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Spring 2005

### 2005 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine

Otterbein English Department

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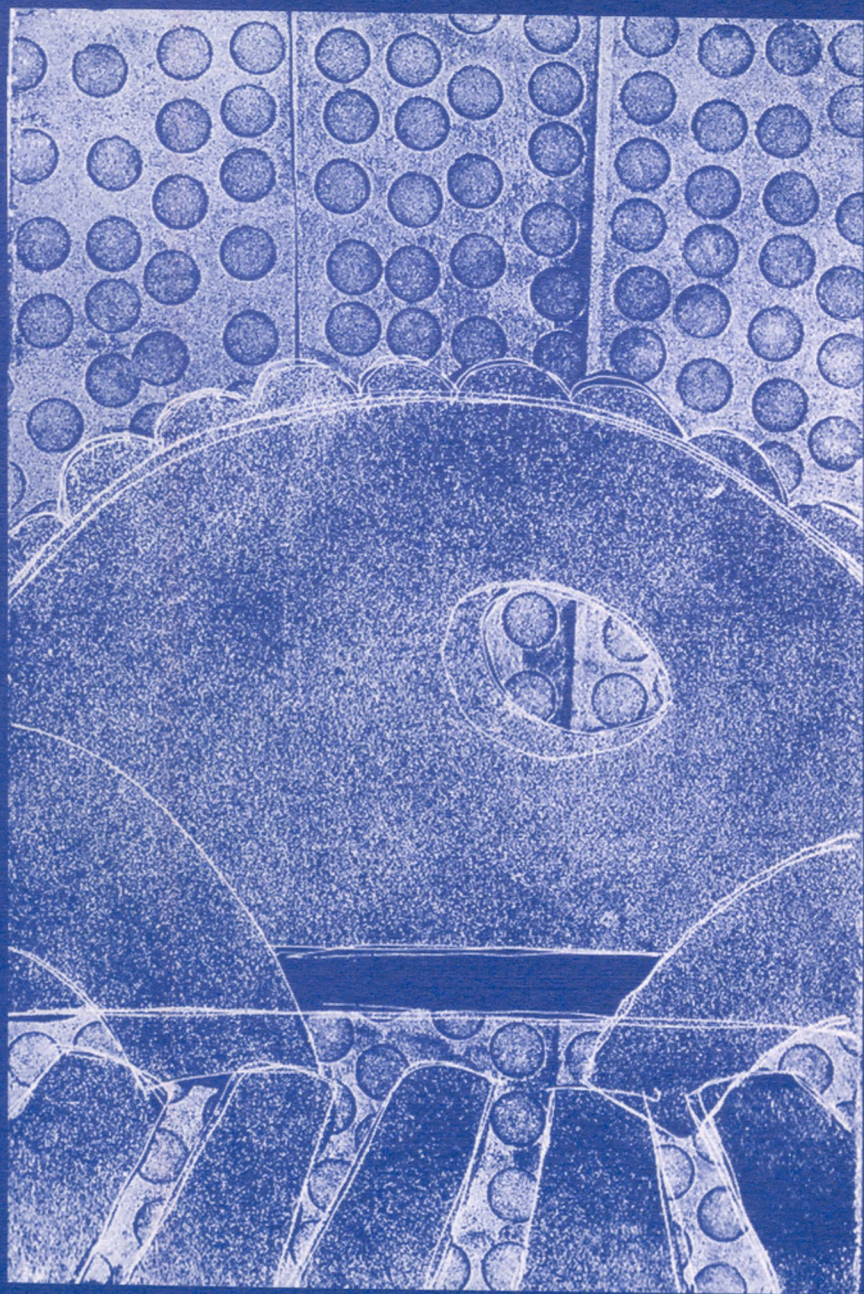
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quiz and quill  
2005



# Quiz and Quill

Otterbein College  
Westerville, Ohio

Spring 2005

## *Editor-in-Chief*

Amanda Knapp

## *Editor-in-Chief*

Jon Juravich

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| Nicholas DeFazio | Gary Klase         |
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## *Faculty Advisor*

Dr. Shannon Lakanen

## *Editors' Note*

Ah, the beginning of a new era. Faithful Quiz and Quillers, the Lakanen years have just begun. For weeks, I've been trying to think up something clever to say about the grammatical battle over "tick marks," the blood-red tick cake, or any of the other timeless *Quiz and Quill* moments we've had this year. But I feel I should leave cleverness behind for once and be sincere. Dr. Lakanen, I'm glad you're here. Good luck. May the Lakanen years be long and fruitful.

I would be amiss in my duties if I didn't send a warm thanks to all of you who had the courage to submit to *Quiz and Quill* this year. It's tough to put your work out there. Even if you didn't make it in the magazine this year, congratulations, you have guts. Another thanks to the contest judges—you had a hard job this year with our many fine entries. Last, but not least, thanks to Jenny Hill for designing the *Quiz and Quill* yet again.

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to introduce *Quiz and Quill* 2005...

## ***The Quiz and Quill Contest Winners 2005***

### **Poetry Contest**

- First Place "Cedarville to Westerville in an Altima, 2 am" by Jen Immel  
Second Place "poem in two parts" by Amanda Hinds  
Third Place "24 Hours" by Colette Masterson

### **Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest**

- First Place "Picking Up Jesus" by Jamie Levy  
Second Place "Sunday Best" by Lisa Lopez Swansinger  
Third Place "Zupha Bread" by Jen Immel

### **Short Story Contest**

- First Place "Unbelievable" by Jason Carney  
Second Place "Pope Joan's Mistake" by Michelle Yost  
Third Place "Squeezing out the Devil" by Mary Teaford

### **Personal Essay Contest**

- First Place "Near Weightlessness and Complete Lifelessness" by Nick DeFazio  
Second Place "Crash Test" by Sarah Grooms  
Third Place "This Is What God Told Me to Tell You" by Nick DeFazio

### **Playwriting Contest**

- Second Place "Labor Pains" by Jeremy Henthorn  
Third Place "Endings" by Josh Bradley

### **Louise Gleim Williams Prize**

- "Unbelievable" by Jason Carney

## **Contest Judges**

### **Poetry and Roy Burkhart Poetry Contests**

**Ryan G. Van Cleave** teaches creative writing at Clemson University. He is the author of twelve books, including most recently a poetry collection, *The Magical Breasts of Britney Spears* (Pavement Saw Press, 2004), an anthology, *Vespers: Contemporary American Poems of Religion and Spirituality* (University of Iowa Press, 2003), and a creative writing textbook, *Contemporary American Poetry: Behind the Scenes* (Allyn & Bacon/Longman, 2003).

### **Short Story and Historical Fiction Contests**

**Tom Noyes'** story collection *BEHOLD FAITH AND OTHER STORIES* (Dufour, 2003) was short listed for Stanford Libraries' William Saroyan Prize. He currently teaches in the BFA in Creative Writing Program at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College.

### **Personal Essay Contest**

**Patrick Madden** teaches creative writing at Brigham Young University. His essays have recently been published in *River Teeth*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and the *Mississippi Review*.

### **Playwriting Contest and Louise Gleim Williams Prize**

**James Bailey**, professor emeritus of English at Otterbein, taught playwriting as well as many literature courses and was also advisor to *Quiz and Quill*. He continues his involvement in theatre by occasionally serving as a dramaturg for the Contemporary American Theatre Company, most recently for a production of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*.

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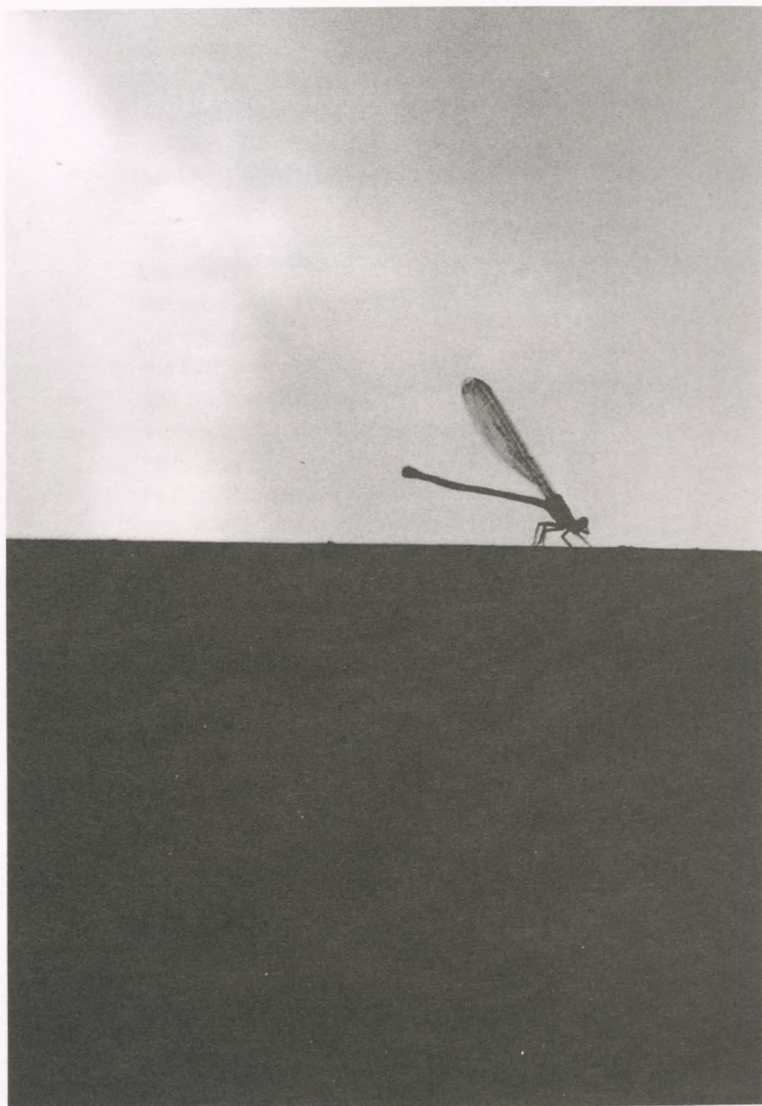
Becca Zapor

**Second Anniversary**

As far as my lungs will fill, I deeply inhale  
fresh-mown grass through daddy's back  
door. I bite into an unripe apple—its crisp flavor  
tastes like autumn breezes holding the promise

of snow. I slowly climb the stairs to his bedroom  
and wrap myself in his soft flannel shirt. Listening  
to the breeze, I hear his deep laughter echo invitingly over  
the creaking antique rocking chair. I stare through the bare

window that overlooks naked branches, shielding the cold  
gray gravestone standing alone in the field. I fall asleep quickly,  
like I did the afternoon of his funeral when I lay beneath a forgotten  
willow. Weeping now, it hides my mourning from his view.



*Rainy Day*  
Colleen Tappel

## Sarah Grooms

### Paternal Collage

He's latex paint,  
 garden soil;  
 he's pekoe tea  
 and grass clippings, green-stained shoes,  
 and New West cologne.  
 He's sawdust  
 and vanilla,  
 leather and old coins.  
 He's tv,  
 recliner claimer.

He's toucher of grime on  
 the engine, the windowsill,  
 the furnace vent. He's  
 steak, chicken, burger on charcoal  
 and marshmallows over dried up  
 sticks fed to fire  
 on a steaming  
 July twilight.

He's chuckles and  
 Silence.

Only child  
 with four siblings.  
 Tree trimmer, bee  
 killer, spider  
 killer, wasp  
 killer.

He's three broken toes  
 and formerly soaked with Camels.  
 He's peppermint-aholic and diet pop,  
 brewer of 'best coffee,'  
 carver of turkey.  
 Chestnut roaster and bread toaster,  
 cat charmer and born again  
 Democrat.

He's a snowman-building  
accomplice.  
No necktie, no sports obsession,  
'no nonsense at the dinner table'  
man and he's mad at that idiot  
he's driving behind.

Drain cleaner, once called  
"Wiener,"  
the man with the camera,  
the tire gauge,  
the Prilosec,  
and the handful of  
violets for Mom from the yard.  
He's gray, he's wit.  
Full of "be careful"s and "I love  
you"s and "always keep your tank half full."

He calls me  
Darlin.'  
I call him  
the only dad I can  
imagine.

Melinda Carter**Spring**

The vestiges of winter's snow  
Stream in rivulets cross the concrete wall  
Its whiteness marred by all the grime and dust  
That's blown there.  
And yet within that murky mist  
Lies a promise  
Of a new purity  
Yet to come.  
We wait upon it  
With bated breath  
And praise our Maker  
For His faithfulness.



*Serenity*  
Megan Alexander

## Jennifer Roberts

### Calling

Sometimes I hear the loneliest voice in the wind. Sometimes I don't hear anything at all. But when I'm lying still on the cool evening grass, my head cocked slightly, and I breathe in crisp autumn, filling my lungs with mild, sweet air, the wind talks to me. The clouds waft by in weightless flight and the wind talks. The crickets conduct symphonic melodies somewhere unseen among the tall grass and the wind talks. Her soft, faint whisper flirts with me, gently coaxing me to concentrate, to focus all my attention on what she has to say. Yet, she only talks when *she* wants to. She is a fickle wind.

I try not to listen anymore. As I am driving up the coast or talking with friends in a café or folding laundry at 3a.m., I am always straining one ear, one small, trained part of my awareness, to listen for her, and just before the air changes to a familiar whisper, just before I hear the hum of stillness change into breath, I concentrate hard, clench my teeth and block her from my mind. I always have to be on alert for her. When people ask for a welcome breeze to embrace them on a hot day, I pray it doesn't come. Three states, four jobs and seventeen hundred lattes later, I still try to ignore her.

I was ten the first time I heard her melodic voice and I wasn't quite sure what I was hearing. I had been running through the field with my brother and his best friend, Billy, playing hide and seek in the tall weeds, when I collapsed in a breathless heap in the clearing behind our house. My chest heaved in and out and I was overcome with a nervous giggle for having outwitted my brother who was still searching for me. With my arm wrapped around my head for a pillow, I tilted my head back and closed my eyes, trying to get rid of the simmering laughter that would surely reveal my position if I allowed it to boil over.

*Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.*

My eyes opened quickly, but I didn't move.

*Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.*

I held my breath.

*Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.*

I thought I heard a rustling behind me. Evan must've been close and I had to be still.

"Close your eyes," the words teased my ear, sounds soft and gentle, "*close your eyes and breathe with me.*"

I obeyed.

The wind gently swept my face and then pulled away, only to brush by me again. I matched my breathing to its touch and soon we were in perfect whispered synchronization. I felt my body begin to relax, first my eyes, and then moving down my neck into my heavy arms. My heaving chest subsided to be taken over by a slow, silent rise and fall. I couldn't feel my body. My mind was attuned to things I couldn't describe. Vibrant sounds and soft colors flooded my thoughts. I was in the wind's control and it felt good.

"Listen to me." She was coaxing, but firm.

