

Susquehanna University

THE APPRENTICE WRITER



JENNIFER SHERMAN
TOWSON, MD
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
MR. CASTRO

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the twenty-first issue of **The Apprentice Writer**, which annually showcases the best writing and illustrations from the 5,000 entries we receive each year from secondary schools throughout the United States. Every September we send 11,000 copies printed free as a public service by **The Daily Item** in Sunbury, PA to over 3,500 schools.

Send material to be considered for next year's **Apprentice Writer** to Gary Fincke, Writers' Institute Director, Box GG, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA 17870. Please include your name and address on each page of your submissions.

The deadline is March 15, 2004.

And, if you are interested in learning about the **Writing Major** and programs related to writing sponsored by **The Writers' Institute**, see page 60 for a summary or go to www.susqu.edu/writers for details.

Editor: Gary Fincke
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LONDON ALONE

I met you in a whisky ad
Smear'd across the back of
Hot Rod Magazine
Or maybe it was a
Smokey Pub in London
I'm not sure.
I thought I was in
Love with you
Or maybe I was
Confused
But when I turned to
My muse, Dante
He shook his head and said
That it sort of seemed like Hell because of the
Smoke and the tobacco ads
(in the magazine, at the bar)
And the lamb was kind of bad.
But he said it was like heaven because
He likes ale more than whiskey
And they call soccer "football"
Which I find kind of
Enticing.
And then, Dante's a fan of Hot Rod too
But maybe I was confused
And I looked up to check myself
And to order the roast mutton
But Dante didn't have
Anything, I think because he's dead
And well, he *is* Italian
And I'm not sure if he digs mutton
Or soccer
But I think there's lamb in heaven
And you, you didn't have anything cause
Well, you're just a whiskey ad
But I think (between the three of
us)
Our waitress is afraid of us
She tips her head to pour my drink
And frowns at Hit Rod Magazine.

PORSCHE JONES
NORWICH, NY
NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL
MR. BERNSTEIN

TERRIBLE THINGS

my father hit a squirrel last week.
his black buick went *thump*
like we'd gone over a speed bump.
i imagined blood on the tires.

the Gettysburg town hall served
as a hospital after the battle.
i stood outside the windows
through which they carelessly threw
amputated limbs onto piles
that grew taller than people.
the mayor hired a marching band
to play outside, nonstop,

because the townspeople complained
about the screams.

at dachau, i walked through
the unused gas chamber,
which is really just a room
with a cement floor and no windows
and a sliding drawer in the wall,
like the book drop at the library,
which the nazis built
to hold the cyanide.

my mother once told me
not to hate homosexuals
only homosexuality
my sister obeyed her.
brian came into third period English
on the fourth day of sophomore year
and told us they'd flown planes
into the twin towers.

i laughed because i was more afraid of being gullible
than i was of believing him.

STEPHANIE APPELL
SKILLMAN, NJ
MS. MUZAURIETA

TEETH

An old woman is getting a silver cap,
while someone's grandchild
fussily squeezes his fists
as his cavities are filled. They are all alike,
molars, like white knuckles,
swelling and ripening in stretched gums.

My mother saves mine
in a jar. My brother shares
her superstition.
Around his neck he wears five
bone shark teeth. They dangle loosely,
like five bleached daggers
against his collarbone. In his fantasy,
they have sunken into the flesh
of men's thighs, children's hands.

Five lives.
Behind the uneven
glass of my mother's jar,
they look like little cream blossoms.
I probe my mouth with two salty fingers
for the irregular slopes of each kernel.

Maybe it's the regeneration I'm afraid of.
I will pluck each one from my mouth,
will remove the death in life.

CLAIRE TINGUELY
MILTON, MA
JAMES CONNOLLY

BEACH DAY

The blue station wagon turned up a driveway, tarred wheels crunching the soft calcium pebbles. In the front, driving the car, sat an old woman. Her hair was white, short, and curled, crowned by a straw hat. She was wearing large sunglasses; the lenses were dark purple at the top and faded to clear at the bottom. Her slim arms, browned and textured by the sun and harsh salt air, were partially covered by the pink short sleeve shirt she was wearing over a floral bathing suit. Her legs and feet extended from the bottom of the shirt, and ended in a pair of white flip-flops.

