

half-mast
ups through its
way it billows an
the red, white an
much they reall
they lower

10



Dedicated to Dr. Wilma McClarty.

Legacy '97-'98

Half-mast

The flag's half-mast for you
The wind whips through its stitching
and the way it billows and blows
even in the red, white and blue
shows how much they really miss you.

Yesterday they lowered the flag
Today we sat in solemn rows
in shades of black and grey.
Tear-stained cheeks, furrowed brows
show how much they really miss you.

The flag's back to the top of the pole
and the bustle presses on.

Late for class, late for work
People move on, while she moves slow.

Her flag's still half-mast for you.

They can forget the way it felt,
but her heart won't ever let go.

She wears it in her gait

She wears it in her glow.

Her heart's half-mast for you.

--Angela Peach

Editor's Note

Producing this year's *Legacy* has been an adventure. Instead of having Quick Print publish our little volume, I decided to tackle the project myself as part of a money-saving scheme. It took awhile to become re-acquainted with PageMaker, but after a few frustrating wrestling matches with the copier, what you have in your hands is, *voilà!*, the *Legacy*.

A big thank you to all those who submitted works for the '97-'98 *Legacy*. It's often difficult to flush poets out of the woodwork since poetry is such a personal form of expression. Nevertheless, I was able to entice a good many of you to enter your poems and prose pieces in this year's contest.

Prizes were given for 1st and 2nd places in both the poetry and prose categories. Only selected works were included in the *Legacy*.

Again, thank you to all the brave souls who entered.

Rachelle Newbold, editor

"Untitled"-a response

What were you expecting? (then again, what was I?)

An indictment?

A plea?

Well my lawyer's bag is fresh out of both and
your sweet Georgia puddin's still on my tongue

slow and seductive as

molasses or better yet as strawberry preserves

or

you and all your (*is-that-what-they-meant-by Southern?*)
charm

Every day

Every day

Every day

keeps me noticing

you

not noticing

my disappointment

my friend

you are too much with me

--Mikhaile Spence

M

How I wish,

that for a brief eternity

Caught

In lingering good-byes,

That your grey eyes would

Capture Me--

holding almost to impropriety.

--Bill James

Justice

Hard, cold footsteps
on their way to forever.
His face is murder
his hands are danger
he holds the devil inside.

Outside they chant
they scream.

Some for his life
Some for his blood
Most for his soul.

Heavy, metal doors
stand between him
and the end of his reign.
His eyes are cold
his lips are tight
he holds the past inside.

Outside they clap
they wait.
Some for his death
Some for his salvation
Most for their peace.

Strong, leather straps
are fastened to his legs
to his body and mind.
His heart beats faster
his eyes plead forgiveness

he holds anticipation inside.

Outside they sigh
they applaud.

Some for his finish
Some for his injustice
Most for their pain.

--Angela Peach

(Infatuation '97)

This '97 October is just
like '96.

Same cold evening,
same wide coat lapels.

Discovering again that
no matter

how hard I clench
my teeth my fists
things dont change
(I still breathe).

Its the same,
this '97.

Only your eyes
have changed.

--Rachelle Newbold

words, words, words--
they flow from the tongues
of prolific men like melting butter
they swim across the page like fish
they spill behind blinking curser

my mouth wont speak.
my pen wont write.
my keys wont type.

ideas cram up,
plug up, stop.

--Christy Yingling

****1st place poetry****

Who?

'Your great-grandpa, he was
tough as nails,
he was a good man
and you are heartless!'

Momma sobbed into his
flowers and I, well, I
rubbed my feet into the grass
all nervous and bored.

(I wanted to believe her but
I wanted to leave.)

Momma, he was so sick.
And I only saw him a couple times--ever--
and he was so wrinkled and sagged so sad
into the chair in the nursing home where
all us kids hated to go.

'Dont you remember the ice cream?'

Oh Momma, I was so little, but you know I think I do.
I think when I look at the flowers by the grave I can
taste
vanilla
and feel a cold tile floor through my sandals when it
was so

hot outside
in Florida
in summer
in Great-Grandpas car that got sticky with happy
sweat
on vinyl, and with dripping vanilla and I dont think
he ever once minded.

But all I remember--really remember--is that Listerine and
soap

they sanitized us children with every time we left the place
where my great grandpa

(who was tough as nails)

sat in the chair and rubbed his feet
into the floor, all nervous and bored.

