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PENN STATE
GREATER ALLEGHENY'S
LITERARY & ART MAGAZINE

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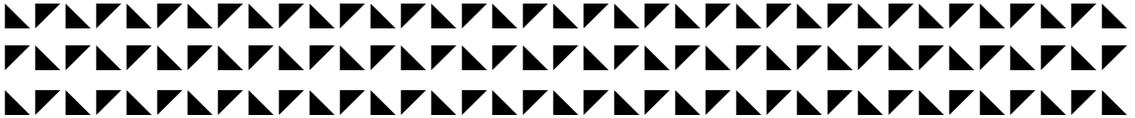
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2 0 0 8 - VOLUME 10



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MISSION STATEMENT

Absence is committed to the yearly publication of a high-quality literary and arts magazine for the Penn State Greater Allegheny community. The magazine's goal is to provide all full- and part-time PSUGA students, faculty, and staff, and alumni with a shared venue for their creative endeavors, and to generate interest for the creative arts in the Greater Allegheny community.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES & EDITORIAL POLICIES

Eligibility for publication in *Absence* is open to all full- and part-time students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Penn State Greater Allegheny. Original poetry, fiction, non-fiction & creative non-fiction, visual arts, and photography will be accepted for consideration by the student editors. Previously published works will not be considered. Upon publication, all rights revert to authors; however, *Absence* reserves the right to republish all materials electronically and to use materials published in the magazine to fund its publication. A blind-review process is employed to ensure that all submissions are judged solely on artistic merit. A maximum of 10 submissions per volume can be made to the senior faculty advisor, who removes all biographical information before turning them over to the student editorial staff for review. The preferred means of submission is by email attachment; send to: <ctm10@psu.edu>. Final publication prerogative rests solely with the Editor-in-Chief.

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GLENN J. BEECH

INTERPRETING POLITICIANS || 40

MIO PRATO SEGRETO / MY SECRET GARDEN || 60-61

CATHERINE BALL

WHEN THE FISH BIT THE WORM || 76-77

KRISTIN BIONDO

FROSTY LAMP || 65

HAZY SUNSET || 39

DR. RUSS CIOLLI

FLOW BAND MAN || 21

I CAN'T USE MY BIKE TODAY || 81

IS THAT A CROW || 53

JUST GIVE ME HALF A SECOND || 57

CHRISTOPHER N. CURTIS

A SIGHT TO REMEMBER || 30

BLACK & GOLD PITTSBURGH || 19

CARIBBEAN VIEW || 42-43

REMEMBER THE VETERAN || 35

ALYSSA FINE

CHILDHOOD || 58

FOR MERCUTIO || 37-38

JACK || 54-55

MY COROLLA || 13-15

MATTHEW FISCHMAN

POWER || 17

DAVID FRANTZ

CAPITOL BUILDING || 41

AMANDA HALVEY

UNTITLED || 22

UNTITLED || 56

JON HOBAUGH

DOCK || 47

WINE COUNTRY || 44

BROOKE HOLLOWAY

GARDEN OF EDEN || 72

LEAVES || INSIDE BACK COVER

DAISIES || 52

ADAM J. HOWELLS

28 BOOKS LATER || 27-29

GANG WAR || 77

KRISTINA KRAJINA

CLOUDS & WAVES || 12

KEYS || 59

SNOWY NIGHT || 75

MILDRED R. MICKLE PH.D.

SPEAK TO ME || 26

DAN MILLER

M'LADY || 20

MELINDA MONSON

DIAMOND IN THE SKY || 78-79

FIREFLIES || 18
LOVE, FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD || 70
MESSAGE TO NOBODY || 68-69
WITH LOVE AND PAIN FROM VIETNAM || 32-34

TIM NYLUND

HIDDEN MESSAGE || 48

ERIN O'MALLEY

UNTITLED || 63

CHRIS O'NEAL & ADAM BENNETT

SET FIRE TO THE SKY || 50-51

BENJAMIN PAUL

VIOLINS || 36

RACHEL POPOVICH

THE ORANGUTAN TREE || 73-74

DANIELLE POSSUMATO

VOIDED GIFT TO A FRUITLESS LOVE || 71
TRAVEL LIGHT || INSIDE FRONT COVER

BORJANA RADIC

WATER || 38

JONATHAN SIMA

EIGHTY || 43
FORTUNE IS FOLLY || 42
GIVEN TIME || 67-68
POND PRAYER || 49

RHYMES & RUMINATIONS || 24
WINTERTIME || 80-81

JIM SPARVERO

I COME HERE OFTEN || 25

SHANNON SPECA

GRASS || 16

SEED HEAD || FRONT & BACK COVER

DAVID SPINK

BEAUTIFUL CALIFORNIA || 31

DAN SWARTZ

ENJOY AN ULTRA VIEW || 23

LAKE AND SKY || 62

PYRAMID || 66

SNOWY MOUNTAIN RANGE || 64

DORETTA WHALEN, PHD

MY TIMES || 45-47

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS || 82

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Throughout our lives, there are many experiences we (collective humanity) deem pleasurable: challenges we overcome, loves reciprocated, so on and so forth. Many are recurring, destined to be experienced once more with glee but, just as often, the experience is trapped in the past, gone forever and retired to memory. No matter what happens you will never relive that experience. You must hold it tight, lest it slip away. Perhaps this is why photography exists. But perhaps the experiences that do come again, the ones that are not so ephemeral, can be treasured just the same.

Working on the magazine has been one of those experiences. For the past two years, I have looked forward to the April unveiling of *Absence* with much excitement. I look to the moment when all of the hard work of so many people can finally be laid bare, made public, and celebrated as the arts should be. Everyone in this magazine deserves to be in it, having donated a small piece of themselves for our viewing or reading pleasure. And, perhaps, that is the key to this entire project: a sacrifice of the self, however little, to convey beauty to others, to show them that photography is more than pixels or celluloid, a story is more than words and sentences strung like pearls, that a poem can be more than exact rhyme. Art is a sacrifice for something bigger than ourselves, whether a painting or a poem or a magazine. I can truly say that I could not be prouder of my work helping to bring this magazine from the computer screen to your hands.

Not to say I did this alone. For the tenth volume of *Absence*, several individuals were essential every step of the way. My fellow staff members, A.J. Howells and Jonathan Sima, whose judgements and opinions helped shape this magazine as much as anybody's, are indispensable staff members and talented writers themselves. Both have works in the volume that I'm sure you will enjoy. For your help and dedication, gentlemen, I thank you. *Absence* has benefitted greatly from your participation. I would also like to thank Lou Anne Caliguiri, whose kindness and willingness to listen is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Lastly, as I depart PSUGA and *Absence*, I wish to disclose my gratitude to Dr. Manlove and Professor Hepner; both have helped me more than anyone else. Cliff, your encouragement and guidance over the past two years has been utterly priceless. I have the utmost respect for you and will miss working on the magazine with you. Thank you so much. Lori, the expertise and imagination you have brought to this campus has been a tremendous help in bringing more visual art to the magazine, thank you. I hope this is a trend that continues in the future. And speaking of the future, to whomever takes over next as Editor, I wish you luck and patience, as both are necessary to fully realize this magazine's potential. I sincerely hope *Absence* continues its climb towards bigger and better things, and that my efforts provide a stepping stone towards an increasingly impressive zenith.

C. DeMarco - Editor

CLOUDS & WAVES

CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE HONORABLE MENTION

KRISTINA KRAJINA



MY COROLLA

WINNER, *THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR BEST LITERARY ART*

ALYSSA FINE

My writing is random, indifferent, and meaningful, but it is me. I can boil down all of my thoughts into black ink for this page.

I see now in front of me an old amber-colored glass root beer bottle, its label faded and cracked. Inside, it is filled with fine white sand, collected in secret from the shores of a distant dream. From the opening, and spilling over the lip of the jar, protrude weeds and all manner of beach grasses. They are yellowed and dry, but smelling still of the sharp salty air which deeply permeated them as they grew. This bottle is my memory. I fade away, into my dream world.

