

MOCKINGBIRD

2010

Credits

Art Director

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Art Juror's Bio

Kathleen Campbell is an artist, teacher, and writer. Her interests lie both in the visual arts and in art history and criticism. Her work in photography and mixed media has been exhibited widely at such places as Soho Photo Gallery, NYC, The Philadelphia Print Center, the Schneider Gallery, Chicago, Houston Foto Fest, the Houston Center for Photography, CEPA Gallery, the Asheville Museum, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo. She has published reviews and critical/historical articles on photography in a number of journals, including *exposure*, the *San Francisco Camera-work Quarterly*, the *CEPA Journal* and *Photo Metro*. Her work is in the collections of the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY, the Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC, the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe and other venues. In 1998 she was awarded a Visual Artist's Grant from the North Carolina Arts Council. She is currently a Professor of Art at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.



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Fletcher Hancock Dyer



Remembering Fletcher Hancock Dyer
2/16/1987- 11/5/2009

On November 5, 2009, we lost a bright light and intense force of energy, Fletcher Hancock Dyer. Fletcher became a model for all but never seemed satisfied it was enough and continued working harder! At all times, the passion reflected in Fletcher's life and art was to focus on society's blemishes and illicit dialogue and resolve to improve our world. Fletcher enriched our lives and left a wonderful legacy for us to share. Fletcher was one of the 2009 Mockingbird Co Art Directors. The 2009 Mockingbird won a Gold ADDY Award in the Northeast TN ADDY Awards 2010 which automatically qualified it to be entered into the District Seven ADDY Awards competition winning another Gold Award. At this time, the entry moves forward and is a finalist in the National ADDY Awards Competition.



FIRST PLACE - Greg Howser



Greg Houser
"Adam Stanifer"
print/encaustic
24x15 inches

Fiction - The Pub and Roy Harper

by Adam Lambert

I was sitting at the bar with Roy Harper the night Jameson got engaged. It was as appropriate a place as any. He and Randaline had their first date there as well (another event at which I was present), and they'd met one another's parents there too. There was history in that pub, but not a history that would be scratched into a book or put onto a calendar. It was a history, however, that would be just as important (or more) for those it involved. It was not Appomattox courthouse, but there had been many a man surrender there. It was not Washington, but hundreds of oaths had been taken. That pub was every event in history, but on a personal, diminutive scale. However, the particular instance I would like to recall involves the patron, and tenant of the next to last barstool from the right, Roy Harper.

Roy Harper was about five feet seven inches tall, but his voice was that of a man at least five foot nine. He had brown hair (as far as anyone could tell) that he kept covered up with an assortment of brown hats. He usually had a green shirt or sweater on under his jackets, and wore corduroy pants five nights a week. Occasionally he would sport a dark red shirt, which matched his burgundy barstool to a tee. There was the intermittent occasion when Roy Harper might spill his drink on his shirt, mismatching him from his seat. Nevertheless, Roy Harper was probably as close to a best friend as I ever knew in my adult life.

"No, I suppose I wasn't meant to be a millionaire," Roy Harper burled.

"What are you talking about, Harper?" I replied.

"I was just recalling the day I thought I was gonna have it made, the day I almost became a millionaire."

"Another?" asked Jack from behind the counter.

"Always," Roy Harper said, "always another, friend."

"Yep," Jack whispered grabbing a frosted mug.

"Like I was saying," he continued, "I was thinking about the day I almost struck it rich. Practically holding a barrel full of money. I'da had to call you to come help me carry it all."

By this time, as was common, Roy Harper had attracted the attention of three strangers and a boy, who had already angled their chairs to hear the tale.

"I was up at Lonesome Pine, playing golf... it must'a been about twenty years ago now, playing with Dog Houndshell, Browning Wynn and Shannon. It was more than twenty, cause that's the year before Shannon got diagnosed- it was seventy-three I think. We all rode up there in my old, blue Shelby Mustang for a best ball tournament, and if we didn't have the best team there, I'm not Roy Benjamin Harper. Shannon could knock down twenty footers left and right. Hell, you know Leonard, you played with him."

I nodded and inhaled.

Roy took another drink, and pulled on his collar, wincing and turning his head towards the strangers. The young boy stood looking at him with his hands at his sides, white shirt untucked. I sat still facing the bar, but listening to Roy, slightly curious of the story I had even yet to hear. I thought there was probably good reason for that.

"So, there we are on the first tee. Shannon went first puttin' a safe one out there in the middle with a three wood. I followed 'im. Pushed mine right." He drank again with his eyes closed.

"Then Hound Dog stepped up there. Now, Dog is a lefty, and on this particular hole, there was a tree about 20 yards in front of the tee box, reaching out to the left middle fairway. So Dog steps up there, and tees his ball up. Then, he stepped back, and looked at his shot. He walks back up to his ball, and re-tees it up on the right side of the tee box, and steps back to look at it again. He leaned left and right, a'lookin' at that shot, then huffed back up there and re-teeed on the left side. He backed up again, and leaned up against his club on his hip. He stood there lookin' for a minute, and then turned around to all of us. He stared at us, and at the other ten or fifteen people for a second..."

Roy looked around, imitating a stooped Hound Dog. "Threw his hands up in the air and said, 'Well Goddamn boys! I ain't never been tree-hooked on the first fuckin' hole!'"

The strangers started to cry they were laughing so hard. I chucked to myself, holding my drink in my right hand, propped. Roy was sitting to my left staring and laughing, wide eyed at the strangers. I suppose Jack and I were expecting something about like that, so it didn't catch us off guard right away. I noticed Jack sniggered himself, wiping off a bourbon glass with his apron and shaking his head.

"Oh shit. I tell ya," Roy Harper wheezed. The naïve boy stood staring at Roy Harper with a look of confusion washed over with boredom, like he might at a monument on a field trip.

"So what about the million dollars?" the boy asked.

"I'm getting' to that, son," Roy Harper replied.

"Harumph," the youngster puffed as he

Fiction

stuck his hands in the pockets of his rolled up jeans.

“Hound Dog just picked his ball up, and we played Shan’n’s.”

Roy raised his glass to his lips for another drink, but words starting coming out before he could sip.

“So we finally get around to hole twelve, a par three. And that’s where I nearly became a millionaire gentleman.”

The strangers became more attentive, and the boy was now slightly leaning on Roy’s knee, craning his neck up at him on the barstool. I turned my head away from the Regulator clock I’d been staring at to see Roy sitting up like a marine with his chest out. You’d think he had the million dollars in his pockets at that very moment, or a corn cob in his ass.

“We were taking a break up on the hill where the tee box sat, overlooking the liver-shaped green below. I stood there leaning on my club and chewing on a tee. Wynn was over there arguing with Dog about something, and Shan’ was next to the fence taking a piss. So, I went over there to see what they were fussin’ about. Turns out that Dog claimed he’d nearly made a hole-in-one on this hole before. Said he’d done it last week, and was betting that he could get closer to that hole than Browning could every time. Browning Wynn, as you well know, is a proud man, and wasn’t having Hound Dog talk to him that way. I swear, you can’t put stock in a damn thing Dog says, but you know the Wynn’s, ev’ry one of them rich and proud.”

The strangers ignorantly nodded in puzzled affirmation, but they weren’t wrong. The Wynn family was extremely wealthy. Hell, they used to own the land the golf course itself sat on, until they sold it for that pur-

pose. Their great grandfather (Also named Browning Wynn), had set up businesses all over the county on various land plots he owned, and half of those had become convenience stores. The entire, massive Wynn family didn’t have to work another day if they didn’t feel like it, but they all still went to school. Eventually each would wind up holding some high-ranking legal position throughout the state of Virginia, simply to remain in the aristocracy. I’d say by this point in their lineage, it wasn’t optional. I doubt they gave much thought to that, though.

“...and Hound Dog called him an uppity bastard,” Roy Harper said in a disapproving tone.

“He is,” Jack barked from across the bar, now engaged with another customer, but obviously still listening in.

“That’s why I wouldn’t have had a problem taking his money! ‘A fool and his money,’ they say. So, like I was sayin’, they were about to start talking about one another’s mothers. That’s when I walked up to ‘em.”

“What’d you say?” questioned the boy, whose hands were now tugging on the sides of his shirt.

“I told ‘em both they were fools. I told ‘em that if they stepped up in that tee box right there, and hit a ball each, that I knew who’d get closer.”

“Well,” said one stranger in a suggestive tone.

“Me!” Roy bellowed.

The strangers cackled and rolled their eyes, as the lad smiled admiringly up at Roy. He mimicked him, putting his elbow on the back of a chair, like Harper’s was on the bar.

“So Wynn calls me a boostful asshole, or something like that, and I told him I’d wager with ‘im,” he said, then stopped to take a

long swig.

“Well, what went wrong, Roy? Let’s hear it,” I said.

“I reckon I was getting’ to that Leonard,” he condescended, and took another panicky sip to buy time.

“So Wynn asks me what kind of wager I’d like to put on the shot, and I joked back with him that I wanted all his stores he owned. To my surprise, his pride spoke before he had a chance to say anything, and he agreed. I asked him what he wanted of mine- which was to me, a blame joke, and he said he’d settle for my good plot of land there next to the river.”

I bluntly spoke, “You still live next to the river, Harper.”

“I know that! -But *they* didn’t!” he spouted.

“Damn, Leonard,” he said with the last wisp of a breath.

“So I told him, I’d bet him the land. We shook on it squarely, like men, and agreed. Old Shan’ would attest to it if he was still here. So Wynn says he’d go first. I told him to go right on, that way I’d know whether I should knock it in, or if I could just wear a blindfold and hit it.”

“Where’d he hit it?” asked the boy, removing his propped arm and becoming a kid again.

“On the green, about 6 feet from the flag,” Roy replied.

The guests looked on anxiously, waiting to hear the ending they already knew.

“So I nodded at him, stepped up, and hit my ball.”

The boy again spoke, his grubby hands grasping tightly to a wadded, white dress that nearly hung to his knees.

“Where’d it go?”

“It hit right next to the pin, son. But, the damn thing had so much backspin on it,

Fiction

that it jumped back, and rolled off the front, into the fringe.”

“So you lost?” asked the stranger in the middle, slightly bemused.

“Sure did,” he replied in a satisfied fashion.

“But he said you still lived next to the river,” the boy said pointing at me.

“Well, I told him that he couldn’t have my land. Where would I live? I told ‘im it’s the only valuable thing I had besides my ol’ Shelby.”

The boy was quiet for a moment, then asked, “So what did you lose?”

A grinning Roy Harper paused for a second, and glanced at me. He looked back down at the kid.

“Ask him,” Roy said, pointing to me with his head, “he drove me here.”



Poetry - In Search of Thebes

by Anthony Cole

It started out with books,
searching them out in the library, always
keeping an eye out
for something.
I didn't know it then but I was looking for
people like
me, not knowing why but still in search of
the intangible something—
a something that would tell me I wasn't
alone.

The Sacred Band of Thebes, their struggles,
cornered into history books, nothing more
than a band of friends.
Your passion so diluted I didn't know what
to make of you,
the books spoke of timeless love but love
without consummation;
was this unrequited, platonic love all you
were?

I've spent my life searching for you,
a way to recapture the magic I felt looking
on Greek vistas,
imagining the brute call of the men to
arms,
charging their enemies, each man with his
lover,
I've been looking for you as long as I can
remember.

A nation not once again,
but once for all,
a way for us to stand together and not
shrink for who we are,
but to expand.

The ancient books were always indirect,
coded language that I spent years decipher-
ing.
They talked of comrades and companion-

ship,
of ancient soldiers' bonds and the strength
of them.

I didn't know they meant the kind of
strength you feel
when the full flushed dilation of a man
astride you,
or the strength of his hips pressing into
your own.

I didn't know, and so forgot the books.

The next time it was poetry.

Bullish assignments for poetry readings,
summers spent in banal verse long dead,
I finally found something that spoke to me.

I was in the back of the library searching
out poetry,
courtesy of the public school system I had
little choice,
but found something else entirely.