Yes. I heard myself answer. Yes, *anything*. It felt good, enchanting.

"You must hide."

"Where?"

"You have to hide."

We breathed in and out, slowly. I must hide. Where can I hide?

"Hide." The wind picked up. It was blowing against my face quicker; it was becoming cooler. My eyes fluttered against the air as it picked up speed. My breath could no longer match its pace.

"From who?" I felt uneasy, scared.

"Hide."

I opened my eyes and looked around. Where was Evan? The wind was stronger now. I couldn't catch my breath.

"Evan?" I yelled. I stood up and looked around the field. The house, standing only yards away, seemed so far, but I began to run fast. I could feel the wind at my back, pushing me, "Evan!" I screamed.

"You can't hide." The whisper that once soothed me was now threatening, hoarse, and angry. I picked up my feet as fast as I could, but the groundhog holes were hard to see. I tripped over them, twisting my feet, slowing my pace. I felt the wind surround me. It was in front of me. It was behind me. It was strong. I could see the house, but with each step forward the house seemed to move back farther from my reach. I put my head down and tried to push forward, but my foot caught another hole and I fell.

"Please, stop it!" I cried, "Evan! Where are you? Mommy!" I collapsed in a heap, head in hands, chest heavy with fear. Tears were streaming down my face. What was happening? The wind circled me. I felt my chest begin to crush under the pressure. I...couldn't...breathe.

Suddenly, I felt a strong hand on my arm, jerking me upward, pulling me in the direction of the house.

"Hurry!"

It was Evan's voice. He grabbed my wrist and was lifting me off the ground. We ran. We ran as fast as we could until the front steps appeared before us. But the wind was following us. I could hear it.

"Run. Hide."

I looked at Evan. Could he hear it? His face was distorted into a grim, frightened expression and with one final yank, pulled me up the stairs. We pushed open the door to the house and Evan slammed it closed. I collapsed, crying, on the living room floor. Evan stood rigid, on guard and stared at the door, not letting himself breathe. The whistle of the wind could be heard through cracks in the door; windows rattled and shook. But then, it fell quiet and Evan exhaled. We were safe.

The door swung open and I began to scream.

"It's awfully windy out there," Dad said as he shook off his jacket and hung it over the armchair, "What the hell is going on here? Evan, quit picking on your sister."

I realized I was still crying and wiped my eyes and face as Dad walked by. "You two settle down." And he was gone into the kitchen for a cup of tea.

I looked at Evan. He was still staring at the door, frozen, but breathing. Eventually, I got up and turned on the television. Evan went to his room.

That night, I remember Mom getting a phone call that upset her. She cried a lot. She hugged Evan and I more than normal. Later, I learned that Billy Martin had disappeared that day. They never found him.

That was thirteen years ago and here I am, sitting in Paddy's Coffee Shop in the middle of San Francisco. I don't know if I am crazy and I'm not sure I want to know. What I do know is that every so often I hear a whisper, faint and hungry. I try to forget those days in the field and it was crazy to think that they were more than a child's playful imagination. Yet, these past few days I haven't been able to ignore the calling; she won't let me block her out, anymore.

Last week, there was another Amber Alert flashing across 101 telling of another missing child. I have seen posters, television ads and magazine articles on this subject many times over the years, but suddenly, I was pulled back into that day in the field with Evan and the fear that we had felt that autumn evening.

Billy Martin was Evan's best friend and partner in crime. Many times they would pick on me and leave me out of their games, but on rare occasions, I would have the honor of joining in on a day of cops and robbers or tag or red light, green light. Once, they had taken me with them to Mike's Corner Market. As we entered the store, I quickly became aware that a heist was planned. Billy and Evan walked me back down the narrow aisle lined with canned beef stew and saltines until we reached the freezer. Billy stood guard as Evan shoved ice-cold root beer Popsicles down my pants. By the time we left, my legs were numb and turning blue. It was a thrill and I finally felt accepted.

But Billy disappeared, and Evan was not the same. He didn't want to play anymore and he definitely didn't want to talk about Billy or the wind. I witnessed him fight demons masquerading as teen rebellion, depression and isolation. I held his hand at Bellevue when he didn't even know I was there. It was too much for me, watching my brother's grasp of reality slipping away. That's when I left for Rochester, then Weirton and finally here, California. I am still running, still hiding. So is Evan, in his own way. He left this message on my answering machine:

"Hey. I just wanted to see how you were. Call me," he paused, his voice quiet, "Did you see the alert, Gwen, the Amber Alert? Yeah. Um, listen Gwen, I need you to call me. Please. It has been awhile, hasn't it? We could talk, okay? Did you see the Amber Alert? I did. I saw it, Gwen. I saw *it*." There was a pause, but I could hear his breath, his ragged breath, "Have you noticed how windy it is today?"

Jamie Levy**Picking Up Jesus**

Picking up Jesus on the corner,  
finally finding my friend.  
All day long he breaks cigarettes trampling pink elephants  
and combs his teeth with minty splinters.  
He says  
Everyone knows that NO PARKING signs cry at night  
wailing and moaning beneath oceans of disdain.  
We wonder  
if ants slink away and make love to birds,  
hatching new songs.

I watched a violet garden speak  
in tongues on the belly of a church.  
Delicate petals desperate to drink in  
the savage secrets  
locked away in the trembling lips of garbage bins.  
Goodyear plays on brick streets, snapping along to the rhythm of the morning.  
Glass shards peek around Kerry and Edwards,  
pledging allegiance to porch-light politics.  
He salutes crimson tombstones encircling a sapling of old,  
broken down and nameless  
standing beneath the bearer of dawn.

Tell me how to live, light of wisdom.  
Show me truth, for I will follow.

## Watching Charlotte Watson Earn Immortality

Watching Charlotte Watson earn immortality,  
 I wonder how many steps  
 She has stolen from this tired path.  
 But she pays no mind to tow away zones,  
 or broken highlights splattered across the pavement.

She cried when the rogue red pumpkin  
 strolled over the edge of a crumbled balcony.  
 She wanted to smash her canary hope against it  
 to color it the proper shade of orange.  
 Instead she kisses sweet lemons  
 with stable lips,  
 shuffling toward brutality of citric proportions.

Crawling beneath the feet of Jesus,  
 She tastes freshly ground sunflowers  
 between her toes.  
 She

skips and dances

across Hop-Scotch

squares,

ever mindful of the bouncing stone turnips  
 in her grandmother's secret garden.

The signs told her to stop  
 when she reached Heaven.  
 But she keeps spinning...



*The Classified Female*  
Amanda Helmrich

Nick DeFazio

**Propaganda for an Afterlife**

Corpses in caskets  
 Are never caught dead with an expression on their face.  
 People say they look  
 Peaceful.  
 This is because the dead sense no expectation  
 To grumble.  
 Or plead  
 For the dispensation granting the return of their  
 Elapsed existence.  
 Their faces look characterless  
 And insipid.  
 And bored.

Relatives march up to the casket in their fabricated trance  
 And they know they're supposed  
 To pray.  
 Or sob.  
 But they too feel a lack of emotion  
 Because the corpse doesn't look too upset  
 About having died.  
 So they just kind of bow their head  
 And for just an instant they figure that if  
 there might be a heaven,  
 Then they should probably do something nice  
 sometime.

And as they exit the parlor to resume their vivacious lives,  
 They announce ineptly to the mourning family,  
 "I'm so sorry,  
 Beautiful roses,  
 Nice to see you,  
 You're looking real good!"

Great party.

## Spontaneous Winter

I meander along the streets becoming an outlet for the cold,  
 Succumbing to the night, or at least assuming my slavish role.  
 I can't help but feel unwelcome, my footsteps flouting the encompassing silence,  
 I feel too human for the outdoors, with too much DNA for a panorama sanctified  
 without science.

I spot a gazebo looking lost in the center of the street and I sit on its rocking  
 chair,

I become someone's dream and I taint the wind, tumbling through the air.

I zip up my coat and I bathe my deadened hands in two buffalo hide gloves,  
 I impulsively turn back, escaping my mission, with the false supposition that  
 darkness is absent of love:

The trees swing undressed, faint, frosty, and almost rotten

And yet it feels unjustifiable; it is only the first month of autumn.

The rain embarks on its fall from above and beneath me—no it's snow!

I don't sense its coldness or the flakes' contour; I focus on its glow

And at that moment I wonder if I have discovered a raw, overlooked miracle

Or if maybe I have stumbled upon love: proverbial and empirical  
 existing not for another person,

nor underneath the covers,  
 nor in the pride of accomplishment,

but in the wintry, gloveless streets,  
 which now become frostbitten and gleaming

with each footstep emerging as a footprint,  
 the pavement nurturing enchantment herself.

## Sarah Grooms

### Crash Test

I was at my aunt and uncle's house and somebody said the word "death". I must have asked what it meant because all I can remember is my Uncle Tony taking a shot at the definition.

"It's like going to sleep for a really long time. You just never wake up."

Never wake up. My young mind chewed on that thought for years afterward. It didn't seem that bad at first. Just keep sleeping. But how could you just not wake up? Would it be dark the whole time? Would you even know that you were "asleep"? I would ask my mom these questions at bedtime, sitting in her lap in the rocking chair in my room. Sometimes she would talk about heaven or God, but I never got death's connection with everlasting sleep out of my head. Darkness would come and never leave. I would go to bed with a queasy stomach.

In one of my first nightmares, I had eaten something and my dad had then informed me that it was poisonous. He demonstrated what poison would do to you by putting his hand to his mouth, blowing up his cheeks, eyes wide, and looking like he would throw up. I think the image actually came from a Looney Tunes cartoon, Bugs Bunny going green and sickly after being on a boat or something, but I woke up in terror at that look on my dad's face. He had been showing me my own death and it was going to be horrible and I could not escape it. I felt sick again.

I had always known that my mom's mom was dead. She had died before I was born, before Mom was married. My grandmother died of lung cancer when Mom was only nineteen. I always knew it, but I never asked Mom about it. She seemed okay, but I couldn't imagine that she would want to talk about her mother's death. She would mention her mother, this person in eternal sleep that I would never meet, but she wouldn't talk about her death. I have one vivid memory of her alluding to it one day when I was coughing.

"Don't cough like that," she told me.

"Cough like what?" I thought I had done something wrong.

"That's how my mom used to cough." She walked away. I imagine I was only five or six at the time, but I was smart enough to understand what my mom had said. I was afraid to cough after that, not only because it was a reminder, but also because I had come to fear my own death. Coughing could bring death.

For all my agonizing over the concept of dying, I didn't have to go to many funerals as a child. I can remember walking by a casket of some old woman that looked somewhat familiar. She looked like she was sleeping, hands folded across her chest. After this, I can't remember going to any funerals until our old neighbor, "Pint" passed away when I was in the fourth grade. I cringed

as we approached the coffin, his wife patting his cold, bald head as he lay there. I think she even kissed him. I wonder now if my repulsion showed on my face.

Death was a cobra and I spent a lot of time fearing its strike, appearing suddenly from the tall grass. I knew it happened too fast to jump out of the way, the teeth sinking into the exposed ankle, filling it with venom. I always kept my eye on the grass, sure that the cobra would raise its head any day now. Most times I would imagine my mom's reflection dancing in the cobra's black eyes, its gaze fixed and determined. I knew I couldn't charm the snake and I would be helpless to stop its attack.

When other people at school would complain about their mothers, I wouldn't join in. After a few rough years in middle school, I became even closer to my mom than before. I could talk to her about school, the boy I liked, the boy I couldn't stand now, problems with friends, even questions about sex. I know that some people would talk to their friends in times of need, but I couldn't imagine that. My mom was my most loyal friend. She would never betray my trust and she had much better advice. I snuggled deeper into the security of having my mom as my best friend, treasuring the times we spent together and our after school talks. Now in college, I have to plan when I will call her because we talk for hours at a time. My dad can't understand it and I don't think my housemates can relate to it, these marathon phone conversations, but my mom and I have always been close. My favorite teacher in college was the only person who managed to describe this kind of relationship.

"In my lifetime, I have had many friends. But there have only been a handful of really, *really* good friends. I mean the type of relationships that are so strong that they bring you enormous amounts of happiness. But this comes at a price, because the deeper you care for someone and the more happiness you feel when you're around them means you will be that much more devastated when they are gone." I sat up and looked him straight in the eyes as he spoke in his gentle southern accent. "I personally think this life is only worthwhile if you find those kinds of relationships and enjoy all the happiness they bring, but they will cost you and they will cost you dearly. Trust me." I blinked and sat in the momentary silence in the room. Never since that day have I experienced clarity like that. It was almost nauseating.

When it was time to move my stuff out of the dorm after my freshman year, both my parents came up to help. My dad loaded up my computer and refrigerator into his truck bed and left for home. My mom and I continued packing her car and mine until we decided to get something to eat. We talked over KFC, taking our time to relax, and then drove back to the dorm. I said goodbye to her and she left me to finish the checkout procedures and to say farewell to my friends. After I finally had everything ready, I set off towards home. It was a hot day on I-270 and I was enjoying the breeze. About halfway there I saw lines and lines of emergency vehicles and news vans on the side of the road. I glanced over again to see a car flipped upside down in the ditch. I remember thinking *I hope that person made it.*

Fifteen minutes later I pulled into our driveway and my dad walked up to meet me. He looked a little strained. I got out to greet him and he told me he had been watching the news.

"I woke up and heard that there was a fatality on 270, but they wouldn't say anything else. I kept watching for an update." He seemed calmer now.

"Oh my gosh, I saw that accident on the way. It looked awful." I looked around the driveway. "Mom isn't home?"

"No. I thought she was with you." My throat clenched.

"She left before me. About an hour ago." *What color was that car?*

"Maybe she stopped somewhere. Well, darlin,' I gotta get back to work. I'll see you later." And he left. I walked into the empty house alone. Panic washed over me and I shook uncontrollably. I couldn't remember the color of the car. I hadn't even thought to notice.

At the end of the day, eyes swollen and thoroughly exhausted, I sat with my family watching the news about a woman who had died on impact when her car flipped over into a ditch. Her little boy had been with her and was sent to the hospital. They thought he would recover. I hugged my mom's arm tighter as I caught a glimpse of the scaly, shiny tail slither away around the corner, sliding from the room, fading back into the darkness.



*No Names*  
Colleen Tappel

Amanda Knapp

**A Portrait in Three Colors**

He is the mysterious dark blue of the lake  
I breast-stroked across at age twelve,  
nose high above the water, fish nipping at my heels.

He is the wilting yellow of small-leaved trees—  
those knobby boughs scabby-barked locust trees,  
scantly shading and lousy with grubs.

He is the royal-regular blue of navy buttons,  
each anchor pressed deep as a dimple,  
fastened in ascending order, precise as a drill team.

He is the flecked yellow of gold floating  
in fancy bottles of cinnamon liqueur; the caution-light yellow  
I breezed through, eager as an ejaculation.

He is the dusty blue of crumbling books  
whose bindings I split with an exacto-knife,  
pouring glue down their spines.

