

## The Windy Hill review. 2007

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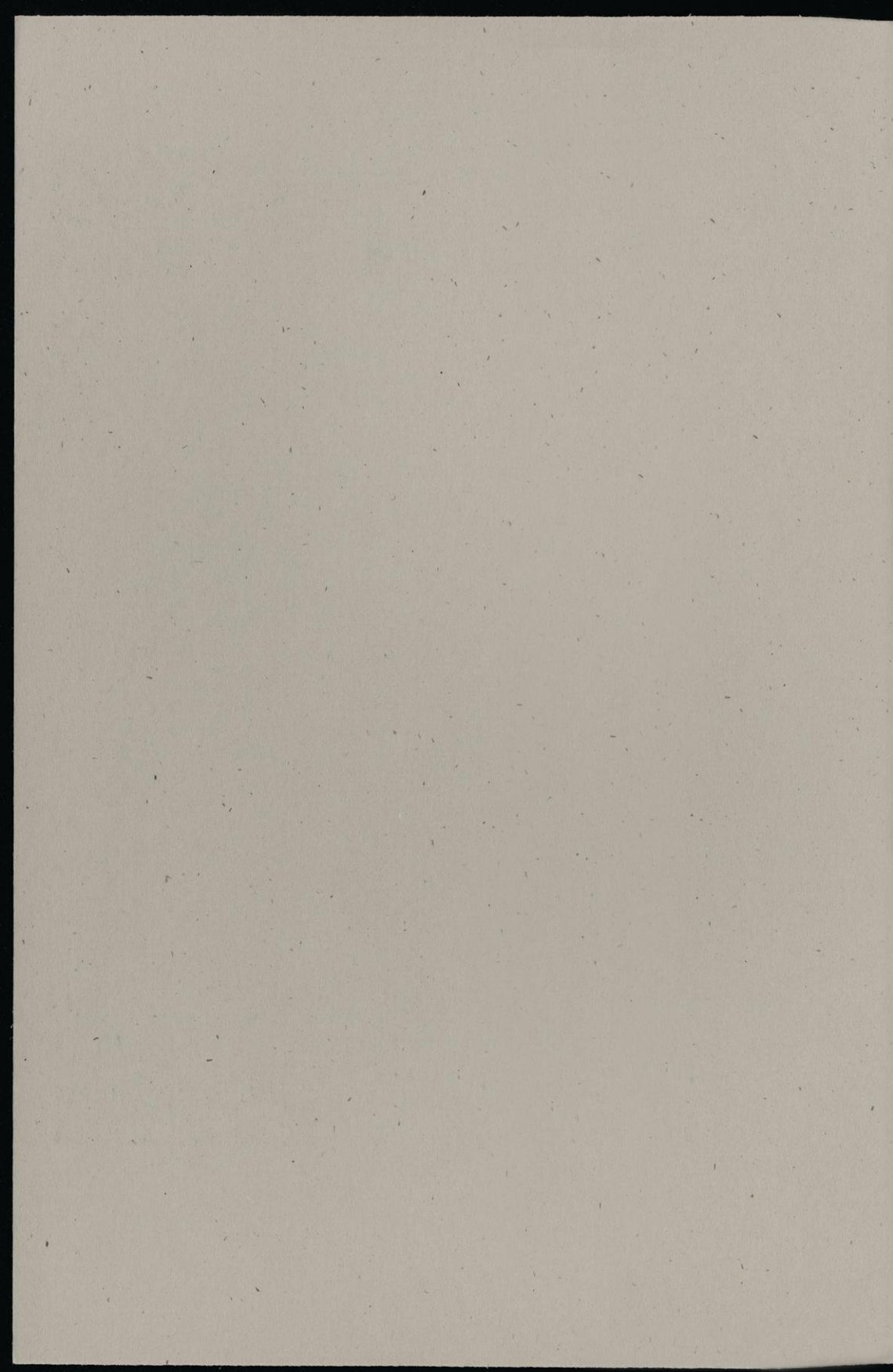
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# *Windy Hill Review*

2006

*University of Wisconsin - Waukesha*



Beyond the Horizon

Amy Peterson

Sleep, endless, peaceful  
washes over my body  
painless evermore

# The Windy Hill Review

**29<sup>th</sup> Edition**  
**2007**

UNIVERSITY



WISCONSIN

**WAUKESHA**

A Campus of the University of Wisconsin Colleges

1500 N. University Drive  
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53188



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and artists who contributed their creative works to this collection.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of this publication  
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## No Good Deed...

By Jennifer Mimier

At the ding, the stainless steel elevator doors parted, cutting my reflection in half and replacing it with the lobby of the west tower's sixty-fourth floor, complete with its own breathtaking view of the ocean glittering in the mid-afternoon sun, seen over the tops of the smaller, more inconsequential buildings. Situated in front of the glass barrier between office and sky was a sprawling oak countertop behind which an old woman sat, thumbing impatiently through a filing cabinet drawer.

I meandered up to the huge desk, my eyes following the path of a seagull flock floating effortlessly above the beachgoers and sailboats. I'd lived here my whole life, seen the ocean hundreds of times, but the sight never failed to draw me away from my present reality. The vastness, the color, the freedom... it was more than—

"Can I help you?" My daydream broke into a hundred tiny pieces and clattered down around my shoes. The receptionist snapped her chewing gum impatiently, glaring at me over the tops of her bifocals. Who was this scrawny, barely-out-of-high-school young ruffian who looked so surreal, tracking filth and poverty into her pristine corporate haven? She silently assessed my wind-tossed mop of a haircut, my faded blue windbreaker, and the irritating orange polo shirt that was part of my work uniform. At least she couldn't see the "Try our new three-cheese burrito!" name tag. She kept her fingers stabbed into the filing cabinet.

"I need to see a mister..." I pulled the crumpled business card out of the back pocket of my khakis. "Lockwood."

She looked at me as if I had just given a blatantly wrong answer. She sighed disapprovingly, now that she actually *could* help me, that I wasn't just lost making a delivery or something. She pulled her long-nailed fingertips from the filing cabinet and swiveled over to face me, in front of a huge appointment ledger. She snapped her gum again and looked at me squarely; fingers now poised over the calendar pages. "Would that be Paul Lockwood, James Lockwood Senior or James Lockwood Junior?"

"Er..." Initially startled by the overwhelming scent of her perfume, I was now mesmerized by the bazaar of colors adorning her face—the peacock blue of her eyeshadow above the penetrating green eyes, the red blush smeared across her sharpened cheekbones, and the purple-hued lipstick that garishly offset her yellowing teeth. I glanced at the card in my palm. "Paul Lockwood," I responded, trying to fake some confidence into my voice. I was determined not to get intimidated by a curt old lady in desperate need of a makeover.

She flipped some pages in her book. "Name." She didn't ask, just stated.

"I don't have an appointment."

She stopped flipping and looked at me. *Don't have an appointment*, her stare chastised. "Mr. Lockwood is very busy, you realize."

"It won't take long, I'm not here about any business. I just—"

"Have a seat over there." She motioned with her finger, turning back to her filing cabinet and beginning to ignore me.

I remained for a while, uncertain, then gave in and took a seat on a leather couch in a waiting area to the right of the desk. There was a coffee table, but no old magazines strewn across it. A portly man in a business suit was asleep in a leather armchair in the same area, snoring quietly. He might be an indication



of how long this was going to take. I needed to pick up Ashley from school at three. So much to do these days, but I've got to be the good, dutiful brother...

I reached into the inside pocket of my windbreaker. I liked that pocket; it made me feel like James Bond. But instead of a gun or a spy gadget, I pulled out a black leather wallet monogrammed with a golden L. I could just leave it at the desk, I reasoned. I flipped it open, studying the balding, self-assured man in the driver's license photo. Mr. Paul Lockwood can get his wallet back from his unfriendly secretary, and then she can stop looking up at me as if I'm going to rob her. I'm *returning* money. I'm a hero here, lady. Most people would just keep the money.

Ashley wanted to keep the money.

"Dude, this guy's loaded!" She had yelled, flipping through the wad of crisp hundred-dollar bills she had removed from Mr. Lockwood's wallet.

"Put those back, they're not yours." I had pulled the drapes shut, but the city lights shone through the thin beige fabric.

"Ever hear of finders keepers? Besides, this guy probably wouldn't even miss it." She pulled some credit cards out to study them. "'Visa Triple Platinum Ultra Rewards Card'? That's a mouthful. Look, 'Hilton Hotels Diamond VIP Membership'... 'Bedford Elite Country Club'... 'Palace Restaurant Preferred Guest'... like this guy is hurting. Especially if he's carrying three thousand some dollars—"

"Three thousand, four hundred and eighty."

"Yeah, that much money around with him in his wallet. That's like *way* more than you make in a whole month at Taco Hut. Besides..." She had lowered her eyes. "Don't we like, *need* the money? 'Cause we only got so much from the insurance."

I had been hoping that she wasn't aware of the financial situation. The pang of guilt hit me hard, there, and probably made me a little angry. I snapped up the wallet and the cards from her hands, shoving the Triple Diamond Elite Snooty Rich Man cards back in their slots.

"I'm going to return it, because that's the right thing to do."

Ashley flopped back onto the couch, defeated.

I hated when she looked at me like that. "I'll look him up in the phone book, or something."

"There's a bunch of his business cards in that left hand slot." Ashley said, hugging a pillow to her chest. "Maybe he'll give you a reward, or something."

