

A woman with dark hair and bangs is looking over her shoulder towards the camera. She is wearing a detailed Renaissance-style costume, including a white ruffled collar, a red and gold patterned bodice, and a black skirt with a white belt. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

# RENAISSANCE

2008



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/renaissance200824wayn>

# **RENAISSANCE**

The Writers' and Artists' Magazine  
of  
Wayne Community College  
Goldsboro, North Carolina  
Volume 24, May 2008

## **Dedication**

This twenty-fourth issue of

*Renaissance*

is dedicated to

**Rosalyn Lomax**  
English Instructor/College Student Success

For her dedication above the call of duty  
For her eagle eyes  
For her love of the language and her creativity  
For her inspiration she gives to all who know her  
For her generous spirit  
For her 21 years as *Renaissance* editor *extraordinaire*

## **STUDENT AWARDS**

Cover Design & Art ..... Gabriela Knox  
Essay ..... Margaret Tilghman-Vaughn  
Poetry ..... Deniz Alemdar

## **EDITORS**

Rosalyn Lomax    Kathryn Spicer    Jeff Williams

Marian Westbrook, Editor *Emerita*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Faculty

Margaret Boothe Baddour and Torey Romero

Staff

Theresa White-Wallace

Student

Jamila Johnson

Educational Support Technologies Department

Majena Howell

Wade Hallman, Brent Hood, Ron Lane

Alice Wadsworth

Student Government Association

and

The Artists and Writers

Andy Rajski and Candice Johnson, whose poetry is published  
in this issue of *Renaissance*, are winners of the  
2008 NC Writers Network Gilbert-Chappell Award.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission.  
Copyright 2008 *Renaissance*

Views expressed are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect  
the views of the editors or this institution.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Satyrs .....	1 .....	Deniz Alemdar, Associate in Arts
Daddy's Little Girl .....	2 .....	Margaret Tilghman-Vaughn, Human Services Technology
<i>Dirge for November</i> .....	3 .....	Matthew Belk, Associate in Arts
Madison.....	3 .....	Christian Turnage, Associate in Arts
Marbled Existence .....	4 .....	Lacey Cerezo, Associate in Arts*
The Phoenix As A Symbol of Love .....	4 .....	Jeff Williams, English Instructor
<i>Nessun Dorma</i> .....	4 .....	Deniz Alemdar, Associate in Arts
To the Man on the Street Corner.....	5 .....	Andy Rajska, Wayne Early Middle College High School*
<i>The Man</i> .....	5 .....	Latoya Edwards, Associate in Arts
<i>The Bridge</i> .....	6 .....	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
Miracle .....	7 .....	Liz Meador, English Instructor
The Ghosts of Berlin.....	8 .....	Jeff Williams, English Instructor
<i>Into the Dream</i> .....	8 .....	Rachel Drosendahl, Dual Enrollment
For Lost Eleanor .....	9 .....	Rosalyn F. Lomax, English Instructor/College Student Success
Thundersnow.....	10 .....	Jeff Williams, English Instructor
<i>A Reinterpretation in Pointillism</i> .....	10 .....	April Barnes, Associate in Arts
To Think That We Were Once A Fish .....	11 .....	Margaret Boothe Baddour, Humanities/Creative Writing Instructor
Until Then .....	11 .....	Christian Turnage, Associate in Arts
Basketballs and Bridges.....	12 .....	Tara Bass, English Instructor
<i>Girl with Striped Shirt</i> .....	13 .....	Ashley Sullivan, Associate in Arts
Romance .....	14 .....	Darrell Tyner, Associate in Arts
<i>Fragile and Easy to Break</i> .....	14 .....	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
<i>Le Point des deux amants</i> .....	15 .....	Nicole Aguon, Associate in Arts
Two Lovers' Point .....	15 .....	Nicole Aguon, Associate in Arts
<i>Inis Mona</i> .....	15 .....	Matthew Belk, Associate in Arts
The Bonsai Effect.....	16 .....	Deborah A. Shoop, English Instructor Gail S. Luckett, Associate in Arts
Scholastic Blues .....	18 .....	Monique Gulaito, Associate in Arts
Dear Diary.....	18 .....	Ethan Cooper, Associate in Arts
All We Have .....	19 .....	Christian Turnage, Associate in Arts
<i>Ready to Wear</i> .....	19 .....	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
<i>Eggs in Bowl</i> .....	20 .....	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
Interesting Humans .....	20 .....	Alison Rawleigh, Associate in Arts
Wake Up! .....	20 .....	Christian Turnage, Associate in Arts
Marble Slab .....	21 .....	Breanna Ponzi, Dual Enrollment
<i>Orchids Surprise</i> .....	21 .....	Katina Davis, Math Instructor
a fifty-second tragedy .....	22 .....	Christian Turnage, Associate in Arts
<i>Heritage Flight II</i> .....	22 .....	Banks Peacock, Information Systems Instructor
Valentine's Day .....	23 .....	Jeff Williams, English Instructor
Mariah Hotel .....	23 .....	Jeff Williams, English Instructor
<i>Soulmate</i> .....	23 .....	Scott Spence, Associate in Arts
<i>Girl in Sand</i> .....	24 .....	Nikki Goins, Associate in Arts
The Dream .....	25 .....	Tara Bass, English Instructor
Sunset .....	25 .....	Lisa Pridgen, Associate in Arts*
Seashells in the Snow .....	25 .....	Rosalyn F. Lomax, English Instructor/College Student Success
I am .....	25 .....	Mary Price, Associate in Arts
A Heavy Burden.....	26 .....	Natashia White, Associate in Arts
The Bear .....	26 .....	Deniz Alemdar, Associate in Arts
Stolen Bottles of Liquor.....	26 .....	Candice Johnson, Associate in Arts*
<i>Talk Up</i> .....	27 .....	Marina Mayton, Associate in Arts
<i>Tree of Wonderland</i> .....	28 .....	Matthew Belk, Associate in Arts

The Portrait .....	30	Tara Bass, English Instructor
Tadpole.....	31	Candice Johnson, Associate in Arts*
Doll Gas Mask .....	31	Candice Johnson, Associate in Arts*
A Sucker for a Sad Story .....	32	Terri Coley Carraway, Associate in Science
<i>Poplar on Cedar</i> .....	32	Brent Hood, Webmaster
I Am Woman .....	33	Theresa White-Wallace, Secretary, Language/Communication Department
The Rose .....	34	Lorie Benton Daughtry, Business Administration
<i>Thorny Subject</i> .....	34	Katina Davis, Math Instructor
Accidentally .....	35	Sarah Atkinson, Business Administration
Jaden .....	36	Lacey Cerezo, Associate in Arts*
Success in Simple Form.....	36	Jennifer Parker, Associate Director, Admissions/Records
<i>Ornament</i> .....	36	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
<i>Scotch Bonnet Pier - Surf City</i> .....	37	Brent Hood, Webmaster
A Day at the Beach .....	37	Jamee Dawson, Associate in Arts
Just Fine for Me .....	38	Collin Whitehead, Forest Management Technology
<i>Ridges of Blue</i> .....	38	Brent Hood, Webmaster
Snake.....	39	Andy Rajski, Early Middle College High School*
The Attack of the Yellow Jackets .....	40	Schiwanda Todd, Associate in Applied Science
7:11 p.m. .....	40	Brent Hood, Webmaster
Innocent Mistake.....	41	Lorena Esparza, Associate in Arts
Making Homemade Apple Butter .....	42	Theresa White-Wallace, Secretary, Language/Communication Department
Grandparents .....	43	Lorie Benton Daughtry, Business Administration
Grandmother's House .....	43	James Mitchell, Special Student*
<i>Grandma's Tools</i> .....	43	Matthew Belk, Associate in Arts
<i>Tennis Shoes</i> .....	44	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
Beside Me .....	44	Terri Coley Carraway, Associate in Science
I'm Terribly Sorry .....	44	Stormy Cazeault, Computer Information Technology
Beware Black .....	45	Mark Thomas, Associate in Science
<i>Paper Square Cutout</i> .....	45	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
Love Right Back .....	46	Jennifer Parker, Associate Director, Admissions/Records
<i>Twins</i> .....	46	Katina Davis, Math Instructor
January 29, 2008 .....	47	Theresa White-Wallace, Secretary, Language/Communication Department
<i>Flowers for a Friend</i> .....	47	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
<i>Chair with Fabric</i> .....	48	Gabriela Knox, Associate in Arts
Before Dawn .....	48	Adrienne Yates, Criminal Justice Technology
Scrawl .....	49	Rosalyn F. Lomax, English Instructor/College Student Success
And the Fish Keep Swimming.....	49	Rosalyn F. Lomax, English Instructor/College Student Success
Creeper.....	50	James Brewster, Associate in Science
A Frog Crooked.....	50	James Mitchell, Special Student*
Penguins .....	50	Wendy H. Smith, Business Administration
<i>Green Envy</i> .....	51	Brent Hood, Webmaster
Where Did I Go?.....	52	Quentin Davis, Human Services Technology
<i>Ooooooo</i> .....	53	Brent Hood, Webmaster
I Am .....	54	Jessica Chesson, Associate in Arts*
A Colorful Person .....	55	Terri Coley Carraway, Associate in Science
<i>Deliverance</i> .....	55	Matthew Belk, Associate in Arts
<i>Cal's Day</i> .....	56	Brent Hood, Webmaster
The Ghost in the Middle Row.....	57	Jerrod Robinson, Associate in Arts*
Maybe Next Tuesday .....	60	Editors

\* English 125 Creative Writing Students

## The Satyrs

Near the edge of a wood  
At the crown of a hill  
In the heart of a field  
That's where Baba says  
He's seen the satyrs  
When the glowing orange sky  
Dims to mellow purple  
And solid land is soaked  
By night's immense, watery shadow  
That's when Baba says  
The satyrs sing their songs  
Dazed in drunken fevers, they dance  
Around the lapping flames  
Of wine-fed fires  
Bellowing long and lusty laughs  
That's how Baba says  
The satyrs spend their nights  
I asked Baba  
May I see the satyrs, too?

And yet I still look  
To the woods, the hills, the fields  
For the sinister silhouettes  
Of satyrs who indulge  
In all that pleasure yields  
Without my baba's regrets

*Deniz Alemdar*

**Daddy's Little Girl**  
*Margaret Tilghman-Vaughn*

I had been there a few times before. I recognized the slow, soft music playing in the background and the clinical smell of what was undoubtedly formaldehyde. It was different this time though. My stepmother would be waiting for me.

I could only have bad thoughts about the woman that had, like a thief in the night, stolen, taken away, and hidden one of the most important things to me. A once driving force in my life. The first man I ever loved. My daddy. My stepmother had forced him to move away from my siblings and me seventeen years earlier. I was only thirteen years old when he left, so it felt like he had been gone forever by now. My evil stepmother had found a treasure, and she was determined to keep it all for herself.

Bill, the elderly, very meek acting and sweetly sensitive undertaker, never knew what he was getting himself into with this particular funeral. Before the whole ordeal would be over, he would have had to separate us into natural children and stepchildren on either side of the room. Poor Bill never knew what hit him. We were sure he would retire after this one. As Bill directed me into the solemn viewing room, I got my first glimpse of the reality of the situation.

I could see my stepmother. I first thought about her jitteriness and shaking, thanks to her forty-year stint with a coffee and Doral cigarette diet, and then my thought turned to her cocaine-addicted daughter by her side, sobbing and reciting ridiculous quotes of the deceased's last words. I say ridiculous because knowing what I know, I could never imagine, not even in my wildest dreams, those words coming out of this person's mouth. I actually felt sorry for my stepmother's daughter, a beautiful, six foot two Cherokee Indian girl with a caramel complexion. She had wavy, jet black hair all the way down her back, and a flawless smile. When I look at her, all I can see is a drug addict.

I was so angry. Angry with everyone. Angry with everything. Angry with the situation. Angry about my entire relationship with these people. Angry I had to be there. I had a few things I had to get off my chest.

I found little old Bill and asked him to clear the room so that I could have a few moments alone with the deceased. He obliged, and after his short struggle with the heavy, wooden, sliding door, which evidently could have stood some wax around the track, I was alone.

I found myself looking down on the cold, gray corpse and my hand clenching its collar, unleashing all the anger that had built up in me for more than seventeen years. I was finally saying out loud all the thoughts I had ever had but couldn't say. I was letting this lifeless mass of human being know all the reasons I had been so angry all those years. I could hear myself asking over and over, "Why and how could you do this to me? Did you ever miss me?"

As my angry, mascara-stained tears fell from my face down onto his, I kept expecting him to open his eyes and tell me why he did what he did and how sorry he was for leaving me, that I was still his little girl. Unfortunately, my daddy never did give me any answers.

Madison

I have come  
To make this sound  
To shake these walls  
To move the ground



You have seen  
Me as I am  
Now you know  
I am a man

I have seen  
You full of grace  
Felt the pain  
In your face

You have known  
My former self  
I have put  
Him on the shelf

We have played  
These thousand songs  
We will play  
To carry on

We have seen  
The rising sun  
We will play  
Until it's gone

We have come  
To make this sound  
To shake these walls  
To move this ground

*Christian Turnage*

*Dirge for November*

Matthew Belk

## Marbled Existence

Pink marble like stone  
Carved into the shape of a heart.  
I stand alone morning noon and night  
Through the rain and snow  
Through the drought and heat.  
As time passes the population round me grows  
None exactly like myself.  
I stand here waiting and waiting.  
Twice a year I am paid a visit.  
I am wiped down and brushed off  
Polished and renewed to my natural shine.  
I'm like a shoulder to lean on  
Or many times even cried on.  
I've been hit and kicked but never move.  
I stand here for those who are  
And those who once were  
The living.

*Lacey Cerezo*

## The Phoenix As A Symbol of Love

There is a certain beauty to thought of it,  
a sense that in love is transcendence.  
The argument over who burnt the toast  
or who forgot to turn out the light  
is a simple conduit, a means to a fiery end.  
Out of conflagration confidently rises  
the great bird of new hope, mythical thing  
with feathers, beginning of deeper life.

Then again, there are other considerations.  
Is setting love aflame the best way to go?  
Do we know what bird will actually emerge?  
After stepping to the coals and descending  
the anti-Jacob's ladder of conflict  
this Phoenix could be an unholy marriage  
of cawing black crow and crazy quilt toucan,  
a thing reborn to suffer among the doves.

*Jeff Williams*

## *Nessun Dorma*

With the dawn we will have lost  
If tonight is all we are

You may decide tomorrow  
That the stars are not as charming  
The moon is not enchanting  
Even my kiss leaves something wanting  
Now you tug my hand and bid me fly  
You wish to pull me from my room  
Later you might break my wings  
To keep me for your own

So set, you stars!  
Vanish, O night!  
For I would rather see the morning  
Than endure this shallow yearning

*Deniz Alemdar*

To the Man on the Street Corner

My mind was busied with the day ahead  
when I passed, hurried by the night grime.  
Your hair was frazzled grey—  
you spoke to those invisible—  
your eyes shone in absence.

I stopped. The wind blew through your life,  
dead leaves beneath you swirled with steam  
around your block, hallowed by eerie echoes—  
The rustle, squeak and hum from  
the littered grates the rats call home.