The summer week spent in Corolla evokes many nostalgic memories. Memories of happiness, love, and warmth flow together as naturally as the ocean itself. Corolla is a lonely beach. Standing on its shores, one may see up and along the coast for miles it seems, and the only objects to obscure the vision are small groups of families enjoying the sunlight. The grassy knolls tumble into the ocean and fight the rolling waves for space, agreeing on a perfect stretch of pristine beach, tickled on the edges by the water that strews hidden treasures on its shores. Those who stroll along the coast, and are lucky enough to salvage the ocean's refuse, find inventive ways to reuse it.

I recall visiting an art festival at the country club that summer. The sprawling lawn was spotted with white canvas tents and the smell of culture, in the form of oil paints and sawdust, was heavy in the air. In contrast with the bright daylight, a spread of dark shade trees bordered the lawn. In the midst of the grove, a steady lighthouse wound its way upward, standing over it, protecting it. People lumbered along slowly, stopping to admire the various crafts that had been formed from items of the sea. I wandered past the tents and over a low wooden footbridge that led to a gazebo just off the lawn and in a small inlet of the peninsula. An eclectic woman whizzed past me, and I noticed that her hand-made necklace was of antique bottle caps. Mingled with that strange mixture of mud and salt water, sea foam gathered about the pylons of the small pavilion, and young children fished from its sides. Far off, I saw the expanse of trees; I could hear the tinkling of sea-glass chimes. This is my Corolla.

Some events are more distinct than others, but they are all very fluid, running together and becoming one. I spent many days on the beach, soaking in the sunlight, remembering

that I would soon wince with pain from the burning. I would lie for hours on a reed mat, watching the waves crash in and slink back out. When my hot skin needed refreshing, I would stroll to the water, wading out into the coolness knee-deep, while the waves threatened and thrashed against my legs, allowing the pure sand to scrub my skin smooth and pink. One is not complete until he scoops up a handful of sand and notes the tiny pieces of pebble, rock, and shell that have been worn down by years of underwater movement and have become something beautiful. The clean sand is the ocean's waste, yet white beaches are our pride. On occasion, I would look toward the horizon, where the reckless depths of the ocean meet with the sprawling heavens, and notice a traveling pod of dolphins leaping into the sunlight, their silver bodies glinting. Once, I felt something slimy brush past my ankles and glanced down to discover a jellyfish. My legs pumped, and suddenly I was carrying the creature toward our beach house in a pail. I remember that the poor translucent jellyfish appeared green against the lime coloring of the plastic bucket. At the house, I quickly showered under the cold water in the driveway, taking care to rinse off all of the salt and the sand that had found ways into my bathing suit. I sat alone for hours watching the graceful movements of my companion. That evening, the skies ominous, I returned to the beach to release my jelly. My salt-crusting hair whipped about my cheeks, and the wet sand clung to the bottoms of my jeans as I placed the creature back in the ocean. I walked home quietly, remembering my friend.

Jellyfish still fascinate me, even today. I have only encountered them a handful of times, the second occasion taking place at the aquarium farther down the peninsula. In a large Kreisel tank, six fish swam under a black light, bathing them in fluorescent purple. I decided then that one day I would have my own aquarium tank filled with jellies. I exited the museum and stood on the veranda, waiting for my family to follow when I happened to look at a low bench and noticed a boy my age staring at me. His eyes were blue; they were bluer than I can explain. The wild ocean does not compare, the sky that watches over the sea cannot compare to the blue of his eyes. I remember a line of poetry from Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's, "The Stone." It reads, "Those eyes that cut me to the bone, and pierced my marrow like cold steel." I cannot describe much more, except to say that his eyes were a perfect window into a virgin soul, untouched by trouble. I gazed at his eyes, forgetting much else, until he left with his family. I never knew his name; I never cared to. The eyes told all. That is a distinct moment of my summer.

The sea is beautiful; it is quiet and gentle. The old waters sigh as they close in upon the beach at high tide, telling stories of the ages, or the secrets hidden in their depths. Sometimes the sea is angry. One night, tornadoes ravaged neighboring Elizabeth City, across the bay. The calm, tranquil blue ocean became furious with the impending storm. I remember standing on the exposed great porch of the beach house, photographing the skies as the

sharp lightning crackled across it, tearing jagged scars into the heavens. The driving rains soon forced me inside and I fell asleep to the drumming of rain on the roof, with my pillow clasped around my ears to ward off the thunderous booms. I awoke to a morning that had not been graced by a blushing sunrise. Taking up a broom, I swept water from the enclosed porch where I had built jigsaw puzzles on a lazy summer evening. For hours following, as the temperatures rose, the air was filled with steam and humidity. Storms had long attacked the great peninsula. I had noted an impassible section of roadway that had been covered with sand from a previous surge. I went to the beach again that afternoon, for it was my last day in Corolla. No longer was it bright; a dense fog shrouded the sands in gray mists and gave a feeling of forlornness. Somewhere in the distance, obscured by the close and heavy air, a pack of gulls laughed and called to one another. A light rain sprinkled onto my hair. I kissed my hands goodbye to my beloved ocean and returned to the house to pack.

The next morning was bright and warm. Life goes on, and people recover. I remember crossing the bridge that led away from the peninsula. I cried softly to myself and fingered the shells that I had collected from the beach. Corolla was an experience for me. It was mine; it was my week of paradise. There is something wild about the ocean, and something calming all at once. Long, lonely days can be remedied by deep thoughts. I spent that week contemplating myself, learning who I am, and who I can be. I found beauty in the most unlikely places, and laughed and loved and cried. Corolla is my reminder of the awesome strength and fragility of life. From the gentle jellyfish to the strong thunderclap, the ocean is a cycle. Polyps become coral, which break apart, die, and ultimately become white sand. It serves as a bottled memory, graced by wind-swept vegetation; my simple reminder. When the collected shells crack and fade, when the bottle of dried memories has withered, and when the countless homemade shell decorations are lost and forgotten, I will still remember. I will never forget.

GRASS

SHANNON SPECA



POWER

MATTHEW FISCHMAN



FIREFLIES

MELINDA MONSON

The night is thick with fireflies
Much to the amusement of children's eyes
And that same soft glow that may bring you your fate
Should ideally attract your mate
But if I should crush your body tonight
You may still give off an eerie green light
Much like our loved ones who'd lived their lives through
Their glow stays inside us, no matter what we can do
Or maybe we don't have much in common at all
With that adorable insect who's taken its fall
For as your luminescence will soon fade away
Our memories can linger and haunt us for days
And no matter how much the painful thoughts fade
They can hit us again in spontaneous waves

BLACK & GOLD PITTSBURGH

WINNER, *THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR BEST VISUAL ART*

CHRISTOPHER N. CURTIS



M'LADY

DAN MILLER

The sound was soft, faint.
It was the sound of a thousand screams,
Wailing, moaning to be released.
The sound resonates through me,
Like a kiss.
Sweltering passionately through
My being.
As I wind my way, pass the stone barrier,
The wall that hides me from my love, I see her.
To gaze at her from afar would be a sin, for beauty
This immaculate can not be explained with meaning
Or purpose. But I do gaze, as if looking
At a distant star, it comforts me. Her skin, soft
And pale, like the moon on a faint September eve.
Her eyes. Eyes that stare deep into me, and penetrate
My deepest darkest secrets. I tremble. My eyes blind me
From the truth. I cannot love again, but must. I flee.
Tomorrow is another night.

FLOW BAND MAN

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



AMANDA HALVEY



ENJOY AN ULTRA VIEW

DAN SWARTZ



RHYMES & RUMINATIONS

JONATHAN SIMA

What does a righteous man take to
When a woman has done him wrong?
--The drink.

