshine, the light, and the laughter. Gone were my climbing trees, my wild imagination, and my forts. My freedom was lost, my freedom to explore. I wasn't allowed to climb trees because it was "dangerous." I felt like a caged bird, begging to be set free. I wanted to be loved and cared for, but I never was. I was ignored, except to be yelled at when I became a nuisance, which happened a lot.

Desperation set in. It cried out within me. But all I received was hatred and annoyance, tearing the hole in my heart even more, making it bleed. I hated myself. I couldn't do anything right. As soon as I tried, I messed up somehow and was punished for it. All I did was create havoc. So I lashed out in my pain and confusion.

I stopped eating.

My dad and stepmom did not know what to do. They tried getting me to eat in many different ways. They thought up "brilliant" ideas. They decided to take away my allowance. I wasn't allowed to participate in fun activities after school. They grounded me over anything. They did everything they could think of except love and care for me. It never crossed their minds. That was all I wanted. I just wanted them to wrap me in their arms, hold me, and tell me everything would be alright. I craved for them to say, "I love you!" and mean it. But they didn't.

I hated myself.

I wasn't like my twin. I was a small child; a late bloomer. I was skinny; bones stuck out everywhere. My skin was pale and translucent. I was constantly cold. Small, dark moles marred my body. To me they were anything but beauty marks. I bit off the most repulsive one, hoping to get rid of it. I poked holes in all the others with thumb tacks, wishing the dark ugliness would seep out with the blood. Paper lunch bags of rotten food filled my room in hidden places. My parents couldn't figure out why my room smelled so bad. Small bald spots speckled my head from my stepmom yanking my hair when she got mad. I was going insane, but no one seemed to care.

I had no purpose, no passion. My stepmom decided I was too unruly and annoying, and drugged me with Adderol to take care of my ADD. It drained me of life. I was no longer a child. I was a monster. Unloved and unwanted- worthless. Every day I was told I was not capable, a failure. I was taunted for my slow thought processes. I made little sense when I talked. Because of this, I became introverted. I hardly talked, and when I did, people couldn't hear me. My siblings and I fought often. We took our hurt and anger out on each other. I was ashamed of who I had become. I no longer was a princess, but a nasty, younger version of my stepmom. I wanted it all to end.

I was silently miserable for years. Things got a little better, rules lightened, but still I cried for love and attention.

My dad realized his mistake a few years later. He made it his goal to make it to every event we participated in. He was there when I made my first shot in basketball: a three pointer. I could pick out his voice in the crowd. Through our triumphs and trials, he gave us words of encouragement. But it wasn't enough. Even though he began to become the father I had longed for, my stepmom continued to ridicule and destroy us. I felt like a child. I did nothing right. My dad stood up for us, causing them to fight. Peace no longer existed.

But then blessings came from years of pain and suffering. After seven years of marriage, my stepmom had enough of us and decided to divorce my dad.

We moved to a brand new house that had just been built. It was big, beautiful, and full of light. A year later, I quit taking my Adderol medication and came to life. My family and I started to get along more. We began talking and working through our hurt and confusion. My sisters became my best friends.

Then Lisa came into our lives.

A couple months after my dad divorced Karen, he began dating this amazing woman. Tenderness, kindness, and loveliness are only a few words to describe her. She brought light and joy back into our family. Our dinner table conversations became upbeat and interactive. After three and a half years of dating, my dad finally proposed to her on Valentine's Day. She said "YES!" and this summer they are getting married. I will finally have the mom I long for.

Though I have been blessed incredibly in the last few years, I still struggle. Low self-esteem defines my life. I have little confidence; I can't get Karen's words out of my head. They loom over every thought. I struggle with my body image. By society's standards I don't have the figure a woman should have. I feel like I need to lose weight, to be skinny again. Bulimia threatens to exist in my life. Thoughts of discouragement and failure consume me. My brother and I still aren't very close. But, most of all, I struggle with my identity as a woman. I feel incomplete. I know nothing about fashion, cooking, sewing, taking care of a man (or just plain interacting with them). I had no one to teach me these things. I am embarrassed over my inexperience; but now I've found hope.

I grew up knowing about Jesus. He was a part of my everyday life. I was involved in church for years and my parents continually talked to us about Christ. By the way they loved us and lived their lives, they showed us who He was. I loved Jesus when I was little, inviting Him into my heart when I was five years old. I had innocent childlike faith but when my mom died, I stopped talking to Him. Confusion and anger swept through me because I figured God didn't care about me. I had prayed so hard for healing, only to not be heard. When we lived with my stepmom, I reasoned He thought I was annoying and worthless, so He wanted nothing to do with me. He had

no use for me and I wondered why He even created me. I was nothing to Him but a hindrance and a failure. In my mind, I was made to suffer through events no children should ever go through. I was made to believe horrible things about myself.

But now, looking back, I see God's loving hands through it all. I spot where His many tears fell when my soul was ripped from my body and trampled on. I see when His heart tore at every bruise my stepmom gave me. I see how He walked through my life with me, carrying me when I could go no further on my own strength. He carried me ever so gently, whispering words to me that I had always longed to hear. He never left me nor forsook me, just like He promises.

So here I am now, a Junior in college. My fantasy has changed from one of princesses and princes to one of myself as a bride and Jesus as my bridegroom. I'm learning to recognize the truth; that there is a hope and a future in store for me. I am continually growing and learning to tear down the walls that keep me from experiencing the true love from those around me. My heart was hardened by fear and confusion, but God's tenderness has begun to soften it. I fondly look upon my life in Idaho, but I understand now that God is with me wherever I am. I am here for a reason, and it is to make a difference. God is using my hurt, pain, and rejection to reach out to those around me. I was allowed to suffer for years so I would become the woman of God He desires me to be. I am here as a light to bring people out of darkness, just like Christ did for me.

God is so faithful.

Mind Games

Cassandra Shaw

The light bulb above the porch flickered and died. When the doorbell rang the sound of death tolls echoed, they travelled through the interior of the sprawling Victorian house before him. The soft slap of women's pair of house slippers on hardwood floor echoed behind the glass inset, eye level in the ornately crafted door at the front of the aged house. As the door slowly swung open his eyes met a pair of icy cobalt pools.

The eyes were framed by the cinnamon hair and pale white skin of a young lady's face. The wandering his eyes did took in the subtle make-up and curled hair but focused on the satin robe she held close. Clinging to the line down her neck and shoulders and curving around her trim thighs to her knees the robe deserved the attention. She smiled showing a straight line of teeth. Vivian.

"Here so soon?"

"The drive was short. I can see I should have obeyed the speed limit."

"Let me slide on my dress, five minutes!"

With the door left slightly ajar Mark crept into the house.

This house is rather normal. As he escorted himself to the couch of a small but adequate living room Mark sat on the sofa adjacent to a brown leather wingback chair and the entry to the kitchen. *She's not ready yet, that's usual. Everything will be okay. . . Vivian can't know anything.* As he sat on the liver colored sofa he felt the urge to explore a little while his host was occupied. First probing with his eyes alone, then getting up and turning in a static circle Mark surveyed the room.

Light filtered through the bay window and led his eyes toward the back of the house. Though the day was gloomy and grey he looked toward the kitchen and saw sunshine there.

The walls and backsplash painted a cheery and morning sunflower yellow brought out the urge to move forward. As he turned the corner to his right he noticed an interesting pattern on the far wall in the kitchen, behind the dining table.

He crept closer, still not alarmed, just curious. His Hanes dress socks, night black Mezlan Orbison loafers and the floorboards cooperated; they did not betray his presence in the house. As he walked across the kitchen in silence he noticed the color of the pattern, red.

The scene past the kitchen consisted of more red with every step he took. As the now lifeless form took shape before him the bile rose in his throat, his airway constricted in panic and his legs rooted to the floor on the spot. The shock was almost too much for Mark, his shoulders shook with surprise, then slowly the shaking changed to slower heaving stifled laughter.

Mark admired the beauty of her handi-work. The exact cuts and precise science that was executed was done with an obviously steady hand. After the initial wave of disgust and nausea Mark's only urge was to examine the form closer, to get a feel for her trademark in its most recent victim.

"Almost ready!"

The light voice echoed from a far corner of the second floor. What? What do I do? As his feet started to respond to the electrical frenzy from his brain that said to run he heard her heels click-clacking evenly down the stairs.

He got as far as the living room.

Between him and the front door was the beautiful cinnamon-haired girl in a black almost knee-length chiffon dress. Her bare legs and knee high stiletto boots drew the eyes first. Then the top cut in a tight corset and a small, short, skirt attached at the bottom, her dress completed the outfit.