Beneath the lamplight you danced  
tangos unknown with shadow, gifts of gloam.  
You are a snapshot to tourist, locals alike,  
a graffitied memory, beautiful to the right mind.  
I stared—you met my eyes and smiled

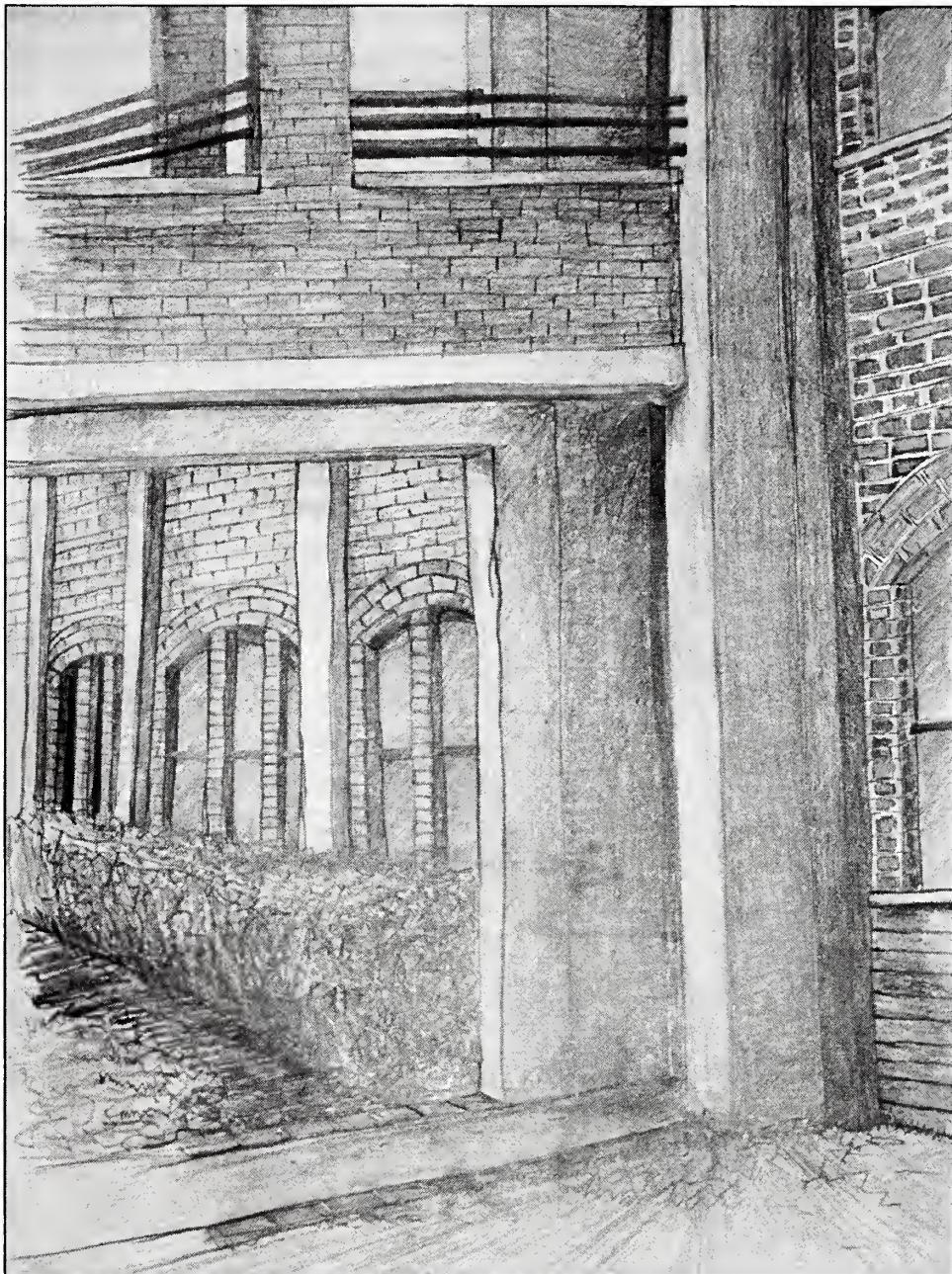
Through toothless gums, taut beneath  
withered cheeks you saw me  
and I saw the price you've dearly paid  
to have the privilege I so envy—  
the freedom of sanity mislaid.

*Andy Rajske*



*The Man*

Latoya Edwards



*The Bridge*

Gabriela Knox

## Miracle

*[Elisha] lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and the flesh of the child became warm. 2 Kings 4:32-37*

The lesson tells of a miracle,  
Of the prophet who gives life twice  
Once at conception and again at seeming death.

Oh, to have been an Elisha when you lay  
Blue-gray marble cold, in your too-soon death  
To have put mouth on mouth, eye on eye, hands on hands  
And not have felt the smooth absence of life on your skin,  
Not mistake my yearning pulse for your still, noiseless one.

In the room full of strangers and strangeness, I want to make you, my child,  
Become warm, retrieve the twenty-one years of sinewy vitality that was you.  
I want to strip away the wrappings they've swaddled you in, and like Elisha,  
Lie upon you to give you life again, my blood awash over you, my breath pushing  
Itself into you, pushing you out of myself, as at your joyous beginning.

But miracles elude mothers who must clasp  
Their dead children's cold hands  
And press last kisses on the stone foreheads.  
Mothers of dead children no longer  
Live with small increments of hope

But face the vast emptiness of remorse  
Of regret, of thinking did I love hard enough  
And, finally, after years, realizing love alone cannot save a life.

The lesson tells of a miracle,  
But the miracle was your life, our love,  
And blinding, brilliant memory where you still live.

*Liz Meador*

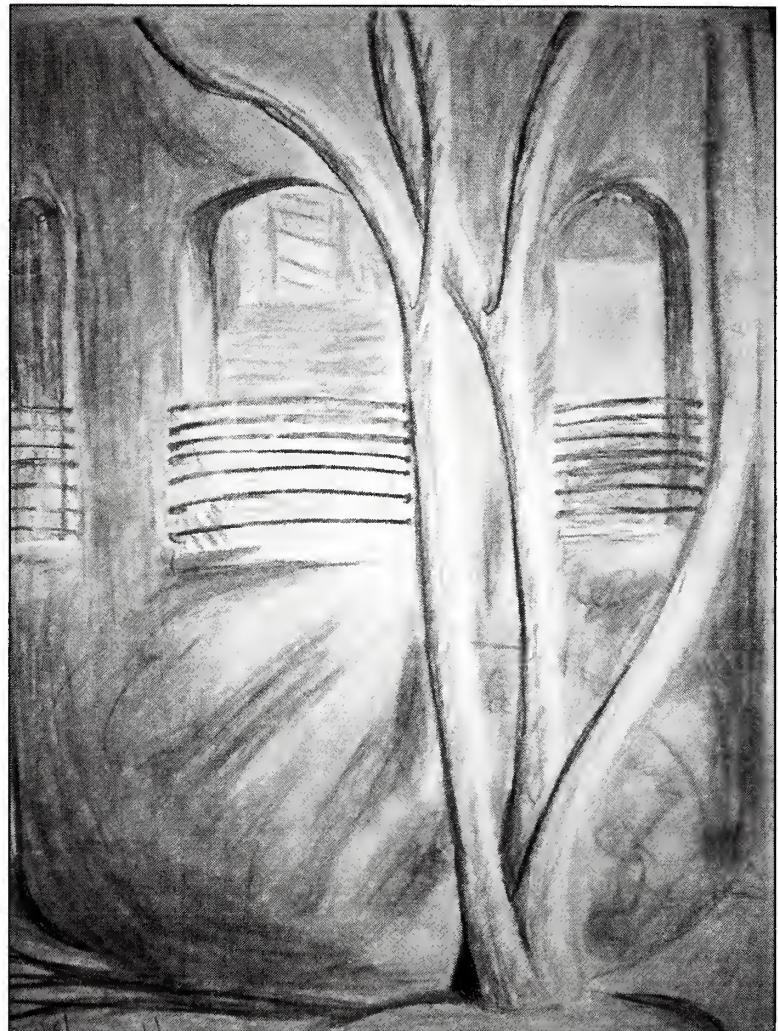
## The Ghosts of Berlin

When the Wall came tumbling,  
men on graffiti-covered blocks  
smashed down with hammers,  
with crutches, with bare hands.  
The Brandenburg Gate opened.  
I own a piece of that wall

in a red pouch my dad bought,  
sparkles of paint and cement,  
dust of grime and thirty years,  
wings of desire encapsulated,  
a curio in a red wooden box.  
I am an older man now,

alive in strange, strange times,  
holding history like jewelry.  
I see a million hands point east,  
to Pottsdamer, to where it was.  
I understand the Germans;  
we should all still fear the Wall.

*Jeff Williams*



*Into the Dream*

Rachel Drosendahl

### For Lost Eleanor

“Eleanor,” it says. We always liked to fancy  
that she was Eleanor Dare, she whose name appeared  
in elegant, old-fashioned script in the narrow bowl  
of each sterling silver ice cream spoon,  
engraved there perhaps before she married Ananias Dare,  
before their fateful voyage and the birth of their Virginia,  
first white child born on this continent.

We never knew the story of the estate sale  
where Great-Aunt Effie Martin Cross discovered  
those spoons, only one missing from the dozen,  
a pair of each design, save one, in elaborate filigree,  
some ornate goddesses, some charming cherubs,  
but each with that same name engraved  
within its narrow bowl.

Surprises always flowed from Great-Aunt Effie’s car,  
sometimes a dozen moist and scrumptious coconut cakes,  
sweetest of sweets from her favorite Raleigh bakery,  
sometimes a gift for me, Jack Winter brand of pants,  
fur hat and muff or leather boots,  
and as I aged and was engaged, the wedding gifts began,  
among them special spoons including those of Eleanor.

I’ve never failed to wonder and to ponder  
as I’ve polished and displayed, even given two away  
when friends had Eleanors of their own,  
just who this Eleanor was and, when the settlers  
fled their Roanoke Island home, if it were she  
who carved that word upon the tree  
in hasty, desperate characters—“Croatoan.”

*Rosalyn F. Lomax*

## Thundersnow

In the falling fireflies of a late winter storm  
an anachronous sound of spring, the rolling thunder,  
the wives' tale promise of more snow to come. I see  
why some are so afraid, the light flying kaleidoscopic  
in waves of gem-like fire through prisms of ice.

But I only know what I know; the call of thundersnow  
puts me on the New Mexico plain, a cattle drive  
to the stockyard, my heart and body in pain, waiting  
for the words of a lover or friend calling out,  
“Looks like the cowboys have come home again.”

*Jeff Williams*



*A Reinterpretation in Pointillism*

April Barnes

## To Think That We Were Once A Fish

*Four years ago, while digging in the Canadian Arctic, paleontologist Neil Shubin discovered the 375 million-year-old fossil of a fish that appeared to have both neck and hands.*

*Newsweek—January 28, 2008*

Well, of course we weren't. The fish,  
elbowing out of his quagmire to breathe,  
through vents, this atmosphere, became us.  
No wonder our joints can't bear up  
and our circulation does not work.  
Our hands, descended from fish fingers,  
often defy what our brains tell them to.  
But the iridescent creature, going round  
on his mindless journey, fascinates us.  
And this is why we eat what once we were  
so that we may become what we will be.

*Margaret Boothe Baddour*

## Until Then

To you, my friend,  
I say go be a grapevine  
Produce lots of fruit  
And don't expect anything in return  
The rewards will come on their own  
Cosmic justice and all that  
Live long and happy  
And I'll see you again  
We can never lose the history we have  
We can only create more  
We are all connected  
Six degrees of separation  
So until then...

*Christian Turnage*

## **Basketballs and Bridges**

*Tara Bass*

Like fog lifting through the house, the warm aroma of popcorn came sneaking down the hall from the kitchen. It reached my door and barreled its way inside, filling my room with the familiar smell of anticipation. I knew what that smell meant. It meant that the game was about to begin, and I knew I didn't have much time to get into my place.

I scurried down the hall from my bedroom, an awkward seven-year-old, clumsy and half-grown, and with all the drama I could muster, I announced that I was ready. I remember my dad's smile as he looked up to see his little girl in her finest red and white, a red ribbon streaming from her caramel ponytail. I ran to his chair where he had already prepared his place: a Natural Light on the end table, his own basket of Orville Redenbacher, and the push remote extended as far as its cord would allow. Daddy pointed to the fireplace, a danger to small children, but my own personal table or workbench, whichever I was in need of. There upon the aged white brick was a small glass of Pepsi and my very own basket of popcorn with extra butter, just the way I liked it.

I could tell Daddy was anxious, and his nervous energy became contagious, circling me, daring me to invest myself in the game. As the announcers began their own version of history, the room fell silent. We could hear fans in the background, their tribal chants ancient and infectious with spirit. I looked down at the T-shirt my dad had chosen for me to wear, at the cup I had been drinking Pepsi from, at the hat atop my daddy's brow; I noticed the logo, the crimson red, the daring white, hints of shadowed black, that confident wolf parading boldly in the background. The ambience was magnificent, and I felt that I was somehow a part of the endless sea of red washing over the stands and into our living room.

As the night wore on, I recall the sounds of periodic celebration mixed with an occasional expletive, the cursing of a ball that, once committed to the basket, fickle-mindedly sauntered back out. The popcorn dwindled in our bowls, and the taste of Pepsi grew tired in my Wolfpack cup. My eyes were weary with the constant ticking of the clock, counting the minutes, the seconds, until the party would end. The buzzers and the whistles and the ticking of that clock became an incessant lullaby, hypnotic and surreal, and I feel certain I drifted off to sleep there before the fireplace.

I don't recall who won that game, if the Pack ascended as ACC champions, or if some other foe snatched the title indignantly from beneath their feet. I don't even remember who N.C. State's opponent was. What I will always remember, though, is the excitement of that night, and others like it, building a bridge between a small girl and her father, a masterpiece of memories in blood-red hues, and the girl who, twelve years later, would see a similar smile on her father's face, a blush of pride before her, as she herself stood in that crimson sea, finally understanding.



*Girl with Striped Shirt*

Ashley Sullivan

## Romance

Love's not for the weak, are words that I speak,  
In the area of courtship and chance;  
For the heart is too fragile and easy to break,  
To dance with the maiden Romance.

She curtsied, I bowed,  
My heart beating loud,  
I waltzed in Romance's shroud.

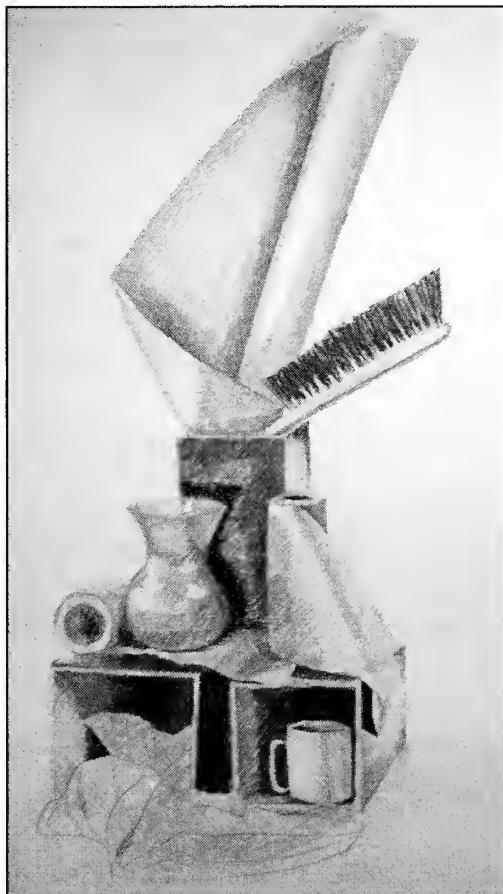
Entwined and enchanted, free and easy we spun;  
And my heart fell in love with this dame;  
But the words that she whispered when we were alone,  
Unbeknownst, were just part of her game.  
Not knowing, willingly, I played along,  
Unaware what she had going on.

Like flowers she picks and tosses away  
Were the men that she courted and loved;  
And she shatters their hearts in adulterous way  
Then sinistly seduces another with her "love."  
So imagine my blow when she turned to go,  
Into the embrace of another fellow.

Now Regret taps my shoulder and Pain mocks my step,  
As I, burdened with heartache and sorrow,  
Dance with arms that are empty and eyes that have wept,  
To Betrayal's melody, alone in the shadow.  
Never again I have sworn  
To feel Romance's scorn,  
I'd rather dance Eternity alone.

*Darrell Tyner*

*Fragile and Easy to Break*  
Gabriela Knox



## **Le Point des deux amants**

*Nicole Aguon*

Il était un fois à une petite île de Guam, il y avait une jeune et belle fille. Elle avait les cheveux longues et noirs, et elle avait les yeux marron. Elle aimait aller à la plage et nageait dans l'océan. Un jour, elle a retrouvé un jeune et beau garçon à la plage. Il avait les cheveux longues et noirs et il avait les yeux noirs. Ils ont parlé et ils commençaient à passer le temps ensemble. Bientôt, ils se sont tombés amoureux, mais la famille de la fille, n'aimait pas le garçon parce qu'il était pauvre. Elle ne pouvait pas le voir, mais elle l'a vu quand même. Ils ont décidé de quitter ensemble, mais l'île était petite et ils ne pouvaient pas se cacher. Alors, ils ont décidé d'aller à une falaise près de l'océan. Ils ont attaché leurs cheveux longs ensemble. Ensuite, ils se sont embrassés et ils ont sauté du falais. C'est l'histoire de Guam de grand amour. Aujourd'hui, la falaise est un site de touristes populaire.