Is that why I'm staying here, then, instead of just letting Missus Angry Receptionist give the wallet back? Isn't that how it works? I could go in there, and Paul Lockwood would smile and say, "Why, young man, I'm so impressed with your honesty and fortitude! Perhaps I can offer a job to such an outstanding gentleman like yourself? With a company car? And two weeks paid vacation? Ah, so you're studying business at night school, eh? Well, how about I take care of those nasty tuition bills for you? We never find such *integritous* individuals, it'd be a shame to pass you up!"

You do the right thing, and that impresses people, and they reward you for that. Karma, right?

But any reward that he'd give me would probably be less than three thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars. And besides, 'integritous' isn't even a word. I opened the billfold slightly, and Ben Franklin's picture winked out at me. Mr. Paul Lockwood has probably already written off the money. I wouldn't even try to use the credit cards; he's probably already reported them. He can apply for new Hilton Club Cards, or whatever. They probably know him by sight anyway. And I

could get the car fixed. And buy something nice for Ashley, her birthday's coming up.

But it would still be stealing.

Finders keepers, losers weepers. But Mr. Lockwood doesn't have anything to weep about. So everybody wins, right?

Except my conscience.

But I'd use the money for good things. Nothing for myself, just some necessary things. And some new shoes, because these ones I have are falling apart. And maybe a haircut. And that new Final Fantasy game.

"Excuse me. Mr. Lockwood can see you now." The secretary's voice cut across the lobby shrilly. It seemed as if she had been repeating herself, or she was just that annoyed to be talking to me. The businessman who had been asleep in the nearby chair was gone. Although she didn't use my name—I hadn't told her it—she was staring right at me.

"Thank you," I said, folding up the wallet and standing. The leather in the couch creaked as I pulled my weight off of it.

"Down the hall." The old receptionist pointed with a pen she held in her hand. "Right at the end. Has his name on it."

I walked down the carpeted corridor, past meeting rooms and scampering yes-men. There was less activity near Mr. Lockwood's office door. The gold letters gleamed in the florescent light.

He still hadn't seen me. I was still holding three thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars. I could still just walk back to the elevator.

I knocked on the wooden door.

"Come in," came an authoritative voice from behind it.

I could still run. Probably faster than he can get to the door.

I opened the door and stepped inside. I recognized Paul Lockwood from his driver's license photo. His office was furnished just the way a man who could stand to lose three thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars *would* furnish an office. My eyes flashed to two plaques gleaming on the wall behind him. "ASPCA Golden Benefactor" and "Metropolitan Museum of Art Sponsor" with Paul Lockwood's name engraved deep in each. The man himself stood up from his leather executive chair and offered a hand.

"What can I do for you?" He asked amicably, while I self-consciously shook his hand. I'm no authority on the subject, but I'm pretty sure that the Rolex on his wrist wasn't fake. I could still run. He'd think I was crazy, but I'd have the money.

"I found your wallet, yesterday." I said, proffering the wealthy scrap of cowhide with its monogrammed letter. "You left it at the register at the Taco Hut..."

"Oh, yes, I recall stopping for a soda. I was so thirsty, I just couldn't wait..." He took hold of the wallet. *Run!* I felt him remove the weight from my palm, felt the worn leather brush off of my fingertips.

"An extra grandé Cherry Pepsi with no ice..." The wallet was gone forever.

Paul Lockwood grunted an agreement. He flipped his wallet open, and started looking through the compartments with apprehension.

"I took one of your business cards, to find you." I explained needlessly. I still held it in my other hand. It felt moldy and undead, as if the decaying paper fibers were going to squirm their way under my skin. I wanted to shudder, but I didn't move.

All seemed to be in order, and he snapped the wallet closed and put it in his pocket, smiling at me. "Well, thank you very much. It's not often you'll find someone who'll be so honest. Most people would follow that little children's



saying... 'finders keepers', no?" He shook my hand again. "I admire your honesty. It renews my faith in America's youth."

"You're welcome, sir."

Paul Lockwood sat back down at his desk, still looking at me with surprise. "Good things happen to good people like you. Have a very good day."

He turned back to his work. He used a silvery pen to scribble signatures on important documents. He stopped, and glanced back up at me.

"Something else?"

"You can have this back, too." I dropped the crumpled business card on his desk. He unfolded it, a little confused, and studied it for a moment or two. He may have been about to say something, but I was already down the hallway, watching the stainless steel elevator doors seal off the lobby of the west tower's sixty-fourth floor.



Ian McDonald

## **ever after**

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

Never-Never-land must be full  
lost boys roam the streets                    everywhere  
hungry and sad and friendless  
they seem grown up    that's make-believe

I saw one last night    hiding in the shadows  
like Peter    listening to stories    pretending  
the stories were his    it was hard to sit still  
not go up and pretend with him    pretending  
I'm still good at that    I watched a blonde leave  
her friends    smile at him    softly brush  
a loose thread off his sleeve    he leaned closer  
laughed    and she was happy

I wanted to stop them    tell her  
it could never work    her story would never  
be enough    he'd smile for awhile    then  
leave    she'd grow up alone    I still wanted  
to tell that young man one last story  
and he'd remember    but I am old now  
I'd see a new ending in his eyes

oh, but once upon a time  
Peter taught me to fly  
with him I was sky born

My name is Wendy and I still miss flying



## Beloit

By Paul Robert Ceretto

Squeezed in the middle of the big  
cities.

Teetering on the edge like a five  
dollar whore!

What has happened to our fair  
bitch?

The Rock runs through you  
like a dirty mother, brown skin  
liquid.

Your greatest champion  
conquered

lays like a skeleton long dead  
brick, steel and concrete bones  
lay on blacktop sand.

Your sweet neon stars at night.

Your foul tongue women,  
stronger than your men,  
who waste devotion on days long  
past.

Yet you remain like an  
abandoned child  
hoping for love to return  
love you never knew.

Vicious and cruel,  
but not as wicked as you think.

Delusional toughness,  
no more tough than a defeated  
bully

once strong but now weak.  
Pride broken, waiting for a savior  
your champion to rise again  
rise from the dead!

Foolish hopes that never meet  
expectations  
flaccid dreams like a flaccid man  
a woman waiting for a erection.

Your brutal nature untamed.  
Ill try to kiss your foul mouth  
every time.

Like a liquid lunch I will ignore  
my health for you,

so my mind can run dizzy and free  
from reality.

I love your vile tongue,  
cigarette tasting breath from  
your nose  
as I kiss you every time I see  
you.

Open your legs to me  
so I may pleasure in your soft  
and wet secret.

I will not speak of your infidelity.  
Your husband already weak and  
broken hearted

Fades under your galactic neon

Why do you stay

Why do I return

Like a good time

I relish in your fond memory!

You don't water down your  
whiskey

but give it to me straight  
or double for the price of one.

I love you,  
like a step child loves an alcoholic  
mother

hoping for the best for you  
because of the love you showed.

Apprehensive though of your  
return

to your once youthful beauty  
once precious control.

It is your home.

You stay stagnant in the  
squeezed womb.

Your mother sick  
you hold her hand  
wipe her forehead with a damp  
towel

and wait for her to die.

Your loyalty and devotion to your  
mother

this is your greatest strength.  
Thus your pride in her no greater  
love for a city have I ever seen.

## **Haiku**

Heidi Bennetts

(Bluebird)

The final melting -  
newborn grasslands  
approaching  
by a bluebird call.

(Hummingbird)

Candied red water -  
magnets for the hummingbird  
under sun-warmed sky.

(Robin)

Rainbow sea of leaves -  
hidden in the midst, robin  
sings in her warm bed.

(Raven)

Shivering, bare trees -  
raven's photographic eyes  
capture the bleak cold.



Megan Steffen



**Inevitable**  
Carol Deprez

like a rose that lingers past its prime  
waging a battle of will against time

or a spark that leaps between a he and she  
igniting the fuse to fait accompli

or a moth that senses before its flight  
the flame is lethal, yet flies despite

wisdom needs bend with humility  
to the sovereign nature of futility

**Nobody's Perfect**  
Carol Deprez

When the Almighty created woman  
was she a gift—a curse—an omen  
or simply counterpart to lonely man?

Was she destined to obediently cleave  
to stand beside and never leave—  
God's gift to man—this woman Eve?

Or did he practice first on Adam  
saw imperfection—said *Oh damn,*  
*I can do better—for God I am!*



## **Losing Sleep**

Brandon Peters

To God and the whole world there is you, and there is the rock, and there is the window. To you there is your breath; visible in the street lamp glare, your stutter-steps an echo in the cathedral street, the cold that makes your bare arms break out in small bumps. Your body is textured, jagged as the earth, a congregation of cells shifting and moving. In the cutting wind, a shiver rolls down your spine like an earthquake.

Or maybe there is just the hand, your hand, but far away. Picture your hand at the end of a long road. The hand will throw the rock and break the glass, break it into a billion falling stars that will pull the heavens down with them and leave God naked. You will find solace. You will find knowledge. You will find what Eve found in the bittersweet nectar. In the moment when the rock and the glass, and you and God collide you will find what you have not found in Psalms, or Proverbs, or behind heavily misted windows. You will find peace. You will find the dreams you've forgotten, and you will be able to sleep.

But the glass won't break. The sun will reveal no scar, no mark, no sign. What the sun will reveal is you, cold and spittle-lipped. It will shine plainly into the large gash across your being. Were you sleeping? Not really. You cannot, have not truly slept for days. Your dreams have invaded your reality. Even sober you are not sober. Passing out is not, does not, pass for sleep. In the honest sunlight, you will wonder if you ever really threw the rock, if there ever really was a night.