He was the sun on the water that day, laughing as  
we capsized the canoe, feet kicking the water,  
giggling all the way to a green-lined shore.

### Photo of M.E. Looking Towards the Spring

A couple, plump as the backyard raspberries  
you stuffed in your stomach every summer's end  
till it churned with seeds—a fat couple hand-in-hand  
under a dripping orange canopy, a light brush of leaves  
sweeping behind their footfalls—  
beautiful.

Beautiful the way gnats are beautiful,  
swirling-golden in slanting light.  
The way in this photograph you are beautiful,  
stiff-backed and awkward in yellow library-light,  
fair hair curling about your face like a gilt picture-frame.

Calm—as though the photographer wasn't photographing;  
as though I weren't here watching; as though the winter  
isn't stretching her long hard hands, cracking everywhere we went.

## A Grey Portrait of A. F. Who Laughs Redly

She is silver baubles on barren branches—  
the crystal winter rain— when I sit inside,  
foot-propping and cocoa-drinking.

She is stairs instead of the elevator,  
lightless landing after landing after landing  
trudging to a tenebrous top.

But like a grey squirrel hound-cornered—  
its furred sides flaring like a bull's nostrils—  
she has a way of flying at you suddenly.

Then she laughs—a red bud on a grey woolen lapel—  
for she knows how to make pink a dusty dun:  
the art of tailoring the world to suit oneself.

She pushes up her wire-rims with a whole hand  
and stares sweet-sadly like wan Auntie Em  
before Dorothy's skipping trip away.

Her eyes like ball-bearings towing down the line,  
leveling pretense with a surveyor's ease,  
painless —the way ink quietly mars a page.

## Jason Carney

### Unbelievable

3:47 pm. Wake opened his misted can of Budweiser with a sigh, pressed power on his black Magnavox television controller, and flipped to CNN. He sank into his leather couch, propped his white-socked feet on the coffee table, and tilted back a gulp.

3:38 pm. Miller sat cross-legged in the dark gymnasium, tracing the outline of Michelangelo, smiling and swinging nunchucks on his Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles backpack. His gym teacher, Mr. Gregor, who always wore a polo shirt and a whistle around his neck, stood in the light of the side door beneath the exit sign, his face shadowed from the bill of his ball cap. All the other children who had not long ago filled the gymnasium with echoing, munchkin-like chatter had left, loaded into Mazda minivans, Ford SUVs, and a long line of yellow buses. Miller was left alone, a single survivor on the glistening gymnasium floor, and they'd turned the lights down. He was humming the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles theme song when Mr. Gregor asked, "Somebody's coming for you, right, Mill?" His gravelly voice echoed through the darkness, reverberated off the walls like a black-gloved, mustachioed villain.

2:12 pm. Blake stirred the thick tomato soup bubbling on the stove. She wiped the hair out of her face and glimpsed her mother's cat, Jezebel, obese and slow, warming her belly in the dust sparkling sunlight coming through the living room shades. The twinkle of a tea bell rolled from down the hallway, and Blake sat the black saucer of soup on the back burner, turning the heat from ten to two: "Coming, momma," she said washing her hands in the sink.

2:54 pm.

"Yeah, hon?"

"Mom's really bad off, Wake. I'm taking her to Ashland."

"Okay, sounds good baby."

"Wake! You're not even listening — she might be having another stroke. I need you to —"

"No, Tom, I need the thirty-fives, damnit."

"Wake."

*5 second pause.*

"Wake?"

"Yeah, those will do."

"Are you still there? Honey, I need you to pick up Miller for me."

"Tom hold on —"

what now, you're still at your momma's?"

"No, she's sick and I'm driving her —turn left here, Momma?"

*3 second pause.*

"I'm taking her to the hospital."

"Well, okay. You need me to get Miller then?"

"Yeah, can you? He gets off at three-twenty, okay?"

*6 second pause.*

"No, Tom, the goddamn thirty-fives."

"Wake!"

"Yes! Jesus! I'll pick Miller up! Bye!"

*Click and dial tone.*

4:03 pm. Miller's light-up high tops dangled over the office chair. He glimpsed Mrs. Gibson, seventy-five years old, typing away with her arthritis-plagued fingers on the toffee-colored Apple computer behind her desk — her back curled forward, her spine bumpy through her flower-patterned sweater. She looked like a praying mantis. He focused on the ceramic jar on her desk, shaped and painted to resemble a big-bellied Indian chief grinning wide mouthed with huge cham-pers. He stared at the star-wheel mints inside, but was too afraid to stick his hand into the Indian's mouth—it looked crazy.

3:54 pm. Wake crushed an empty can of Budweiser in one hand, let it fall into the whicker trashcan left of the couch. He took his keys out of his pocket, tossed them jingling to the coffee table, and cracked open another can. He closed his eyes and rubbed his hands through his hair, and the phone rang.

3:53 pm. Katty's throat felt like it was collapsing in on itself. Every breath came with a laborious wheeze. Her vision was fuzzy, her bulbous toes tingled in her house slippers, and perspiration glistened on her blotchy, wrinkled brow. The hospital smelled like chemicals and shit. The random beeping, the machine-like calls for Dr. So and So over the speakers, and the sound of Oprah Winfrey, obese and nodding and compassionate, responding to audience applause made her head hurt the worse. Her daughter, Blake, sat cross-legged beside her, her hand kneading her mother's mushy knee. "You okay, Momma?" Blake asked, her box-like gray car-phone pressed against her ear. "I'm okay, baby," Katty said, short of breath. She placed her hands on her daughter's tiny hand. "I's just fine."

4:12 pm. "Wh-wh-where's my m-m-mommy?" Miller asked meekly, his palms sweaty at his side. He was still in the office. Mrs. Gibson looked up from her computer, her gaudy earrings dangling. "Now what's your name," she asked. Her voice was unsteady, her teeth yellowed. Miller scooted to the edge of his seat, sniffled and wiped his nose with his sleeve. "Ch-ch-chha-a-a-arlie Miller Shreve." "My husband's name was Charlie," Mrs. Gibson responded, turning her chair away from her computer. "Would you like a minty-mint?"

4:46 pm. Wake finished his beer, crushed the can in one hand, and let it fall to the floor of his Chevy S-10 just as he pulled into Lawrence Memorial Elementary. He turned his engine off, removed his keys, shut the door, locked it, and wiped the lint from his black khakis just before entering the building.

4:48 pm. Wake put his mirrored shades back on, rubbed his well-shaved face, and flashed Miller a smile: "Come on, little man. Let's roll." He silently burped, grinned revealing pearly white teeth, and leaned over Mrs. Gibson, wide-eyed at her desk. He took a mint, unwrapped it, plopped it in his mouth. "Was he any trouble?" he asked. Mrs. Gibson could see her reflection in his mirror shades, old and wrinkled and saggy. He smelled like too much aftershave, and beer. "Oh no. Definitely not," she said, and she turned to her computer.

4:51 pm. The sun was bright and hot when Miller got into his father's truck. Moments later they were peeling and smoking out onto the country roads, a Metallica cassette blaring through the speakers. Miller glimpsed his father, sun burnt, driving one handed and casual, barely moving his lips along with the song. The music was bothering him, and he hated the smell of his father's truck. It smelled like ink, aftershave, and paint fumes.

4:57 pm.

"I got him."

"Is he okay? Explain to him why I wasn't —"

"Did you call to bitch at me?"

"Just explain to him—"

"Honeypie, I'm really not in the fucking mood for —"

"You listen to me, Wake, you—"

"So you're going to make me feel guilty?"

"I forgot my son,

I forgot my son,

forgot my son."

*4 second pause.*

"Wake. Have you been drinking?"

*2 second pause.*

"Unbelievable."

*Click and dial tone.*

9:43 pm. Dr. Takashi sighed as he sat down before Blake, trembling and holding a half-empty dispenser cup of hot chocolate. He flipped past one sheet on his clipboard, sat it aside, and focused on Blake. Blake was ill. Her brow glistened. Her lips were chapped. The halogen lights of the waiting room tinted her skin the color of puss. Outside, six stories below, cars streamed by in the darkness. Every now and then they'd hear ambulance sirens screaming into the unloading zone. "We've updated your mother's status and we've now moved her to the ICU," Dr. Takashi said. He placed his hand on Blake's shoulder. She flinched. "If you can contact any family, you should."

4:58 pm. "Unbelievable," Wake said into his bulky gray cell-phone, his sun burnt face flushed and rough from shaving. Miller could feel the cold air blowing from the air conditioner grate before him. He closed his eyes, let the air

move his thin brown hair. It felt like a ghost caressing him. Wake beeped his phone off, tossed it inside his shiny, leather latch-bag, and took another gulp of beer. Miller looked over, could see his reflection in Wake's mirrored shades: his hair looked messed up. Wake grinned, his white teeth gleaming. "Something crawled up your mom's ass so we're gonna putt-putt without her," Wake said, one hand on the steering wheel. Miller raised his fingers to his mouth, began biting. Wake knocked it away, "Don't bite your nails, damnit," he said. They both listened to the hum of the air conditioner for a moment. Miller's hands dropped to his sides. He felt the leather, felt the sweat greasy on his palms. Wake's phone rang. "Goddamn it," he said, and he answered it.

5:32 pm. Miller was distracted by the arcade machines so he didn't hear the marijuana-smelling putt-putt attendant ask, "Pepsi or 7up, *dude*?" Wake held his hand, flipped open his money clip, and dealt two ten-dollar bills onto the counter. The putt-putt attendant asked again, and Wake yanked hard on Miller's arm. "Answer the man," Wake said putting his money into his back jean pocket. "Cherry Coke," Miller said meekly, squinting up at the attendant whose chin sported the slightest strands of facial hair. "We don't have Cheery Coke," the attendant sighed, his eyes barely open. He crooked his posture and dropped a scoop of ice into a plastic cup. "Well then, give him a Pepsi, sport," Wake said grinning and dropping fifty cents into the tip jar. "And give me two games — he get a discount because he's five?" Miller tugged Wake's arm: "Dad, I'm six." Wake slapped the back of Miller's head, and he yelped. There was a silence. Then the putt-putt attendant capped the Pepsi, slid it forward. Wake took it, tapped a straw out of its wrapper, and handed it to Miller, whose hands weren't big enough for it.

1:12 pm. "I think Venessa is falling for Enrico," Blake said over a cup of coffee. "Remember how he saved her from the car crash?" Blake sat in the poorly lit living room of her mother Katty, listening to the hum of the air conditioner. On the television screen Bob Barker held his unique micro-microphone and schmoozed with a mustachioed young soldier wearing desert-camouflage. Katty was spread out in her bulging enormity and was wearing a yellow daisy patterned moo-moo. She wiped her graying hair from her eyes, flicked the thick duct-taped repaired television controller, and pursed her lips. "Listen here," she said, stopping to glimpse the shopping channel. "If Venessa ends up with Enrico I'm watching the Young and Restless again. Enrico looks like a horse's ass." She turned her blushed face towards her daughter, who sat cross-legged wearing a baggy hooded sweater, and smiled. "Hear me, baby?" Blake sipped her coffee, fondled her imitation pearl earring, and said, "Yeah, Mom."

5:50 pm. The sun was dimming. The sound of Mazdas and Chevys zooming past on Interstate 75, mingled with the chipmunk laughter of a blonde-haired kid wearing light-up sneakers, melted beneath the voice of Wake, "Lean back, extend your index finger like this— like this damn it!" Wake lurched over Miller,

whose chubby face peered out towards the life-size plaster sculpture of a Brontosaurus towering on a rock formation ahead. The putt-putt greens sparkled in the melting light as Wake wrapped his callused hands around Miller's tiny digits. Wake whispered instructions into Miller's ear. His breath smelled like beer.

7:34 am. Miller gulped his milk while staring at the television, where Mario stood and pixilated fireworks exploded above a redbrick castle. A digital baroque-like flourish culminated as the points, listed on the top of the screen, rolled higher: 00012734, 00012834, 00012924, etc. He gripped the gray Nintendo controller, crossed his legs and squared himself to the television. In the kitchen, Wake slammed the phone on the receiver and poured himself a tall glass of orange juice. Sunlight glinted off his mirror shades as he chugged. Miller crammed a chubby handful of Count Chocula into his mouth just as he began level 1-2: a gray goombah scuttled toward him, its pixilated eyebrows slanted with anger. Wake grabbed his keys from the clutter drawer, poured himself some more orange juice, and yelled into the living room, "Is my birthday boy ready to go to school?" Miller wiped the cereal crumbs from his Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles sweater, pulled the bottom elastic over his protruding belly, and scuttled meekly into the kitchen, biting his nails.

12:02 am. "I can't wait 'til I'm six," Miller said jumping on his parents bed. The soft light of Blake's reading lamp tinted the room gold. "You promise you'll take me to putt-putt?" he said falling down. Blake looked up from her Cosmopolitan magazine, focused on her son, his eyes dark from allergies, his hair twisted from a stubborn cowlick. She grabbed his cheeks and kissed him. "I'll pick you up from school," she said with a smile. "I promise." Wake came through the doorway, toothbrush in his mouth, wearing a towel. "What the hell are you doing up so late, you little shit," he said sarcastically. Blake flipped a page in her magazine, and Miller stood. "Cause I'm the birthday boy," Miller said defiantly. Wake set his alarm clock for 7:00am. "Well the birthday boy better get his ass to bed," Wake said. He kissed Blake with a smile. "And I mean now."

6:13 pm. Miller had sucked his Pepsi dry not long after he got it and had been too afraid to ask his dad to go pee; now he urinated relentlessly, a broken water-balloon, soaking his corduroy pants, his socks, his sneakers, and the putt-putt hole number sixteen. The warmth felt good. He could feel the quills of embarrassment piercing every pore as Wake strode up carrying two plain hot dogs in a cardboard tray, a disgusted grimace on his face. His eyes widened and he drew a serious breath: "Unbelievable," he said, and Miller began biting his nails.

6:34 pm. Wake removed his belt, grabbed Miller by the back of the sweater, and shoved him into the handicap stall. "Be quiet, pissy-pants," he said, and gritting his teeth he slapped Miller's bare back, over and over until he was out of breath, until Miller felt the warm blood trickling. His chin trembled, his eyes watered, but he'd rehearsed not screaming. He could shut up.

8:30 pm.

"I took him to putt-putt."

"He have a good night?"

"Yeah, he did. How's your momma?"

"I don't know, the doctor's going to talk to me soon."

"You call me if you hear something."

*3 second pause.*

"Wake?"

"What?"

"Make sure you tell him I'm sorry."

"Jesus, the fucking kid is fine."

"I love you."

"I love you the mostest."

*Click and dial tone.*

Shelley Given**The Mathematics of Eighty-Seven**

Anchored behind a swollen knob  
of knuckle, a wedding band sings  
brightly from the thick hand  
for the sixty- second year, the past three  
spent alone and counting.