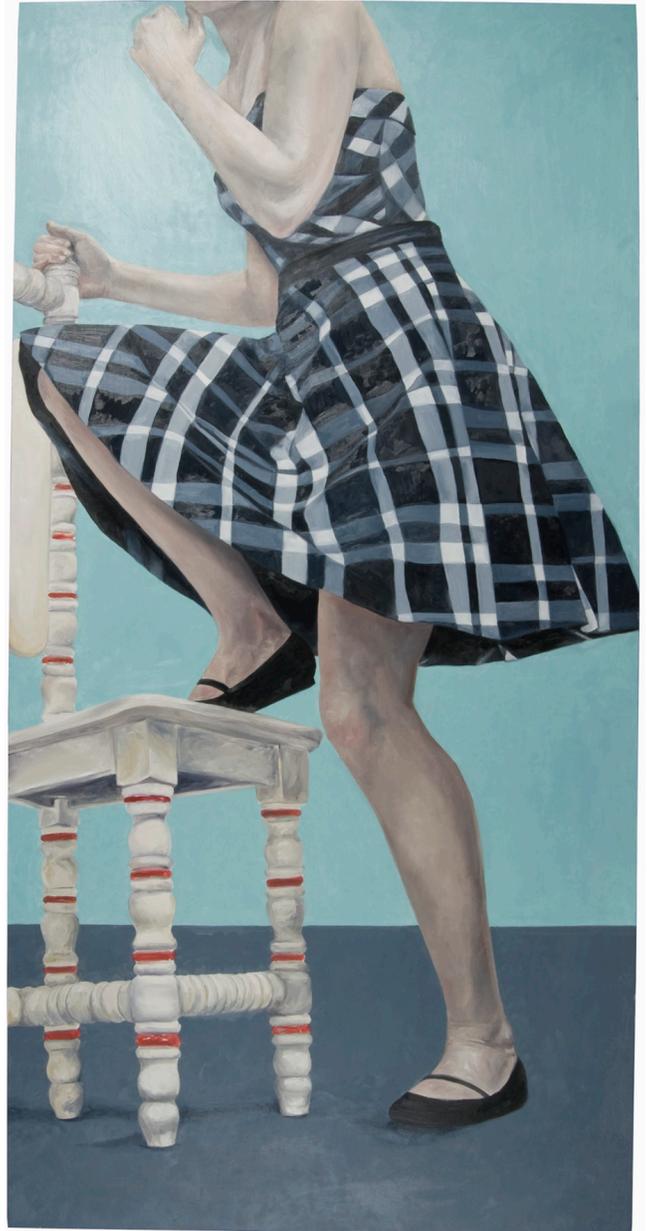
I don't know who ordered it,
what daring librarian imported such a work,
but staring at me in the back of a musty
library were the works of Walt Whitman.

O rhymeless verse, rhyme without measure,
rhyme not concerned with your iambs!
You truly were my first love.
Your graying hair and pot-belly intrigued
me,
and your verse,
I fell in love with your verse.

For a little while, I fell in love with every-
thing.

SECOND PLACE - Jessica Augier

Jessica Augier
"Step"
oil on panel
6 x3 feet



Fiction - Desert Whispers

by Rebecca Catron

OCTOBER 2001

Gently he bends down to wet the cracked corners of her mouth. Cool crisp drops run down his fingers and trickle across her lips. She opens her eyes slowly, the lashes stuck together with the cobwebs of her dreams. "John," she whispers. Touching her lips, he quiets her. She lays back, resigned to the continuing silence. There will be time for secrets later. He sits back on his heels and watches her. Their eyes meet too often to ignore the weight of what lies between them. They try to look elsewhere, but see nothing that holds even the slightest bit of comfort, only the dry sterility of the hospital room. He is hot. Unbearably hot. Sweat pours down his forehead and pools around his temples. The heat transports him back fifty-six years to the New Mexico desert, and he is caught up in the remembering.

JULY 16, 1945. 110 degrees.

John walks to the edge of the testing sight with an overwhelming feeling of excitement, and, inexplicably, dread, though he considers himself lucky to witness firsthand the detonation of an atomic bomb. He is about to see the weapon that will end the war, end the loss of American lives! He puts on his goggles, follows his colleagues into the steel bunker, and prepares as best he knows how for the blast. Though he tries to keep his mind on the upcoming detonation, his thoughts inadvertently drift back to Betty, his new bride with hair the color of fire and eyes the color of ice. They were married less than a year ago, in the quick style fashionable at the time, the air of death and desperate celebration all

around. Of course, his job assured him that he would see no combat, though he was no less a part of the war effort. He and Betty had moved from their small hometown of Rogersville, Tennessee to the booming town of Oak Ridge. Few people knew why all the new factories had emerged seemingly overnight in the sleepy Tennessee town, though some mused the factories were producing suitcases for Eleanor Roosevelt. John could laugh at all the rumors surrounding Oak Ridge, as he was one of the few who knew the truth behind the operations.

Unfortunately, Betty knew nothing of the joy he felt as he and his colleagues grew closer to perfecting the bomb, and began to understand, though only vaguely, the amazing possibilities and responsibilities that followed the harnessing of nuclear power. Keeping a secret from Betty, no matter how critical the secret, seemed like a breach of their sacred trust. Sometimes, to ease his conscience, he whispered everything to her when he knew she was asleep, after her breathing had become shallow and regular. After admiring her for a few moments and running his large hands over the length of her satin nightgown, he would pour out his soul to the rhythm of her breaths.

"Thirty seconds!" The tension was mounting amongst all present, as they waited to see if everything they had worked for would come to pass. A collective breath was held. "Ten seconds!"

John held on to a post to steady himself. Would the bomb work? Would his sacrifice be worthwhile? Could they end the war? "One second."

Then the blast, the blinding light, and the

deafening silence. For an eternity, it seemed, no one breathed or moved. Everyone was caught in his own thoughts, his own justifications and rationales. Everyone breathed with the bomb, their breath sucked in and forced out again. Imploding then exploding. Silence. Breath. Silence. Breath. The bomb was beautiful. And terrible. Terribly beautiful. The world changed in a moment. In the back of the room, a few men jumped and yelled, and congratulated each other with pats on the back. John was near the front, close enough to hear Dr. Oppenheimer whisper:

"We have become death. The destroyer of worlds."

"The destroyer of worlds," John repeated. He chose to see himself as the savior of worlds. They had witnessed the end of the war! And yet he knew, as they all knew, that they had also witnessed a beginning, though no one spoke of that then.

Betty let out a yell of her own as she won her first round of blackjack in Las Vegas. She and some of the other wives were passing their time at the casinos, waiting for their husbands to finish their business trip. She thought of how jealous the other girls back home would be when she told them she had driven halfway across the country with her handsome new husband to vacation in Las Vegas! Of course, she would leave out the part about gambling, and the fact that her husband was not there to share her adventures. She would also leave out the fights they had had more frequently lately, and the fact that they had run out of things to talk about. John couldn't talk about his work, which she understood, but resented anyway. She could only talk about playing bridge with the girls so many times,

Fiction

for heaven's sakes! They had drifted into silence after only six months of marriage. Truth be told, she missed her family, the gossip of her girlfriends, and the slow familiar rhythm of her hometown. This, too, she kept tucked inside her heart. She thought back to the last time she saw him:

Betty had stared out the window of the black '39 Chevy at the miles and miles of nothingness, and felt an almost physical ache for the enveloping lushness of her mountains. Finally, the heat, the acrid air, and the silence converged inside her, and she began to shout into the vacuum of the desert:

"John, I can't take it anymore! I need you to talk to me! Please!"

"What! What do you want me to say?"

"Anything! We can talk about the weather for all I care. Before we moved to Oak Ridge, "

"Oh, life was so much better when we lived in Rogersville?"

"Yes! We had our families. And a house. And plenty of land. And we talked. And laughed!" By this time tears were falling freely.

"We still laugh," he said defensively.

"No, John, we don't. We don't talk. We don't make love. We never spend time together. We've only been married for six months for heaven's sake!"

John wiped his head with a faded blue handkerchief before replying.

"Well, what do you want to talk about?"

Betty paused to think, but realized she had nothing to say either. Both their lives had turned into barren wastelands. The heat from the desert killed off the last of her anger and sapped every inch of caring out of her. They both resigned themselves to

the silence. In her heart, she prayed that she would get pregnant soon so they would have a new life to talk about, a shared life of their own creation.

But the girls back home didn't need to know anything about all that. All they needed to know was that she was having a ball in the big city.

"Hit me again!" she cried, and was soon caught up in the fever of the cards.

The next evening when John returned to the hotel room, his joy was almost tangible. He swept Betty up in his arms, kissed her more passionately than he ever had, and whispered to her how much he loved her. After they made love, she lay in his arms and prayed that she would get pregnant at this moment, when their happiness was strongest.

AUGUST 06, 1945.

Betty switched on the radio as she and John waited anxiously for President Truman's announcement.

"Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of TNT. It had more than 2,000 times the blast power of the British 'Grand Slam,' which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid manyfold. And the end is not yet. . . . It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has

been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East."

Betty and John stared at each other, visibly stunned, not knowing whether to celebrate or to grieve.

"We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war."

Finally, the end of the war in sight! Betty breathed a sigh of relief, as she realized that John would not have to enter the war after all. No more names of dead American soldiers to be read over the radio each night. No more comforting her friends who had lost husbands and brothers. But at what cost?

"If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."

John suddenly realized that the destruction might continue, and his mind could not begin to grasp all the implications of the bomb's continued use. He tried to focus instead on the inevitable end of the war, and the end of the loss of American lives. But he knew that the joy could not long overshadow the stench of human suffering, the extent of which had not yet been disclosed to the public.

"The secretary of war, who has kept in personal touch with all phases of the project,

Fiction

will immediately make public a statement giving further details. His statement will give facts concerning the sites at Oak Ridge near Knoxville, Tennessee, and at Richland near Pasco, Washington, and an installation near Santa Fe, New Mexico.”

They both stared at each other, the weight of the secret spilling itself out upon them. She looked at him as though he were a stranger, amazed that the man she had been sharing a bed with, sharing a life with, had been involved in the creation of a weapon which was more destructive than anything the world had ever seen. How could her husband, who caused life to jump in her womb, also contribute to the creation of death? And yet he and the bomb also signified the end of American deaths. She ran from the room, unsure of everything.

John sat, numb with the sudden revelation of the secret for which he had almost sacrificed his marriage. His sanity. Now that everything was out in the open, he realized that his life had become that secret. He felt like an empty shell, waiting to be filled with something new. He said a prayer that his wife’s pregnancy would be a signal of a new beginning, an era of life.

MARCH 11, 1946.

“We have become death. The destroyer of worlds.” The haunting words of Dr. Oppenheimer had become a tortuous mantra in John’s mind over the past few months. He repeated the words to himself now as he watched his wife hover near death. He held her hand and gently wiped her hair back from her sweat drenched forehead. His tears mingled with hers as she struggled

to find the words to say all that she wanted to say to him before she died. Here. In this hospital room. Childless and hopeless at 23. “Is this all I get?” she thought to herself. “Is this all there is to life?”

The past two years, her adult married years which should have been the culmination of womanly happiness had been nothing but a wasteland filled with too small patches of quiet happiness. And yet, here was her husband, holding her hand. A husband whom she both loved and loathed. He was the one who harbored the poison which had killed their son. He was the destruction of the East and the hope of the West. He was the beginning and end of her pain, and her only promise of happiness. How had it happened that she had nothing else to live for? Nothing else which defined her? Her only hope had been the promise of children. And now . . . She shuddered as she remembered the disfigured stillborn she had given birth to only hours before, and realized that no healthy life would come of this union. She knew John understood this as well. What point was there in saying that which would only bring more pain? She grabbed his hand and waited for death to come. They lost themselves in their own silent vigils.

OCTOBER 2001

“How long have you two been married?” inquired the nurse’s aide, as she fluffed the pillows and tightened the sheets. John added up the years, all the years of quiet longing, all the years of hopeful waiting, all the years of sadness mixed with beauty, all the years that could have been so much more had they only been able to let go and love each other through the pain.

“Fifty-seven years,” he said, after a moment’s thought.

The number was as shocking to him as it was to the twenty year old aide, who could not yet comprehend the meaning of a lifetime together.

“Fifty-seven years.” John repeated the number to himself under his breath.

“That’s quite a long time! How did you two meet?” she inquired, chipper, as she busied herself emptying the bedpan.

Kari loved to ask this question of all her married patients and cherished the wistful, romantic look couples got in their eyes when they talked of the first time they had seen each other. She felt this question was her small gift to her patients, as the answer could often restore a tenderness that was in danger of being worn out. Their responses gave her hope that there was indeed someone out there for her too.

John thought over her question for a moment, and realized a better question would be how they had managed to love each other for so long. Through so much. Through the realization that they would be childless, to the loss of his job after the war efforts slowed. Through the silent years to the years that they could not talk enough. Through the adoption of their Japanese son, one of the orphans of the atomic blast, to the Vietnam war, when they cried together over the limitless expanse of man’s desire for destruction. Through their son’s disillusionment with them to his eventual marriage. Through the empty nest years and the slow descent into old age. And now, here they were, no words left, as in their early years. They were left now with all the things they had not said, and might not ever say, and with the secrets that inevitably

build over a fifty-seven year marriage.

He knew, for instance, though she did not know that he knew, of the time she had almost had an affair. It was in the years following the loss of his job, when they were still young and did not yet know how to love each other through difficult times.

DECEMBER 31, 1947.

“He betrayed me, and I will betray him,” Betty thought as she mentally prepared herself to have an affair. She tossed back another glass of wine, and checked her makeup in the bathroom mirror. Despite the fact that she was 25 and had given birth to two stillborn babies, the sadness did not show on her face. In fact, she looked better than she ever had with her copper red hair tied back in a sleek ponytail, her lithe figure accentuated by a hunter green dress she had bought that afternoon. Outside, she could hear the men laughing over the barbeque in the backyard while the women chattered incessantly in the kitchen. All the pointless frivolity! She had become so weary with everything.

“Everything is meaningless under the sun.” Betty had never before understood King Solomon’s words, but when she had heard them again in Sunday school the week before, the words had resonated in her soul and given voice to all that she could not say. She repeated the words now so that she could hear her soul speak again.

“Everything is meaningless under the sun.” She stared hard at herself one last time, her hair the color of fire, her face flushed with the anticipation of what she was about to do, the heat of her body emanating out of her. With a mixture of dread and antici-

tion, she made her way to the front parlor where she and Rob had agreed to meet.