There are stories that we bring with us, stories that never leave us, stories that fill up our holes. They patch up where we have become frayed, these stories, and mold us into someone quite beyond our control.

I tell these stories like barstool confessionals. "You," I say, I hide behind. "You," the word is a dart thrown across the room. It thumps, vibrates upon impact, draws all eyes. These stories are not mine I say in hopes that somebody else will pick them up. I do not want them. I do not want to carry them, not anymore.

You walk into the street, arms open, deep breaths. Your eyes are open, but do not see. Sweat, not yours, stings them. You are swimming, your blood is an ocean. Your heartbeat crashes like wave after wave inside your heavy head. You walk, drawn forward by the tide of its perpetual motion. You feel your body expand in the absence of crushing bodies and dissonant guitars. You are bigger than this street, this city. You tower over buildings and clouds like a mountain. If you wanted to you could swallow the whole planet.

Your friends are still back at the merch booth, and you walk into the street. A red convertible like a bullet screams past. The lights leave streamers in the air as you spin. You grab at them wrap them around your wrists and your torso. The music is still flowing through you. Your brain is singing.

"Hey," it is another car, this one crawling, "Hey are you alright." The man wears sunglasses. It is night. You stumble over the curb and sit. You reach into all your pockets, and look down at your empty hands.

"Hey," you say it to no one, everyone, "This isn't the shirt I came in."

When you at last focus again the city is far behind you. You reach for a hand, any hand, and close your eyes only when you feel the moisture accumulate between the two palms pressed firmly together.

It is a gradual progression. Mix the rum with Coke, the vodka with orange juice, the Jäger with Red Bull. Or maybe start with Mint Schnapps. You play cards, you play guitar. You watch television and listen to music. You drink when you win a

hand, drink when you lose a hand, drink when the commercial announcer spews out a certain word. Drink when it's a good song, when it's a bad song, when it's a song you've never heard.

It is a gradual progression. Take one sleeping pill. Wait at least a half an hour after you've eaten. Do not sleep. Amytal, Tuinal, Seconal, you have a rainbow to choose from. Take an Ambien and stay awake. Take four or five Wal-Mart brand sleep-aids, anything. Relax. Dance. Laugh. Speak of things you cannot otherwise. Walk the streets at night. You will not remember this in the morning, so you are free. What memory you have will come from group effort. Tiny flashes put together through the eyes of several different people. Do not drink. You will ruin it. You will remember everything if you drink.

It's a gradual progression. When rolling the joint do not be greedy. You will want to be greedy, want it to hit you like a tidal wave. It does not happen fast. You won't even know it is there until someone tells you. Or maybe the stereo will skip...skip...skip. You will notice and then forget. Then you will know.

It's a gradual progression. You sniff and clip at your nose repeatedly with forefinger and thumb. Your sinuses are chalky and somehow taste bitter. The first time one pill will do it. Remember to make sure it is a fine powder. To snort it you can use the body of a pen, a crisp bill, a long fingernail, or anything really. Later you will start with one and a half pills, and then add another one to keep it going. When you feel it in your fingers, when you feel the thump-thump of your heart in the air around you, then you know it is coming. You can drink, but only to buzz. Any more would ruin it. If you eat and drink enough, you can keep this going for three days before you crash. At times, when you need to calm down you will need to smoke a bowl or joint. You will be pale and shaky. If you stay near walls, or in low lighting they will not notice. Convince yourself of this firmly.

They look at you and wonder. Where did it start? Was it the first R rated movie? Was it the first week you slept through church? Was it the first night you didn't come home and they said nothing? You tell them it's the government/large corporations/society. Was it the first rock album? Was it the guitar?

"We never see you anymore," they say, "When are you coming home? Are you sleeping? Come home." Voices fill the space between your brain and your skull. At times words will lose their meaning; sleep, home. You wonder when you last slept. You wonder when you left home.

In the culvert the sounds of cars and semis flow never ceasing overhead. Refrigerator buzz. Your voice carries and carries in your hole, but the rain outside smothers it. It is cold, but the bottle warms you, or maybe it is her that warms you. "Do you love me?" she asks. The others drink, ignorant.

You will throw up when morning comes. Hands on your shoulders, reassuring voices, and the sun spreading like cancer across the sky, these are dreams that will feather-touch your consciousness between heavens. But now the sky is dark and you drink, pass the bottle, drink again. This is not rebellion for you, as it is for the others, this is only the weekend. "Do you love me?"

The beauty of being numb; there is no pain.

She wants to leave. You do not. "What about our friends," you say. And "We're having a good time." She wants to go. It's raining out there, cold. "It's still early," you say. She wants to sleep. "No."

The memory you have is this, her silhouette and her song as she walks away. "You're a crisis," she sings, "You're an icicle." She is gone instantly, and the story is with you as vomit trickles onto your t-shirt. The story is still with you, a song and a faint shadow that keeps you up at night. Sometimes, when it rains, the question leaks into your thoughts. Is it losing sleep, you wonder, or losing dreams?



**PC**

Carol Deprez

the trendy, acceptable way to be

considerate      sensitive  
diplomatic      inoffensive

worthy intentions, make no mistake  
but maybe it's time to hit the brake

addressing gender has been redefined  
don't speak of the common man or mankind

race and cultural issues—don't go there  
sexual preferences—don't even dare

and Halloween? It ain't such a scream  
with scary costumes deemed obscene

a Christmas pageant? not in public school,  
winter festivals are now the rule

environment problems, water, ground, air  
animal rights, the ozone tear

organic foods and nutritional choice  
even Cookie Monster has a new voice

mind every action, heed every word  
politically correct is now preferred

## **Childhood Sonnet**

Andy Heup

I sat in front of the ugly background  
It was my turn after standing in line.  
The professional, his big camera wound  
The flash makes me temporarily blind.  
I sat there, in my uniform so proud  
Yellow kerchief looped neatly round my neck.  
Guided by the duct tape stuck to the ground  
Skin smooth with youth, lacking even a speck.  
Quickly was that day in my mind long lost  
Until months later, photos in the mail,  
Since then, my uniform already tossed  
For a better shade that was much more pale.

It's strange to see family members fawn  
Over a part of me that's so long gone.





Monica Heckenkamp

# **The Suicide of Captain Conners**

Paul Ceretto

Copper medals  
Green Beret

Proud heels  
Strong stomach

Elephant size  
Mongoose spirit

Life's plateau  
Desert career

Blue mood  
Life's bile

Desolate eyes  
Determined hands

Chambered bullet  
Iron gun

Mental blizzard  
Bullet invades

The captain rests

## **Fading Crimson**

Julie Slosarczyk

A feather floating from the sky  
The sun, the moon, the stars, they cry  
A lark softly sings a distant lullaby  
Only as if speaking a somber good-bye

A feather drifting on down the stream  
A silence is broken by a trecherous scream  
But only a scream of a silence from within  
As a young girl discovers her first sin

A feather reflecting the fractions of the eye  
The colors distort what they can not deny  
A stone gray shadow mirrors our lives  
And crimson emotion like the sun rising on high

A feather now mocking the existence we know  
In an endless circle we continue to row  
Spiraling down the rapids we hold on for dear life  
The silence of the depths is drowning out the light

But the feather now settles on the branch of a tree  
A dove sweeps past, sends it flying in the breeze  
Soaring above the mountains, the mesas, and the seas  
And like a razor cuts my heart, and then fades to a memory



**Embrace**  
Ashley Quint

Band-Aids. That was all I could smell. Well, Band-Aids and rubbing alcohol. The smell was so nauseating to me. It didn't matter where you were in the building; the smell followed you, almost like a bad omen. I hated it. What could get my mind off the stench? It was almost taking over my head. I could barely think.

The office was neat. Not like many offices that I see, especially the men's, but this one was spotless. I searched frantically for a speck of dust. Nothing. Frames of awards hung on the walls, as well as degrees. I guess pictures just were not important. It was nothing like the office I used to have. It smelled of tulips, my favorite flower, which happened to be in there everyday. Where could that man be? I hate when people think that they are the only ones in the world that have something important to do. I have a life too.

I walked over to the desk. Pictures of his family, I am guessing, covered it. They were in the mountains, on the sea, in the sea, what a life. My life was nothing like that. I sat at home and cleaned, took care of the kids, and made a million meals. What happened to my life? I was successful, but I gave it all up on account of love. What is love anyway? Is love you cooking and cleaning and then watching your lovely spouse come home and mess it up so you can start all over again? If that is love then I am in it. What a waste.

As soon as the door opened a tall, scrawny, skinny man walked in. He had a nice tan, but not much of a body to go with it. What caught me most about him were his eyes. They were this piercing blue color. They almost seemed to burn right through me. And then once you got away from the eyes there was his hair. If you watched it close enough second by second you could see strands of it falling out. I was surprised that he had any hair left at all.

"Sorry I took so long. Please have a seat."

I looked at him. I hate it when they come into the office and act like they are your best friends always bringing news that you don't want to hear. He is not my friend. He should stop acting like it.

"Please take a seat." I looked at his eyes while I took my time sitting down. It wasn't good news, or was it? I was never a mind reader. I hated this. Maybe the faster I got settled the faster I could get the news and get out. Maybe I didn't want the news, though. Thoughts just flew through my head. I almost wished he wouldn't have walked through the door, and I had the chance to leave.

"There is no easy way to say this. I do have to say that this is the worst part of the job. I just want you to know that I and my colleagues are here for you." I wish he would just get on with it. What is it? He probably says the same things to all his patients. "You are dying."