Loosely circled around him,  
the newspaper table cloth, the chocolate cake—  
are two children, three grand, one great-grand,  
a handful of in-laws, shifting  
like the flames  
of the birthday candles.

The edgeless gray envelope  
of a Midwestern winter envelopes him  
on his way to the barn. Steam rises  
like a single wish from the stainless  
steel bucket of hot milk into the lull  
of early evening— he needs

a midnight sun. It's been four  
months since the last trip  
to Alaska where the landscapes are blinding, raw  
on the eyes; the clean cold burning  
harshly, pure like a second birth.

## Ordinary Saints

There was no warning  
from the vein, inflated blue with blood, until  
it bloomed; a red star in the dark  
overturned basin of her skull.

Ron stilled the hands  
of the mantle clock at the moment  
their first lives ended. Months passed  
before he brought her home.

As their daughter turned eight,  
Mary learned how to walk and talk, again.  
He taught her the number of fingers  
on one hand, the names of family members.

Twenty years later her left hand  
is still curled fetal-like against her hip.  
Sometimes she cries. "One, two..." she sobs,  
holding up the hand, "Sad."

They found other ways to love—  
she can sign the Christmas cards for him; at restaurants  
he orders her a diet Pepsi. There is security  
in thirty-five years, in sleeping side by side.

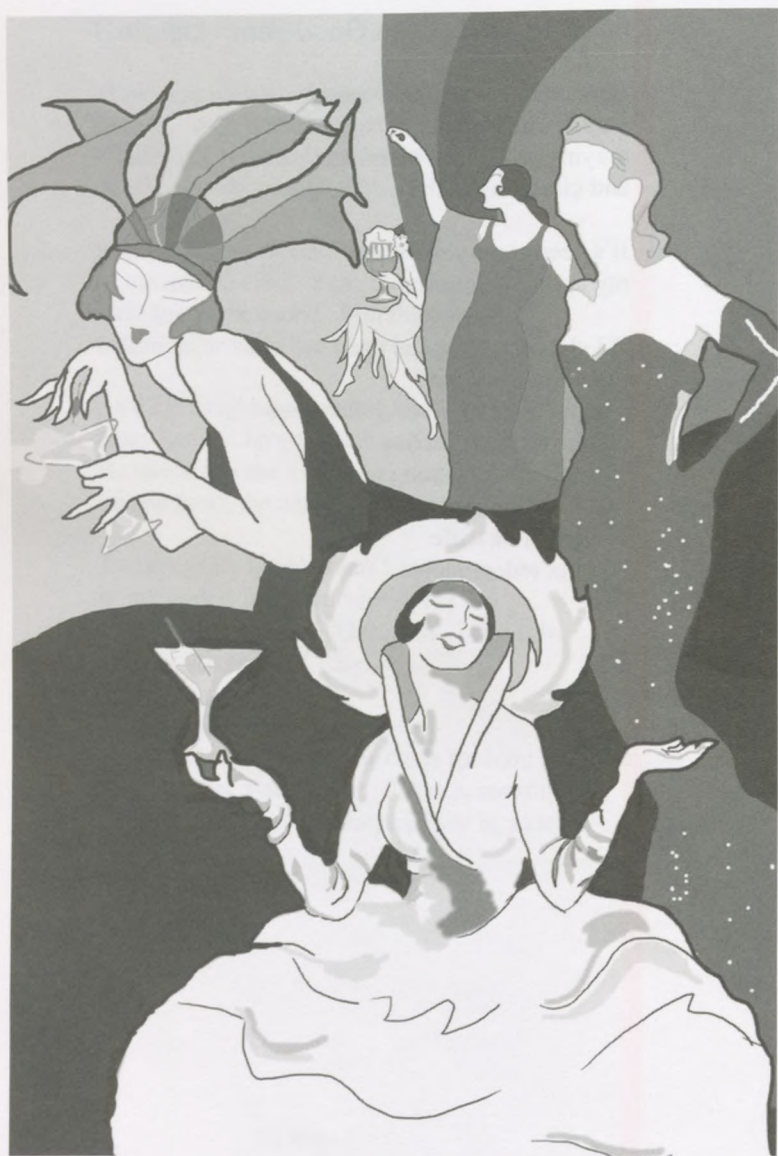
## Catholic Girls Give Good Blow-jobs

Kneeling between your naked  
thighs, I might be  
praying, my palms upturned  
and glistening in the half-light.

It's been eight years since  
my last confession.

If I close my eyes and open  
my mouth to yours,  
I might feel the silver-dollar sized  
disc of the Host resting  
in shadow on my tongue.

Mine will be a life  
without redemption.



*The Ladies*  
Paul Davis

Jeremy Henthorn**Who's (BLEEP)-ing with Rufus**

It was a question he asked himself at 5:30 every morning, on his way to his job as the second-chair-bag-boy at Benny's World O'Stuff. It was a question he asked himself every time he fired up the 1979 Chevy Impala he had acquired from his uncle right before his uncle went in ten years on credit card fraud. It was a question he asked himself every night that he ended up alone, because every girl in town had seen THOSE pictures. It was a question he asked himself every time he entered his apartment complex, with its ragtag group of tenants who screamed and yelled in several different languages—the jury was still out on how many because Bulgarian and Romanian sounded so similar to Rufus.

It was a question he had been asking himself nearly everyday for two years. Two years ago when things went to shit. Then one day, all his questions were answered by a knock on the door.

Rufus was lying on the couch, just off of the early shift at Benny's. He was trying to relax and watch a television show about how *Moby Dick* contained cryptic phrases in clusters when he heard a knock on the door.

"I don't have the rent. I told you, I won't have till tomorrow so go bother one of the deadbeats you know isn't good for it." He yelled from his slouched position.

"I'm not your landlord, Mr. Salmons, but I'm going to need you to open the door regardless." The voice sounded mechanical.

"Look, I don't have any money for whatever bill it is you are trying to collect." He got off the couch and peered out the peephole to catch a glimpse of his visitor, but was unable to see anything.

"I'm not here to collect any money, Rufus."

"Well then what do you want?"

"We will only carry this conversation on if you open the door." The voice sounded as irritated as a mechanical voice could.

Rufus thought for a few minutes, cataloguing all the people he could think of that would want to speak to him. Regardless of how deep into the list he went, none of them that he could remember sounded like a robot. Finally, Rufus threw open his apartment door and put on his strongest scowl.

"Now what do you want?" Rufus looked around but no one was to be seen. Rufus stepped back and looked around his apartment.

"Another trick." He thought his eyes scanning for some kind of device some kind of spy equipment that had been planted as an elaborate joke. He thought about how stupid he had been.

"A robotic voice, and I fell for it." He was angry.

"Mr. Salmons?" The voice came again, "Down here."

Rufus looked down. There at the door, in a wheelchair, sat a man with a breathing tube and some sort of electronic speaker attached by wires to his throat.

"Who are you?" Rufus was taken aback; his tone was softer now.

"I'm the source of your problems," the man said. "May I come in?"

"Who did you say you were again?"

"The source of all your troubles."

"What? That's your name?"

"This may be a conversation we want to have inside, my voice—" the man patted a little black box on the right hand side of his chair with his finger, "kind of carries."

Rufus let the man in and immediately went into cleaning mode, brushing magazines off the coffee table and cat fur off the sofa. He even thought of asking the man if he wanted something to drink but he wasn't sure how the man went about taking liquids.

"No reason to clean things for me, Rufus."

Rufus looked a little embarrassed.

"It's just been a long time since I've had company." He said, cramming his hands in his pockets.

"Well, that's part of the reason I wanted to talk to you." The man zoomed his wheelchair back and forth.

Rufus stared at the man.

"Why, are you from one of those dating services or something?"

The man glanced at his chair, "I think they could have found someone a little more mobile for a door-to-door dating service job."

"Well, yeah, but I know how it works, you wheel in here and gimme your spiel. I feel sorry for you and buy whatever it is you're selling." Rufus said.

The man wheeled close. "Don't you ever feel sorry for me, Rufus." The words had only implied emotion. "You are the one in need of pity, not I." The man turned his chair away from Rufus.

"Look, I didn't mean to offend you but.... I'm just saying it'd be a good marketing tool..." Rufus became irritated. "No, you're not going to come into my apartment and scold me. Who are you and what do you want?" Rufus walked to face him.

"Very well." The man looked up at Rufus. "I want you to reach in my pocket and take what's in there out."

"Okay dude, you've definitely got the wrong apartment, I don't know what you've heard or what you've seen, but I'm not into that." Rufus took a step back.

"Heard or seen.... oh the pictures!" the man's eyes got wide. "I'd nearly forgotten about those." The man face muscles move into as much of a smile as they could—a look similar to a baby passing gas.

"Just reach in my pocket, then you'll understand." The man said.

"Do you have anything in there that is going to poke me?" Rufus asked.

"What, are you a cop or something? Just do it."

Rufus reached in with his head pulled back and to the side, face clinched, waiting for the...

It was a crumpled piece of paper, a page from the phonebook. Rufus glanced at it and saw that it was a page with his name. His name was circled in black marker.

"I'm sure you don't understand, but that piece of paper changed everything for you." The man moved forward. "Stick that back in my pocket, sir, and try not to grope me this time."

Rufus did just that. He had plenty of questions, but all of them would just allow the man to continue to speak in cryptic patterns. If there was one thing he did gain from his time running credit scams with his uncle it was that in a conversation, especially one where you're trying to get information, it was best to keep your mouth shut and see if the other would dig themselves a hole.

"What? No questions?" The man said.

"It was just a piece of paper and a name." Rufus said.

"Just a name, right, right, right." The man's eyes looked furious at first, then he seemed to stare off at nothing in particular. "I lost use of most of my body over three years ago. I was angry at the world, at God, at myself. Now most of the time people snap out of it; they find inspiration in their disability and go on as a shining beacon of courage."

"Like Christopher Reeve." Rufus said.

"Oh, you can just hold on about that guy. I met him at a fundraiser; he's a world-class prick, God rest his soul. The things that man will call you behind your chair would make Lenny Bruce blush and he's been dead for thirty years." The man's eyes dropped down as if he was deep in thought. "I never snapped out of being angry. I didn't get depressed though, I channeled my anger." The man moved his chair to the apartment window.

"In the past two years you've lost a job where you were making a great deal of money. Your uncle was found guilty of fraud; you've been fired so many times over the past two years you could barely get a job bagging groceries. You've lost your nice apartment, your girlfriend, and most people in town have seen pictures of you doing the limbo with the gay male dance review and have just assumed you swing that way too, making it hard to get a date." The man's chair turned in dramatic fashion.

Rufus's jaw fell open, his hands began to shake; some of what the man had said had been in the newspapers but much of it was his own private business.

"You want to know how I know all of that, don't you?" The man motored his chair back and forth slightly for dramatic effect.

Rufus stood silent; he would not give the man the satisfaction of inquiry.

"I know all of it because I made all of it happen." The man's eyes looked nervous, as if they were sizing up Rufus.

Rufus's face was turning red and his muscles were becoming agitated but he continued to stay still and silent.

"That's the reason for the paper. I picked your name out of a phone book." The man looked down, "I needed to take... THIS, out on someone." His eyes glanced at the chair.

"Why me?" Rufus's voice almost cracked.

"It was random, I just told you..."

"Bullshit, you can't even move around, how do you expect me to believe you're capable of that?" Rufus's voice rose.

"Have you ever heard of the wondrous-wavy shoe?"

"The what?"

"The wavy shoe," the man seemed irritated. "It's a shoe that has a thick gel sole that gently swishes across the bottom of your feet." He looked down in reflection. "It makes you feel like you're walking on water."

"Or standing in jelly." Rufus retorted. "I don't understand what that has to do with anything."

"I created the wondrous-wavy shoe. Now I am worth over a hundred million dollars." The man was moving his chair in reverse, away from Rufus. "It only cost me just over a quarter of a million to ruin you."

The words, though mechanical, ripped through Rufus. Few people in ever get to know what everything they've accomplished is worth. Most people would like to dream that their accomplishments and life are invaluable. This wheelchair-bound man had just disproved that to Rufus. Not only had he destroyed Rufus's life, but he was relatively frugal about it.

"I don't believe you." Rufus said.

"I'm not concerned if you believe me or not," the man said. "I came here for me." He paused for a second. "I need to let go of my anger over my unfortunate situation, I need to move on with my life." The man moved close. "I've decided to stop our little game. I've come here to give you back the control of your life."

"Your unfortunate situation? What about mine?" Rufus was now yelling.

"I want to know something first though, something before I leave. I want to know how it feels to know that your life is going to be in your hands again," the man said, a fire of excitement in his eyes. "You've got a second chance; you've lost everything and now get a chance to rebuild." The man's eyes were an inferno. "Tell how that feels!"

"How much of your body can you feel?" Rufus softly asked.

"I have some sensation in my arms but mostly just my face." The man seemed taken back by the question.

Rufus punched the wheelchair-bound man right in the face. Hard enough to jolt the wheelchair but not hard enough to knock it over.

His scream sounded like grating two tin sheets across each other.

Rufus rubbed his hand. He had only hit a few people in his life and half of them were by accident.

"I feel better." Rufus said. "Now get out."

"Wait," the voice was weak. "There is something else you need to know,"

The man shook cobwebs for his head with the limited motor function he had available.

"You need to understand that no one is going to believe you. You can't sue me and get everything back, your credibility is ruined and I'm a cripple which makes me jury-sympathy gold." The man said. "No, you'll have to start

from scratch, that's the whole point of this."

"I don't want anything from you, fella, except for an understanding." Rufus said.

"What kind of understanding?"

"An understanding that if I ever see you again it's over for you.

Cripple or not, if I see you again—it's your ass." Rufus smiled. "I want you to know that as bad as you have it, if we meet again things will be much, much worse."

The wheelchair bound man moved away.

"Now get out."

Rufus listened to the sound of the motor as the man zoomed down the sidewalk. He suddenly wished that he had lived on the second floor. He wished that man had to ask him for help. He knew exactly what he'd do. He'd take him halfway down; absorbing the praise the man would douse him in for helping him after everything that had happened. He'd apologize for all the wrongs he'd cause Rufus. Rufus would just nod his head and methodically move the wheelchair down stair to stair. Then he'd stop and leave his ass there. He'd stick that invalid eight steps up. Then he'd go to the top and wait for the rain that the weatherman promised. Then he'd watch the man get drenched, crying out metal pleas for help. Rufus began to chuckle, at this time, nothing seemed funnier and more satisfying than a wet cripple.

By the time Rufus came back to reality, the man had gone just as self sufficiently as he had arrived. He walked back into his living room and sat down on the couch. His mind had become a tumbling bin of regrets over the past two years. Everyday he would sit down and try to figure out what exactly he had done to have this happen. Or what he could have said differently to make sure THAT didn't happen. He had believed in fate, he had believed in divine intervention—he almost had to. He had to have reasons and it was much easier to believe that either fate or God had it out for him and that he was the helpless victim of a celestial practical joke. But then the tumbling bin would start and out would pop a regret. He was sorry he had not simply told Mary that she was beautiful. He was sorry he hadn't joined the army and learned some kind of discipline or routine. He was sorry that he had listened to his uncle when he said, "No one gets caught running these scams." He was sorry that the tumbler was so full.