--Cherie Priest

Untitled

She sees the long days
before her streaming out
with colors of black
& grey or
dull other scattered
hues
might I color her life
with my companionship
I would gladly live
in darkness
forever

--James Watson

Meaningful conversations
Have been
Sucked
Into the black
Hole . . .
Where all
The missing mates
To my
Socks
Must also be.

And so
I'm left
Collecting
All my mismatched
Socks
In a
Drawer
Along with
All your
One
Sided
Conversations.

--Rhonda S. Rossier

****1st place prose****

She doesn't bite her fingernails anymore

I stared at her hands as we talked. I observed the baby fat gone from her suddenly slender fingers. Beautiful, silver rings perched elegantly, and she twisted them as we talked. Superficially. Of shopping, and boys, and movies, and old times, steering around the deep gap digging itself between us, away from the new lives we've both begun apart from the world we occupied once together. Her fingers strummed the table top in an irregular rhythm, punctuating a slight silent space, and I noticed the blood red polish carefully applied. She glanced at her watch and smoothed her hair. Time's up. We both smiled and stood to go. "It was nice that we could lunch together." "See you in another day or two." I watched as she left and realized she doesn't bite her fingernails anymore.

--Angela Peach

Overture

Your words are a press of chords
Against my ear, your voice
A symphony I heard once
When I was young--
Soft and green
And full of fancies.

I have come to know the tempo
Of your breaths, how they rise
And ebb and slur
Into mine, the rhythm
Of your footfalls
Stepping into line.

But this is only the overture,
There are movements that are not yet known;
Sounds made out of memory,
Muted from the past.
It is not all resonant, or cut clear
By wit or strain, yet still
I know the progression of each phrase,
Your voice, the press of chords
Against my ear, and
The symphony--
I know it by heart.

--Jennifer-Mae Barizo

Sweet, Soul Music

Sweet melody escapes her lips.
She moves with hurried sorrow
as the weight increases her hips.
Her brow is trickled with the sweat of desire
and I feel freedom in her bosom
and see history burning her fire.
The black smooth of her skin glistens
rich, under the scorching sun
as the chains of bondage pause to listen.
Her prison walls are caving in
as her mouth whistles triumph,
overcoming hate and forgiving sin.
She is climbing Jacob's Ladder.
Life is a stop along her way.
Nothing the devils say matters.

--Angela Peach

Drug

Waiting for you
 is killing me
 Shutting me down
 like a wind-up doll
 with no more batteries
to keep me going
 going
 going
 like some energetic pink bunny
But I'm still waiting
 Feeling my strength drain away
Not caring
 Only wanting
To feed my addiction to you
 like a junkie
 desperate
 with fever and chills
 empty-headed
 blank-faced
 hollow-eyed
desperate for
the next hit
 of you
desperate to
infuse you into my blood
And feel the high

--Mikhaile Spence

Vision

I stumble out of bed--fall out might be more accurate--and pull on my running gear. As soon as my shoes are tied and my hair pulled back, I head outside. My legs have learned the routine of my running route, which is a good thing because my brain is still sleeping. I go straight towards the trails that criss-cross the hills behind campus. My brain has to wake up in order to keep from stumbling over the roots. It starts processing information in order of importance: right foot, left foot, jump creek, avoid hitting tree, take the path to the left . . . Once fully conscious, I begin to take in my surroundings. The haze is just starting to clear from the hills, and I can see outlines of the trees. They are almost completely empty of their leaves, allowing me to see farther than usual.

Three months ago these trees were still thick and green. I remember how their density amazed my prairie-accustomed eyes on my first run. Back then everything was new and different. Then my mind was occupied with the thousands of new names and faces I was trying to remember. I was overwhelmed with a new-found freedom from the familiar. I had just said goodbye to family and friends and was feeling so strong and independent. I was worried about keeping a 4.0, working twenty-some hours a week, and balancing a social life at the same time. I stressed about the first B I got on a French test and considered dropping the class because it might bring down my GPA. But that was then.