That is it. That is what he is going to tell me. Just like that. I am dying. I was speechless, probably for the first time in my life. What was I supposed to say? A man that I barely knew walks into his neat, clean, nauseating smelling office and tells me I am dying. He tells me I am dying like it is just a casual fact. Like, by the way, it is no big deal, but you are going to be dead soon. What was I supposed to say?

"The cancer spread way too fast. It is out of control, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. It is too late for chemo therapy or radiation treatment. In this case it would just be a waste of time because it will do you no good. My advice for you is to spend as much time with your family as you can. Make the most of these last days."

"How could I have lung cancer? I have never touched a cigarette in my life nor has anyone in my family. How is this possible?"

"In about ten percent of the cases for lung cancer the people are non-smokers. It could be caused by second hand smoke, pollution in the air, and a number of other ways. It's not very common, but it is possible." I hate when they act like they are smarter than you. I wish he would just talk to me like any normal human being. He thinks he is better than me, but I doubt he really is.

"How long do I have to live?"

"Your case is very developed. I would say a couple of months at the most. I know this is sudden, and I know no matter what I can say will make it better, but if there is anything I can do..."

I looked at him. All I could see was his mouth moving, but no words were coming out. I had to get out of here. If there was nothing he could do, then why was I wasting my time and money on him, especially the little time that I had left.

As I walked through the huge double glass doors the cool breeze felt good on my flushed face. I saw cars go roaring past me at speeds that were way higher than they were supposed to be. I found myself just standing outside the office and staring at the cars roaring past me. That was it. I could run in front of a car and end it all now. It would be less suffering for my family, as well as myself. My husband probably wouldn't even care. My daughter wouldn't have to face the long slow death faced in front of her. It would be better this way. So much better.

I started for the road. I had made up my mind. I was going to end it once and for all. Was life worth living when you knew it would end soon anyway? Would people think I am taking the easy way out? One car. Two car. Three car. I stepped my foot out onto the road, until I looked up and I saw a mother with her young daughter walking on the sidewalk past me. My daughter would never have the chance to say goodbye. I wouldn't be able to hold her in my arms and embrace her. I couldn't do it. She needed me more than anything in the world.

Ever since she was born my husband grew distant from me. I don't even feel like I am good enough anymore, but that is fine. He won't have to deal with me anymore. He can go on with his affair, and it won't matter. Go destroy someone else's life in the name of love. I know he is having an affair and it makes me laugh because I gave it all up for him so he could be happy. I gave up my career, my friends, my life. I wait on him hand and foot, for what? I have not a clue. The funny part I guess is that he is happy, and I am not. What a joke. I need to sit. I need the bench right there in the park under the beautiful shade tree. I need to think. Just think.

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"Where the hell have you been? I have been calling all over the place looking for you. The babysitter said you just didn't come home, didn't call, nothing. I had to feed the baby and put her to sleep and make my own dinner because of your negligence."

I looked into his burning blue eyes. They were filled with hatred. Where was the love we once had? Where did it go? *How was your day dear? It was great, how was yours. Thank you for asking. I missed you too. I love you.* What were these words anymore? I walked right passed him seeing his mouth move, but no words came out. It was the silence I needed. The bed. I just needed to rest.

"I was talking to you. The doctor called, and asked if I had spoken to you, and was worried when I said I haven't seen you because you ran off. What is going on?" Should I tell him or just let him wonder. Maybe if I let him think about it long enough he might actually care or at the least pretend that he cared.

"Do you love me?"

"Do I what? Why are you talking like this? I demand to know where you were."

"Do you love me?"

"I am married to you, am I not?" Marriage. If that was love to him it was over. He would never love me the way he should. The way he once did.

"I am dying. I only have a few months to live, and I just wanted to know if my life was a total waste. I wanted to know if I gave up everything for someone who might not even love me. The sad part is...I love you, even after all you have done."

"You are..."

"I sat in the park all night trying to figure out if I love you or not, and I do. And I am scared. I am scared for you and for Annabelle, who won't even get to know her mother, and I am scared for me. I am not ready for death, but it is ready for me."

He was in shock. The words couldn't even escape from his mouth. I rolled over. I needed sleep, but as I did I felt an arm around me. It was a touch that I haven't felt in so long. A touch that I needed. As I lay in bed with my death running at me I realized that everything will be okay. That embrace said it all.

"I love you too."



## **And They All Fall Down**

Janet Leahy

Wasn't it just yesterday  
I passed under your blooming branches  
inhaled your sweet fragrance  
watched while white blossoms spill  
as you lay a lace tablecloth  
on green grass

Today you toss gold coins  
into autumn's chill  
the wind rushes by  
to sweep your grilled bronze into piles  
for children  
who come leaping

## **Yesterday**

Janet Leahy

In the backyard of childhood  
there were no drive-by shootings  
no gang beatings  
or stolen bikes  
no dead bolt locks

Morning wash  
waved from monday's clothes line  
bridal wreath laced lilac bloom  
a patch of purple violets  
at my feet  
my world complete

What would I give  
for a chance  
to go back  
to smell lilac sheets  
to gather violets for my mother

### **What am I? What am I?**

I am everything and nothing at the same time.

I am short. I am tall.

I am fat. I am thin.

My hair and eyes hold every color of the rainbow, yet are black besides.

My skin holds the colors of every nation, in a patchwork quilted design.

I come from every nation, with no nation to call my home. And no where is there a home for me to call my own.

People treat me as a leper. I am shunned.

People treat me as a king or queen. I am revered.

I am your mother, father, sister, brother, but for me, I have no other.

I have seen war, pestilence, famine, flood, economic rebounds; ups and downs.

I have witnessed the fighting between my brothers and sisters, wish with all my soul that it would stop.

I am the sun, earth, the galaxy, the air you breathe, rays of the moon that you see as you gaze skyward, I am that bright shining star, from far far away. Yet no one not even you have seen me.

### **What am I? What am I?**

I talk. I am silent.

I am rich. I am poor.

I am a lost soul, hungry for a host. I am an angel looking for my charge.

I am what everyone wishes I was, and nothing I wish I could be.

I am a soldier. I am a doctor.

I am a poet. I am a teacher.

I am a carpenter. I am a technician.

I am. I think.

I love. I hate.

I am an atheist. I am a Christian.

I am everything and nothing all at once.

### **What am I? What am I?**

I am a child of god. I am a child of the earth.

I am a volatile storm. I am a calm peaceful day.

Here is what I am!

**I am a human being, with feelings and emotions, who is as diverse as the person I stand next to, I am not going let that diversity disparage me from getting to know my neighbor, whatever else I might become, I am a human being first, foremost, forever, and I will act accordingly.**



Monica Heckenkamp



## **Oprah: A Living Legend**

Dane Jones

Oprah's talking about how special it is to be a black woman. Again. She's planning the Legends' Ball reunion. They'll go on tour. The Legends' Tour. Her, Toni Morrison, Gayle—everyone. They'll travel in a bus, one of those fancy buses. The ones with leather interiors, wet bars, and plasma televisions. They'll listen to jazz, and at some point, Maya Angelou will set down her mimosa and rise and, in her best James Earl Jones voice, deliver a poem about how black and hard life is. And the other black women will applaud her. They'll thank her. Again. They'll tell her she's great. And all the white women will flock to see them. There'll be tickets for sale on eBay. They'll skip church to see Oprah. They'll leave the kids with their fathers. They'll print out directions and carpool with the other white women from work. It will be pandemonium, like a rock concert of soccer moms. But Oprah won't take the tour to Baltimore. She won't take it to Flint. She won't make it to Oakland, nor Jacksonville. It will conclude, however, in Montecito, California, where cookies and cake will be served inside her drawing room.

## February Snow

Paul Ceretto

Nothing to say, nothing to write  
The snow falls like one big sack  
You do nothing for my soul  
Grab my shovel, break my back

I sit without a single phrase  
As your flakes of white pile higher  
Like a king you invoke your will  
Let me clean your sidewalk, sire

A child who makes a messy room  
I your parent have to clean  
A shot of whiskey down the throat  
You never cease to make me mean

I'd rather compose away from winter  
I wish I could write you away  
Spring bring my pen to words  
To inspire a poem a day.

**A DSL Hell**  
Joshua Sellnow

A CPU devil dwells  
on an evil desktop throne  
in a DSL hell.

All hope of sleep and real world freedom gone,  
a hacker demon sits here, its keystroke unlocking a cyber abyss,  
on an evil desktop throne.

The incessant, infernal loading time persists  
as the computer eats a paperback soul.  
A hacker demon sits here, its keystrokes unlocking a cyber abyss.

The endless clicking and typing is taking its toll  
on a damned former novelist staring, tormented,  
as the computer eats a paperback soul.

The imps dance on the shores of the digital stygian water  
surrounded by megabyte flames  
as the damned former novelist stares, tormented.

Playing pernicious, diabolic software games  
a CPU devil dwells  
surrounded by megabyte flames  
in a DSL Hell.



## House of Portraits

David Ahrens

I sat eating dinner in the presence a new and most welcome silence. Immersed in the setting sun as it dipped below the swampy landscape, I cleaned off the last of a meal that even the governor would envy. Such a remarkable turn of events, let me tell you. There was something utterly sublime about signing the last of my wife's inheritance papers, willing me this grand mansion. She was the last in her family's bloodline and all the treasures of her house, collected for hundreds of years, I could now wrench from the withered hands of that old hag. The plush velvet upholstery, the rich flowing draperies; the elegant lamps, china, and cherry wood furniture were all claimed by me. And despite my objections, even the vast expanse of innumerable portraits; they too were my own.

