Draw your grass purple

Draw your grass purple,
Your sky forest green
Use words that aren’t real
It’s awesomely Seusseen

Read right to left
Walk backwards to class
Challenge yourself,
Break from the mass

-CASEY KERNS

**FORBIDDEN**

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37 WRITING CONTEST INTRODUCTION

38 WRITING CONTEST RESULTS
Still Perfection
Micaela Tucker

If you want to be her
Stop breathing
Exhale until flat

In the beginning
Two women were formed
From a rib and from mud

Woman of rib was cursed
To never be satisfied
With every breath

Desiring transparency
She stopped feeding
Her boned soul

Woman of mud
Burned into delicate
Glass

Breathless
Beautiful
Flat

All women were
Not
Created equal

Her boned soul
Needed
Needed breath and blood and flesh

Glass frame
Lived without want
Breathless
Futile attempts
To be perfect
Thinned the skin

Bones protruded
Every fucking bone
Bovine

Curse the day
Blood entered my veins
Preventing porcelain perfection

Women equal when broken
Glass shattered
Ribs still

Drugs Suck
Kimberly Kaoh

Drugs are an asshole. You think that trying things once can’t hurt, but it can quickly grab a hold of you and suck you in. Like when you’re curious about a guy, you’re not sure, but you think, “What the hell, I’ll give it a shot,” and next thing you know, you’re in a relationship that you pretty sure you don’t want to be in, but you’re bored and it keeps you entertained.

The first drug that I ever tried was acid, and I was 15. Most people start with weed and then the whole “gateway drug” thing gets them started on harder drugs. Not me, I jumped right in the middle. That night was a crazy night of hallucinations. Everything was moving, carpets turned into flowing water, people in pictures were moving around and talking to each other, there were little clowns running on the couch, and my friend was freaking out because he thought I moved his stove. I was convinced that the stove moved on its own. But this wasn’t the moment when I got hooked into my crazy relationship with drugs. That happened while I was working at Chuck’s Steak House.

Chuck’s Steak House is in Waikiki. I think this is probably the most interesting place I have ever worked at. When you walked into the restaurant, you could instantly smell the charcoal-like smoke and the steaks on the grill. It was so dimly lit in there; the only light that enables you to see comes from candles that are on the table and a few lights in the back for bigger parties. The bar was made to look like a tiki hut; there is bamboo on the bar and a little brown, grass-like roof above it.

Our boss was almost never there, which made it so much more fun! I don’t think I have had any other job where my best friends all worked with me. There was Tara, Tiff, and Sheena, who rotated between hostess and cocktail waitress; Aunty Jess and Uncle Julio were the waiters; and the cooks, who would always send food to the bar when they knew I came
to work stoned and in return I would send them a beer back. I was the bartender, so being at work stoned didn’t take too much effort.

Most of our customers were tourists. The majority of them were either in the military or they were Japanese and didn’t speak English. This meant that they didn’t know about leaving tips or that it was rude to snap your fingers at your waiter. Aunty Jess was very quick to let them know that this was rude. She would walk up to their table, glare, snap her fingers to them and say “NO!”, like they were puppies that needed to be taught a lesson.

Aunty Jess is crazy. Seriously crazy. But she is beautiful. She is tall, with the longest, skinniest legs in the world that seem to go on forever, and curly brown hair that falls a little past her shoulders. She has big brown eyes and a petite, pointy nose. Tourists would ask her to take a picture of them at the table and she would give them her sparkling smile and hand the camera to either me or Tara. Then she would jump in back of them and flip off the camera. This was before everyone had digital cameras, so if you were ever in Oahu and had a crazy waitress ruin your picture ... I’m sorry.

One night I was bartending and doing what I do to entertain myself, taking shots of tequila with Sheena, topping off ALL drinks with Bacardi 151 for fun, and running back and forth to Tara to just talk. Nothing really interesting was going on, but then Aunty Jess tells me to meet her in the bathroom. Since the restaurant is in a hotel, we have to use the bathroom that’s by the pool. It always smells like chlorine and has a muggy kind of feel to it. I go in the bathroom stall with her. It’s cramped, and it’s hot. I’m starting to get irritated.

Me: “Whhhaaatttttt?????”
Aunty Jess: “Sniff this”
She pulls out a key and digs into a tiny bag filled with white powder and holds the key up to my face, which I’m trying not to move.
Me: “Shutthefuckup”
Aunty Jess: “Just SNIFF IT!”
I really don’t want to, but I’m afraid I’ll be trapped in the bathroom stall forever with Aunty Jess.
Me: “Fine”
I sniff it, but it quickly falls out of my nose. Oops.
Aunty Jess: “Damn it! You need to close your other nostril, then tilt your head back. Here try again.”

Really?!? I feel like we’ve been in the bathroom stall WAY too long for two people to be in a stall together. I try once more. This time nothing falls out, and then I get the “drip.” That slow, chemical drip that oozes down your nose and coats your throat and fills your mouth with that chemical taste. I don’t get it. Is that it? Gross.
Aunty Jess: “Yay!”
Me: “Can we get the fuck out of here now?”
She finally lets me leave my temporary prison and we go back to work. About half way back to the restaurant it hits me. HARD. Oh my geezy. I am hyper, but extremely happy. I get back to the bar and I’m talking up a storm with everyone, and I mean everyone. If you were within hearing distance of me I was either saying “HI!” or talking to you about whatever was popping into my head. I was REALLY happy and having A LOT of fun.