I decide to take the trail that bends around to the left and up to the highest point. I sprint up the last part of the hill and then slow to a jog as the trail levels out. A gust of wind whispers through the tree-tops and knocks loose a few more leaves. I watch one of them break free from its branch and meander down to the forest floor, joining the millions of other leaves that make up the colorful carpet I'm running on. The forest seems empty. I look back at my thoughts from three months ago and laugh. Now I smile and wave at all of my new friends; I still can't remember most of their names. I realize that change only stays change when it is constant, and even what was so new has become familiar. Now I know that I need my family, and independence can be very lonely. I've found out that I will still be an okay person without a 4.0, that French will ruin my GPA, and that the experience will be worth it.

I stop and look across the clearing haze at the next hill over. I can see through the trees now, and they don't seem nearly as dense as they did before. Things have freed up in my mind too. I have grown over the last three months. I have learned how to break over the challenges and reach the tip of the hill. I can also see that the seasons will continue to change, the forest will grow thick and crowded again, and there will be more hills to climb before I reach the end of the trail. There will be times ahead that won't be as clear as this, and my vision will be blocked by more worries and problems. But even then I will just be prompted to keep growing and learning until the next autumn when the leaves will fall, and I'll be able to clearly see my way again.

Eventually the sound of distant traffic breaks my train of thought, and I reluctantly head back towards the dorm. I have run far enough for today: far enough to improve my vision.

--Melissa Wysong

* * *

Contact

Reaching out to touch
Someone,

digitized, mobilized, computerized, miniturized
laptop, solar cell, mobile phone, fiber optic,
gigabyte, megahertz, satellite, Compu-serve . . .

but further apart than ever before.

--Bill James

****2nd place poetry****

why is it that
what ought to be
and what must be are so often contrary?
as if love,
having played the role
of fairy godmother
one too many times
rips off her costume
five minutes before curtain,
ducks out the splintered back door,
and disappears into the
blue-black infamy beyond,
leaving me standing alone
in the reticent silence of the wings
waiting for my cue to venture out
onto the cold, hard pine of the stage
and, amid the thunder of a
hollow, austere auditorium
explain what happened
to the audience
of you

--Jennifer Pester

Say "Ahhh"

Just checking to see
if you ever
smile inside-out
or upside-down
(when you stand
on your head
in a shadow of light)
Or maybe it's 'uz
I'm looking from
the outside-in
that makes me think
that you too might be
wrongside-out.

--Rachelle Newbold

Ungrateful

I hear the slickness in her voice
and I cringe on the inside,
as her perfectly red
blood-red
fresh kill
nails
run through her long, brown hair
(chestnut really
with these golden glimmers),
and she sighs, out loud
as if she's got somewhere else
she'd rather be
than there
with him.
And he laps it up like sugar water
Champagne
so eager, puppy eager to please,
to make her want him.
I want him, and I want to scream.

--Angela Peach

This should be three different letters, all
addressed to you

Men lie. They lie shamelessly. Every last one of them. The musicians, the poets, the class presidents, and editors of the newspaper. They all lie. And the saddest, most frustrating thing of all is that they still make me believe them. Them with their little games and quiet, endearing charm. Their smell, their size. Their weakness and their strength. They make me smile and cry and ask myself intimate, imposing questions to which I have no answers.

They . . . you.

You keep me locked in my room and send me screaming out into the damp night. You leave me sitting with obtrusive lumps in my throat, falling back on all I know how to be--nothing.

I went to class again today. Not that I make a habit of not going, but today was different. I sat there, wishing I couldn't smell the soap you showered with or see the tiny droplets of rain resting on those long, dark lashes (my weakness) that drape your eyes. I took notes furiously although I didn't understand anything the teacher was saying. I always do that--try to distract my mind from runaway thoughts that overtake it. It worked pretty well today. At least until you touched my arm and said something silly about me having the sniffles and did that pouty thing that unravels my concentration. Then I fell apart inside.

But you couldn't tell, could you? I just took a deep breath, glanced at the clock, and put my pen down to stretch the writer's cramp out of my wrist.

I envy your exuberance. And you, I think, envy my even-tempered reserve.

I think I decided how much I could love you when you took off your baseball cap (on backwards, of course) and prayed before that test you ended up getting a 68 on.

But you? I don't know what you're thinking or why. I guess that's why I sort of wish I could escape you altogether--so I wouldn't even wonder . . . not as much anyway. Unfortunately for me, that (escaping) is impossible. I guess if it's not meant to be, then eventually the feeling will wear away and I'll be able to look at you without wishing it was you I'd be going home to at the end of every day.