One can only end such a pleasant evening beside a warm fire and an open book, and so I made my way to the den to find my favorite seat being careful as to not meet eyes with any of the portraits. One must be very careful not to upset them. The eyes scream in my head.

Her obsession with Renaissance art, I remember thinking on my first visit, was an eccentricity derived from the pangs of loneliness and the onset of senility. They are ever present, a multitude of stoic expressions with fixed gazes. I was surprised that she never questioned why a man half her age took interest in her. Perhaps she wanted to pass on her heritage and family title to someone else before she died. I was doing her a service in outlasting her. It would be such a shame to let all this rich history go to waste. Except for the portraits. The portraits, she explained, served as a sort of ancestral shrine; a tribute to her heritage and culture. Those that occupied the main hall, above and below the stairs, were her direct descendants and close relations. I cursed how they loved to stare; how they loved to pierce their eyes into my flesh like burning needles.

It was a foul tradition within her family that each member have their portrait painted in Renaissance style to Maxmillian De Atheme, the first and original, who was himself a late Renaissance painter. He brought into being a self portrait that was so evil, so unnaturally alive, that it was even the envy of the queen in his day. It had inspired future generations of the De Athame family to immortalize themselves in oily pigments and thick oaken frames dusted in gold.

Maxmillian himself was the centerpiece of my mansion, looming above the stairs so that it was the first thing I saw upon entering the house. It was immense, perhaps ten or twelve feet high and nearly as wide. He was an elderly man frail in appearance, yet his solid posture and stern expression commanded a certain mystifying power. The portrait was done to appear as if he was stepping out of the dark into candlelight, his head tilted back slightly and his eyes wide, leering downward as if he was looking at the ground a few feet away.

I reluctantly looked at the painting as I passed by the base of the burgundy carpeted stairs. There was something about those horrible eyes; dark, staring, and intense with a flicker of candlelight making them seem wet and real. The eerie contrast of the black background and the red wallpaper it rested against gave him the appearance of a vengeful devil. I pondered what wickedness he plotted each night. My mind sank into his eyes, my thoughts melting away, until he reminded me about the night my wife died.

There was something unsettling about watching the prune die, the way her eyes grew large and wide with fear as if she saw something terrifying just beyond my back. It must have been the sensation of her heart stopping, too weak and old to pull herself from bed to look for her medicine. After the breath left her body she slumped back down in bed, her hands over her heart staring at me.

I broke my gaze with the hellish portrait and took a deep breath as I made my way to the den. I tried to hide my fear from his eyes, but no matter, he always knew. I selected my book for the evening, a collection of short works from a recently deceased fellow, along with a bottle of Amontillado. I set up a rather nice fire and began to read until I must have dozed off.

The next thing I remember was waking in my chair, the fire reduced to coals and my book and glass clutched in my hands. The fire and wine had long since worn out and failed to provide any warmth. I set my book aside waiting for my energy to return. The moon filled the room with a bluish light which made the usually cozy den appear shadowy and ominous and the white eyes of the portraits stand out. They eyes were everywhere looking at me. They wouldn't stop.

Their gaze burned my skin and then their whispering came again. Tonight they were angry. The whispering grew louder turning into a chorus of murmurs and shouts and finally screaming. I threw my glass at one of them hoping that they would be rendered silent but after it shattered it screamed worse, as if it were in pain. There was red blood dripping from the painting! I held my head between my trembling hands to stop the horrible noise, but nothing.

Suddenly, the screaming began to recede behind a serene moment of soft humming. My mind became clear. It was him, Maxmillian's portrait, which commanded the others. I had to destroy it before its evil consumed me. No sooner had I experienced this revelation did the screaming return. I was suddenly filled with a familiar resolve. Maxmillian's portrait hung there in the main hall helplessly as I crept into the kitchen to find a knife and as I crept back into the hall ready to use it on that diabolical painting. He saw me, I know he did, but I took each step slowly letting the glee of my eager blade fill my body. Each step, the screaming got louder but I didn't care. I was going to silence him forever.

As I stepped onto the top step, my foot gave out and I began to fall backwards. Before I struck the first set of stairs, an image of my wife lying dead and staring at me flashed through my mind. She sat up in bed and screamed. I felt my spine break when I fell onto the hard edge of the steps and suddenly my limbs discovered a weight I have never experienced before. I tumbled down the rest of the stairs before landing on my back.

Here I lie now waiting for death to bring silence once more. The screams sound welcoming now, like mind has become a part of its harmony. For the last time I close my eyes as I feel my soul drift away with the chorus of screams towards the dark, staring eyes of the portrait.





Carla VanWilligen



## **captivating narcotics conquer innocence**

Katie Clope

sad love songs mixed with  
bad rap songs conquering  
the minds of the innocent  
and capturing headlines

bad rap songs conquering  
the sobriety of narcotically challenged adolescents  
and the captivating head lines  
of giving head and doing lines

sober adolescents challenge narcotics  
the innocent coke whore determines her fate  
of giving head and doing lines  
as her lover avoids destruction of his crystal perfect pot

the fate of an innocent coke whore  
against the minds of the innocent  
as the lovers avoid destruction by  
the sad love songs

## **No Reason**

Paul Carter

Zero means nothing.  
And nobody will ever know why  
Somebody wanted to quantify  
All of the things that don't exist

*Excuse me, sir,  
What zeros do you have today?*

I have zero elephants  
Zero exotic dancers  
Zero extra feet  
And zero of everything else that I don't have

But I usually have nothing to say about that.

## **Mystique**

Paul Carter

you can't tell whether or not I'm  
engaged in leisure time flying or  
if I've got some mysterious bird plans...  
that's how I like it.

me and all the other birds  
make noise in the morning  
about our secret plans  
but you people don't even know what we're saying  
that's how we like it.

the next day comes  
we act like nothing happened yesterday  
like we never had a plan.  
that's part of our plan.

more ambiguous flight  
and you people think nothing's going on.

## What is Jazz?

Ramon Klitzke

Somebody asked me once, Now what the hell is Jazz?

I said, Listen to me close, son, and learn.

Jazz is what you find late at night on the radio

Sweet notes, dancin' in the naked air

Powdery arpeggios slippin' 'round a melody.

Incense of Jazz floats in off-Broadway piano bars

and hard-to-find clubs where hungry guys gather

with horns and obsession

You buy 'em drinks and they'll play 'til dawn.

Ministers of Jazz spread the gospel:

Fats Waller, his piano and his band

Louis Armstrong, born in New Orleans

Cannonball Adderley's alto sax

Dave Brubeck and his *Take Five*

Jazz is Miles Davis and his trumpet

It's Fatha Hines boppin' at the piano

Coleman Hawkins at the Philharmonic

Charlie Parker's alto sax

Jazz is Billie Holiday Singin' the Blues

Dizzy Gillespie's trumpet bop

Jazz is Thelonious Monk at the piano

It's Loius Jordan's rythmn and blues

Sarah Vaughan, *They Can't Take That Away From Me*

Almost blind Art Tatum sittin' at his piano.

Yes, son, Jazz is sacred.



## Harsh Love

Ashley Quint

As I walked into the bar the sudden rush of smoke filled my lungs. I just needed to get away, be in a new atmosphere, and escape from everything. I just didn't know if this bar was the right place to be. It was such a grimy place, peanut shells covered the floor and tables. The tables alone didn't look like they had been washed for months, maybe even years. The walls had paint starting to peel right off of them, and the ceiling looked like it might collapse from water damage, at least that is what I thought it was. I hurried to the table that looked the cleanest and took a seat. As I looked around the room I saw the bartender eyeing me up as he hurriedly came right to my assistance.

"Can I get you anything? Peanuts? A drink?"

"I'll just take a coke. No, let's make that a beer." I usually wasn't a drinker, but today was just one of those days.

"How about some peanuts?"

"I would never eat peanuts from a bar! Do you know how many grimy hands, probably unwashed, go into those bowls in just one day? I would rather die!"

"A simple no could have done. That's all we need is another pretty lady in here who is just a depressed crank. Why don't we get the fun ones anymore?" He mumbled this to himself more than to me. I couldn't help but wonder why he couldn't see why no one would want to be in here. Besides the bar being dirty and falling apart there was a constant draft that gave me the chills, even with my winter coat on.

The bartender brought me my beer and quickly left, probably afraid I would snap at him. I wasn't in the mood for anyone's stupidity. Not today, not now.

I took a look around the place a little bit more, trying to ignore the mess in the mean time. There were the typical old men who had nothing better to do but sit in the bar and drink, and then there were a bunch of young men who were really into a game of pool shouting so loud the juke box could barely be heard. I seemed to be the only woman in the whole place, which was understandable because I couldn't understand why anyone would want to be in this hole. But then she caught my eye, a striking young woman in the corner of the bar. She sat at her table all alone, not even paying attention to what was going on around her. Her hair was as black as night, with a ghostly white complexion. Her eyes were what really drew me to her. They were this bright green, unlike any I have ever seen before. They glowed in the darkness. I could see the sadness in her eyes, and the tears that wanted to come, but just couldn't. As I sat and watched her, I almost felt that we had something in common; her sadness just seeped into me.

She took off the ring from her left ring finger and twirled it around her finger. Men, it was always the men that were causing all the problems. I don't even know why we need them. They were the cause of my problems, and I was almost certain the cause of hers. There was something about her that made me want to talk to her, but why would she want to talk to me? I had to try. As I got up the bartender gave me a weird look.

"Leaving already?"