What does a patient man take to
When the world has done him harm?
--The brink.

What is an honest man given
By those who esteem his cause?
--Blame.

What is a criminal given
By a world of rules and laws?
--Fame.

What is a blind man left with
Who has lived in the dark of his days?
--Sight.

And what is every man left with
At the end of a long, troubled day?
--Night.

I COME HERE OFTEN

JIM SPARVERO

I come here often
Year round
Nearly every night
But never before the sunset

I sink myself in
To a place where a man
Can be true to himself
Where no one judges him
Except for the stars above

Outside
It's portrayed as a hotspot for love
But inside
It's my hotspot for opportunity

It's where the future seems closer
Than the stars of Orion
And where dreams are thought of
Over a soothing glass of green tea

It's the perfect refuge
Where for the moment
One can lasso the moon
Like George did for Mary

SPEAK TO ME

MILDRED R. MICKLE, PH.D.



28 BOOKS LATER: A BRIEF AND IRONIC HISTORY LESSON

ADAM J. HOWELLS

The following is the complete introduction from World History: Infection to Present Day, a popular textbook used in high school Social Studies classes across the United States. This introduction provides an extremely condensed version of the events between the years 2014-2099, which are discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of the text.

On July 14, 2014, Jennifer Abigail Starr, otherwise known as Abbie Starlight (a pseudonym used to pen the most successful book series of all time, *The Starlight Chronicles*), died in her Pittsburgh home after a carbon monoxide gas leak early in the morning. Fans on every continent except for Antarctica mourned her passing. To make matters worse, the final book in her beloved series was to be released globally on August 2nd and she would not be alive to see it. If she had lived to see it, would she have been able to prevent what happened?

The Starlight Chronicles was a groundbreaking series, not only in the realm of children's literature, but in adult literature as well. Its popularity was nothing short of phenomenal. After the release of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, it would seem that no other work could possibly measure up to its greatness, and that life without another Potter book would be a bit duller. However, when Maxwell Stanton, the series' protagonist, hit the bookshelves in Starlight's debut of the series, Potter became old news and Abbie Starlight was crowned a millionaire overnight.

Tragically, at the highest possible brink of her popularity (getting ready to publish the final book of the series that had turned her into a multi-millionaire), Starlight was found dead.

However, the death of Abbie Starlight did not affect the publishing of the book, for she had finished writing it and had just submitted the final copy for editing. A special introduction by Gabrielle Starr, her daughter, was added to the release and it was due to be published on its original publishing date, two weeks after the infection struck.

Starlight's death did not affect WZOM's "Starlight Starbright" radio contest either, where one lucky listener would win an advanced copy of the book. The winner would receive the book two weeks before global publication and would be able to read it in the comfort of his/her own home, under a police lockdown, preventing theft of the book or spoiler leaks. After the book had been read, the reader would then be escorted outside to news crews from

around the world that had gathered on his/her lawn and would utter the line (recently discovered as prewritten) “It is everything we’ve hoped for and more,” which would then be transcribed into countless different languages and into fans’ homes everywhere. A moment of silence for the late Abbie Starlight was planned to follow.

The winner turned out to be Billy Agin, age 14, resident of Monroeville, Pennsylvania. The book was transported to Billy’s rural home in an armored van, followed by a squad of police cars which would surround the house for the duration of the reading. Within an hour, hundreds of news crews surrounded the home, along with thousands of spectators, filling the open fields of the area. For eight hours fans pondered what Billy was going to tell them about the novel.

At 8:46 p.m., Billy emerged from his house to forever change the world. A podium had been set at the end of his driveway from which he would speak. Billions of fans around the world had their eyes on him.

Soon after infection struck, many theorized that the “collective friendship” of the crowd had caused Billy to do what he did. Psychologists, who were not fans of the series, claimed that instead of stage fright, the intense fan base of spectators, news crews, and a significant portion of law officers who all shared the same undying love for Maxwell Swann are what caused Billy’s breakdown, for as soon as he reached the podium, his eyes filled with tears and he exclaimed, “He’s dead!”

The silence that followed was astonishing. Every fan stopped breathing, and never started to do so again. Billy regained his composure, but it was too late for him. The crowd, the crews, and the officers, who had read all twenty-seven previous installments, simultaneously broke into an inhuman run and ripped Billy to shreds.

The remaining officers and news crews who had not been fans of the series could not even attempt to rescue him. Billy’s parents ran dangerously into the crowd and were immediately dismembered. A few rogue officers shot blindly into the crowd, but aside from headshots, these beasts were impossible to take down. All uninfected humans were soon obliterated.

After Billy had spoken what are now regarded as the two deadliest words in the history of mankind, the global zombie plague was born. Any fan who had been viewing the broadcast destroyed their television sets and went in search of non-fans of the series, now dubbed as “Unbelievers.”

Mankind was forced underground. Everyone had to find their own shelter, for the government could not provide any as the majority of the world’s armed forces had been fans, and those who were not had been gunned down after Billy’s speech by their own comrades.

Worse yet, if an “Unbeliever” had been attacked and had lived, they would then be turned into a homicidal maniac with a craving for illiterate blood.

The year is now 2099, and it is estimated that zombie eradication has reached 100%. Of course, this is after a loss of 95.5% of the human population.

But rebuilding has begun, and every copy of *The Starlight Chronicles* has been destroyed (a tough task, after the zombies began to worship them), save for one complete set, which a group of scientists have used for research purposes, resulting in the shock of the millennia.

On October 5th, 2054, *The Complete Starlight Chronicles* was delivered to William Gossamer's prison cell. Gossamer, a previous crime lord, was convicted of harboring an infected relative in his basement and feeding his surviving enemies to it. Among his various hobbies, such as drug racketeering, money laundering, and prostitution, reading was always at the top of his list. Gossamer agreed to read the books because, after all, he did not have much to lose and had (luckily) missed the opportunity to read the phenomenon before infection had struck.

Gossamer completed the set within a week. As he finished the last page, huddled in the corner with his lips moving along with each word, he began to cry. He closed the book and put his head against the wall. The group of scientists and psychologists observing him waited for him to jump up and puke blood on the two way mirror, a common experience of newly infected beings.

But it never happened. Instead, a smile broke out on his face. One of the scientists leaned forward and spoke into a microphone, breaking the prolonged silence hanging in the air. "Well, Bill," he said, "What do you think?"

Gossamer cleared his throat and responded, "Those were the most beautiful books I've ever read. Almost worth going to jail for."

Curious, the scientist then inquired of Maxwell Starr's fate in the book, to which Gossamer replied, "Why he lived, of course! It's a freaking kid's book, he's not going to die!"

...Billy Agin's breakdown had been a joke...