I can outrun her in those heels if I have to. . .

Well, he's still here. When Mark was left on the doorstep to await her return Vivian left the door ajar, a test of sorts.

I knew he'd come in. Those eyes. She watched as he shifted uncomfortably in front of her, probably not realizing that she could see him trying to inch his way toward the door, looking at it longingly and yet unable to tear his eyes from her bare flesh.

Vivian turned and reached for the door handle, it fit coolly into the palm of her well-manicured hands. *He can have the full tour of the house, he might even get to see the kitchen.*

Vivian suddenly slammed the door shut. The deadbolt fell into place with the sound of finality.

The Etiquette of Bursting into Song

Jerriann Watkins

There are some people in this world who say that musicals are completely unrealistic because in real life, people don't randomly burst into song. Some of us know better. We know that the real reason is not because of the musical outbursts, but because these outbursts are perfectly on pitch, and because of the synchronized dances in the middle of grocery stores. Of course, those of us who know this are either the ones bursting into song, or the victims of said song-burster-outers.

While a lot of people may be overjoyed to discover that the wonderful world of musicals can be a part of the tangible world, others may find the idea of nonstop musicality a bit overwhelming. Therefore, I have drafted the following guidelines for those who always have a song in their head waiting to come out, but enjoy being liked. If practiced correctly, these rules should contribute to making life bearable for all.

Maxim #1: Be aware of your affect on others.

If your outburst is a bit on the loud side, take a glance around to observe others' reactions before continuing. If people look like they want to rip out your esophagus, you might want to tone it down a bit so you can sing another day. However, if people are joining in, feel free to carry on at your current energy and sound level, or even increase it. Some call it volume, but others call it sharing.

Maxim #2: Change it up a bit.

Some people really do enjoy listening to impromptu concerts and/or random musical musings. However, even the most appreciative person can get annoyed at hearing the same line of a song over and over again, so it's good idea not to be too repetitive. If you only know a line or two of a song, try humming to figure out more of it, or move on to another song. This gives your audience a bit of variety and keeps them happy.

Maxim #3: Collaborations are always fun.

If people want to join in, let them! Don't be too picky about pitch, not everyone can sing as perfectly as you! The point is to have fun! If your song happens to remind someone of their favorite song and they start singing it instead, join in, or at least wait a polite minute before changing back to your song or moving on to a new one.

Maxim #4: Consider the studious ones.

If someone is trying to focus, or has asked you to stop, it may be best not to annoy them; they may throw a calculus book at you. Try to at least keep your outbursts at a respectful volume. If you continue to get carried away and really can't keep it down, it may be beneficial to all involved if you relocate yourself.

Maxim #5: Singing over existing music.

If someone is listening to music or watching a movie with music in it, singing along with the music is perfectly reasonable, even expected. However, singing a different song is quite rude, and changing the lyrics to the song is pretty unforgiveable as well.

Exception: Changing the lyrics to a song and sharing them AFTER the song is finished or stopped is perfectly acceptable. Also, if your friend knows your revised lyrics and feels like singing them with you, then really no one is being bothered, are they? In this case, it could be suitable to sing "Jingle Bells, Batman Smells" even though the original "Jingle Bells" is playing on the radio.

Maxim #6: Caroling isn't just for Christmastime.

Have you ever knocked on someone's door and all of a sudden gotten the urge to serenade them as they open the door? This makes for great laughs, but there are a few precautions to be taken. First of all, make sure the intended person answers the door. You don't want to be singing "You sexy thing" to your boyfriend's mom. It is always important to be on your toes. Since they are unprepared for your musical gift, it is very important to be adaptable. If they come to the door in a towel, "Rubber Ducky" may be appropriate. If they are on the phone, you may want to hum "Banana Phone."

The more obscure the situation and the more appropriate your song, the more your friend will appreciate your humor and quick wit. It is also good to be prepared to cancel your outburst plans completely, in case your friend answers the door in tears or something equally unpleasant.

Maxim #7: Gauge the situation.

There are times when certain songs just aren't appropriate. For example, when babysitting five year olds or tutoring disturbed teenagers, songs about the "effing" world going to "effing" hell would be very inappropriate. Also, it would not be good to burst into "I'm Walking on Sunshine" at a funeral (or any upbeat song for that matter, you inconsiderate monster). When your best friend just got dumped, love songs will not improve her mood. Songs about Ben and Jerry's will. It's just a fact of life.

Maxim #8: Don't sing to strangers.

Yes, singing in public is fun-and a great way to get attention- but it can get old fast. Here are a few key tips to avoid being labeled as a nuisance. Don't sing off key on purpose. It's not funny, and people don't appreciate it. They may even get offended, especially if they happen to be a music major. Save the tone-deaf act for your car, or the shower. Also, respect the personal space of others. Overly loud outbursts in closed spaces-such as buses and trains-can really irk people. Finally, if you are singing to impress an attractive stranger across the room, proceed with caution. You could either scare them off by being too "out there", or you could attract a life time stalker. This is the real world, people. There ARE serial killers in airports.

Maxim#9: Don't use your singing for evil.

No matter how tempting it is, using your vocal instrument to purposely annoy people is wrong. Not only is it wrong, it will come back to bite you in the butt. Loudly singing "You're So Vain" when your arch-nemesis walks into the room may seem clever, but just you wait. When you have a massive headache and the freshmen who live in your hall won't stop singing "The Song That Never Ends", you'll know that Karma has had her revenge.

Maxim #10: Pay Attention!

It may be easy to slip into a dream world where you star in your very own cheesy musical, but take some advice. Stay away from the white light! Look both ways before crossing the street. Try not to run into anyone (unless they're cute; but there's a completely different set of etiquette for "accidental-on-purpose-bumping").

I hope these simple maxims for musical living help you in your quest for a harmonious life. Of course, there are always exceptions, or situations that these may not apply to. As with most rules, these are best taken as guidelines, a roadmap toward- not a blueprint of- the best possible existence. If you are disappointed that there are not more pointers for you, fear not! In the words of one of the many famous Johanns of the composing world, "I'll be Bach!"

Madlibs

Vanessa Wendland

Triskaidekaphobia-

Fear or a phobia concerning the number 13.

As a rule, teachers never liked Alicia Kachmar. She didn't blame them-- she acted too nervous. She was too unpredictable for any authority figure to feel comfortable with her wandering around with her own free will. But her behavior wasn't exactly her own fault either. There were too many things in the world that were out of her control for her to be comfortable acting normal. She knew what she should be afraid of, and she avoided it at all costs. It was human nature to experience the fight or flight instinct when faced with danger. And with her small, bony 5'2" frame, she knew she had been made for flight.

So when she saw signs for danger, she did not hesitate to run. She ran after she walked into class and realized that there would be thirteen people in one room every week for an entire semester. She ran from the grocery store when the only check stand open was number thirteen. And when her favorite hair stylist carelessly dyed her hair a Honey Blonde 013, she ran to buy new hair dye. She had always heard that pink was a soothing color, so she chose a very safe Cherry Blossom 267.

In the slew of random events that defined her life, Alicia found herself lost in a sea of drunken college students one average Wednesday night. She couldn't find any friends but she managed to find plenty of alcohol. Though she didn't fit the picture of an average student, she knew their practices well. Taking a shot of any liquor earned one black Sharpie "X". Even though she was a stranger to everyone at this party, anyone who witnessed her taking another shot was perfectly willing to mark her arm for her in a show of comradery.

The night was going pretty well. Most people stared at her hair, some were even brave enough to ask who she was, but no one questioned her right to be with them, to participate in the night's festivities. She didn't know anyone, she might not

have even been invited to the party, but somehow, at that moment, she was at a place where she completely belonged.

This feeling of contentment was foreign to her, however, so she began to feel uneasy as the night went on. The simplest solution that she could find was to follow the example of her peers and continue to drink what was handed to her. She had seven X's on her arm when she firmly made her decision, and it wasn't long before two more appeared on her arm. Her wariness of her situation slowly began to fade.

Before long, Alicia realized that she had made a terrible mistake. There were now thirteen dark marks on her right arm, contrasting horribly with her pale skin. She didn't want to consider what this omen could possibly lead to, so without a moment of hesitation or consideration, she grabbed the nearest glass and drained it. With another clean mark swiftly placed near her elbow, the curse has been broken and Alicia was safe again.

And it was that last drink that she had taken, her perceived deliverer of salvation, that would be the catalyst that would push her completely over the edge.

Pulchritude-

The quality of appearance which pleases the eye; beauty; comeliness; loveliness.