After they met, they planned to sneak out the front door and steal an hour at Rob’s house while Judy, his wife, and John were busy at the block party.

After an eternity, it seemed, her feet finally led her to the parlor. When she saw Rob in the corner, book in hand, he looked less like her savior and more like a desperate last resort. With his nondescript features and bland clothing, he looked like all the other men at the party. Yet something in his eyes let her know he shared her special sadness. And so they would spend an hour escaping their sadness together. When she moved towards him, he looked up with eyes that seemed to see through her soul, and began to read from a book of poetry by Stephen Crane chosen from her private collection.

Slowly, with full understanding and tangible sorrow, he read,

“Yes, I have a thousand tongues,
And nine and ninety-nine lie.
Though I strive to use the one,
It will make no melody at my will,
But is dead in my mouth.”

An admission, a silent understanding. Softly, she began to cry, and he tenderly kissed her tears and brushed his lips against hers. Then, placing his hand over her heart, he spoke to her soul as he read:

“I walked in a desert.
And I cried,
‘Ah, God, take me from this place!’
A voice said, ‘It is no desert.’
I cried, ‘Well, But-
The sand, the heat, the vacant horizon.’”

A voice said, ‘It is no desert.’”

Then, Betty began to weep. Rob led her out the front door and she screamed to the unforgiving night and heartless world. He kissed her softly, his gift to her sadness. John watched from the parlor window as his wife kissed another man. He turned away and said nothing, returning to the kitchen to retrieve another Manhattan for the men out back.

That night, Betty put on her best satin nightgown, and crawled into bed beside her husband. He understood that she had come back to him from her own private desert, and he accepted her silent admission.

“I want to read you something,” she said, as she retrieved her bible from her nightstand. “OK,” he whispered, afraid to hear the words.

“I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;
I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my work,
And this was my reward for all my labor.
Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
And what I had toiled to achieve,
Everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
Nothing was gained under the sun.”

John leaned back and thought about the words as she looked at him expectantly. With great tenderness, he recited, “I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge. Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.”

Fiction

Through the words of King Solomon, they gave voice to the silence of their souls. Rain came to the desert and they bloomed in each other's arms.

OCTOBER 2001

"That," John thought, "is how we met." Instead he told Kari that he and Betty had met at a college dance.

"It was World War II, and the only time we were guaranteed was the present. We married six months after we met and moved to Oak Ridge."

"That's sweet," Kari said, not really listening at this point. She was ready to go to lunch to meet a cute doctor she had recently started seeing. Caught up in the promise of love, she excused herself from the room. John turned to his wife, and ached to see her so close to the end. Her mouth was gaping, breath and secrets rattling in and out of the dry hollows. Her grey hair was matted to her forehead, her brittle skin stretched tight against the bony contours of her face.

He bent close to her chest, and could still hear her heart beating faintly. She inhaled. Exhaled. A muted moan caught in her chest. He quieted her, kissed her cheek, squeezed her hand.

"I love you," he whispered directly into her ear.

Two tears slipped from the corners of her eyes.

"I know you love me too." He said the words for both of them.

She closed her eyes. Inhaled. Exhaled.

Nothing. Nothing.

He waited for another breath. Expectantly. Full of hope that she would not leave him yet.

Nothing. Nothing.

A young nurse came in to disconnect her from all the tubes which had fed her medicine and oxygen. When he knew that she would speak no more, he was suddenly filled with words. He wanted to talk to anyone who would listen. Even this young nurse who had only a vague concept of war, or atomic bombs, or love, or death, or real suffering.

"I helped build the atomic bomb," John said, a little too loudly, with the mixture of madness, regret, and glee that comes with all resolutions.

Poetry - Done Playing

by Luke Champouillon

There are brief moments
when you have to wonder
when the curtains will come down;
the lights fade,
and the actors come out
before us,
thank us for watching,
and let us get on
with the real thing.



THIRD PLACE - Lanora Davis



Lanora Davis
"Corset"
black and white photograph
6x3.817inches

Nonfiction - The Ojibawa Dictionary of Phrases: Gii-ayaa (Ge-a-ya) • v. 1. He became my hero by Leona Holman

When I was nine years old, growing up in Alberta, Canada, I had a very extraordinary friend. Of course, an extraordinary friend sometimes risks becoming a hero: a champion of everything you hold high and noble. He was nothing less. And, like any kid without a father, his friendship filled a familial gap. In the time I knew him, he taught me the stories, songs, and lessons of an Old People, walking an Old Road. His name was Juuyaay, meaning ‘sun’ in his native Haida language. And if you could once more see through the eyes of a child, you would easily see how I came to call him, Jay.

It’s still right on the edge of my memory how we came to be friends.

He was a giant man who thumped around in the apartment below ours. He had a Mt. Sinai voice when he spoke—or laughed. For a man of such strength, his gentleness surprised me. He was a storyteller and an artisan of American Indian crafts: totem poles, grizzly bears, and flightless eagles all fashioned from cedar and cottonwood and all brought to life in narrative time. Only after I finished an extra page of long division, would Mam let me visit with Jay and listen to the stories. I’d grab four lemon cookies and race down the stairs. Jay would wait until my foot hit the last step to begin, “Be careful how you walk, kid. The Old Ones say that in springtime, when all things blossom with new life, we must be careful where to step, for mother earth is pregnant.”

One early morning, Jay knocked on the door. Mam answered. Jay stood, wearing muck boots and toting a canvas bag, asking if I could go arrowhead hunting. I had only ever seen arrowheads at flint knapping events held during the Calgary

Stampede. Every summer, cowboys and Indians came together at the Stampede to re-enact treaties of the Old West and demonstrate bygone skills; arrowhead making was one of them. Back then, and for as long as Mam would let me, I’d sit and watch old men with skilled and fibrous hands replicate tiny bird points and complicated early woodland pieces, noting their patience. I must have had that same look of astonishment in my eyes that day, waiting for her to say yes and that I could go.

Mam found a pair of old galoshes and stuffed my pockets with tissue. The whole time she fluttered about the apartment looking for extra sweaters and wool socks, Jay stood at the door, grinning. I hated all the fuss, but, according to Mam, it was nothing to hear of hikers freezing to death up at Banff National Park because they didn’t wear galoshes or take tissue. Maybe, that was true. For sure, the nature of spring in western Canada was as indecisive as a green-broke horse and just as dangerous. Mam wrapped two peanut butter sandwiches and gave me strict orders to say “yes, sir” and “no, sir.” She smiled and thanked Jay for including me. There was a moment of silence that passed between them.

My brother and I lived alone with Mam. She worked in a manufacturing plant making metal rods. Every payday, she took us to our favorite restaurant where my brother and I ordered a platter of Texas-style fries with brown gravy and chipped beef. We ordered vanilla milkshakes, and Mam watched on, sipping creamed coffee. There was no need to ask about our father, it was understood that, for the last three years, life was calmer without him. Mam was careful about where we went and with whom, but she knew Jay and didn’t feel the need to say all the cau-

tionary things mother’s usually say.

It was still early when we left out in Jay’s truck. We drove past acres of grass-fed buffalo; their bodies looked like obsidian boulders standing odd distances apart. Their eyelids flickered and absorbed the morning frost.

While we drove, Jay explained how arrowhead hunting was addictive. How easy it was to keep looking for just one more, even if your pockets were full. He told me about the time he went to the river, closed his eyes, and prayed: “*If I can find just one more, one complete one, I won’t look down again.*” That was the day he found a perfect Clovis. He even kept his promise: he walked in careful strides over uneven ground, trying not to look down at his feet.

On our outing, Jay talked about the arrowheads he had collected over the years and called each one by name, all beloved . . . all distinct. He talked while guiding the truck down roads that weren’t really roads at all. He followed grooved tracks until the shape of Milk River came into view. It was the same river he had tracked the year before, and all the years before that one, hoping to discover anything he might have missed.

We parked against a row of Juniper trees, and when I stepped out of the truck, I felt like I had stepped instantly into another world: a time that was not my own. We started toward the river. The ground was still frozen in places and mud-soaked in others. The evergreen aroma added to the ambiance. The grasses were still the color of winter wheat, and they crunched underfoot. Nearer the river, in the hollow places by the river bank, the water sprayed like sparks from a welding machine. Jay explained the best way to find arrow-

Nonfiction

heads, and I listened intently, determined to make him proud. He said that the trick was to pay attention and that a good hunter could hear the rocks talking. Furthermore, the trick was to look for rocks with teeth marks in them: rocks that looked like they had been chewed around the edges. To me, however, all rocks looked the same; they had the same quality—nearly. They had the same color and same hardness. I told him what I was thinking.

“That’s not true,” he said, “Rocks are like snowflakes. They’re unique. And not just rocks and snowflakes, all things organic are unique—like twins.”

Still, all the rocks looked the same to me.

He assigned a portion of ground for me to work, and, as I worked, he told me about antler billets, how to chip small flakes from the stone, and that a bifurcated stem is what dissects the arrowhead base from the body, making it look like a capital “A.” He told me about edges, outlines, and long, slender grooves channeled from the center to the point, and I looked for those qualities. I looked scrupulously over every small bit of earth, one portion at a time. He was more adept and worked swiftly through his portion, and so we worked accordingly.

Above us, the hawks soared like figure skaters, coasting the rim of a denim-washed sky, calling and calling: it was mating season. One red tail hawk dipped its wings, and I got to see how its belly outlined a flush of vertical feathers, light and long. We worked in silence most of the morning, knowing there was an unspoken reverence in what we were doing. From time to time, I’d stop to look up at Jay. He looked like Paul Bunyan and his shadow like Babe the Blue Ox. His long hair was drawn back into

a ponytail, and it rose at the tip when the wind blew. His skin was not unlike Mam’s: she was Indian, too, a half-breed Indian with fawn-colored skin. Her people were from the Ojibwa nation.

I was not without the knowledge of Mam’s Indian-ness but rather, my own. There was a missing part to my collective whole that I had not yet discovered, and, somehow, Jay knew that. He knew that I would one day feel the need to reach in and examine the color of my own heart. Arrowhead hunting was a preview of that journey—a lesson in seeing through the layers of things to find the particular.

“Do you believe you can do anything, kid?” Jay asked.

It was a simple enough question, yet I felt embarrassed to answer. He asked the same question, rephrased.

“Do you believe you can be anybody you want to be?”

“Mam always told me that if I tried hard enough, I could become anything I wanted.”

Jay agreed and then added something I had never considered. He said that I should be mindful of self-assurance: if I tried long enough and hard enough at anything, I would indeed become good at it. And that was why I should never lie, trick, take, or use more than I needed. “Never risk becoming good at being bad,” he said.

So I promised I never would and went back to looking for arrowheads, not thinking about his words but feeling their truthfulness.

Just then, a sedge wren flew under some bottle brush grass near a felled log. It looked curiously at me. There was something the color of aluminum glimmering in

the sunlight near the log. I walked over to it. It was an arrow shaft from a compound bow. Some small evidence, bits of skeleton, was left where a doe must have fallen, fatigued after vaulting through the field: a hunter’s failure.

“See something?” Jay asked.

I didn’t want to tell him about the aluminum arrow, the unused deer, or the way things were sometimes left and forgotten. Looking at the remains of a once living thing, I wanted to tell him about Mam and how lonely she was. And how she still kept shirts in the back of the closet, unused, hanging like ghosts waiting for a body to inhabit them. I wanted to tell him about school and how my classmates had parents—not *parent*. I wanted to say all that, but I didn’t. I didn’t because he already knew.

“No. It’s nothing,” I said.

In the distance, a train wailed, breaking a certain feeling of the day because, before its shrill pitch and before the aluminum arrow—signs of the new world—we were like two ancient warriors searching an ancient land for clues and remnants of our own forefathers, like eagle brothers hunting prey, like father and son chasing an elusive stallion down a spiral canyon.

At that moment, watching him there at that river, I surrendered to the idea that having a hero was just as good as having a father.

* * *

He was a hunter of history, and the rocks spoke to him; we were looking for rocks with teeth marks in them, and we were just getting started.

FOURTH PLACE - Justin Kyle

Justin Kyle
"March of the Dead"
ink
12x9 inches



Drama - September

by Robert Kottage

Cast

John, an Irish-looking man in his early 30s
Sophie, an Irish-looking woman in her mid 20s

A waiter

A crowd of bar patrons

A dim, crowded Irish pub in North Boston called The Black Rose. Thursday, September 20th 2001, 9:00 PM. A mahogany bar is visible upstage, a brass railing in front of it, tapestries with Celtic family crests hanging by drop wires from the “ceiling.” Several small black tables are arranged downstage, and a wrought iron staircase on stage right leads to the second floor. The crowd talks in dumb show, waiters bustle. White noise hisses from all the televisions at once, reaching a crescendo, and then stops abruptly as the camera zooms in on its subject: George W. Bush. He approaches a podium, wearing a sky-blue tie and navy suit, framed by teleprompters, while all of Congress gives him a standing ovation. Everyone in the bar spontaneously stands and applauds as well.

Throughout the rest of the play, Bush delivers his September 20th Address to a Joint Session of Congress on all the televisions, but the audio should be “doctored” so that it becomes unintelligible, bass-heavy background noise until specific lines from the speech are quoted in the text.