A SIGHT TO REMEMBER

CHRISTOPHER N. CURTIS



BEAUTIFUL CALIFORNIA

DAVID SPINK



WITH LOVE AND PAIN FROM VIETNAM

MELINDA MONSON

He burst into her life like the light of ten million stars
He warmed her heart with his smile and beckoned her
Into his arms
Everyday, he whispered
Everyday we'll be
Everyday we'll be together
You're the missing part of me
Their lips locked in eternity
She's turning into him, transforming slowly
The chameleon
But it's all fine, all grand says she
So long as she can run to him
But with this river forced between them
The curse she stumbled on that day
She gazed past her side of the river
To see his back is turned away
With the flowers growing from her bed
The river's flowing from his head
They slept together, sang together
She clings until the end
And the fire's always burning, the fire never dies
As the final shards of wishful thinking fall beyond their grasp
She sits she cries as the last rose dies...
He's triggered into freezing, for he no longer mourns
The sky grows ever darker as the thunderclouds form
She is made of liquid, it's the girl's turn to pour
Arms flung in deep desperation, she shouts through her storm

*"So long
Too long
I'd linger there
Lost in my lover's jet black hair*

*He's beautiful and tall enough for me
He's the color of sand caressed by the sea
With his soft warm hands and loving arms
And syrupy words and witty charm
Within that presence, my world was born
But the presence he gave me is now forlorn
It turns to stone now what he says
His arms are growing cold and dead
His words now pierce me through my breast
The way he now impales my chest
I still know these words my heart had sung —
The taste of silver on my tongue
The depth behind his loving stare
The scent of silver in the air
And now he lets it go to waste
When I've grown so accustomed to the taste
When all I imagine is being with him
In holding him, absorbing him
And pretending he was never gone
Like the day he finally came home
With love and pain from Vietnam”*

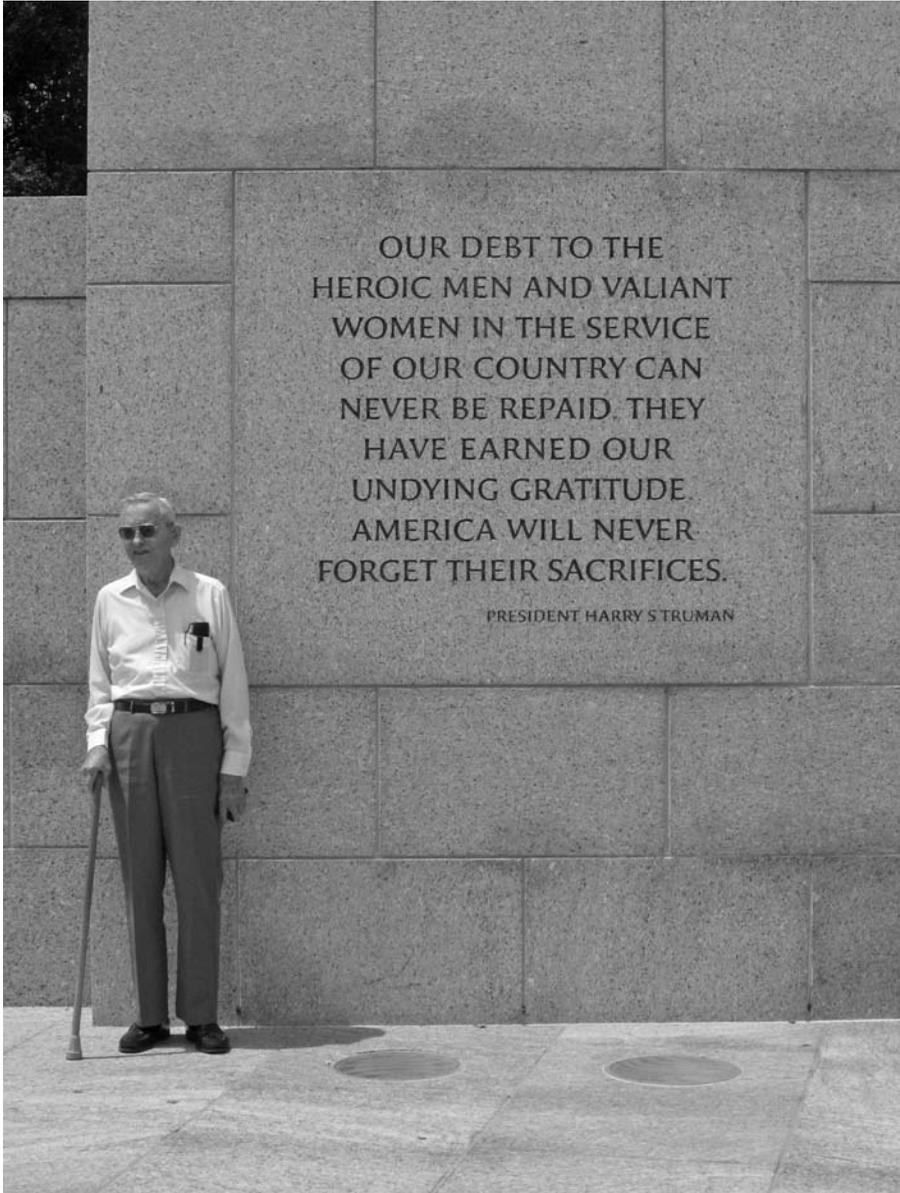
And though she is battered by the falling of ice
She stands firm as the melted drops cradle her
He's always in the distance
This she remembers
Far away but never out of reach
And despite the burning of silence
Unspoken words held back in defiance
There was one thing she always knew
Buried in the back of her mind
“It's never too late.”
The time has come again to wait
Standing alone until the ninth numbered day
It's his move to prove it's not in vain
After days of useless pain
No longer is he so far away

She always knew what it would become
*"I've always known how it would be
This soul forged from fire and ice
Is dissolving over me
My love, my heart from Vietnam
I may still be your Aztec Sun
For night is decaying
And hope never dies
Clearer and clearer are growing the skies
I know what I've done, all that I said
And how many times you took me to bed
And as I waited in the rain
I know you've been standing in the flames
But there lies something we both may need
And I'd never let it go to waste."*

Love runs deep throughout their veins
And it cannot be destroyed
Not now
Not ever
We can withstand all rain together
May we always be clasped forever
And may the waters you drown in be swallowed by the light
Of the one you love

REMEMBER THE VETERAN

CHRISTOPHER N. CURTIS



VIOLINS

BENJAMIN PAUL



FOR MERCUTIO

ALYSSA FINE

ROMEO

I dream'd a dream to-night.

MERCUTIO

And so did I.

ROMEO

Well, what was yours?

MERCUTIO

That dreamers often lie.

ROMEO

Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace!

Thou talk'st of nothing.

MERCUTIO

True, I talk of dreams,

Which are the children of an idle brain,

Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,

Which is as thin of substance as the air

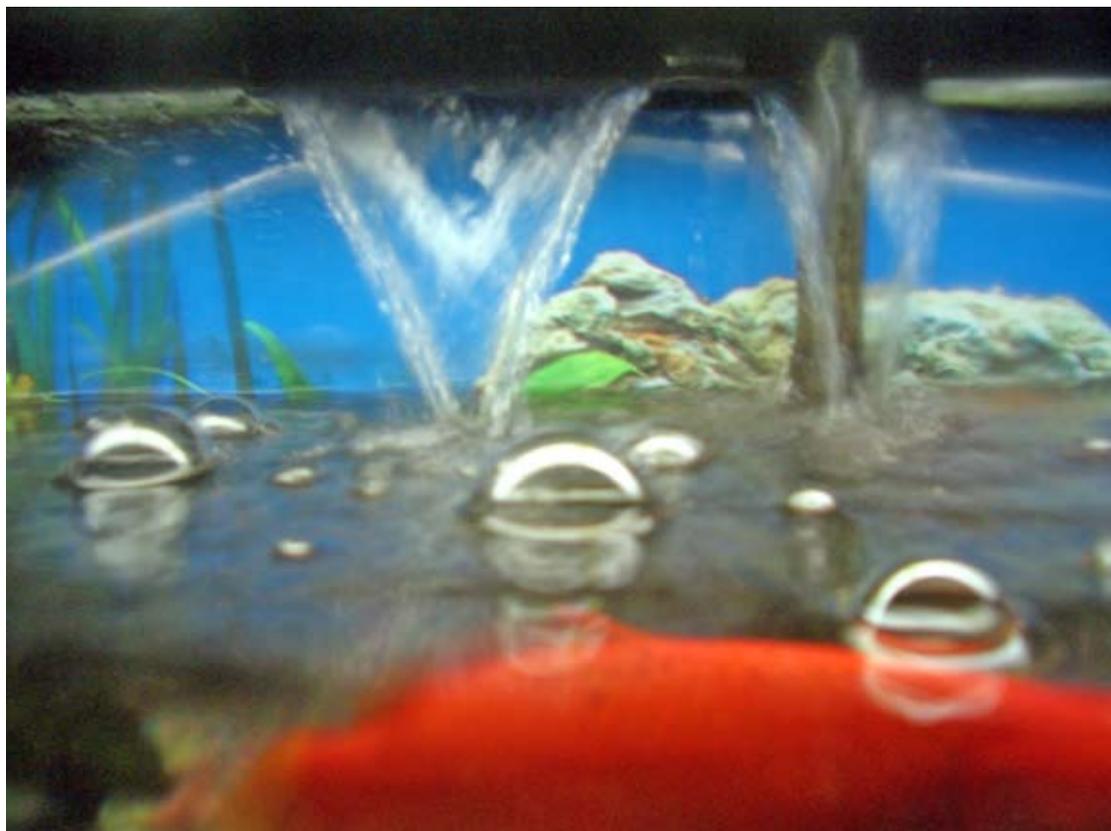
And more inconstant than the wind... —Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