Gabriella had always been considered beautiful. She was not the kind of person that would admit it out loud to the general public, but whenever she was complimented, the same sorts of words were always repeated. Her mother in particular would remark on her glossy blonde hair and cobalt blue eyes, usually while she was justifying her decision to enter Gabriella in every beauty pageant in the state. It was a crushing blow to her mother when she finally realized that with her barely-average height of 5 "4" she was not exactly a desirable candidate for pageants or modeling.

Gabriella had added a stinging insult to already grave injury when she had announced that she did not share the same interests as her mother and would be pursuing a degree in Biology.

Despite her desire to escape her mother's preconceived plans for her life, Gabriella found that she had already been type-casted into an irritated role. Upon first seeing her, she was often considered to be the "dumb blonde bitch" or some variation of that stereotype.

In her attempts to persuade the affections of her classmates, she strove to become someone to admire. And though not everyone could recognize the value of intelligence, Gabriella found that few could find fault in characteristic of kindness. So despite what she or her mother really wished to be known for, Gabriella soon became remembered at her school for being remarkably kind.

Sometimes, like in moments such as these, Gabriella would idly wonder if her acts of compassion really amounted to any sort of worth in reality. She couldn't help but wonder if they resembled hypocrisy rather than humility, since she initiated these actions for the sake of recognition, and she only continued them out of habit.

Even now, as she watched a girl with a mess of shockingly pink hair stumble across the crowded room, she only moved out of habit. Though she felt pity for the sorry state of the girl, she inwardly scoffed at her naivety to be completely drunk at a party with no friends nearby to help.

If she assisted this girl, but mentally criticized everything about her, would it count as a true act of benevolence? Her conscience seemed to insist that her counterfeit kindness would never be fully accepted by herself, and it would only be a matter of time before the general public realized her lack of authenticity.

Even while she mulled over the reasons behind her actions, her body seemed to move from memory. Without really noticing, Gabriella had already moved to slide one arm behind the drunken girl's back and latched an arm over her own shoulders so that the stranger leaned against her. The girl gazed at her with glassy viridian eyes, not fully understanding Gabriella's actions or words as she gave a half-hearted attempt at introducing herself.

The girl was much worse off than what she had first assumed, Gabriella noted with distain. She couldn't even stand by herself. No doubt it was only a matter of time before she began puking every drop of alcohol that she'd consumed that night.

Gabriella even found herself promising that she'd drive her home, even though the idea of the pink-haired girl vomiting all over the leather seats appalled her. But the mantle of the Nice Girl demanded that she ensure that the girl wobbling next to her found herself safely at home.

Her annoyance at the girl grew exponentially as she tried to coax her out of the house and into her small blue car. The girl couldn't really function in any productive way; she could barely move one foot in front of the other.

Gabriella did feel a pang of sympathy for the girl as she buckled her seatbelt. They had passed many inquiring faces as they stumbled through the house, but there was not even a flash of recognition upon seeing the mass of pink hair. The house had been overwhelmingly crowded, yet the girl did not have a single companion. Not even a familiar classmate, Gabriella mused wryly as slid into the driver's seat. Because surely if any of them had seen this strange girl at any point in time before this night, would have remembered her.

Her thoughts were interrupted when she turned the key in the ignition and the only sound that could be heard was a foreboding click, click, click. She tried two more times before she was forced to accept that her car would not start.

"It looks like there is something wrong with your battery."

The voice was friendly, soft, and melodic, but Gabriella shrieked out of surprise. The owner of the voice stood several feet away from her car, leaning slightly towards her open window. She recognized the girl who stood before her, though she couldn't recall her name. She had seen her curly red hair and deep hazel eyes earlier that night and at previous parties at well. She was tall-- enough that Gabriella's head would only barely reach the girl's shoulders if they were standing next to each other.

The girl seemed unperturbed that Gabriella did not make a sound to acknowledge her suggestion, or that she was still staring at her in shock. She smiled again at Gabriella and nodded.

"I'm sure that's what the problem is. If you want, I can help you. I have jumper cables in my car."

"You know how to do it?" Gabriella asked hesitantly, finally able to speak.

"Yeah, I've seen it done lots of times!"

And suddenly she was gone, skipping away in the opposite direction. It only took her a few minutes to reach her car and to drive it to them. She seemed so sure of herself, so confident in her movements, that Gabriella willingly opened the hood of her car and allowed her to put the appropriate cables where they belonged.

Before she knew it, the girl was standing in front of her again, with an unusually large grin adorning her face.

"Okay, everything is ready! Try again!"

The girl's confidence reassured her that everything would be fine. Her car would start without a problem, she could deliver the nearly-unconscious girl to wherever she belonged, and then she could finally return to her own home and crawl into her own bed. She was already imagining the comfort of her fluffy pillows when she turned the key once again.

Gold and white sparks shot out from under her car hood, in a dazzling display of fireworks that blinded her from where she sat. She could hear a very distinct sizzling noise, despite the surprised cries of the few people who were standing outside. The most horrifying aspect of those five short seconds though, was the repugnant odor of plastic burning. The smell was so strong that it made bile rise in her throat, even before the realization of what that smell meant. Gabriella didn't know exactly what the burning rubber meant in relation to her car, but she did know it meant that any hopes of making it to her bed anytime soon had fizzled out in that blinding, disastrous light show.

"What did you do?!" Her voice had risen to painful octaves, even to her own ears, as she jumped out of the car.

"I think I might have put the cables on wrong." The girl was thoughtful, but unrepentant. She looked like she was trying to figure out a complex math problem and hadn't even been bothered by the current catastrophe.

"You said you knew what you were doing!" She knew that she was yelling, but she knew that she couldn't stop herself. She was ruining her reputation, destroying her masquerade of abundant kindness.

"I thought I did. It seemed so easy." The girl shrugged, still not looking the least bit apologetic.

"Easy?" She repeated the word, trying not to reign in her anger. The girl nodded once, and it destroyed any shred of self control over her emotions. She felt her anger flare up like the powerful electricity that had just maimed her only way home.

"You ruined everything! You destroyed my car! You are a dumb-"

But whatever verbal assault was about to come from Gabriella's mouth was interrupted by the sound of vomit forcing its way out of the pink-haired girl's mouth, who was still sitting in the murdered car. Gabriella whipped her head around just in time to see the final act of mutilation that these strangers forced upon her car.

"Well, I didn't do it on purpose." The redhead said, in the same harmonious voice,

"I didn't think it would explode."

Storytelling

Rebecca Carlson

I pound both fists against the glass until I cannot tell where the pain stops and the world begins. I scream his name- "David! David!"- over and over until the sound bounces back off the paned window and hits me in the face.

For a furious moment tears blind me, but when my eyes clear I can still see him walking across the parking lot; a figure growing smaller between endless rows of rain-streaked cars. My bricked-up shadow stretches out over him, though he seems not to see it.

Night falls and I stand still so the moon doesn't see me waiting for David to come back. When the moon-glow rises beyond my view I seize my chance.

"You can't, you won't leave me here!" I shout at the shivering glass. I clench my narrow jaw and take one determined step back on the worn carpet. I am a fragile figure in a hospital gown, but have the strength within me to break free. I stand there for a moment, close my eyes and feel the empty space calling me forward, but then hear the door smoothly opening behind me. Their feet pound across the room, trying to keep me from escaping, but I fling myself toward the glass. I scream in exaltation: they are too late.

There is an instant's pinprick of pain and then I am floating in the sky over the darkened cement rectangles. I am the clouds and the stars, I am part of the night breeze, and "Where's David?" I search for him everywhere, in the shadows behind each car and "David? Where are you hiding? Why won't you come back to me?"

I toss and turn and with one sudden arm motion knock the glass off my bedside table. It bounces with a hollow clatter. Plastic. I hate it for pretending to be real. The nurse slips into the room and hovers above me.

"Good morning Emily," she says as she picks up the empty cup, "Is everything all right?"

She's just waiting for me to give up all my secrets.

I ignore her and eye my large, twelfth story window. I could fly out of it, take wing above the earth and escape forever. Soar like the red swirls that spiral into darkness. Blackness.

There's a sudden, sharp light that cuts into me. I jump up to run and hide, but can't move. Bars are holding my thin body flat to the white sheets, and the nurse leans in with another syringe.

"No, please don't," I beg. "I'll be good; I'll tell you a story. Please. I'm good at making up stories."

My gathering of days in the hospital leached the remaining color from the ever-raining sky until life was shades of grey. Soon hours went by without the nurse peeking through the safety window in my non-locking door, no longer trying to catch me spinning in the center of a kaleidoscopic universe. They (a fitting name for the uniformed, faceless hordes) began pulling me out into the taupe hallways and trying to convince me that schizophrenic Sally and paranoid Peter are my equals. But I won't play their kindergarten games.