Beaucoup de couples se marient à la falaise.

## **Two Lovers' Point**

*Nicole Aguon (translation of her story)*

Once upon a time on a small island of Guam was a young and beautiful girl. She had long black hair and brown eyes. She liked to go to the beach and swim in the ocean. One day, she met a young handsome boy at the beach. He had long black hair and black eyes. He spoke to her, and they started to spend time together. Soon, they fell in love with each other, but the girl's family did not like the boy because he was poor. She was not allowed to see him, but she saw him anyway. They decided to leave together, but the island was too small and they could not hide. So, they decided to go to a cliff near the ocean. They attached their long hair together. Then, they kissed each other and jumped off the cliff. This is Guam's story of true love. Today the cliff is a popular tourist site. Many couples get married at this cliff.



*Inis Mona*

Matthew Belk

## The Bonsai Effect

*Deborah A. Shoop and Gail S. Luckett*

I came upon this weather log the other day and re-read it for perhaps the thirtieth time. For the umpteenth time, I realized just how much weather can mirror human emotions or maybe just my emotions. In fact, following the log, I can track the emotional progress of my younger daughter for what my other family members lovingly call the “year of hell.”

*September 8, 2004: Hurricane Frances is soaking western North Carolina. Had a bit of rain, though not much. Walked down to the creek, heard the frogs jumping, but couldn't see them, too dark with the clouds covering the moon.*

I've read about them but never seen one, those giant water bugs that suck the life out of their amphibian victim. And I know there are human equivalents, evil, soulless beings who, with their fists and their mouths beat and rip and suck the life out of children. Specifically, my daughter, Maddie, who, although nearly seventeen, is stuck in the emotional chaos of a four-year-old. I have heard it said that the eyes are the windows to the soul, but Maddie has shuttered eyes like windows painted black to escape the outside world. Is there a soul in there, starving for the lack of light when the eyes hold only emptiness? I wonder.

*September 12, 2004: Hurricane Ivan has left 56 dead in the Caribbean - Grenada and Jamaica. It looks like it won't hit the Keys, maybe Florida's Western Panhandle.*

We watched the news together, my two older children, and Maddie, perched stiffly on the sofa next to me, her eyes fixed on the television screen, lips parted as she breathed excitedly. Why excited? Does the destruction and devastation left in the wake of the hurricane strike some responsive chord in this child nurtured in chaos and devastation? I can feel the resentment from my older children most at night, like a palpable thing, a wet dark blanket that settles on my shoulders and won't let me shrug it off.

*September 17, 2004: Ivan is affecting the entire east coast. Tonight there was a bird on the big deck umbrella. He was under the top flap so I couldn't see his head. Grey thought he might be a wren but I couldn't tell by the bird book, he was all medium brown with white spots, like a fawn. The book doesn't show birds from that angle. Why is it that you never see them from the angle the book shows?*

As I lay in bed, listening to the rain, I think of my friend's gardening—I hope it doesn't beat down the moonflowers—and I think about the bird in the umbrella, about how like my daughter it was. Maddie goes through life hiding under an invisible umbrella so no one can tell who she is, or touch her. I suppose that's her way of self-protection. If people can't see her, then they can't hurt her.

*September 19, 2004: A gray morning. The moonflowers don't like it when it's overcast. They don't like rain or chilly weather, either. But in the summer, oh, in the summer, I think they could cover the entire house.*

Gardens are really beautiful and, my neighbor says, worth the work. Maybe one of these days I'll take up gardening—could be fun. But right now I have to deal with the wildly growing weed in my own home, the daughter who is an inmate of a prison not of her making, but one that she works diligently to maintain. People talk about being careful not to rush judgment in criminal cases, but why does a dognapper get more prison time than the people who stole my daughter's soul? Used her before she was even old enough to cry for help from a mother who had left her to them in the first place; twisted and scarred her soul until there was nothing left; no fear, no hope, no joy, nothing but black-

as-night-emptiness where a child's laughter and love should have grown. She is now just a withered bonsai tree that no amount of love and nurturing can help.

*September 28, 2004: The remnants of Hurricane Jeanne blew past today - only a little rain, though. The boys said they saw a ringneck snake on the road today - do I really want to sit out here in the dark?*

I like being out on the deck at night, after everyone has gone to bed and the house is quiet. I know I have only a short time now because it is getting colder every day. Every wooly bear caterpillar I see is very dark, and I've been told that is supposed to mean a cold winter. I can hear the screech owl far off across the fields, his horsey whinny sounding louder in the still air. Later, I hear the distinctive sound of a great horned owl. I hope the kittens have been taught how to stay safe from owls. Gail's kittens, mothered by a cat dumped behind my friend's house when the cat was pregnant and, of course, my friend had to feed it. I'm sure I'd have done the same thing and then I'd be the one stuck with eight kittens. That is, if Maddie didn't kill them like she killed the baby ducks in the pond a few years ago. Why does death so captivate the child who has no fear, who knows what it's like to be hurt, yet is compelled to hurt others?

*October 12, 2004: had to get up in the middle of the night to separate the cats - fighting noises aren't conducive to a good night's sleep. Heard the horned owl again, hope the kittens are safe. The coffee maker has made coffee again. Is one of the cats stepping on the ON button at night?*

Maddie's gone, for now. She was accepted into a residential program where the staff members are trained to handle children with Reactive Attachment and Conduct Disorder. Could this actually be the place that can help heal her? The changes from day to day are imperceptible, but month to month there is difference. In September, it seems it will never cool off, but then comes October, and all of a sudden we're wearing sweaters and the trees are nearly bare. I read somewhere that, if you lean against a tree, you can share that tree's energy. This sounds like an idea worth exploring.

*October 27, 2004: I don't think we will be watching the lunar eclipse tonight as it is too cloudy. Why does it seem as if it is cloudy every time there is not another similar astrological event for seven years?*

A phone call from Maddie, angry because she can't wear a costume and go trick-or-treating with the little kids. She doesn't want to understand that she is simply too old now. Her therapist tells me she is just being Maddie, that she has to figure out her place. Am I hoping for a miracle?

I wander out onto the deck after supper, shutting the door tight against the noise of The Simpsons. The sounds are different yet again. Crickets, still an occasional katydid, leaves rustling, cars from the road, car doors closing, a faraway screech owl. A couple of kittens clamber up on the deck to join me. It does take a lot of worries away to sit down on the deck and watch kittens play. I completely agree with my friend who believes that any time you find yourself mildly depressed, you should get a kitten. Of course, this theory may carry serious implications about our own state of mental health.

*December 2, 2004: Coming back from school tonight, I saw a falling star. I stayed outside on the deck for an hour after I got home, hoping for more, but didn't see any. I guess one is enough, though.*

Funny how I think about Maddie so much more now that she's gone. Without the dread of what she'll do next, it's easier to think about the traumatized child I actually adopted, not the little girl of my dreams that I'd wanted to adopt. Maddie did not come to me free of baggage, ready for love. There is not enough love in the world to erase the damage that has been done to her heart and soul. But maybe one day, she will learn how to cope with the pain. Maybe one day so will I.

## Scholastic Blues

Mother of two  
It's hard being a mother of two  
And a full-time student  
Baby wipes, teething rings, diapers galore  
Onesies, bibs, books, blankets, binkies and more  
Books, labs, homework, research papers, oh, lord!  
I need some help! What will I do?  
I have a project due, and my baby has the flu

*Monique Gulaito*

## Dear Diary

*Ethan Cooper*

Last week my English class was given a very difficult assignment. We had to say something nice to someone every day for a week, and we had to record his or her response. It may not sound difficult, but it's harder than it looks. Nothing could have prepared me for the events that would follow.

My first test subject was my English professor. I complimented her on how wonderful she looked, and she just laughed at me. I was devastated. How could someone be so heartless? I cried my eyes out as soon as I got home. I had never felt so miserable in all of my life. Perhaps the next test would be better. It wasn't.

I chose my manager at Books-a-Million to be my next test subject. I told her that she had a big butt. Instead of a simple "Thank you," she slapped me and called me a dirty name. I was at a loss. I thought complimenting the size of a woman's butt or bust always provoked a positive response; it always seemed to work on TV. I was so angry when I got home that I punched my bedroom wall, but that just made me feel worse because I hurt my hand.

Against my better judgment I decided to try again, but this time I would ask my good friend Wes to help me think of something nice to say. I thought it was the perfect plan because he was always talking about how smooth he was. I won't repeat what he told me to say because when I said it, I got a swift kick to the groin. Perhaps he's not the lady's man he claims to be, or I just have no social skills.

What kind of sick professor would put her students through such torture? I'm thinking about turning her in to the head of the English department, or maybe I'll sue her for all she's worth. I hope that no one else had to suffer as much as I did.

## All We Have

I open up my mind  
And pick it apart with both hands  
I look at all the little imperfections  
All the little cracks in the psyche  
Read great works  
By genius rulers  
Humanity: lost  
History: scarred  
The future: uncertain

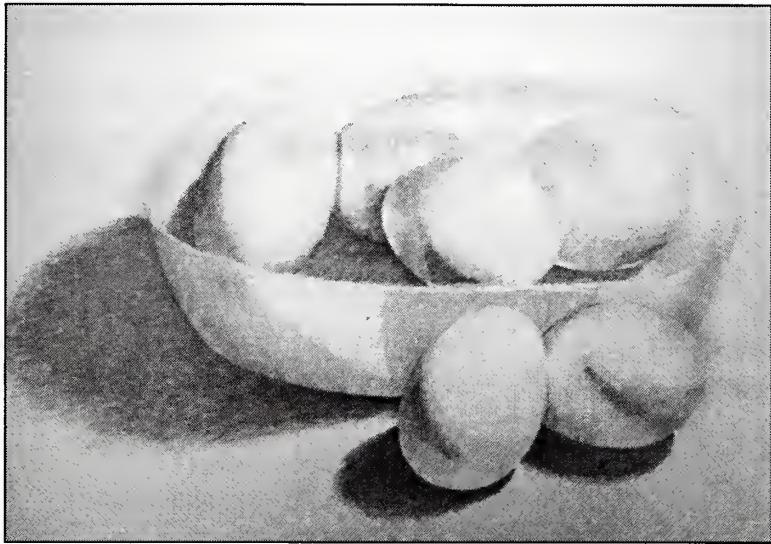
I open up my heart  
And tear it apart with both hands  
I look at all the massive breaks  
All the gushing hemorrhages  
Read sonnets  
By that Elizabethan poet  
Words for all history  
Humanity: broken  
History: marked  
The future: optimistic  
The past: over  
The present: all we have

*Christian Turnage*



*Ready to Wear*

Gabriela Knox



*Eggs in Bowl*

Gabriela Knox

## Interesting Humans

Humans: they're an interesting bunch.

They do things that are not necessary,  
silly things by any other standard.  
Shaking hands, kissing lips, and writing words -  
All of these are fruitless to survival.

They seek to know things that they'll never use:  
what lives swimming deep below the waves, or  
types of rock that form their planet's core, or  
names of creatures once living in times past.

Humans say things daily they don't mean. "I'm  
starving!" Are they truly? No. They really  
tell a lie to mean a truth. "How are you?"  
"I'm good," they say, even if they aren't.

Humans: we're an interesting bunch.

Only we would take each others' hands and  
lie down in the dewy grass at midnight,  
point out stars we know by name, and breathe the  
whisper, "I could spend eternity here."

*Alison Rawleigh*

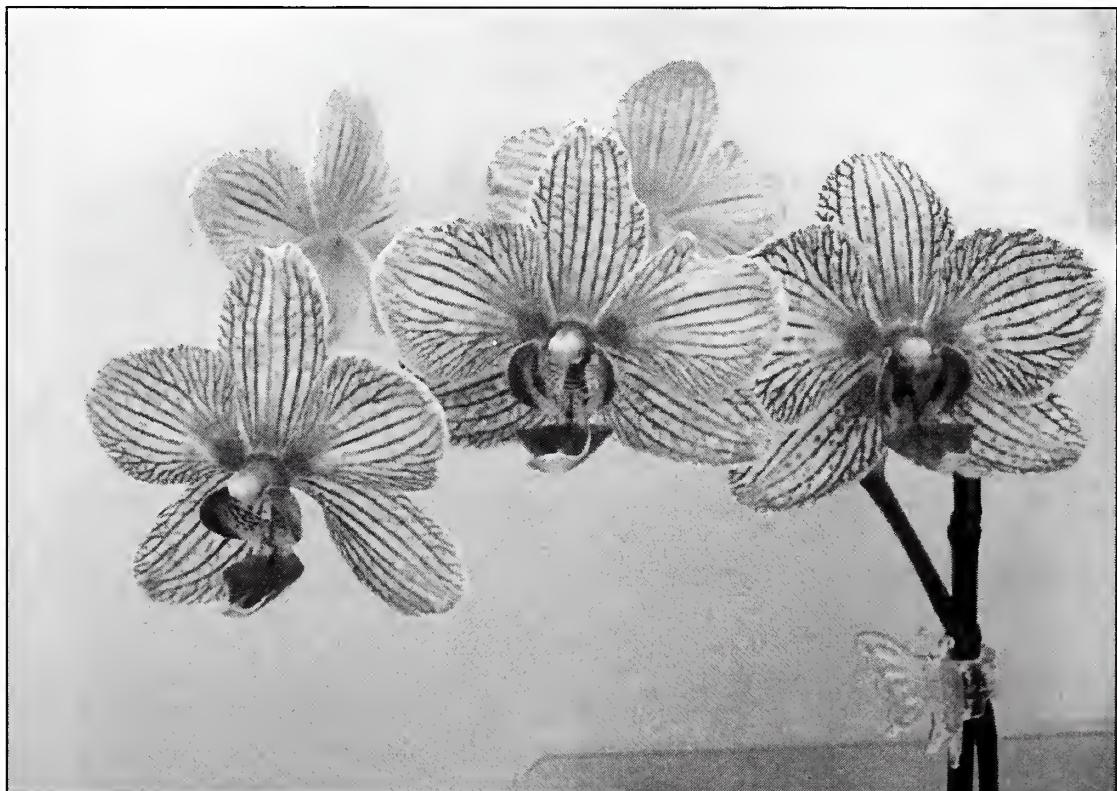
## Wake Up!

I'm blind, I'm running  
But I can't see  
The forest for the trees  
Skipped a step  
And tripped over my knees  
I'm falling  
Can't wait to hit the ground  
\*Blow\*  
I can't wake up  
From this nightmare  
Scary music in the dark corner  
Hide under the blankets  
It'll all be O.K.  
And you can wake up  
To another beautiful day.

*Christian Turnage*

**Marble Slab**  
*Breanna Ponzi*

Moses sits above my desk. His white eyes stare ominously at me as though he is the watchdog and I am the thief. Something rests in his pale arms; is this what he is guarding? The remnants of two horns poke through his long hair. A blanket of dust bunnies rests on the stubs, reminding me that he is, in fact, only marble. Still, I wonder that they have no fear of him. Perhaps the dust bunnies know that he has far more important things of which to think. All of his energy seems concentrated into anger. It sears through his eyes, bursts through his arms, and tightens his brow. His muscles are tense; he rests ever so lightly on the marble pedestal, ready to jump up from his repose at the slightest sign of threat. Any such threat would be welcomed as an excuse to liberate his anger. In vain, he tries to suppress his fury; it seems that the sculptor merely froze the moment in time before its sweet release. He comes alive in my imagination. Despite his enormous size, he rises from his seat with agility and the strength of a mountain, dust bunnies flying from his head and robe. Still clutching his treasure, he lunges at his victim, the mere sight of which would drive away any mortal. I look back at my Moses and see, with relief, that he still sits on his platform. My curiosity increases. What was Michelangelo's intent when he formed his character's furrowed brow and clenched jaw? Was there a falling out between the art and artist? Could it be that the marble slab destined to be Moses suddenly decided it would rather be, say, David? I dare not ask what causes his wrath for fear of incurring it on myself. I can't help but think that Michelangelo would scorn my petty thoughts of his creation. For shame that I, a simple schoolgirl, should attempt to analyze his great work of art!