Are all dreams truly born of idle minds?
Or is there hidden deeper meaning lain?
Can I be certain which side to believe?
Amidst long hours slumbering in dark,
I've glimpsed real truths and profound ideas great,
But what cruel trick! My sleep-numbed idle brain
Cannot recall by day such vivid wonders
It dreamt and realized in the deepest night.
Such brilliant dreams and nightmares hideous,
Reflecting in themselves my daily life,
Are lost, evaporated with the dew...
I rub the Sandman's mixture from my eyes
And recollect no longer what is true.

And recollect no longer what is true.
I find it difficult to understand—
Or differentiate from waking life—
My dreams. The visions slur together so
The muddled beauty brings tears to my eyes.
I love my dreams, sweet solace do they bring.
A world apart from that which we all share.
Utopia, a personal safe-haven
From black and white, our ordinary world.

WATER

BORJANA RADIC



HAZY SUNSET

KRISTIN BIONDO



INTEPRETING POLITICIANS

GLENN J. BEECH

Politicians seem to have their own language.

- ↪ A fishing expedition – you are looking for the truth but we are doing our best to hide it;
- ↪ Collateral damage – more innocents killed;
- ↪ Decider – I am in control and I won't listen to anyone;
- ↪ Deferred success – we are not winning;
- ↪ Disinformation – information we will turn around in such a way no one under stands;
- ↪ Family values – I have and support them until I get elected, then they don't apply to me;
- ↪ Hands on leadership – you will listen and do it my way or else;
- ↪ Increased foreign appropriations – less money for those at home;
- ↪ Informational briefings – we will provide only the information we think you should know;
- ↪ Mission critical – we really screwed this one up;
- ↪ No child left behind – fewer children moving forward;
- ↪ Out of the mainstream – we are so far out in left field we are now playing football;
- ↪ Political incivility – I am lucky my opponent doesn't have a gun;
- ↪ Politically correct – I really can't tell it like it is;
- ↪ Stay the course – I won't listen to anyone;
- ↪ Structured approach – we are making it up as we go along;
- ↪ Submitting my resignation – he got caught and I want out before it gets to me;
- ↪ Surge – more soldiers will be killed;
- ↪ Take responsibility – don't blame me, I didn't know anything about it;
- ↪ Tax relief – tax cuts for the rich, budget cuts for everyone else;
- ↪ Tax reform – we will be replacing one tax with another;
- ↪ Value added – we are still charging you too much;
- ↪ Think outside the box – I don't have an idea and neither does anyone on my staff;
- ↪ Wiggle room – I haven't told you the whole truth and I don't intend to.

Why can't they just tell it like it is?

CAPITOL BUILDING

DAVID A. FRANTZ



CARIBBEAN VIEW

CHRISTOPHER N. CURTIS



FORTUNE IS FOLLY

SECOND PLACE, THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR LITERARY ART

JONATHAN SIMA

“. . . For those who seek for much,
Much is ever lacking.”--Horace

Fortune is folly,
A blind venture into corruption that all men seek, yet few will ever find.
And Fortune is fantasy, one that the madman will dream of
And the sane man will denounce, bled
From the veins of miser Time himself,
And left as little more than a distraction,
Drawing us away
From the true nature
Of our being. . . .



EIGHTY

JONATHAN SIMA

When I am eighty, I wish to retain the mind I was given.
Should I live to be a hundred and recall when I was eighty,
Wouldn't that be something?
Even if I have nothing else to show for in life:
No merit or fine trophy upon the wall, no key to any city, no name outside the household,
and nothing along the lines of fame, fortune and God-awful glory,
Wouldn't that still be something:
To look back on being eighty?

WINE COUNTRY

JON HOBAUGH



MY TIMES

DORETTA WHALEN, PH.D.

We took our places at the oblong table.
Mother ladeled from the heavy platter
to the 8 of us
in succession,
our legs invisible
under the white, billowing linen
she'd spent the morning pressing.

It was summertime,
and I was to practice riding the two-wheeler.
I was afraid,
but Daddy kept his hand on the seatback
so I wouldn't fall,
while Mother watched
through the kitchen window
where she did the dishes
by hand.

Then, joining my puffy-pastelled sisters,
we jumped rope
on the cement walk,
singing jingles
and wearing holes
the size of fifty-cent pieces
in the soles of our black patents.

My brothers
and the catty-corner Zikeli boys
turned our lot
into a ball field
using gravel for bases,

hitting balls past Cedar Street and Gerwig's garage,
then scattering like flies
when a car was coming.

One by one
we'd listen for our names.
In half-hour shifts,
the youngest at six,
Mom kneeled into the tub
spreading over every inch of skin
the soapy washrag,
scrubbing away
all traces of play.

Pajamed and prayed,
but not the slightest sleepy,
we lay still
to hear the cries of neighborhood kids
riding their bikes up the hill,
headed home.

Under my bed
waiting,
my library book
retrieved in one motion...
me straining for some pages
as the light from the gauzy window faded.

I must have fallen asleep!
I'm dreaming of that girl who is 13
--much older than me —
in a concentration camp.
I want to help her escape
before she dies
--probably tomorrow night —
from starvation and torture.
I want her to come to my house

and sit at our table
with our family.

Then I wake up
in the darkness.
Calling to me
deep under my bed
is a small brown paper bag
with black licorice,
root beer barrels,
and watermelon coconut.
I pop one into my mouth
and silently savor my life.

DOCK

JON HOBAUGH



HIDDEN MESSAGE

TIM NYLUND



POND PRAYER

JONATHAN SIMA

God save the children who played in the pond some twenty years ago.
God save the dreamers who built silver kingdoms from mounds of thinning snow.
God save the no-nonsense teacher who taught his students wrong is right.
God save the children who played in the pond and lingered deep into night.

God save the soul of the hollow man, and God save the soul that's pure.
God save the weakling in all of us, God save the strong and sure.
God save the preacher who stood at the corner, God save the passerby,
God save the children who played in the pond and still do not know why.

God save the Minister's daughter, and God save the Parson's son,
God save the pimp and the prostitute, God save the lost and the won.
God save every sunrise, every yesterday and tomorrow,
God save the children who played in the pond and felt there was no sorrow.

God save the lamb the poor shepherd forgot, and God save the shepherd, too.
God save the father as well as the son, God see the old ways through.
God save the stricken soldier, and God save his dying foe,
And God be kind to those of us who've nothing more to show.

God save the children who played in the pond some twenty years ago.
God save them now, they've seen the lot, and still have far to go.
God be their grace, their grace be in God, and God be their guiding light,
For God knows the children who played in the pond were always burning bright.

