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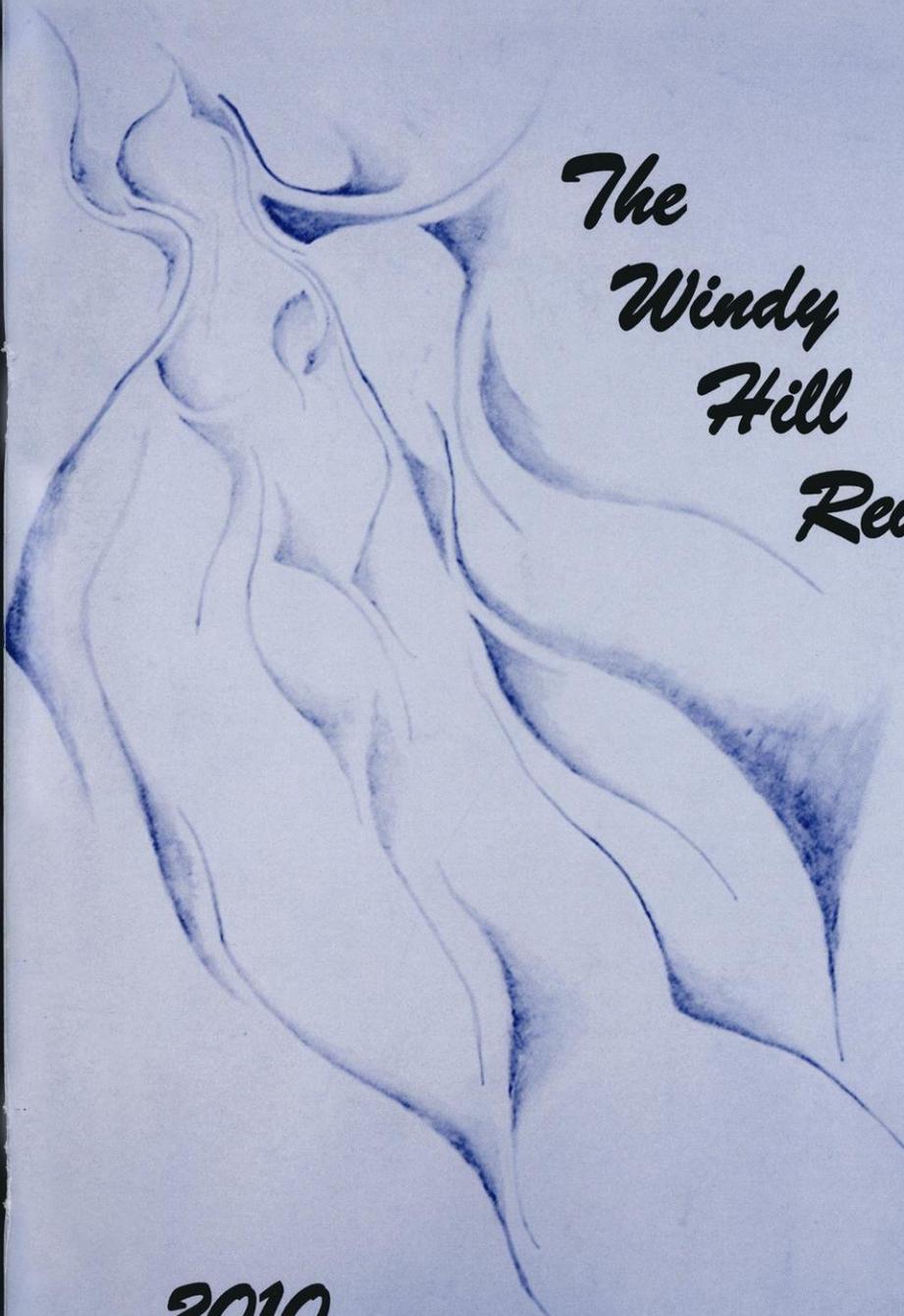
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*The  
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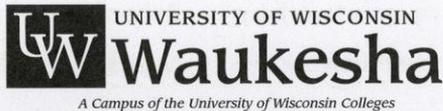
**2010**





# *The Windy Hill Review*

**32nd Edition  
2010**



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Waukesha, Wisconsin 53188

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The Windy Hill Staff would like to thank all of the writers and artists who contributed their creative works to this collection.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of this publication, please send your poetry, short stories, or art to [waklit@uwc.edu](mailto:waklit@uwc.edu). Please limit your submissions to no more than 5 poems and no more than 2 stories.

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# Playground Politics

Nick Klokner

Pinky swears, scabbed up knees.  
Popsicles, swallowed gum.  
Eating bugs, climbing trees.  
Imagination means fun.  
Tag you're it, no tags back.  
A lack of meals, a surplus of snacks.  
Eating candy till we're sick.  
Fighting over nothing.  
Ignorance was still bliss.  
We were pros in the act of carelessness.

# Cliché Sampler

Carol Deprez

Once upon a time, there lived Charles Cliché  
Most phrases he uttered were stale with decay.

He thought his speech was sharp as a tack.  
For a handy phrase, he never did lack.

He concocted his sentences with a casual attitude,  
'cause his food for thought consisted of platitudes.

Quick as a flash, a hackneyed phrase he'd employ  
to avoid tedious thinking, which he didn't enjoy.

In search of truisms, trite though they be,  
Charlie left no stone unturned, such a busy bee—he!

Charlie's proverbs were pedestrian, his smiles stock.  
He played second fiddle to none in verbal schlock.

He would rise and shine at the break of day  
to greet the world in his tried and true way.

Rose colored glasses filtered his views.  
He seldom saw red—never suffered the blues.

He fancied himself a writer quite fair,  
with his repertoire of expressions beyond compare.

To publishers, Chuck sent countless selections  
but he puzzled over their curt rejections.

They didn't expand or explain their views,  
just penned a cliché—don't call us, we'll call you.

# Two Cinquain Poems

Barbara Bache-Wiig

Focus

write, daily, write

accumulate pages

use cinquain form, think, settle down

focused

Great thought

accept a bribe:

coffee, cream, morning bun

brain & pen flow, write with vengeance

drink up

# Long Day Ahead

Joe Hollnbacher

The cursor on my blank word document pulses in its unpredictable rhythm. It flashes at me, daring me—no, taunting me—to write something. Go ahead, Steven, just write something, anything. I stare up at the digital clock that is flashing 3:19 in the same rhythm that my cursor is. I have no idea what to write. I would ask my roommate Dave for some good ideas, but he's the most boring person I know. Too bad. I squint into the brightness of my screen and begin to write, "Green flares illuminated the—" What the fuck are you writing, Steven? Just go to bed. The cursor seems to interject. This was a good enough point. I'm not writing a story about Vietnam, so my readers could care less about green flares. Green flares offer no substance, no foreshadowing even. Not even a particularly interesting object in general. Green flares are shit.

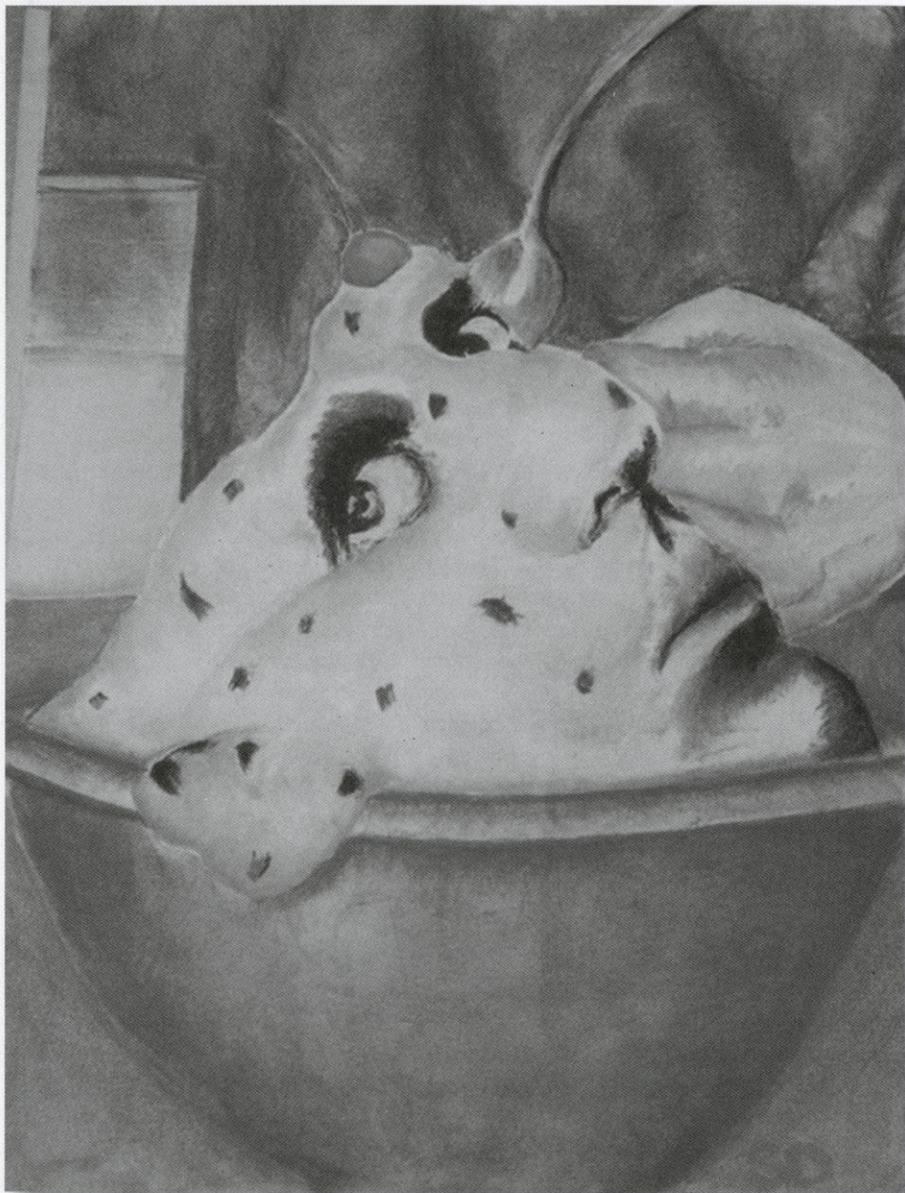
Okay, gotta concentrate. I twirl my greasy blond hair and try to think of a new subject, possibly two guys walking through a park looking for drugs. Good enough I could probably make a story from it. I begin, "Luigi and Vincent stalked down the path through the park—" Luigi and Vincent? Are you trying to write a story about a gay Mario Brother? You're never going to write this paper. Again the blinking cursor on the page taunts me with this thought. I let out a sigh. My teacher is going to kill me if this paper isn't finished. What could I possibly write about that is interesting on the night before my final paper is due?