*Orchids Surprise*

Katina Davis

a fifty-second tragedy

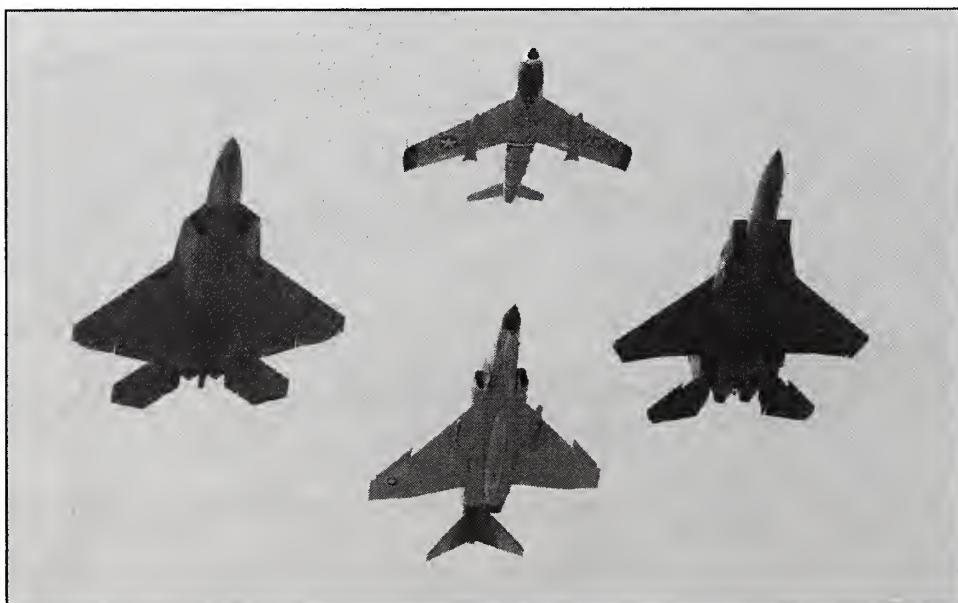
from birth to be destined  
to see greatness  
all around you  
to fly through the clouds  
like gravity doesn't hold you

to fall from grace  
as though surfaces  
dissolved beneath you  
sinking deep in thought  
all...fall...down

through time and space  
the ages fall  
touch infinity for a moment  
to float through the heavens  
like gravity doesn't hold you

the old gods still live  
in all the newest forms  
temptations come and go  
there is nothing new  
all...fall...down...

*Christian Turnage*



*Heritage Flight II*

Banks Peacock

## Valentine's Day

The same moon rises  
The same sun slowly falls  
The same freight train passes  
The same screech owl calls  
A piece of hard dark candy  
A glass of cold white wine  
A slice of winter held  
In a space of frozen time

The cat's paws twitter softly  
Over crumpled paper birds  
While cards and gaudy letters  
Carry oft-repeated words  
The glitter of the moment  
Follows lovers to their beds  
Though morning sun will not  
recall the pretty things once said

*Jeff Williams*



## Soulmate

Scott Spence

## Mariah Hotel

### I.

His humor always drew her back when days  
grew long, bad jokes funny in that boyish voice.  
Now the witticisms grow so weary and thin.

Another anniversary; more roses in glass vases,  
another year, drifted from day to grim day.  
Home is a shaving brush askew on the counter,

a red pumice bowl on white and green Formica,  
an unpleasant sink, film of whiskers black and gray,  
a panicked glimpse in the mirror, her mother's face.

### II.

She steps from the taxicab, sunglasses pushed high,  
small hazel eyes, tight kerchief over newly dyed hair,  
a garish red coat so unlike what she would wear.

He takes her hand, but she pulls away. Eyes scan  
too expensive furniture and light stands, search  
for friends or colleagues, coworkers or children.

Only then she holds his arm—young man, third  
floor of the Mariah Hotel, a closed polished door,  
a private space free from her mother's sullen eyes.

*Jeff Williams*



*Girl in Sand*

Nikki Goins

## The Dream

Cold winter night  
Hot steamy bar  
She sauntered in, hadn't gotten very far  
When your neck moved to chills  
Silent thrills making waves  
To the shores of your fingertips  
The pianist plays  
Notes drift, smoky swirls  
Ragtime girls couldn't touch  
This angel in red, fitted velvet that cuts  
To the small of her back, to the break in her breasts  
She steps up on stage, turns the page, takes the rest  
In slow stride, very slow  
Oh, that long, slow stride  
The slit in her dress travels up to her thigh  
One leg crosses the other  
Creamy flesh steals the show  
Till she opens those wine-whispered lips  
And she blows  
And she sings  
And she moans  
That one little word  
Her gaze grabs you wildly  
The rest goes unheard  
Her song is for you  
She's reeling you in  
So close you could kiss  
While you struggle to stand  
The word is like wax waning melted and hot  
Molding your breathing as it rises then stops  
Hold your breath  
Make it last  
Fill you up to the top  
“Fever” spills out of her lips  
And you drop  
to your knees  
In the weakness that sears through your chest  
And the rest...  
Ahh...the rest...

*Tara Bass*

## Sunset

I saw the setting sun  
right before I jumped.  
It was the most beautiful sight.

As I looked down from the bridge  
I saw its glow  
reflected in the shimmering water.

Then I smiled  
knowing that I could take  
that moment for myself

to sink into the water  
as the sun was at the moment  
and then I did.

*Lisa Pridgen*

## Seashells in the Snow

Summer and winter  
merge at the line  
where snow meets seafoam.  
Bundled-up beachcombers  
stroll, seeking shells  
in snow on sand.

*Rosalyn F. Lomax*

## I am

Looking for a way out of this sea  
Drowning and calling out for help  
Wishing someone would hear me cry  
Wishing I did not feel the need to fly  
Wishing I had not flown *quite* so high  
Looking for a way out of this sea

*Mary Price*

## A Heavy Burden

A heavy burden to hold  
When you love someone with all you got  
But in the end you realized  
It was a simple plot

A heavy burden to see  
When you view yourself with hate  
And it is your own life  
You desperately want to take

A heavy burden to feel  
When you work all week to be broke  
While our youth are never serious  
And take life as a joke

A heavy burden to know  
When you are there for a friend  
To find out when self is in need  
Friend won't a helping hand lend  
A heavy burden to bear

*Natashia White*

## The Bear

You come to me, swaggering like a bear  
Almost tripping, leaning, wobbling  
A dangerous brute you are  
Your head hung low and swaying  
And very low, you're singing  
La-da-dum, now laughing  
I can tell you've had enough  
On the ground before me  
You paw and pick your place  
Collapse at my two feet, you sigh  
and I can tell you've had enough  
Had all the life, loss, and liquor  
That a hunted brute can take  
Asleep at my two feet  
I will wait until you wake

*Deniz Alemdar*

## Stolen Bottles of Liquor

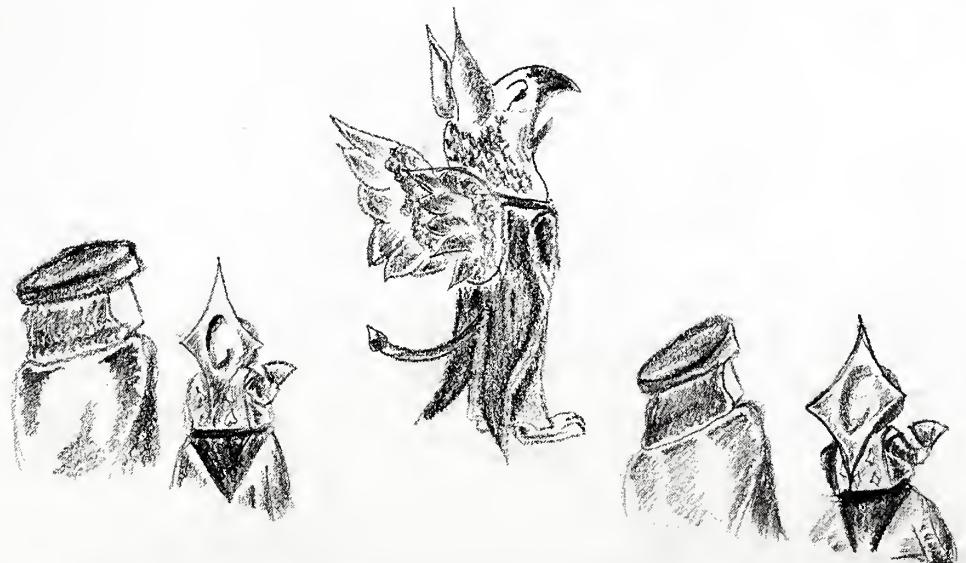
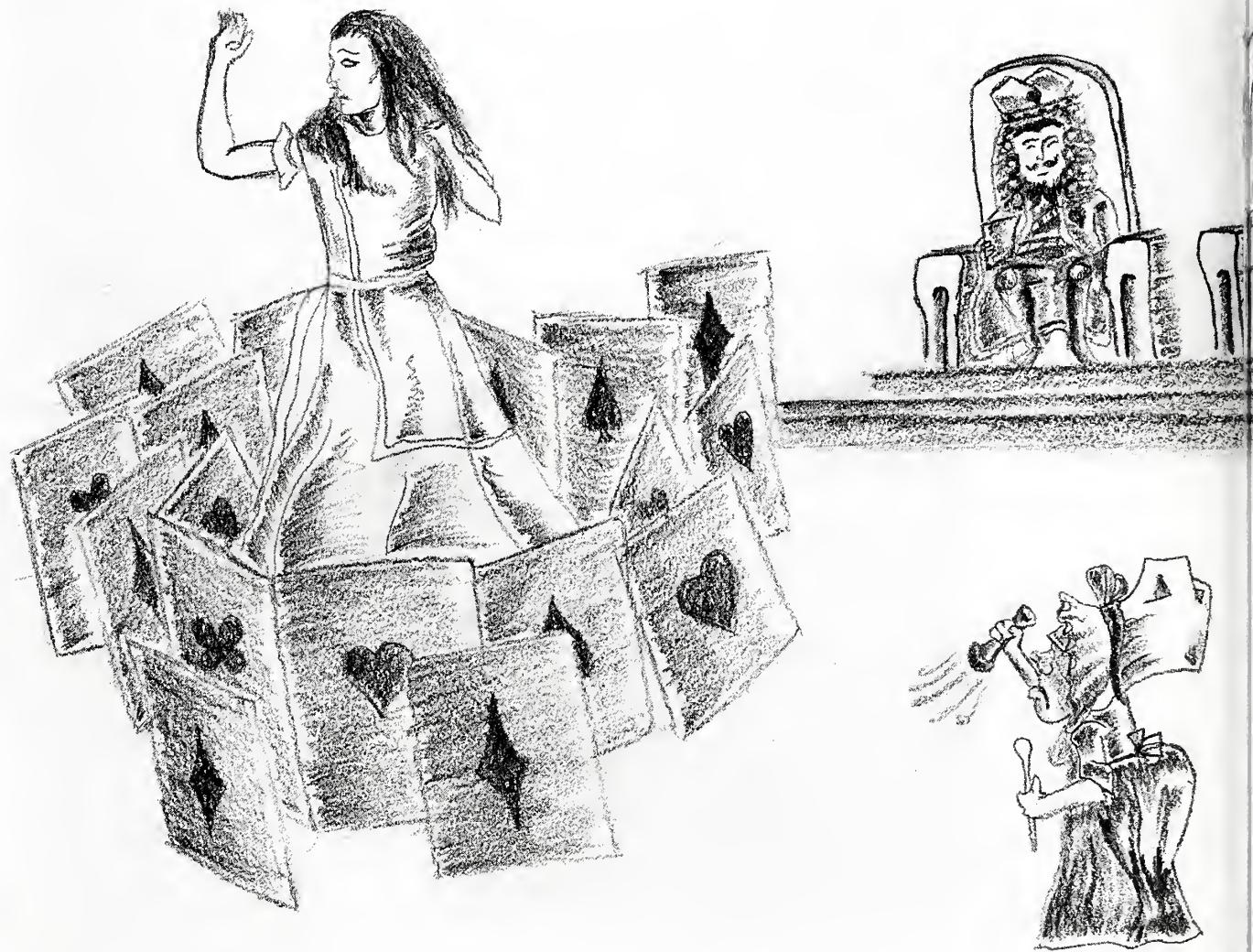
My black backpack is torn  
And stuffed with broken dreams  
Twenty dollars rests heavy in pockets  
My shoes are worn  
My jacket is ripped and dirty  
My jeans have been patched more times  
Than I have seen money  
I walk through a subway terminal late at night  
The security guard looks at me and sees  
Long dirty hair  
Rust-colored face  
Homeless clothes  
Torn backpack  
Glassy look in my eyes  
He stops me before I can pass and asks  
“What do you have in your bag?”  
I shrug, take my backpack off, and open it  
The guard looks inside and sees empty whiskey bottles  
He looks at me with shameful eyes  
I keep quiet  
Don't shame me, kind sir,  
This is all I have  
My whisky bottles, this backpack, my damaged clothes,  
And my broken dreams

*Candice Johnson*

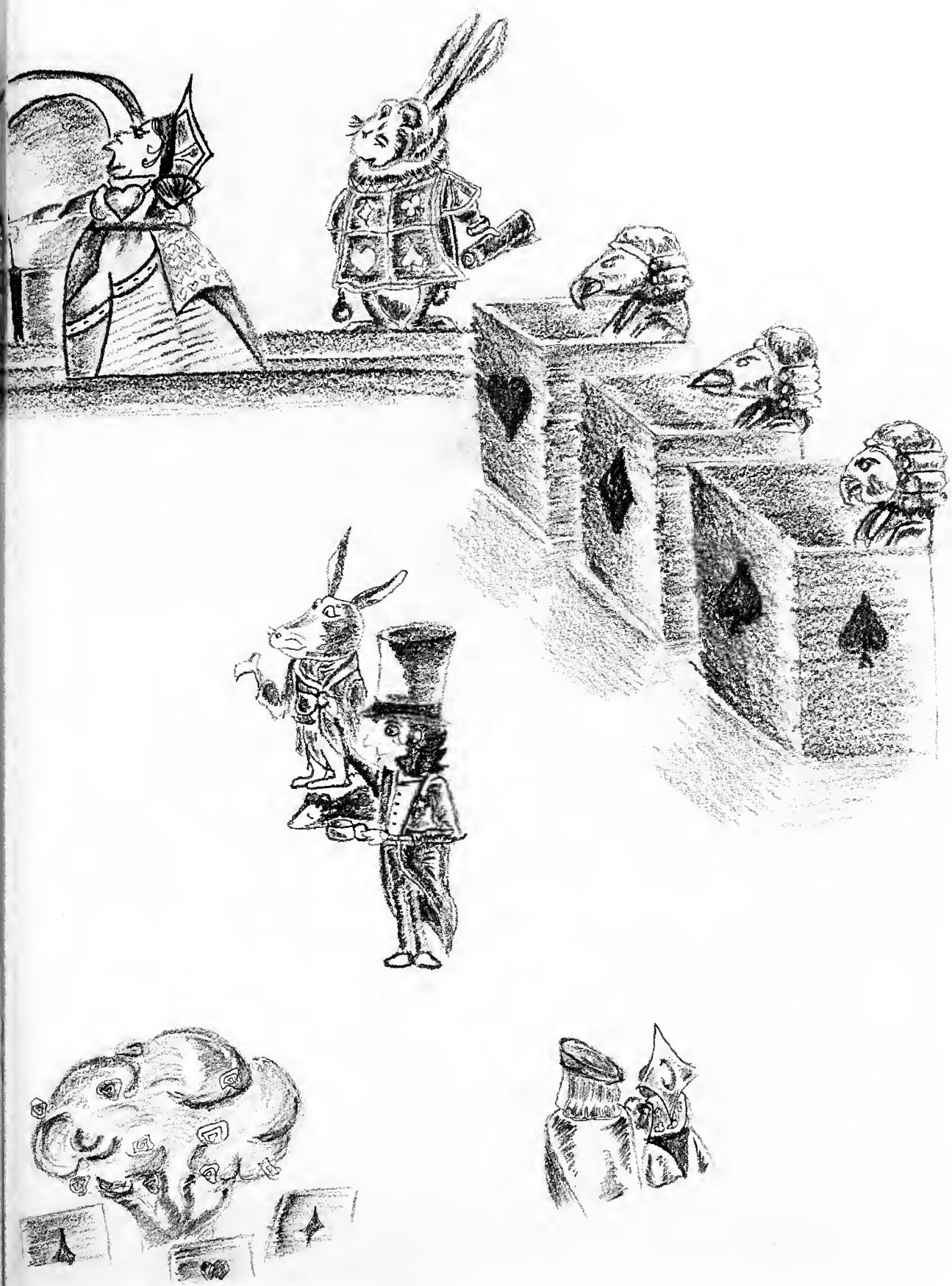


Talk Up

Marina Mayton



*Tree of Wonderland*  
Matthew Belk



## The Portrait

The gentle humming of humidifiers in the background  
Lonely lamplight snuggles close  
But her eyes are baiting me  
Waiting to see if I'll notice that she's still there  
Perched atop the mantel in her regal pewter frame  
She claims the throne above the hearth  
Hunkered down in sweet angora  
Notes of Nora settle my soul  
But her eyes are colder now than once they were  
When she was brought

And oh the price she paid  
She sold her soul for middle class  
For a box of china and crystal candlesticks  
With no fire left to burn them

Damn those nave curls  
Those hand-sewn pearls on silk champagne  
That time and time again mock her treasoned spirit  
In sultry, scornful scowls from parted lips  
Parted lips of tsk, tsk, tsk  
“How dare you pour wine on this dress?  
Tear my stockings  
Scuff my shoes  
Pluck the roses piece for piece  
Unearth the bosomed girdle  
Claw the truth from underneath  
This masterpiece in polished pewter?”