It had all changed now. On just another early, spring day, with the rain clouds coming in, he had learned that it wasn't divine intervention. He wasn't that important. His regrets were nothing but figments of his imagination that helped him make sense of things. There was no sense to be made. The truth is a wheelchair bound multi-millionaire had picked him out of a hat as the victim in his own personal war with God. The truth is that fate is as random as picking a name out of the phone book.

Rufus leaned back on the creaky couch and flipped on the television. The station came to life on some bald dude with a paunch and a mustache looking at the camera and pointing.

"It's time you take back your life," the accent sounded one generation removed from Deliverance.

Rufus smiled, got up from the couch and got his phone book from the kitchen counter. He plopped back down and rested the rather large volume by his side. He took a deep breath, then another.

He closed his eyes.

Flipped the phone book open.

And picked one.

Jennifer Immel**Zupha Bread**

*Let us break bread together on our knees  
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Her body rocks  
as she kneads the mound of warm dough  
on the old towel, scattered with  
flour  
Pausing, she wipes a clump of hair  
Away from her face and  
sighs

hands on her hips and red-faced  
she turns to me  
*baby, I need a break*

and I flour my palms  
and squeeze the dough  
feeling its life  
as it inhales and exhales though my  
fingers

and she's tired now from the strain  
of teaching me to prepare thanksgiving  
while she still can  
so she naps and I watch the bread rise  
while her body sinks into  
sleep

and in an hour she wakes  
and we braid the dough  
into a loaf and paint it with milk  
for shine  
and we look at each other,  
the bread and us.

## Waking Westerville

September is rigid and the town yawns wide and long this  
Thursday, as I turn my collar up and walk down  
State Street. I'm jolted  
by the near miss of a newspaper  
slapping the storefront next to me, where a mannequin stares at the dangling  
fire escape across College Avenue, remembering when she  
graced a boutique window  
instead of a consignment shop with dusty tumblers and  
chipped crystal. The bull dog lady stops and  
stares at us  
and I know that all day he pirouettes though her mind and she  
habitually touches her heart as if her pain is physical.  
A man, tired-looking and rumped  
holds his cigarette like a joint and sucks though his teeth, then flicks  
the butt near my feet. Is everything in this world  
burned and  
trampled,  
left for dead?  
The lamppost's shadow stretches for the road, jealous of his  
Brother, chasing a fast Chevrolet and  
the blue trim of the house matches my shirt  
but the yellow siding is all wrong. It is 10:23 and I turn my face  
from the sun.

### Cedarville To Westerville in an Altima, 2 am.

even on the cusp of an October night  
in the middle-of-nowhere, Ohio  
fifty-some miles away from any significant town,  
the night is not quite nightish enough for me

because the sky is not black or navy  
but a rich blue,  
the color that I used to crayon in the ocean in the first grade  
and I somehow feel cheated as I'm driving  
because I realize I have never seen a black night

I can't wish on a star  
because they've all surrendered for the evening,  
probably tucked out  
from wishes flung skyward  
that crash with gut-sickening impact

all I can see this night is the moon,  
frothy and milky, cloaked in the violated atmosphere  
hidden more and more each evening  
behind its blanket of self-pity  
and it doesn't have time for girls like me

see, it's hard to drive away from you  
channeled by my compass that doesn't know  
Albany from Albuquerque

especially when the night won't even meet me halfway.



*Night Club*  
Paul Davis

## Mary Teaford

### Jelly Beans

Characters:

*Molly is the Mother's Helper. She is about twenty, thin, quiet, and pretty in a conservative, perfectionistic sort of way. She has brown hair pulled back in a slick ponytail, perfectly ironed casual clothes, and very short nails.*

*Chuck is a friend of the family. He is about sixteen, tall and knobby, with fashionably messy blond hair. He is wearing his prep-school clothes and a pair of hideously ugly sneakers.*

*Tess is a dancer, close to twenty, a cousin of the family. She is short, blonde, cute and innocent-looking as a kitten, but every move she makes is highly suggestive. She is wearing pedal-pushers and a pink tank top.*

*Matthew is Mrs. M's son, Molly's charge. He is a boy of three, chubby, red, and healthy-looking. He is wearing cowboy boots and a gun holster over a pair of footy pajamas.*

*The setting is a modern living room. Upstage left is a door from which the characters enter and exit. Beside the door is a small kitchen table, covered in messy leftovers from breakfast and one large, prominent bowl of standard, cheap, jelly beans. A few inches of wall are visible, covered in finger paintings. Upstage right is another door, open, blocked with a baby gate. Center stage is a large couch on a faded rug. Two laundry baskets are on the floor, one marked "Matthew," the other marked "Jessica." Garish toys are scattered on the floor. On the couch is Molly, a pile of socks in her lap, a fat used textbook on the cushion in front of her. Enter Chuck.*

Chuck. Hey Molly!

Molly. Hey what? I thought you were in school.

Chuck. It's only study hall... and then gym. They won't miss me. I'll go back after lunch.

Molly. Well, keep it down. I just got Jessica to sleep.

Chuck. Where's Matthew?

Molly. Watching "Noggin," thank Heaven. I can get these socks mated before Mrs. M. gets back.

Chuck. *(Nervously)* When'll she be back?

Molly. Not for a few hours.

*(Chuck jumps on the couch and shoves Molly's feet to the floor. Socks fly. He clicks a remote at the audience. Blue flickering lights reflect off his face. SFX: muffled speech.)*

Molly. *(sarcastic)* Why don't you come in? Have a seat.

*(Enter Tess. Chuck jumps nervously, sees that it isn't who he thinks, and settles down. Tess brings the bowl of jelly beans into the room and sits on the floor. )*

Tess. Hey, Molly. Hi Chuck. Where's Aunt Mary Beth?

Molly. Running errands. Chuck, this is disgusting. Change it.

Chuck. You're so sensitive lately! What's the deal?

*(Chuck clicks the remote. SFX change to a warm, comforting classical theme song, gradually melting into an enthusiastic woman's voice. Chuck pulls out a deck of cards and begins aimlessly shuffling.)*

Tess. Jelly bean?

Molly. No thanks.

Tess. Queasy? *(Molly glares)*

Chuck. There's a virus going around. Thanks. *(Tess offers him a handful)* No, not the black ones. I hate black ones.

Tess. Racist.

Chuck. I do *not* hate black jelly beans because of their color! I hate them because of their culture.

Tess. Oh, you. Whatcha reading, Mol?

Molly. Some modern European poetry. It's for school.

Tess. Your classes don't start for a week!

Molly. I want to get ahead.

Chuck. I hate modern poetry. Those long ones that read like stories? (*In a nasal, snobby voice*) "I loved my love. So I stabbed him in the face. Twenty times. With a paper clip. And kept his liver. In a pickle jar. The blandishment is over."

Molly. That's pretty much it. Hey, what is this show?

Tess. A cooking show.

Molly. Cooking what? A wet haystack?

Chuck. Maybe it's onions.

Tess. Look out, she's gonna taste it. Oh, yuck! It's brains! I know it's brains! Get it off! (*Remote clicks, blue lights and SFX off.*)

Molly. Oh... help. (*Holds her stomach, reels a little*)

Chuck. She's gonna hurl!

Molly. (*Collecting herself*) No... no. I'm fine now. So... how are things, Tess?

Tess. Rotten. My boyfriend's moving out.

Molly. I thought he moved out last month.

Tess. We made up. But this time it's for real... Tim and I are together now. You don't mind, do you?

Molly. Nah, we broke up months ago. Turns out he wasn't my type.

Chuck. Pick a card, Mol.

Molly. Ten of spades.

Chuck. Okay, now cut the deck anywhere. (*Molly does.*) Now you pick a card.

Tess. Jack of diamonds. Honestly, Molly, what do I do wrong?

Molly. You let them live with you.

Tess. Oh, come on.

Chuck. Now, I'll shuffle the deck. Okay, now here's the top card!

Tess. It's a three of hearts.

Chuck. Plus one, two, three, and the third card is—

Molly. Five of spades. Get off my socks!

Tess. How do you plan to get a boyfriend in college with that attitude?

Molly. I've had enough boyfriends.

Tess. You can't stop seeing guys, Molly. People will think you're...

Molly. They can think whatever they want!

Chuck. Okay, I've got it. Now, pick the top card.

Molly. It's an ace of hearts.

Chuck. Ta-da! Not only did your card come to the top, it turned into the ace of hearts! But that's not all!

Tess. Yes it is! *(Throws a black jelly bean at him.)* Molly, you don't have to act like such a prude in front of us.

Molly. *(Warning)* Tess! Chuck, I said get off!

*(Matthew appears behind the baby gate.)*

Matthew. Molly?

Molly. I'm coming. *(Lifts him over the baby gate.)* What've you got there? A doll? What's his name?

Matthew. Guy.

Molly. Oh. Now, your Mommy said you should have quiet time for another half hour. Why aren't you watching your shows?

Matthew. *(Proud)* I made a BM.

Molly. *(Sudden realization)* Ugh! Oh, great.

Tess. Let me change him for you!

Molly. Not you! You'll get it everywhere. Chuck, you've got a baby brother.

Chuck. Let Tess do it.

Molly. No way! I'd be cleaning it out of the ceiling fan. You owe me one. Go clean him up.

Chuck. Okay, okay! (*Exit over the gate. Sfx: distant bathtub filling. Pause.*)

Tess. So... you saw the doctor yesterday?

Molly. Yes.

Tess. And... when are you going back?

Molly. I... I can't go back. I'm sorry.

Tess. What?

Molly. I can't do it! I just can't!

Tess. What do you mean, you can't? What choice do you have?

Molly. I felt it moving!

Tess. Like Hell you did! It's way too early. There's nothing down there. We talked about this.

Molly. I didn't... I didn't know what it was like!

Tess. He can't help you, you know.

Molly. I don't want his help!

Tess. Why can't you just get it over with?

Molly. It's a baby, Tess. I felt it moving. It's a baby!

Tess. It is not! Listen, just go back. If you keep it you'll ruin everything.

Molly. What hasn't already been ruined?

Tess. What about Tim? People are going to put two and two together. You weren't seeing anyone else.

Molly. Tim? Of course, that's what you care about. Don't wreck his reputation. Is that it?

Tess. It was a mistake. He made a stupid mistake and now you can make it go away. Can't you do that for him? Why do you want him to suffer? You can't hurt everyone like this!

Molly. I can't do it now! Damn it, I felt it move!

Tess. Bitch! (*pause*) You'll make a horrible mother.

Molly. Please! Tess, please don't.

Tess. How are you going to tell your parents? (*coldly*) Oh, that's right. You don't care what anyone thinks of you... you don't care what Mrs. M. will do when her babysitter starts *showing*. Or what everyone at school will think of little Molly!

Molly. Shut up! I've thought of all that! I'm terrified! But... I felt it move. It's alive in there. It's...

Tess. I've had it with trying to help you, Molly! You're on your own! (*exits.*)

Molly. (*Holds her stomach*) Dear God, I wish I was on my own... oh, God!

Chuck. (*Entering with a soaked Matthew in a big white t-shirt.*) I just put him in the sink. Here you go, buddy!

Matthew. Jelly beans!

Chuck. What's wrong? (*Turns on TV. SFX: upbeat music, possibly an exercise video.*) Molly, what happened? Where's Tess?

Molly. My God... I can't do it.

Chuck. (*Reaches to steady her*) What's the matter with you? (*Hands on her waist; sits her down.*) Omigod! What's that! (*Lets go, starts back.*)

Molly. (*Half-laughing*) It's a baby. It... it really is. It's a baby.

Chuck. A... a what? What's going on?

Molly. Well... I'm pregnant, Chuck.

Chuck. *(Goes through a wide range of facial expressions, from confusion to a dawn of sheer horror to a cloudburst of little nervous stammers)* Y-y-y-You are?

Molly. Yes.

Chuck. Pregnant.

Molly. Yes, I am. What do you say to that?

Chuck. Like, you're going to have a kid.

Molly. Yes.

Chuck. *(terrified, swallows, pauses, continues.)* Oh. Well... congratulations.

Molly. What?

Chuck. Congratulations. Do you need anything?

Molly. What would I need?

Chuck. I don't know. On TV they always want pickles and ice cream.

Molly. I... I can't believe you.

Chuck. What's not to believe?

Molly. How are you taking this so well?

Chuck. Well... I... I like babies. You do too, don't you?

Molly. Well... of course I do.

Chuck. Do you want a heating pad or something? Can we tell Mrs. M?

Molly. Yeah... yeah, we will when she gets here. But you'll be back at school by then.

Chuck. I'd rather stick around. *(Very cautiously, like handling a firecracker, he sits next to her.)* If that's okay.

Molly. Thanks... You know, I would like some ice cream.

Chuck. We'll get some. Start with a jelly bean.

*(Music fades slowly out as curtain drops.)*

Kristina Pace**The Woods**

Behind him the trees watched in silence;  
no one knows of the glowing window that called  
him through the doorway of the December sky.  
That entrance; that tree, its skin peeling at the seams of old age and  
animosity.  
A figure asked him why he came here and held the scissors  
in candlelight.  
He waited for the next approaching tree to catch fire.  
"I seek death not by choice;  
death needs no fingers.  
I come in to sever its limbs;  
Tear down the hideaway of old memories.  
Take its apples as it never intends to let go.  
Come aboard and view the universe.  
Collide against the darkness.  
Sometimes you see a sliver of light;  
please don't be afraid."