Behind her, in the backseat, sat two young girls. Occasionally they spoke, weaving the trailed threads of their conversation, but the woman in the front seat could not know what they said. The girl on the right side of the car squinted out the window, her eyeballs scraped by the breeze. She was thinking of the ocean, the large waves, and the starfish. A cup of melted ice cream leaned against her bruised knee, and had she been more careful, she would have realized that it was dangerously close to spilling on the plush cloth. Her feet hung limply of the bench, her legs too short to reach the sand-covered floor mat below. Her hair was short, brown, and salty. Everything was salty.

In the middle of the backseat lay a lop-sided pile of seashells. Hand-picked that very afternoon, they were still damp from the ocean water. A faint, fishy odor rose from the pile, a clear indication to the woman in the front seat that they needed to be scrubbed with an old toothbrush. The girl with the brown hair had wanted to find a starfish, but she found three glistening clamshells instead. On the left side of the car sat another little girl. Her hair was blond and longer; her legs were shorter. She grasped her cup of ice cream in her brown, sticky hand, stared at the seashells. Each time the car made a turn, her loose barrette dangled lower and lower, barely clasping the strands of her hair. Every so often she dozed off.

The car stopped, humming in the garage for a few moments. Sticky hands rolled up windows, door opened, an engine stopped. A musky-moss smell permeated the garage. It was dark and damp; fading sunlight from the open door stretched across piles of rusty tools and beaten books, like a ripe banana, dripping stringy syrup to the spongy tree roots below. On rainy days the old woman stood in her garage, knocking her knuckles over the artifacts, sorting, remembering; a book read at a secluded lake, a book read while she was young and still in love, a book read while unable to sleep on a sharp night, a book read on a bus. Stories would sprout from the dusty concrete, beating her eardrums and rattling her nostrils. After, the stories would recede, swallowed into the waiting plaster and pipes that laced the velvet intestines of the house walls. Twelve years later, they would melt and steam into the calloused rods and cones that curled behind her hardening retinas, sucked from all material that had known her touch. These were not the stories of the novels. There were the stories of her life.

Fumbling up steps, the group reached a small, carpeted room. The shades were drawn and the room was cool. Crayons and paper were sprawled beneath a coffee table; a pacifier wobbled on the edge of a chair and would soon be seized by the girl with the blond hair. A short tree stood in a clay pot in the corner; its leaves were leathery and forlorn. Soon the old woman would ask the two girls to water it. Together, they would fill the scratched watering can and drag it to the tree. Hose water would slosh down their legs, forming goose bumps in the creases of their skin.

Bags were dropped, and lay forgotten by the back door, still ajar. Seashells were dashed to the safety of a paper towel on a kitchen counter; a chin was wiped; a bath was drawn in a pink tub.

Two girls sat inside the tub, splashing in the warm water. One old woman stooped above, washing hair, rubbing sand away. This was returning from the beach.

KATE THOMAS
NEW YORK, NY
MR. HOWARD SCHOTT

UNTITLED

Dear Nicole,

I remember June after seventh grade. The air conditioner in your room was buzzing on and off, on and off like our voices as they fell up and down with the pulse of our conversation: soft and lazy with eyes half shut and then suddenly loud, sparking, *did I tell you who called me last night?* Each utterance from one to the other was like world breaking news. We could not believe the things we were speaking. When we were tired of secrets, you'd turn to your closet, and although I could have tried things on if I'd asked, I'd opt to stay on the pretty grape vine comforter and advise. I didn't want to unfold anything that you'd worked so carefully on. Frustrated, you'd throw a shirt or pair of pants on the chair by the closet (only temporarily of course). Suddenly a face would appear in the window, not only a face but a *man's* face and you would shriek until I reminded you to move with a tug and we both would land on your perfectly made bed, laughing. "Do you think he saw them Caroline? Do you think he saw my *boobs?*" You were so scared and I was in hysterics and we both knew you would have to see the painter the next day and the day after that and of course he saw them!

Even in winter your bedroom was feminine with artificial white flowers on the intentionally cracked green nightstand. You were always very particular and you said, Caroline don't touch anything on my dresser, I'm sort of neurotic. I watched with eighth grade eyes as you painted your mouth *boysenberry*. We would go to a dance at St. Sebastian's or Roxbury Latin; your dad would drive us through the towns at night and we couldn't handle the anticipation of boys as we stared out the windows, choosing to see either our own nervous reflections or the cold black beyond them. Your dad would talk about your brother Joe's hockey game and we were telepathic, nudging each other at his idiosyncrasies; he seemed to pause thirty seconds between every word.