Everyone sits again. Lighting frames a table just left of center, where John and Sophie are sitting. Sophie is looking down at the table. She wears a burnt orange turtleneck and jeans. John wears a charcoal woolen trench coat with a white shirt underneath, and jeans. He is visibly shaken. Two beer

mugs and two double shot glasses lie empty on the table between them.

SOPHIE: It all comes down to this, then.

JOHN: [smiling nervously] Is this wild or what?

[Sophie nods once.]

JOHN: I mean is this not fucking wild?

SOPHIE: [looking up] I mean, yeah. It doesn't make me smile, honestly.

JOHN: It's just nerves, Sophie.

[The waiter is passing in front of the table, staring at a television along with everyone else. John flags him down and points at the glasses, reordering: two and two.]

JOHN: You know what it reminds me of? Whitewater rafting.

SOPHIE: Hmmm, right. Exhilarating.

JOHN: No, of course not. More like you're trapped. There's the current, and there's the rubber raft, and that's it. Once you hit that first hole, if you decide—You know what? Maybe I don't want to be whitewater rafting after all . . .

BUSH: Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

[Congress stands and applauds on television, and the whole bar follows suit again, including John and Sophie. This lasts for about fifteen seconds. Once they all sit

back down, John is wide-eyed. A long pause follows.]

JOHN: Sophie?

SOPHIE: John.

JOHN: We're trapped in this, aren't we? It really is—it's just like rafting. Or being in the stands at a soccer match.

[Sophie is silent.]

JOHN: [pensive] Poor Sophie. Poor, poor Sophie. [“Trying on” the thought of this] Sophie talking to John again—imagine that. And all is right with the world, as they say.

SOPHIE: [suppressing a smile, then changing the subject] Are they going to keep making us fucking stand up, then? I'm already sick of it.

JOHN: [nervously] Shhh. Keep it down, Soph. And I double-dog dare you—

SOPHIE: I'm not doing it again.

JOHN: Oh, you'll stand all right. Don't and you'll be marked a Muslim.

SOPHIE: Fuck that.

JOHN: [teasing] I might have to change tables if you don't. Disappear into the crowd.

[The waiter arrives with two shots and two beers, and sets them on the table. He hesitates.]

JOHN: [to waiter] Oh—I started a tab with the other dude that was here before.

Drama

[Waiter nods and leaves.]

SOPHIE: I hate that you would even say that: “Marked a Muslim.” What does that mean? I don’t even know what to think about that.

JOHN: Hey, don’t blame me.

SOPHIE: Well who the hell said it?

JOHN: [raising his shot glass] Speaking of bitter arguments about nothing, here’s to old times. Salut.

[They both down the shots. John shivers violently from the alcohol, but Sophie is still.]

BUSH: Those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah.

[Congress stands on television, applauding respectfully, but the bar patrons remain seated this time. Sophie alone stands, but her body language indicates she immediately regrets calling attention to herself. She doesn’t clap.]

SOPHIE: [in a hiss] Would you look at these bastards?

JOHN: Sophie.

SOPHIE: Bunch of cigar-chewing, seer-sucker—

JOHN: Sophie, sit down, I’m begging you.

[Sophie sits, privately relieved to have been forced. But she realizes this about herself

right away and is filled with self-loathing.]

JOHN: [impishly] Told ya you’d stand.

SOPHIE: [despondent] What are we even doing here?

JOHN: What are we doing here—are you kidding? “The Black Rose”? “Over the highways and byways the pilgrim goes aflame with the name of my small black rose”?

SOPHIE: Oh, I see. What are we doing here?

JOHN: Laden with meaning. Symbolism.

SOPHIE: Ah.

JOHN: Eighteenth century. Language of flowers. Each one meant something different. Back when people passed messages to one another through plants. “Say it with flowers,” they’d say.

SOPHIE: And now we just fly into buildings.

JOHN: [shrugs] People have grown denser. Tougher to get a message through. [Long pause.] Funny thing about symbolism—when you’re an English major, you spend so much time digging through the facts to find the symbols, like a dog looking for a buried bone. “Look, everybody—I found a symbol!” [Pants like a dog.] But when you start looking around the real world and all you see anymore are symbols, you realize: I’ve gotta start trying to dig my way back to the facts. You know?

SOPHIE: Not really.

JOHN: Yeah you do. It’s like what you just said about flying into buildings. We’re gonna have those towers blazing in our brains forever. This guy they’re saying was behind it—this...bin something, bin Osama—hell, his face is going to be like a picture on a stamp. I give it a month, he’ll join the ranks of Elvis and Hitler.

SOPHIE: I don’t think he’ll be on any stamps.

JOHN: No, I’m serious. I need to know—[hesitates, realizing he’s raising his voice, looks around sheepishly, and continues sotto voce]—I need to know what happened here. They’re saying, “we will never forget.” Ha! It’s been nine days and we already don’t quite remember. We never knew! And this [looks behind him]—this s.o.b. on the television? He’s blowing it up. Penetrate, inflate, obfuscate. I need to know the facts, before they get so buried in flags and flowers that no one can even tell me what they are anymore. [Pause. Continues desperately.] I need to know what happened here.

BUSH: Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.

[Everyone in the bar stands and applauds again. John and Sophie are the last on their feet, but they just stand looking at one another, not clapping, while everyone else stares at the nearest television. They are somewhat obscured by other bar patrons milling about. Everyone sits again.]

SOPHIE: [lightening the mood] I hope

Drama

Jesus has been charging royalties on that sentiment.

JOHN: [smiles sadly] You're so beautiful, Sophie. I want to remember what this is like, looking at you. In eight years, it'll be all blown out of proportion.

[Sophie is silent.]

JOHN: I'm afraid. Your eyes—your eyes were always so black. Like falling off my feet, up into something. Nobody ever looks as hard as you do at things. You're unrelenting.

[Sophie is silent.]

JOHN: We haven't talked in years now, Sophie. You realize that? Years. That makes me afraid, too. Did we have an argument? Can you remember?

[Sophie is silent.]

JOHN: Was it something . . . something to do with your car? An accident? [Pause.] Say something, goddamnit, or I'll—. [Pauses and contains himself, then continues, quietly.] Please say something, will you? One blink for yes, two blinks for no. [He laughs, but it comes out a cry.]

[Sophie is silent.]

JOHN: I know what. I know how you can say something without even opening your mouth: don't stand. Next time all these fuckers start applauding, just don't stand. I dare you.

BUSH: Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people

and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.

[Everyone stands again, including John, who is shaking his head wistfully and looking down at Sophie where she sits. Sophie isn't visible to the audience behind the people standing in front of her. The ovation lasts about fifteen seconds. When everyone sits again, Sophie has vanished. John is not surprised—he appears to have expected this.]

[All the lights go down except that of a single television (the largest one, which should be stage right), and a spotlight on John, who remains standing. Everyone else is invisible and still from here to the end.]

BUSH: Even grief recedes with time and grace. But our resolve must not pass. Each of us will remember what happened that day and to whom it happened. We will remember the moment the news came, where we were and what we were doing. Some will remember an image of a fire or story or rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever.

JOHN: There were things I wanted to tell you. I wanted to say something like this: the reason I never really loved you? It had nothing at all to do with you. It was my fault.

[Long pause.]

I guess it's way too late to be honest now. No way to dig the facts back up. But...I need to know what happened here.

BUSH: Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence

with patient justice, assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom and may he watch over the United States of America. Thank—.

[A burst of gray interference fills the television screen before Congress can begin applauding, as though the cable has gone out, and after a brief pause the spotlight on John is killed. The television hisses static for fifteen seconds before slowly dimming to black, the sound fading to silence.]

[Curtain.]

Poetry - Oil Spill

by Derek Slagle

the smell of gas floating
on surface tension of water's rainbow.

the spectrum waiting and sliding
as burnt webbed feet holding indigo plum-
age.

the silver hull of a ship is a fan
breaking water surfaces. tossing waves
smacking
its cold side like a buoy.

a photo negative of clouds swimming,
rolling their weight onto sand and rocks,
blackness creeps through a white sea foam.

father and I in our boat with automatic
fishing
poles watching a ribbon trail
as we leave the Carolina shore.

Andrew Scott



Andrew Scott

"Untitled #3"

photograph

3.59x6 inches

Fiction - Denial

by Caron Castle

The Five Stages of Grief

Denial (*this is not happening*)

Anger (*why is this happening*)

Bargaining (*I promise I'll be a better person if...*)

Depression (*I don't care anymore*)

Acceptance (*I'm ready for whatever comes*)

I'm exhausted. I'm *unwell*. I'm losing weight, my head aches, and I'm having trouble concentrating. I'm winter-tired. My limbs are heavy, and cold seeps under my clothing. If not for my bony hips, my jeans would be in a puddle around my ankles. My glands are swollen; my throat is sore—something's got me. I study, walk the dog, keep my appointments, pretend to be happy and healthy, but I only want to lie on my back in bed. I sleep more than I am awake, but these ever-darkening circles around my eyes prompt concerned questions at first from family, then from friends, and finally from strangers. The lady at the salon suggests highlights for my hair, concealer for my eyes, and pizza and burgers for my thin frame, though she compliments my protruding hipbones. I tell everyone cheerily, "I'm fine," and I am pretty sure I mean it. J. handles me as though I'm made of glass when we make love and then makes a sad face when he catches me leaving the shower. He insists I seek help. I visit the doctor on August 17th. . .

"What is your primary complaint?" the lady in scrubs inquires.

"I've lost 13 pounds in three weeks."

The big-boned nurse says dryly, "Congratulations. Dr. Smith will be with you in a few minutes. Undress and put on this gown."

"Open in the front, or back?"

She shrugs, "Doesn't matter."

When I unfold the tiny rectangle of scratchy paper, it becomes a not-much-larger rectangle of paper with a circle cut

out of the middle. While I'm working out the mathematics of how to cover 71 inches of girl with 17 inches of paper, Dr. Smith knocks and enters without waiting for a reply. I stand there, naked in socks, freezing. "Here. I don't know what this is." I thrust the crumpled paper at her, and she impatiently slides the hole over my head, walks to her computer, and enters a password. I catch sight of myself in the mirror and note that the paper does not drape compliantly over my upper body, but extends stiffly outward on either side of my shoulders. I'm a scarecrow: skinny, unhealthy, ridiculous, but I'm grateful that the mirror is too high to include my fresh bikini wax. At least I am spared the indignity of viewing my newly childish nether regions. The lady at the salon was right: I need a pizza. Dr. Smith types madly, and I shiver. I look around for something, anything with which to cover myself, and see that the doctor has placed her plump behind on the other, more generous square of paper that was meant to offer my lower body some degree of modesty. She types. I decide to stand there, bare-assed and bare breasted, sheltered by nothing but my paper collar, and force her to deal with my protruding ribs, bony legs, and shiny crotch.

The doctor finally turns to face me, and I'm disappointed when she doesn't flinch.

"So, what's going on with you?"

"I've lost 13 pounds in two weeks.

I feel awful. I look awful. My glands are swollen. My boyfriend says I'm not sleeping well, but I sleep 11 hours a day, am tired all the time, and always cold. Something is *wrong*, and I don't know what it is."

"Hmmm. Have a seat."

The doctor opens the paper blanket with one expert flick and then ungraciously tucks

it between my sharp knees. The blanket is temporarily warm from her body heat. This seems like a small kindness, and I'm caught off guard for a moment . . . and grateful. Both the moment and the warmth pass, and I shiver. She takes my temperature (low), looks in my ears, at my throat, and asks about my periods.

"Are you coughing?"

"No."

"Had any nausea, cramps; any other complaints?"

"No."

"Could you be pregnant?"

"No."

"Hmmm."

"Do you have any joint or muscle pain?"

"No."

"Not even your back?"

I don't answer.

Dr. Smith feels the glands in my neck, makes a face, then suddenly yanks the stirrups out and hits the call button for a nurse.

"I need to examine her."

Caron, I think you need to examine *Caron*. I'm right here in the room, and I can *hear* you.

"Raise your arm."

She pokes around in my armpit, finds something tender, moves her cold hands down to the side of my breast, and finds another one.

"That hurts. What is that? Are *all* of my glands swollen?"

Her turn to snub: no answer. She taps, bangs on my stomach, runs her hard fingers down to my hipbones, and finds another painfully sensitive spot.

"How long has this been here?"

"I don't know. I wasn't aware of it."