I know what I need; I need to get up and get some food in me. That'll give me the inspiration and energy I need. I stand up, still staring at my computer screen. The cursor seems to flash a message of amusement at my situation. As I walk away from my computer, I think about why hasn't anyone invented a non-blinking cursor yet? The lights are still off in my apartment, so it's hard to see much of anything, and I end up tripping over a bowl that is half-filled with curdled milk from some distant breakfast. I stumble my way through the dark towards the kitchen. The cold linoleum lets me know that I must be close to the fridge. A Cheerio makes a soft crunching noise when I step on it as I pull on the refrigerator handle. The light bulb flickers on and off for a bit before finally deciding to stay on. God, the refrigerator smells; it's probably something in the back. Oh well, not planning to eat that. The glow from the fridge reveals the sink behind me and piles of dishes that Dave still needs to do. I could probably do them, but it's his turn. I turn back and examine the contents of the fridge. The most appealing foods are leftover Chinese, yogurt, or chicken from an unknown date. I weigh my options. I ate some of the Chinese for lunch, but the noodles were way too salty. Yogurt is all right, but I read somewhere that dairy can make you go to sleep, and I need to get energized. Hmm, chicken has protein, so that should get me going, and the chicken wasn't too bad when I had it, but I can't remember when that was. I reach for the grease-stained plastic baggie that houses the poultry. Holding it up to the refrigerator light, I examine it. It looks okay, better try the smell test. I open the bag and take a cautious whiff. Hmm, seems to be okay.

I close the fridge and take a bite of the chicken in the dark. It's chewy and nearly tasteless, but it's suitable for what I need. I make my way back to the computer and start thinking about new topics to write about. Hmm, what about a story with a guy who breaks into a safe but finds out that the safe is actually a decoy? I take a big bite of cold chicken and some spices fall onto the "G" in "Gap" on my T-shirt. Nah, how would I write a story like that? So many details to work out, I wouldn't be able to get to the core of the story quick enough. Hmm, maybe I can get some inspiration watching online videos. A couple clicks and Youtube loads up and has an entertaining video of a young child who is stoned on laughing gas. Uninspiring. Another video has a fat kid waving around a light saber like he's in Star Wars. As I watch these mind-numbing videos, I find myself dozing off occasionally in my computer chair. Maybe a power nap isn't such a bad idea. I'll just sleep for a small while...

I wake up to the sound of my stomach gurgling, like my own personal alarm clock. I swallow and rub my eyes. The cursor is still faithfully blinking at me. My stomach feels queasy, and I start to think about logical excuses for my teacher as to why I didn't have my paper. Screw this, I'm just going to write the first sentence that comes to my head and go with it. I'm going to finish this paper. I think and write, "My stomach feels really gross." That's because you ate three week-old chicken, you dumb fuck. The cursor blinks to me. My stomach gurgles. Oh man, I think the damned cursor might have been right. Thoughts of sickness overpower my thoughts of deadline. My stomach twists and gurgles even louder. Oh man, I'm going to puke. I jump up and try to run to the bathroom but manage to trip over that stupid bowl from before. Why didn't I just take care of that bowl? Doesn't matter now—Exorcist-like vomit is spewing from my mouth at a ridiculous rate. Low, hollow moans manage to escape from my mouth when there is no puke pouring out of it.

I hear my roommate Dave somewhere in the darkness say, "Jesus Christ, man! Were you drinking?" I use my remaining strength to bellow for him to call an ambulance. I lie in a puddle of my own puke for minutes; the smell of the herbs on the chicken overwhelms me. I begin to dry heave. As my body convulses and my chest throbs, I hear the blaring sound of a siren. I hope my teacher will understand. There is now a massive puddle of vomit beneath me; my t-shirt and blue jeans are soaked. God, I don't want the paramedics to see me like this. I look around for a towel or a t-shirt or something, but all I can see in the darkness is the light from my blank word document and the flashing cursor.



**Steven McCartney**

# Kitchen Table Politics

Adam Gawronski

That table a welcome site  
for many years  
a place where meals  
were served and eaten  
a place where board games  
were played  
a place where card games  
were played  
a place where happy memories  
used to be made  
now when I see that table  
I can only think of  
the bad memories that were  
made there of late  
for arguments too silent  
meals void of conversation and love  
the last time I walked away  
from that table  
I wasn't just walking away  
from a table  
I wasn't just walking away from a table  
I was walking away from  
a life I used to know  
and a life I used to enjoy  
a simpler time when it was  
just dad and me but  
nothing stays the same  
all I can hope for is to  
find that joy again  
maybe you'll be there too

# That's What They Say

Becky Smiltneek

Nice.

Cool.

Sweet.

That's what they say.

I'm trying to make conversation with you,

so I'll use these fillers.

That's what they think.

Be quiet.

Shut up.

Stop!

That's what they say.

With everything that's happened today

you're just adding to my stress!

That's what they think.

Ok.

Sure.

Maybe.

That's what they say

I really don't want to,

but I can't tell you

that

That's what they think.

I never knew.

I'm sorry.

Can you forgive me?

That's what they say.

If you don't forgive me,

I'll feel guilty for a long time.

That's what they think.

Amazing what

they don't say.

# Wait, Mars!

*Mars, the God of War*

*Gerrit von Honthorst*

**Kathleen Hayes Phillips**

Can't you hear us calling?  
Hold your torch higher.  
Lower your sword.  
We are not the enemy.

We are the faithful ones,  
spreading destruction and ruin  
under your banner  
going to our deaths whispering  
your name.

We took you from the fields,  
named you a god.  
You promised us protection  
and greatness  
victory against our enemies.  
Why do you fear us now?  
Why do you run  
bare-chested, gasping for breath?  
What happened to you?  
What happened to us?

Your torch flickers weakly,  
casting long shadows.  
Soon it will go out. We will be left  
in the dark.

Abandoned to face alone  
the chaos we created  
in your name.

# Memories From My Mother at Twilight

Sean Gifford

That time existed before I did and  
that she was not  
as she is now  
is as foreign to me as the setting sun  
which illuminates these revelations

The turning tide sent waves to her little toes  
as shadows shade her drooping eyes  
the sea spray speckled her plump youthful lips  
that speak to me though thin and chapped.

With soft hands that built a sand castle to be  
carried away, reclaimed by the ocean  
she pushes graying hair behind her ears  
in a state of whispering reverie

The bitter sea salt pinched her face  
sand stuck to coconut tanning oil  
the recollected smell of which makes her smile  
as next day's work is sprawled across her lap.

Water as white froth, the pinnacle of the now  
receding wave, reaches her stretched out feet, then  
returns to the oceans again  
And she, staring at eternity in the setting sun

Her sisters sang, and shouted merrily  
the ocean mantra carried on  
while the clock ticks  
ever, never, ever, never  
and the darkness hides the sun

# Freedom

## Rebecca Bohdalik

As I started to regain consciousness, I opened my eyes to notice that the blindfold had slid down, just enough, over my right eye that I could peer slightly above the cotton into the darkness. Trying to tie together the moments before I'd been bound and gagged, I found my thoughts floating back to our wedding.

---

"Quit moving! You're gonna look like Marilyn Manson if you don't sit still," my sister Sam remarked as she tried to put on my mascara.

"I'm sorry this dress isn't exactly conducive to sitting on a stool you know." I did my best to quit readjusting every twenty seconds and sit completely still.

I just wanted to be in the limo on my way to the airport. Maui waited impatiently for me. I imagined Mitch and I sitting on the beach staring into the sunset, his arms lovingly wrapped around my body, holding me close to him, the wonderful nothings he would whisper to me, about his love and passion for me, that would bring a smile to my face, or the way he would gently lay me down in the sand and make love to me. I just wanted all of this hoopla to be over. I hated being the center of attention. However, it's hard for the bride to hide in a corner and go unnoticed at her own wedding.

"There..." Taking one last look at her masterpiece, Sam sat back. "Ok, you can move again." She grinned at me. "Beth, do you think I'll ever find someone to make me as happy as Mitch makes you?" my sister asked, as she started putting away the make-up.

---

If only Sam could have known or warned me, maybe then I wouldn't be bound and locked in this trunk. Oh, Sam, I thought. I wish you were here to save me. It had been six years since the accident, but the thought of her still comforted me as though she'd never gone. The duct tape tore at my wrists as I moved, and brought me out of my thoughts. I tried to focus in on my senses one at a time. What could I see? My eyes began to adjust to the dark. I'm sure there must be one of those interior trunk releases. If only I could find it now. The red glow of the tail light through the carpet helped me to see the contours of the trunk. There wasn't much room, and I tried to roll over, but I couldn't get my knees straightened enough to squeeze them by the lid of the trunk. I wrenched my neck, trying to get a better view. I searched for some sort of strap or lever that might be my ticket to freedom. As I did so, I noticed the flashing of the left blinker, and before I could register, blinker means turning, I was being thrown violently against the side of the trunk. That's right, Mitch has always driven like a maniac, I thought, as I moaned in a pain that brought nightmares to surface now.

---

"I'm sorry. I'll heat it back up." I spoke very carefully as not to upset him anymore.

"I don't see what the problem is. You knew I was on my way home. Didn't you. DIDN'T you." He glared at me.

Did he want an answer or a reason? As I tried to quickly decide, he started in again.

"How difficult can it be to have a hot dinner waiting? For God's sake it's not rocket science you know."

"If you'd have come home after you left work instead of stopping at the bar, maybe it would have been hot," I wanted to scream, but I knew better. Instead, I responded meekly, "I know. You're right. It won't happen again."

"It won't happen again," he said, mocking me. "You fucking useless whore!"

He stood up, shoving the table a foot across the floor and tipping over the chair he was sitting in. I knew what was coming next. I tried to prepare myself. I knew nothing I could say would save me now.

"What? I don't do enough for you? I don't buy you enough. What about this new stove!" He said as he grabbed my wrist and threw me towards the stove.

I fell to my knees in front of it and reached to pull myself up on the handle.

"You must need someone more handsome with more money! That's it, isn't it?! You fucking gold digging, dumb-ass, piece of shit!"