Someone should have told me that cocaine is an expensive drug. Well, at least in Hawaii it’s expensive. Six months after my cocaine virginity was taken in that bathroom stall, most of my paychecks go to blow. The fact that my drug dealer has a crush on me doesn’t help either, just means I’m getting more for free. When I meet up with him to pick up, he always leaves a little “present” for me. The dumb thing is that I actually have to look for it. He doesn’t leave it in obvious places, which I guess is smart, but I don’t like randomly finding bags of blow in my car. LET ME TELL YOU! It is quite shocking to pick your mother up, and right before she gets into your car, you find a baggie tucked under your passenger floor mat.
My little affair with cocaine has now turned into a full on relationship. I have turned almost all of my friends on to it and most of our nights are spent at the beach, in my car, watching the waves crash on the shore, chopping lines on a cd cover. I love this drug so much because I can actually express my feelings! Finally! I don't keep things in anymore; if a thought runs through my head it comes out of my mouth like uncontrollable vomit. If I don't like you I'll tell you in the nicest way why I don't like you.

One night I am high, and I mean SUPER high. My nose is dripping and I keep sniffing to keep it all up there. My head is buzzing with thoughts and my eyeballs feel like they're dried out 'cause I keep forgetting to blink. I am at the park with my friends, just smoking cigarettes, doing blow and talking. It's another warm night; it's dark but everything is coated in a dark yellow light from the streets. There are a few guys here that I've hung out with before but have absolutely no interest in. One of these guys comes up to me and we're talking: the whole time I have a tissue with me because my damn nose is running like a leaky pipe.

Strange Boy: “You're so pretty, but I think it's so unattractive when I see you like this.”

Me: “Well you're NOT pretty, and I think you're always unattractive when I see you. So I guess we're even.”

Oops, word vomit again. I give him the biggest, fakest, coked-out-of-my-mind smile. Now my head is running: Oh shit. Was that mean? Nooo. I don't think it was. Was it? Where's Tara? I should ask her. Is that her? No that's a garbage bag. HAHA! Where the fuck is she? It is awkward after my vicious word vomit, so I quickly turn around and walk away looking for Tara.

Strange Boy: “You’re so pretty, but I think it’s so unattractive when I see you like this.”

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About two years into my cocaine habit, my friend Amanda tells me that she thinks I have a problem. I've known Amanda since I was in 6th grade. She's half Japanese and half White. In Hawaii we call that "hapa haole." She's a bit on the chunky side, but has long blondish-brownish hair and beautifully deep green eyes. Her mouth always looks like she just ate something sour, and when she's upset she screams. Not like she's yelling, she actually lets out this scream that makes you think someone is being murdered. I hate it when she does that.

Me: “Whaaaat?? What makes you think that?”
Amanda: “Hello!! The other night me and GJ were at your house and you were so tweaked out we couldn’t even watch T.V.!”

Oh yeah, I forgot to apologize to her about that night. A few nights ago Amanda and GJ came over to my place and as usual, by the time they got to my house I was already high. Really high. We were sitting in the living room, they were watching t.v. and I was doing lines on my table. Eventually it got later and I got higher.

Me: “Amanda can you turn down the volume? It's super loud.”
Amanda: “Ok.”
Five minutes pass by.
Me: “Can you turn it down some more?”
Amanda: “Oook.”
A few more minutes pass by.
Me: “Um.....turn it down more. I think my neighbors can hear it. I don’t want them coming over here pissed.”
Amanda: “KYM! If I turn it down anymore we can't hear anything!”

Me: “Wewww!! Then put it on mute and turn on the subtitles!” (Another coked out smile)
Amanda: “Really?!”
Me: “Yah” (Smile)
Ok, so I’ll admit that I might have a drug problem.
My solution to this is to move away. Away from here and away from the drugs and the friends who I do the drugs with. Sounds good to me. Where should I move to? California isn’t my favorite place, plus I have family there that I would eventually end up punching out. Everyone says that Washington has a lot of rain. Don’t really want to go there. But I also want to be as close to Hawaii as I can; I hate plane rides so the shorter, the better. Oregon? Never been there before. I guess it's Oregon!

I get to Oregon late one night in January. My dad flies in from Taiwan with his girlfriend to help me settle in, since I don’t know anyone up here. They’re staying at a hotel in downtown Portland and I’m in my new apartment
in Beaverton. The air is COLD! I have never felt air this cold before! I can actually see my breath! I instantly think of that movie *Cool Runnings*. I stand out on my lanai and look at the sky. It's cloudy, but I like it, and I like how the air feels clean and crisp. I brought my dog Meelo, and my cats Leo and Kittay up with me. We're all a bit freaked out. We settle on the mattress my dad bought and cuddle up. Fuck. I wish I had some blow right now.