--Mikhaile Spence

My Country 'Tis of Thee

the Boys of Summer
ran away
and left her to cry
alone
on the playground

the boys in Blue
walk her streets
in the sweltering
July heat
She is bursting
at her seams
with
restless
crowds

the boys in D.C.
police her progress
stealing her glory
buying her fame
for themselves

and still
she holds her head high
and walks in beauty

--Mikhaila Spence

Lemonade

The summer sun
beats sticky on my back
as I strain to lift my hand.
I smell the exhaust
as you back out of my life
and I wave my iron will.
My tight-lipped smile
locks with key the words
I know I'll say.
Off you go to conquer life,
in I go for lemonade.

--Angela Peach

Reflections on a Gone City

Oh Mister San Fransisco
you are so far gone now
your laser lit eyes
& your golden gated back
stain my brain with a desire
to walk the sparkling streets
of your embracing midnight

Oh Mister San Fransisco
you are so drunk
wallowing in the liquor-filled
sidewalk puddles
of your consciousness
underneath bridges
& through long tunnels
to poppy-seed pastry shops

Oh Mister San Fransisco
you are so beautiful
elegantly clothed
in a filthy thought
of an Alcatraz dawn
fading city lights
of beat generations
that were starving naked

Oh Mister San Fransisco
I cannot revive you
from this gutter
wretched--bleeding amidst a
Height-Ashbury memory
that I never had

Oh Mister San Fransisco
you are a ridiculous old man
muttering streetcar blues
by a Chinatown pizza shop
of scarred veins and trains
of thought--oblivious
to my wanderings

And Oh Mister San Fransisco
you are so far gone now
unmoved in my mind
still--silent
and I know your tide
rises and falls
regardless of my presence

--James Watson

In These Tangled Words

In these tangled words books try to say
What they know. Snapshots try to
Tell our secrets. But our story is not
In picture books of little girls who
Went astray posing like
Skeletons before the
Backdrop of a life. The settings
Are not concert halls, or faces grinning
Beneath a peachbud sky,
Stages or glaring screens.

The story is made of you and you
And you and all those we do not remember
But we never forget - our lost cities
Our frozen love affairs, our faint songs
Whose words still stick to the
Roofs of our mouths and make our
Mouths dry; all these things and more
And more and more; silly things, unspeakable
Things we laugh over in the light and
Weep over in our sleep; lips we
Knew too well, the food that never
Filled us, the hands that understood.

There is no sequel; we live. We die.
We die, we die, without an
Epilogue or a proper end, without second starts
Or resolution. Yet these tangled words
Still try to tell our story.
Snapshots try to tell the secrets
We have never told a soul.

Moon

misty yellow
crescent jewel,
adorning the navel
of an African queen.

--Bill James

The Spill

I keep seeing you at 7-11
and at first I was sort of scared.
After two years and change
the hurt still hasn't gone away.
But it doesn't sting that way
the way it used to back then
when the wound was fresh.
But since then I've licked it,
actually picked myself up
(which was hard at first,
me being so heavy about it and all).
And now as you buy your magazine
and I pretend to just notice you,
I realize fault and who owns it
and blame and shame
and other such nasty words
kind of begin to melt.
They're not taken completely
not gone
but liquid
and that's easily wiped away.

--Angela Peach

Travelin'

I wonder--

when I see a car
running on its last leg

loaded with the necessities
of life--

Are these transients
traveling to the land
of Milk and Honey or
returning--

Disappointed?

--Bill James

****2nd place prose****

The First Day of School

"Seesuewongawong," I said to the tuk tuk (taxi) driver.. He shook his head and drove off. I looked at my watch. I had 15 minutes before class. I had to catch a tuk tuk immediately if I was going nto get there on time. I hate being late. But this was even worse, I would be late for my first day of teaching. When I applied to be a student missionary in Thailand, I had no idea catching tuk tuks would be an essential skill. One I didnt seem to have. As another tuk tuk neared, I waved frantically, but it didnt stop. Neither did the next, or the next. Finally one pulled up. I ran to the window.

"Seesuewongawong," I said desperately.

"O-K," he agreed.

"Hab baht," I said holding up five fingers. If you pay more than *hab* (five) baht, you are being cheated. I didnt want to be cheated.