He grabbed the back of my neck and lifted me off the ground like I was a dead cat.

"Or maybe I don't fuck you enough! Maybe you just need some good old dick inside you."

Still holding the back of my neck, he bent me over, mashing my head onto the top of the stove with one hand and unbuttoning his Armani slacks with the other.

"Well, I can fix that."

He tore a hole through my pantyhose then yanked my underwear to the side. I felt him tear into me like a wooden plank.

"That's right, scream whore."

I tried with all I had not to, but the pain coursed through me and out of my mouth anyway. When he finished, he removed himself from me, buttoned his pants, picked his chair up, and resumed his place at the kitchen table.

"Now ya think you can get me that hot dinner, doll?" he spoke so proudly as I lifted myself from the stove, devastated that I'd failed to make him happy again.

---

There, that must be it. When the brake lights came on, I caught a glimpse of a strap hanging down from the trunk lid. God, I promise if you help me just get to that strap, I'll leave him. I promise. I knew God had heard these things from me before, but I meant it this time. I just wanted him to love me the way he had all of those years ago, the way he had on our wedding day. But those days were long from me now. I knew I should have left the first time he colored my eye, but I believed him when he apologized. I believed it when he told me it would never happen again. A month later, when it happened again, I really believed it was my fault. I just wanted to make him happy. I loved him and I just wanted him to love me. This though, this was different. He meant to kill me tonight. I couldn't tell you why, but I knew I must have done something this time. Something that he'd told me if I did it again, he'd kill me. I racked my brain to find a reason, and instead found more disturbing memories answering different questions.

"You realize we're never gonna solve this." Mitch's voice grew louder with each word. "You can't even take care of the fucking house yourself. How the hell do you think you can take care of a DOG?" He was now screaming as though I was standing a block away, not on the other side of the couch.

"I take care of the house just fine!" I yelled back now. "How many more times do you want me to scrub the FUCKING floor for you, or wash the God Damn WINDOWS? I'm NOT YOUR MAID SERVICE! I'm YOUR WIFE!!!"

This must have put him over the edge because just as I went to turn and stomp off into the kitchen, I was being knocked backwards against the curio cabinet that stood stoutly in the corner of the family room. His fist felt like a tire iron as it met my face, doing just about as much damage as I felt my flesh split open with his wedding ring. It seemed like slow motion as I slid down the cabinet, like a dirty wet rag slipping down the side of a newly washed car.

"Oh my God, babe!" Mitch spoke sympathetically now. "I'm so sorry. Are you ok? I didn't mean to hit you that hard." He bent down next to my trembling body.

"Why?" I groped for words but that was all that came.

"I'm sorry babe. I guess I really lost my temper this time," he said, brushing my hair from the side of my face to assess the damage. "Come on, let's get you up. You're gonna need some ice for that," he said gently.

I took his hand and staggered to my feet, still trying to process what had just happened. My cheek throbbed as what felt like tears meandered down my jaw line and neck. I wiped them from my neck, and as I moved my hand to grab the wall, I noticed the crimson smeared across the palm of my hand and realized the damage he had actually inflicted was far more than ice could fix.

"I'm bleeding, Mitch. You made me bleed." Tears of disappointment streamed down the damaged contours of my face carrying the blood to my white blouse.

"It'll be ok, sweetie. Here, sit down, let me see." He pulled the kitchen chair over and softly turned my head up towards him.

"Babe," he said timidly. "I think you're gonna need stitches." His voice was now covered in guilt. "Here, I know it hurts, but you gotta put pressure on it. I'm gonna go get your stuff and start the car. I'll be right back." As he quickly hurried off, he stopped, turned back, and said one more thing. "Honey, I love you. You know that right? Can you please not tell anyone about this? I promise. It will never happen again." His eyes begged to me with shame.

"Ok," I said.

It never occurred to me that I had forever sealed my fate with that one word.

---

If they could've only made this trunk a little bigger, I thought, as I tried to squish smaller and smaller into a ball and roll over to my left. This is never gonna work. I wrenched my arms up, trying to find the diamond in the rough. Push, pull, prod, grope, still, I found no strap in my hand. I took a deep breath and stopped wrestling with myself for a moment. My body fell exhausted, resuming its position prior to the wrestling match, and I went back to God. "I can't reach it! I don't have enough room! You're not helping! Why aren't you helping? Mom always told me 'Ask and you shall receive.' I'm

asking now for your help, where are you? Why have you forsaken me? I used to believe you could work miracles, yet I never ask anything from you, because I also believed that you knew best. Well, I've changed my belief now. I'm asking. I am humble. Please! I just don't want to die by his hands. However you chose, whatever your will is, I am ok with that. Just PLEASE not by his hands.

At that very moment I felt a jolting cold. The sound of wind exploded in my ear drums. I opened my eyes, peering above the blindfold into the crisp, gleaming night sky. For just a second I couldn't believe what was happening. I tried to wrap my brain around the idea that God had just answered my prayers. No time for pondering, my rationality broke in. With every ounce of energy I had left, I tightened my stomach muscles, hamstrings quads, and pulled my legs up to my chest. Using my upper body now, I threw myself up to my knees. My muscles burned as I stared at the pavement streaming by. The bass of the stereo echoed up through my body. "Good thing he always played that radio so fucking loud," I thought and grinned slightly to myself. I took a deep breath, knowing this would hurt, to say the least, and somersaulted forward over the lip of the trunk. My hands tore open as I hit the pavement. Feet, knees, back of head, shoulders, and arms and back to my hands. The ground raped my body now just as he had for all of those years. When I finally came to a stop I opened my eyes. The blindfold had now found its place around my neck. I looked back to see his tail lights being swallowed up by the night. I then stared up at the sky. I felt no pain, my body breathed in freedom, and I smiled up at God.

"Thank you. Thank you."

May 16th 1998

The front page of the *Milwaukee Journal* read:

Former District Attorney, Mitchell Morgan, has been convicted of the murder of his wife today. Beth was struck by a semi truck, 12 miles outside of Rhinelander, on Highway 8, two years ago. Beth, rolled from the trunk of Morgan's Chevy Impala onto Highway 8, with her hands, feet and mouth bound in duct tape, but despite her escape from the trunk and death at her husband's hands, she was still struck and killed by a semi moments later. It was determined that Mitchell's binding of her hands, feet and mouth with duct tape is what ultimately led to her death. Taking the risk of no conviction, the district attorney, Wesley Owens, opted to charge Mitchell with 1st degree murder, instead of involuntary manslaughter which would have been a guaranteed conviction. His risk paid off today when Mitchell was sentenced to life without parole...



**Hannah Mooney**

# Why I Miss Spring

Becky Smiltneek

- Because of the way air surrounds each hair on my head and fluffs the waves.
- Because of the way the clouds stand out like white island utopias against an egg-shell blue sky.
- Because of the golden fuzzy ducklings bobbing on gray sparkly rivers.
- Because of the juicy brats slathered in barbeque sauce.
- Because of iced tea and lively lawn chairs.
- Because of the windows cracked open wide.
- Because of the distant roar of motorcycle engines.
- Because of my pale limbs like raw chicken legs waiting to be browned.
- Because of the flowers that bloomed before I noticed they were sprouting.
- Because of the hum of a hundred happy songs at a stop light.
- Because of my toes wiggling free in sandals, revealing neon nail polish.
- Because of your warm torso against mine in the sun.

# Pastures Have Many Landscapes

Eric C. Schulz

The mist outside my window  
is a grey veil, concealing my view of  
the neighbor's familiar brown meadow.

I remember how it felt to journey its lush, green trail  
during the summer, meandering through tall grasses  
and flowers wild like an aged river forming winding turns.

My river was blocked by small, spotty  
trees, which were dams to the drift of my path  
which then deviated, and explored the landscape.

With winter approaching, this wet, drab pasture  
soon will appear as a wide, white snowfield  
easily mistaken for a vast, frozen lake,

its perennial inhabitants blanketed by the snow,  
keeping hidden its identity as a  
grassy summer pasture for horses, hawks, and deer.

But soon spring will melt this extensive glacier and  
cut out a valley, in which my footpath  
will surge like rapids bordered by wild flowers and high grasses.

And then I will go paddling the pastures once again.

# Suns of the Night

Becky Smiltneek

Weightless wind pushes me up, fills  
Feathers of wings fanning, floating  
Above the evergreen forest,  
Talons tucked under my tail.

Feathers of wings fluttering,  
Eyes gold, piercing globes,  
Talons tucked under tail.  
Silence.

Eyes gold, piercing globes,  
I am stealth itself.  
Silent,  
I swoop from on high

Stealth itself; seeing,  
Sensing something stirring  
Swooping...  
Mouse never suspected.

# Comet Commentary

Carol Deprez

I saw a shooting star tonight!

This time, it wasn't just movement at the edge of my sight  
some stray flare  
a distant headlight  
a firefly

I caught it fully this time  
looking straight on to it  
for its entire split-second prime.

A blade of white sliced the raven sky in a clean, sharp horizontal arc  
brilliant—but brief.

How sad to be a spectacle  
witnessed only by chance.

How lucky—  
to be the witness

# Three Sevens

Dan Radojicic

Donald stepped into the car and began to make a familiar drive. Straight down I-94 east, exit 309B, hangs a right on 25th street, and then go through the roundabout to Canal Street. As he made his way through the roundabout, he could already see the flashing colors on the building. They were dancing around like the aurora borealis on the outside of the building. Mary had always loved the colors. Donald only recently began to see their beauty. Donald and Mary used to make the trip down almost every day until Mary got sick.

Donald pulled into the parking structure and made his way and began to walk towards the front door. As he sipped his senior coffee he began to once again marvel at the dancing lights. Mary sure did like these lights. As he walked in the front door he saw Jeff the security guard. Nice to see that friendly face again.

"Hi there, Jeff. How ya doin' kid?" Donald asked.

"Hey, Donald. It's been a while. Great to see you again. How ya been holdin' up?" Jeff asked.

"I've been doing alright. Figured it was about time to get out of that house and get back to action. Gotta win that jackpot and take that vacation to Hawaii that me and Mary always wanted to take. How are the little rugrats doing?"

"Oh they're a handful, but I love 'em to death. You know I think that Mary would be proud to see you back out here and goin' for that jackpot again. She was a wonderful woman, Donald."

"You don't gotta tell me twice about that. Well, it's great to see again, Jeff, but I got some slots to play and some jackpots to win. You take care now."

"You too, Donald, and on behalf of me and the rest of Potawatomi Bingo and Casino I wish you luck."