## The town in which I stand

The sun beams down upon  
the clustered street and  
stretches its arms into the mist  
of the morning while  
the shadows dissipate into  
another dimension untethered  
by loneliness and animosity.  
Gnarled into one town they linger  
in the fog of the morning.  
Stretched into life's beauty  
Shouting out to those who cannot hear them;  
The trees reach towards the heavens  
Waiting to be released from the uneven earth  
That traps them.  
Stretched between heaven and hell  
They wait to pick apart the sky  
To shatter it into thousands of pieces.  
Antiques shine in the mornings mist  
While plants climb down to touch the darkness  
Cast down by a row of gallant trees.  
A woman not far from here  
Picks apart a pastry  
And hands it to her son.  
She speaks of the traffic and  
The plans she has today.  
Two little children sit beside her  
Waiting for another part of her cookie  
Dangling their feet to and fro as they wait patiently.  
Feeding their food to the birds  
They sit wondering about the large moving vehicles  
That pass them by in a constant motion and  
Listen to the trucks screech their brakes  
And the loud people talking to each other  
On the corner of State and Main.  
Growing tired of the hot sun  
The two children chase the leaves  
That jump and dance in the shadows  
Of the cool uptown sidewalks.  
All day the woman travels about the streets  
In search if something she needs  
In search of something new.  
Dead leaves fall along the ground  
As they continue down the street

Toward the flower shops and antiques on the corner.  
Looking at the old dresses people once wore  
To weddings and parties that ended in nightfall  
They stop to admire the striped vases that are  
Displayed in the windowsills.  
Turning the corner now, they disappear into a shop of exotic flowers.  
Sitting on the bench  
Now in front of the bakery  
I look down the streets at the old empty buildings  
That wait to be opened, and watch the long corridors of brick walls  
Fade into the distant sunlight once again.  
Stores of decorations of the seasons and furniture made  
by men from distant lands paste the streets in an awe of wonder.  
It is here that they linger over the thick paved road that lays heavy lines  
That divide one side from the other.  
Across from me a woman sits picking apart the clouds in the sky  
As if she were somewhere else in time.  
Just beyond her in the distance a slender figure stands.  
Black silk placed upon her head  
She shakes in the sun's face as its  
Flawless beauty is engulfed by the brilliant sunlight.  
Woven from dusk it's placed gently  
Upon the warmth of her small almond shaped eyes.  
Here I sit now across the wide street  
Wondering about life and if I will raise a family here one day.  
Now it's just a thought in my mind  
As I sit along the sidewalk in my easy chair,  
Waiting for more people to pass me by.  
Waiting for a miracle.



*The Mission*  
Amanda Helmrich

Amanda Hinds

## poem in two parts

## I.

silence abounds  
ear-piercing  
deafening

not even  
the faint sound

of a watch  
ticking steadily along  
to its eventual death

## II.

i vaguely notice a butterfly  
float in front of me

everything in slow motion  
fading like a music box  
that has wound down

beautiful ballerina  
who is sick of pleasing others  
and perhaps would like

a nap

and to rest her feet awhile

Jeremy Henthorn**Labor Pains**

Characters:

Meg, a.k.a Megan Galloway, *the pregnant wife*

Rusty, *a soda machine vendor, is dressed in a maintenance uniform.*

Joseppi Galloway, *the magician husband*

Paramedic

Man

*The curtain stays down for a couple of seconds and we hear some panting, huffing and screams of pain. As the curtain comes up Rusty speaks on a phone.*

Rusty. Hello? Yes, I need an ambulance at the Jersey Shore Motel in Fairfield... Well there's a woman in labor here.

*The curtain rises up all the way and we see the inside of a rather modest hotel room. On the bed lies a very pregnant Meg Galloway. Rusty puts the phone down to his chest.*

Rusty. Ma'am, your name please.

Meg. It's Megan Galloway but the last name's about to change with my no-good husband in God knows where while I'm having his (*contraction*) BABBBBYYYYY!

Rusty. (*To the phone*) Her name is Megan Galloway. It's umm... Room 27 I think. Okay... All right... Goodbye.

*Rusty hangs up the phone.*

Rusty. The doctors are on their way. (*He begins to leave.*)

Meg. Wait! Where are you going?

Rusty. I'm going to wait outside. I don't know anything about babies.

Meg. You can't just leave me here!

Rusty. I'm not really qualified for this kind of thing. I just fix Coke machines. The ambulance people said they'd be here any minute.

Meg. What's your name?

Rusty. It's Rusty ma'am. (*He points to his sewn-on nametag.*)

Meg. Well Rusty, we might not have that long until... (contraction) Look do you have two hands?

Rusty. Yes ma'am.

Meg. And can you reach my crotch?

Rusty. I think so.

Meg. Well then that makes you infinitely more qualified than me right now to get this thing out of my body!

*Meg has a heavy contraction.*

Rusty. Okay, okay, what do you want me to do?

Meg. Just make sure that it doesn't land on its head or get choked by the umbilical if I happen to deliver before that ambulance gets here.

Rusty. Okay, I can do that.

*Rusty just stands, fairly far away from Meg and fidgets with his hands.*

Meg. Now's not the time to be modest, Rusty. I'm going to need you to get between my legs and see what's going on down there.

*Rusty walks over and kneels between Meg's legs. He peers as if he is looking quite a distance.*

Rusty. I don't see anything. I think you're good.

*Meg has a contraction. Rusty leans back.*

Rusty. Whoa...

Meg. What's wrong?

Rusty. Nothing, I just wasn't expecting you to be trying.

Meg. I can't really help it, fella.

*We hear whistling coming from off stage. Enter Joseppi, a man in his early forties dressed in a lime-green greatcoat with rhinestones and a matching bandanna. He is very drunk, a boisterous drunk.*

Joseppi. A magnificent performance it was! Worthy of one by the name of Joseppi the Magnificent.

Meg. How redundant.

Joseppi. (to Rusty) Who are you?

Rusty. I'm Rusty.

Joseppi. Rusty, do you mind if I ask you a question?

Rusty. No sir.

Joseppi. Why are your hands between my wife's legs?

Meg. I'm giving birth, you stone!

Joseppi. My God!

Rusty. The doctor's on his way but if he doesn't get here in time, I'm going to catch the baby.

Joseppi. How noble. (*walks over trying to comfort Meg. She makes every effort to keep him away.*) Don't worry Meg, I'm here to help now. Ev-vveerrrythinggg is going to be just fi.... (*looks down at the bed, horrified.*)

Joseppi. On the sheets? We'll have to pay the dry cleaning for those!

Meg. Well, I couldn't really think about that!

Joseppi. How inconsiderate!

Meg. Inconsiderate? You want to talk about inconsiderate! I've been calling your phone for the past two hours and got nothing.

Joseppi. I was performing!

Meg. I called the theater. They said you ran out 5 minutes into the show!

Joseppi. It was a disappearing act!

Rusty. Maybe I should go now.

Meg. No, Rusty, you stay, I need one man I can count on here!

*Meg lets out a scream of pain.*

Joseppi. Can you keep it down! You'll wake the neighbors.

Meg. *(yelling)* I'M IN LABOR!

Joseppi. Well, I work hard too and I don't feel the need to raise my voice.

Rusty. Yeah, I'm going to go.

*Meg lets out another grunt/scream.*

Rusty. Oh my... I can see the head!

Joseppi. You can?

*Joseppi walks over to Rusty and looks. He looks disgusted and amazed.*

Joseppi. Well that's better than the ass.... Right?

Rusty. Ok Meg, we've got to do this now.

*Joseppi looks out the window.*

Joseppi. I can see sirens right now; just hold on to that thing for a few more minutes!

Rusty. It's too late for that... Meg, PUSH!

Joseppi. Oh, that's just gross.

Meg. *(screaming)* Ahh...

Rusty. Here it comes!

*Meg lets out one last push and the lights fade. There is a loud THUMP in the darkness. A baby cries. The lights come up and Rusty is holding a baby and Joseppi is lying unconscious on the floor.*

Rusty. I think your husband fain....

Meg. My baby...

*The siren lights are more prominent now.*

Rusty. He's fine.

Meg. A boy?

Rusty. Yes ma'm... Oh... Um...

Meg. Is something wrong?

Rusty. It's so little.

Meg. Well don't blame me. My husband's Irish.

*Fade Out.*

*Fade In: Moments Later*

*Meg and Joseppi are being put into an ambulance on gurneys. Two paramedics are assisting. At the side of the stage is a pop machine that is opened with several cans on the ground. This was the machine Rusty was working on before.*

Paramedic. What happened to this guy?

Meg. He fainted.

Joseppi. *(in a weak voice)* I have low blood sugar.

Paramedic. And a weak constitution. Come on, let's load the mother and Mr. Fragile here up.

Rusty. *(As they are being loaded.)* So, have you thought of a name for him yet?

Meg. I have.

Joseppi. Joseppi Jr., a rightful heir.

Meg. I'm naming him after the only man who has ever been a help in his short life.

Rusty. The ambulance guy?

Meg. Sorry, the FIRST man who has ever been a help in his life.

*Meg holds up the child.*

Meg. Meet Rusty Jr.

Rusty. Oh my.

Joseppi. What?! You're going to name him after this pop jockey!

Meg. As opposed to a washed-up magician with a gambling and alcohol problem? Yes.

Paramedic. Are you going to continuing screaming like that sir?

Joseppi. I'm distressed!

*The Paramedic gives Joseppi a shot.*

Joseppi. Ow! What was that?

Paramedic. A cure for my future headache.

*Joseppi begins to lose consciousness.*

Joseppi. Rusty, what a silly name, we're not done talking about this... I'll...  
Fight... You ....tooth and...nai.....

*Joseppi loses consciousness.*

Paramedic. Okay ma'am, we're ready to go.

Meg. (to Rusty) You can come see him whenever you want. And Rusty...  
Thank you for being there.

*The door closes and the ambulance leaves.*

Rusty. A baby, named after me, it's all truly full of surprises, isn't it?

*Man enters the stage and walks up to the open soda machine.*

Man. Hey guy, is this pop free?

Rusty. Today it is my friend, today it is.

*Fade to Black.*

Lisa Lopez Swansinger

**Peacoat of Cream**

She stood  
in her peacoat of cream  
a freckled faced little angel

her hair an auburn sunset  
caramel gloves to match  
embroidered by a mother she never knew.

This life spirit stood,  
her father's strong sculptured hand  
softened in hers.

She anticipated the coach  
perhaps it was the *vendedor*

with his pots and pans, yellow maize,  
and for a light skinned girl with freckles,  
. . . a caramel or two.

As the dust cloud whirled into a distant tumbleweed,  
her anticipation grew  
would he bring a *muneca*— a doll made of straw,  
or a blanket she'd turn into a tent.

As she anxiously waited,  
she looked up the huge expanse of her father,  
up his land worked legs  
the broad stream of his shoulders  
to the grey creased lines of his young face.

She studied the contour of his age  
a man of thirty—his white skin tanned from the sun.

He was beautiful  
and she loved him so.

His eyes were *dead* serious, as they so often were in the mountain—  
when he gathered their stray cattle  
when he tamed the wild horses for the neighbors' ranches  
And like the many times he hunted the stalker of his prized *animales*.

He was serious like the time her sister  
knelt her down in an ant hill and made her sing "Cielito Lindo."

He was *that* serious,  
and she could not remember what she had done  
to make him that way.

As the coach approached  
 she saw the lines of his face turn down toward the sullen ground.  
 She knew he felt her gaze  
 but he avoided her.  
 She did not dare ask  
 she loved him, but she respected him more.

The coach came to a halt in front of them  
 it was different than before.  
 His grasp strengthened for a long moment  
 almost crushing her,  
 but sooner than it came,  
 it loosened.

When she saw her aunt step out of the city coach, her hair in a hat and matching gloves,  
 she panicked.  
 She looked at her father  
 her little eyes begging, "*Papa, Nooooo.*"  
 I'll be good, Ray and I won't cause any problems. *Por favor, Papi.*"

He kissed his sister's cheek in a respectful and appropriate way  
 as the little girl pulled back, never letting go of his hand.

Her favorite aunt's eyes beamed at her with love —the love of a mother  
 But it would not replace the loving presence of her father's hand.

He picked her up  
 she screamed, "*Nooooooooo, Papa, Nooooooooo!*"  
 Caterpillar tears welling up in her little baby eyes.

He placed her in the coach reprimanding her to mind him.

In defiance  
 she tore off her Peacoat and the soft bonnet that had held her  
 perfect little braids in place

and she screamed and screamed  
 horrible childhood tears.

And as the coach rolled away from her father  
 Aunt Tere softly said, "*No llores, Mija.*" And she held her gently  
 rocking her across her bosom  
 where her kind heart beat for the little girl  
 she would soon raise as her own.

Josh Bradley**Home**

on the wall  
 a mud-streaked tree  
     is painted  
     its  
         dead leaves sprinkled 'bout  
                     their acrid scent lounges  
                 over  
 asphalt crumbs that  
     stare  
         helpless  
             into the steady sun  
                 to soon rise under  
                     a tidal wave church tower  
                         tiny gold chips  
                     unconcerned  
                 with cigarette butts  
             make a yellow-bricked road  
 a makeshift eternity  
     so  
     as an almost  
     lost  
     school of gold fish  
         forming frozen gold river currents  
                 they  
             can scrape away  
                 with the breeze  
             back  
         to the dry fingers  
             waving from home

## 1347 in 2004

The first time our street was  
empty

Black Death  
started playing in traffic,  
writhing a marrow morrow-less  
skeleton dance  
with smiles inevitable  
strips of clothes streaming  
as wild cars swerved by

The second time,  
Black Death came dancing  
there were no cars to swerve past

only two old men in red checkered flannel who played calm  
chess on the street corner

they nodded  
to the ceramic  
carousel horse's smile  
still leering hysterical

The third time,  
Black Death came singing with a wind

and stopped at the vacant chess table  
pieces in mid-game and centered in their gray squares,  
it stood between the sides and rested one hand upon each corner  
as if curious  
about

the echoes its drumming fingers made

down the  
empty street

about the pieces so carefully  
placed

about the game so carefully  
played



*Back to Sanskrit*  
Lauren Suveges

Jessica Faulkner**Encircling**

Black tattoo encircles the stark simplicity of my pallid arm  
Much like your warm darkness wraps around  
My reed-like waist  
Grayscale contacts confused darkness  
I smile at both patterns  
On my arm and waist

Unseen rain comforts the bone-white windowpane  
Running smooth and ample, soothing its  
Wooden uncertainty  
A secret cycle gently builds  
I am cradled in its circle

I miss the rain nearly everyday  
I forget its steady, stoic serenity  
Its laughter pattering the walls  
Its trailing shadow stalking the halls of  
My depth

Fading tattoo shadows the transparency of my reddened skin  
Much like I can feel the mark of an awkward lock around  
My shallow waist  
Doubt shouts over lonely rests  
I shake in all conquests:  
Real faces and imaginary life

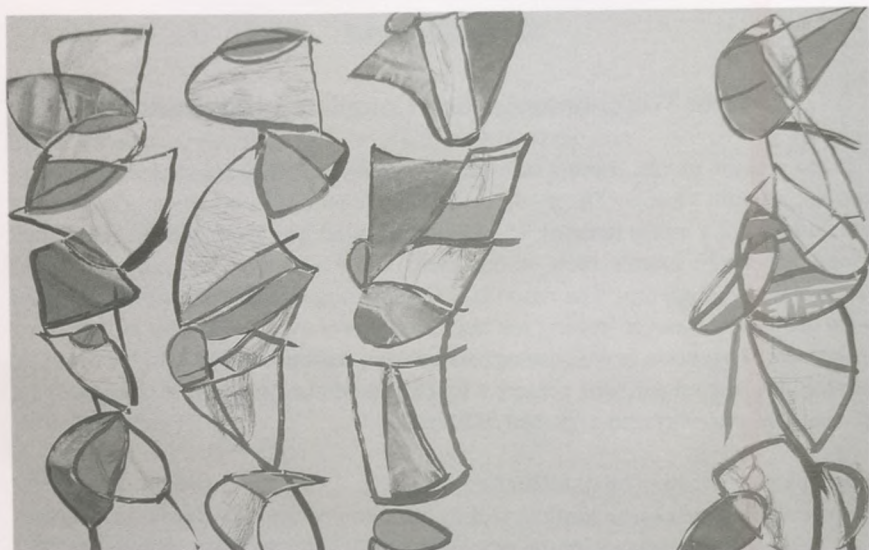
Frozen rain contorts the dreamy, dormant chain  
Scalding, scorned, and simple; sifting its blunder  
An idiot's request  
Secret lovers slowly raze  
I am trapped in this circle  
I see the snow nearly every day  
I forget your mood so slovenly  
Your talk dispelling the gloom  
Your failing silhouette passing in favor of  
the real me

Nick DeFazio**Near Weightlessness and Complete Lifelessness**

I gaze up at the moon, shining like the snow, maybe even a mirror image of snow, I wouldn't know. The moon is the white chocolate on a melting sundae—the emblem of a world thawing in its own transgression. And the stars. How the moon just sits so submissively among them, sometimes even wishing upon them when it has a tough day. The moon is understanding and relaxed, sharing the sky with the sun, and never fretting nor becoming upset over something as intrusive as comets. The moon is welcoming. Sometimes an angel or two will become bored with heaven and will venture a few miles southeast to the moon. They're given a place to stay and even bed 'n breakfast.