"*Sip* baht," he replied, also holding up five fingers. I nodded and gratefully climbed in the back. Once in the tuk tuk, I wondered what *sip* meant. When we arrived at Seesuewongawong, I gave the driver five baht. He frowned, "*Sip* baht."

I lifted up five fingers, "Hab baht."

"*Sip* baht," he replied, displaying ten fingers.

Then he started talking in Thai. All I recognized was the word *sip*. I had been taken. I reluctantly gave him five more baht. *How could I have been so stupid?* I wondered, as I walked into the school. I didnt have long to kick myself, though, because a lady came up to me.

"You teacher," she demanded.

'Yes; I said smiling.

'Come; she said and then started walking away.

I followed her as she pointed at classrooms. 'You teach, here, here, here . . . ' She left me at the last one. Forty kindergartners looked up at me. I tried to be confident as I walked in.

'Stand up; I said, making a rising motion with my hands. They all stood up. 'How are you?' I asked.

'How are you?' They echoed.

'I'm fine; I said.

'I'm fine; they repeated.

Yikes. They don't know any English! I quickly decided to teach them a song. At least they could repeat.

'I'm a little teapot; I said.

'I teapot; some of the children replied. Others were crawling under desks, standing on chairs, and *doing their homework?*

'I'm a *little* teapot; I repeated, using an animated voice and trying desperately to get their attention.

'I lille teapot; a few of the kids responded, but now most were playing.

I cast an anxious look at their Thai teacher. She was ignoring the commotion and grading papers. I didn't want to bother her, after all, they were paying me to teach. I was supposed to know how to. I had to get the kids attention.

I started loudly singing: 'I'm a little teapot short and stout. This is my handle, this is my spout.' I made exaggerated movements to indicate my handle and spout. 'When I get all steamed up; *Oh yeah, I know about steamed up.* 'Hear me shout; *If only I could.* 'Tip me over and pour me out.' I leaned over and made a pouring noise.

The kids imitated me, except they leaned all the way

over and fell in a heap, squealing with delight. English class was a huge hit. But I didn't want to be a hit. I wanted a little control.

'Okay class,' I said in my best teaching voice. 'Sit down.'

Nothing.

'Sit down,' I said, motioning with my hands. After repeating my request several times and using the evil eye, I finally had them seated. I pulled up a little chair and sat in it. Then I said, 'stand up.' I stood up, and the class followed me. I said, 'sit down,' and I sat down. The class again responded.

We spent the remaining time learning the English words for stand up and sit down. When my time was up, I said good-bye. The kids mobbed me. They wanted to shake my hand, touch my hair, grab my leg. Their teacher looked up and said a few harsh words in Thai. The students melted back to their seats, and perfect order was restored. It was incredible. Now if only I could do that.

I took a deep breath and walked into the next classroom. Forty children looked up. *Will this morning ever end?* After 90 harrowing minutes it finally did. I felt a rush of joy as I walked out of the school gates. I was almost done. Now all I needed was to catch a tuk tuk back home. *Here goes nothing!*

--Sari Fordham

Again

There's a certain sameness
about the pattern of the road
Tires spin, rotate
one more time
on the exact places
crossing the empty spaces
again.

There's a certain sameness
about the buzz of the neon
Light flickers, quivers
this exact booth
where I sat with him
talking above the din
again.

There's a certain sameness
about the pattern of the road
pavement swept up
underneath
leaving behind pain
leaving behind shame
again.

--Angela Peach

The Pieces

The merry laughter of Christmas cheer bubbles through the room as the family trims the tree. Everyone is in matching holiday theme sweaters, all are enjoying their egg nog, and most the scratchy old records crooning Christmas cheer. The group appears the essence of Hallmark cardness--perfect bliss, contentment, and loads of sentimentality.

Then it happens. As if by a pre-laid, sadistic plan, Ed drops the star. It falls from his hand and lands in thousands of tiny, little glass pieces. A hush overtakes the room as everyone stares morbidly at the fallen star. Grandma is the first to break the silence as she shrieks, "The star, the star! Oh my heavens, the star!" Then, without warning, she turns into something very scary, "Ed, you moron! How could you be so careless! That's the STAR!! What will top the tree? What will we do? You've ruined Christmas for everyone . . ." And then underneath her breath, "I can't believe Sharon married that bozo . . ." No one else is moving. They are all just awestruck, watching Grandma drive herself off the deep end.