A gentle hum of something in the background  
Lonely lamplight snuggles close  
A mindless wonder stirs  
About the thrifited print upon the hearth  
I hum a line from “Nearness”  
To drown her seething, muffled screams  
That dust the house from underneath  
A cardboard box of china

*Tara Bass*

## Tadpole

“Is she even here?”  
Her hair used to be long  
and white blonde  
Then, she cut it and dyed  
it black  
Her nails were pink  
Now, they are black, too  
She used to wear  
the cutest dresses  
They have all disappeared  
Jeans and pants have taken over  
She used to be a quiet  
little sheep  
A free-thinking loud  
rebel lives in my house  
Mickey Mouse, Barbie, Disney  
were her best friends  
Kurt Cobain, Trent Reznor  
and David Lee Roth all  
hang out with her  
But  
when did this all happen?  
Junior high?  
Libby?  
Trevor?  
I’m too scared to know  
She can’t go back to what  
she used to be  
None of us can  
That’s just how it is  
All she can do is march  
merrily into her teenage  
wasteland

*Candice Johnson*

## Doll Gas Mask

She sits alone in the back  
in the back of the Humvee  
Everything is fake  
Tall plastic tress  
Cotton grass  
Everything stiff  
Pink to sickness  
Blonde rules the land  
Painted faces  
Imaginary roads  
Battery run  
Always sunny  
Paper makes the needs  
of its residents  
She won’t survive here

*Candice Johnson*

## A Sucker for a Sad Story

When I met him  
He appeared so lonely  
Something in my head  
Told me he was phony  
Something in my heart  
Wouldn't let me see  
That he was not  
The man for me  
He would tell me how easy he was  
And couldn't keep a relationship going  
How women would use him  
How he would continue on not knowing  
So I let him kiss me  
And one thing led to another  
My heart was saying  
He's not like the other  
This happened just two days ago  
I felt I was his crown—his glory  
I decided to surprise him early this morning  
But caught another sucker with him  
Falling for the same sad story

*Terri Coley Carraway*



*Poplar on Cedar*

Brent Hood

## **I Am Woman**

*Theresa White-Wallace*

Going to the doctor's office can be a pain. The first pain comes when I have to sit in a cold waiting room. There I am, sitting patiently, reading a book, listening to the TV, and wondering why all of the appointments are scheduled fifteen minutes apart. Can the doctor honestly see and do everything he has to do in fifteen minutes? The second pain comes when I have to sit in a cold examining room with just a paper gown on. By the time the doctor arrives, my legs and arms have turned blue. "No, I don't have poor circulation, I am just frozen." And we won't even go into what goes on behind closed doors. Before I leave the doctor's office, I receive the final pain, the bill. Once I am in the car, a sigh of relief comes over me. My physical is over, and I don't have to worry about it for another twelve months.

I am afraid that getting a mammogram isn't much easier. I am immediately placed in the first of three waiting rooms. The first waiting room is large. Some are waiting to have their leg or arm X-rayed while others are waiting for the big compression. I get very excited when I hear my name called, but my excitement soon fades as I am placed in a smaller waiting room. This room is cold, and lined around the wall are women waiting for the big compression. My arms and legs begin to turn blue, and I think to myself that maybe they are trying to make my whole body go numb. After all, anything numb can't feel pain. The second waiting room becomes a game of sorts. As I look around the room, I see a variety of ages, usually women in their 30's and up. As much as I try not to look, I can't help but notice the size of everyone. I see someone who is small and think to myself, "How do they compress something so small?" I then see someone who has been blessed by God. And for the first time in my life, I am glad that God has not blessed me. Bigger has got to hurt more. Finally, my name is called, and I am placed in a room the size of a closet. I am so pleased when I see a cloth gown that I just want to shout, "YES!" As the assistant is leaving, she tells me to make sure that I put the gown on with the open part in the front. That seems easy enough until I find out the gown has three arm holes. How does one accomplish this task with a wrap-around gown? So I spend the next five minutes putting on and taking off the gown. This is a conspiracy so that I won't know how much time has passed. I think to myself, "Next time I will know how to put the gown on." I will forget. The assistant finally knocks on the door and takes me to the compression room. There before me looms the big vice. After I am compressed into the vice, the assistant stands behind the screen and says, "Don't breathe." I then realize that I haven't been breathing all along and wonder how much longer I can keep it up. It is now time to do the other side. Again, I am compressed into the vice. This time I am holding my breath not because the assistant told me to, but because I am in pain. The assistant stands behind the screen and says, "Can you believe you are not compressed enough?" At this point, I either laugh or cry. As soon as I am released from the grip of the vice I think, "Men have it is so easy." And for just a moment, I want to slap them all.

## The Rose

A rose is a soft and fragile flower.  
It's strong and willing, so is it fair  
of us to call it weak and ephemeral?  
Yet the touch of a hand breaks the flower  
but the hand bleeds. The thorns protect  
the flower, but it is too late now.  
Blood so red, just like the petals,  
drips to the hard, cold, lifeless ground.  
As with life the rose will die  
even though it has fought hard to survive.

*Lorie Benton Daughtry*



*Thorny Subject*

Katina Davis

**Accidentally**  
*Sarah Atkinson*

On a bright, sunny summer morning in 1964, I was playing outside with my childhood friend in her back yard. My friend owned a dog that was not kept on a leash. I was very afraid of dogs, and my friend knew it. An accident that I remember as though it were yesterday happened that day. To my remembrance, we had a little spat, and she wanted to get back at me and decided to have her dog chase me. She told her dog to “sic her, sic her, sic her!” When that big black dog acted as though he realized what she was saying, I realized he understood, so I started to run. As I started running, the dog began to chase me. With no regard to where I was going, I ran, and just as I got out into the street, a taxicab was coming; we were face to face, that taxicab and I. Realizing it was too late, Mr. Pearson, the driver, began to slow his car. When he finally stopped, he realized that we had collided.

He immediately jumped from his car and began screaming out at me, “Are you okay? O, my God! Someone call the ambulance!” Once I heard him say the word *ambulance*, I tried to get up on my own. At this time, my mother was running down the street in her house robe and night-gown. Her robe was full of wind, and it was blowing back.

As she reached us, she cried to Mr. Pearson, “Is she hurt??”

Mr. Pearson said, “I don’t really know. She tried to get up just as I approached her. I think we should call the ambulance.”

Again I tried to get up, but my mother told me to “stay put.” I screamed and yelled, chanting, “I don’t want to go to the hospital! I’m okay!” over and over and over. Shortly thereafter, my mother asked if I could walk, and I said I could. She had me stand up, and I jumped up and said, “Look, I can run!” My knee was hurting so badly, but I took off running.

Days afterward, Mr. Pearson would stop by to see me and bring me different goodies. I remember once he brought me a bag of Kennedy fifty-cent pieces. Every time I would see him, he would tell whoever was around the story of our accident and would call me his little girl.

In January 2008, Mr. Pearson was the victim of an accident wherein the driver was speeding and failed to stop for a stop sign. He was traveling west on Highway 70, and she drove right out into the highway into the path of his oncoming vehicle, crashing his car and causing his instant death. The fire and rescue team were dispatched, and his grandson who was a member of the Goldsboro Fire Department had to relay to other family members that their dad and granddad had died in an accident. This accident occurred forty-three years later than mine, but I remember both as though they were yesterday.

## Success in Simple Form

Bubbles flying through the air,  
Dancing in the breeze.  
Tiny hands clapping all around,  
Anticipating their next move.

Little squeals of delight,  
Success in simple form.  
Happiness on a sunshine day,  
Who could ask for more?

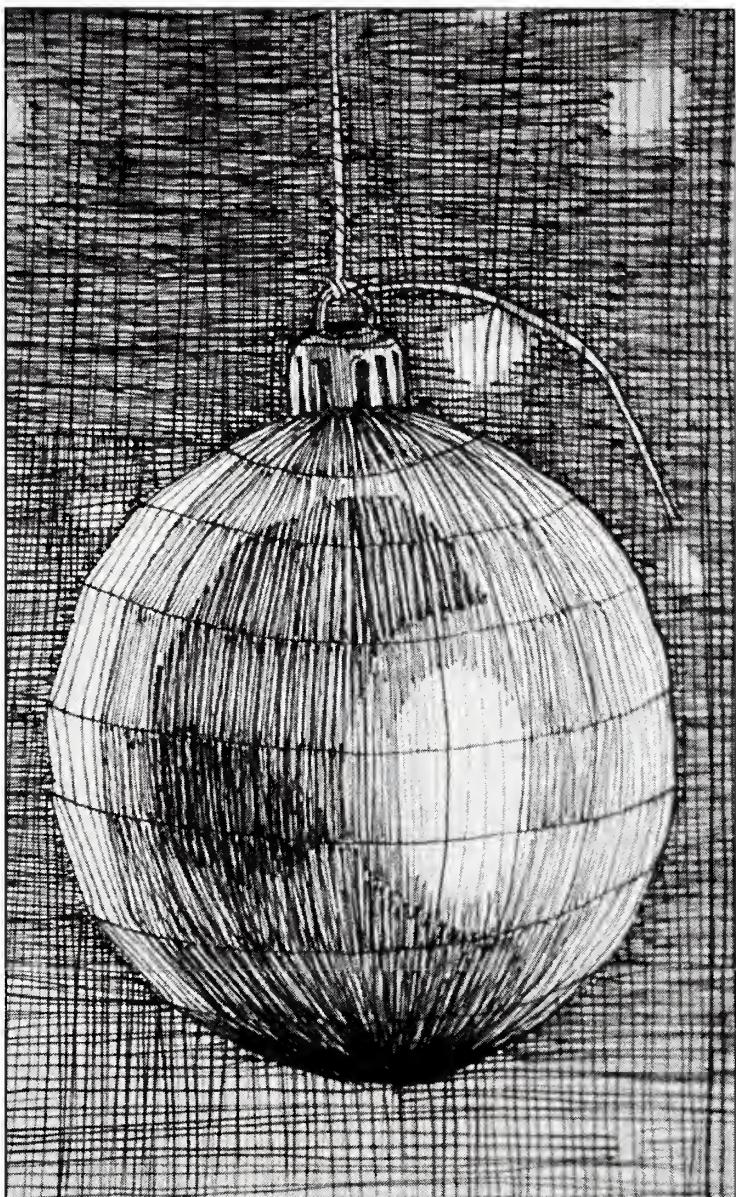
*Jennifer Parker*

Jaden

I met a stranger.  
He was very handsome.  
I smiled and introduced myself.  
He stuck out his tongue.  
I held him in my arms.  
Then he was taken away.

He was handed back to me  
All bundled like a burrito.  
I smiled and introduced myself again.  
“I am your mommy,” I said.  
I held him close to my heart.  
He was my firstborn.

*Lacey Cerezo*



*Ornament*

Gabriela Knox



*Scotch Bonnet Pier - Surf City*

Brent Hood

### **A Day at the Beach**

*Jamee Dawson*

As I climbed up the sand covered boardwalk and caught a peek of the blue-green ocean, I felt a spur of excitement as I stood there in admiration. As far as the eye could see, we saw shades of blue, green, and yellow beach umbrellas. We saw seagulls hovering over groups of kids as they threw their leftover snacks up in the air. My friends and I could not wait to feel the blistering sand between our toes.

We ran down to the bottom of the sand slope as we scoped out a place to lay our multi-colored beach towels. One by one, we rubbed the sticky sunscreen on each other, covering our entire bodies. We darted into the icy cold water, splashing and laughing. As the gigantic waves crashed on our heads, the bitter and salty taste filled our mouths. The surfers rode the waves like pros as the waves carried them inward. Struggling against the brutal current, we desperately tried swimming toward the shore.

Fighting through the crowd, we searched for our brightly colored towels. Dripping wet, we lay on our towels to let the warm, breezy air dry us. Soaking up the sun, we ate our sandwiches. With every other bite, we tasted the gritty sand that the breeze delivered. As the sun began to sink behind the ocean, we exhaustedly packed up our belongings and headed back for the boardwalk. Finally, pulling out of the ocean's sight, we joyfully giggled about the excitement we had enjoyed.

## **Just Fine for Me**

*Collin Whitehead*

Many things bring me joy in this life. Some are simple; some are more complicated. One thing that continually brings me happiness is living on the farm. When I was younger, I lived in the suburbs. We had a nice two-story house, and I went to a suburban school. When I was about twelve years old, my parents realized they were tired of living in the city limits and packed up. We moved out to a small farm on the western edge of Pender County. It is quite a transition, the suburbs to the country. Saturday morning cartoons turn into Saturday morning chores. Summer nights in the neighborhood become summer nights tailgating at someone's farm.

I will admit that at first I was not happy with my situation. The change for me had been a big one, a new house, a new school, basically a new start. The farm that we now lived on was less than fifty miles from our old house, but in my mind, it was worlds away. The joy I feel when I am at home compares to nothing else. It is a simple thing to hear the breeze blowing through cornstalks or to hear the rain on a tin roof. However, I know that such simple things that I can take for granted are in fact a privilege that few can experience.

To some folks, "the simple life" might mean a failed reality television show. I wouldn't know much about that. There is no cable television on our farm, just the three channels we receive when the weather is good and everyone in the room stands very still. I do know that when I hear "the simple life," what immediately comes to mind is the late summer when the pears and the grapes are ripe, or first thing on a spring morning, when the horses are pacing in the barn, ready to be turned out on the new grass.

Living in the city, life is certainly more convenient, but after living in the country for the better part of ten years, I realize that I no longer have much use for paved driveways or mail that's delivered in a timely fashion. Seeing the sunset reflected in the pond or being awake to watch the sun creeping through the pine trees is just fine for me.



*Ridges of Blue*

Brent Hood

## Snake

It was late summer when you came,  
Wreathed in sunshine dazzle,  
Speckled—solemn and kind.  
I with rake in hand along the creek.

So standing, I spread the leaves  
Around your abode and stared.  
Split tongue, seemly, slit eyes,  
What had they seen?

They saw me.  
I, unworthy of your presence,  
—Your prescience,  
Was humbled.

But No!  
Snake, so soon,  
You sacrificed the silence to hiss,  
And I could not save you.

The slice of life so horrible!  
We screamed, all is shadow,  
Stop! They say safety first in such  
Matters, but whose?

You came and I cried, what  
Could I have done differently?  
It was of no intention—To sever us  
Was a mistake.

Scales are false impressions,  
Inside you were soft, like the sun.  
And I still search for you, Snake,  
Such sepulchered solitude suits no one.