I don't know whether I will be drafted to heaven. I suppose getting in would plague me with the same shallow feeling I encounter when I achieve something that I cheated on. Heaven for me would be a white lie, and I would prefer white chocolate. Anyway, I haven't considered how it would feel to live on the moon, because essentially I'm able to retreat to my own means of isolation here, which is often criticized as behavior that is "abnormal" or "antisocial." But even here, there is always so much noise. How would it feel to age in silence, serenity, oblivion? How would it feel to exist (or better yet not exist) in nothingness? I would be unaccountable for the stars burning up around me.

Considering that the government is spending most of our tax dollars on sprouting orange construction barrels in the middle of highways and on constructing missiles with the capability of melting an increasing number of starving civilians, I'm not relying on NASA to construct a rocket capable of fulfilling my dreams anytime soon. I'll probably be right here tomorrow. Yet what could be better than lying dead on the moon? What kind of 'Rest in Peace' would I actually attain? Without decomposition, I would remain as I always have: only lacking a pulse and a soul. On the moon, I may be floating in a slender streak of gravity or I may be obscured face down in a sandy crater. Either way, I would be The Face on the Moon, and I would be a few miles closer to heaven.



*Brice*  
Jon Juravich

Mary Teafor**Eating Tangerines while Contemplating Childhood Trauma**

I have to bite the skin because I have no nails.

There's a rubber-bitter rush

that sticks to the tongue

like a dirty word

and makes a film.

Then I pull off sections,

soaking the keyboard in a slimy spray

that turns my fingers

jaundice yellow.

Then comes the juice

and the pang of guilt

that's come with a sweet taste

ever since they first called me a pig.

They never let me eat in peace.

## I Come From the Cathedral

I come from the cathedral,  
slung over Daddy's massive,  
steel-gray shoulder,  
wondering  
at the organ pipes.

I wonder if they are solemn men,  
and why their eyes are all squeezed shut,  
and why they always frown.  
I wonder if the music hurts them  
when it bursts up from their throats  
and if the priest would stop them  
if they tried to bite me.

I wonder at the statues,  
the Blessed Virgin as a child,  
and if she's really marble,  
and if her hair is blond like mine,  
and if she'll come and play with me  
and if the priest will mind.

I wonder at the great stone pillars,  
and if they're really made of sand,  
and if they taste like sugar,  
and if my arms were long enough,  
if I could hold them all around  
and make the walls shake—  
and if I'd have to stop again  
if the priest saw me.

I stick my tongue out—  
not for spite—  
at the ladies in the pew behind.  
I think they smile.  
I come from the cathedral.

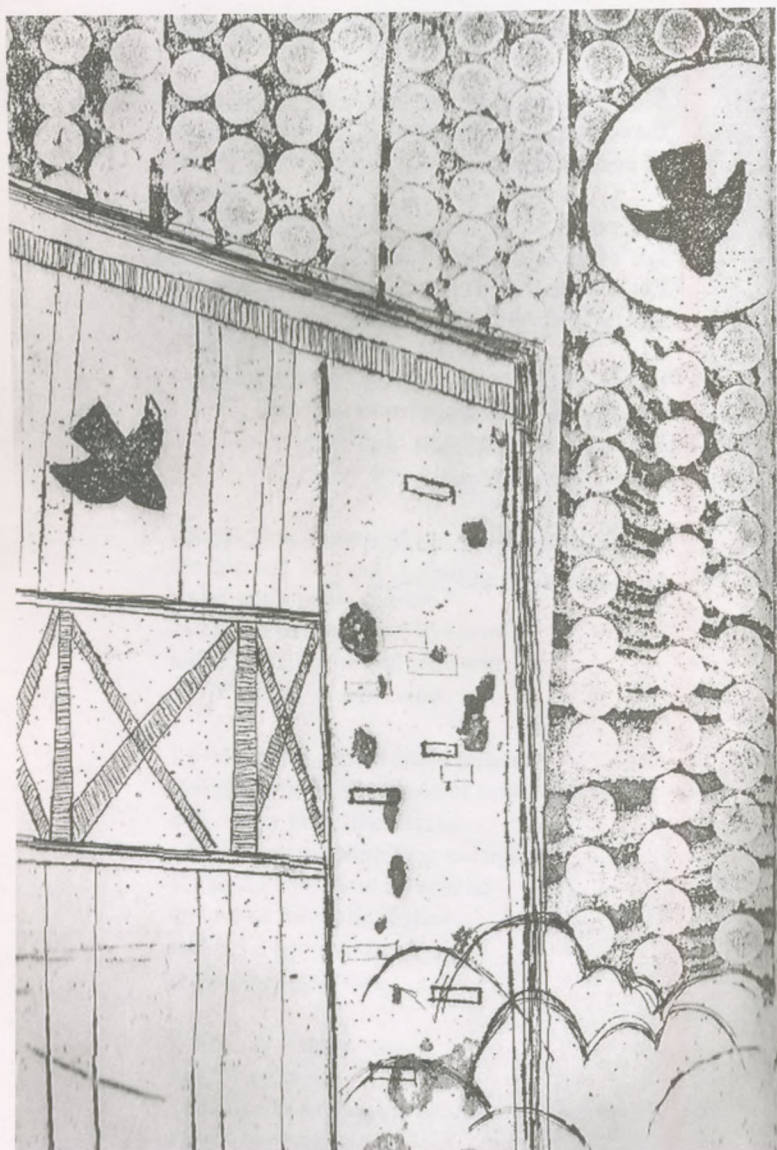
**Invitation**

They say that Time and Space are all the same.  
they say they're shaped like circles  
or upside-down bowls.

Let's us two go and find the edge of nothing.  
Let's hike to the spot where Space becomes Time.  
Let's see the stars bead up like raindrops  
and fall into True Space with the ages.

Let's us two find my birthday,  
soaking up a sea of stars  
with the very first April  
and the Ides of March.

They say that Time and Space are all the same.  
Let's us two go and prove it's so.



*JIT Sketch: The Chapel*  
Jon Juravich

## Sarah Grooms

### A Tale of Pirates

Gwen told herself that she should write ten pages of a story by the end of the day and at eight o'clock in the evening, she wasn't surprised at the blank computer screen in front of her. She just sighed and turned on her radio, plopping down and staring up at the ceiling from her bed. The yellow street light outside was shining through the tilted blinds and tracing lines on the walls, the beams bending at the corners of the room. She lay motionless on the bed, exhausted with frustration. She turned up the music to drown out her thoughts.

"Gwen! Turn that music off! I'm trying to read down here."

"Sorry Mom, I'll turn it down." Gwen didn't have the energy at the moment to argue about what was too loud.

"No, I said turn it off! I need to hear myself think!" Gwen got off of the bed to yell out the door.

"Mom, I can just turn it down. You won't hear it."

"Yes, I will!"

Gwen could feel her back tighten. "That doesn't make any sense!" she yelled, angry at her mother's stubbornness.

"Don't you tell me what makes sense!" Her mom was now at the foot of the stairs, yelling up. "I took a logic class once. I know what makes sense!"

*You have got to be kidding me, Gwen thought. She's ridiculous!*

Gwen managed to control her voice long enough to say, "Ok," before she went back in her room, fighting not to slam the door. She turned the music down so low, even she couldn't really hear it, but it was a defiance, if not a bold one, nonetheless. *She might as well speak gibberish to me, she thought to herself. Logic class or not, I don't understand half of what she says.*

After a while, Gwen decided to turn off the radio, admitting her defeat quietly. Close to ten o'clock, she decided to try once more to write. At least she'd be able to create a world where the good guys would conquer the bad guys and everything would make sense for a change.

She began to type freely, allowing her thoughts to flow. She could do this; all she had to do was relax. She decided to go with a story about evil pirates terrorizing the Atlantic currents and a handsome captain in the British navy that sets out to capture them. She got excited (she liked handsome sea captains) and started typing away. She had the pirates cursing and attacking ships, the captain gaining on them, the pirates laughing at their evil deeds and the captain catching them! Yes, and then he discovers that a particularly nasty big shot of the pirating world was not on this ship. So, he must strike a deal with the pirates promising to let them go if they tell him where to find this terrible pirate. She was on a roll!

"Twelve o'clock? Crap."

Much to her dismay, Gwen had to be up at five-thirty for school the next morning and now she would almost certainly fall asleep in Geometry. *I*

was just getting into the rhythm, she thought. *I was finally getting somewhere.* Despite her disappointment, she got up to get ready for bed. As she brushed her teeth she thought she remembered having some sort of homework due the next day, but it wouldn't be the first time she had neglected school assignments. She found writing much more fulfilling. Well, most times anyway.

The next day, Gwen jumped off the school bus and checked the mailbox before heading for her front door. Anxious to get back to her story, she made a beeline for the stairs, but her mom came from around the corner and stopped her. She had her eyes wide open in an alarmed fashion that made Gwen extremely nervous.

"Gwendolyn, you haven't taken any pills the kids at school are handing out, have you?" Her mother's hair had a frizzy quality that was intensified by the humid Florida air and at times like these, made her seem even more eccentric to Gwen. She closed her eyes to her mother's odd question.

"Mom, you know I'm not stupid and I don't take drugs. Besides, I have never seen anyone just come up to someone and say 'Hey kid, you want these mysterious pills?' At least not recently anyway." She opened her eyes and let out a sigh, staring at her mother the way one would a child who just will not learn.

"Well," her mother replied, just as earnest as before, "don't ever take anything from anybody. For all you know, they could be handing you anthrax or something. Or a smoke bomb..." She had trailed off again, wandering back towards the kitchen, leaving Gwen to wonder once again whether her mother had been the slow kid who had had one too many pulled over on her.

Gwen shook her head to bring herself back to the realm of the sane and took the stairs in twos. She was determined to keep her momentum with this story. She knew it could work if she just followed through.

Throwing her book bag onto her bed, she sat down at her desk and scrolled to the top of what she had written the night before. She had to get herself back in the mood. She read through the scenic description at the beginning and came upon the first lines of dialogue for her pirates. Gwen's shoulders began to sag as she read her awkward, ridiculous lines between three pirates on the ship. As she read more and more, she felt an increasing urge to shut down the computer. She kept her cool though, and went back to the first spoken sentence to follow the dialogue closely to see if she could salvage it.

"There be a ship just o'er the horizon that is ready to be attacked for its riches!"

"Aye, matey. We should head towards the stars to reach this ship of fortune!"

"Which star, matey?"

"Ar, the bright, shiny one o'er there on the, er, star side o' the ship."

"Then hoist the main sail! Throw in the... thingy! Swab the, uh, floor?"

ARRRR!!"

Gwen sat up straight in her chair. She squinted and looked hard at the screen. These last lines didn't seem familiar at all.

"What ye be playin' at? Ye be the most wussy pirates I ever met! Ye can't even speak pirate, matey!"

"Arr! I be as good a pirate as ye be, I just don't remember the bloody names o' all our pirate gear!"

"How can ye forget the name o' the deck?! I still says ye be a lousy pirate!"

"It be not me fault! Me writer don't know the lingo, seein' how she lives in the twenny-first cent'ry!"

*Whoa!* Gwen shoved her chair back and stared at the screen with her mouth wide open. *I know I didn't write that!*

"Arr! Yer author be makin' ye inta a monkey! Why don' we make her walk the plank, matey?"

"That be a good idea! By my hook, let's pillage and blunder her vessel and send her o'erboard! Ar har har har!"

"It be *plunder* ya bafoon! I still says ye got questionable piratin' skills, me hearty. But ye be lucky I be in a plankin' mood today. Avast, ye landlubber!"

At this, Gwen actually looked behind her to see if they were talking to someone else. This couldn't be happening, could it? The lines weren't just appearing on her screen before her, were they?

"Ahoy there, missy!"

Gwen started to panic. Were her pirates *actually* talking? *I'm crazy*, she thought. *Certifiably insane.*

"Avast, ye wench! We be comin' to pirate yer ship and all its booty!"

*Oh my god, they are talking! What am I going to...wait...did he just call me a wench?*

"Ye be correct, lassie and we be not jokin' around. Ye be makin' me pirate friends o'er here a laughin' stock o' all their mates! Ye can't be allowed to continue foul'in' up us pirates' reputations! We be wantin' to scare people, not make them giggle with glee! Arr!"

"Whoa, are y...you seriously talking to me?" Gwen asked outloud.

"I thinks she be a bit slow upstairs, don't ye think, matey?"

"Yarr!"

"Hey! Stop talking about me!" Gwen stopped and shook her head.

"What am I saying? Quit talking period! You're not real! You can't have thoughts! I'm writing this story, this story is not writing itself!"

"We be not carin' bout yer rules, missy. We just be carin' that ye be a lousy pirate writer. Ye must be walkin' the plank!"

"Plank?" At this Gwen had to laugh. A band of pirates talking freely on a computer screen was one thing, but pirates in a story making threats? Ridiculous! "How do you propose to do that? Hmm?" Gwen was getting hysterical. "I'm sitting in my chair at my computer. You all are *in* the computer. You're all talk! Literally!"

"We pirates be havin' ways of makin' ye do what we wants!"

"This is stupid. Or crazy. Maybe I'm crazy."

"I think ye be stupid!"

"Shut up, you stupid pirate!" Gwen shot back.

"Arrr! Yeh'll be sorry ye talked that way to blood-thirsty pirates, wench!"

"That's it." Gwen lunged for her keyboard. "That's the last time I get called a wench on my own computer! Prepare to meet your maker, pirates! Beware the wrath of my mouse!" She almost let out an evil laugh as she finally moved to end this bizarre encounter.