SET FIRE TO THE SKY

CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE HONORABLE MENTION

CHRIS O'NEAL & ADAM BENNETT

No sooner do the thoughts enter your head
Than the fuse is lit, it's a veritable powder keg
Then your lips ignite and the words are all blown away
You've got weapons-grade intentions
And a voice of mass destruction
You've been playing vernacular Russian-Roulette
Just open your mouth, pull the trigger, and BANG-BANG-BANG

Faster and Faster
My Words Burn Like Embers
Thoughts Feed The Fire
Igniting The City Aflame

So lets set fire to the sky
We'll burn ourselves alive
And rise up from the ashes
Take all of your modesties
We'll line them up and see
Which ones will burn the fastest

Ashes to ashes as every word passes
Screaming out of your mouth like incendiary flashes
You'll speak in burning tongues and not be silenced
Feed the flames with all your voices
Make them hear you, make them higher
Throats will burn like smoking barrels
Make it all go down in flames

Faster and Faster
My Words Burn Like Embers
Thoughts Feed The Fire
Igniting The City Aflame

So lets set fire to the sky
We'll burn ourselves alive
And rise up from the ashes
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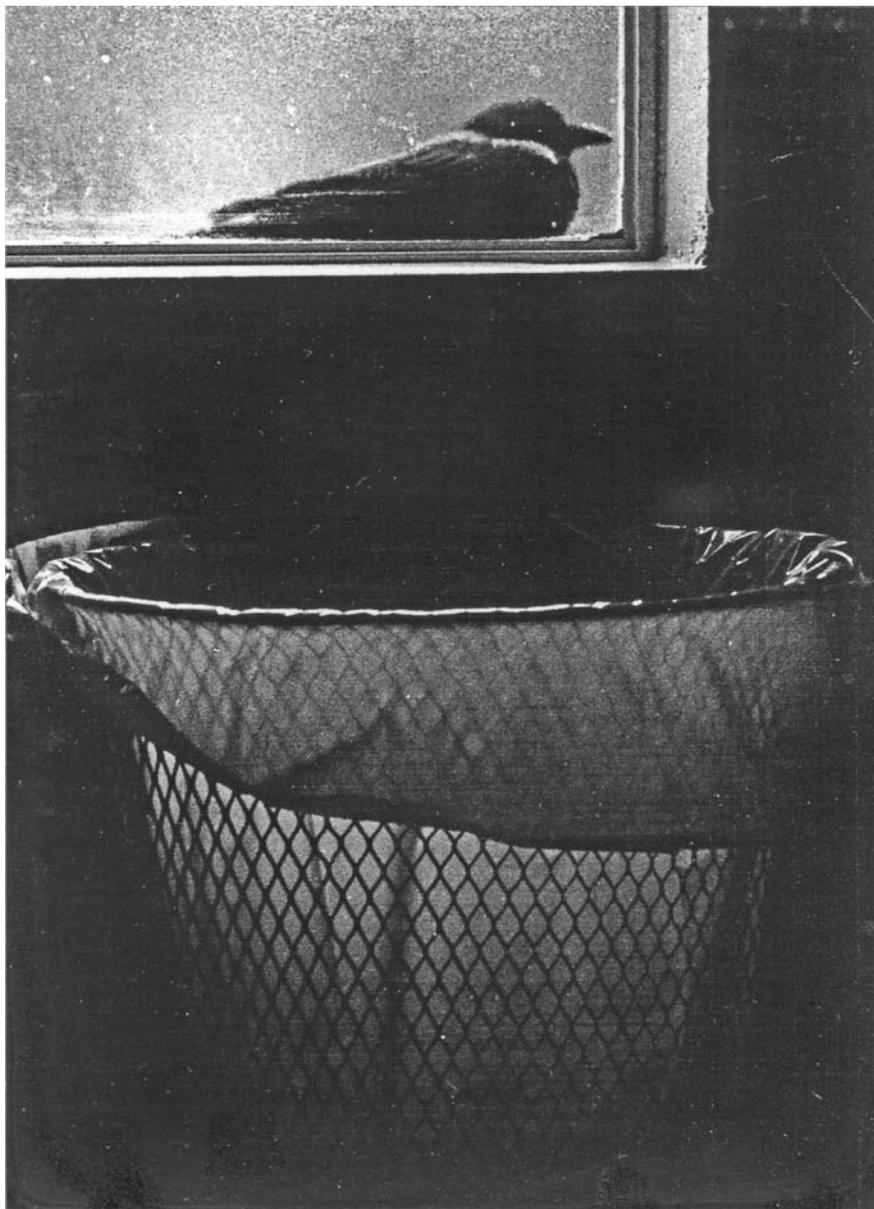
DAISIES

BROOKE HOLLOWAY



IS THAT A CROW

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



JACK

ALYSSA FINE

It happens each October,
Invariably inevitable...

The stores are stocked with great mounds of
Red-orange pumpkin squash
Of different shapes and sizes:
Short and stout,
Tall and oblong,
Some crooked with warts,
But to each the same fate.

“Knock on this one, hear the thud.
Yessiree, sure is ripe.”
And home they go with excited young children
Who stab at the pumpkins,
Rip out their innards,
And feel the intoxicating texture of the
Stringy, gooey, seedy mess.
Now carving eyes, noses, mouths,
In a plethora of expressions,
Some sad, some cruel, some naïve,
Then out they go, to the yard.

The clean-cut fresh pumpkin faces
Stand watch in the dark yard,
Accompanied by the slight flicker
Of an unsteady candle within.

The days roll past,
The nights fly by,
And clean cut pumpkin faces grow murky.
Wrinkles form at the corners of proud eyes.
Jagged teeth slowly wither away.
Smiling lips rot into frowns,
Like those who have no smiles.
The faces sink in upon themselves,
The dim candles long extinguished.

But who stops to notice our friends now that they rot?
We've long since lost capacity for compassion
Of those who are not fresh and new.
Sad fate for those no longer young and strong.

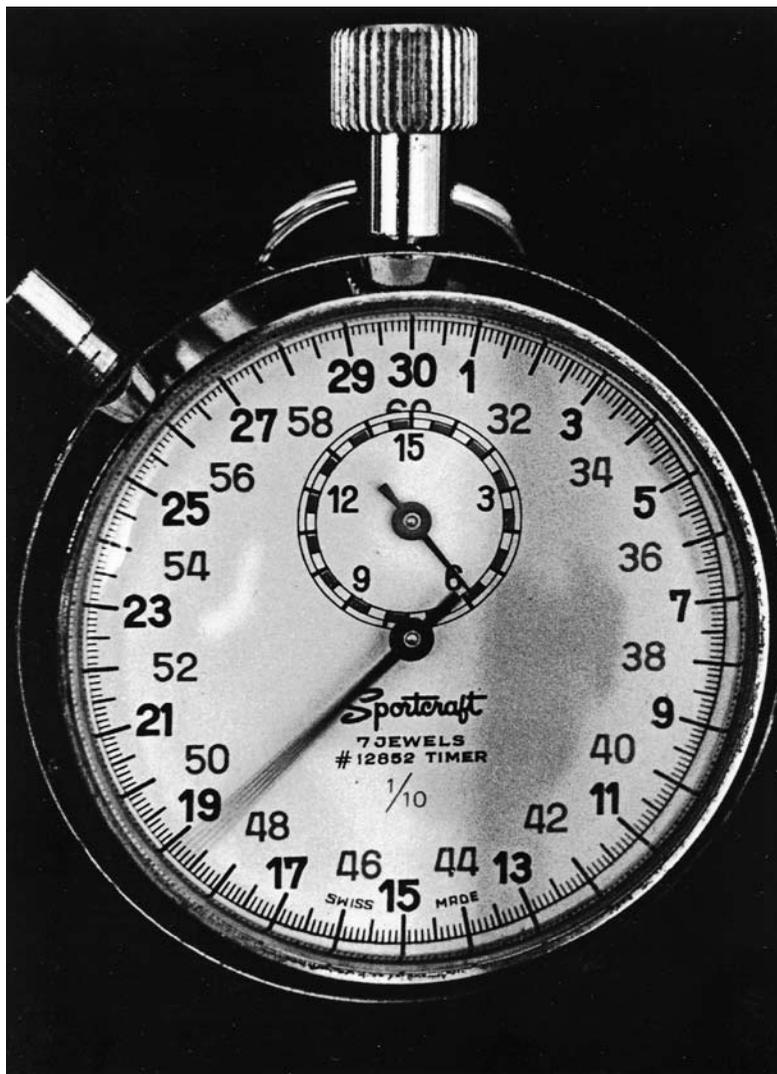
Poor, poor jack-o-lantern.
I'd never hope to be as you...