Donald just chuckled and nodded. As he walked into the slot area, those familiar feelings crept back into him. All the lights and sounds. The lights flashing everywhere like an arcade. There were various bells and whistles coming from all directions. Separate, these bells would be meaningless and annoying, but together they created a symphony of sorts that warmed Donald's soul. It reminded Donald of jazz music the way you didn't always know what sound and melody was coming next. Mary would often comment on the beauty of the noise. It had always been noise to Donald. Only now did Donald really understand.

He made his way through the casino and could smell the familiar scent that only the casino had. You could smell the cigarette odor but they covered it up with so many cleaning products that the smoke smell became vague. Almost like a room at your house that rarely got used but was always cleaned. Donald felt the urge to smoke a cigarette, but he knew Mary wouldn't like that. Not after all the work they did to help

him quit. Donald made his way to the ATM. He took out the usual 50 dollars. No more and no less. He and Mary would only take out 50 dollars and when that was gone they'd stop. Except that one time on Donald's birthday.

"Well, Mary, my fifty's gone. How are you doin'?" Donald asked.

"No better here. It would be a shame to waste birthday luck though. Maybe you should go ahead and take out another 50," she replied.

He ended up winning back his original 50 and enough to go to their favorite restaurant, the Mineshaft. Later when looking into it, Donald realized that Mary had never even taken out her fifty that day. When he confronted her about it she just winked and said, "It would be a shame to waste birthday luck." Donald began to smile.

Money in hand, he made his way over to his machine: the lucky sevens machine. He sat in the familiar chair and got a feeling of peace. This was where we had spent so many afternoons. This is where we would talk without talking. All I had to do was give her a look and she would know how I was doing. There was no way to lie about feelings with us. Even when she was sick and I would try and comfort her we didn't need words. Talk about Hawaii and how nice it was going to be to sit out without coffee and watch the ocean.

He put the money in and began to pull the lever. Up and down and up and down. Seven, seven, cherry. Seven, blank, seven. Before he even realized it, he was down to twenty-five dollars. This next pull will be a winner, it just has to be. Donald took a deep breath and continued to pull the lever. Blank, cherry, blank. Seven, seven, blank. You're due, bet the max credits on this one. Donald hit the max bet button and pulled the lever with authority. Seven, Seven,...blank. Finally he was down to his last quarter. Mary always said the last quarter was luckiest. He licked his lips, took a deep breath, and pulled the lever. Seven, blank, Seven. That damn third seven eluded him yet again.

He got up and glanced over at the diamonds slot. That was Mary's slot. He walked towards it. He could still see her pulling the lever. Focused on the task at hand. Occasionally glancing over to throw him a smile. Then he saw a light glimmer on something on the floor. As he bent down to get a closer look, he noticed that it was a quarter. Was this fate? It had to be. One last quarter by Mary's machine. She wasn't gone yet and she needed him to play the machine one more time for her. He knew she was there; a sort of excitement began to brew in the pit of his stomach. The feeling you get right before something big. The beautiful blend of nervousness and excitement. He picked up the quarter and slid it into the diamonds machine. His arm shook as he reached for the lever. He paused and looked up at the sky and then pulled it down. Each reel spun for an eternity. Finally the first one stopped: blue diamond. Second one: blue diamond. We're gonna do it, Mary! We're gonna win! The third reel slowed and Donald could see the blue diamond coming around. The side of his mouth began to curl into a smile. Just then the diamond passed and the reel stopped at a blank.

Donald felt the excitement and anxiousness immediately leave his body. After a few moments of staring at the machine, he made his way back across the floor and

towards the exit. Jeff's shift must have ended because he wasn't there. All he could think about was the missing third diamond. He stopped and turned around and took one last look at the diamonds machine. Donald whispered quietly to himself, "She's really gone, Donald. She's really gone. . ." A small tear formed in his eyes as he turned to walk away.

# Riding the Bus into the Past

Melissa Flynn

Onto the bus she stepped  
Pausing in the middle  
Glancing at the seat

World changing to  
Black and white  
She saw the signs

And yet she sat  
Not in the back  
Eyes closed

Touching the worn  
Earth colored leather  
Warm from the sun

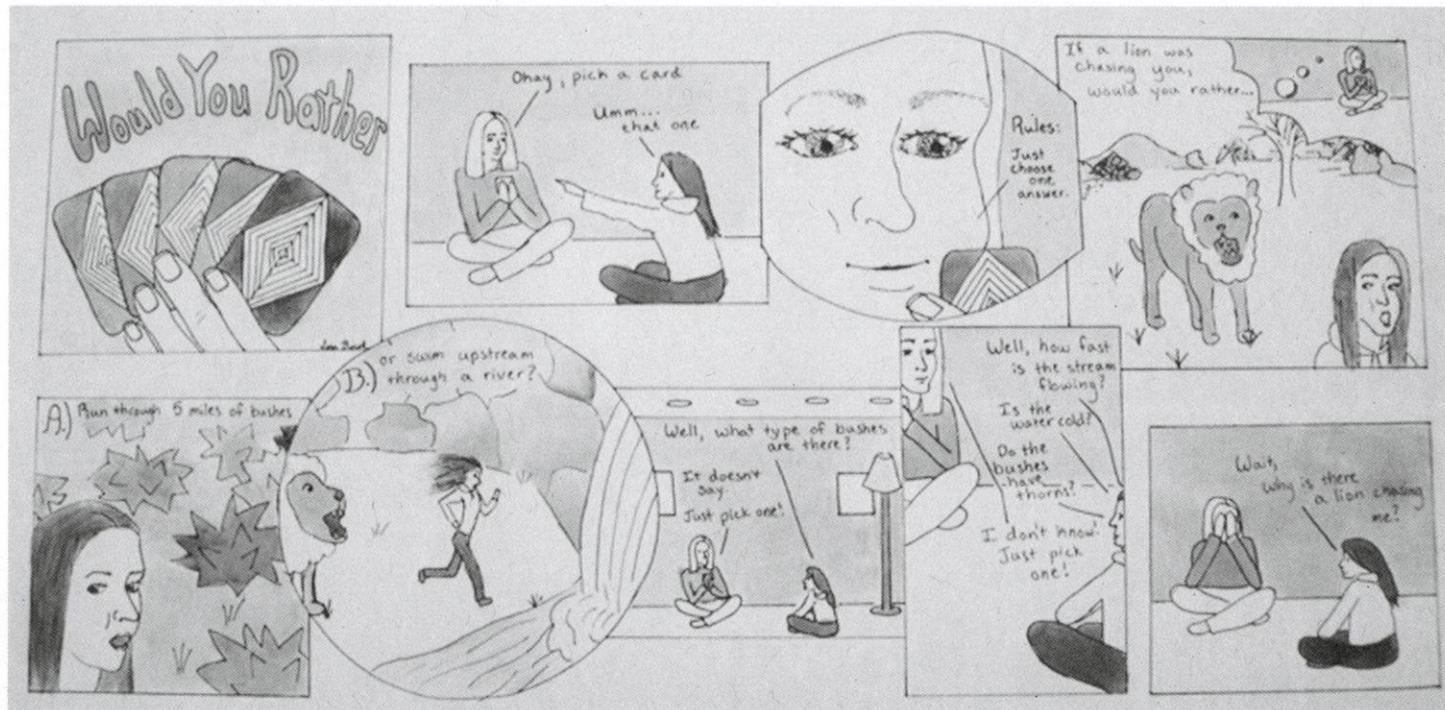
Rays of light  
Breaking through  
The hazy window

Opposition on  
Either side  
Front and back

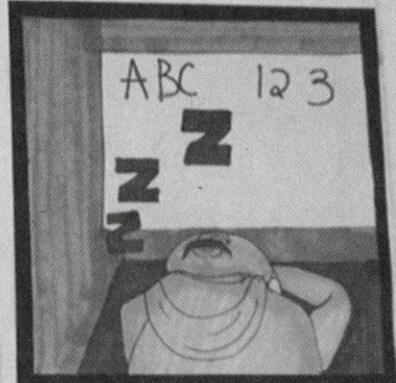
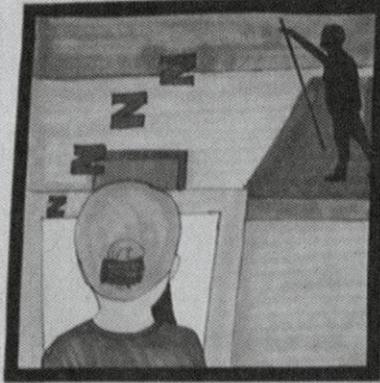
Stares of those  
Entitled to the  
Front seats

Worry of those  
Sitting in  
Back seats

Montgomery 1955  
A long trip  
From now



A DAY IN THE LIFE...



# Untitled, 1980's

*Raymond Coin*

## **Kathleen Hayes Phillips**

Celts carved images of their gods on granite  
slabs torn from the earth Shaped stiles  
to be found on rock-strewn hills overlooking the sea  
Or in hidden fields surrounded by sheep If we  
had to walk a pilgrim path or climb a stile to find  
this stone If it was covered with silver lichen,  
aged by soft moss, or split by lightning, would we  
try to decode the story etched here?

We want to understand for we are lovers of stories  
told in stone We will climb hand-tied ladders,  
searching for carvings on the walls of hidden caves  
In deep quiet we hear the voices of ancient peoples  
who etched their lives by flickering light We imagine  
in the dark and believe If we found this carving  
in such a cave would we understand?