I just ignored him and headed for the round table in the dark, almost invisible, corner. It was probably the most peaceful place in the whole bar, not like bars are really peaceful to begin with. I sat down and just waited. I didn't really know what I was waiting for, but it was something. All of a sudden she began to speak; she didn't even look up, but my presence there was all she needed.

"Have you ever been cheated on?" It was a question I didn't know how to answer, but I don't think she was looking for an answer as much as she was looking for someone to talk to. "It happened all so quickly. I knew my husband was up to no good, but I didn't want to get myself to believe it. He told me everything today, everything. How long it has been going on. Where and when he was doing it. But the one thing he didn't tell me that I really want and need to know is why? Why would he do such a thing, especially to me? I was always so good to him."

"Men are jerks." That was all I could say. What was I supposed to tell this poor woman, who had her heart torn right out of her? But I stated the obvious, and I don't think that did her any good. Yet, I continued to wait to see if she would express more to me. I felt like an addict in that I needed more and more. I was her drug, and she was my relief.

"He wants to work everything out. He says he loves me, but how could he say that after all he has done. I can't really say what love is anymore, but I know for sure that cheating is definitely not love." She looked up at me, her beautiful green eyes swelling with tears, the tears that just wouldn't come. The tears that I too had in my eyes. I didn't know what to say to this poor woman. If I were in her situation I think I would have been devastated too, but my situation was more on the other side, the cheating side.

"Why are you here tonight? You don't look the type to spend her night away in a dirty old bar."

I didn't know if I should tell her my story. It was the opposite, well kind of the opposite of her problems, but she looked like someone I could trust, so I went on... "I was cheating on my husband for almost a year and a half." I looked up at her, but she just looked back with her eyes urging me to continue. "I just couldn't do it anymore. I think my husband knew, but just didn't want to say anything. He didn't want to face the reality that we were falling apart and never could go back. He tried so many times, but our love was gone."

"How could you cheat on someone, the one person who you are supposed to love until death do you part?"

"It is hard to describe what I was feeling. I thought we loved each other, and when I was with him I felt like there was no one else alive. I missed that feeling. I talked to my lover and we really loved each other, well at least I thought we did." As I sat there talking I looked up and around the room. Everyone else seemed to disappear when I talked to her. All I could see were her eyes urging me to go on. The bartender even seemed to find something better to do than to watch us. I couldn't figure out why I was telling her my life story. It may have been the fact that I just needed someone to talk to and anyone would have done, but I felt it was much more than that.



"We both mutually decided that we would end our marriages to be with one another. I thought the idea was perfect; we could stop the lying and sneaking. I could finally feel the weight off my shoulders. So I did. I went to my husband and said it was over, and I told him everything. We both cried in each other's arms that night for the first time in a long time, and we parted ways. We still talk, but we don't fight. It's kind of nice. It is definitely better than what we had before."

"What happened to your lover? I know your story couldn't end happily or you wouldn't be here."

"I don't really know what happened. He just kept on saying day after day that it wasn't a good day to tell his wife, and then today he said he couldn't leave her. He loved her, and even though he loved me they had something that we never could have."

"And what was that?"

"A lifetime of memories that was irreplaceable. I just couldn't believe I gave up the world for this man. I thought for sure one day I would be walking down the aisle and would become his wife. What a joke." The memories seemed to flow through my head and I started to cry. First it was just soft tears, and then it was bawling. I couldn't understand why he would do it to me, we had memories too, but I probably deserved it. I now could feel the pain that my husband had felt when he found out about my unfaithfulness.

"Would you like to go somewhere with me?" I looked up at her pleading eyes. I would normally never agree to go with a stranger, but there was something about her that I trusted.

"I would love to."

As we got up the bartender looked our way. "Where ya pretty ladies going?" I hated the man. Instead of hitting on every woman in sight he should clean the building. The dirt and grime would scare away anyone. No wonder why he needed the business.

The woman's car was a bright red convertible. A car meant for a queen. Leather heated seats and a huge speaker system unlike any I have ever seen. She drove off at a great speed, but I trusted her. She seemed so in control. We went through street after street with lights flying by. Until we came to a neighborhood.

"Once when I was doing the laundry I found an address in his shirt pocket. I then realized that it was the woman he was seeing, so I had to come and see her home. I sometimes sit out here and wait and stare for hours. What am I waiting for? I have not a clue. I guess I just wait for an answer. One that will probably never come."

As she stopped in front of a house. A beautiful house with yellow siding, and green shutters. A white picket fence lay around the yard. It was a beautiful, happy house. A house that was filled with many memories. A house that belonged to me.



## **Once upon a Time**

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

the prince  
said he was perfect  
And she thought it was true  
Then one day he casually mentioned  
that maybe just maybe  
she'd look good  
with a few blonde highlights  
Very subtle Just enough  
to brighten her complexion  
which might just might  
use a touch more color  
especially if she bought  
those blue contacts he suggested  
Of course no pressure  
When he brought home a size six dress  
to fit her size ten body  
she was flattered  
It was those pointy-toed spike-heeled shoes  
that made her nervous  
and cut into her feet like glass

## **The early bird catches the worm**

Amanda Sankey

Her bright eyes and  
smile remind me of her youth.  
White hair glistening in  
the sunlight,

braided and pinned up on her  
head like a crown.  
The early bird steps  
into the room, quiet and

as fragile as the rain.  
No one else is awake  
the kitchen is filled  
with banana pudding.

Grandma knows that little  
bird is waiting for a worm.  
She scoops a spoonful of  
Pudding into a saucer



Angie King



## **The cedar fence**

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

is getting old  
deep furrows crease  
once smooth surfaces  
and youth's straight lines  
now tilt and lean  
into the seasons  
loose joints providing  
convenient homes  
for chickadees

Across harsh edges  
morning glories twist  
and climb  
Splashes of mustard yellow  
and moss green tell  
of change Silver lichen,  
of passing years

Stretching toward the sun,  
slender tendrils of green  
point toward autumn

the fullness  
of bittersweet

## Dear Clementine

Ramon Klitzke

She was a farmer's wife, but she was no hick  
Her drop-dead figure raised your pulse up quick.

She was in the barn, milking a cow  
I asked her if she would show me how  
She smiled and gently took my hands  
and guided them onto Bessie's glands  
A warm and steady stream began  
and while I milked I formed a plan.  
*My dear, I said, with unctuous tone*  
*I wonder if we might be alone.*  
*I'm sure dear Bessie would not mind*  
*if we depart, leave her behind.*

Clementine gave a knowing glance  
Something within me started to dance  
She pointed to the big farm house  
*You do remember I have a spouse*  
*He's big and strong and he's quite jealous*  
*When it's about me, he is quite zealous*  
*My dear, I said, Please do not fear*  
*I do not think that he is near.*

*Okay, she said, you have fair warning*  
*Anyway, he'll be gone 'til morning*  
My heart jumped and I took her hand  
determined to explore the promised land  
We went upstairs. There was a bed  
I stepped forward and smartly led  
Dear Clementine to her destiny,  
which, in this case, was to be me.

I was down to my underwear  
when I heard a footstep on the stair  
*My dear, I said, please tell me true*  
*Is there no one in this house but you?*  
She was speechless, then all of a sudden  
she ran to the window and threw it open.  
*Out you go and make it fast*  
*or this day will be your last.*

I needed no further interpretation  
and I needed no second invitation  
I ran like a deer in the bright moonshine  
waving good-bye to Dear Clementine.

## Monday Morning Journal Entry

Janet Leahy

With his new crayons  
Cedric can put a yellow sun in a gray sky  
turn brown grass green  
make a purple dog with red spots  
but he cannot put a smile  
on the person he is drawing

He makes a picture of a man  
presses down on his black crayon  
to force hard thick lines all around  
the man  
he puts himself in the picture  
standing outside the black lines

Cedric tells me  
he went to visit his father yesterday  
his father in prison  
the little boy in the picture  
is crying  
his tears are blue



**Ellie**  
Katie Visser

Everyone keeps saying that it's ok to be angry. If I want to cry or scream or punch something, that's fine with them. Good to know, but I really don't feel mad today. My eyes keep wandering away from the long, smooth box that holds Grandma Ellie. I notice things about this church that I never did before. There are exactly twenty-seven saints in the stained-glass windows. Father Joseph's hair turns an unearthly shade of white when you look at it in just the right lighting. There's a long, skinny splinter mark in the pew rail in front of us. (That's the same pew rail that's been in front of us every Sunday for fourteen years and I swear I have never seen that splinter mark before.)

All around me I hear my relatives trying to cover up their sighs and sobs. If Aunt Marie blows her nose one more time I think it may fall off. It was a sweet idea to try and stuff all three generations of Grandma Ellie's family in the first two pews, but honestly, whoever decided on it must not have counted us beforehand. Mom and Paul and I are so close together right now that I think the armrest is going to leave permanent marks in my side. Mom keeps squeezing my hand and looking at me out of the corner of her eye. She has her other arm around the baby and Paul is leaning on her shoulder. Paul's face is red and puffy. I wonder if he even knows what he's crying about. (It's probably just because everyone else is doing it.)

I cried, too, when Mom called from the hospital on Friday and told us Grandma was gone. I cried when I was getting ready this morning and Dad came in to ask how I was doing. I'm still crying now, a little. I cry because I miss her. I miss her more than I've ever missed anyone or anything in my whole life. I simply *must* not think of the days ahead. This is what makes me cry the most. I *cannot* think of how she won't be there in the morning when Mom drops me off at her house. How my place at her table won't be set with a glass of orange juice and a bowl of banana-flavored yogurt. I can't think that there will be no one hanging the wash on the line while cousin Grace and I run between the billowing rows of fresh, flower-patterned sheets. But, in spite of myself, I am thinking of those sheets, of that wash line. The days I used to spend at Grandma's house consume my thoughts as I sit here in this sunny church. The sound of sniffles accompanies the melody of "The Lord is Kind and Merciful" as it floats down from the choir loft. I close my eyes, trying to ignore it all. All that's there is the music now.