The first three days are spent looking for a car, getting my room set up, and buying stuff for the kitchen. On the fourth day, my dad tells me that this weather has made his girlfriend suicidal. Shut the fuck up. So the fifth day is spent getting the car because my dad and his girlfriend are leaving that night. I end up getting a used, white, Volkswagen Buggy. At least it runs. I miss my GTI. I'm not sure how I make it through the first few days driving around Beaverton without a GPS. I get lost... A LOT. Eventually I go on Craigslist and find a job with Cirque Du Soleil working in the VIP tent. I love this job. I love the people I work with. I have no clue that my addiction to drugs is about to get much, much worse.

If the Personality is Housed in the Stomach

Benjamin Miller

~If the personality is housed in the stomach~

-And not just if-

*you are what you eat*

(BUT IF YOUR MOOD SWINGS ONE WAY WHEN FULL)

...or the other way if...

[ ]

<thenwhatcanyousayabout>

“Fat People”? 
Unrelenting

Jeriann Watkins

I am the biting wind.

I bear not the comfort
or subtleties of a summer breeze.
I will not flirt and flit about,
or be gently pushed away when you tire of me.

You may try to move on
but I am not easily escaped.

I lie and wait those frigid nights
outside your door,
lunging as soon as you emerge.
I spring for your vulnerabilities.

Feel my breath upon your neck,
your exposed ears, cheeks, nose.

I attack without mercy,
begging your acknowledgement
but you continue briskly
until you reach your destination.

Though you ignore me, you feel my presence,
a deep chill aching in your bones.

A single glance through a window,
at the leaf-less trees,
with frozen squirrel corpses beneath them
will make you recall my icy touch.

I will not be forgotten.
fading into a haggard grey. He was aging faster than he should have.

Finally, she left him. One day it was business as usual, the next she found someone new. Spenser was his name, I think. Spenser was everything her former partner was not. A newer, improved model. And though it sounds harsh, we all understood what she was thinking when she left. Spenser was someone who had much more appeal and worth than poor Alejandro did.

*******

Alejandro is what I call him, since he doesn't like his old name. He can't ask why I named him that. I would lie if he ever could. I would tell him he was named after a genius poet or a spectacular artist, or someone who was a complete bad ass. I would never tell him that I heard the name in a bad Lady Gaga song.

I was with him when I heard it. We were driving somewhere together, but I don't remember where. I had been trying to think of a good name for him, something to call him to show that he was officially mine. That song came on the radio and it just clicked. I don't even know what she was singing about, I just heard his name and it was official. Alejandro: interestingly odd. Alejandro the exotic. Alejandro the magnificent. Alejandro, Alejandro, Alejandro.

My Alejandro.

*******

When it was first suggested that we be together I almost laughed. I held it in because I still felt sorry for the demolition of his train wreck relationship that I had witnessed. But my sympathy wasn't strong enough to actually say yes. I had standards that were much higher than the likes of him.

But he was persistent. I'm not sure how the idea of him and I even came about, but suddenly there he was. Relentlessly optimistic. He wove stories of the life we could have together. The places we could go. The experiences that we could share, just the two of us. Eventually, I reluctantly surrendered.

*It's better to have something than nothing, right?*

And when he came to me on that first warm night, that night that made him officially belong to me, I suddenly realized that we were made for each other. When I walked down from my apartment to meet him on the sidewalk, I was unexcited and unimpressed. But when I saw him, I forgot about his past. I forgot about my reservations. It was just the two of us, together. Both strangely broken, in our own ways. So unalike, but somehow belonging to each other anyway.

And the rest was history.

*******

But even the most precious aspects of our life can lose their meaning once the demands of daily life become enshrouded by the mundane. Alejandro became less and less important in my life until he wasn't really a factor at all. Now he was just a convenience. I only saw him on the weekends, if I had time. I only acknowledged his presence if I was lazy and didn't feel like cooking, so I would go to him and he would take me out to a restaurant. If I wanted a companion to go shopping with, I would make him go to the mall. I ordered him around like he was my servant rather than my partner. And he just took it. He waited patiently for me to notice him—even if it took hours or days. Even if it took weeks.

He would only go where I told him to go. He would stop exactly where I instructed him to do so. I became tyrannical with how much power I had over him. I demanded everything that I possibly could, without ever considering his feelings. I barely allowed him the most basic of needs. And he let me. Like with all of the other girls that he had taken out before, he was powerless to take control of his situation. Our union was doomed to be a repetition of all of his past relationships. The only difference was that I was addicted to the power that I had come to possess. It was my first serious relationship of this magnitude and I was not willing to give it up or throw it away as easily as the last girl who had had Alejandro. I was completely and fully committed to this uneven partnership. I would never let it go. I would never let him go.

I never expected that he would let me go.

*******

I remember our last day together because it started off completely irritating. Infuriating weather, annoying people, aggravating music. We were driving to my school, late as usual,
when it happened. A skinny white girl was on the radio singing about how she partied like P. Diddy. The raindrops slapping against my windshield forced me to slow down with the rest of the agonizingly slow traffic. Just Alejandro, himself, every noise he made, every movement that he attempted, pissed me off. I remember vocalizing my anger, just before it happened. I don't recall exactly what came out of my mouth, just that I spewed out a string of insults that consisted of how much better I knew I was, how much he didn't deserve my time, how much I thought he was worthless.