So we stop here and look We see a naked man  
suspended from a cross, bristling with skeletal twigs  
His finger-claws grasp the crossbeam His eyes  
are closed His mouth a tight thin line  
He hangs above a house, a child's stick house,  
all squares and triangles, with a road  
attached like an umbilical cord, looping  
into the air to wherever or whatever  
is just beyond out sight

This is not a faceless unknown He has a name,  
a town and folks We know his land, the hills  
surrounding his home Yet the story in his carving  
is hidden Like Michelangelo standing before his marble  
the artist released the truth he heard, the truth  
he knew from the beginning was hidden in the stone

# When I Grow Up

Adam Gawronski

When I grow up  
I want to make people laugh  
when I grow up  
I want to be the best  
friend possible  
when I grow up  
I want to spend every moment  
having fun with  
mom and dad  
when I grow up  
I want to stay up  
past 9 o'clock  
and eat junk food  
all night  
when I grow up  
I want to be compassionate  
and understanding  
just like mom  
when I grow up  
I want to have  
a cool job like dad  
when I grow up  
I want to have lots  
of pets to play with

when I grow up  
I want to be a responsible  
and mature person  
when I grow up  
I want to be loving  
and caring to other people  
when I grow up  
I want to meet a girl  
who is cootie free  
when I grow up  
I want to find  
a new dad for mom  
when I grow up  
I want to help mom  
stop crying  
and smile again  
when I grow up  
I want a place  
I can call home  
when I grow up  
I want to see  
the good in people  
no matter how much  
bad shines through  
when I grow up  
I want to try and  
make a difference  
in the world...  
I don't want to grow up

# Shadows

Rebecca Bohdalik

In the far back corner of Scotty's center desk drawer was a small, pale blue pouch with a faded gold cross painted on it. He unzipped the gold zipper, which once matched the color of the cross, and turned the pouch over, spilling a wooden rosary out into his callused hand. Scotty climbed into his sleeping bag, lying neatly atop his queen-sized bed, and tried not to remember the last time he had slept under his flannel sheets and down comforter. He felt safe now, as he zipped the sleeping bag shut, still clutching the wooden rosary in his right hand. Closing his eyes, sliding the wooden beads back and forth between his right forefinger and thumb, he pictured his mom. He could still see her silhouette against the hallway wall, as she would close his bedroom door, after kissing his forehead and whispering goodnight, just as she had every night. He missed her. It was still too close though; his thoughts quickly faded away from the pleasant memories of her and back to that Ash Wednesday. It was Feb 25th. He thought it would be like every other day, with the exception of church and ashes brushed about his forehead, but oh how wrong he was.

He remembered it, as though he were floating in a corner of the room, as some random onlooker of a tragic event, staring, and curiously unscathed by the horrors that lay before them, not as her son. He watched himself and remembered how he'd felt, the moments before his world imploded: rolling over, looking at the clock, groggily wondering why his alarm had awoken him and not his mother, tumbling out of bed, dragging the covers half off the bed across the floor as he stammered to his closet, throwing on his favorite pair of jeans and hooded sweatshirt, walking over to his dresser, grabbing a few bucks, some loose change, his grandfather's pocket knife, a tube of strawberry Chapstick, his cell phone, and shoving them into the appropriate pockets of his jeans, and meandering out the door of his bedroom. He shifted out of the door, behind his memory, and watched himself, half-awake, pushing his parents' bedroom door open. He watched himself stand up, as a marine called to attention, and stare straight ahead, without moving, as the door fell completely open. He watched himself stand, a statue, in the doorway. He thought, now, in his subconscious, DO SOMETHING! He screamed in his head, now, but he remembered then, that day, standing there, staring in utter horror, dismay, and confusion, as he watched his mother's body swing round and round from the ceiling fan. He remembered how silent it seemed, in that moment, it was as though his mind was overloaded with such devastation that he had gone deaf. He heard absolutely nothing. No noise existed. The silence loomed about him like a forest that had been burnt to the ground for hundreds of miles around, and all the life had gone from existence. He remembered being paralyzed in awe, and thinking he was still dreaming.

How he wished he had still been dreaming. He desperately wanted to be able to open his eyes now, and wake up to find that it had all been a terribly long, inescapable nightmare, but he knew better; he'd tried that for weeks, and it still always ended the same. So tonight he would stop, he would give up and continue to watch from the corner, a spectator in the play of his life.

He continued to watch himself stand erect in the doorway, silent and motionless. Then he remembered his sister's voice, breaking the silence, like thunder in the dead of the night—

“Dude you’re gonna b...”

—and how it stopped, he remembered how abruptly it broke the silence, and then how abruptly the same silence returned, mid-sentence, engulfing her too now. He remembered staring with her. He remembered wishing words from her mouth, and tears from her eyes, and screams aloud from the depths of her soul, but only the silence spoke between them. Neither of them doing anything, but standing, silent, and staring at their mother’s body go round and round and round from that ceiling fan. He remembered thinking he should cry, or that he should get help, or that he should call his dad, or that he should do something, but still, he just stood, now, next to his sister, staring, still staring, at the small circular motion her feet made, at the shadows that her wobbling limp body cast along the room, changing, from wall to wall, back and forth, from one to another, shadows of her existence, and he remembered thinking, what a metaphor this moment would be, for her life, for his life, for everything. Just shadows, dancing shadows. He watched himself now from the corner of his parents’ room. He watched his eyes move up his mother’s body. He remembered wondering: How long has she been there? How had she hung herself from a moving ceiling fan? How long would the rope hold and would the fan break free from the ceiling first? He remembered thinking that his father must have hung that fan correctly if it held up to the weight of a dead body. Dead. He remembered the moment that word crossed his consciousness. He remembered the collapse of every emotion he had ever experienced pound him to the floor. He watched himself crumble to the floor wailing in momentary realization of that word. He saw his sister kneel next to him and take his hand. He remembered how the feeling of her thin, clammy hand brought his thoughts back from that momentary realization. He watched himself straighten to his knees and reach into his pocket. He remembered the silence that fell upon the room again. The dead silence. He watched himself pull the knife from his pocket and open it in one fluid motion. He watched himself look up at his mother’s body empty. He saw his sister squeezing his hand now as tears began to drip down her chin. He watched himself close his eyes and calmly smile for just a moment. He remembered his phone singing to him from his pocket... On the day that you were born the angels got together and decided to create a dream come true... He remembered lingering in the words of Karen Carpenter. He remembered finally realizing that it was his phone singing to him and not his mother. He watched himself open his tear-filled eyes, slide his hand from his sister’s, reach into his pocket, pull the phone up toward his ear, and flip it open. He remembered hearing his father. He watched himself stare through the window and say nothing. He remembered his father instantly saying “Scott.” He watched himself finally speak, one word, that word, “dead.” He watched the phone fall from his hand to the floor, like a single lost raindrop on a sunny day, and close as it bounced off the carpeting. He watched himself, man up onto his feet. He remembered hearing Karen echo through the room over and over and over and over. He watched himself turn the fan switch off on the wall next to him, walk toward his mother, embrace her cold limp body, draw up his grandfather’s knife, slice the last semblance of her life from the room, carefully carry her to the bed, gently lie her down to sleep, kiss her forehead and whisper goodnight.

He remembered, with his eyes closed. He watched, trying desperately to change his memory, to make something different happen, to change the past, to bring his mother back to him. Nevertheless, memories do what they’ve always done. Never subsiding to our wishes or wants.



Sara Boeck



**Sarah Buck**



Kari Kleinmann



Jenna Kassnel

# Braving Poe

Carol Deprez

Shhhhhh

The house has settled

And silence is here

The time is now

No need to fear

An interruption

From Mom or Dad

From baby Missy

Or brother Brad

I tunnel beneath

My quilted cave

With flashlight armor

I'm bold and brave

Roused and ready

For a hush-hush look

I aim my beacon

To shroud the book!

Shhhhhh

I'll not utter

A squeak or shriek

At ghostly words

So grim, so bleak

My eyes are drawn to

A Plutonian shore

I hear a Raven

Croak nevermore

I suffer sorrow

for the lost Lenore

All of this and

even more—

A bust of Pallas

to shield a door

A perfumed mystery

to explore

Shhhhhh

what's that I hear—

a tap? A tapping

on my bedroom door

as if someone rapping

The door creaks open

and shadows loom

A voice, deep and dozy

invades the room

Are you still up, son?

It's long past midnight!

Go to sleep.

Put out that light!

Oh heartbeat, please

slow your drumming

Brain, unwind and

cease your humming

# Withdrawal

Nick Klokner

The rapid movement of your eyes is hypnotic.  
They punch back and forth.  
Hard to watch, harder to look away.

Your fluttering eyelashes brush my chin  
As I kiss your clammy forehead.  
The rapid movement of your eyes is hypnotic.

The room is too hot,  
For your hands to be this cold.  
Hard to touch, harder to let go.

Your hair is wet and parted to the left.  
Exposing your porcelain face, exposing  
The rapid movement of your eyes, it is hypnotic.

A civil war is your body.  
Bombing and poisoning itself  
Hard to watch, harder to look away.

A cold wet rag is a flower in the barrel,  
To lower the temperature of your burning skin.  
The rapid movement of your eyes is hypnotic.  
Hard to watch, harder to look away.

# Roots

Adam Gawronski

Are  
the hidden strength  
of you  
and me  
that  
help keep us grounded  
and level headed  
and without  
their support  
in times  
both good  
and bad  
the part  
of who we are  
and what  
we stand for  
would  
mean nothing

# Haiku

Eric C. Schulz

Green, yellow leaves fall:  
Harsh winds blow caps white,  
West over green lake.

\*\*\*

White caps blown westward  
Break around jumping musky.  
Splash! Lure returns.

\*\*\*

Rain falls like a mist,  
Obscuring views of distant  
Shores. Waves are capped white.

\*\*\*

Grey clouds touch green lake  
With rain drops thrown at angles.  
Autumn union.

\*\*\*

Leaves turn yellow, green  
While light evens the day:  
Autumn Equinox.

\*\*\*

Grey clouds water trees:  
Black-capped chickadees seek  
Shelter and black seeds.

# Rough Day

Dan Radojicic

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! I reluctantly open my eyes and turn off my alarm. The time is 7:28 and I have hit the snooze button as many times as possible. I have to get up now. I climb out of bed and make my way towards the bathroom. A shower should wake me up. The warm beads of water hitting my cold skin begin to wake me. This is going to be the best that I feel all day. I dry off, comb my shaggy brown hair, and put my work uniform on. It is a polo that is so red it's disgusting. As I make my breakfast, I begin to think of the long day ahead of me dealing with stupid people. I finish eating and get in the car.

I arrive at Sentry about 15 minutes later and sit in my car for a moment. I'm going to be late but who cares. I should just quit. It's not too late to call in sick. I need the money; time to enter the shit. I climb out of my car and walk in the door. I peer at all of the customers beginning their shopping, walking across the half beaten-to-shit linoleum floor, clogging up the entire aisle with their carts, and gazing in a very confused manner at all the food. Fucking assholes. Every one of them. I make my way through the maze of aisles and back to the clock to punch in.

The back of the store reminds me of a garage. The floor is concrete and dirty and the walls are dirty and disgusting. If customers saw this is where the food was stored, they may vomit. As I punch in, I notice the musty smell has gotten worse than the day before. I look up and see a spider web. Beautiful.