I rise up to see what "this" is, and feel a cold alarm climb the back of my

Fiction

neck. There are large . . . lumps just under my skin next to my hip.
“Get dressed, and walk down the hall to the lab. We will need to do some tests.”
“What are those lumps? Are those lymph nodes? But I don’t have a fever, so I don’t have an infection, right? What is wrong with me?”
“I’m not sure; that is why we need to draw some blood. The nurse will help you.”
The nurse will help me. In my recent experience, the nurse wasn’t very goddamned helpful, but the naked have few options. The nurse appraises me, frankly, while I am getting dressed; she takes a deliberate look at the landing strip below my navel, snarls, and quickly pulls the door open wide before I have my pants back up.
I sit in the next waiting room for more than an hour as other lab patients come and go. The lab technician’s eyes slide past me each time he calls another patient, even though I’m seated in the first chair, right in the doorway. I stare at the wall, leaving a month-old copy of *Newsweek* unopened on my lap. An elderly man takes it without asking, I’m cold, tired, uncomfortable, and wondering, at this point, if I give a shit if the other patients will be offended if I scratch my itchy bikini line. The urge becomes unbearable; I scratch good and long, but no one notices.
Seven vials of blood later, I drive home with shaky hands and two stiffly bandaged elbows. The next few months are a hazy, slow-motion blur. A doctor who calls me “Carol” scrapes out my uterus. It takes several days to recover, but my condition doesn’t improve. I’m sent to an otolaryngologist who surgically scrubs my sinuses with what must have been steel wool and mustard gas, and I spend three weeks

inhaling fire, slowly healing. No improvement. My tonsils are removed by the same doctor, who introduces himself before the second surgery. He clearly has no memory of having buried his instruments in my face just three weeks before. Recovery is brutal and takes five more weeks from my life, but nothing changes. I’m down to 103 pounds now, and my family has stopped making comments about my weight. But the concerned looks are beginning to take a toll. I no longer hear anything about the dark circles from my friends, but that may be because they stopped calling. Strangers no longer ask if I’m tired, but they have begun to bump into me with such frequency that I sport bruises on my feet, arms, and elbows that match those under my eyes. I’m too weak to protest, and the assaults continue. I feel insignificant, unsubstantial: a nuisance. Even in my dreams, I am made of paper, glass, and cobwebs. J. comes to the door with sympathy now instead of flowers and calls more than he visits, but my pride doesn’t know the difference. He tells me that he loves me and is always there for me, ready to help me with anything I need, but he only kisses my forehead.
Dr. Smith arranges a biopsy of my stubborn lymph nodes, and I find I’m no longer alarmed by sharp metal needles and knives and the indifferent eyes that peek out from white caps and masks. I’m cooperative: there is a devil in me, and I want it out. Though she doesn’t know it, the anesthesiologist has become my most caring and considerate friend. She gives me permission to sleep. . .

I receive a call from the doctor’s office: “Come in and discuss the results of the biopsy.”

I ask: “What have I got? What has got me?” The voice on the phone says, “Policy doesn’t allow us to give results over the phone, but can you come in right away?” I should be frightened by the urgency implied in her request, but a relieved “*finally*” is all that I can summon.
An hour later, Dr. Smith thrusts my test results in my hands, along with pamphlets explaining the connection between the Epstein-Barr virus and Burkitt’s lymphoma. She tells me three things: I have an appointment with an oncologist on April 17th, Burkitt’s is a form of cancer, and that it is possible that I just have a chronic case of mononucleosis.
“Since August?” I ask, but she doesn’t answer.
It is spring now; nothing has improved, and I have begun to contemplate my death. I have nightmares and awkward conversations with my family and boyfriend that end with “Oh, don’t worry. I am sure you will be fine.” *I will be fine. I am fine. I’m fine.*
My bed is my refuge and my hell. Exhaustion and insomnia fight over me, and I lie on my back for hours, in the dark, wondering if I am asleep or awake. It is March 1st, and I have begun working on a will, making a senseless list of account numbers, bills, and balances. I try to come up with profound words for my loved ones, but since they seem unconcerned and unaffected, the cold list of debts and assets is all I can manage. I’m strangely unemotional about this . . . affliction. I haven’t shed a tear in months. I haven’t the energy.
J. comes over and finds the pile of documents that define me: my car titles, property deeds, certificates of deposit, and utility bills. He tells me, “Don’t be so dramatic.

Fiction

You will be fine,” and goes to bed angry, but, of course, I am already there, shivering under a pile of blankets. Anxiety floods my veins, and I am suddenly drenched and cold. My pillow is wet and hair is soaked. I sit up quickly and turn on the bedside lamp. J. snores beside me, dry, comfortable, oblivious. I put my hands to my face and feel something moist pour out of my right ear. I hold my hand tightly to my head, run to the bathroom, and flip on the light. I stand in front of the mirror shaking so hard that I hear my own teeth chatter and force myself to pull my hand away. Water, not blood, pours from my ear and slides coldly down my cheek and neck. Only slightly relieved, I step back into the bedroom and scan the ceiling for a leak: nothing. Back in front of the mirror, bewildered, I turn my head. My hair is plastered to my forehead, and my other cheek is also wet and sticky. I drag my fingers down my face and put them to my mouth. I taste salt. Salt? I’ve been crying? And it all comes rushing back . . .

It is raining, I am in the passenger seat, and J. is driving. “I’m tired of this song. Can I turn the station?” but he doesn’t answer. *Jerk*, I think. I know he likes this song, but I’m sick and don’t know *how* sick; *he* doesn’t know how sick either, and you would think I could switch the goddamn radio station if I wanted to. Angry, I lean up and punch the button, *hard*. Harder . . . nothing. “What is wrong with the stereo? Do you have the remote?” He ignores me. I smash the buttons with more force and with both hands. I turn the knob, but the station won’t change. I stare at J’s face, it is incredulous that he is ignoring me while I beat his expensive receiver in a fury. J. signals,

turns onto Center, and parks in front of the post office. I scream, “What is wrong with you? Why won’t you answer me?! Are you a ghost? Am I?” But he turns off the key, steps out of the car, and coolly walks towards the post office. I watch as J. holds the door for a pretty blonde carrying a newborn in a snuggly. She prances through the door, blond curls bouncing, and a slight grin crosses his face as he stares at her ass. J. obligingly takes her flowered umbrella, shakes it, folds it, and places it carefully against the door. I step out of the car in a red daze, determined to walk home. Damn him. Blind with rage at his silent hostility and blatant flirting, I step into four lanes of oncoming traffic, but, miraculously, the cars miss me. I make it to the other side of the road and try to step up onto the sidewalk, but I’m so weak I have to sit on the curb for a moment, ankle deep in a cold puddle with my hands and knees shaking. I realize that I am seven miles from home and far too ill to walk.

I left my purse and cell phone in the car. I’ve been sleeping for eleven plus hours since at least July. I’m sick, useless, whiny. My underweight body is boyish and weak; the dark circles under my eyes age me. I haven’t been fun, attractive, or productive since last summer. No wonder J. ignores me. I have used him up. He is too young to deal with a major illness, too young to settle for a debilitated, deteriorating, demanding girlfriend. I should apologize. I should suck it up and work hard at getting well. I’ll fix this. I’ll win him back, regain my health and my strength, highlight my hair, dab on concealer, gain a few pounds, and make him love me again.

I watch J. exit with the pretty young mother: laughing, chatting, and holding the door

as she unfurls her bright umbrella. She is curvy, cute . . . healthy. I can make out her blushing cheeks and freckles from here. She tosses her hair and laughs as J. makes a silly face at her fat, pink, wriggling baby. My lip quivers. I can’t do this. I don’t deserve this. I took care of him when he had kidney stones . . . when he had that liver condition that turned him yellow for weeks. I’ve nursed him through colds, hangovers, and the loss of his mother. I fix my hair, smear on lipstick, and try to look pretty. Push up bras, bikini waxes . . . he hasn’t kissed me in weeks and spends his charm on a stranger. I try to be fun, try to be upbeat, and try to pretend I don’t feel like warm death. I’m tired. I’m *unwell*.

I see an eighteen-wheeler speeding towards me, trying to beat the yellow light. I realize that I am going to get soaked, and I’m trying to climb up onto the sidewalk with shaky legs when I hear a musical giggle from across the street. Fuck waiting for the oncologist. Fuck Dr. Smith and the whole crew of indifferent surgeons. Fuck my disinterested family, absent friends, and insensitive boyfriend. I’m *tired*. Sick of being bumped into, ignored, belittled, and treated as though I am invisible. I cover my ears with my hands, hold my breath, and step off the curb. I feel the wind and rain whip around me; my hair blows across my face, and I catch J’s eye just before the truck reaches me. The freezing rain whips sideways, and the noise of the speeding truck on wet pavement is deafening. I breathe out, “*finally*,” and all goes silent and black as the water hits my face. I put my fingers to my lips and taste salt.

Brittany Willis



Brittany Willis

“Untitled”

acrylic on cow skull

20x12 inches

Poetry - Words Matter

by Audrey Peters

Your metaphors are obvious,
Like that bird represents freedom,
Or this ink stands for death.
You should know that even fools
Can be right on occasion, bright
Tongues whose words we should
Know, like Camus and Rilke
And that guy who stands
On the streetcorner, the man
Who speaks in tongues and wears
Too many coats, wondering
How many words it takes
To make a poem, how many
Scars to make skin entirely new.
He stands there thinking of how
Much matter words have,
And how little words matter.
And so he digs, he pries
And pierces the leather that binds
His body in—dismantling
Is one way to God, one way
To let the soul go free.

Poetry - Whisper Whisper

by Jacob Vines

Whisper. Whisper.

Listen!

The brittle rain crackles
On the tin of my roof!
My head placed on my pillow,
My eyes closed to the light,
My legs and arms tingling,
My nostrils rotating with patterns,
My ears wild and thriving:
Wild to the voices
Of rain on a tin roof!

Shhh! Listen!

Whisper, whisper.

Hear the timid whispers
As each drip and drop tells
What they have seen on
Their fall from the heavens?

Have they seen the Hosts
With blinding light and radiance?
Did their bodies act as a prism
And cast a colored arch across Earth's
prison?
(A medium of God's covenant.)

Have they spoken to stars
And heard their cosmic reply?
Or blown a kiss to Paris

As they fell from their height?
Or viewed the mountains of God
For any length of time?
Or heard the deep deep diesel
Resonate so high?
Or shook at all earthly wives,
Destructs of nature's life?
Or did their death did they question
Just seconds to their good-bye?
Or rejoice at the time they had,
That time was still alive?
Did they pitter about the heat,
Or patter about the tax?
Or did they live to die?
Or did they learn to relax?

Oh, listen to their simple replies
Of the death on my tin roof:

Despite their journeys, accomplishments,
Failures and wishes,
Regrets and aspirations,
Wants, lives,
They all end on a tin roof.
And they all breathe the
exact
same
sigh.

Listen!

Whisper, whisper.

Sherry Tuccianrone

Sherry Tuccianrone
"Inland"
soda fired porcelain
14x3.5 inches



Drama - Here

by Daia Stager

[Night. High amongst a bridge buttress with lights flashing from cars passing above, three women—1, 2, and 3—with filthy faces and hair, dressed in cast-offs, sit like Buddhas.]

1: Here I am, under the bridge, as if I have nowhere else to go, by choice. Unthreading the loom.

2: I am stationed here, tuned to the heartbeats carried by the tires that whine overhead, the Unweaver.

[Sirens wail.]

3: They're coming! [In the cadence of the siren] AAAAAH! Too late for my children. Too late. Pushed aside. Ear-piercing cries, hear me.

1: Hear us.

3: The heart screams for the burnt bodies of my babies, seared into the skin on the back of my eyes.

1: Time-lines skewed.

2: Am I riding with Khan again?

3: No. That was then.

2: When?

3: When you burnt my house with my children and me in it.

2: We re—member. We did, didn't we?

1: Yes. Swinging swords. Thundering hooves.

2: Shattering the old ways.

3: Stirring the pot.

1: Now, marauders dress in grey flannel.

3: And chinos. Punching 9 keys with eyebrows raised.

2: Yes, that's a good one.

3: 8.9% revenues even with the collateral damage.

1: Justified. They weren't ours.

[Pause]

2: Banshees chant in blood stained voices, their condemnation.

1, 2, 3: Men

2: As if it's them—the others.

3: The others.

[They snicker.]

3: Sarah said—the truth which no one ever utters.

2: The truth is—there are no others—only us.

1: In the killing fields. On the killings.

Under the killing field. Backs to the killing fields.

[Slow hissing chant]

1, 2, 3: Only us.

1, 2, 3: Only [pause, in breath] you.

2: The night I lay dying, belly down, suffocating in eosinophils' toxins, paralyzed, earnestly praying to the Punishing One and the Redeemer, do not make my children orphans, the voices started in low whispers, we must take her out.

3: Take her out.

1: Take her out.

2: She's too damaged. I knew what they meant! Death to me?

3: Death.

2: In a vacuum of elephantine darkness I screamed.

1: Nooooooo.

2: Don't make my children orphans. I'll do anything.

1: Through threats of death and pain, anything?

2: What? Anything?

1: Yes, anything.

3: Forgive the unforgivable gropings of the demented ones.

2: They poured their pain into that small body in blind grouping and thrashing, smearing the cum and blood in hasty attempts to make it go away.

1: What?

3: It?

2: You know, the guilty evidence of their . . .

3: Even Here . . .

1: Now.

2: I can hardly bring my mouth to form the words . . .

1: Now.

2: No, I won't yet.

3: Not here.

2: Who is there to trust with this suffocating darkness?

3: I can't breathe.

[A panting pause. Tires whine. Puddles are splashed. Lights flash by. Their Buddha faces return.]

3: My son's soft skin, weathered and whiskered now, is scarred from the banshee voices' fangs.

2: Wanting to clip his manhood with their highbrow-glazed, fury-infected sanctimonious venoms:

1, 2, 3 Men Men

3: Not my son, you vicious bitches. I silenced them. With the eyes of a Mother and a heart once wounded by cum and spiteful censorship, I stripped them of their—get over it.