I hear humming. "The Lord is Kind and Merciful" - it's Grandma Ellie's favorite hymn and we never tire of hearing it. She attempts to

lull Grace and I to sleep with her clear, high-pitched voice. But we're far from tired. We wait eagerly for the first chance to steal off the couch and smuggle a toy or two from the toy box under the window. Any moment now Grandma will think we are asleep. If we lay very still for a minute she will disappear into the kitchen to get dinner started. We hear a sigh of relief, then her footsteps as she turns the corner, still humming softly. *Who needs a nap?!* we think to ourselves, but we're careful not to say anything out loud. Grandma has excellent hearing.

We silently dare each other from our places at opposite ends of the big, overstuffed couch. *1, 2, 3...Run!* In a flash we are at the window. Once a doll or bear is tucked under each arm there is a mad dash back to the couch where we pile our treasures under the thin, blue quilt. *What's that?* I hear the footsteps first. They are quick and determined. I shoot a look at Grace and we both dive under the covers. A second later Grandma Ellie appears in the doorway, smiling suspiciously. She tiptoes over to us and gingerly lifts one corner of quilt, then another. What does she find? Two angelic, sleeping faces. I yawn for effect and Grace lets out a pretend snore. But, as usual, the act doesn't work for long. Grandma pauses and exclaims, "Oh my, I'd better not wake my sleeping darlings." Then she reaches down and tickles our stomachs. The game is over! She sits down in the middle of the couch and we both scurry into her lap. "I guess you won't go to sleep unless I rest for a while, too," she sighs, as we snuggle down and gather the dollies around us. We smile knowingly - it was part of the plan all along.

Grandma is humming again. This time we will both fall asleep in her arms. I am drifting, fighting to stay awake. At last the beautiful tune is too much for me. I look up at her face and she is half-smiling, eyes closed. The music makes her happy, too. In a moment, my head nods and she sees I am asleep.

The singing has ended. The armrest is digging into my side again. Everyone stands up to recite the Lord's Prayer. I stand also, and pronounce the words methodically. Earlier I had done all I could to avoid the long, smooth box in the aisle. Now I can't take my eyes from it. Suddenly there is a cool breeze that makes me shiver. I turn my head quickly and notice that the stained-glass window next to me is open slightly. Through the crack I see an elderly lady across the street. She smiles to herself as she hangs clean sheets on her wash line.



## **Interlude**

Ramon Klitzke

She moved with grace of a gazelle  
As she came toward me I could tell  
That she would well be worth my wait  
That love we would communicate.

We sat 'neath a weeping willow tree  
I loved her. She loved me  
The hours flew from day to night  
Her face serene in the cool moonlight.

The moon departed, darkness grew  
She sadly drifted from my view  
Abandoned by a shy moonbeam  
She was no longer in my dream.



## **San Francisco**

Heidi Bennetts

I remember the long drive:

The anticipation,

Wine fields bursting with perfect red grapes,

The houses set with miles between,

The wild daisies.

I remember the first hilled road:

The parade with sunlit floats,

Cat woman spread-eagle on a cab,

The dancing in the street,

Air brushed sidewalks.

I remember the restaurant:

The rosemary grilled chicken,

And crisp spiced potatoes,

The desire for dessert,

The room full of memories.

I remember the time we spent:

The nights up 'til five,

The fire burning,

The air between us.

I remember the last argument,

The final plane ride,

Leaving you behind.



Ryan Jacobson

## **Playful Words**

Timothy J Wojtal

I sit at home  
and watch my poems play  
horsing around and what not.

One will attack another  
and there will be a dog pile of sorts  
until I hear one yelp for help.

Then I have to step in a separate them from each other  
putting them in their proper piles  
and comforting the ones that were hurt.

Some already have hurt feelings  
and I cannot help them  
but I do try my best.

I fill them with hope of the future,  
telling them everything will be okay  
before going to bed.

At night I hear them again  
trying to get out of their folders and binders  
to no avail.

I have put them under different things;  
a stack of movies, video games,  
and books containing their guidelines.

The following morning I find a stray  
chewed up, torn and whimpering  
from a fight with my cat.

I assure it everything will be okay  
and rewrite it onto another sheet.  
Giving it a new life, it joins the others in play.



## **Insufficient Memory To Perform This Task**

Carol Deprez

I think I need a disk doctor  
for my brain.

My memory's fragmenting  
or starting to wane.

Bits of data are missing  
on my grey hard drive.

I hope they're retrievable  
from my cranial archive.

I'm sure it's not ageing  
that's causing the glitch,  
just a shortage of megabytes  
sparking a hitch.

I could trash some old files  
to free up more space  
but my heart rules my brain  
and will not erase.

So my memory's imperfect,  
no longer prime,  
but at least I still have it--  
except for downtime.

## Non-Traditional Family Trees

Lisa Tanin

"Look, the plant grew through the lace," she pulled the drapes away from the window, leaning her small body over the peach colored sofa. She held her soft palm behind the off-white lace to prove to me that she wasn't seeing things. I stared at the hanging plant which was housed in a cottage-cheese container. Its underside was bulging and damp. "And when a leaf dies, I just pick it off," she let a crumbled brown leaf drop from her hand. "Well, you didn't come all this way to hear about my plant. What did you want to ask me?" She placed two of her fingers under my chin to level our eyes. Her heavy eyelashes coated in clumpy black mascara and encircled in black eyeliner fluttered. She never washes her make-up away. She applies another layer each day.

"I'm doing a project in school. It's kind of like a family tree and I--"

"Ooh! Your uncle told me you are doing so well in school!" she tensed up in excitement (squeezing her fists that were pressed against her collar bone) before she threw her arms up in a (squiggly) V. I don't think she was aiming for perfection there. Maybe she didn't realize she was cheerleading for me. There's nothing more enjoyable than an excited, cheerleading grandma.

"So what do you want to know, little missy?" A thinning lock of black hair fell loose from her hairdo and landed between her black-lined eyes. She stared at me for a moment, almost as an attempt to freeze time so she could fix her hair before I saw what happened.

"Gigi," I broke the silence. "Tell me about Ukraine." I smiled.

"Uhm," she cleared her throat. "What do you want to know?"

"Where in Ukraine were you born? What did it look like?"

Gigi's eyes wandered across the room focusing on the rows of dusty family pictures and kindergarten art. "Hang on just a second," she sat up and slipped on her dirty pink slippers with the little satin bow on the top and walked toward the kitchen.

I slouched on the peach colored sofa. Its texture felt like an old towel. It used to be a brighter shade of pink, but it is so old now. The carpet was once a bright 1970's green but now resembled burnt pea soup. I felt like I was sitting in a garden. I leaned over the sofa to see what a mess Gigi has made of those dead leaves. There was a handful scattered along the length of couch. I don't even think she owns a vacuum. Maybe the leaves decompose in the grass-like carpet.

I sat up with my legs crossed and my yellow notebook in my lap. I scribbled on the top of the page 'Family tree.' Two hours have past and I haven't gotten any information for my project. I picked up an unfinished Ukrainian egg that I began decorating years ago.



I traced my finger along the lines of wax until Gigi waddled back into the living room.

"Okay! Ukraine!" she sang, giving me some intense vocal-training hand motions. Her right hand seemed to reach out, grab my heart, squeeze it, and twist it until it popped out. She scurried across the room to the chair that matched the peach couch and retrieved her little radio. "Remember when your father would drop you off here when you were sick and we'd listen to this radio?" It was about the size of a three-hundred page hardcover book. She kept it wrapped in paper towel and rubber bands. I'm not sure why. She turned up the classical station and waltzed with her radio in the center of the living room. I smiled at her when she ended her dance with a curtsy, clutching the bottom of her aged pink silk blouse.

Dogs barked outside and Gigi fled to the window nearest me on the peach sofa. She pulled away the drapes and peeked through the bottom left corner. She reminded me of my cat, her eyes darting back and forth. "Remember my neighbor Nancy?" Her voice squeaked. I thought, no, but answered yes because I wanted to hear what she had to say without the distraction of explanation. "This is my entertainment. I peek at the neighbors; I want to know what is going on! No one visits me and Grandpa is at work all the time. He doesn't want to see me when he comes home anyways. Everyone is so busy these days." I didn't know what to say. I closed my notebook. I placed it on the aged wooden side table to my right. I covered my notebook with the Kleenex box. She seemed so happy in my presence.

"Can you teach me how you tie your head scarf?" I asked as I stood up and stretched, my hands almost sweeping the low ceiling. "Sure!" Gigi's eyes lit up. We walked together to the dining room where she keeps all of her head scarves. She keeps them clamped with clothes pins which are clipped onto clothes hangers which are hooked onto wall mounts on the wall to the left of the out of tune piano. The cream colored paint was peeling in this area of the wall. She covered one area of peeling paint with a large piece of paper that my dad drew on when he was very young. There were drawings of Match-Box cars in red and blue crayon. Gigi grabbed a long black cotton scarf with a really beautiful and colorful Ukrainian design on it. The blues, greens, and reds glowed even more vibrant when she held it in her hands.

"My mother gave this to me," Gigi confessed as she stroked her fingertips along the smooth fabric.