Which is more deplorable about my behavior? The fact that the last thing that he ever heard from me was ugly, hateful words twisted together for the purpose of hurting him? Or the fact that it had become such a habit to belittle him that I am still unaware of exactly what I said?

****

He had been acting strange all day, but I chose to ignore it. I blamed his own incompetence before I even considered that there might actually be something seriously wrong with him. I was much too consumed with my own problems that seemed so important at the time.

I didn't even realize he was in trouble until he was already gone. One moment he was there, silently trying to push through my verbal assault, trying to survive until we reached our destination, and the next moment he was gone forever. There was no coughing or gasping for air, no visible struggle for consciousness and life. He just stopped. I watched as the life was snuffed out of him as if someone had flipped off a switch. His body was an empty shell of what he used to be.

Everything stopped as I watched him die. I couldn't focus on the traffic outside of the vehicle, only on him. Everything had become silent—I couldn't hear the static of the radio any longer or even the familiar rumble of the car engine.

Alejandro, what have you done?

Three lanes later on the freeway, I managed to pull over without even realizing how I did it.

Alejandro, what have I done?

I struggled to unfasten my seatbelt and stumbled out of the car. I frantically tried to think of something, anything, I could do to save him. But there was nothing.

Alejandro, please don't leave me!

Cars rushed past us, swirling up wind and kicking pieces of biting gravel that bounced off of the cold, dull metal of my vehicle. No one stopped to help us. But maybe it was better that way. There wouldn't be any witnesses to my nightmare. And besides, no one could have saved him. No one could have saved me.

*****

Eventually reason returned to me and I began to realize that I couldn't just sit there on the side of the road, collapsed onto a corpse. I made the call that everyone is always afraid of making. I waited for the men who everyone is always afraid of one day waiting for. I'm not sure if it took them seconds or hours to arrive, but when they appeared they weren't much comfort. I didn't have the answers to the "how" and "why" questions they asked. They didn't have any real answers for me, either.

But how could I explain to them what happened? How could I admit to being a murderer? Because that's what I was. I killed Alejandro. I murdered him slowly, through months of neglect and abuse. I enjoyed ensnaring him in the web of mind games that gave me the power and left him as a broken victim. I loved the power so much that I didn't realize how fast his life was deteriorating until it was much, much too late.

*****

When had I become such a monster? Memories swirled through my mind, suffocating me with guilt and regret. Alejandro taking me to a weekend trip to the coast. Alejandro sitting with me at the drive-in. Alejandro carrying me through snow, rain, or any sort of horrible weather to get me where I needed to go.

Alejandro, I'm so sorry.

But as they prepared to move his body, I knew that my apologies meant nothing now. He was gone. I was finally the powerless one in the relationship. He had left me. He was free and I was forever trapped in his memory.

I watched as the tow truck carried my beloved Toyota Rav 4 away from me forever. And though I might one day
move on and get a new vehicle to replace him, Alejandro was my first car, my first love, and my heart would belong with him forever.

Paper Heart

Ciara Laing

My heart is made of paper,

Formed into a three dimensional shape.

My blood wells up inside

Oozing through the thin membrane

Feeding the wormy veins that will pump it through.

When I let her in

The paper will become soggy.

Soon it will be nothing more

Than a pile of mush

Like the guts of a Halloween pumpkin

Folded up in last week’s newspaper

And left to rot in the garden.

She will destroy

My heart.
Honora

Christopher Marin

War again, recession.
Making meaning this time by importing
Joie de vivre: turning the suburban doyennes
Of facials and Costco sales into hearty
Laughers, hardy, posed arms akimbo.

Editing the Mattel-
Prototypical Anita Ekberg,
The urban Venus; vying instead for
Gamboling country life,
Wifeliness.

Like fatuous, pederast,
Would-be Adonis:
How pleased he was
To be the Queen of May, to be a
Dervish before Bob Dylan, to om
For inflammatory monks.

Chakras and anodized steel in his
Saffron-polyester wake. The brutal
Pan-yogi and his hypocritical castanets.

Contretemps, cavorting while there are drones
In Sadr City; the
Long in tooth and fulsome.

Internal Overload

Jeriann Watkins

After seventeen years of idyllic childhood, the core
of Kara's Stepfordian world was trembling. As the family sat
down for their weekly Sunday picnic, lightning flashed in her
mind. Thunderclouds of thoughts and confusion clogged up
her contemplating cerebrum. In the terror of this tornado,
Kara did not know what to do. All the structure that had been
established throughout her life was crumbling. It had begun
with a pizza and ended with Kara walking in on her mom and
the delivery man. There was no doubting what she had seen.

The question was, what was she to do? Obviously, her
mom was willing to keep up the wholesome family charade, so
who knew how long this façade had been in place? Was this the
first time she had leapt off her pedestal of integrity and into the
arms of someone who was not Kara's father? Tears welled up in
Kara's eyes and threatened to turn the tornado into a hurricane.

Quickly excusing herself, Kara rushed to the restroom.
As she reached the ill-managed personal waste disposal area,
the tears finally released themselves, adding to the questionable
puddles on the ground. The gears in her head whirred furiously,
and the complex pulley system that was her nervous system
overloaded from conflicting messages. Kara's body hit the
ground.