2: They limp and crawl through existence, cowering or preening.

3: I stripped their gory armor from soft, white shoulders to bare their anguished

Drama

yokes to barren fields.

2: Killing fields.

1: Time-lines skewed

2: Didn't we burn together during the Inquisition?

3: Who burnt who?

2: Does it matter?

1: Or was that Salem?

2: Was that you who sent the first born sons of Judah wailing to the crocodile God, Baal?

1: Yes, that was then. This is now. I have paid in full.

3: Remember death's last thought? Oh God, how could I – have you forsaken us?

1: Dharam Rai stuffs Kal Narinjin's maw with writhing souls.

2: Grinning cohorts savoring the sweet spice of regret and succulent guilt.

3: That guarantees the spinning of the Wheel.

[Pause.]

1: I remember.

2: I saw them when I lay dying.

3: I promised.

2: I will do anything.

3: I was sucked through an intestine of slick orange into the flaming bowels of Hell.

1: [Screams] Noooooo!

3: A small, soot-smudged face peered through gnarled hands. Tear trails down her cheeks. Eyes begged, free me. She was four.

1: Here.

3: Nothing mattered.

2: Only her.

3: In the name of Love, Life, and the Divine, you have no right to that child's soul.

1: I am, she is, I am, she is me.

3: She flew without hesitation into my embrace, a searing moment of my chest ripped open wide enough to let her in, stinking of torture, ripped and burning flesh.

1: How could they watch as one tied the body to a slab of cold concrete and that time mounted it and ripping his way in???

2: To one so small, like my children were, like my grandchildren are.

3: How?

[Pause. Grieve.]

3: I remember.

2: Time-lines skewed.

1: Tightly raveled knots of frantic suppression in my guts, muted until touched.

2: By some unexpected flash of tenderness that made it past the barricade, in the most unlikely place.

3: The cereal aisle.

1: That song played that reminded me of love like so much water under the bridge.

2: The brain as a fragment of the hologram of the universe requires periods of time for the focusing on and the grasping of its own contents.

1: So I escaped.

3: Here.

1: Under the bridge.

2: The biological time framework set genetically for all human experiences.

3: If not successfully absorbed, experienced, or learned.

1: For some reason.

2: Within the set bio-time framework, makes further development, absorption and experience incomplete.

1: Now.

2: Under the bridge, I am undone.

3: Or done.

1, 2, 3: Let go . . . [in a softer tone] let go.

1: My naked face recoils from eyes that would have it be another.

2: Wrinkles and scars, wrinkles and scars.

3: First, give up what you want to gain.

1: Let go of control.

2: Help me.

3: Let go of needing to be heard.

2: Hear me.

1: Let go of righteousness.

2: They hurt me.

3: Let go of ignoring the voices.

1: Speak now.

1, 2, 3: Shhhhhh.

3: Hear.

1, 2, 3: Shhhhhh.

3: Listen.

Ani Volkan



Ani Volkan
“She’s long gone, snapshot 1”
intaglio on cotton batting with
tea staining
32x26 inches

Poetry - Their Daily Bread

by Isaac Wilson

Deserted streets
Empty yards
No June bugs dancing in the porch light
Hell! No porch lights
No dogs barking or cats clawing
Not even the crickets make a peep
Perhaps they weep
For having nothing to do
And no one to sing to
Only sounds of television screens
In this bizarre world
We call
THE AMERICAN DREAM
Where everyone is trapped
By the magic machine
That comes to us in primetime
And fills our heads
With garbage trucks and stop signs
Empty pizza boxes and used condoms
Bullet holes and dirty magazines
Road-kill, landfills, and prescription pills
Ads for weight loss and brain loss
Dried-up pimps and crooked bosses
and
Dental floss the crevices of your mind
And wipe clean the slate of your being
Because there's no need to keep your
mind fed
It's the place where everyone goes for
their daily bread

NONFICTION - That's The Way I've Heard It Should Be: A Single Woman's Questions on True Love

by Victoria Vanderveer

Of course, it all begins with a boy. That one we think is Mr. Right, our Prince Charming that we can't wait to bring home and show off to our parents. Tonight began with a boy. I'm sick of boys. At twenty-two, I want to date a man. There's a big difference. Sometimes I really think of swearing them off. But then a cute one walks by and gives you a wink. I never get winks! So, maybe there is something redeeming to the male breed. (Dude that gave me a wink is now hovering over his girlfriend. Yeah, I feel so good about myself . . . Waiter, another shot please?!)

– Journal, August 2, 2009.

I'm reminded constantly of this Delbert McClinton-Bonnie Raitt duet, "Good Woman, Good Man." In the song, the two are searching for the proverbial good woman and good man: proverbial because the "good man" does not exist. He was our fathers and grandfathers, occasionally the heroic uncle, but somewhere in the gene pool, the "good man" disappeared, leaving all of us girls scrambling to cover our asses in tight jeans and miniskirts. We have spent years since praying for and trying to will into existence this "good man."

And what if he did exist? Would we not classify him as "not cute enough," "not muscular enough," "not smart enough"? If we can get past our inhibitions with his appearance and intelligence, would we not load him down with our incredibly heavy emotional baggage and run him off? Men are not made like they used to be, as if they were assembled in some factory somewhere. They don't open doors or pull out chairs; we're expected to pay half the bill, tip, and valet; we can't even ask them to

take us to the hospital.

Everywhere I look, I see "shiny, happy people," as REM says. They flit, prance, hold hands, and smile candid one-sided smiles as they share plates of sushi. I look down at my Boston Roll and Vandy Roll, then back at the room full of couples, then back to the sushi.

Across from me sits the newly-married Larissa. She can tell what I'm thinking . . . I think. From the way I peel the label off the bottle of hana-awaka sake to the lifeless way I push my sushi around, she can at least take a good guess and figure out what I'm thinking.

"Don't worry. He's out there!"

This has to be about the millionth time she's said that. Since we worked together at Walgreens and struck up a friendship at Volunteer State College, we've been hanging out on most Tuesdays, either studying together over pizza and beer or making the rare extravagance away from tests and homework to indulge in some of Nashville's finest sushi and sake.

I try to raise an eyebrow but get off with only half-squinting an eye. "Yeah. . . Then where is he?"

"Well, James and I met when I was workin' at the pharmacy," she answers with her sweet country girl accent kicking in. "He was a customer. We really hit it off, then he walked away, and I thought, 'Damn! A few months later, here he comes again. And that was it.'" A month after they started dating, they moved in together. A few months after that, he proposed. And now Mrs. James Austin is just another one of my friends happy with a ring on her finger.

Underneath the table, I trace my empty left ring finger, trying not to remem-

ber that it had been a year since I ended my engagement.

I'm not sad that it was over. When it was over, it was just that: over. He left without speaking, so I had a destructive moment throughout the house and pawned the jewelry. What else can you do?

Since then, there has been the Sexual Harassment Boy, the Wiccan, the Ex-Marine, Urinal Boy, and James—the James I knew and still longed for.

"Just make sure any new guy you date knows the difference between a urinal and a sink!" she laughs.

Yeah, it's really funny to me, too. Ha ha. Well, maybe a little. I had invited a guy out to a dinner of pizza and beer with Larissa and her James, and he showed up in a shirt that looked like it had been vomited on, grey sweatpants, and with dirty hair. Unable to cancel at that point—and believe me, I tried—we went on to Brixx Pizzeria. At one point, he went to the bathroom, came back, and announced that he wasn't sure if he had used the sink or urinal; they looked the same.

(Cue the board that smashes me in the head.)

Eventually, Chris came along. He was 24, an accomplished genius in a new field of computer science, and mature beyond his years. It had been a long time since I had fallen for someone, and throughout our friendship, I could see myself with Chris on a more frequent basis. He never told me why, but my feelings were never reciprocated. Maybe he had been hurt just like me. Regardless, we rarely—if ever—talk now.

At 22, I was more mature and experienced with romance than most of the girls I knew; I wasn't going to put

NONFICTION

myself through any pain because some guy I liked didn't feel the same. If I could move on, with my head held high, the day after I dumped my fiancé, then I could move on from him . . .

I go on and laugh at her joke. After a few bites of sushi, I shrug off most of the overwhelming feeling of loneliness. "I just have to keep looking forward. God will put someone in my path."

After some more sushi, we talk about other things. It never seems to leave her mind, though, that I'm "the Single One." "We really need to get you someone," she says, picking up her sushi with her fingers. I laugh because she can't use chopsticks.

"Well, if he's out there, I'm one day closer to him." That makes her smile. "Besides, God and I have a deal. If I don't find a good man to marry, He will always give me good dogs. Just look at my pugs."

Again, I trace the empty left ring finger.

Yes, I'd been engaged before . . . His name was Adam, and he seemed like Prince Charming for eleven months. We were constantly together, got two pug puppies, and had a fairly normal life. We both worked and took time off from school. In May of 2008, we went to Indiana to see my childhood friend, Kelly, graduate from Indiana University. Our time in Indiana was wonderful. He had chosen a quaint little inn for us, and across the street, there was a small restaurant that served breakfast and afternoon tea. Even now, I wouldn't trade those days for anything.

The problems started when we returned. He became addicted to "Lord of the Rings Online"—LO'TRO, as it was nicknamed, and that was the final nail in the

coffin of our relationship. His life revolved around that damn game . . . and a girl he met while playing: "L." I never knew her by any other name than "L." When I had to have surgery that summer, in mid-June, my mother asked Adam if he still loved me. He said no. On August 1st, I kicked him out. I think, perhaps, that my karma with love has simply ran out. Larissa talks about something James was doing at work and then about their cats. I listen, nod, eat my sushi, and pour us both sake.

She asks about the well-being of my friend, Jessica, who suffers from cystic fibrosis. "Twenty-nine and doing well. She's still having some trouble with her stomach but is fighting like mad." We both admire Jessica for her strength. I want to be more like her.

Later, I drop Larissa off at her car. Turning on my iPod, Carly Simon's song "That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be" comes through the speakers. The words sting and hit me in the gut like a sucker punch, but I don't change the song. Maybe it's a sick part of me that listens to this song over and over. Maybe I just can't help it. The situation is just too real:

My friends from college they're all married now.
They have their houses, and their lawns.
They have their silent noons, tearful nights,
angry dawns . . .
And yet they drink, they laugh,
close the wound, hide the scar.

But you say it's time we moved in together,
and raised a family of our own, you and me.

Well that's the way I've always heard it

should be.

You want to marry me.

We'll marry.

"How absolutely freakin' true!" I think as I drive fast down the back roads to my parents' house, my temporary residence. I have the top down on the convertible and let the wind whistle through my hair. My tears grow cold on my face, but I can't hold them back.

Kelly is engaged to a man I can't stand—but whom she loves.

Larissa just got married.

Jessica has been with the same man for eleven years, and they live together happily.

At night, I share my bed with the two pugs that Adam and I bought together. I'm not unhappy, but I'm not happy. I feel so incomplete, like something is wrong with me. At a red light, I look in the mirror: aqua eyes, pale skin, pink lips . . . cowl-neck blue shirt, jeans, and moccasins. Subconsciously, I toy with my moonstone necklace. But for tonight, I'll go home, settle into bed with Milla and Otis, pray the same prayer I always pray, and try to sleep . . . maybe tomorrow.

Yeah, maybe tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow is one day closer to that man.

Fiction - Anonymous

by Victoria L. Vanderveer

I have a photograph of a man whose name I don't know. Sometimes, I stare at it for a long time. Sometimes, I hate it and want to throw it away. Sometimes, I wish it would fall out of my limp fingers into the fire.

His face is pleasant enough: brown eyes, black hair, a cocky grin, a mole above the corner of his left lip. When I stare at it, I try to imagine his voice, what he would sound like if he spoke to me through the photograph. I can almost hear him: his voice is light and soft, like a gentleman's, not rough and throaty like the heavy smokers I pass in the park. He sits on my nightstand in a broken frame. He stares at me at night. Occasionally, I stare back.

Today, I will take the photograph with me. Today, I will find this man, understand him, learn his name. Perhaps, I will come to know why I have this picture. I will go to the police and hand his photograph to them. Surely, they will know him or how

to contact him. I will go to the fire station and ask for him there. Perhaps, they will tell me where he is. I will go to the newspaper and look him up. I will go to the library and find his name.

I sit up from my ashen bed and shake off the dust of the night. Looking over, I see his cocky smile and brown eyes. He is staring at me again. No, I will not take him anywhere. I remove his picture from the broken frame and walk into the kitchen. From my pocket, I take out my lighter; I hold it to the photo. Slowly, the flames eat it up, like orange caterpillars eating a brown leaf. I drop the burning mess into the sink and watch as it fades into ashes. This is the last of me that I care to remember. That picture of me when I was young – that picture of a man I no longer know. I can't even remember him. He died years ago and was replaced by a heavy smoker with a throaty, rough voice.

Evan Walker



Evan Walker

"7:17"

digital photograph

8x10 inches

Poetry - Enspenserian Stanza

by Caron Castle

Lo I am mere American moderne

For whom it paynes to conform rigid
verse

Whilst paying homage to a man well-
learned

Homer inspired, rhythm and rhymes
coerced

To wax romantic on Reformation
Epic ambition exalts the faire queen
Retires to deathbed; leaves restless nation
To lament noble unfinished decree
Despite heroic worke; still disagree.