"What was her name?" I questioned gently, attempting to retrieve a small bit of information for my project.

"Hang on a second," Gigi walked a few steps to her dark bedroom. I hope I didn't upset her again. I was being selfish.



She returned with a framed portrait and put her arm around me and held out the picture like it was a camera and she was taking a picture of us. "Her name was Maria Kuzmowych and my father's name was Wasyl Hollowinski.. You look a lot like Maria," she fluttered her eyelashes and set down the picture to continue her lesson in tying a head scarf. She tied a bright green head scarf with light blue details on my head and made a big bow below my right ear. The happiness washed out of her face when she asked, "So what else do you need to know for your project?"

"Nothing, I have all I need to know just as long as I can keep this scarf!"

"You can keep the scarf; it looks like it was made for you!"

"One more thing," I motioned for her to follow me to the living room. I picked up the Ukrainian egg that I started decorating years ago. "Can I take this home to finish it? I'd like to use it for my project and then I can bring it back to you."

"Let's talk," Gigi sat down on the peach colored sofa. "Let's talk about something funny before you go."

"Haha... do you have a vacuum?" I questioned softly.

"Why of course I do but I think there's something wrong with it," she hummed a sour sounding tune while rummaging through a small closet with no door. She had nailed a green blanket in place of the door. Gigi cleared her throat loudly as she yanked the vacuum free from the closet's contents, spilling a large container of Lincoln Logs across the floor. Gigi set down the vacuum and pointed at the log cabin on the Lincoln Log box. "It looks like my home in Ukraine. I think that's why I bought this toy in the first place."

I inspected Gigi's vacuum. I changed the bag which was ready to explode like a ripe cat-tail. I gathered the Lincoln Logs too far out of her reach from her position on the floor and passed them her way. She began to build a new little home.

## Poembot 6000

Andy Heup

With gears grinding in a plastic brain  
And oil-blood pumping so fast  
The machine feels synthetic pain  
For all nineteen years of its past.

Its job is to spit out piles of words  
That appear to have some sort of order  
It likens freedom to flight of birds  
And emotional boundaries to borders.

Only minutes have passed by  
Insert paper designed to fit  
The mechanical reply  
Is sent to the printer to spit:

"Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
I connect to PC  
With USB2."

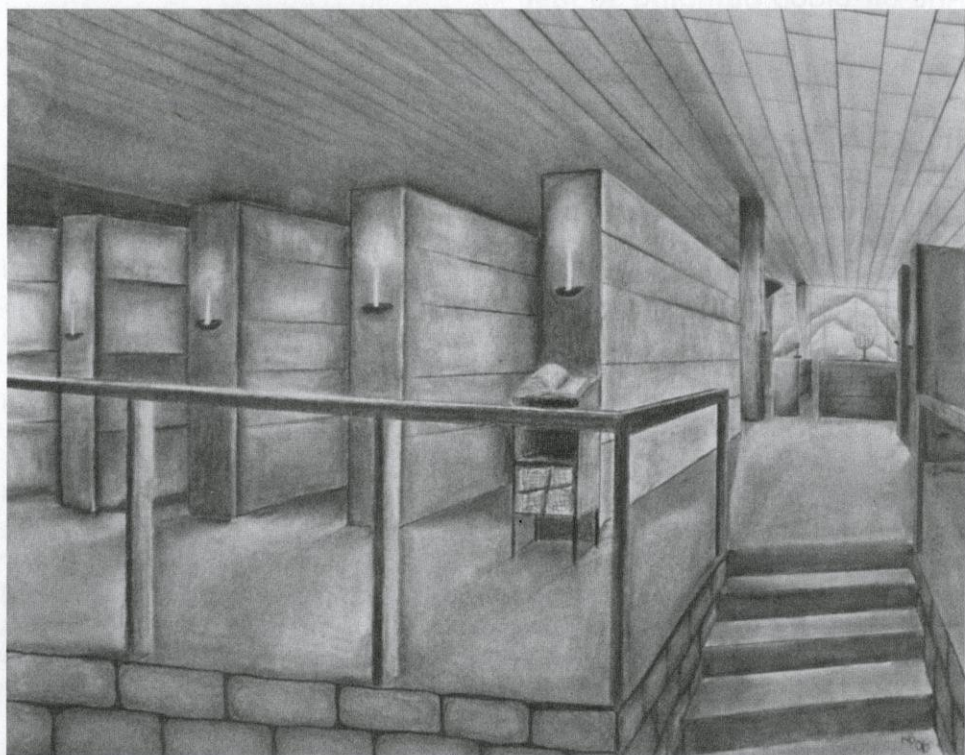
## Caution: Yellow

Andy Heup

What is it about the color yellow?

The variations of meaning are amazing.  
A coward is a yellow-belly.  
Friendly people wear yellow shirts,  
but unfriendly skies are also yellow.  
A beautiful flower may well be yellow,  
but yellow can indicate sickness too.

Somewhere between stop and go lies yellow.



Kim Barry



## 9:00 a.m. Appointment

Janet Leahy

It is conference day  
*he never lets me leave the house* she says  
her face bruised  
her son trembles at her side

*He never lets me leave*  
she starts to cry  
her son trembles  
*only today to see the teacher*

She starts to cry  
rolls up her sleeve  
only today to show the teacher  
bruises on her arm

She rolls her sleeve  
angry welts  
bruise her arm  
*I am afraid* she says

Welts of anger  
bruise her face  
I am afraid for her  
it is conference day

## **Expiration**

### **Ramon Klitzke**

A pile of soggy tissues between  
us on the taxi seat. The radio  
plays a Sinatra tune that sings  
my memory but does not soften  
our bristly mood. She silently  
stiffens as I whistle and track

the melody. The rain outside  
drenches any chance to strike  
up tidy conversation that could  
shrink the time needed to reach  
the restaurant. She moves slow,  
ferrets a cigarette from her purse.

I point to the "No Smoking" sign.  
She purrs a dark demurrer  
and deliberately lights it.  
I slouch deeper in my seat  
and attend to sliding raindrops  
outside the blurry window.

She observes that Saturday night  
is not one of soft tranquility  
at the foolish restaurant I chose.  
I suggest our time of wedded bliss  
has long since expired in ashes.  
We proceed in sullen silence.

**Condor Ave.**  
*for Elliott Smith*  
Brandon Peters

We were all envious eyes when you came back from the fairground. We heard the shouting even before you turned the corner and by consensus our game, it was hide and seek or tag, was over.

You brought the colors and smells back with you as you walked past our sidewalk and our parents' houses. You always wore your hat low over your eyes and a bottle in your jacket pocket. She wore a tear-stain down her left cheek, and she threw her words and stuffed animals at you but missed.

The two of you did not listen. Or maybe could not hear because the sounds you both made were layered over each other's like the sounds of the Ferris wheel over a line of crowded conversations. We picked up the animals from the street once we saw that you weren't coming back for them.

We were fascinated by the way you fought then. It was the way they did in movies: with walk-aways, turn-arounds, and unfinished sentences. As hard as you pulled away from each other, you never got far. We knew the game. It's when there's a rope and you both try to pull the other one across a line. We played games like that most afternoons. At night we pretended to be taken to the fair.

When you reached your house you threw the screen door back and forth instead of words. We played games like that too. We thought maybe that fighting was a kind of game for a while. But the way she fell into the porch swing, and the way the chimes fell all over each other, we could tell before even you could that she would leave. We even knew that this time she would take your jean jacket.

We decided she had slipped past. You probably were under your hat and didn't see her go. We were sure that when the diseased car retched to life though, that you would also. Some of us thought you might come out and fall to your grass-stained knees. Or some of us thought you would run after her into the street. We thought either one really. But you didn't, not even when the car door locks clicked shut.

When she drove the Oldsmobile out of Condor Avenue, we ran beside the car like always, like we were going with her to see the lights and play the games. Then she was gone and we talked about it.

We decided that you must be laying in the quiet beneath the hat and a cigarette, blowing whispers of smoke at the ceiling fan's rhythmic spinning. We decided that if that was it, it would be best to keep quiet for a while.

It was raining when the Oldsmobile crept back onto Condor Avenue. We all watched. And when she drove up onto the grass and left the car door swinging and open, and the headlights burning, we all knew you'd take her back. She still had your jean jacket.

The quiet was nice, but we weren't surprised when she threw your bottles and your hat out the screen door and onto the grass, and then you pushed her onto the ground and she was naked and screaming. She cried in the car until the rain came and the clouds turned the sun away. We watched her shoulders rise and dip, up and down, from the bushes. We decided that she would stay with you, and probably never leave again.



When you came out with your jean jacket and covered her and brought her back inside we all felt a little embarrassed, because we knew then that she would go.

As she left we all knew it was different. Maybe it was you standing in the doorway under your hat, and tapping your bottle against your belt buckle. Your cigarette wasn't even lit. Or maybe it was that she didn't lock the car doors that time. At least she still wore your jean jacket.

When she pulled off of the grass she left big black marks where the tires had revealed the moist earth. And as she passed she looked at us and waved. She seemed barely awake. We all went inside after that. She wasn't coming back but no one said so.

When the police lights came to tell you about your car they blared the siren and the radio all over Condor Avenue. We watched you not cry behind your cigarette. The policeman said a lot, but mostly he said she took a nap while the road was straight. Only the road didn't stay that way. We watched you not cry, but we saw your smoke whispering to the chimes, and the chimes whimpered.

We've been to the fairgrounds since then, but the lights and games weren't all they're supposed to be, and the sounds were like a sick shouting.



*The Windy Hill Review*