"Hey, Donny!" a voice says. I would know that voice anywhere. It's this complete idiot that I work with. Never shuts up and never has anything interesting to say. Solving a Rubik's cube is easier than ending a conversation with this douche bag. I turn around to see the short stocky man that was talking. He has grey hair and a big dumb smile on his face.

"Hey, Dan," I say.

"Did you see the Bucks game last night?"

"No, I don't really follow the Bucks," I say, for the thousandth time.

"Oh, yea I think they're a scrappy bunch. All of those injuries and they're still playing pretty good I think. Sessions had a good game," he said.

Didn't I just say that I don't follow pro basketball? Why is this idiot still talking about all this bullshit? I don't care. I don't care. I don't care! I just smile and nod.

"Yeah, they should be alright this year I guess," I say. I don't care! Finally the cube is solved and I somehow break away from the never-ending conversation about shit that I don't care about. One of these days I'm just going to tell that guy to shut the hell up. No, I won't because I never get into any confrontation. I just smile and nod and smile and nod all day long.

I finally get to the front end and head to the countdown room to get my drawer. I look to see who's working in the courtesy booth today and notice it's that hag Susan.

"Hi, Don," she says in her "nails on a chalkboard" voice.

"Hi, Susan."

"Don, yesterday when you closed we noticed that the bags didn't get filled.

That should get done every night before we close so that there are bags in the morning," she screeches.

Well, Susan, that's because that isn't my job. That is a job for the baggers and since all the baggers we have at this store are either mentally challenged or smart ass high school kids, their jobs don't get done at night. It's not my fucking job to babysit them and make sure all of their shit gets done. Why don't you just yell at them and get off my ass?

"Yeah, I'll make sure it gets done next time." I smile, grab my drawer, and walk to my register. Of course they put me on the express register. Easily the worst register in the store. Nothing but constant business and people in a huge rush. I stand in my two foot by two foot daily prison. About a half hour into my shift, I get the first douche of the day.

"Hey, how are you doing today, sir?" I say.

"Fine. Just to let you know I'm in a hurry."

Oh! You're in a hurry? I was going to check you out really slow, but now that I know that you're in a hurry, I'll be sure to be efficient. Does this idiot really think that I'm going to handle his order any different than the others? I move through his order at the same steady pace that I move through any order.

"Credit or debit, sir?"

"Credit, credit, come on, come on." The register approves his card and I begin to grab the receipt. The man sees that it's approved and begins to make his way towards the door.

"Sir!" I yell, "You still have to sign for it."

"Oh, are you fucking kidding? I gotta sign for a friggin' 12 dollar order?" He begins to make his way back to my register. "This is retarded." He gives me a real dirty look.

Yea, asshole, because I designed the machine. It was completely me, a cashier, that decided to make people sign on all credit transactions. He signs the slip with a scribble and trusts it back toward me.

"You have a great day, sir," I say with the biggest smile on my face.

They day drags on and on and I deal with the usual customers. One lady is mad because she can't read a sale sign and grabbed the wrong product. One guy's mad because he can't write a check for more than the amount. Even though he could just get a check card which is ten times faster and he could get cash back. There was the multitude of customers that can't figure out the credit machine.

They all hit the wrong button and come back with the three word line I hear ten thousand times a day: "They're all different." Yeah, they're not identical, but every one of them involves sliding your card and then following the step by step instructions on the screen. Then there was the lady screaming at me because she thinks the apples she bought don't weigh as much as my scale says they do. Yea, it's all a part of my secret plan to overcharge everyone on fruit. I'm an evil genius.

The day isn't all bad, though. I get to go on my break and talk to other co-workers that I actually like. Basically we all just complain about all the idiot customers and annoying co-workers. I don't think there is a person in this store that likes this job.

Eventually the day finally drags to an end, and I bring in my drawer. I grab my

coat in the back and clock out. I'm hungry. I need some Taco Bell. So I head outside and light up a cigarette. I wait for its calming buzz and get into my car. Taco Bell isn't far and I am thankful for that. The drive thru line is super long so I decide to go inside. The line inside is somewhat long too, but I'm already inside. The guy in front of me is yelling at someone into his cell phone. He's a big man with a very thick mustache. Very red in the face. It's his turn to order, so he puts away his cell phone. He orders his food and now it's my turn.

"Welcome to Taco Bell, what would you like today?" the girl behind the counter asks.

"I will take a crunch wrap supreme and a..."

"Excuse me, Miss!" says the mustached man.

"Yes," counter girl replies.

"I clearly said that I didn't want any fucking sour cream on my taco supremes. How hard is your fucking job? Are you just that stupid that you can't take a god-damn order?"

"I'm sorry, sir. We'll get that fixed for you..."

"Get it fixed?! You're damn right, you will. Can I talk to your manager, please? I want some free shit because you just wasted my goddamn time..."

As the man goes on, my mind begins to zone in on his mean ugly face. You don't treat people like this. Who do these assholes think they are? My fist begins to clench and I can feel my scrawny arms begin to flex muscles that I didn't even know I had.

"Hey!" I yell, "You don't talk to her like that. You're being an asshole."

"What the fuck did you just call me?" He walks towards me and pokes my chest in a very aggressive manner. A fire burns inside me and sweat beads begin to run down my face. I can feel my temperature getting hotter. My fist begins to clench and my arm begins moving upwards. I gather everything I have, and my fist arm swings up, and in one beautiful fluent motion, strikes the man directly in the face. All of my might goes into this punch and I nail him right in the eye. As I pull my arm down, I feel a liberating triumphant feeling. Then real time comes back and I realize that the punch barely fazed him. The next thing I remember is a very big fist heading towards my face.

I wake up in a daze about twenty minutes later. I am still lying on the ground in Taco Bell but now paramedics are staring down at me. My face is throbbing and there are few other pains on my body.

"Hey kid, how ya feel?" says one of the paramedics.

"Head hurt."

"I'll grab some ice. We may have to take you to the hospital."

"No, I'll be fine."

I feel like a complete and utter idiot. I must have looked so dumb getting knocked out. Why did I do that?

"Hey, Don is it?" says a voice. I turn around and see that the voice is coming from the counter girl.

"Yea, that's me. Sorry about all of this..."

"Sorry? I deal with assholes like that all the time and nobody ever does anything. You actually said something, and even though you may not have beat him up

or anything, he did get arrested. I just wanted to thank you." A half smile comes to my face and in the pit of my stomach is a warm pleasant feeling I hadn't felt in so long.

"You're welcome." The paramedic comes back in with my ice and I get to my feet.

"Here's your ice. You better get home and lie down. You've had a rough day."



# Visit with a Friend

Becky Smiltneek

You are laughing, I am recalling  
The color green. Sun is glowing  
Behind clouds and rain is splashing  
On brick patio and picnic table.

Rain is recalling behind clouds. Sun  
Splashing on the green picnic  
Table on the brick patio. You and  
I are glowing and laughing.

Sun and rain are on the picnic table splashing  
Behind clouds and on the brick patio.  
Your green eyes are recalling sun behind  
Clouds. I am laughing with you in the rain.

# Questions on a Saturday Afternoon

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

How, when it has once broken  
over its banks,  
can the river find its way back home

Or the cat, when it's winked  
at the dawn  
find contentment on the hearth

How, when the mist has touched  
the mountain top,  
can it rest easy on the meadow

or the daylilies when they've mirrored  
the summer sun,  
sleep content in the dark arms of the earth

And when I have found the source  
of my questioning,  
how can I be sure of any answer

# First Bite From This Apple

Sean Gifford

Lying in the cradle of the tree  
with the sunlight streaking though the leaves  
that flutter in the wind  
rustling, singing, soothing me

Enraptured by its vernal sheen  
I pluck the apple from its stem  
a tug, a snap,  
a bite, a crunch  
bittersweet juices speckled on my chin

Instant bliss, like youthful reveries,  
fleeting and ephemeral to the touch  
the taste of which is sour  
yet sweet on close reflection

I recall, though somewhat vaguely  
upon first reaction from my tongue,  
this moment in the tree  
by the orchard below the sun

# Unexpected

Rebecca Bohdalik

Whrrrrr ...

As the elevator began its descent from my appointment, my mind reeled with thoughts of the building burning to the ground, elevator cables breaking, and the painfully gory death that would ensue if these things happened. Of course my claustrophobic self would have to choose a psychiatrist whose office is on the 28th floor. Ok, only 13 more floors to go, you can do this. I glanced over at the Adidas the guy next to me was wearing and wondered how they would hold up after the plummet of the elevator when the cable snapped.

WHAM!

Suddenly I found myself sandwiched up against my neighbor as the lights buzzed and flickered, and the elevator came to a jolting stop.

"It's alright. You're okay," a voice said calmly.

I shook with paralyzing fear as I folded into the stranger. We're going to die. We're going to die now. Who's gonna feed my cat? I wasn't very nice to my mom on the phone this morning. Did I just waste the past four years with Pete because it was comfortable? Will I go to Heaven? Is there a Heaven? The tornado of questions tore through my mind. Eventually, after what seemed like hours, I began to notice that the stranger, whose body I had been trying to disappear into, was brushing my hair back with his right hand and very quietly humming. My mind started to quiet as I opened my eyes, trying to regain my bearing. Surprisingly, everything seemed fine. Outside of the complete lack of movement, all the lights were working, and we were not a crumpled pile of blood and metal at the bottom of the elevator shaft. With these realizations now becoming apparent, I immediately began to notice the arm around my waist and the warmth of another body encompassing me from behind. I turned and hastily stepping backward out of the, what was very quickly becoming awkward, embrace.

"I'm...I'm sorry." I mumbled as I looked up into piercing green eyes and became lost for a moment.

"There's no need to be sorry, sweetie."

As I broadened my view from gleaming green eyes to encompass the entire person standing in front of me, I heard her voice and suddenly realized that I'd been too hasty in assuming sex by shoes. I suppose her androgynous look might have thrown many off at a glance, but now, in the close context of our situation, her femininity was unmistakable.

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On the first floor, a man began impatiently pushing the up elevator button. "Come on, come on, I can't be late again!" He rambled to himself unconsciously as he repeatedly pushed the now blinking button.

"Arhh!" He hurriedly stomped over to the reception desk in the lobby of the building.

The lady on the computer behind the desk glanced up, still typing. "Can I help you?" She went back to looking at the computer screen.

"Excuse me. I'm talking to you."

She looked back up at him, this time giving him her full attention.

"What can I help you with, sir?"