Tortured language truly this madness be

Obsessive compulsive disorder, yes?

Tho I admire Spenser's consistency

Can structure set creativity free?

His untimely midlife death suggests stress

Worke unfinished; no resolution be.

His country still in religious duress

If only Spense hadde finished his duty
Great Britain's Church mighte know true
unity

Poetry - Mother's Postcards

by Tina Michael

Postcard pictures of my mother
float on stacks of takeout menus
and magazine renewal notices.
Her face from a millennia ago
smiling at me from light years away.
A snapshot to tell me
today they had blood sausage
and her tongue curled into a knot
to avoid it.
This wrinkled and yellowed rectangle
promises that dad caught fish
as big as dogs
and she could not cut them
as they gasped on the counter.
Here my postcard reply
to tell her that she must be vegetarian
was marked "RETURN TO SENDER".
Her heavy penmanship proclaimed
in the margin that I was
"as absurd as the stars."
How, here in this Montana wide open,
could I avoid meat with

your father's family of hunters?"
Remembered stories of their trips
to be there with his people
reach through years
of passed over holidays
and unattended weddings and funerals
to make my heart feel heavy with guilt.
Guilt from knowing that her love for him
carried her miles and miles
across the country
year after year,
yet my love for them
was not enough
to bring me back home
across only a couple of hours.
Today I will go in search of blood sausage
and feel my tongue tie in a knot to avoid it.
This I will do for my mother
who waits somewhere among those
absurd stars
watching my guilt gasp on the counter.

Joshua Burd



Joshua Burd

"Marble Bowl"

cone 9, gas reduction, soda

firing, stoneware

4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

NONFICTION - A Trip to the Farm:

An Unexpected Day at the Knox County Correctional Facility

by Isaac Wilson

It's Football Time in Tennessee

It was a beautiful fall afternoon in Knoxville, TN. Located along the banks of the Tennessee River, the University of Tennessee campus was alive with fans from all over the region that had traveled to support their football team, the Tennessee Volunteers, in what would prove to be a battle against the Auburn Tigers. Many had been tailgating since the early morning hours. Grills were fired up and loaded with a plethora of greasy treats, footballs were being thrown between little kids idolizing their Volunteer heroes, and of course, as with any football tailgate anywhere in the country, the alcohol was flowing like a mighty river.

Half way through the third quarter of the game, the Cumberland Avenue strip, the heart of downtown Knoxville, was still very much alive with activity. All of the bars were packed to full capacity with Vol fans periodically pouring onto sidewalks trying to catch a glimpse of the game on one of many gigantic televisions that dot the strip. With Tennessee locked in a close battle against Auburn, spirits were high, and hopes of a much-needed victory were within the fans' grasps. However, I cannot relate any of this first-hand because I was sitting in the back of a dark, crowded paddy wagon awaiting transport to the Knox County Correctional Facility, or the Penal Farm, as it is also known. And so began the worst twenty-four hour period of my life.

Moonshine, Whiskey Look Out!

I suppose the best place to start any story is at the beginning, but unlike

most true accounts, I will not include any names of the people that I met or came across in my experiences at The Farm. One reason being that some might not want it known that they were in such a dreadful place as The Farm; the other being that, while I was at The Farm, I did not really attempt to make too many friends, or care to for that matter. Being filled with shame, regret, and confusion as to how I arrived at my present location, I just wanted to get out as quickly as possible.

With the game set to begin at 7:45 p.m., I arrive on campus with some friends around two o'clock to begin the festivities. We walk to a tailgate that is located behind the Roaming Gnome, a bar on the Strip. While at the tailgate I catch up with some old friends of mine that are in town for the game, many of them having traveled from Nashville and even one friend that has come all the way from Redlands, California. There is a spread of food that would make anyone's mouth water. Pigs-in-a-blanket, sandwiches, chips and multiple dips, fruit and veggie trays, b-b-q weenies, hot dogs and burgers, and much more line the food tables. We have two kegs of beer and a variety of liquors for cocktails. Also, someone has managed to acquire some moonshine for the occasion. The problem with moonshine, for those that have never experienced it, is that if you're not careful it will sneak up on you in the blink of an eye. There are few things as terrifying in this world as a man in the midst of a moonshine spell.

As the game begins, I travel a few blocks down the Strip to the Tin Roofs with some friends to watch the game. After more beers and cocktails, I decide to go across the street and get a pack of cigarettes

because I am running low. This is where my memory gets a little cloudy and I can't recall exactly what happened. To the best of my recollection, I am leaving the bar when I notice there is a line forming to get in. I approach the bouncer watching the door and proceed to ask him a question. "So, if I go across the street and get some smokes, will I be able to get back in?" "No," he replies to my astonishment. "What a bunch of bullshit," I replied, or something along those lines.

Apparently, bouncers don't appreciate it when you call bullshit on them. Next thing I know I am being helped out of the bar towards the street. Now, when I say that I am being helped I mean that this tree trunk of a man has lifted me by the back of my pants and is carrying me to the sidewalk, my toes barely dragging the ground, where he proceeds to throw me down on the side of the street. Being man handled and thrown down in public would normally hurt my pride, but I am more confused than anything. Sure, I have just called bullshit on him, but I mean the man no offense; it is said jokingly in sort of an "Ah, that sucks," kind of tone.

As I sit on the sidewalk bleeding, trying to gain a grasp on the situation at hand, I become more and more confused. Now remember: I am not sure if that is exactly what I said to the man. For all I know I could have called his mother a hamster and his father a ballerina. I pick up my cell phone, call my friend S and inform him of what just happened.

"Hey, I just got tossed out of the bar."

"What? What for?"

"I don't know. I'm going to go find out."

NONFICTION

Click.

As I return to the scene of my recent eviction, the bouncer notices me coming and intercepts me. I throw my arms up in a defensive motion as if to say I give up.

“Look brother, I don’t want any trouble. I just want to know why you threw me out of the bar like that. What did I do to be tossed out like that?”

My pleas go unnoticed. He grabs me again, one hand secured to the back of my waist with the other secured tightly around my neck. This time I find it rather ridiculous and continue to tell him so, even though I am having difficulty breathing.

“Listen, man, I really don’t know what your problem is, but if you want me to leave, all you have to do is ask. Honestly, what’s the point of all this bullshit?”

This time he launches me a good five feet before I manage to use my hands and face to break my fall. Fortunately for me, two of Knoxville’s finest happen to be walking by at that particular moment.

“Citizen’s arrest, citizen’s arr...” I begin, but am quickly cut off by the bouncer. “Get this motherfucker outta here,” he barks at the officers.

To my dismay, they listen, scraping me off the sidewalk, putting my hands around my back, securing the hand cuffs tightly, and walking me two blocks to the paddy wagon. Well, this is just great I remember thinking. What a bunch of bullshit.

Three Hours in the Paddy Wagon

I suppose it was a blessing that I was the first one loaded in the paddy wagon. I was worried about stepping into a crowded wagon with nowhere to sit. I did not want to get on bad terms with

anyone, so the fact that the wagon was empty brought some relief to my otherwise troubled mind. I took a seat in the corner at the very back, that way I wouldn’t have people stepping over me. My mind was racing, mostly with thoughts of anger towards the bouncer. I imagine he gets off on roughing up people smaller than him, or maybe he’s trying to make up for a lack of something else. It wasn’t long, though, until I got some company. An older man who looked more like a bum than a football fan, a notion that would later be confirmed, was the first of eight to join me in the paddy wagon. Sitting in the dark on a metal bench is not particularly comfortable, especially when your hands are constrained behind you. The wagon was cramped; it smelled of booze and sweat. I lost track of time and tried to imagine myself someplace else.

When we finally began to move I felt a sense of relief. I knew our final destination and what awaited us was the Farm. I had never been to the Farm as a prisoner but had made a few trips there in the past to bail a couple of friends out of jail. I just tried to relax and play it cool in front of the others. The Penal Farm is located in north Knoxville, out past East Town Mall, near Three Ridges Golf Course. It is usually about a ten to fifteen minute drive from downtown depending on traffic. For reasons unknown to me, our trip took well over forty-five minutes.

We finally pulled into the Farm unloading area where the engine was shut off and we were left to sit in the dark for a while longer. I could hear people all around us. It sounded as if they were playing cards, just sitting around letting us marinate in our own misery. They didn’t seem to be in any hurry to get us unloaded and into the

holding area. One man in the wagon began cursing and kicking the inside wall, which only infuriated the officers more. They began kicking in return and shouting curses at all of us that would make their mothers cringe.

Another man began shouting about how much he had to pee. He managed to slide his arms under his waist and pull his legs through so that his handcuffs were now in front of him instead of behind him. He then unzipped his pants and began to piss all over the paddy wagon floor. I propped my legs up against the opposite wall from me while a stream of urine crept its way slowly towards the rear of the paddy wagon. This put the officers over the edge. I honestly thought they were going to pull us off the wagon and begin beating us, or leave us in the heat, dark, and pee for another hour or two. The man that couldn’t hold his liquid was the first to be unloaded. They then began taking us off, two at a time, every fifteen minutes or so. After about three and half hours, I was finally unloaded, placed against a wall and patted down rather thoroughly, and placed in a holding cell to await further directions. I was the first one on the wagon but the last one off, my palms were bloody, I was almost pissed on and very pissed off, and, there wasn’t a chance of breathing the free air until morning at the earliest.

The Drunk Tank

After being stripped of all my possessions, pride included, I am issued standard Penal Farm clothing: one pair of orange boxers; one pair of orange socks that do not fit no matter how you arrange them on your feet; one button-up, one-piece, black and white striped suit; and

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one pair of orange slippers—left foot size twelve, right foot size sixteen. The alternate shoe sizes prove troublesome considering the fact that I wear a size ten and a half. I guess they are afraid of me making a run for it.

I am then escorted to the drunk tank: a twenty by twenty-five room at best, with one bathroom and no toilet paper. The first person I notice is an old friend of mine that I used to run around with in high school. We haven't spoken in years, but we both get a laugh out of seeing each other in our current location. It's the first time I have cracked a smile since my ordeal began four hours earlier.

Bodies litter the floor with everyone ranging from your common college student facing a public intoxication charge to your more professional criminal types that have obviously been through the system a time or two before. I assume this because they are on a first name basis with many of the guards. Some men are sprawled out on the floor, while others lie prone under the benches—wherever there appears to be room enough to sleep. These repeat offenders have no difficulty getting a peaceful night's sleep amongst such company. I try mostly to stay out of everyone's way without giving off the impression that I am weak or scared. I am not fearful or intimidated at this time, nor do I ever feel these emotions throughout my time at The Farm. I still have plenty of "riot punch" running through my veins and find my situation rather laughable. It still seems that I have been unjustly imprisoned and am awaiting my release which, I imagine, will be followed by a chorus of apologies from the many officers for the inconveniences enacted against me.

Three hours later, I am pacing the drunk tank which is growing with bodies every few minutes, when I notice someone being brought in. It is one of my friends that I had been tailgating with earlier in the afternoon. He walks into the tank, and I begin laughing at him because he looks like hell.

"I was at the bar and they told me you had gotten arrested," he said, "and then, three hours later, I get arrested, too."

"If you wanted to see me that bad, you should have just posted my bond."

Ten minutes later he lays spread across the ground like butter on toast snoring loudly. A few minutes after that, all of the prisoners receive a very balanced and nutritious breakfast which consists of two small boxes of Frosted Flakes and a carton of milk. Since this is the first thing I have had to eat or drink in the last seven hours, I find it quite pleasant.

About an hour later, around seven thirty, I am moved to an adjoining cell which contains about twelve prisoners. We are then filed out, issued plastic containers, and ordered to march down a long corridor in single file. It reminds me of being in a hospital with the long hallways, bad lighting, and a peculiar odor that is neither fowl nor pleasing; it lies somewhere in the midst of stinky limbo.

We are placed into a pod in the jail and all issued a cell. None of us are fortunate to have a cell to ourselves for the police have been very busy this weekend, no doubt making the streets safe for the citizens of Knoxville. Ha! If you ask me, the police are just making as many arrests as possible in order to make money off the people, but I won't get into any conspiracies—if you can call them that—involving the local law

enforcement agencies.

All I want to do is get in touch with someone on the phone and then go to my cell for some sleep. It has been nearly twenty-four hours since I have slept or taken my medication for epilepsy, and my mind is beginning to wander from me. I have to do something to reel it back in before it strays too far.

Time to make a phone call? Great, but who do I call?

Some Bird's Feathers are too Bright to be Caged

Those of us that had just been issued cells were given fifteen minutes to get a shower, grab a drink of water, or make phone calls on one of two phones. Having been unsuccessful in my earlier attempts at contacting the outside world, I decided to try another phone call. The problem with the telephones at The Farm is that calls being made to land lines are the only calls that go through on a regular basis. I haven't known anyone with a land line (house phone) in some time, so to claim it was difficult to contact anyone would be a serious understatement.