*Andy Rajske*

## The Attack of the Yellow Jackets

Schiwanda Todd

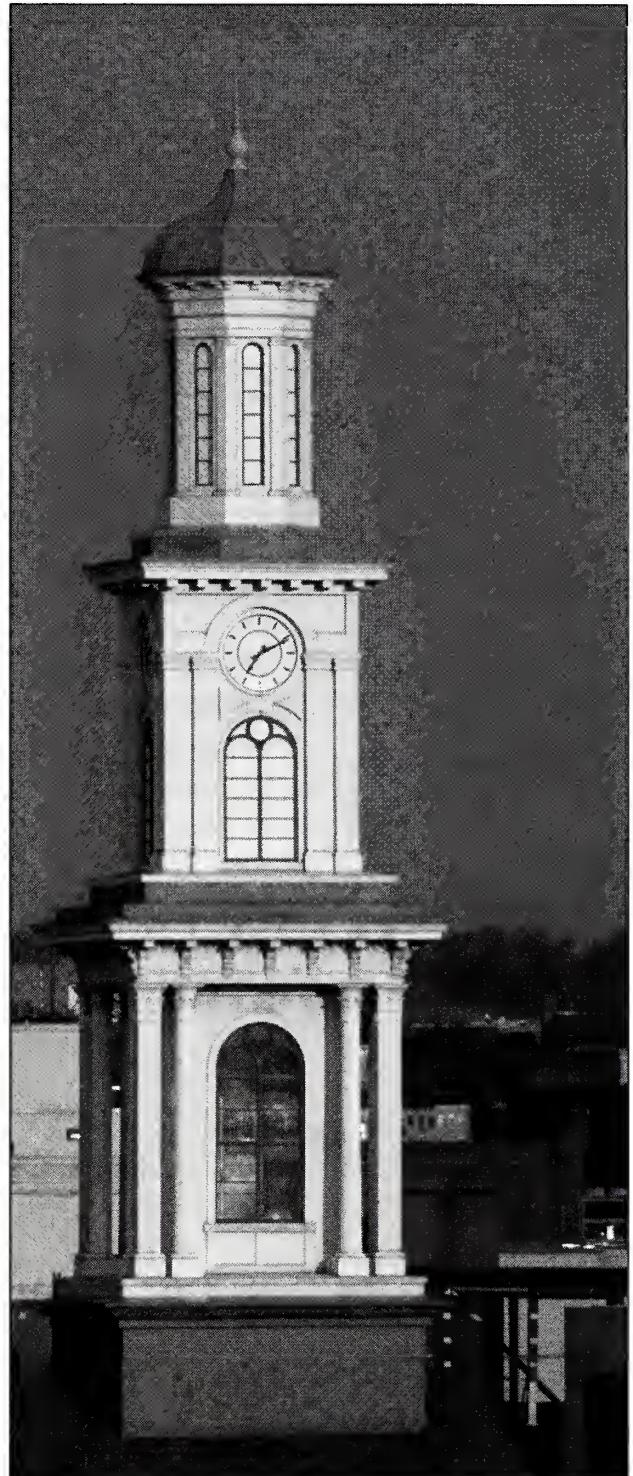
One of the more painful and embarrassing experiences of my childhood is now a funny incident that I can laugh about. In the year 1979 on a spring Sunday morning, my family and I had gone to church. I was nine years old.

I remember sitting in church feeling uncomfortable. I felt as though I needed to move around. This made me start singing and clapping my hands, but as soon as I started moving around, all of a sudden I felt excruciating pain. I frantically tried to get out of my yellow rain jacket but was having a hard time with the buttons.

Next, I was trying to figure out where the buzzing sound was coming from and realized it was from inside my raincoat! It felt as though my neck were on fire and was swelling like a balloon! I looked around the sanctuary hoping to signal anyone to help me out of my dilemma. I was unsuccessful. I started bouncing up and down like a kangaroo because of all the pain I was in. When I looked around again, Pastor had the microphone in his hands telling me to keep on praising the Lord. I was yelling, "Help me, please! I'm in pain," but everyone was mistaking my cries for a convicted heart.

Finally, my mother realized I was truly in pain and saw how I was pointing to get the raincoat off. She ran to me at the speed of lightning and unfastened my buttons. I was so relieved for help. A burden had been lifted. After I got the rain jacket off, five yellow jackets were smashed against the back of my swollen neck!

Real life experiences can sometimes be painful, but every time I see a yellow rain jacket on a cloudy day, I will relive the attack of the yellow jackets.



7:11 p.m.

Brent Hood

## **Innocent Mistake**

*Lorena Esparza*

Over the years, my mother has told me many stories of my childhood, about my mischievous ways. According to her, I was a very curious troublemaker with a loud mouth. I used to get lost in stores a lot, I used to talk to strangers, and I used to break things. The best example occurred back in Mexico when I was five. Even after thirteen years, I have heard of no one else who has broken the basin that holds the Holy Water in my hometown church.

Every other day my older sister and I went to Bible study for our First Communion. We were allowed to go to church alone since it was close to home with only familiar people. Once in the church, my sister left me with my group and went to find hers. The church had held a baptism that Saturday, so the basin was out in the middle of the aisle. The church was small with around ten benches on each wall. My sister was sitting at the front bench, and my study group was near the middle on the opposite side, but I did not join my group at first.

I noticed how many people entering the church took something out of the basin, and I became overwhelmed by curiosity. I asked myself what could possibly be in the basin. In the past I had never noticed the thing at all, but that day it was out in the middle of the church. As more people came in, they all did the same thing, dip their fingers in the basin and walk away. The marble basin was sitting on a tall marble pillar. I noticed that the Bible study had already begun, so I left my curiosity and went to my group. Once the study was over, my sister went to the bathroom, leaving me to wait by the basin.

I looked around and saw no one, so I took the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity. I tried to look into the basin, but it stood too tall. I inched closer on my tiptoes with my hands on the basin. As I stretched even more, the pillar began to tilt. Feeling the weight of the basin come down, I moved quickly to the side. The basin came down with a great crash, and the Holy Water that had filled it covered the floor. Standing in the middle of the church with a broken basin at my feet and Holy Water all over the floor, I began to panic. By then my sister stood by me looking at my latest disaster, so she took my hand and began to walk home with me. We walked in silence until we were far enough from the church. “What did you do?” she asked in a worried tone.

“I’m sorry; I didn’t want to do that. I just wanted to see what people were getting out of that thing. You think I’m going to get in trouble?” I responded, thinking about what my mother would do to me when she found out. If it had been up to me, I would never have told my mother, but knowing my sister, I knew she would tell her the moment we entered the door.

“Oh, yeah, Mom’s going to be really mad at you. You’re in really big trouble now,” my sister said with amusement. She liked to scare me by overreacting. I began to worry even more and to dread going home. I had no courage for telling my mother what had happened, so as always my sister came forward and told her everything. However, to my surprise, my mother did nothing to me. She found my reasons logical, and she felt it was the teacher’s responsibility to keep an eye on the students. The only thing that my mother said was that I should not have done that; instead I should have asked someone what was in the basin.

I was relieved with my mother’s reaction, but there was still the church to deal with. My parents were worried that the church was going to charge them for the basin. A week passed with no complaint from the church. My parents never brought up the subject with the church officials, and nothing was done. Another week passed, and we moved to California, leaving the affair to rest.

## **Making Homemade Apple Butter**

*Theresa White-Wallace*

When I was a child, summer was one of my favorite times of the year. It was a time filled with no school, vacations, family cookouts at Grandma's and camping trips to the lake. The summer that I turned nine years old was one of the best ones I can remember. My grandparents were no longer with us, but the family would still get together and have summer cookouts at their place. On one of these cookouts someone suggested that we make homemade apple butter. My Uncle Roy had two huge apple trees in his front yard – the kind of apples needed to make apple butter. After much discussion, we chose a date. The week would be very busy prior to apple butter day. After supper each night, family members would gather at my uncle's house. The men placed tall metal ladders against the trunk of both apple trees. Before long, two men would disappear into the foliage. Then two more men would repeat the process. The men would climb high in the trees and bring baskets of apples to the ones below, who would then place the apples into pails.

The women gathered in the kitchen with paring knives ready. Soon the first pail of apples appeared. Then the assembly line began, peeling, coring, slicing, and washing. Everyone had a specific job. Every evening when we stepped inside my aunt's house, the aroma of apples was present, such a sweet warm smell. Everyone was tired by the time the last of the apples were picked. I am sure my family had not realized what a big job they had taken on. Even though hands were achy and backs were sore, everyone seemed to have a good time. The night before the big day, several of my uncles went down to my grandparents' house and brought back a huge cast iron pot. The pot would hang on a beam over an open fire as in the olden days.

The adults were tired and not as excited about apple butter day as much as the kids were. Everyone got up early on apple butter day, and by 8:00 a.m., everyone had assembled at my aunt's house. My uncle had a huge graveled driveway, and a spot was chosen to lay the wood. The men put the cast iron pot into place and started a fire. Soon after, the women put the apple mixture into the pot. The men stayed outside and kept the fire going as the women prepared the jars that would become the storage place for the apple butter. It took most of the morning for the mixture to cook. We could smell the aroma of apple butter with each breeze that passed over the pot. After lunch, the mixture was placed into the jars and sealed. The next morning we got to try the newly made apple butter. The apple butter wasn't as dark as the kind that you buy in the store. Instead, it was light brown, and we could almost see through it. The taste and texture were also different, but the apple butter was the best I had ever had.

Apple butter day had been a good one. It brought back memories for the adults and gave a history lesson for the young ones.

Grandparents

Looking in their eyes  
Reveals a wisdom so unknown  
Looking at the world  
Steady as they go  
Bodies worn and tumbled  
Spirits strong as steel  
That they are getting older  
Never seemed so real

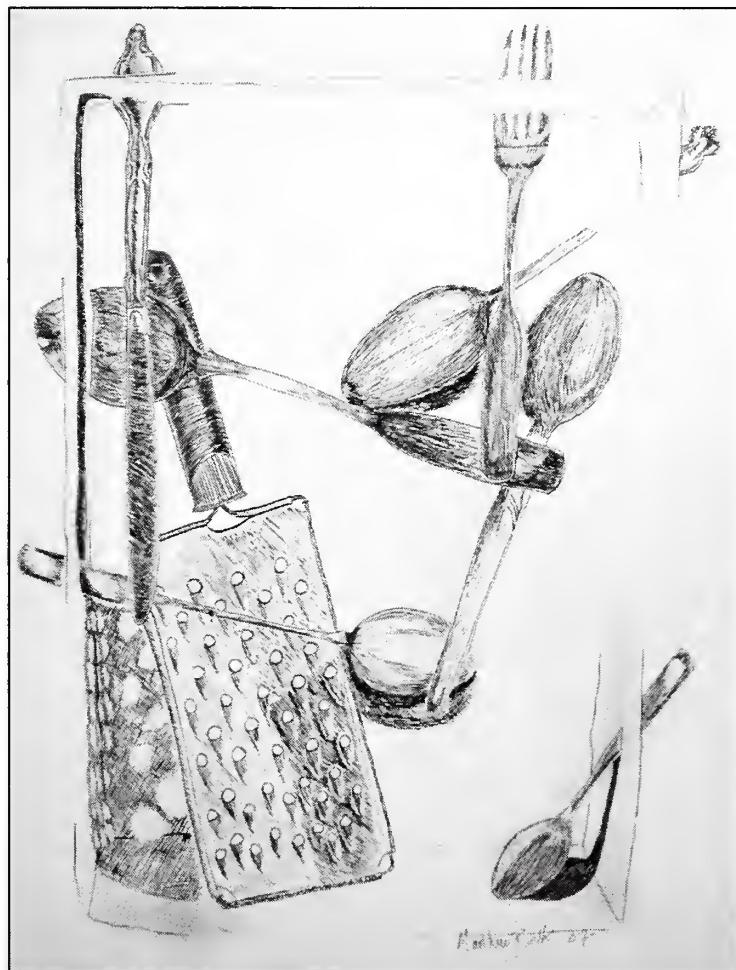
*Lorie Benton Daughtry*

Grandmother's House

The pitcher pump on the porch  
Cool clear water  
Better than that from  
The new spigot  
Knot hole in the floor beside  
Fluffy feather bed

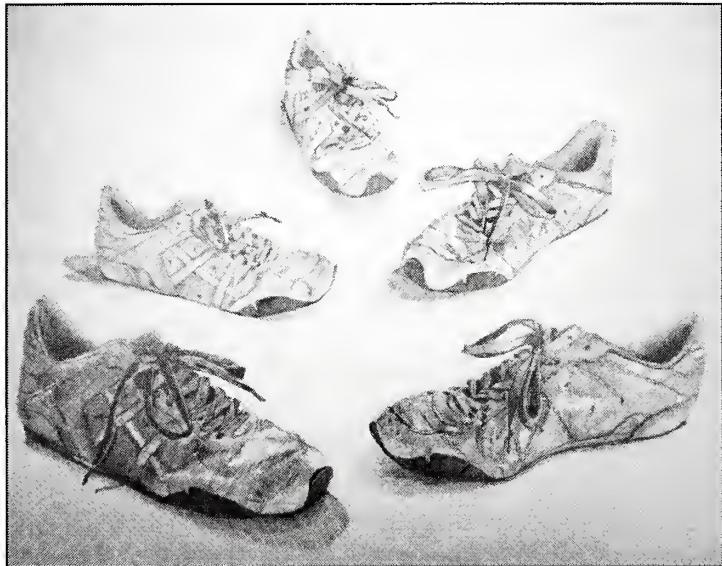
Oil lamp flickering in the  
Dimly lit room

*James Mitchell*



*Grandma's Tools*

Matthew Belk



Tennis Shoes

Gabriela Knox

### Beside Me

When I take two steps forward  
You always take two steps back  
A winning relationship  
Doesn't work like that  
It takes a special kind of person  
To do what you do for me  
And I am more than grateful for you  
But I want you to see  
That when I move up  
I don't want you to move down  
And if I am at a standstill  
You mustn't stand behind me  
When I take a step forward  
Be it one, two or three  
Please don't step back  
I want you beside me.

*Terri Coley Carraway*

### I'm Terribly Sorry

Honey, I'm terribly sorry  
I could never do things right for you  
You felt you could never trust me  
Even though I thought you knew  
I loved you

Things in life don't go the way we want  
You said you needed time apart  
I felt you robbed me of my heart  
This year was just a game to you  
Even though  
I loved you

We are friends now, I think  
Thoughts of you haunt me in my sleep  
Of how things could and should be  
But now you don't love me, but  
I loved you

You want my body  
I want your heart and soul  
Those things you can't give me  
So I guess I'll let things go  
Even though  
I loved you

I'm terribly sorry  
Maybe one day you'll forgive me  
Until then, I'll keep my heart closed  
And love you in my own way  
When you are ready, tear the wall down  
For I loved you

*Stormy Cazeault*

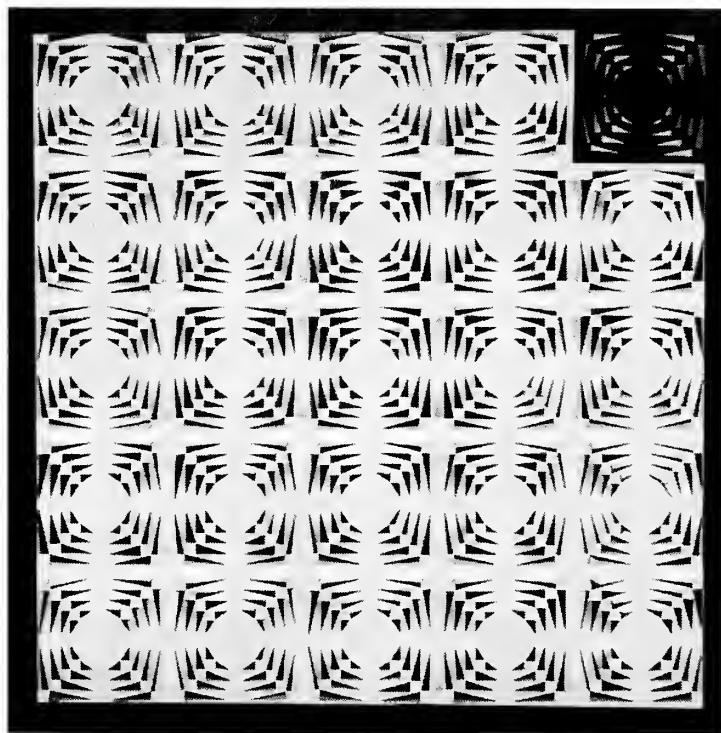
## Beware Black

*Mark Thomas*

When I was fifteen, I was broke and was given a beater to drive from Point A to Point B. Unfortunately, I wanted to go fast, so I saved to buy another beater that I worked on for 6 months straight until it was ready. Its name was "Black."