In your bedroom afterwards, there was no more anticipation. The night was a let down again and you said why do all the boys like Eliza Browne? She is so perfect that it's annoying and if you were a boy you could probably never burp in front of her if you felt one coming. You said you didn't care, boys were supposed to burp and be gross and play sports until they're exhausted and that you would be there after the game just to be there. You said why don't any of them pick me? You shaved your legs every morning to show up in pants to our all girls' school, swearing that good habits bode well for unexpected opportunities. You were soft and had nice fine hair that was blow-dried to perfection with a round brush that cost as much as thirty dollars. You said you would do anything for a boy; you wouldn't be stupid and prude the way Eliza was and that you'd love to really get someone going. After every dance the mascara would flood down your face onto the grape vine pillow cases where we sat and as I petted you and you would say if *you* love me this much, why can't a boy? I wasn't entirely sure, but I loved you almost the way a parent loves their child, and I knew that your time would come. Who wants to hear that their

time will come? I stayed silent.

In the fall of ninth grade your bedroom became even more restless. Makeup was a given, bras were old news, and boys had been integrated. We would wake up late on Sundays under the grapevine comforter having stayed up all night wishing we had some place to be, wishing we were sixteen not fifteen, or there and not here, or cool instead of smart. You didn't do your homework anyway. We went places; mostly to Cleveland Circle Movie Theater where we'd watch movies that we were tired of by the time they were halfway done. Your dad would ask us why we'd gotten back to your house so late; you'd say we were down at Pino's getting hot chocolate. I wondered if your dad had ever been to the bar across the street from Cleveland Circle, Mary Anne's, and if he'd pictured his daughter ever sitting across the street watching the college boys show up one by one from BC or BU. You couldn't get over how hot the Irish Catholic boys were.

You'd always taken the T to school and some days I would ride home with you to the Reservoir stop. We each strove to make funnier circumstances out of the characters we traveled amongst and we tried to be subtle but they knew we were staring. On the walk past Cleveland Circle Movie Theater we would look for boys, knowing that they wouldn't be there at 3:30 on a Wednesday but still expecting them; it was the site of past encounters without the ambiance of nighttime. Dean Road was just around the next corner, we were confiding about confiding, admitting that we'd never told anyone the things we told each other these days. It was two flights up until we hit your bedroom, the main setting for confession. You would put down your books and stare into the mirror, blaming it for things that had fallen apart since before breakfast. I would head for the stereo and make sure the music was worthy of our time.

In the spring of ninth grade I was doing fine. Boyfriends had come and gone. At school I was happy with the attention I got from many friends, although my mother told me I should branch out more from you in order to have more. I didn't care. There was part of me you needed. While I was happy to do my homework every night and had successful results, you were still delaying, still dreaming.

Against the soft glow of your Laura Ashley lamp at night, you told me what you wished this bedroom might have been. With a framed picture of Samantha, the American doll, to your right, and a table full of charms and trinkets and scents on your left, you said *I want to be poor*. You said you wanted to go to public school and to smile at the kids who wore sneakers until they were actually worn out and make them want to find out your name. You said you wanted to not go to classes and to wander the streets instead and that you swore you'd die to marry a construction worker with a hot Boston accent who got rowdy at Fenway. Half the time you were hyper and you would clutch my arm tight, telling me what you'd do if your neighbor Nathan from Boston Latin was here right now. I'd laugh at you because I knew you were eccentric but I loved your anecdotes and I'd be thinking of things I could add to your fancies.

Other times you would barely speak; I would watch you stare out the window in algebra two and I knew you weren't hearing anything. You were watching the snow come down piece by piece and you'd probably fail the next test because there was nothing *real* about math. I understood that. In your room, on the wicker floor next to a stack of letters and magazines and books, I watched your eyes brim over with tears. Sometimes you couldn't explain why you were crying. It couldn't be pinpointed to simply not having a boyfriend, or not having good grades, or not liking the

other girls at school who were skinny and all wore the same clothes. It wasn't the kids you taught after school as community service who didn't know how to read, or the kid's fathers either, like the man who asked you how to spell "certificate" as he carefully recorded his child's Christmas list on the Globe Santa sheet. It was not your father who sometimes seemed locked in his past and it was not your mother who you swore did not care about your future as much as your younger siblings. It was anything and everything at once, and it hit so hard that it was easiest to not remember, to be loud and crazy and fun and to think about haircuts and shopping and sex. But when you saw the tiny pricks add up one by one to create a gash, you couldn't help yourself sometimes. You'd call me on the phone barely breathing. What did I say to you? Everything for me was always fine.