The cold, grimy concrete did not help soothe the
hormonally imbalanced teenager. The longer she sat there, the
more she could feel the public restroom bacteria creeping into
her body. Choosing misery with family over a lonely death by
bad hygiene, she rose, composed herself, and walked back to the
picnic site. She would join her mom in this deception for now.
But eventually, she would have to figure out what to do about it.
Broken Silence

Ciara Laing

Three years old
A joyful little girl
dances in the grass

Four years old
That girl, in the dead of night
Soiled sheets tell of innocence lost

Six years old
Her dreams turn to nightmares
Images of his naked body plague her mind

Nine years old
The girl meets drugs
She finds relief in the vibrant colors and breathing trees

Twelve years old
Mom is low on money
Trades the girl to her ex for milk and a loaf of bread

Teen years
Girl spends time in and out of JDH
Becomes an artist with hair at eighteen

Thirty-three years old
Supple cheeks begin to sink, two-toed crow lands near eyes
She becomes a mother

At age 56 he dies
His drugs laced with mercury
His daughter his drug dealer

Fifty-two years old
Woman reveals her past to her daughter
Vomit floods her daughter's mouth
She will never forget

Head © 2011 Ben Fitzgerald

http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol19/iss2/1
An Essay on Futility

Michel Sands

Alas! When all bodies, friend and foe, have fled the room of my presence
All that there persists is the lonesome screech of my own dainty voice.
Contemptible sound.
Were the sound of a heavy heart dragging across the parlor any choicer a tune
I would right away buy the album and play it incessantly until I drifted off to my shallow sleep.

Unfortunate that I must suffer the gnashing of one's withered teeth.
The chords are dissonant and the pitch flat, a worthless instrument the mouth is;
Gaping like a puncture wound and babbling forever its mucksome bile.

Oh, that all tongues were pens and all lips parchment.
Then silence we'd all have and understanding then,
When a lover can discern the true intent on one's lips.

Only I have silence in this speechless solace.
Woe to you who seek it-
For it is gold when you are kept from it,
But lead when you have nothing but.
In the Dirt between Earth and Hell

Ciara Laing

Honestly, in all fairness, this is a hard story to tell. Where do I start? Where do I end? What do I include and what do I leave out? I’m afraid that I won’t be able to portray these characters fully and entirely honestly. I don’t want you to be lost when reading my life. I don’t want to deny the other points of view.

November 2007.

The lead ball strikes me square in the chest. I’m breaking, shattering into millions of little glass shards. I lie on my bed safely tucked under a mountain of fluffy, feathered blankets, grasping my knees to my chest, restraining the sobs that will surely break me apart and reveal the raw, vulnerable person hidden inside. I rock myself back and forth, whispering. It’ll be okay... you’ll be okay.

I drag myself out of bed, uncurling my body, slowly letting my outer shell crackle to the floor. A roll of clear tape sits on my rotting plum purple desk. I reach for it and press it close to my body as if it is the last thing I will ever touch. Frantically, I begin to gather the pieces of my shell and tape them into place. I stand in front of the mirror and listen to my thoughts, trying to understand.

How could I let her do this to me? I swore I would never let it happen again. Why did I let her see me cry? Why did I yell back? What happened down there?

What happened was she expected me not to cross the line. I cross the line with her a lot. I am a teenager, 16 to be exact. Do you know how hard that can be? She is more than twice my age, but sometimes I feel she is the same age as me and always will be. I’m so afraid I will end up like her. I have to swear to her that I won’t end up like her. I tell her I will never be awful to my husband for no reason, I will never accuse him of things he couldn’t possibly have done. I will never be so insecure, lonely, and rage infested. I won’t let rage take me over the way cockroaches take over a home and nest inside
everything. How could I not swear that I will be better than her? How could I not scream in her face until I felt like my lungs would explode all over the wall in a bloody mess, that I would never leave my children alone with the cow of a neighbor who had walls that stunk of mold and children with lice? I had to say those things didn’t I? I had to swear that I would be different and better. She had to know how horribly she was hurting me, right? How afraid I was. She doesn’t care about me though; everything was and always will be about her.

December 2007.

“You know what? Screw you!”

Shit! I went too far. Crap, crap, crap! Run faster! I have to get up the stairs, slam the door shut, and hold myself against it as if it is the last thing I will ever do. It probably is the last thing I’ll ever do.

Crack! Shit my face! I wasn’t fast enough! She is able to get her cold, rough hand around my boney ankle. Slap – right across my face.

“Get off of me! You’re fucking crazy”

“I’ll show you fucking crazy,” she screams as I try to squirm away, but she pulls me back to the ground, pulling my hair so hard it comes out in chunks.

“Get off of me!”

I push her away and crawl quickly into my room, blood dripping from my nose. She pounds on the door in a furious rage.

“Get the fuck out of my house,” she screams as her fist literally comes through the door.

“You can’t kick me out, this isn’t even your house, and it’s in Dad’s name. He’ll never let you kick me out,” I scream back.

“You wanna bet? Pack your shit and get out!”

Tears streak my face in black lines. Stupid mascara. I will escape this hellhole. No one deserves to be treated like this. My room is a giant mouth that has chewed up my possessions, swallowed them, half digested them, and then puked it all back up. I start repacking my clothing first; she won’t get anything of mine. Rummaging through the chaos I spot the stained glass butterfly she gave me a week ago; broken, shattered into hundreds of little shards. I love butterflies, she knows that.