"Black" is a 1987 Ford Mustang Coupe with black pearl paint that sparkles like millions of stars in a black night's sky. Black has silver, waffle cone designed rims and looks like it's sitting on the ground. Sitting there, Black looks like a harmless sleeping dog. When I turn the key, the monster awakes with a deep roaring growl like a vicious black panther on the defense in the jungle. I hit the gas and pop the clutch. Black takes off like a jet on a runway setting off every car alarm in a three mile radius. Black grips the road with the gentleness of an infant but with the technique of a skilled blacksmith in straights and curves. Coming down the highway, Black looks like a mean slithering black cobra weaving down the path to find its next victim. People stare in amazement as Black cruises by, rumbling the ground like a stampede of thousands of angry Mustangs. Black then sneaks into its parking spot like a toddler getting into bed. Sadly, I then turn off the key. The world becomes quiet. Then, I take in a deep breath, and the taste of high octane fills the air. Black sleeps peacefully until it is time to go again. Oddly enough, Black leaves with me an aroma of fumes of high octane to warn any car that doesn't know Goldsboro is his yard. Trespassing on his yard isn't taken lightly.

Black is now notorious in three states and countless counties. Who would have dreamed a four-cylinder, 1800-dollar bondo baby could have become the monster it is today? Dreams aren't given. They are built!



*Paper Square Cutout*

Gabriela Knox

## Love Right Back

Hello, dear mother, it's been a while since I had the chance to talk.  
So much has happened in my life, I don't know where to start.  
I have a son; he just turned one, the apple of my eye.  
He's got your nose, perfectly shaped; it crinkles when he smiles.  
He's been a blessing in my life, my angel straight from heaven.  
I sometimes hope you got to meet, before God sent him to me.  
Perhaps you got to hold him close and touch his tiny cheeks.  
I know that he dreams of you when he goes to sleep.  
I take him to your resting place as often as I can.  
We pick you flowers that you'd love; he likes the yellow ones, too.  
I tell him just how wonderful you are, and that you love him so.  
I know that you'll watch over him wherever he may go.  
It helps to ease the pain sometimes to see you in his eyes.  
I hear your voice whenever he laughs, and I know you're laughing, too.  
So dear mother, I'll talk to you as often as I can.  
Now that I'm a mommy, too, I think I understand  
The love a mother feels for her child that reaches beyond her life.  
I send that love right back to you, from one mother to another.

*Jennifer Parker*



*Twins*

Katina Davis

January 29, 2008

Today is the day.  
One year ago the angels  
came and took her away.  
Heaven rejoiced and  
the rest of us cried.

The year has been long  
and empty without her.  
We haven't been shopping  
in a while.  
A new restaurant opened.  
Wonder what she is doing  
today?  
It is Christmas morning and  
I have to call her.  
She's gone.

I look at Purr the cat and  
peace falls over me.  
Ann Spicer is not so  
far away.

Today is the day.  
I look at the clock.  
This is the time  
the angels arrived.  
Heaven rejoiced and  
the rest of us cried.

See you later, my dear friend

*Theresa White-Wallace*



*Flowers for a Friend*

Gabriela Knox



*Chair with Fabric* Gabriela Knox

**Before Dawn**  
*Adrienne Yates*

My father may not have been the smartest or richest man to ever live, but he was humble, caring, loving, trusting, and above all else, selfless. He was a carpenter, firefighter, EMT, plumber, electrician, carpenter, church builder, Mason in training, Eagle Scout, and troop leader. He was also my first softball catcher and my personal basketball coach. Most importantly, he was a teacher, a counselor, the root of my family. An affectionate hater of all school boy crushes. My defender. My superman. My guardian angel.

As my father lay in a ditch full of water, forbidding me to come near, he struggled with broken tree limbs and broken bones to keep himself above the water, all the time reassuring me that he was okay, just that in the tornado a few choice clothing items had become lost. He kept asking how I was, how everyone else was, and when I told him, he began giving out first-aid directions to the people around us. For over an hour, as the emergency response team picked their way through the massive destruction the tornado had left in its path, he lay there never once asking for help himself. And when the ambulance finally arrived, he demanded that everyone else be seen to first. Once he was reassured that I was properly checked out and seated up front in the ambulance, then and only then did he consent to being loaded in. The ride to the hospital was spent asking repeatedly where I was and how I was. Encouraged by the sound of my voice, he began to relax enough to receive medical attention, all the while telling them what to do and how to do it. He could have spent the ride to the hospital filling the silence between siren wails with complaints, moans, sounds of desperation, and self-pity. The last words that I would ever hear from this great man, however, were not those of pain or hurt, but instead, four simple words that I carry with me every day. Those four simple words, which can mean so little to some, struck me to the very core of my being that morning. He simply said, "I love you, Adrienne." Shortly after that he lost consciousness.

## Scrawl

The claustrophobic closet  
where I undress waist up  
before the mammogram  
is not a decorator's dream.

Neutral wallpaper's random marks  
evoke a smile as I recall  
my children's glee at cryptic scrawl  
of red or green or purple  
on linens, garments, upholstery--  
"Mom fell asleep grading again."  
English teacher's children  
love to tell their tales.

At call-back mammogram  
my smile fades.  
Wallpaper scrawl  
becomes  
handwriting on the wall.

*Rosalyn F. Lomax*

## And the Fish Keep Swimming

The laptop on the Queen Anne desk  
in the private waiting room  
commands my full attention,  
its screensaver alive  
with fish of every color--  
yellow, orange, electric blue--  
and the fish keep swimming.

The radiologist, lovely,  
young enough to be my daughter,  
enters and chats, then says  
with tears in her blue eyes,  
"You have breast cancer,"  
and the fish keep swimming.

My husband's voice floats by  
with all the vital queries.  
In childhood contests,  
I held my breath underwater.  
Now I hold my breath and stare  
at the laptop on the Queen Anne desk,  
and the fish keep swimming.

*Rosalyn F. Lomax*

## Creeper

Night falls on the land as the sun sinks into the hills  
Orange twilight covers the sky, then darkness  
Creepers in the dark stir  
Silently waiting for unknowing prey  
A yellow orb rises into the sea of stars  
Light flashes on armor of many colors  
Wind flows through the trees  
The trap quivers  
Light reflects off white wings  
Shimmering in the orb's white light  
Closer the wings come, a flitting and fluttering pattern  
Claws wait silently, hungrily  
Clear drops of morning dew cling to the trap  
Scintillating light reflects off the drops  
Eight eyes eagerly watch the white wings  
The wings move toward oblivion

*James Brewster*

## A Frog Croaked

A frog croaked as I was leaving  
From somewhere on the pond.  
Crickets played their somber tune  
Yet I dared not tarry long.

Fireflies presented their colorful display  
Like the flickering lights of a town.  
The Angel smiled, then waved her hand  
To wipe away my frown.

I stood elated, my heart full of joy,  
Yet no one ever spoke.  
But somewhere there on that crystal pond  
I could hear that mournful croak.

*James Mitchell*

## Penguins

Oh, what fun to watch them ride  
On the ice like a slippery slide  
Tuxedoed males their time must bide  
Eggs on black feet they must hide  
While the females quickly stride  
To bring back food from far and wide  
As they waddle from side to side  
They still walk with so much pride

*Wendy H. Smith*



*Green Envy*

Brent Hood

## **Where Did I Go?**

*Quentin Davis*

My father passed away two weeks ago. His mother, my granny, passed away one week later. Today, of all days, I return to work. It's October, and fall is in full momentum. It's cold and cloudy. I enter these prison walls unable to escape the clouds. For obvious reasons I should not have come to work. I am chum in shark-infested water.

Before today, I was mentally untouchable. I had deep love for my life, I was laid back to a fault, and I found myself believing in some of the inmates' causes. Before today, I knew my name and everything I believed. As an officer, I was firm, fair, and consistent.

Things at the prison have not changed. I report to briefing to get caught up on what's happening in the world of segregation. My duty for today is patrol officer in charge of feeding. I report to the chow hall to retrieve the food carts and meet the smell of fresh, greasy fried chicken, bland rice, and salads. Upon returning to the segregation unit with the food carts, I find myself slowly getting back in the groove. Work is becoming a routine again, and the distraction is welcomed.

My partner and I begin the feeding process. I begin to get this eerie feeling because things are going too well. I go to cell BU-206, which houses Inmate Jones. I give him a food tray and pour his beverage. Just as my partner and I are leaving the cellblock, Inmate Jones states, "I didn't get a fork on my food tray," but he uses a descriptive word for the fork. As soon as the inmate uses that expletive, my mood changes. My blood becomes water. I tell Inmate Jones that I will have to go to the kitchen to get him a fork. Am I a correctional officer, a butler, or a babysitter? I don't know which is worse!

As promised, I go back to the kitchen for another fork. I open his food passage door to give him a utensil. He states that he wants another food tray. I emphatically tell him "NO!"

He states, "I'm not going to eat this slop!" He takes his food tray and throws it on me, soiling my uniform. He is now in the process of retrieving liquid from his toilet. That's when I decide to rain pepper spray on him. I close his food passage door and exit the cellblock. I can hear the throat-clearing coughs and sneezes from the other inmates on the cellblock in their own separate cells. In a small ten-by-eight cell with no ventilation, I can only imagine what Inmate Jones is going through though I do not care. He could gag to death! My water is boiling, so he means nothing!

I report the incident to my sergeant. I speak of the inmate's action and my immediate reaction. My supervisor gathers two other officers to take Inmate Jones to be decontaminated. Sgt. Jasper gives specific orders for me not to re-enter the cellblock. She can see the water escaping as steam is hissing from my head. At first, I wait to make sure my co-workers are safe. After a deeper look, I want this inmate to say or do anything to give just cause to rain thunder upon his very soul. The closer Inmate Jones comes toward me, the more my patience fades. I become a victim waiting for the ax to drop. I close my eyes and see my dad's dead carcass in the casket. For a split second, I am overwhelmed. When I reopen my eyes, life doesn't matter!

As they leave the cellblock, Sgt. Jasper asks Inmate Jones if he wants to be decontaminated. He says no rather emphatically accompanied by the occasional "F" word. Sgt. Jasper gives Inmate Jones an order to face forward and proceed to the holding cell. They walk by me, and I immediately take the lead in escorting this tyrant. He instantly stops his movement and turns toward me. The second order comes, "Turn forward and proceed to the holding cell." At this point, Inmate Jones needs to gain respect from his incarcerated buddies and reaffirm to himself that he is still a man. Knowing these things makes my spirit smile to the point of outright laughter. Like death, the anticipation of this explosion is worse than the explosion itself.

Inmate Jones stops his movement and tries to swing at my sergeant. Why doesn't he swing at me? I do not care because he is giving me my birthday gift two months early! I catch his handcuffed hands as my sergeant ducks. I ceremoniously throw the inmate into a plexiglass window with a sound that awakens Zeus from his million-year slumber. My metamorphosis has occurred!

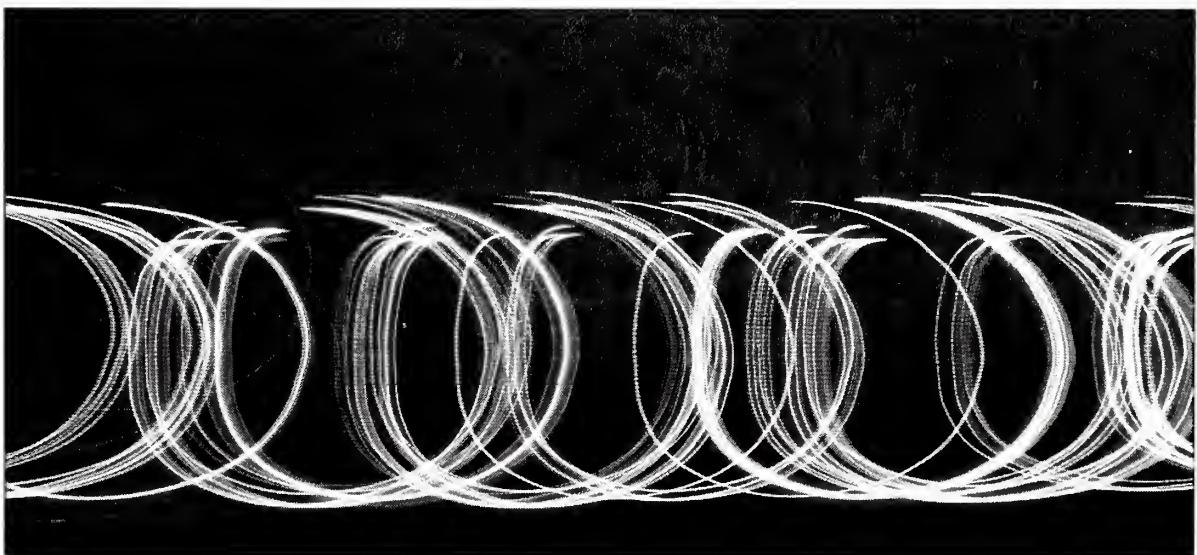
We attempt to remove the handcuffs, in front in order to handcuff his wrists behind his back. As we

remove the right handcuff, Inmate Jones feels freedom for the first time in ten years. It is as if the North is a line marked with my presence directly in front of him. He makes his break for freedom swinging at me. He misses his mark, but the velocity of his punch makes me realize he is dead serious and I am dead happy! I catch his hand and pull him close as if we are about to do a waltz. I hit him with two closed fists leaving a cut over his left eye and a seriously broken nose. The inmate falls to the concrete floor. This gives us enough time to keep him down and handcuff his wrists behind his back. We are finally in control. We get him to his feet. The sally port door opens so we can put him in the holding cell. I control his right side while my partner controls his left. Inmate Jones breaks away from my partner and kicks me in the shin as we approach the stairs. With no balance, the three of us crash down the first flight of stairs and hit the cement wall. This is what it sounds like when trains collide. Inmate Jones hits the top of his head flush in the corner. He now has two one-inch gashes, on top of his head. Blood splatters everywhere and drips from the hairs on my left arm.

A minute passes as my partner and I rebound from the fall. We get Inmate Jones to his feet. We make it down the next flight of steps without incident. I take control of him by myself while my partner retrieves the key to the holding cell. With one last gasp, Inmate Jones decides to spit on me. Quentin, with everything that makes me who I am, leaves the building! I take his right wrist and bend it until I can hear and feel bone-cracking satisfaction. I then try to force him through a locked fiberglass door leaving his bloody facial imprint on it. His knees turn to rubber, and his body is limp. The holding cell door is opened, so I throw him inside. I watch with a hint of satisfaction as he crashes into the wall and falls to his knees. He is alive, but he got everything he wanted, and I was thrilled to give it to him!

I go back upstairs to make sense of what has happened. I can't be found in mind or spirit! I never thought I could lose my way as I did, and I don't think I could lose it more than once. I am filthy, and I want him to pay for making me this unclean saint. I storm out of the office to finish my work. I hear the rumble of thunder outside. It is raining. I never get the key to the holding cell. My father must have spoken to the officer because he refuses to give me the key. I am weak, dizzy, nauseated. My water is cooling, so my cognitive skills return. Quentin is back, and my co-workers are glad to have me back. Sgt. Jasper thanks me for my quick action, keeping her from being assaulted.

Mercifully, the shift ends. Along with a fresh uniform come fresh, uninterrupted thoughts. I realize that I went to a very dangerous place. I do not know who I am or how I should feel. I am mentally and emotionally numb. I know this is only the beginning. The internal investigation promises to be a circus. As I walk to my car, a steady rain falls. My God and my father are crying. God cleanses His Earth with rain. I wish I could be cleansed.



Oooooo

Brent Hood

## I Am

I am the coral snake of New Mexico  
Slithering across the smooth sand with great precision.  
Bands of red, black and yellow wrap around my body.  
My patrons fear me, for I am highly poisonous.

I am the rattle snake of North Carolina  
Creeping along brown, dead grass  
Shaking my rattle to victims I pass.  
Watch out, humans, I leap when striking my prey!

I am the great Boa Constrictor roaming South America,  
Hanging out daily in the sleepy swamp.  
I possess vibrant, shimmering colors,  
For all of my enemies to see.

I am the venomous water moccasin, ruler of the river,  
Aggressive to keep my abode my own.  
My throne sits high in a nineteen-foot Cypress tree.  
Comrades call me cottonmouth for short.

I am the lazy fellow slumbering in the sun,  
No initial threat to humans, but most still fear me.  
Tiny little two-foot snake with no harmful intentions,  
I am the garter snake, snacking on earthworms and frogs.

Finally, I am the one people fear the most.  
I speedily chase humans, but only for a bit of fright,  
Fulfilling my name of the “Black Racer” just right.  
I remain harmless to all, aside from vermin for a feast.