There is only one bright ember in this ashen existence. The brightest spark is during the darkest time of day, when the parking lot lights, like night-blossoming tropical fruit, hang in dimly glowing clusters below my window. I have pretended to take my medicine already, distracted the automaton with carefully worded comments about the weather, weekend, water dripping from my stained ceiling. Now I am free to dream of David. I stand wrapped in the dusty curtains, no longer afraid of even the moon, for I have told her that she cannot have David.

"He is mine."

I wind my brown curls around and around one finger and inhale deeply until I can breathe in David's summer scent as he walks softly across the room, putting his arms around me from behind.

"Isn't it a beautiful night?" he says. "Let's get out of here."

Sometimes I watch his stooped back wearily walking to the car and slowly driving away, other nights I have to imagine his face as I gaze up at the blurred, indistinct stars.

"Good night David," I whisper.

Then I wake up in the morning to only the ghost of his memory steadily fading in the early light. Or I did, until David brightened one cloudy day with the gleam of sunshine, the glow of a yellow date book. One of the nurses, my constant shadow, gave me it to me. My particular shadow is as stiff as the cardboard cutout of a nurse, holding herself like a mountain oblivious to earthquakes, even as unrest radiates out from my agate eyes. She left the bright book on the scarred counter, walking briskly away from it with her military gait. I gathered it up eagerly and, so she would not see how much I wanted it, tucked it under my faded paisley gown, holding it flat against my stomach with casual fingers.

The next morning Sally told me the nurse was looking for it. The nurse must have forgotten she gave her planner to me, so I hurriedly slipped it under my lumpy pillow. I won't let her take the gift back.

"Hypocrite, hypocrite, Indian giver," I chant in my head as she questions me suspiciously about it, her shifty eyes darting around my narrow room.

"No," I tell her. "I haven't seen it. Maybe it was one of the visitors; they could have snatched it and disappeared before you noticed. Or maybe you gave it to someone and then forgot."

Once she is gone I cradle her planner in my arms. It is the treasure chest holding the greater gift. Inside the front cover is a crumpled sticky note with eight numbers scrawled in purple ink. The code for the ever-locked doors. This yellow book is the map that will take me back to David.

"He must have told the nurse to give it to me. I knew he would not abandon me here."

I stroll casually out of the tall glass doors, pushing the handle out with my sleeve so I won't leave any fingerprints behind. There's no way I will let them catch me and take me back to the twelfth floor.

Clarissa's stiletto boots, a size too big for my small feet, cluck along the cracked sidewalk and I wrap Noelle's leather jacket closer around me. The wind gathers behind me and urges me forward, another November leaf blown out into the world.

I follow the map inside my head to David's apartment. I grin as it towers above me, wanting to shout so the whole city can hear that I have come to rescue him. I picture David, the anxious prisoner. I am the conquering hero coming to save him from the oven breathing dragon. "Wait, who's the dragon? Dragon, dragon. No, Emily, don't think about that, focus on David. David. Dragon. David and the Dragon." I repeat this to myself, waiting for it to suddenly make sense, as I climb the stairs. The shifting boots make it tricky, so I have plenty of time to try and figure it out.

He won't open the door, so I keep knocking. "You have to be home so I can rescue you," I tell the empty, hopeless hallway.

Then, his angelic voice drifted up to me. I leaped down the stairs two and three at a time, soaring down to where I knew David was waiting for me at the bottom.

And there he was; David stood in the entry way looking up as I jumped down the last few steps. His hands clutched plastic grocery bags bulging with prepackaged food. A short, round woman was waiting behind him, and I waited for David to move. He would let her pass and then rush to me, dropping cans and boxes heedlessly, letting apples bounce and roll across the dark tiles, but David stood still.

"David," I said, "It's me, Emily. They released me today. I came to tell you."

He stooped slowly and set the bags down, straightened up to his lanky, ex-basketball star height. David took one cautious step forward.

"It's okay, just calm down," David said.

I wondered who he was talking to. His brown eyes were nervous and he kept looking back over his shoulder at the round woman frozen in the doorway even as he inched toward me. I could feel him trying to weave a web of words around me, holding me in place with soft, insistent phrases, but never using my name.

As the web grew, I felt a spider nestle in the tangled curls at the top of my neck. I shivered. I looked straight at the strange woman for the first time, meeting her owl eyes.

"Hi," I said. "I'm Emily and this is my David."

I could feel a smile spreading across my face as I sidestepped David, and walked toward her. I trailed my right hand along the wall, feeling the greasy wallpaper slide past beneath my fingers. Clarissa's (or were they Cassandra's?) boots echoed in the silence, along with ragged breathing.

I could rescue David now. I had found the dragon.

There are no windows in this room, no way to watch for David's return. They dragged me here, suits as dark as their souls; no one listened to my stories, my explanations. Now I am a prisoner again.

I have nothing to do but sit at the polished table that reflects a distorted face up at me; sit and think about David. Then he walked into the room and it is instantly brighter with him in it.

"David!" I said, leaping up and whirling across the room. However, he is gone before I can touch him, his blank face replaced by the unadorned walls. I sink down onto the cool floor, patterned skirt wilting around me like a stemless flower.

I clench my cold fingers and repeat David's name until I can see through the mirror to where David stands stiffly, arms folded across his chest to keep him from reaching for me. I catch his gaze and try to will him through the glass. "If I call him enough times, tell him the right things, he will come back. David always comes back."

Hours pass, and David is still so far away, separated by walls no words can break. From the stillness around me seeps the hum of violins. Somewhere, someone is playing Pachelbel's Canon. Da dun. Dun dun, I hum.

My mom watches my careful steps with a smile on her face and a gun in her hand, the same rust-streaked gun she held eight years ago to her crimson hair, after telling one last story.

David is waiting by the altar with a black robed priest who resembles my cousin Richard, same shiny hair and scarred

face, with hands that look as if they've never held a Bible before.

I run to David, as all my life I have been running, until I strike the wall with each bone in my body, my poor David-less body.

I am frozen and burning and falling awake as the Northern Lights erupt from beyond the Styrofoam-tiled ceiling.

"I tried to tell you a story," I sob. "I'm good at storytelling. Don't you believe me? Please David, you have to believe me. I love you. You know I could never have hurt you. Her, I could easily tossed into the overfull dumpster behind your apartment, but you David, you can let me out now because I will always protect you."

My words come through a waterfall of tears, my soul trying to communicate from underwater, miles out of depth of the sun. I sink into the scuffed floor, far from the sound of David's voice, left with only his pleading eyes: hoping, deceiving, loving, leaving.

"David. David!"

POEMS

Clam and Seed

Christina Busby

What a pearl she is --
My delicate, secret
treasure

I hold her soundless and still
between my fingertips
Her white silk
soothes me

My glimmering pebble,
We sit between strands of seaweed
The undertow
grasps us in its whirlpool arm
Bubbles dance and pop
as I cradle her
and we spin

My jewel,
My sacred gem
I thought of abandoning you (once)
among the grains of gray sand
I wanted to lose you
between the prints pressed
by the bare feet of lovers
The sun - a fiery, golden
eye - would bruise
your swirls
of white and silver

My virgin nacre,
My mother-of-pearl
You would not fit
as a bead on a string
You were never meant to adorn
the space between the collar bones

What a pearl --
Together we dipped our purity
into a glass of red wine

Let us dissolve there
Let us be salt or silver
They raised the glass of elixir

to the sky
and our juices

dribbled down the creases
of their lips

The drops
fell silent on our feet

Haiku

Benjamin Miller

In the desert sun
There is a stone that waits for
The breeze of night air

There was never song
As beautiful as the home
Full of memories

Underground Crowds

Brooke Sahlstrom

Thugs pulling chocolate bars from behind their belts
Trading amateur porn
Huddled in the back of a rickety metro

Wrapped in flesh colored corduroy years below her
Sneakers laced up tight
Not-so-crafty hustler tripped on the escalator

Camouflaged against the Soviet inspired cement
Ticket control hunts
Catching nearly innocent tourists in cold solid lines

Blazers rush toward the approaching train
Clutching briefcases close
Barely evading slippery fingers on the side

Four minutes of silence underground
Find your spot
Careful not to make eye contact with other lonely souls

Lights appear with a rush of cold air
Just in time
Drunkards can part ways before exchanging numbers

Crowds jam the stairs searching for smokes
Nicotine levels decreasing
Tensions rise as tourists block half a step

Heels reach ancient Czech cobblestones
Stumble slowly onward
Weaving under stars brighter than any child's eyes

Amnesia

Michael Tucker

To forget would be sweet Seraph's breath:
The end of days gone by at length
With no memory of grim conscious choices,
Or careless words coughed with hurried voices.