"I've been waiting for the elevator for ten minutes now. Is it not working? If that's the case, you should have put up a sign saying so." His tone was demeaning as he gestured obnoxiously.

"I really can't say. This is the first I've heard of the issue. I'll have to look into it. The stairs are down this hall to the left. There is a large exit sign over the door and it's marked STAIRWAY on the door." She responded with the same tone he had.

As he turned quickly to rush off, he tripped over the large potted plant on the floor next to the desk, strewing it and its contents across the floor. He then stepped over the plant and scuttled to the stairs, without looking back to see the mess he had made.

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It was a very small elevator. The kind that makes you feel like passengers in a crowded plane even if you are standing in opposite corners of the car.

"I'm Quinn."

I watched the words fall from her mouth effortlessly as she removed herself from the railing that separated the carpet from the wood paneling on the elevator wall. I was speechless. How long had she held me? How long had she been enduring that steel bar tearing into her back? What was she thinking? How are we going to get out of here? How high up are we?

"It's okay. We won't fall."

Her voice broke my mental ranting for a moment. Speak, I thought. Tell her your name. Say something for God's sake. Nothing came.

"Even if the cables have completely snapped, the backup brakes seize us to the rails on the sides of the elevator. This car won't move an inch until they're manually released. There's no need to worry. We're just stuck here for a little while is all." She shrugged. "I'm sure help is on the way."

As she spoke, I took a moment to take her in. She was beautiful despite her lack of make-up and casual look. She didn't need dressing up to turn heads. She was wearing a fleece-lined jean jacket that didn't quite match her worn, dark Levis that hung loosely from her waist, though I don't think they were meant to. The jacket looked twice as old as her; she must have picked it up at some second-hand store, and the front left pocket bulged with a pack of Camel Lights.

"Oh... how do you...," my thoughts now running a marathon in my head. "How do you know all of that?" My voice was still quivering as I managed to whisper out the sentence.

"I'm sorry. What did you say, dear? I couldn't understand you," Quinn replied.

I looked up from her shoes this time, doing my best to seem put together.

"How do you know all of that?"

"Oh," she smiled. "My friend works for Otis, and we've had long discussions

about it, cause I'm always really interested in how things work and what happens if they don't. I actually feel much better about riding in elevators since I've found that stuff out."

Quinn took her jacket off, using it to cushion herself as she leaned back against the wall. It was becoming noticeably warm in the car. I could feel the sweat working its way through the surface of my skin, and with my winter coat on, I was beginning to feel like we were in Tahiti, not Wisconsin. I was quick to follow her lead, removing my coat and taking a seat across from her.

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"Mark," she called for the maintenance man through the radio.

"This is Mark. Go ahead."

"Mark, there seems to be an issue with the elevator. Can you see if it's working? If not, I need to know as soon as possible."

"Ten four."

Mark, who was changing an exit sign light bulb between the 17th and 18th floors, finished screwing the sign back together and carefully backed down the ladder. As he began to step off the bottom rung, the man who was rushing up the stairs attempted to push by him and knocked him and the ladder over. Mark hit the wall and managed, despite having lost his balance, to stay standing and catch the ladder with his left hand so that it did not hit the hurried man running up the staircase.

"You should be more careful where you put that ladder." The man said to him mercilessly as he continued his ramble up the staircase without hesitation.

Mark, taking in what had just happened, did not respond and instead carefully pushed himself off the wall, ladder still in hand, grabbed the rung on the opposite side, and folded the ladder toward him. He then carried his things to the maintenance closet. What a moron. Why couldn't he have used the fucking elevator.... It was at that instance that Mark remembered what he was supposed to be doing and stammered off to the top floor to inspect the elevator.

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I struggled to get comfortable and still keep my distance from her, but no matter how I shifted or leaned, our legs still lay too closely parallel for me to do so.

"We should have chosen a larger elevator to get stuck in, hey?" she said, accompanying a quiet laugh.

I found her candor allowed my body to free itself a little.

"Yeah," I responded.

I wanted to say more, but I didn't know where to start. I was afraid of what would come out of my mouth and how she would respond if she knew the things I was thinking. For God's sake, I wasn't even sure what I was thinking. Luckily, she took the leap for the both of us. As she spoke, I became lost in the soft contours of her face and her succulent voice. Since looking at someone while they talk to you is only polite, it gave me the perfect opportunity.

"I'm an officer in the navy. I was supposed to ship out yesterday, but my leave got postponed until next week, so I thought I'd stop by and take my dad out to lunch

today." She took off her brown knit hat and set it on the floor next to her as she spoke.

Her blonde hair was smooth and shined like a lake on a perfectly calm day. Her slender oval face was decorated by a tender smile that never seemed to waiver.

"He's the maintenance guy here, and he very rarely takes a break for lunch, so I thought it would be nice to surprise him. Plus, he could use a little fattening up."

Her lips, thin and defined, moved about as she spoke like a ballet dancer flowing across the stage of her face.

"Mom used to pack him lunch every day. Turkey and Miracle Whip on rye bread, carrots, pretzels, a Butterfinger, and a napkin with something sweet written on it."

Blush fell on her cheeks ever so slightly to reveal the beautiful contour of her facial features. Her eyes pinned me to the elevator wall as they seemed to caress my thoughts. "Really? Oh," I interjected every once in a while to appear as though I was listening and not enthralled by her androgynous beauty.

"So, what about you?"

I realized I needed more than a sound or one-worded answer now and quickly tried to remember some piece of our conversation. Nothing.

"What about me?" was the only response I could think of.

"Ha ha. It's okay. I understand you're distracted. Whatever you want to tell me's good. Where ya from? What do you do? You know. All that good stuff." She pulled up her legs, crossed her arms, and leaned out over her knees and began listening intently as I spoke.

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"Mark," the secretary's voice blurred through the radio.

"Mark here."

"The repairman from Otis is here. Can you come to the front desk?"

"I'll be there in five," Mark answered.

Mark had already propped open the access door on the top of the elevator shaft and was headed up from the basement where he turned off the circuit breaker to the elevator. He was pretty sure he would be hearing it from the lawyer's office on the fourth floor, and he knew the dentist office on the 19th would be complaining. But what are you going to do? The words on the breaker box were extremely faded, which made it very difficult to read, especially without his glasses. They'll get over it. He smirked as his thought drifted off to thoughts of the asshole in the staircase being in the dentist's chair when their electricity went out.

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I realized as we spoke that her presence had allowed me to be comfortable in my own skin. I couldn't remember if I had ever felt that way before. Our legs were touching slightly now. I lay propped up on one arm. We had spread our coats down to cover the old worn carpet, and I hadn't even noticed that any time had drifted by until now.

"So what happened to your mom?" I inquired gently.

"She was killed in a car accident two years ago. Drunk driver. I was stationed in Mississippi at the time. I still remember getting the call," she replied reminiscently, staring off somewhere outside of the confining elevator walls.

"I'm sorry. It sucks. I know. There really isn't more to it then it sucks," I said solemnly.

"Thanks." She brought her gaze back to my eyes and smiled.

"For what?"

"For that. It does suck. There really isn't any other way to put it. Everybody wants to console you, tell you it's going to be okay, and try to fix you, but really that's all I've ever wanted, was someone, anyone, just to acknowledge that it sucked. Just to let me have that. So thank you."

"How long do ya think we've been in here now?" I asked trying to distract from the melancholy conversation I had created.

"I'm not sure. My phone's got no reception, and I don't own a watch. Maybe three or four hours," Quinn replied.

"Wow, four hours! I thought you were sure help was on the way," I teased with a sarcastic grin. "It takes a while to climb up 32 flights of stairs and down an elevator shaft, you know. Come on, give me a break." We laughed.

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"Okay, now you are sure you've turned off the circuit breakers to the elevator?" The repairman asked.

"Yes, I'm sure," Mark answered. "I've also had a sign put up on every elevator door in the building."

"Good. I'd hate for something stupid to be overlooked and kill me when I crawl down there."

The repairman now double-checked his safety harness, turned on his flashlight, and entered the elevator shaft. A few minutes went by and Mark felt the need to find out what was going on.

"Did ya find anything? Can ya fix it? Don't forget there's people in there we still got to get out." His voice echoed down the shaft.

"It looks like the governor's speed sensor malfunctioned and the mechanical braking system kicked in. Should have it fixed in a little while."

Mark had no idea what the governor did or even that there was a speed sensor, but he yelled back okay and took a seat at the top of the shaft and waited.

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"So, why are you still with him?" Quinn inquired.

Conversation flowed so easily now, I hardly noticed our inconvenient situation anymore.

"I'm really not sure. It's convenient and comfortable, I suppose. Plus, it's not like anyone available or better has come along. So I guess I just figured it's okay and maybe that's the best it gets."

What I didn't say was, until now, but, of course, that was an absurd thought.

"Never settle. It's not worth it. I know that somewhere there is that person

waiting for everyone. The one who will literally take your breath away the moment you first see them." She sat up on her knees now, her face intensely concentrating on every word. "The one who surpasses every ideal you've ever built, every hope you've had, every dream you've dreamt. The one. I know that I don't want to be distracted by some 'okay' relationship and miss that, and I sure hope that your settling doesn't get in the way of that for you." Quinn's hands, balled-in fists gestured intensely as she spoke with more conviction and passion than even a dying man could convey.

"Wow" was all I could say as I watched her in awe.

"I'm sorry, Bailey. It's just, I've wasted so much of my life trying to distract myself from what was real and I never want go back to that." She said, inviting calm back as she relaxed again, taking her position back on the floor.

"No. Don't be. It's nice to see someone have such conviction and passion. It's not something I often see in my life. Everyone is usually bland. It seems to me most days that no one I know cares much about anything. They're all just making it through. It gets kinda depressing." I beamed gratefully at her.

In all my life, I had never met someone like her. She was so easy to talk to I felt like I'd known her for years not mere hours. I wanted to stay here, with her, forever. Okay, well, maybe not here, but I wanted our encounter never to end. If she would have been a man, I would have proposed right then and there. Wait. I suddenly thought. This is a woman you are in company with. What are you thinking? I couldn't help it though. She, was the one.

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Mark must have dozed off because he was so startled that he actually jumped when the repairman began talking to him.

"Alright. That should do it. You want to go downstairs and turn the circuit breaker back on? Radio me when you're done. I'll wait up here."

"Uh, yeah, sure, I'll be right back," Mark stammered, got up, and began hustling down the hall. "Hey! You're going the wrong way!" the repairman said loudly.