*Jessica Chesson*

## A Colorful Person

My grandmother calls me colored  
My mother calls me black  
And what would I be without a little Cherokee  
We all have claim to some of that

I am red when I am angry  
I am blue when I am sad  
I am green with envy and pink when I think I'm pretty  
And white when the lotion doesn't last

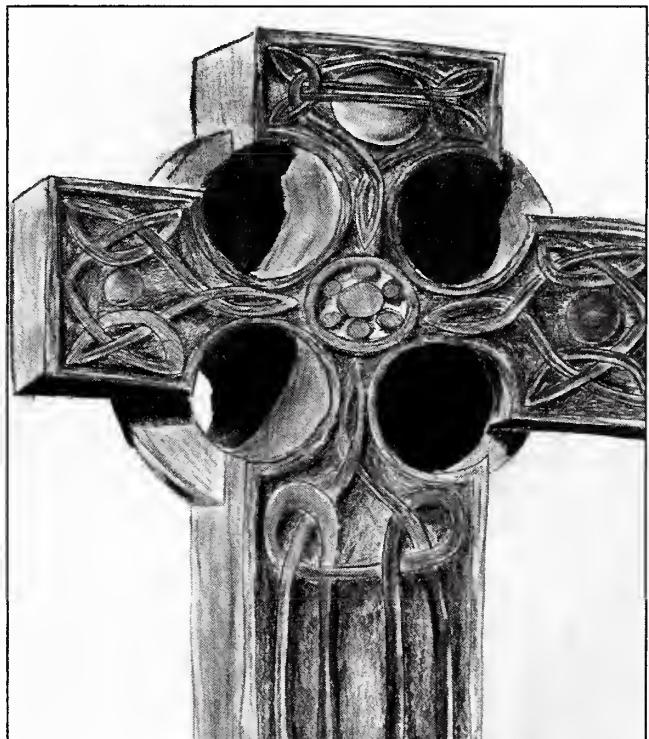
I am yellow when I am happy  
And purple when formally dressed  
For I feel like a queen and want to be seen  
Who doesn't when looking her best

I am a colorful person  
And can portray any of the colors above  
But when looking at me, what do you see  
Do you see me as a product of

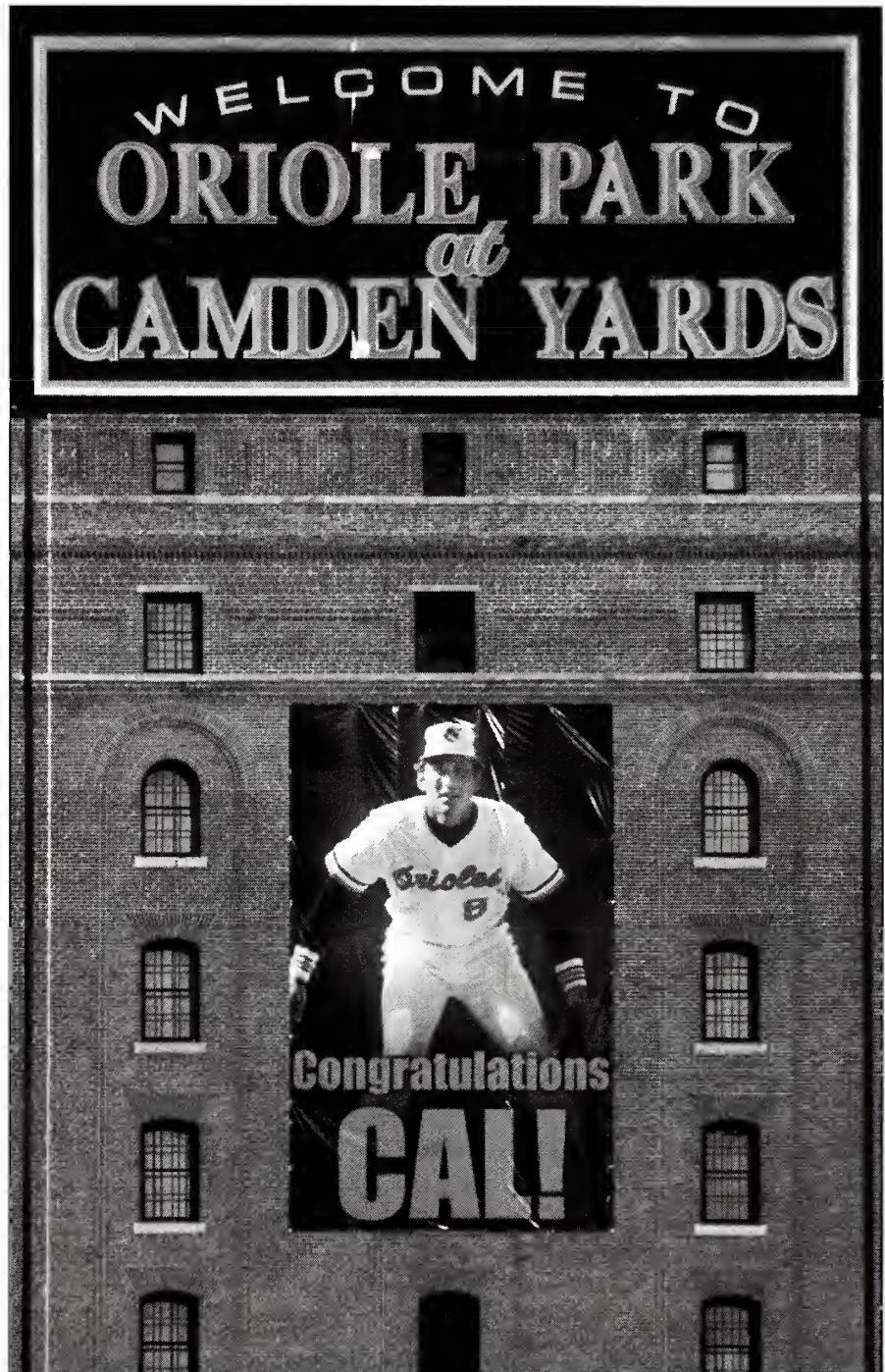
A people that were brought to this country  
With shackles on their feet  
That went through trials, tribulation, the worst discrimination  
If you do -- don't weep

For I have excelled  
And in the world have found my place  
I am all the colors of the rainbow and more  
We all bleed red  
I am of the human race

*Terri Coley Carraway*



*Deliverance*  
Matthew Belk



*Cal's Day*

Brent Hood

## The Ghost in the Middle Row

*Jerrod Robinson*

"Duck, duck, duck, goose!" I watched as Michael entered into a mad dash around the ring of first graders sitting outside Brogden Primary. Bobby, while slightly overweight, galloped behind him trying to keep up with his undersized and much quicker target. Michael then flopped down into the spot vacated by Bobby, giggling and snorting, as only Michael could get away with. Bobby hunched over and rested his hands on his knees as he wheezed and said, "That's messed up."

Michael replied, "Maybe you shouldn't have ate all those Lucky Charms this morning." The class giggled as Bobby turned red and informed Michael to "Shut Up!"

Mrs. Overman, who seemed to be on the way as teacher of the year after she threatened to give me a "U" for not sleeping during nap time, just said, "Hey!" Scary enough? Then again some might find her very scary. Mrs. Overman was already known for her hard stance on order even though her physical stature didn't seem that scary since all the other adults towered over her. Her low, evil eyes were brought out by the squinty glasses she wore. They had the chains hooked to them like Urkel's. She was slightly—no, she was very chubby and didn't help her cause with her hairdo. Her light brown hair was curly and resembled one of those balls of weeds seen in the desert of a looney tune. Some of my classmates had begun to call it her "fro."

Meanwhile, Bobby collected his breath and started his roll call, "Duck, duck, Goose!" Bobby stumbled as he tried to propel his "fit" body into motion. He was then stopped in his tracks by the touch of another, followed by a subsequent chuckle by the audience as Bobby turned around to face his smiling assailant. Skinny little Alicia just stood there and responded, "Gotcha!" Bobby just stood with a frown slapped on his face as his shoulders sank like quicksand. I found myself sitting anxiously, waiting my turn to be the goose. No one had ever picked me in the two weeks we had been in school. Just as I finished that thought, Bobby started his rounds, and I sat almost as if I were trying to telepathically communicate to the big buffoon, "Pick me, pick me."

Apparently human beings, well, at least me, are not capable of telepathic thought. I just sat on the ground and pulled out blades of grass as the others laughed. Not much time went by before we were ushered back inside by Mrs. Overman with our pointer fingers straight up over our mouths because the day before we got in trouble for being "rowdy." We all fell in line and broke off one by one on our way back to our assigned seats. They were humongous tables interconnected in three rows with chairs on both sides of the rows. My seat, if you want to know, was directly in the middle of everything. Michael sat across from me at a diagonal, and Bobby was behind me.

Michael asked the boy sitting across from him named Billy, "What time does your party start?"

"At six, I think, but my mom says that you can come over right after school."

"That's cool, I'll ask my mom if I can ride the bus home with you then."

The class's collective grumble then fell into silence as Mrs. Overman called out, "Excuse me! Now come in like that again and we'll have recess inside for the rest of the nine weeks." I chuckled inside, since I really didn't believe she could stand to have us inside for that long. We sat very quietly while Mrs. Overman's assistant, Mrs. Powell, handed out our next assignment. I looked at the paper underneath my nose and saw it was none other than what we did for what seemed like hours the day before - subtraction. I rolled my eyes and put the oversized fat pencil I was holding in my hand to work as I solved the problems that gave me no trouble the day before. I put my pencil down and looked up to see that Michael and Billy had already given up and resumed their conversation as half of the class had followed suit. Mrs. Overman then finally barked, "Quiet! Okay, class, we're gonna have a little test. Everybody write down your age on the top of your paper. Now subtract that number by three and that's how y'all are acting. Now do your work or I'm going to send you to the principal and tell him to send you home because I'm not here to teach toddlers!"

"You're seven?" Michael asked me.

"Um, yeah, why?"

"Cause that means that you failed a grade. Didn't you?"

"No."

"Yes, you did. Hey, Billy! Jerry's failed a grade before."

"No, I haven't." My face curled up as my temper started to unravel.

"Don't lie. Yes, you have. 'Cause you're suppose to be six but you're seven which means you should be a year ahead of us."

I just laughed off like I normally did when I wasn't trying to let my anger show. "No, I'm not. My birthday came late, so I had to start a year later than my mom wanted me."

"Oh, so you're just stupid then," Michael said. I became furious at the thought of being called stupid, since I knew in my mind that I'm not the one who couldn't do his own work, and simply said, "Shut up."

Bobby then chuckled out of control and let out, "You shut up, dummy,"

"Your momma," escaped from my mouth as Bobby jumped out of his seat, but not before I jumped up first.

"Boys!" Mrs. Overman yelled as she stepped into the row and separated our faces. "You go sit on that end of the classroom, and, Jerry, you go sit in that corner, and I don't want to hear another word from you the rest of the day, or it's to Principal Patterson's office you go."

I just sat in the corner with my arms crossed as I could still hear chuckles coming from where my seat was. I knew Michael and Billy were still talking of their grand spoiling of the quiet boy. It just fueled my exile. Mrs. Overman told us about thirty minutes later that it was time to go. I was then allowed to leave my corner and pack up my book bag. Michael, Billy and Bobby just stood with heinous smirks on their faces. Michael then walked up and said, "What's wrong? Can't talk all of a sudden or are you really stupid?"

"I don't have to prove that I'm smart to you, Michael. I know that I am."

"That doesn't matter! We all know you can't beat me at anything else. Who cares about schoolwork anyway?"

"I don't," Bobby replied.

"We all can tell that," I stated with utter seriousness.

"Man!"

Mrs. Overman jumped in. "Hey! Now you two can still visit the principal and we can have your mothers pick you up. How bout that?"

I shut my mouth since the last thing I wanted was to have my mother get off work to pick me up from school again. Last time she threatened to send me to military school if my behavior didn't improve. I must say that I really did enjoy my room. Losing it and being sent away to some distant school wasn't what I was looking forward to any time soon.

Mrs. Overman ushered us to our school buses where I met up with my friend Tarik and watched as the three stooges got on their bus and Billy said, "See you tomorrow."

"No, you won't," I thought to myself. "No one ever does."

The next day followed as any other would with reading and grammar lessons throughout the morning. No one really said much to me, just the isolated treatment I was used to receiving to that point. After lunch we filed back into the classroom where we were once again victims to the almighty subtraction problem. That time, however, we were subject to slightly larger numbers, 20-3, 18-12, etc. Not to toot my own horn, as my mom always said, but the math was not that much of a problem for me. I finished quickly while every two minutes Michael called Mrs. Powell over to explain the next problem to him.

"Hey, Billy. What's 12-8?"

"I don't know."

"4. The answer is 4." The focus switched to me as I couldn't stand to see him struggle anymore even though he obviously had a problem with me.

"I didn't ask you. How do you know anyway?"

"Because, if you take 12 and minus 10 what do you get?"

"Um that one's easy, 2."

"Okay, so what's the difference between 10 and 8?"

"2."

"Right. So what is  $2+2$ ?"

"4." Just then I saw Michael's eyes light up like a light bulb had just been placed between his ears and intelligent thought had just entered his life.

Billy witnessed this and showed off with, "Oh."

The table grew silent as Michael went down the page, at times looking like he wanted to peer up and ask another question, but he didn't. I just thought to myself that he didn't want to ask the dumb boy who failed a grade a question in front of his friends.

"Hey, dummy," I finally heard come from behind me. "You really think you can beat Michael at anything, don't you?" I just shrugged my shoulders. "Yeah, but I bet you can't run faster than him." I still just sat quietly, shaking my head and pretending to have something better to focus on. Inside, though, I couldn't help but want the chance since no one had caught Michael that year.

Finally, Mrs. Overman said, "Put your pencils down. It's recess time."

We filed outside as Mrs. Overman lead us to our spot in between the sandboxes. She stood in front of the class and took a hand vote on whether we wanted to jump rope or play Duck, Duck, Goose. The latter won with almost all of the class voting for our favorite bird game. We all sat down into a big circle with Michael, Billy and Bobby all sitting together across from me with Billy and Bobby smirking as usual. I could see Billy and Bobby egging Michael on to go first. I didn't know why they just couldn't fight their own battles, but I still wanted the chance.

Mrs. Overman asked, "Who wants to be first?"

Bobby then yelled out, "Michael does!"

"Michael can answer for himself, Bobby."

"Nah, it's okay." With that Michael jumped up. He started with Alicia and began to snake towards my side of the circle.

"Duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, goose!"

All at once I felt my head snap forward and I saw Michael enter into a dead sprint. Even with my momentum carrying forward, I managed to spring to my feet. The ground didn't even make a sound. I lifted my leg over the guy who was sitting next to me (I had no idea what his name was) and began to chase like the cheetahs I had seen on that Discovery Channel. With every stride, I felt myself gaining on him as we rounded the first half of the circle. "Only an arm's length," I thought to myself. I reached forward only to grab air as I was slowed by the extra weight leaning forward that caused me to stumble, but I didn't give up. I threw on what my brother Wes called the afterburners and seemed to glide back into form. No, he's almost there. He rounded the last part of the circle and began to slide into my spot. Just then I felt a burst as if an angel had come down and greased my hip sockets. I stuck my hand out to the side as if I were tagging someone out running to third base just like I did the year before while I was playing shortstop for the Royals in Grantham. My hand swiped his arm just enough to make it sway to the side and then, Michael screamed, "I'm safe, I was already in his spot!" The class looked with their eyes fixed upon Mrs. Overman like she was naming students who could go home early.

"No, Michael, he got you."

Michael slowly rose and abandoned the one spot he couldn't take, mine. I sat down with a quiet smile on my face. The rest of the class looked on with sparkles of amazement. The dumb seven-year-old who failed a phantom grade and was too slow to ever catch anybody had just been seen.

Redemption.

*Maybe Next Tuesday  
Dedicated to Rosalyn Lomax*

From teacher to editor  
this woman goes  
with square little glasses  
perched on her nose.

She spots writing talent  
from miles away  
encouraging students  
to have something to say.

Their words she can polish  
brighten their light  
and forge them to beauty  
to give true insight.

But the Eagle has landed.  
Farewell to her rhyme.  
Maybe next Tuesday  
she'll find the time.

*Liz Meador  
Paula Sauls  
Kathryn Spicer  
Marian Westbrook  
Jeff Williams*





1990

**RENAISSANCE 2008**