“I wanted to wait to give this to you until I thought you were ready. I think you’re ready,” I read it out loud.

“Dreams are which the mind conceives, the heart desires, and the soul believes.” I love it!

I collapse on the floor, sobs rocking my body so hard I must be shaking the whole house. Why doesn’t she love me? I love her. After a few more minutes I drag myself up and start packing again. Where will I go?

February 2008.

I hate it here! Less than two months I’ve been here, living with a family I barely know, and I’m already crawling my way back to my mother. I’m ready to apologize for things that will never be my fault. I have no other choice. Last week I found myself in these people’s basement office, cornered, door blocked. Kathy, the mother of the household said, in so many words, get food stamps or get out. Thanks. So much for being “welcome to stay” until I got a dorm at Concordia in August. Fucking liar.

I find that it’s okay though, I want to be home. Home, where I can have my own room with a dresser. It would be so nice not to live out of a suitcase anymore. Home, where I can use whatever kind of soap I want because we actually scrub our shower and tub. Last week Jeff, Kathy’s husband, told me to not use my green Dove soap because it was turning the tub green. Well, if you believed in cleaning products, that wouldn’t be a problem. Huhhh… it would be so nice to look in the refrigerator and not find food that expired three months ago; to be in a place that is clean and fresh. I certainly won’t find anything good here.

May 2008.

“Your attitude hasn’t changed at all.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your fucking mouth, that’s what!”

Why am I here? Oh, right, because it’s the only place I’ve got. She’s always going off. I never do anything right. My B’s aren’t A’s. The dishes didn’t get done the second she asked me to do them. I didn’t hear her calling me from the couch downstairs; probably because the T.V. is blaring so horribly that it sounds
like the action is happening right in my bedroom. Why doesn't she love me?


Standing outside, the icy rain pounding me into the ground, I realize this is officially the worst night of my life. To think just moments ago I was a fairly happy 17-year old girl. Just ten minutes ago my mother came running at me in the kitchen like a stampede of elephants. Her giant pear shape filling my vision until her tiny, button nose was but an inch from mine. I can still smell her smoky breath. I can still feel holes being bored through my brain and out the back of my skull from the raging stare of her beady green eyes. I thought to myself for a quick moment, Why does she buzz off all her hair, it isn't attractive. She screamed at me in that husky voice of hers that had developed from 35 years of smoking, "He's not your father!"

What? He's not my father?
"You're lying!"
"No, I'm not. I didn't want to tell you like this, but you were being a bitch."

My heart falls into my stomach, sears and decays in the acid.

The tight hug my dad gives me as I shed bitter tears of disbelief doesn't console me. I escape out the back door. I think I will just lay here in the grass until the rain pounds me all the way to hell. At least there it will be warm. I mean, it can't get much worse now. Maybe in hell I won't have to live with Rage. Rage doesn't run on a schedule. It comes and goes as it pleases, leaving the door open on a winter night – allowing the cold air to burst through and slap you in the face. I could be having a perfectly wonderful day, but I know when I walk through the front door I will be walking on eggshells. If too many of them crack, Rage will lift its heavy body off the couch, out from in front of the T.V., and come barreling straight toward me – a football player ready to tackle. Rage will throw the remote at me if I interrupt its show, and then curse me to hell. Rage will pull my bedroom door off its hinges and leave a huge gouge in the low ceiling above. Rage will pull my hair, slap me, and degrade me until I am completely destroyed. In the end, Rage always seems to win. In the end I am always defeated, tired, and hopeless. I'm done living with Rage.

When I'm done feeling sorry for myself, I peel myself off the grass and head inside. I don't say a word as I drag myself up the stairs to my door-less room. I change my clothes and crawl into bed. Hopelessly, I toss and turn waiting for sleep to take me away from this nightmare. Maybe that's all this is; it's just a bad dream. I'm just dreaming.

I wake the next morning with a foggy brain and puffy eyes. Was I crying? Why was I crying? I walk down stairs and my mother is cooking breakfast.

She says nothing. The silence strangles me until I can no longer bring in air.

I run into the bathroom and lie on the cold green tiled floor. Why doesn't she love me? I'm alone, so alone. I'm done. Where's the razor?
Hope is Right Behind Us © 2011 Matthew Lai

Pensive © 2011 Megan Smith
Solar Lovemaking
Benjamin Miller

Flirtatious dancing
Blown kisses of light
Lunar cleavage tempts Solar tongues.
Orbit around
Earthly maypole,
Terra voyeur in awe.
Lips skim with
Heightened radiance
Riding brilliance
Gyrating Gravities Escalating To-
-Having Afterglows
Chided sighs
Idly departing,
Until the next
Celestial tryst

Apathy
Vanessa Wendland

She has waited her entire life to feel something.
Anything.
She tries to feel God by raising her arms, closing her eyes, and singing.
Nothing.
She tries to feel love for the first boy who confesses.
Nothing.
She tries to feel fireworks so she kisses the next boy who doesn't.
Slobbery lips don't count for much.
Next she lies
then cries
then fries
her brain.
But bad rhyme schemes don't create emotion.
So she purges herself of this craving.
And hopes that
someone
someday
will make her feel
Every Thing.
Because they understand her in less than 100 words.
A letter from Joriann Watkins, 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.