Mark, still trying to shake off sleep, stopped, turned around, and headed in the other direction, looking at the floor, until he reached the door that led to the stairs. Cuz that wasn't embarrassing, he thought to himself as he headed down the 32 flights of stairs in front of him.

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Quinn sat up on her knees and leaned to reach over me. Her hair brushed across my hand as she did so. It was even softer than I had imagined. The faint scent of her cologne carried my breath away. She was so close to me now I could swear I could hear her heart beat.

"Sorry, I wanted to see if I had any gum in my coat," she said.

I wanted to touch her. I wanted her to touch me. I hoped she'd lose her balance and maybe fall into me.

"I guess my last mint will have to do," she sighed as she fumbled around in her coat pocket.

She pushed herself back with ease, and as she did so, our eyes met and I quickly looked away. I knew if I didn't she would see every thought dancing through my mind and I would become speechlessly lost in her gaze. A glance must have been all she needed though to see into my soul because as I finally found my breath, she was taking it away again. Her hand slid behind my neck into my hair as she pulled in close to me. This is heaven, I thought as the elevator began to move again.

# The Winter Cabin

Eric C. Schulz

Builder, in building this little cabin,  
in every way that you may feel,  
but please please me in every brown log.  
Don't build me a cabin that is not real.

However far you must travel for wood,  
whatever distance into that forest of pine,  
find me enough to build four walls and a roof,  
and build for me this dream cabin of mine.

It's not that I'm greatly afraid of cities,  
but I never heard of one where silence is known  
(And I know of many who would with me agree).  
Where for me the forests create a tranquil home.

And I welcome the brisk blow of winter's snow,  
that there always is in these cold northern lands,  
and the smell of the crackling fire beside a stone hearth  
that always there is when snowflakes band.

A cabin is for a hunter or lumberjack,  
but I don't see why that should matter. Listen,  
a cabin would serve to remind me  
of serene woodlands with snow that purely glistens.

# Masterpiece

Sean Gifford

There is music in the river  
composed of water flowing  
over rocks

Tall grass by the stream's edge  
gently dance, sway  
to songs of a soothing breeze

Poppy field in whirlwind  
paints a picture  
shifting skyline, gold and red

I am the artist  
though I have not a paintbrush

only breath

# Aristocracy

Becky Smiltneek

Three Doberman dogs walk down the street  
Each leashed to owner's hands  
What fine dogs to meet.

Bristling black bodies, tall and sleek,  
Long muzzles hide the teeth of hounds  
Three stately dogs stride up the street.

Pointed ears and tails cropped at the seat,  
Markings at paws like tanned sand  
What a fine breed to meet!

Like horses nuzzling for a carrot treat,  
Stallions pulling a carriage, grand  
Three steeds trot down the street

Taking turns nosing ahead of other feet,  
These guardians of house and land  
What fine canines to meet.

A fierce, frightening breed to greet?  
Not so it seemed, this friendly clan  
Three Dobermans walk down the street  
Finer dogs I could not meet.

# My Guardian Angel

Adam Gawronski

Is always herself  
is a strong independent spirit  
Who can soar as far  
as the sky will take her  
is the counter balance  
if I should forget who I am  
and a refuge  
if I should  
fall from grace  
always sees the good  
in a person  
no matter  
how much  
bad shines through  
flies with a  
broken wing  
hoping that  
one day  
she can be whole  
and find  
who she truly is  
and what  
she can truly be

# Walter

## Erik Vanden Heuvel

What has happened to people? They have no consideration for their elders. No consideration for the veterans who fought to make this country what it is, and certainly no consideration for the laws of the road. As I ride down the sidewalk on my scooter, the same time, same place, I watch the same stupid people do the same stupid crap.

Every day the same red car pulls out of the Citgo gas station and speeds by to catch the light. I hope to God he gets pulled over today. I usually stop and stare at him so he knows someone sees what he's doin', but he does it anyway. There ain't nothing under his hat but hair, I'm sure.

In front of my assisted living apartment building is the nicest stretch of sidewalk in town. They paved it two months ago, and it still rides like new. But once I got to the Lutheran church on Oakwood, my smooth ride goes to hell. The cracks in the sidewalk always beat the shit out of my scooter no matter how slow I go. It's gotten so bad, I had to replace my wheels this spring. What a hassle that was.

My scooter probably looks older than I do at this point. Its reddish purple shine has completely faded into a dull red, and the handle bars don't turn all the way to the right. It's a little wobbly since it only has three wheels, but the one good thing about it is that the seat has formed the shape of my ass.

I take my usual route to the Walgreens on the corner, where I pick up either a prescription, or my favorite snacks, malted milk balls and shredded wheat. The only damn things left in the world to live for.

Most people don't find me to be a nice person, which I like. I take pleasure in the fact that I can be rotten to people and still have no consequences. No one is going to question a man at my age. For God's sake, I'm eighty-four years old and I look like I'm about to die. I don't give a shit. I just wish I could move on.

In truth, I look worse than I really am, physically, I don't mean emotionally. My hairline has receded behind my head and my neck has so many wrinkles that it looks like I used to weigh more than an elephant. The fact is, I'm skinnier than I've ever been, and pale as a ghost. I only wear plain white undershirts so that there's a contrast between my skin and something even brighter. Maybe it helps, maybe it doesn't. I don't give half a horse shit. It's comfortable, and that's all I care about.

I can see it. Walgreens. My second home, although I wouldn't consider mine much of a home anymore. It's more of a prison filled with horrible memories. My limp neck and tilted head bounce up as I hit a bump going into the Walgreen's parking lot. Damn. I slowly make my way through the parking lot, finally coming to the automatic doors, and I make my way back to the prescription counter.

"Oh hello there, Walter, how are we today?" the pharmacist asks. Her name is Melissa and I try not to talk with her because every so often when I do, she just about chews my ear off. I always appear to be in a hurry, but what's the use. She knows I don't have to be anywhere. I'm a lonely old man for Christ's sake.

"Dandy," I reply.

"I think we just got in two of your prescriptions today, let me go check." She disappears for a minute and returns with three small orange tubes of pills and leans over the counter. "Okay, Mr. Lemmon, we've got your Furosemide, Propranolol, and Simvastatin which just got here about ten minutes ago," she says.

"Just great. What about the others?" I ask, while gazing at her titanium white pharmacist coat.

"The Perindopril and the Verapamil? They should be in within the next few days."

"Well, what the hell am I going to do until then?"

"Well, Mr. Lemmon, I'm sure you haven't taken the entire prescription yet; it's only been a week. Just come in on Thursday and I'm sure they will be here," she says.

I switch into reverse and start backing up. I don't check to see if anyone's behind me because I honestly don't give a hoot. I get as far back as I can go. No one there. I switch it back to forward.

"Hey, Walter, you still holdin' up okay? I mean remember I'm always here if you decide you want to talk," Melissa states. I can see a truly honest gleam in her eye as she rests her elbows on the counter and stares at me. I don't respond. I ignore the comment as I ride away on my electric scooter.

For the past year she has bugged me to talk with her, but what's the use? No one can help me move on now. Not even Melissa, the cheery pharmacist.

I make my way to the only aisle I ever buy anything in. Aisle 7. This is where I will find my beloved malted milk balls and shredded wheat. I pick up two large cartons of milk balls instead of the usual one. They help me relax, and since I gave up smoking two and a half years ago, this has become my new addiction, along with the bowl of shredded wheat in the morning. Sometime last year I actually convinced the manager to switch the shredded wheat from aisle 3 to aisle 7, and to put it on the lower shelf. That is the extent of my charm.

There's a new cashier today. She looks about twelve years old and has disgusting piercings all over her face. I wish I would have found a magnet to buy.

"Hello sir. How are you today?" she asks in a demeaning tone which I find very insulting. I choose not to respond for that very reason.

She finishes scanning all of my prescriptions and food, and I slowly hand her my debit card. Every month my card gets refilled with the 1207.10 check I get from the government. I truly admire social security benefits. She swipes my card, presses a few buttons, and hands it back to me. Then, she picks up my filled plastic bag and asks, "Sir, do you need any help with your bag at all?" Oh, that always flames my ass.

"Help? What do I look like, a fucking cripple?" I snatch my bag from her and put it in my basket. I drive away. As I exit through the sliding doors, I scowl at the family that is coming in. They just smile back. I think it's funny that if I were about twenty years younger and scowled at them, they might be frightened or taken aback, but being my age, it's almost expected.

As I turn from the automatic doors onto the cold concrete sidewalk, I see something out of the corner of my eye. I turn and look, but only catch a glimpse of the

woman who looks just like her. Her flowing blonde hair and kind stature bring back lost memories I had forgotten. And now she's gone. Again.

I approach the parking lot and see a car coming straight for the cross walk. I'll take my chances today; what is there left to live for anyway? I roll down the sidewalk and onto the paved lot into the path of the vehicle. It skids to a complete stop three feet from my scooter. I keep going. I hear the window go down and someone say, "Hey, watch where you're going!"

That's it. I turn my scooter toward the vehicle and pick up my cane from the side pouch. I come to a stop in front of their driver's side window. I wind up my cane behind my head and whack into their door in one swift motion. Bang! No damage, just one very surprised man looking out his window in silence and awe. As I turn and ride away, he pokes his head out to see if there's any damage. He sees there's none and drives away. That's the last I see of him. I wouldn't do something like this two years ago, so I suppose I have passed the point of caring what I do. Nothing really seems to matter anymore.

Once again, I'm back on the same path as usual: the cracked sidewalk, the kids playing in the street, and the foliage that never seems to be trimmed. The only change in my path is a police car flashing its lights behind a small red car on the side of the road. Justice. I get back to my apartment two minutes later than usual. 4:27.

I take out the bag from Walgreens and set it on my kitchen table. I fumble through it for awhile and finally come up with a carton of malted milk balls. I open the carton and make my over to the couch. I grab the remote control for the television, and for the first time since this morning, I stand up.

I take a step towards the couch, and then a step towards the coffee table next to the couch. Another step.

I see something I haven't seen in quite some time; it's a picture and it's hiding behind a bigger picture. I reach down and pick it up. Before losing balance, I turn and fall back onto the couch. I steadily set down the remote and hold the picture with both hands. It's a picture of my wife and me on our 50th anniversary. I gaze into her beautiful blue eyes and she stares right back at me. For the first time in two years, I start to cry. She looks back if only to say "Walter, I'm okay now, you don't have to worry about me." And for the first time, I am able to let her go.