AMANDA HALVEY



JUST GIVE ME HALF A SECOND

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



CHILDHOOD

ALYSSA FINE

Childhood Is...

Childhood is taking a soapy bubble bath and

Feeling squeaky clean once Mommy

Wraps you in a warm, fluffy towel.

Childhood is curling up to sleep, but not closing your eyes

Until Daddy tucks you in so tight under the covers

And finds your little teddy bear for you to squeeze.

Childhood is the smell of the green, fresh world

After a rainstorm has passed; the wonder of

The little birds emerging after the showers have gone.

Childhood is spending the day at Grandma's house

Baking cookies and nut rolls and cakes,

Lying on the scratchy carpet to watch Mr. Rogers on TV.

Childhood is chasing the ducks around the pond at Renzie.

Childhood is feeling the freedom of outgrowing training wheels.

Childhood is wearing the same bright t-shirts over and over,

Just because your Grandma Weezie

Bought them especially for you.

Childhood is going to kindergarten in the morning,

Visiting the playground at lunch,

And capturing lightning bugs at dusk.

Childhood is a rainbow with no end in sight.

KEYS

CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE HONORABLE MENTION

KRISTINA KRAJINA



MIO PRATO SEGRETO

GLENN J. BEECH

Ho un posto in questo mondo dove mi sento molto vivo.

È quiete e tranquillo
I colori sono più vibranti,
Gli aromi più pungente,
I suoni più dolce,

È il mio prato segreto

Riposo nell'erba alta e sento come la terra mi avvolge come un figlio nel' braccie di suo
madre,

Vedo il blu, zaffiro cielo e sento libero, come un merlo sull'ala,
Aqusto forza dalle alte e bianche montagne Dolomite,
Chiudo i miei occhi ed ascolto alla brezza tesa e mi dice, "sono a casa".

È il mio prato segreto

Sono nel prato dove Nonna, quando una ragazzina, ha condotto vacche per pascolare
Sono nel prato dove Nonno, quando un ragazzino, ha tagliato l'erba per fieno

È il mio prato segreto

MY SECRET MEADOW

GLENN J. BEECH

I have a place in this world where I feel most alive.

It is quiet and peaceful,
The colors are more vibrant,
The aromas more pungent,
The sounds more soft,

It is my secret meadow

I lie in the tall grass and feel the earth envelop me like a child in its mother's arms,
I see the sapphire blue sky and feel free like a blackbird on the wing,
I gain strength from the tall, white, Dolomite Mountains,
I close my eyes and listen to the gentle breeze and it tells me, "I am home".

It is my secret meadow

I am in the meadow where my grandmother, as a young girl, led cows to graze,
I am in the meadow where my grandfather, as a young boy, cut the grass for fodder

It is my secret meadow

LAKE AND SKY

DAN SWARTZ



ERIN O'MALLEY



SNOWY MOUNTAIN RANGE

DAN SWARTZ



FROSTY LAMP

KRISTIN BIONDO



PYRAMID

DAN SWARTZ



GIVEN TIME

JONATHAN SIMA

Given time, given time, given time and time around
Given all the freakin' time in all the world,
One could hold it, one could shine, stand against the very brine
Given all the freakin' time in all the world!

So I face disgrace again?
Based upon the nature of
My design, no crime withstanding,
All is sound.
So I carry ill-repute?
Why the hell should I reboot
Guilty feelings, when they aim
To shut me down?

Given time, given time, given time and time around
Given all the freakin' time in all the world,
One could hold it, one could shine, stand against the very brine
Given all the freakin' time in all the world!

I have lowered my defenses
I have dawdled in my debt,
But the truth be told
I still am kicking hard.
Facing demons by the dozen,
There is not a demon yet
Who by Fortune can possess
The winning card!

So drop your rifle, quit your post:
Come tomorrow, you'll be toast
Given all the freakin' time in all the world!
If you loosen up your mind

You can fathom any bind
Given all the freakin' time in all the world!

Given time, given time, given time and time around
Given all the freakin' time in all the world,
One could hold it, one could shine, stand against the very brine
Given all the freakin' time in all the world!

MESSAGE TO NOBODY

MELINDA MONSON

Under the glass I am residing, their heads are turned to me
The others here all know I'm next and reared to clearly see
Take me, I'm takeable
Just as easily breakable
The words spoken foolishly, I cast them aside
I find it is best to forget all the rest
And lie back and flow with the tide
But time is different in each layer of space
And this time has shown me a very new face
With a pang in the wells, and an ache that screams for release
I can shout at the clouds, but I can't stop the rain
I can extinguish my eyes to feel your pain
But in the end still be unable to speak
The question remains, what was I to you?
What was all that we did and the things that we do
And when did all of it turn?
You can bury your secrets deep in the sand
You can stretch your heart widely over the land

But in the end still be unable to learn
So there remains inside us, a love song unsung
I'd learn the words but I'm two nights too young
And the wheel's against us, my unfortunate one
Your curse is contagious, and I'm sure you know all too well
And the others were silent, and desperately stared
At me, right then I was so unaware
They were sending a warning to me
But in the end it was best to let things be
And now I'm still takeable
But not as easily breakable
Not as much as I'd once believed
I've seen the destruction, I've seen the laments
And I've a keener sense of what I need
I cannot be held where I'm unable to speak
Or turn away from the answers I seek
But push forward--against the tide
The sound of true words will ease my mind
And all that was lost, given in, or unspoken
All of it —
I've left behind

LOVE, FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD

MELINDA MONSON

It's a twisted, funny thing
It's schizophrenic, ever-changing
An insecure chameleon
Falling at your feet in life-saving wings
Or sometimes wearing a black robe,
Carrying a sickle
Sick enough, still, to conjure its evil twin
Hate
Contradicting, tying minds into knots
There are many fields...

But here we have it!
In its purest, simplest, most beautiful form!
Hit me like a speeding train
The time I least expected it
(It enjoys playing tricks on us)
I tremble inside
And my mind races for a thousand miles
Looking into your eyes
It stops, it faints
It shouts a thousand words to my mouth
But my lips are always stubborn
And the very best I can do
Is bury myself
And whisper
"I love you"