This year, we decided to use the same concept we used last year; the Short-Short Story. We challenged students to write a story in 500 words or less. Our theme: Literology. This could be taken to mean whatever authors wanted it to.

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

Rebecca Carlson, alumna of Concordia, 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 next page. Comments on the winning place entries are provided by Rebecca Carlson.
NOTES ON WINNING ENTRIES

1st Place
Cole Dahle
My Fecal Fortress

2nd Place
Samuel Cantrell
A Hot Day

3rd Place
NyEma Sims
My First International Flight
Honorable Mention
Donnie Drobny
Haunted Past

MY FECAL FORTRESS
This story's vivid imagery immediately captures the reader's attention. The children described as "monsters," "creatures," and "rabid animals" are a perfect counterpart to the helpless, hiding narrator. This reversal of expected roles provides the impetus for a swiftly moving, comically entertaining and highly creative story. The author knows how to make readers laugh, and is not afraid to have the laughter be at his expense.

A HOT DAY
"A Hot Day" is built upon layers of carefully constructed conflict. The author uses seeming contradictions and false expectations to build conflict, and then holds in the tension with the tight interior setting, pulling the characters inexorably together. The ending is wholly unexpected, a powerful shift in character that causes the reader to rethink the entire story. The language is tight and clean, letting the action speak for itself.

MY FIRST INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT
The narrative is nicely framed by the flight time; it is a self-described "nineteen hour race to our final destination." The varied views out the airplane window are used as an introspective look into the narrator's thoughts and emotions, making the story one of self-discovery as well as exploration. The reader is left (along with the narrator) standing on the edge of a journey, waiting to see where it will take them.

We hear the chanting and activity ten minutes earlier than usual. Looking across the emerald grass, we see one hundred monsters scampering about in boredom. I look around at my fellow coaches to see them all staring at me, unblinkingly. Facundo's buck teeth show as he addresses me, "It's all you, Coley." I look around at the other coaches one last time before releasing a long sigh and standing upright, making my way towards the largest congregation of campers. The creatures recognize my approach while I still have thirty yards of ground to cover and swarm around me, instantly. Putting a broad smile on my face, I begin to interact with them, laughing at their lame jokes and ruffling the tops of their heads. But things take a turn for the worst when the biggest and bravest boy decides to undress me. He takes a firm grip on the bottom of my black shorts and attempts to rip them off my body. I leap into the air and bolt out of the pile of small bodies. Wrong choice.

The horde screams in delight and races after me, misinterpreting my flight for a game of tag. I am a magnet for children; my following grows with every lap around the field. While my feet can cycle infinitely faster than the tiny legs pursuing me, I do not have the vast reserves of fuel that drive their little engines. My breath comes in short gasps, and I know that any attempt at surrender will result in a mouthful of dirt. At that instant, I spot a miracle; a beautiful sanctuary that will protect me until the stitch in my side can settle. I make a beeline for it, hurling myself into the sultry honey bucket and slamming the lock.

The kids arrive and encircle my place of solitude. The shaking of their stampede shifts the contents of the port-a-potty and a fresh aroma of urine and feces wafts its way into my nostrils. I cannot see the rabid animals, but the banging on the side of my fortress and their deafening voices unite in chaos. I can only lean up against the door and shake my head with a smile of disbelief. Then the voice of a child stops my heart.
“Let’s tip it over!”

Suddenly, my hideout begins tilting back and forth, gradually growing in magnitude. In a flash, I explode out of the mobile toilet. Sending bodies flying, I hurdle the siege in a single bound, a solitary sheet of toilet paper streaming off my right foot. I rejoin my circle of colleagues, turning to survey the scattered corpses lying on the ground from my flight. My focus returns to the coaches and Facundo catches my eye. The hairy Argentine shakes his head as his chest heaves with laughter. “Only you, Cole. Only you.”

A Hot Day

Samuel Cantrell

A mosquito landed on the bank’s glass window. It swatted its wings impatiently, almost fanning itself off, before it took off again. Inside, I stood impatiently in line, clasping my deposit slip. I wiped my forehead, but there was too much sweat on my face from the sweltering heat outside.

The heat had made the lone teller lethargic, and the line I was in wound around tables and signs until nearly the door. I looked down at my watch, shaking my head anxiously, and shifted my weight.

Another man in line caught my interest. Dressed fairly well, in a dark suit, he was wearing dark sunglasses, which, on account of the bright day, could be understandable, but he felt wrong. The reader probably knows the feeling; there wasn’t so much proof. Well, there was one thing: he didn’t hold a check or some other scrap of paper, like most of us did.

I looked down at my deposit slip, ensuring everything was in order. I exhaled loudly, hoping it would help cool me off, and looked slowly around the bank. The security officer had exited, probably for his smoking break. I frowned, and then looked over at the dark-suited man. He was looking over at the exit, his right hand now inside his coat pocket, and he seemed to be grasping something inside. My eyes widened. He’s got a gun, I thought.

I breathed slowly. No sense in getting excited. If he started shooting up the place, dozens of people could get hurt. I reached inside my coat, feeling for my badge: it was there.