Your bedroom was where you said if you had the chance to leave, even if it meant having boys and freedom and a chance to be a whole new person; you wouldn't be able to leave me. You asked did I know that Ted Washington wanted to leave Rockmont Hill but he didn't because he wouldn't leave Bobby Scott there all alone. I believed you. I understood the sensation that if one person leaves, there is no one. There is a certain loyalty that boys have between each other that they can't let go of. Part of me wishes I could have that selfless loyalty, that I could put you before everything else. But oftentimes my thoughts are so individual that my decisions can't be translated into the language of friendship. How could I rationalize that you were my whole world, but I was ready to enter a new one?

From what seemed like across the world, I'd call you and tell you about my new place. How it was similar to St. Anne's and everyone was skinny and wore the same clothes. I said picture St. Anne's times a hundred. You said Caroline, if you become like that I'll be so disappointed in you. I could picture where you were sitting in the chair by the closet with the phone with the blackberry nail polish stain.

You tell me all the time how you hate St. Anne's more and more, how everyone just gets stupider and preppier and you never do your homework, you just look out the window and feel bad and wait to see the light turn on in Nathan's room across the street knowing that he'll call in the next five minutes. He thinks you're hot, and hysterical when you're high, but the grass is always greener. You say you wish I'd come home. I tell you I'm doing just fine. I've got a boyfriend who wears his shoes in till they're way past worn out. I miss you.

I come home in Polo Shirts and you say Caroline, you sell-out. I'm doing a summer school course at Harvard for creative writing and you get nervous about what you should be doing for college. But; you're always thinking and your thoughts are spinning around in the snow and I think you're reaching that old racy goal that you've waited for. You tell your parents you're at the library studying and that you'll be home for dinner; then you'll call me on your cell phone in his car on the way back from his house exclaiming that the worst possible thing happened: his mom walked in. You've been dating for 8 months but I swear he doesn't know the first thing about you. Somewhere along the line you became beautiful. I'd like to be there with you.

Last week we had an essay assigned to us in school, an essay to read about a boy growing up with his friends in Haverhill. I didn't get past the first page until I was on the phone with you, reading my assignment out loud. It is the cold of Massachusetts that excites you and dream of being old school with hand-me-down jackets and living side by side with the assurance that life is larger than school. I pictured you in your bedroom, mouth open and

eyes fixated on the spot on your wicker-like carpet, wanting to be inside that essay. Your manicured hands were smooth and gripped the white telephone with the mulberry nail polish stain on it. I sent it to you in the mail, picturing how easily your tears always come. First they would spark at the sight of a letter from me, and next they would brim with a sentimental feeling. Finally, the boys in the essay would make you hurt, and you'd think of the cold dirty streets beyond your room.

It is hard to believe that there was a time when your room was enough, that the air conditioner was ever comforting. But there was what only seems like a moment, now, before we ever needed anyone else, before we ever were wanted. There was a time when our friendship was faithfully magnetic, unaware of the other fields calling out to us, pulling us forward to other poles we never knew existed. And it is difficult to make visits.

Love, Caroline

CAROLINE HAMILTON
GROTON SCHOOL
KATE MATWYCHUK

INSIDE

Through drops in the glass everything is slanted.
Mother's fingers, even, quiet in motion, shelling peanut
after peanut in the red hum of the kitchen.
We are curved against this night, against the strain
of the maple and the street's distant brawl.
Through one drop she is perfect, round like a grapefruit, whole.
Black paws at the door and, with a crack, is denied.
Tilted here, where warmth glances from eye to eye
and filters over jars of dried apricots and beans,
we have kaleidoscoped our silent cause.
I would drink, and see us swim, see the light
of a candle tumble over our faces like foliage,
admire her nails, her skin, the crack of a shell,
and feel that, slanted, we belong together—
I would drink us whole if it were not for the bottom.
The empty glass, then, in the stark metal sink,
clinking softly, inevitably, as a dog's chain.

AMELIA WILBUR
AMELIA, MA
J.F. CONNOLLY

"MOON IN WINTER"

It was cold. Again.
The pond on the neighbor's roof had fizzled
into a silent, solid mirror.
Black crows sputtered in the gray air
Another hard one, they rasped,
Once it gets this bitter, there's no turning back.
They float away, not pausing
against the moon, now faintly visible,
like a pale lemon against the new,
early twilight if winter.

"THE GIRLS"

I.
The timid pixie girl smelled like clementines.
She always removed her blue doll shoes
to reveal her vanilla moon stockings.

II.
The mean girl, whose hair set on fire in the sun,
wiggled her nose and stuck out her tongue
at the timid girl in the corner
who could barely see over her desk.