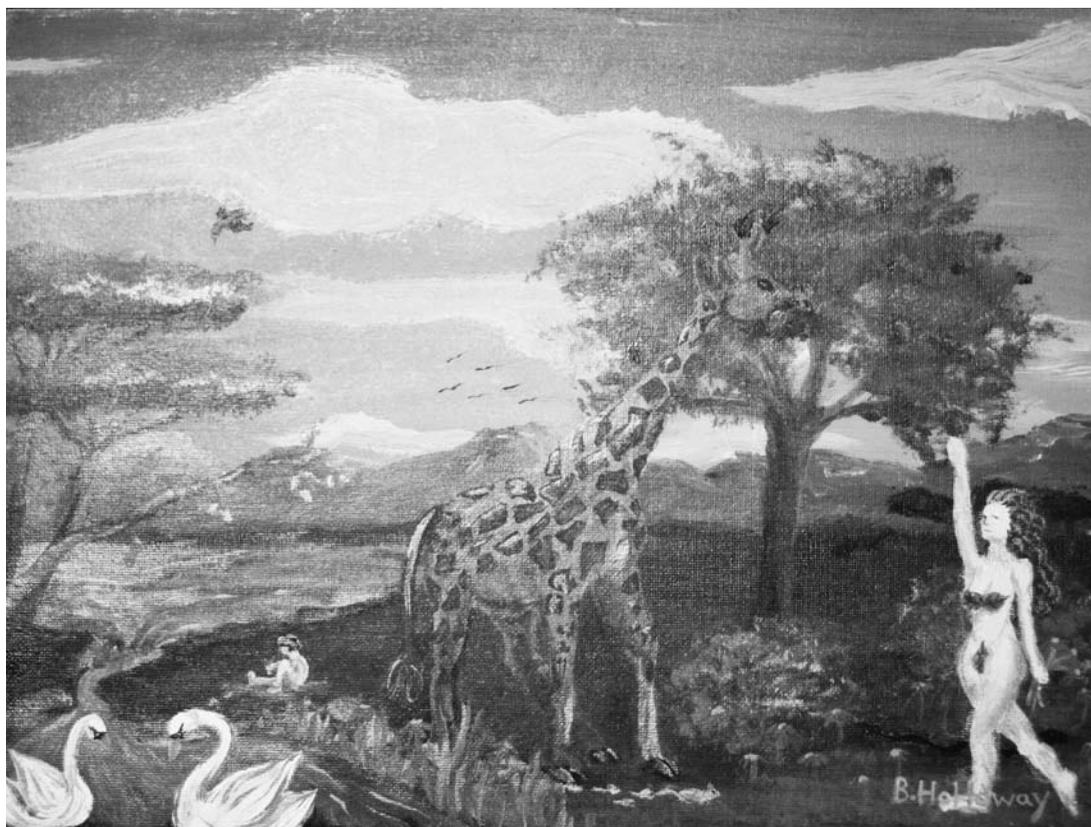
VOIDED GIFT TO A FRUITLESS LOVE

DANIELLE POSSUMATO



GARDEN OF EDEN

BROOKE HOLLOWAY



THE ORANGUTAN TREE

RACHEL POPOVICH

A bead of sweat rolls down my face. His song gets loud. I reach out and tap the tree three times. My body is burning. I turn and run as fast as I can back through the woods, across the yard, up the hill, onto the deck, and into a pair of welcoming arms.

My sisters and I visit my aunt and uncle's house every Saturday night. We have dinner there. Normally, we watch a movie and go home after that. We always enjoy the same menu: mashed potatoes, fried corn, and gravy.

One warm summer evening, Uncle T tells us we are going to take a walk in the woods after dinner. We'd been in the friendly woods before so I expect an enjoyable hike in the forest-filled backyard.

When we reach the end of the yard, he leads us down a path we have never taken before. Apprehensively, we follow him on the barely visible, weed-covered path to a clearing.

It is like a completely different world. The air is full of a musty haze. A lone tree stands in the center of the clearing.

The tree is very tall, but much more slender than all of the other trees around it. When I look up, I see very few branches belonging to this particular tree. Its off color sets it aside from the rest like a peacock among pigeons. A patch of moss covers the exposed roots.

My uncle starts singing. His deep voice fills the emptiness surrounding us.

*Oh oh oh oh, Oh oh oh oh,
Mr. Orangutan, Oh oh oh oh*

He looks at our confused faces. My oldest sister, Laura, even breaks into a smile. He explains that he is calling Mr. Orangutan to come down from the Tree.

Sarah's mouth falls slightly ajar as she squints up at the tree.

He tells us to find a stick and to start chanting with him. We do as we are told.

After retrieving a stick, I look up at the trunk uneasily. I can't see any orangutans, or anything else for that matter.

“Those orangutans must be real sneaky,” my sister, Sarah, thinks aloud.

Uncle T continues to sing the ominous chant as he bends down to pick up his own stick. I wonder silently if the sticks are for protection.

My question is answered when my uncle says, “Ok, now he’ll come down if we each tap our sticks against the tree three times.”

Unwillingly, we cautiously veer forward.

Uncle T starts the chant again.

He reaches forward.

We reach forward.

My arm trembles as I gasp for a breath in the thick air.

Simultaneously, we tap the tree three times.

One.

Two.

Three.

It is at this time when I realize that I did not want to meet Mr. Orangutan because I don’t like the idea of an orangutan appearing out of thin air and climbing down a tree to meet me. I don’t know if he’s friendly or if he wants to eat me. I bolt back through the woods, across the yard, up the hill, onto the deck, and into E’s welcoming arms screaming the whole way.

I am desperately trying to catch my breath when Laura and Sarah come up behind me. They, too, had run away from Mr. Orangutan.

We visit the tree after that night, but it always ends the same way: my sisters and I sprinting out of the woods screaming at the top of our lungs. We never actually see those inconspicuous orangutans.

SNOWY NIGHT

SECOND PLACE, THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR VISUAL ART

KRISTINA KRAJINA



WHEN THE FISH BIT THE WORM

CATHERINE BALL

Once there was
an eagle
soaring high.

There was
a morning glory
loving the sky.

And a book
filled with
words of wisdom.

But then the fish bit the worm.

Now the eagle
has landed
on a tree marked
with a red X.

The morning glory will
see nothing but
wallpaper while
in glass.

The book
is shut
on a dusty shelf
in the back.

And the fish is
in an empty
bucket
on the edge
of a well.

GANG WAR

ADAM J. HOWELLS

Glittering gold glistens on the ground.
Stars soak into street pastures, now yellow.
Houses are aflame, but all is sound.
Fighting ceases, fists go down.
Eyes are glancing all around.
Tears dry, then run some more.
Differences are buried—
Love is in store.

It's an illusion...
Darkness devours.

...

..

.

Red pastures.

DIAMOND IN THE SKY

MELINDA MONSON

A weary, weary little light
Is straining so that eyes may gaze upon
An ever-disappearing beauty
Our children may never realize
Tiny diamond in the sky
With only a crescent of silver for company
Floating in an abyss
Created by the city
I cannot lay upon the ground
To look up and dream as I, a child, have
But we are stranded on the Earth
With only a cryptic message as more and more
Stars abandon us
A subtle hint to look at ourselves
The dying planet we live on
We have drank the last drop of milk
From our mother
And she is wasting away
The sky is whispering this to us
Each and every day
For the human race has been stripped
Of its privilege of beauty
A punishment for the spoiled child
The daytimes bring forth the angry burn of our father
Due time, he will settle this once and for all
Old Sol will engulf us in fury
Every other blank star is a distant warning
But once our father Sun has exposed
The truth of our weakness
All the sky's diamonds will
Explode back into existence

As if to say they told us so
But with the following anguish of humanity
Our eyes may be too watered to see them
Or we will curse the beauty of
A fiery, vengeful star
Either way—
I will make sure I travel to
The belt of the Earth
So that I may lay upon the grass
And gaze towards the worlds beyond
Letting them know this child is not afraid of the dark

WINTERTIME

CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE HONORABLE MENTION

JONATHAN SIMA

When in the wintertime, when in the snowy climb,
 Into the dusk I go.
When as in olden days, brass bronze and golden days,
 Dark dim and bolder ways,
 Covered in snow.

Here lie my bones with the rest of the ages,
 Here lie my memories, too.
Though I shall live on inside of these pages,
 I'll never be whole until
 I am with you.

Deep in the darkest deep, caught in an endless sleep,
 Still I've to stave off the cold.
Yours is the only warmth I've left inside of me,
 Though it's the death of me,
 Strong to its hold.

Here lie my bones with the rest of the ages,
 Broken and hidden from view.
Though I shall live on inside of these pages,
 I'll never find peace until
 I am with you.

Such are these windy days; such are these stormy waves,
 Every time you linger by.
Cast from the light of day, my soul is swept away,
 Into eternity
 Time after time.

Here lie my bones with the rest of the ages,
Here lie my scattered dreams, too.
Though I shall live on inside of these pages,
Let's face it, I'll never
Find peace without you!

I CAN'T USE MY BIKE TODAY

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



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