Many times wishing to undo
Thoughts, speech, and actions too;
Amnesia's touch offers this relief.
Erasing past pain or swollen grief.

Take the gift of this thoughtful thief
It presents to all an unmarked belief:
That this life need not be made
Of what was done or the heart displayed.

For one small sip of the river Lethe—
Able to enter Paradise, free—
Would negate and dam amounting sin,
And from imperfect Past—renewed—begin.

Tilted Universe

Rebecca Carlson

How can I walk in a straight line
When the axis of the world has tilted
When the sky whirls into the ground
And the trees weave and wander
Over the dreams lurking in the shadows
And spinning in all directions is the future
As it always circles around the past
Yesterday's oceans drowning tomorrow's

mountains

The sand smoothing away my footsteps
While the clouds fall from the sky
While the equator points north
How can I live a life undisturbed

Grief

Rebecca Carlson

Time heals all wounds
But what if time is dead
Slowly strangled to a stop
Leaving thunderclouds
Always hanging overhead
As the grey days fade into each other
And still the wounds bleed
Stripes across my happiness

Leviathan

Benjamin Miller

You sit in wait of my approach-
And scream
and scream
as I encroach.
In vile chamber
of mucous limbs
and bloody stews
The game begins.

Slaughter is the favored sport-
We play
we play
midst murky court.
The taking of life
befuddled with gore
snapped bones and sinew
our only chore.

And so we joust until by sword-
You die
you die
amid discord.
Victory fatal
in death's knell
our bout kept fuming
in endless hell.

Nonsense Syllables

Benjamin Fitzgerald

Life - a confusing conglomeration of miscellaneous shapes,
nonsense syllables, cardboard cutout moments.
Repetition, repetition, variation, repetition,
time and place, here and there, same as the last, just as before.
Go to work, sweat and bleed. Make love.
Smiling: peanut butter cookies and memories of home,
the inscription on Grandmother's tombstone - poetic, silent.
Time flashes by, days go on.
Nothing more, nothing less, the way it's always been.

Patience, Carefree, Happiness

Julia Payne

I'm not sure how much more I can take of this.
Those who find these virtues easy to obtain,
stretch my patience, blood rushing through my veins.
No, I don't want to follow your idea of happiness.
What you enjoy is far from mine, you and your filthy
righteousness.
How truly irritated I become when you preach at me-
Take you and your opinion away, you are the last thing I want
to see.
Please don't ever begin to think you know where I'm coming
from.
I run deeper than you can imagine-no, what's been said is done.
I've tried to listen, tried to place myself in your shoes.
I'm insulted and hurting, anymore more of this and it's my mind
I will lose.
"Patience, Carefree, Happiness?"
I'm not sure how much more I can take of this.

Solitude

Julia Payne

Heaven slips gradually and softly.
Into, and through the heart,
The voices caress the soul.
A sigh of relief. They fall.
The calming tone chills, smiles warmth.
The blessing.
The power of sound that brings voice to heart.
The dust lifted by a breeze.
Clean, cold, crisp air,
The rush of life inhaled.
Exhaled, the deepest pain.
Finally, My Heaven.

Falling Leaves

Monica Logan

Scuff. Crunch. Scuff. Crunch.

The wind tries to knock me over once again,
carrying with it stale red and yellow leaves.

Fall is finally here.

Teachers have started lecturing,
peers have learned your name,
professors have forgotten it,
and all the plastic-scented and slippery textbooks
are receiving their first cracks, tears, and coffee stains.

What is it about these
kinds of days that makes you want to just
sit and stare
out the window,
enjoying the way
the trees dance to the wind's howls?

I pull my soft, cotton hood
closer to my freezing cheek,
thankful there is no snow on the ground.
The clouds move with a kind of urgency that I have never seen
before.

Are they running from the dread of tomorrow as well?

As I sit back in the stiff wooden chair in front of my desk,
I can hear the faint pitter-patter
of the sprinkling rainfall outside.
With my windows open, the fresh, brisk scent of the new rain
invades my room.

Fall is the metaphor for death,
yet I see it more as a preparation for winter.

A cleansing for tomorrow.

Winter will be full of more complex subjects, final grades, and
a harsher cold.

So, for today, I will enjoy
the light wind,
the few raindrops,
and the harmony of nature
coming from each step.

I Sat at My Window Just After it Rained

Sabrina Williams

The clearing sky was now a bright blue;
For perhaps a few hours the downpour refrained.
Oh, why does the rain make me miss you?
The clouds pass by in gossamer wisps.
They move so quickly before my eyes,
Their journey above the tree tips.
In all their sadness each cloud gently cries.
How is it back home? Hot, I would hope.
For now all is calm here except for the water.
It flows in the street and from trees like it's pulled by a rope.
Oh, but home in California would be much hotter,
But those white wispy things in my sky and my dreams,
They keep moving by and in my mind I'm chasing.
Like them, if I keep moving I'll be home so it seems,
But as I watch the clouds my mind keeps racing:
Do I like it here and is home my home no more?
Do I like the great difference in weather?
Is it the heat or the rain I'm living for?
Why does my heart wonder which is better?
They are both now my home;
Both equal parts of my heart.
I think of the other when in one and alone,
But I miss both when I'm apart.

Face to Face

Zeke Fetrow

Indeed she was there.
A child,
A most gracious child.
For in her eyes shown life everlasting.
In her eyes, I saw a beautiful story.
I saw the sunrise and wept.
I saw the mountains and mourned.
I saw life and am compelled to tell the world,
Hope is alive.
Breathing,
And believing.
Just as she stood before me,
I stood before it.
Face to face with hope.
If I should stop believing for even a moment,
She should vanish.
Should I never again see her,
My comfort lies in knowing
That out there somewhere is a child with a compass on her
heart,
Proving that not all hope is lost.

Department: The Promethean, Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (2009-2010)

The Slink of Night Wetly Luminous

James Anderson

in the bent, fibrous sheen
of subtleties of sex and body,

whirling
wet through the whispered touch,
whirling the blades sing soft
while the night whispers through the fan
and I touch you I touch you
into you and the world is made

stark inceptions our eyes are javelins
made of the sun

we are distance into the light cracked all coal smoke
and lavender, we mean
the size of it.

We are privacy and moment
we are the soft of skin and the wet
lips licking us;

we the depth everyone
refers to, obliquely,
as they are otherwise unable;
we are the touch the whisper
through the blades.

I move
into you and the night
moves

a funnel of stars wetly
in my mouth crawling
into the wet to the soft

and the thigh
we each clutch
my thighs as strong
as your neck feels to me.

We are the terror
they smile brightly about
on bright days, smiling; we are
the deep of dark and the satin.

We are the force of vowel and voice,
we are mouthfuls of air and my tongue
through you
gives us
you

immaculate

You will be afraid into all
the referent realms, perhaps,
when I tell you we are
animate flesh ex machina
--perhaps that seems too enmeshed,

that I have superimposed too many
shades of created upon shades of experienced
actuals, but, my love,

I am building us
and nothing, not even the machine of time,
or the motion of the mechanisms and mincing meanings
of logic, which is the world
according to the crudely woken,
who are dreamless,

My Ocean

Zeke Fetrow

Deep and tranquil.
The waves soothing and caressing me to sleep.
My eyes grow heavy as the water glides across my skin.
Between my fingers and through my hair.
I lay in the sand, the tide washing over me.
Liquid beauty that runs through streams and creeks.
Even in the muck and grime,
Water shines iridescently glorious and pure.
But it's only my surface that sparkles.
For below my glimmering smiles and laughter,
The steady creeks and streams of my earth,
Lies an emptiness paralyzed in the fear of never realizing my
potential.
My own magnificence that the water so cleverly shows me.
For I am only a pond.
One day I will make waves as stunning as the ocean.
I will become as rich, deep and tranquil as the seas.
I will be teeming with life and energy,
Unrestrained by the comforts of my puddle.
I will rain down on the earth with a love that heals and soothes.
I will be a part of each and every being,
Protecting, surrounding, and providing.
Someday.
But until then I remain a pond.
Shallow and chaotic like a tiny sea in a storm.

not even their faith
not even their delusions
of an eternal deference
lifeless as all hell they call
normal, not even that

can cut
through this which is
physical and holy
and our sacred right.

This, my love, is the beginning
of an anthology of unreasonably revelatory
love poems which will
never apologize.