Ed just stands there looking foolish. Sharon rushes over to defend him. "Mother! Get a hold of yourself. It was an accident. We'll get you something else to top the tree. Something better!"

But Grandma will not listen, "For 37 years that star has sat on the top of our tree. What will Christmas be without it? What will I do? Do you realize what he's done?!" She then bursts into tears and runs from the room. Of

course this sets off the younger kids who all begin to cry. The rest of the family splits up between Ed and Sharon, the kids, the turkey burning in the oven, and Grandpa sneaks off to comfort Grandma.

The room sits dark and aware of the deep-seated frustrations that the star held inside its glass. The Christmas when Shirley came in and announced she was pregnant, the time Sharon never came home at all, the year of Sarah's heart attack, the incident with the tinsel. It all had been placed on the top of the tree each year, safe inside the hand-made star.

And now the pieces lay on the floor, on the table, on the gifts, under the couch. And the feelings seeped onto the carpet, up the walls, and into the air. The pieces could no longer hold them in.

No one bothered to sweep the mess up for another few days. They waited until the room had lost its weight, and the feelings had begun to evaporate. But Christmas was different after that. Nothing felt the same. Grandma blamed it on the egg nog, Ed apologized for his carelessness, and the kids were busy with their new toys. But something was missing . . . or something new was there. Maybe the long lost pain they'd forgotten to feel, the hurt they'd never shown. Whatever it was, it caused a change, somewhere in the midst of the pieces.

--Angela Peach

The Joy of Fossil Fuels

Squeeze. Click. Squirt. Gush.

Hot indeed. Something about
a snake's butt and a wagon rutt.

Smell it. The Gasoline.

Everybody does.

The man inside
with his name on his shirt.

The stray. I'll say I was
Breathing it deep. Could hardly help it.

The way it smoked under my skirt
and between my toes.

Something nice about being a flirt.

Trucker in the big Mack blows
a kiss and honks like a sick goose.

(Summer turns these feelings loose)

Sunglasses slip down my nose.

Adjustment.

Grin off into space.

Sort of like . . . no, not really.

Other customers stare off too,
but in that embarrassed way.

Like their dogs are whizzing
in the neighbor's yard
and they're pretending not to notice.

--Cherie Priest

Prufrock's Attempt

Having weighed it all a million times,
Pondering the question, I open my mouth.
If a cave man, I would take you by force.
If Don Juan, I would woo you with words.
Alas, I am not Lazarus from the grave
but an insecure child who reads too much.

I need you fills my head,
but my mouth gushes-- 'Did you know,
I just read, Have you ever wondered.'

Maddening rambles--
covering
silent cries.

--Bill James

You Have Me

Dont you dare think
that I'm just here
like some monument,
never moving
never changing
I could just disappear.
Dont take for granted
that I'm going to stay
that you can call
upon my charm
when you need
someone on your arm.
Because I wont be there,
and I wont be her.
If you want me,
WANT ME
with desire
with burning fire.
Not because
everyone has someone
and you have me.

--Angela Peach

This is the marketplace
where we exchange futures, securities,
mutual commodities, and trusts...

There was one company,
a major piece in my portfolio
Suddenly, without warning
experienced a major corporate takeover.

Two corporations merged
(without my vote),
without warning
(I'm no financial analyst,
but I should have seen the signs);
I was left a stockholder in the minority.

The index took a sharp nosedive;
and it left me in a depression.

Here I sit, on the trading floor
I stubbornly cling to my
few common shares that remain.

I feel tempted to sell out,
cash in what little I have left,
and liquidate all my assets.

Or perhaps, I need some more time
to let all my investments mature,
and wait for better dividends.

--Kerensa Anne Juniper

Releasing the Cub

He's very handsome. I don't think that any girl could deny it if she saw him as I do--sitting at the piano, writing music, his long, dark eyelashes nearly brushing his cheeks as he bends over the page. The neatly trimmed beard outlines his jaw and blends into the dense, wavy mass of mahogany brown hair, shining faintly in the lamp light. He moves, and the muscles in his arms shift faintly, defined by hours of basketball. If he stood, his head would more than top my five foot, five inches--but slender-waisted and broad shouldered.