I first tried to call my parents. When I called my dad, the phone rang twice and went to his voice mail. The telephones at The Farm don't allow the caller to leave a message either; why, is beyond me. Instead, an automated message is left which mentions nothing of the caller's situation, nothing about where the call is being made from, nothing. Just to emphasize that one more time—nothing. All that this message states is something about a 1-800 number that you can call for more information. My dad, being the type that ignores calls from 1-800 numbers due to his justified detes-

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tation of telemarketers, did not attempt to call the number to find out any more information. I received the same response upon calling my mother. I then called three friends whose numbers I knew by heart but was not able to reach any of them. After five minutes of attempted calls, I gave up and headed towards my cell defeated.

When I reached my new home, I was greeted by my cell mate, though he was no mate of mine. To my great surprise and comfort, he turned out to be a decent fellow. He was around my age and had already been in jail for a week and a half. That was the extent of our conversation. We had a mutual understanding between us. We both knew that the other man did not want to be there, we both understood that like the old song goes, “silence is golden,” and we both understood that respecting each other’s privacy would be essential to us getting along. It was rather nice, actually, feeling secure enough to go to sleep without having to worry about what the other guy was doing.

The cells themselves were appalling. They were maybe eight by twelve feet with one bunk fastened to the wall, a small sink that offered lukewarm water, and a steel-framed toilet that would prove to be my rival later. Since my cell mate was the first one there, he laid claim to the bunk, which I did not detest. It wouldn’t have been worth it to cause trouble over something so insignificant. My sleeping arrangement consisted of a blue mat that folded in threes, like the ones from nap time in kindergarten, laid between the bunk and the toilet on the cold cement floor. It had some thin blankets spread across it to protect my exposed skin from the cold and the staph that was known to be hiding on the mats, according to my cell mate. There was also a small table with

two round seats protruding out of the wall. Above this table there sat a window. Looking through this window, I was able to look across the yard to another set of pods. If I knelt low enough, I could barely make out the morning sky in the left corner of the window. I began to feel dizzy and light-headed as I gazed out the window, so I took a seat on one of the round seats and tried to gather my thoughts. The “riot punch” had definitely worn off: my eyes were blurred and heavy, my body ached, and my mind raced. I hadn’t been able to reach anyone on the phone and didn’t even know if anyone knew where I was. I was beginning to give up. I fell onto my filthy covered mat in exhaustion and sunk into a deep sleep. I wonder what’s next.

Shit or Get Off the Pot

I find myself being shaken by my cell mate a few hours later. He informs me that it’s time for lunch. I stumble to my feet and have a brown paper bag tossed at me from an officer that passes by. I find myself ripping the bag open to see what it contains. The Frosted Flakes and milk didn’t do much for me and that was nearly six hours ago.

Let’s see, what do we have here? One ham sandwich with hardly any ham, one dried up, bitter orange that has too many seeds, and one generic Swiss-cake roll without the cake or the roll. Not quite Christmas morning, but I suppose it could be worse. Ooh, what is that?

I am beginning to experience the early stages of mud butt, or diarrhea, as it is otherwise known. I guess all the beer, Jaeger shots, and “riot punch” did a real number on my stomach yesterday. Prison

food doesn’t help, either. This isn’t going to be good. Every minute lasts an eternity as I try to hold in my gas with an extraordinary amount of stomach shifting and cheek clenching. The more I try to fight it the worse it gets. I decide to let one little, harmless fart out.

Whoa, I’m glad that was silent.

An overwhelming stench envelops the cell as my cell mate begins to writhe in agony. There is not a single vent in the cell and no path for this cloud of death to escape from us or for us to escape from it. All there is to do is wait it out like a nuclear winter and hope for the best.

“Dude, I’m really sorry about that. My stomach’s pretty torn up.”

“You can’t be doing that again.”

But it won’t be that simple. I can’t just ‘not do that again’ even if I want to. Another hour passes as the feeling of eventual demise continues to mount in my stomach. I begin to pace the cell holding my stomach in discomfort.

“You need to shit?” he asks.

“You have no idea. I’ve been trying to hold it, but I don’t think I can.”

“Well, just make sure you keep flushing it down. Keep water on it and it won’t be so bad.”

“I’ll try.”

I hate to cut you short here, but I will not continue down this disastrous road because I fear that I have already lost you back during the early stages of mud butt. Let it be known that my attempt at “keeping the water on it” did not do much good.

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No amount of water would have done any good at that particular moment in time. There is a lighter side of this unfortunate setback, however. My cell mate, through all his understanding and compassion for my delicate situation, remained in good spirits throughout this ordeal. Now remember: there is no wall separating the two of us, and he is lying on his bunk not five feet from me. I can reach out and touch his foot if I so choose, but I don't. As I sit there, fiercely trying to finish this as quickly as possible, I notice that my cell mate is wrapped in a blanket, mummy-style, and appears to be sniffing on something. "What's that in your hand?" I ask. "Oh, nothing. Just my orange from earlier. They're great when someone's got to shit." "Interesting." "Not really. Keep that water going."

And in the End...

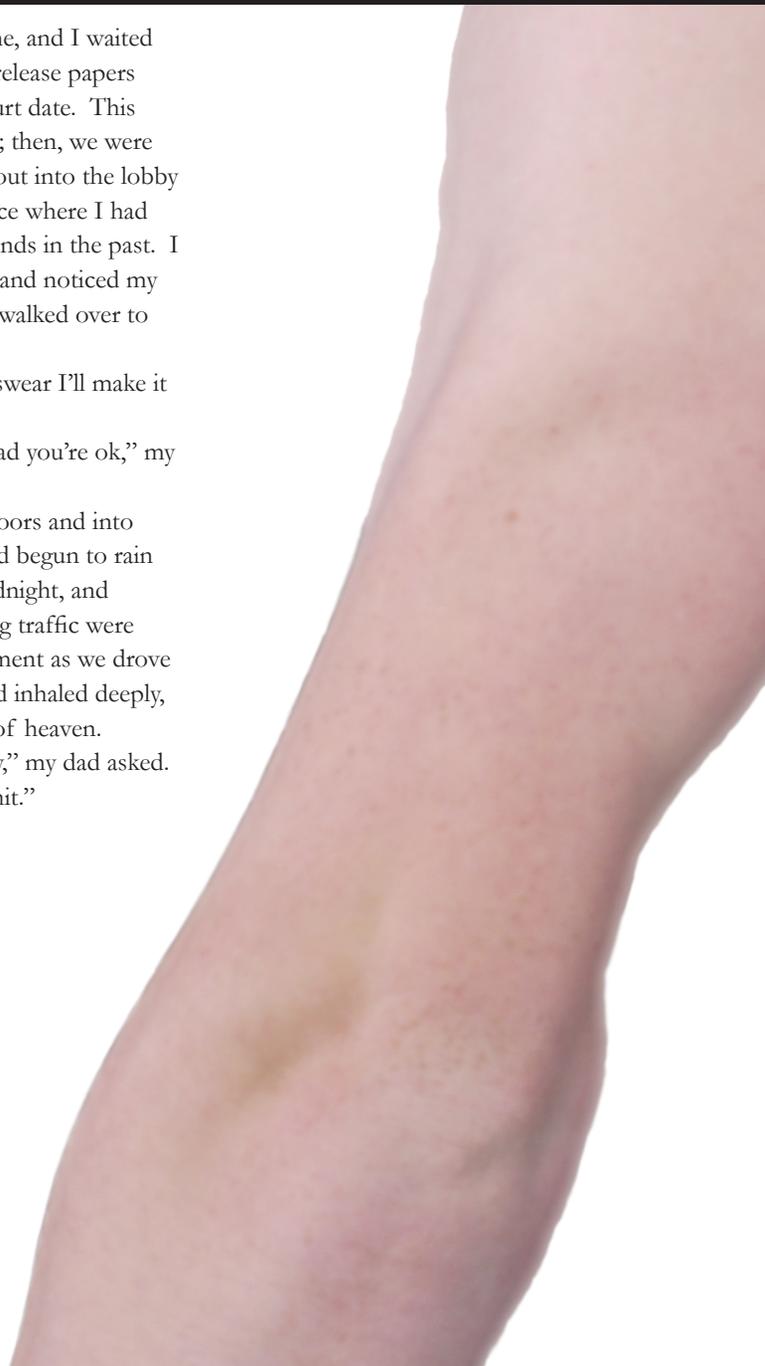
The next seven hours were spent in a daze. I moved between two spots—the first being my uncomfortable, diseased ridden bed, and the second being the cell door for prisoner count. This was done to ensure that none of the prisoners had escaped through the plumbing system or the window that didn't open. After being served dinner, I remember thinking I'm going to stay another night here. Fortunately for me, I was called out of my cell two hours later. Along with three other prisoners, I was filed back down the long hallway with the bad lighting and the peculiar odor. My

clothes were returned to me, and I waited for my turn to fill out the release papers that notified me of my court date. This process took another hour; then, we were finally led through a door out into the lobby of the Penal Farm, the place where I had been before to pick up friends in the past. I glanced around the crowd and noticed my parents in the corner, so I walked over to them.

"I'm so sorry you guys. I swear I'll make it up to you."
"Don't worry, we're just glad you're ok," my mom says.

I walked out the doors and into the parking lot where it had begun to rain steadily. It was dark as midnight, and the headlights of oncoming traffic were streaking along the wet cement as we drove home. I lit up a smoke and inhaled deeply, blowing out a large cloud of heaven.

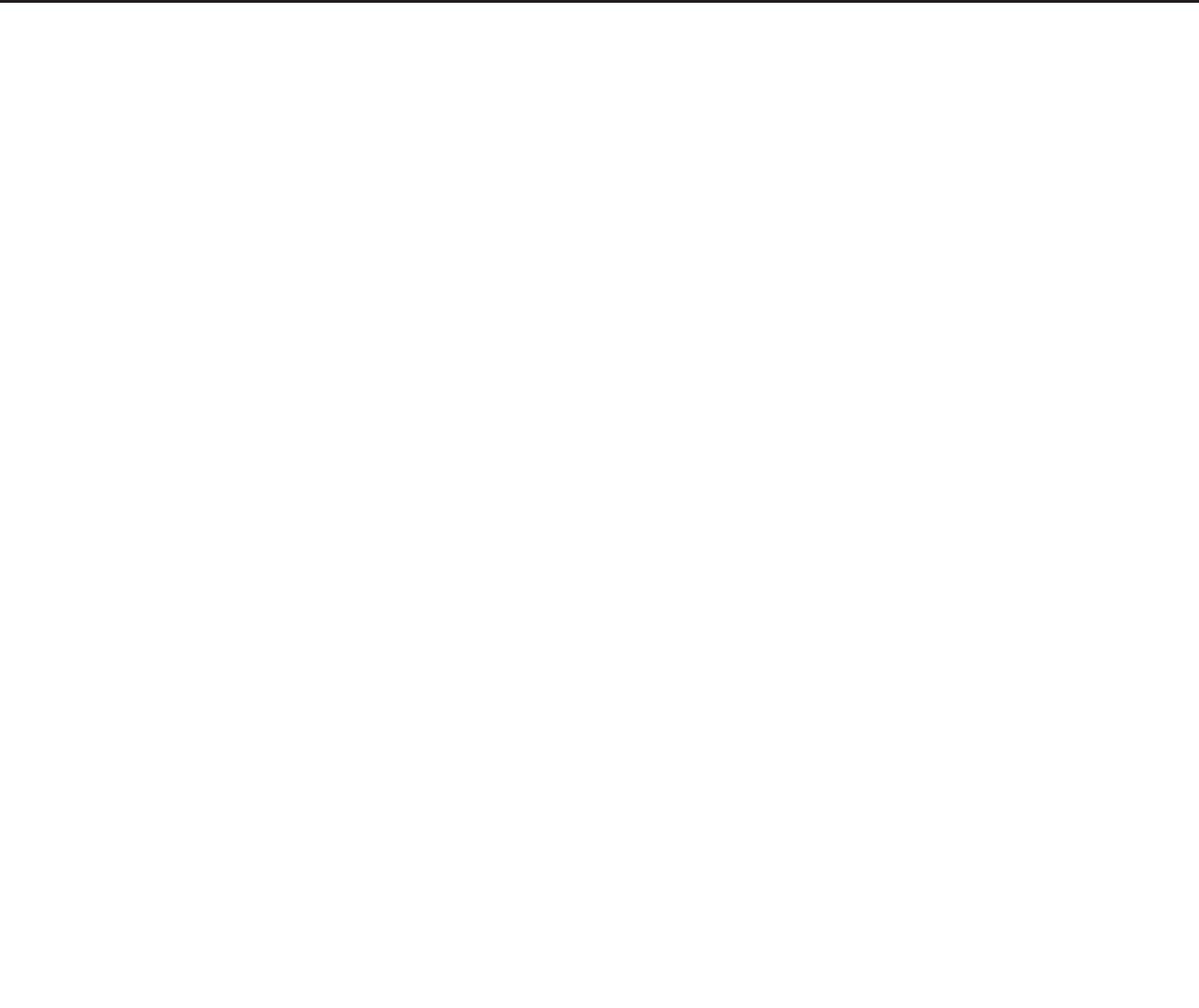
"So what happened exactly," my dad asked.
"Ah, just a bunch of bullshit."



Andrew Frost



Andrew Frost
"Ben and David"
Silver gelatin print
10x8 inches





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