More than Color

Brittani Brown

A lot of people
think brown is brown
But...
It's all the shades
that
make you sit up
and take notice

So many hues
From dark to light
Smooth to bright

Beautiful butterscotch
Cute Carmel
Caring Cocoa
Mature Mocha
Chuckling Chocolate
Enthusiastic Ebony (!)
Persistent Pecan
Meaningful Mahogany

Even Bronze
- nearly golden in the sun

Like me-
Complex
Rich
Radiant

My Oatmeal

Monica Logan

I look down.
Gone,
it's all gone.

The warm paper bowl full of air
is light in my limp and disappointed hands.

With each bite of the steaming oatmeal breakfast,
the crisp image of my father
would explain the newest code he implemented
or the greatest development of the laser
or telescope he was working on.
The sweet maple aroma
brought to my quaint,
quiet,
and simple dorm room
the warm, husky voice of my loving and lovable dad.
The memory of his laughter
and his silly crooked teeth
filled me with the warmth and joy of my childhood.

Of course, in an instant,
he's gone.
An emptiness,
a hole
full of the longing of home, is left in his place.

I am alone with the remnants
of my morning meal,
my oatmeal.

Point of Depature

James Anderson

1. Smell the flowers on the tree
dying at their ripest, purplest
darkest. The white
of their stamens is filthy cream
skimmed from sea foam
of this ocean.

Walk to the outhouse: scent
squeezed dry rotten lemons of urine.
Urine in the rusted urinal
crystallizing on concrete.

Then a strain
of pure
desert
air.

How much I love life.
How it hurts.
How it describes itself to me.

2.
We beat into the night
me and the insects.
Tarantula wasps, beetles
cockroaches, cicadas, flying ants
geckos all of us
living a raucous prayer
o the sound
sounding the prayer of life.

We started to form
new words of our own.
Yes we were killers.

We gave life and that alone
made us killers

There was never before
such a language.

Then the sun rose on a white moon.

3.
White iris
taking inventory of
refusing to be
the night's soul.

Sickly hibiscus swallows
hope
for nakedness.

The sky is shining dark on the world
but the moon hangs in the way.

4.
White moon
at sunrise throat
of moon
burnished gold fluted bloom
of gramophone white
throat of moon
burnished gold
fluted bloom of gramophone.

O white moon at sunrise:
there is no song for you.

5.
The dark is made
of black rose petals
because you
have been sleeping with your eyes

open. Soon
the night will be blind
too.

The night and I work
to fill you up
to finish the job
like maniacs with blades
because we are maniacal blades.

6.
The handle opens me
to pain
like a pomegranate exposed
to air full of children,

yet it is not the blade
I give thanks for, strangely
it is the restraint of fingers.

7.
Your eyes
are big and beautiful
and your heart
so rosy pink
it lacks perspective.
You're so full.

I want to kiss your echoes,
your reflections.
You don't use them.

I won't bother to explain the hunger.

Entrapment by YOU

Brooke Sablstrom

you
YOU
vivid shriek in the dark
stumbling about half lit snow banks
leaving behind a trail of ashes
tip gracefully over another pint
spill a drop for me
please
you
haven't left the tangles of electronic spasms
internal shocks keep me separate
terrified to think of him
of you
you can never just be a man
just be someone else
vulnerable in a pile of leaves
shaking on the edge of a railing
teetering atop a steeple
just exposing enough to blush
YOU
YOU
snatched me up
cradled my weak limbs
stroked each gaping wound
until
I bubbled over
awkward glee surrounded
us
haunted by convenience
tortured with consequences
spinning
in the night wind

YOU

cherished whistling through the blinds

YOU

must apply the harsh elements

leave my jumbled neurons

float out

with the next

noreastern

YOU

shall not be forgotten

just leave in peace

Praha Pět

Brooke Sablstrom

I'm a stagnant body in motion
pushed along well traveled tracks
gliding amidst foreign crowds
exiting among rundown pastel structures
those reminiscent of New York's projects
just brighter
less industrial

balconies decorated with Soviet kitsch
dogs chasing the wind in grassy dunes
behind this attempted development
trains tagged by locals whiz past
shaking window panes
rustling laundry strung between buildings
threatening every dog in the area
challenging others to conquer nature as well

across the tracks
quaint cottages rest easy
behind fences shaded by native pines
accented with seemingly random poppies
mothers cruise by with fully loaded carriages
no city traffic to disturb their child's sleep

I'm quickly avoided with a slight turn of the wrist
my tousled appearance startles them
It seems that I meshed better on the other side of these tracks

Goodnight of November 4th, 2009

Zeke Fetrow

I'm lying in my bed, an empty desert of sheets and satin.
This spot, always and only yours, is empty tonight.
Pretending that if I want it enough you might appear, but knowing you will not.
It's the absence of your warmth that forces me to wake.
Every hue of your perfume still dances across the pillow.
The dream of your silky skin flutters across my fingertips, a tingle of sensation.
I am ever reminded, lying alone in my bed, how empty it is.
I cover every corner yet it remains empty.
I stretch and roll always finding nothing.
Your hair does not flow where your body does not lay.
Your hands cannot hold what is not beside you.
My bed cannot be the hurricane in a rainforest unless you are here.
Truly 'tis love when we lay together.
I feel it in every thread of every sheet, pillow case and blanket.
It's a love that fills this empty bed to the brim.
Spilling out into the night and blossoming on the floor to bless the ground we walk upon.
To imagine that such love belongs to me.
Belongs to us.
Us.
I like that word us.
Together.
Goodnight darling.
Dream of a beautiful sunrise where we both can lay.
And awaken embracing each other on the warm oceanfront sand.
Perhaps tomorrow night.
Yes, tomorrow night, you'll be here.

Looking at Myself

Cassandra Shaw

The eyes staring back are in two different places,
head scattered around the edge of the mirror.

Body and mind are disconnected,
at the throat,
leaning toward one another but not quite there.

The separated eyes wander to the
square torso on the right,
stick legs on the left,
feet separated by
a third foot of space.

The body is whole and yet scattered.
The illusion of function I can't live without.

Fluid Ripples

Brooke Sablstrom

Calmly sifting
through ideas, plans
minnows drift across my skin
settle on a crease
for a short moment
I begin to sink
immersed in smooth notions
slight kicks disturb the peace
bring air to my lungs
crack the lid
additional comparisons form

Khmer time slips unnoticed
as only a leaf floating down
causing slight ripples
no drastic changes on the surface
tradition goes as before
the depths conceal secret pasts
no need to plunge any further
simply continue living
with a few advances

Western time is meticulously kept
quickly passing one deadline
simultaneously creating another
as if trying to skip a rock
while scanning the beach again
already having pocketed two more
yet this new one might be better
the first is simply tossed in
crashing through layers of algae
confusing the entire ecosystem
but holding the belief
it will all settle better in the end

bright rays disturb
my rest
instinctively shock
my limbs
as if an alarm clock sounded
toppling me off
the curved log
splashing
into any tiny creatures below
rushing off
to the next appointment
twenty minutes past
the agreed upon time
keeping with the Khmer system
toppling me off
the curved log
splashing
into any tiny creatures below
rushing off
to the next appointment
twenty minutes past
the agreed upon time
keeping with the Khmer system

Colorless

Zeke Fetrow

There were some men with an awful plight,
The first was black, the second white,
The third was red, the fourth was yellow,
The fifth was green a grimacing fellow,
The sixth was purple, the seventh blue,
The eighth was red again but a darker hue,
They did not need another red, but they saw the first red was
dead,
Blue went for yellow but was shot by green, Revenge would be
the end it seemed.
Yellow exclaimed he saw white do it, white saw blues blood and
stepped right through it.
But from the side black had a knife, and with a swing took
yellow's life.
Green jumped up, a surprise attack, his ambush worked and he
killed black.
The other red tried to escape, but he too met a morbid fate.
Green killed him and white was next, but purple put an end to
this.
He killed them both and there he was, the last man covered in
all their blood.
As purple gazed he removed his coat, revealing the real joke.
Everyone knew but none would guess, underneath the coats, all
men were colorless.

An Ode to a Crucial Body Part

Michael Tucker

The most important inches of flesh
Any human can possess.
Flexible, bending, and versatile,
But easily stiffened in approval.
I gaze at this master of ensnaring
And am grateful for pleasures it allows me,
Although, sometimes it throbs and pulses in pain.
Sometimes it's immovable and numb.
I look down at on of the most important components
Of my body and wonder --
Where would we be without thumbs?

Hands Madly Open

James Anderson

Prison.