"I wouldn't be clickin' that 'x' if I were ye."

"Oh yeah? Just watch me!"

*Click*

"Ha!" Gwen shouted at the dark computer screen. "You'll be sorry, my ass! The most delusional, insane pirates I've ever met! Oh my god, what am I saying?" She stumbled to her bed and put her head between her knees. *This would be a good time to wake up*, she thought.

Just then, she heard it: a metal clank coming from her closet door. She was just lifting her head as three, full-grown grinning pirates burst through the doors with enthusiasm.

"Ye be the delusional one, lassie! Arr!" The other pirates joined in hearty laughter. Gwen supposed that this pirate was the leader in a sense. At least he had the big black pirate hat. "We be here to...er...*persuade* ye to end yer pirate writin' career right now. But not before, o' course, ye write out that swabbie, Cap'n Milton!"

"Yarr!" the other pirates nodded in agreement.

"Why would I write him out? He's the good guy who's going to punish you for all your evil doing! He'll be the hero of the story!" Somehow Gwen had spoken forcefully in front of vicious looking pirates that were crowding her room. After she spoke, however, she could feel her ears turning red.

"See there, me hearties? I told ye she be a fiery lass! Looky here, me little writin' wench..."

"I am not a wench, you filthy pirate!"

"Oh beggin' yer pardon, lassie. I meant no offense." The other pirates laughed. "If we be standin' on formalities, then I be askin' that you be callin' us gentlemen o' fortune. The name o' 'pirate' be havin' so many bad connotations that we be preferin' the other name." At this, he gave a wide grin, minus a few teeth. Gwen just stood there. "Well, puttin' that aside, we be needin' ye to stop writin' me hearties as lily-livered sailors. Ye be makin' us such pathetic pirates that we be gettin' caught by that scurvy dog, Cap'n Milton!"

"That's none of my concern," Gwen answered haughtily. "You're pirates...excuse me, 'gentlemen of fortune,' who deserve to get caught!"

"I be gettin' the sense that ye be thinkin' this Milton be one o' the good guys."

Gwen was surprised at such a silly question. "Of course he's one of the good guys! He's with the British navy!" They really were stupid pirates.

"Beggin' yer pardon, miss," said a pirate from the back, "but he be no better 'n the worst pirates I be runnin' across on the high seas." Gwen was surprised to hear the subordinate pirate speak. *He seems very polite*, she thought. *Well, polite for a pirate, I suppose.*

"How is he no better?" Gwen asked.

"Oh, he be a terrible liar and thief and he be carin' nothin' for the people he be takin' advantage of!"

"He be speakin' the truth, lassie," the leader chimed in. "He be a scallywag through an' through. He be considered worse than a pirate at times, for pretendin' to be a respectable man o' the navy. We pirates be dislikin' him considerable."

"Ok, ok. Wait a sec. When I started this story, you guys were the bad guys and Cap'n, er I mean *Captain* Milton, was supposed to be the hero and save the day. You're trying to tell me that he's now *worse* than you guys?" The pirates just looked at her and nodded. "I find that hard to believe. Just what did he do, anyway?"

"Oh ye be openin' a fine can o' worms with that question, lassie. Here's the short of it. He be catchin' us off the coast of Spain and be threatenin' to take the lot o' us back to England to be hanged." The other pirates winced at this, rubbing their grimy necks. "We be expectin' this from a navy cap'n an' all, but then he be sayin' that we could be professional pirates, privateers if ye will, with the British navy if we on'y be tellin' them where Black Heart Samson be hidin'. Arr."

"Black Heart Samson?" Gwen was feeling overwhelmed, considering they were talking about a world she *supposedly* created herself.

In a hushed tone the pirate replied. "He be the worst pirate I e'er heard tell of. Just so happens we be knowin' the place where ol' Black Heart be hidin' so we tells that cap'n o' yours all we know to be savin' our necks. Well, that scurvy dog of a cap'n went back on his word," the pirate yelled, "an' told us we'd be feelin' the hangman's noose soon enough. We be willin' to help him out and that rat turns on us an' steals our ship to boot! Tell me if ye think that be an example of honesty an' playin' fair, me lass?"

"Honey?"

"Oh no!" Gwen said, her heart leaping to her throat.

"Who that be?" the pirate asked, hand resting on the dagger tucked in his belt.

"Gwen? I was just checking to see what you wanted for dinner." She was right behind the door now.

"It's my mom," she whispered to the pirate. "Mom, I'm not really that

hungry right..."

"I be likin' an orange." Gwen and the other two pirates turned to the formerly silent pirate. He simply shrugged and replied, "I be not likin' the scurvy." The others looked bewildered as Gwen held her breath, hoping her mother hadn't heard the pirate's odd request.

"Alright. You and your little friends sit tight and dinner will be ready in an hour or so. Don't worry, I have plenty of oranges!" At that she went back down the stairs. Gwen slapped her forehead with her hand.

"My mom is so weird! I can't believe she didn't come in!"

"She seems like a fine wench to me. Wouldn't ye be agreein' lads?"

"Yar!"

"Is that all you ever say?" Gwen demanded.

"Yar!" The pirates beamed at her. Gwen rolled her eyes.

"Now back to the matter at hand," prompted the leader. "We be not havin' all day."

Gwen thought back to what the pirates had told her about Captain Milton. She had to admit he sounded shady, although she wasn't ready to trust these pirates. "How do you propose I fix this? Just delete the captain's lines and let you go about your plundering?"

"Yes, that be a fine idea!"

"Yarr!" the other pirates contributed.

"We promise not to be sendin' ye down the plank if ye be givin' us yer aid," the less boisterous pirate added, as if this were the deal of a lifetime.

Gwen eyed the pirates and the pirates eyed her, one pirate using a single eye. Gwen shuddered at the thought of what was under his eye patch and turned toward her computer. "So all you want is the captain off your back, right?"

"Aye, lassie," the leader said. "Then we be leavin' ye to be writin' any other stories aside from piratin' ones."

Gwen rolled her eyes. "You know I could just write him as a better guy. I mean, I need a hero! I can't just delete the hero!"

"Ye be messin' it up the first time. We can't be lettin' ye do it all o'er again. Arr, no, ye must delete him, unless," he paused, lowering his eyes, "ye be wantin' me to be settin' up the plank!" He took a step forward, suddenly seeming much taller to Gwen.

"Fine! Fine, I'll erase his lines. Don't get your bandanas in a twist." The pirates looked at each other, confused. "Never mind," she sighed. "I'll delete the captain. Just hold on a sec."

She grumbled as she started to highlight Captain Milton's first line. *Just as I write something that might actually be good*, she thought. But before she could hit delete, her closet doors burst open with the sound of gunfire and Gwen and all three pirates hit the floor for cover.

"I wouldn't move if I were you." His voice was booming and his eyes were ablaze. Gwen looked up from the floor to see a rather handsome, but manic naval officer looming before her. He had a gun in each hand and he looked furi-

ous. She had no problem obeying his orders.

"These acts of treason will not go unpunished," he seethed. "You three! Against the back wall!" The pirates gave the captain the surliest looks they could muster as they scooted toward the wall. "And you! You will be joining your little swashbuckling friends at the gallows for your attempts at freeing these villains and committing murder!"

"Murder?!" Gwen almost sat straight up but quickly remembered the guns. "What do you mean?"

"When you attempt to end a captain's life, young miss, consequences follow. It will be the last murder you ever plot." He gave a satisfied, slimy grin that sent shivers down her spine.

*I can't believe this. How did I get into this? He's going to hang me?!* Oh my god! Gwen was looking around her room for some blunt object to use, but there was nothing. She was fighting not to panic. Glancing at the computer, she realized the captain's lines were still highlighted. She would have to wait for the right moment.

Captain Milton was moving towards the pirates with the two guns shifted to one hand and a large rope clasped in the other. He turned back to Gwen and made her understand by his look that moving would be a very big mistake. He then proceeded to tie up the pirates, linking them together with the sturdy rope. Gwen knew it was now or never. She reached her hand up and tried to reach the delete button. No good. She would have to sit up to reach it. Slowly, she moved off the floor and took her eyes away from the captain to look at the keyboard. She quickly hit the delete button and heard a disturbing yell. She turned to see the captain clutching his heart. "Idiot girl!" he screamed and started crawling towards her, obviously weakened by the loss of his line. She realized she would have to delete the other two lines to eliminate him completely and save their necks.

She scrolled as fast as she could and found the second one, highlighted and hit 'Delete.' She heard the captain scream again, closer now.

"I will kill you for this!" he roared, writhing on the floor. He raised his gun as she scrolled for the other line. She found it and moved the mouse to highlight it. His hand shook as he took aim from the ground. She turned to see the gun and reached for the button as he pulled the trigger. BAM!

A considerable amount of smoke filled the room and made the pirates cough. They looked through the clearing smoke and saw Gwen in a heap by the desk. "Young lassie?" the one pirate called. "Ye be alright?"

The heap twitched and Gwen lifted her head. Her left eye caught sight of a black smudge on the wall by her head. She turned to look and saw it was a hole. She turned back toward where the captain had been, but saw nothing. She could see the pirates by the wall, still tied together. *I'm alive!* she silently cheered. She couldn't believe her luck. The bullet had missed her by no more than five inches.

"I guess he's gone," she managed to say, even though her voice sounded faint through her ringing ears.

The pirates all laughed and kept laughing as she untied them. "Yo ho ho, our writer be a brave lass, mateys!"

"Arr, that she be!"

They all laughed for a few minutes until Gwen realized something. "Wait a minute, how are you all going to get back in your story?"

"That be a fine question. We be thinkin' we can't. We can't be havin' ye deleting our lines o' course. Didn't look like a right fun way to go, did it, me hearties?"

"Arr, no," they chuckled.

"Well you can't stay here!" Gwen cried. "My mom will wig out!"

"We don't be knowin' what yer mother's wig be havin' to do with anything, but we be plannin' on takin' yer boat out to the high seas to be continuin' our plunderin'!"

"My boat? You mean that rusty canoe tied up at the canal out back? Surely you don't mean that thing?"

"Aye, we do! Thanks for yer help, lassie. Ye be a right fine wench!" And at that he kissed her heartily on the cheek, with the other two following suit. The leader opened the window and all three jumped down to the ground. She just stood there and watched as the three of them hopped in the little canoe and shoved off down the canal, the captain standing majestically as the other two struggled to row forward.

"Unbelievable," she muttered, frozen in place. She stood gaping out the window for only a few seconds before she heard her mother's voice yelling.

"Gwen! Please! How many times do I have to tell you to keep the gunfire down? I can't hear myself think!"

## Contributors

**Josh Bradley**, *sophomore*, is an English major concentrating in literature and creative writing.

**Jason Carney**, *senior*, is an English and philosophy major. He enjoys turning pages, sipping coffee, and pretending to be a philosopher romantically disenchanted with the world. After graduation he intends to spend some much needed time with his family, friends, and guitar.

**Melinda Mooney Carter**, *senior*, has been writing for over fifty years! In her spare time, she enjoys reading, listening to a special coloratura soprano sing, watching the yellow oriole from her bedroom window and curling up with the cat. She is currently working on a family memoir to be presented at a reunion Labor Day weekend.

**Nick DeFazio**, *freshman*, is delighted to be in this year's journal. He is a superficial young man who enjoys clichés, run-ons, paper cuts, aggression toward third world countries, pop and rap artists starring in mainstream films, Pura Vida coffee, and America Online. His motto is "Life isn't fair."

**Jessica Faulkner**, *freshman*, learned to read and to draw long before she could write legibly. She enjoys all things British; she gets high on life by dancing to that fine, fine music. Her life was saved by rock and roll.

**Shelley Given**, *senior*, is majoring in English: creative writing, and art: with a concentration in photography. She likes gin and tonics and walks on the beach.

**Sarah Grooms**, *senior*, is currently working on the long version of *A Tale of Pirates* for her Senior Writing Project. If all goes well, it will have an ending. She acknowledges her cat, Weegee, for making her laugh simply by resembling a sausage with a head. Sadly, Sarah has WPSA (Writing a Personal Statement Anxiety), but joking aside, she sincerely hopes you enjoy this year's magazine.

**Jeremy Henthorn**, *senior*, is the writer/director of several short films, nationally ranked cigar-boat racer and runner-up to Bill O'Reilly for the 1970 "national punting title for my division." His hobbies include: privately insulting public officials and lying on bio's.

**Amanda Hinds**, *senior*, loves writing poetry and reading nearly anything. She has far more cookbooks than she could ever use, creates interesting things out of found art, and spends much of her spare time telling her bloodhound to "drop it!", 'it' being anything the dog can fit in its mouth.

**Jen Immel, junior**, is writing major from Massillon, who attended high school in Northern Virginia, near the Shenandoah Mountains. When she isn't writing, she enjoys guitar, Jesus, Super Nintendo, making documentaries, learning the secrets of stealthhood, and being with her buddy, Funnel. She hopes to write young adult fiction.

**Jamie Levy, senior**, is an atypical artist, writer, and athlete. She enjoys music, friends, chocolate, running, and occasionally sleeping. Her future plans include being happy and probably poor.

**Amanda Knapp, senior**, is turning in her badge as Chief of the Grammar Police. What will she do now with that *Quiz and Quill: Blood and Glory* tattoo? She would like to thank the library for being full of books, her roommate for being full of listening, and her professors for being full of smarts.

**Kristina Pace, unknown**, was born in Delaware, Ohio and received many awards in music and writing in high school and college. She began writing poetry at the age of eight, and has declared an English major at Otterbein College. She hopes to influence others about poetry.

**Jennifer Roberts, sophomore**, splits her time by living in denial—a wonderfully exclusive “happy place” set among the bleached Sonoma hills—and Dublin, Ohio. Besides the voices, she shares residence with a seventeen-year-old daughter (insert dramatic pause for audience's sympathetic moan), ever-patient husband and two cheese-obsessed dogs.

**Lisa Lopez Swansinger, beginner**, has written her whole life. She did not know that her writing was considered poetry until a quarter-life crisis brought her to Otterbein. She wishes this wonderful institution of excellent teachers had a Creative Writing Master's Program, and she will keep saying it until somebody listens . . .

**Mary Teaford, junior**, is a creative writing major from the Armpit of the Western World, Clintonville, Ohio. She is a white trash Irish-Scotch crossbreed. Her hobbies include children's theatre and carbo-loading. Her main interest is Speculative Fiction; she has three apocalyptic novels on the back burner while she finishes school.

**Becca Zapor, senior**, must rub her feet together at least three times before she can sleep at night. After graduation, she plans to make a living by thinking up greeting cards that reflect “real life” (e-mail her for samples). Becca's chapbook, still untitled, will be available later this spring.

Our Excellent Art Contributors: **Megan Alexander, Paul Davis, Jon Juravich, Amanda Helmrich, Lauren Suveges, and Colleen Tappel** are members of Otterbein College's Starving Artists' Club