The dark-suited man looked around the room, probably checking for the security guard. I guessed that he wouldn’t be back for another ten minutes—plenty of time for a heist. Good thing I was here.

He moved towards the teller window. I moved a little to the side so I could watch his movements. He smoothly walked up to the window, removing a gun from his pocket, and shot the customer who stood there. I twitched at the shot.
People started screaming, but I was concentrating more on his gun. I hadn’t heard a really audible report; obviously, he was using a silencer. Clever fellow.

I quickly pulled out my badge, and with my other hand removed my gun from my waistband. “Police!” I yelled.

He turned to me, surprised, and then turned his gun at the bank teller. “I’ll shoot her!” Her face turned cement white.

I just pulled the trigger. It was one of my cleanest shots; right to the head and he was down. No danger to the hostage.

I quickly made my way through the line to the teller, pushing past the people who were slapping me on the back, thanking me. The teller thanked me profusely. I merely smiled casually, and put my deposit slip down on the table. It read, “Give me all your money.”

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My First International Flight

NyEma Sims

*Passengers, fasten your seatbelts and prepare for take off!*  
As I glance out the window, I see that we are slowly beginning to move. Not much time passes before we rapidly gain momentum; off into the sky we go. It will be a nineteen hour race to our final destination. The food is edible; I don’t mind the crying babies or the guy next to me that is talking excessively. Why, might you ask? Because it is what is to come that I can’t wait for: a new land, different people, diverse culture and religion. This will be the experience of a lifetime. The clouds seem to disperse themselves, opening up a gap to reveal that which is unknown to me. It’s like a dream that I never want to wake up from. As I look out onto the beautiful horizon, I see the majesty that I always took for granted, but this time the angle is different and that makes all the difference. The feelings are indescribable, the emotion uncontrollable. I feel a peace and serenity that covers me like a warm blanket on a wintery night. Everything is moving so fast, although according to the clouds it feels like slow motion. The clouds drift along as the sunrise creeps up between it in beautiful hues of purple, pink, red and orange. Every color plays its part perfectly to create something that touches me deep down in my soul. Every little area exposed with nowhere to hide. But this beauty is only attainable at this angle, this angle from 37,000 feet in the air, moving at a speed of 580 miles per hour. As day breaks, this is the first time I am able to see land and water. The stars are beginning to fade and the sun does a little dance as it comes to full view, but the memory is embedded in me forever. Slowly, one by one, as if being directed by an orchestra, each passenger starts to wake up. A stretch here, a yawn there and a wipe of the eyes as everyone takes one last look. A change is occurring and for the first time I am not afraid. I will embrace it and never turn back. Doors are opening and I am walking through them with no hesitation, just faith. I reach into my purse and pull out a single piece of gum. I pop it in my mouth and prepare for descent. *It’s*
been a long ride but so worth it. My first international flight.

Haunted Past
Donnie Drobny

The Midnight Hotel was a dimly lit bar well off the beaten track of the city. Unlike many hip dive bars, the Midnight Hotel smelled of cheap alcohol mixed with the bitter scent of cigarettes. Jack sat alone at the bar nursing a long necked bottle and staring at the playing card coaster. Absent-mindedly, his left hand reached down and touched the wedding ring he always carried in his pocket, feeling the weight of it through the course denim. He still carried it even though his wife, Susan, had died nearly 5 years ago. The weight in his pocket reminded him of what the weight in his heart would never let him forget.

He found himself thinking about the way that she laughed at all his dumb jokes, the way she softly snored in bed beside him and how she tugged at her earlobe when she was angry. That was the Susan he missed.

“Hey buddy, you in there?” The bartender’s voice ripped through the haze of memories and Jack started, looking into the smiling face of the aging man behind the bar.

“Yeah, sorry, I was just- well, somewhere else I guess.”

“I know the feeling. Need another!”

He gestured at the empty bottle still in Jack’s hand.

“Sure, I’ll be here awhile.”

The bartender took the bottle, revealing the queen of hearts, a halo of water encircling her head, and walked away. The bar had filled up and a flash of raven black hair, exactly the same shade Susan’s had been, at the other end of the bar caught his eye. Jack was sure that she would turn around and he would see that same smile with the lone dimple on one side.

Then she turned to face him and that same smile flickered and faded. That same dimple shrunk then disappeared. Her green eyes locked with his and flashed quickly to the exit.

He was up pushing through people before she had begun to move away from the bar, cutting her off before she could reach the door.
“Excuse me.” She looked at the floor avoiding his eyes.
“Susan?”
“Jack, I-This can’t happen.”
“Susan? How- I saw them bury you. I was there Susan. What the hell is going on?” He reached out, taking her arm and she turned to face him.
“Jack. Look at me, right in the eyes. You did not see me here. I am gone and I’m never coming back.” She pressed her will against his, feeling his crack and break as a dull haze floated over his eyes. He blinked twice as she disappeared out the door. Jack walked back to his seat and picked up the new bottle the bartender had set before him.
“Who was the lady?”
“What lady?” The two men looked at each other, faces mirrors of confusion.
“Whatever, man.” The bartender walked away shaking his head as Jack removed the small gold ring from his pocket, stared at it thoughtfully and returned to his beer.