I wake to the concrete anger
of a grey cell, its blue steel door.
This cube of cruelly transluzed
and eternal bluish ice. I wake
to the Hate Factory.

I wash my hand and head,
the steel basin mirrors
my dripping, voided face.

I stand barefoot on concrete stained
with visceral shades of premeditated sin. I stand
in grey state-issue boxers
made of moth wings
and longing. I have to laugh
because it's funny how terrified I am.
And because of the concrete
reality and the skin of my feet.
There is no altar in this temple,
only rose petals in the jet engine.

I make coffee then wash my hands
in water tepid as my bones.

Massive and sick
with the vertigo of a single ant
I slump to my plastic chair
weak before this one day awake,
raw tendon-drawn-taut awake,
at the heavy foot of darkness.
A thin shaft of charcoal through my window,

daylight primes me hard, crowds me
with terminal virus: Life,
this astonishing. I swallow coffee,
I lean back, I close my eyes.
I remember last night I dreamt
I was with Amber Skye.

We were naked
in the ocean,
In my dream,
in language,
things swam below us, our breath
was ink. We exhaled stains
and sank.

I was still in my cell, still in prison, still
stilled, but above us, above the ocean's skin
an albatross turned circles in the grey,
we in its underworld. Light
clashed lemon fins on water's curve.

Amber Skye touched her collarbone,
looked at me with surprise. The sun, she said,
makes our shoulders walnuts
polished smooth in emerald liquid.
But her eyes were pale gold.

Something streamed from the albatross
so clearly from its silent wing,
we below made of shining.
We watched the light move.
We watched each other
watch the light.
A stingray brushed her wrist.

I wake from remembering a dream
to the sound of keys I would never touch.

I stand
I wash my hands, I arrange meticulously
the hygiene products on my shelf.
"Maximum Security" shampoo makes me smile.
I wake from remembering a dream
to the sound of keys I would never touch.

The cell door opens, we each of us
from taloned womb, state-issue
brogans laced tight as nerves,
ease into the cell block.
Downstairs, we gather in a clutch
all fists, braided hair and grease.
We stand together, fallen, American refugees,
citizens of the fourth world.

I love us, I must tell everyone
I FORGIVE THEM.
They will beat me bloody.
I smile and feel the rhythm.

We walk along the fence in single file,
a red-scarred sun anointing razor wire,
crowning cruel snarls in myth and dancing
red light. While eating a bowl of oatmeal
I watch a piece of steel shoved into a man's neck.
We walk back in line, single file,
roiling sun icing razor wire
in sky blood.

Back in my blue cell
I wash my hands, find my desk. I plunge
into belief without faith: I write
paper aircraft, folding them
eloquently into the sun.

I shudder--all the electricity of my body
has left me. I am two bright eyes in a shadow.
Damaged hands drag,
black as rotten sunflowers
across my face, behind my knees
where that soft skin is.

I no longer know
whether what I hold
is pen or blade.

Just keep cutting, I write,
trying to stay human, keep cutting
with cheap state razor blades.
Turn this blue apple into rose petals
here alone in the blue temple of my cell.

Lunch comes at 11:14. The brown paper bag is filthy. I shiver
I am
In deep.

I wash my hands, I open the bag to see green bologna juice has
soaked into the cookies. I cannot wash the food or my nausea.
I flush it all down the steel toilet,
and the swallowing
and the hunger
reminds me.
I don't know of what.

What happens? The light is in pain. Another march to the
chow hall; maybe someone is hurt, maybe I don't remember.
The day milks away. There is blood in the milk, cream
running from sunset's wounding.
Through the Plexiglass archer's slot
of my slender window, I see,
out beyond the fences, solitary
in the relentless attention of absence, of space,
a ginger gold pear cactus,
hands madly open. The night opens.
I shroud my freshly-shaved head. I fall
to the concrete, I fall with my words. We lie there unmoving
on concrete. I feel the stain and think. When I encounter
people I am afraid and ashamed by the galaxies in our eyes. So
I keep secrets: in my pocket the flesh of a very fresh
yellow lemon. I hunger for the light you spend
in reflection; I hunger for colors I alone have words for; I
hunger
for the white eyes of my sleeping daughter.
My silence is
hunger.
If Amber, or Paula, had come today,
the guards would have summoned me from my cage
escorted me along a fence
brought me to visitation, released me
into a mockery of release, to her at a table nervous faced
smelling cleaner and softer than forgiveness
across from me but machined
into some other and brighter cage entire.

We would have sat silent a moment,
clutched to each other by need. "What do you think, Baby,"
would have been the first
and only question, "crucified in a single day, or a lifetime in
prison?" I would have touched her soft
palm reader's map and thought of nails. Holding a book
not reading it, I am

in my cell, face to the wall, eyes
dark as fresh bruises my body
like a spider's web: all sense
and drawn out
delicate white genius.
I get up a last time
to wash my hands.

I lie back down,
deep down,
to suffocate
in air, sweetly, because the air is honey made of glass that
suddenly
eats itself in flame.

PHOTOS



Heart-Shaped Rock © 2010 Christina Busby



Remember Me as a Time of Day © 2010 Christina Busby



Lookout Tower © 2010 Brooke Sahlstrom



Tri Kamenovali Zombie © 2010 Brooke Sahlstrom



Was I Hiding or Just Waiting to be Found? © 2010 Brooke Sahlstrom



Let's Explore This Country Together © 2010 Brooke Sahlstrom



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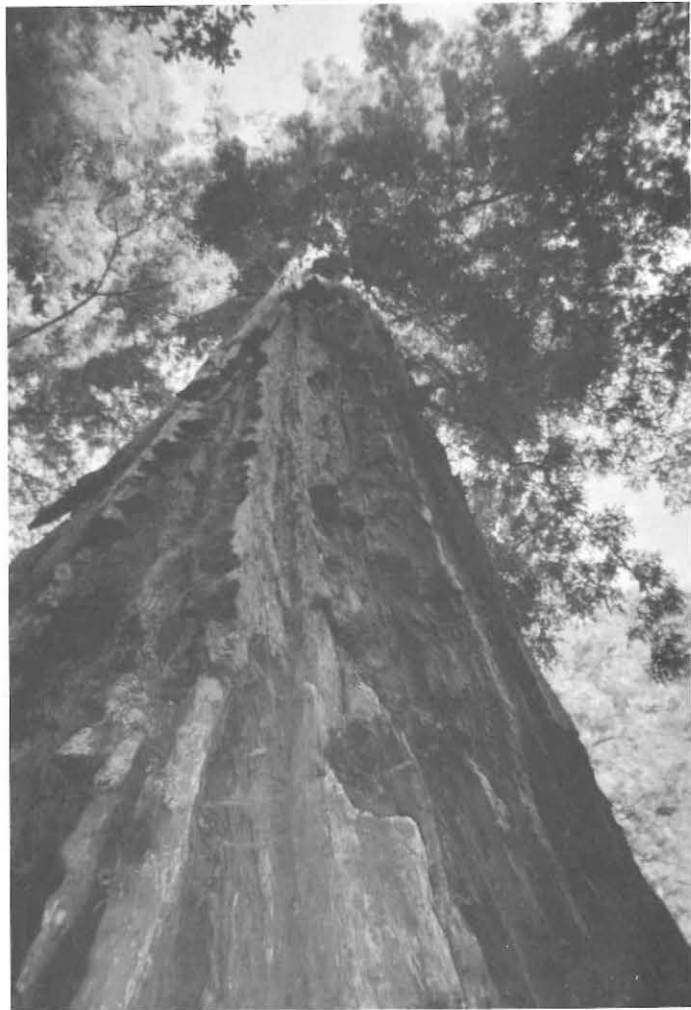
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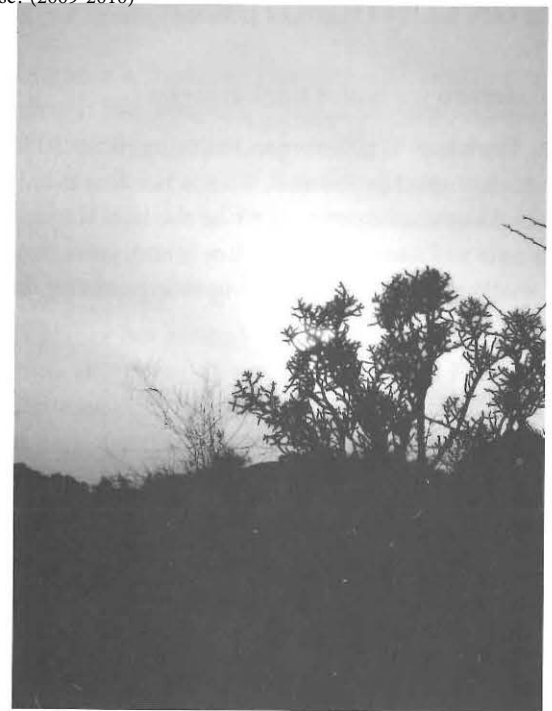
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Central Park © 2010 Sharon Stewart



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Joshua © 2010 Brie Sylvia-Clarno



Broken © 2010 Brie Sylvia-Clarno

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS:

James Anderson is a junior English major.