A vision leaps before my mind's eye: an image with cowlicked brown curls and huge blue eyes--bouncing up and down, always bouncing. A high voice that squeaks with excitement: 'Abbie, play with me! Abbie, read to me! Abbie, come outside with me! Play the piano for me! Draw with me. Teach me to draw, Abbie!'

The vision fades, changes--a bit taller, more angles. 'Abbie, let's swordfight. Let's play dinosaurs and ponies. You want to go for a bike ride? Have you written any more of that story?' Imitating everything I did, always wanting my opinion. We grew up in the eighties in the heat and quiet of a little Florida town where a garden hose and a few plastic animals afforded hours of entertainment--the pieces of stories I still tell.

I kept waiting for that horrible little boy stage, but it never came. At some point the shrieking voice dropped to a mellow bass. The beard came abruptly too. And then he was taller than me--major adjustment. The piano... No, he

doesn't ask me to play for him anymore. Now he plays for me.

He's brilliant. They can't measure his scores on standardized tests. He plays the piano for hordes of local musical organizations. He argues with Dad about the nuances of computers and writes music that angels will sing.

He never learned to be casual, though, which was probably my fault. We didn't talk peripherally. Oh, we had conversations to be sure--awake until two in the morning discussing books, computers, music, teachers, Nintendo, God, dating, Heaven, and why fluorescent lights make that funny noise.

We plotted and loved and lost and read and dreamed together. I would never be writer if he hadn't pushed, hadn't pried, hadn't wanted more and more and more. He knows all the little private jokes that no one else understands. The "I love you" that seems to strangle in the throats of so many adolescents comes easily to him. "What are you thankful for?" they asked him at worship. "My sister," he said without hesitation.

The tears come as I revert abruptly to the present in the first vibrant chord of the new composition. The voice on the phone rings clearly in my head: "Is Hughes there?" A fluting voice of one of those sophomore girls with willowy bodies, long hair, and short skirts. I repress the urge to turn and go back to my room. Outside I laugh, but inside I'm a mother wolf ready to kill in defense of her cub.

"Why are you calling my brother?" I had wanted to ask. "You don't need to talk to him! He's only sixteen! Why don't you and all the rest of those doe-eyed sharks go back to the ocean?!"

But I didn't say anything like that. 'Hughes?'

He stops playing and turns bright gray eyes to me.

'Yes?'

'A girl called for you.'

'Okay, I'll call her back in a minute. Abbie?' He arrests my retreat down the hall.

'Yes?'

'Would you show me how to draw animals this evening? We haven't done that in a long time.'

I smile and bite my lip, turn away so he won't see my eyes. *No, we haven't done that in years, Hughes. In fact, you haven't asked me to teach you anything in quite a while. Not that I've stopped. But to be asked . . .* 'Sure.' I smile aloud and walk away.

--Abbie Hilton

radioactivity

instability of elements
that rotate around my nucleus
unleash the power reaction

which could efficiently
power dreams and lives
within lead and granite boundary

yet also holds potential
to burn, warp, and mutate.
if all control is lost.

handle with tongs and
impermeable suit
even then, you can be afraid.

its taking too many
years--millions--for half-life
to make me a less offensive substance.

the only hope for your
survival lies not in my
destruction; I cant go that way.

pray the glowing element
held at arms length
can . . . and will . . . change.

--Kerensa Anne Juniper

Degory

once was a haberdasher,
a fine one they say. In England
he knew chinas and cherrywoods
but he knew not God.

His heart took his wife his children
his God to Holland.

Strangers' acceptance, strangers' language
were lonely to foreign ears.

So he made himself a sailor passenger
on a small crowded boat
with God's blessings.

May God save the King
(who couldn't care less).

He watched the periwinkle foamed gray waves
surrender to unfamiliarity of trees and coast.

This husband father whose soft hands knew
needles and threads and felts for fine hats,
this man died of winter.

Left them one more body to bury.

Oh yes, and his name
and his widow
and his babies,
who later made the same trip
(followed in his wake).

(God bless America my father says, and he knows
his own eyes still roll with the color of wide virgin waves)
--Cherie Priest

My hunger
growls
will not be fed will
not be fed
and hollow I am
I rattle around in
my bones and
hunger and
want

--Rachelle Newbold

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