Katelynn Barnhart is a freshman majoring in Social Work and will potentially minor in Spanish. This is her first piece ever to be published but she hopes it won't be the last. Katelynn enjoys spending time with her family and boyfriend, going to the farmers' market, shopping, and going swing dancing. She hopes someday to live abroad.

Brittani Brown is a sophomore English major.

Christina Busby is a senior English major at Concordia and will be graduating in May 2010. In her free time, she enjoys writing, reading, knitting, painting, baking cupcakes, drinking wine, eating sushi, and playing guitar. She dreams of traveling the world, teaching English, publishing her first novel, owning a bundle of corgis, and having babies.

Becky Carlson is a senior English major and the ASCU President for 2009-2010. After she graduates in May, she will pursue a graduate degree in Library & Information Science. She is looking forward to spending even more hours in the library, trying to publish her thesis (a work of creative nonfiction about children's literature), and continuing to write poetry and short stories.

Zeke Fetrow is a sophomore at Concordia University. He is primarily a musician but has recently decided to try a poetic outlet. He writes mainly for his own entertainment and expression but greatly enjoys sharing his work with others.

Benjamin Fitzgerald is a sophomore English major. He likes to play guitar, old computer games, and Lord of the Rings RISK on Friday nights with Chris, Dan, and Jared. He enjoys writing both creative fiction and non-fiction. He read *Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris recently, which inspired him to develop his sense of humor as a writer. At present, his writing is focused towards this goal.

Chris Hix is a senior Business major.

Monica Logan is a freshman this year, majoring in English. She was born in San Jose, CA. Monica has easily adapted to the strange Oregon environment, especially the freezing winters and heavy snowfall. This is her first time having any of her work published. Her family is very proud, requesting six copies of *The Promethean* to give to the family and friends. Monica is honored to be accepted into *The Promethean* this year.

Benjamin Miller is a junior English Major at Concordia University who is also pursuing a minor in Musical Performance. He has been a member of the Promethean staff for two years and favors dark themes and imagery in his and other's stories. He is currently in the midst of constructing his Senior Novel-Thesis.

Kaitlyn Montague graduated from Concordia in 2009. Already well on her way to becoming a self-proclaimed "starving artist," she spends whatever time she can spare in Seattle cafes drinking overpriced mochas and penning one of several manuscripts. She's a pop culture fiend with a love for cult films, mythological references, inventive music genres, and comic conventions. Her current projects include: *Teucer*, the first half of her attempt to rework the Trojan War (from which "The Archer in Your Arches" is excerpted), *Nocturnal Melee*, the story of a comic-nerd gone wolf, and *The Suits*, where modern myth meets a Wonderland-saturated postmodernist culture.

Julia Payne Julia Ann A. Payne was born on May 4th, 1991 in Upland, California, and later, moved up to beautiful Oregon. Asian and Native American culture, climbing, reading, and rock n' roll were a few of Julia's favorite things as a child. Currently, she plays piano (11 years and counting) and continues to write for pleasure, as well as singing, volunteering, and meeting new people. She is looking forward to starting off her new major of Social Work, with a minor in music. * * *

Jeremy Richards is a senior English major.

Brooke Sahlstrom is a senior Sociology major.

Tia Sexton is a senior this year. She will be graduating with an Early Childhood Education Degree. Next year she is hoping to teach abroad somewhere to feed her wanderlust. I hope to one day settle down and teach in my hometown of Estacada, OR. She enjoys photography and collage based altered art. She uses many types of materials to create something new and unique.

Cassandra Shaw is the editor of *The Promethean* and is very active on the Concordia campus. As an English major and Music minor she has a wide variety of friends. As a current member of the Associated Students of Concordia University Executive team as the PR/Advertising coordinator she stays busy. With career goals focused on the literary world, hopefully in editing/publishing, she has greatly enjoyed the experience of editing a literary journal. She also likes the word 'as' when writing in third person as it makes her sound smart and sophisticated.

Sharon Stewart is a third year spontaneous transfer this year from Cincinnati, Ohio. She had never seen the ocean before, or those slugs that wash up on the sidewalk after the rain. She wants to teach English as a second language abroad one day, and in the meantime eats a lot of 'corndogs, reads the obituaries, and furthers her closet obsession with Mary-Kate and Ashley movies.

Salena Stopper is a junior this year and is currently majoring in Exercise and Sports Science with a minor in Psychology. She plans on becoming a sports massage therapist then later going into women's ministry. She enjoys many things including: spending time with people, being random, and watching movies. If Salena could be any kind of bug, she would be a spider- that way she could be creepy and no one would see her

Brie Sylvia-Clarno is a sophomore English major.

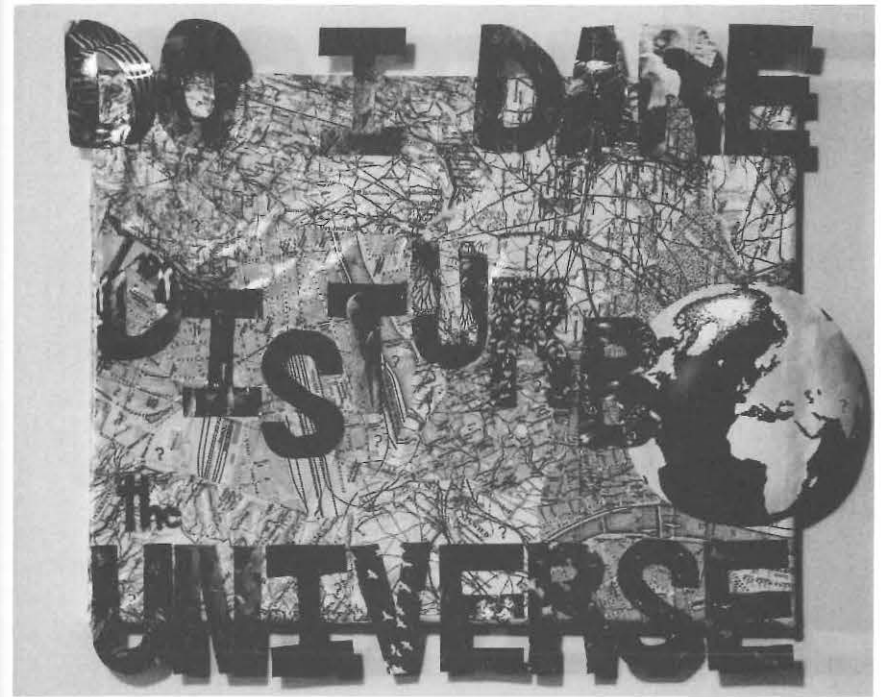
Michael Tucker is a senior Education major.

Joshua Urie is in his first year at Concordia as Student Service's Assistant for Residence Life and Housing. He has enjoyed writing for as long as he can remember; even double majoring in English and Philosophy during college. He is thrilled to submit to *The Promethean*, as this is one of the first literary journals to accept his work. Joshua grew up in Minnesota, but is excited to live in Oregon, especially Portland.

Jeriann Watkins is a sophomore English Major at Concordia. She is the assistant editor of *The Promethean*, Judicial Chair of ASCU, and she is pretty darn awesome to boot. If you would like to submit an application to be her friend, you are more than welcome, but the competition is pretty stiff. Her favorite word is "woohoot" and she loves cows, but doesn't feel bad eating them.

Vanessa Wendland is a junior English major with a psychology and a history minor. She stays involved on campus as the Editor of the university newspaper, *The Concordia Chronicles*, the President of Sigma Tau Delta, and as ASCU Secretary for 2010 & 2011. When she's not busy with school, she enjoys reading classic literature and writing- but never poetry. After she graduates from Concordia she plans to continue on with school until she official earns the title "Dr. Wendland".

Sabrina Williams is a freshman English major from California, a theme which she reflects in her poem. After graduation, she plans to remain in Oregon and pursue a career as a novelist and hopefully publish some of her many stories. When not writing or in class, she likes to draw, sing loudly and obnoxiously, and play the piano.



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The Promethean is a publication of the Associated Students of Concordia
University-Portland and the College of Theology, Arts, & Sciences

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