III.
Later, after dinner,
the youngest girl put on the teacup-pink sundress
that fluttered when she ran.
She left without her sweatshirt,
and grabbed the green jar on her doorstep.
She hurried up the path over the hill.
In the meadow she heard
The concerto of crickets.

MEGAN MARTINELLI
PROVIDENCE, RI
CLASSICAL HIGH SCHOOL

THE MESSENGER

After Martin Drolling

What has become of the old
days when every woman,
upper class or lower class
held a letter between her
swan-arched hands.

When a lady in a blue gown sat
in her dressing room reading
a letter brought to her from a gentleman
in a short brown suit coat and gray slacks.

When I was seven, I collected stationery
from every place I could get my groping
little fingers to. In Paris, a photograph shows me
sitting in the metro with a pen and paper in hand.

At nine, I practiced at making my penmanship
as neat as my teachers'
making sure my g's and y's were especially nice.
My letters were always creative and original

Now letter-writing has become as extinct
as typewriters, our hands growing adjusted
to keyboards and Palm Pilots.
These days I write an e-mail in regular black
Size twelve Times New Roman font.

The old letters lie in boxes tucked away in the attic
and only pictures show a messenger
handing and eager lady a letter,
elegant in her blue dress gown.

Victoria Rukovets
Tenafly, NJ
Mr. Gary Whitehead

VOLLEY BALL

Someone once told me
if you can draw a perfect circle,
it means you are crazy.
The teams have been formed;
circling, circling.
"The ball won't hurt you,"
somebody says from the other team.

The gym smells of dirty sneakers and sweat,
The sound of bodies moving and colliding.
As a kid, I used to play a game-
Spinning around in circles until
someone would turn dizzy and stop.
Time has allowed me to stop spinning.
Each year, another part of me grows dizzy.

I am watching the ball grow horns,
charging towards me-an enraged bull.
They are watching me cower back,
my hands pulling themselves
toward my head
and the world is stilled.

But I don't keep spinning.
This time I stop, duck, breathe
and all of them are clucking their tongues
in disappointment when the ball hits the floor.
"You can at least make an effort,"
the girl next to me says,
her hands in the standard position
that has always reminded me of scooping water.
I shrug my shoulders-I could never draw
a perfect circle anyway,
no matter how hard I would try.

VICTORIA RUKOVETS
TENAFLY, NJ
MR. GARY WHITEHEAD

FRUIT UNDER SPIGOTS

I wash my son in the sink,
Lathering his plump flesh.
Careful. *Careful!* I imagine.
Washing fruits. My son is a plum.
No, a peach. Shower his sweet dust
Under a spigot.

It pains me to wash my son.
The pain is typed on shards of glass
And hung on thin hooks above my neck.
It beats me violently upon the head. The bruises
Are brilliant.

The white walls beside the pink crib
Are vacant. I imagine
Posters of pot-smoking rockers here, ten years from now,
Closing their eyes in a stage twilight gripping
Guitars emphatically, always careful, as
One father holds his son in warm water
For wash.

I wash my son in the sink. My son is a peach.

It is hard to sadden a peach, no?
No.

It pains me to awaken peaches
On kitchen counters. Quite often,
I turn over thoughts of peaches
In refrigerators, alone and dreaming
Under blankets of letters signed "yours truly"

JAKE BRUNNER
BALA CYNWYD, PA
CHESTNUT HILL ACADEMY



JOLENE CAREY
WEST WYOMING, PA

LATINO COUCHES

I'd go to the discount furniture store after school almost regularly, just to pick out my favorite. Most days, when the hunger pangs didn't make me dizzy, I knew where to find the couches. All the way in the northwest corner of the 2nd floor, right next to the antique plush ones. They would be lined up in no specific order, yet to me every inch between them was significant. The smell of the leather drew me closer, until I couldn't help but plop myself between the pillows. The texture was like skin, Chinese, African, Italian, American, each one but my shade of Latino. Some smooth like butter; the kind we couldn't afford; others like white lard; cheap imitations.

When I came home from the furniture store, the fried plantains would always be waiting for me, piled into a mountain on a ceramic plate. Coated with sugar, like everything else in the project life. That sweetness was gone, 2 years ago, when the plane landed. But if we poured enough on, everything would taste better. The house reeked of the sugary stench. Sometimes when my bus pulled in late, you could actually see the oil bubbles beginning to harden if the lighting above the table was just right. It was better to be late on Friday nights, when Mama's chiquitas came over, hands full of plates and full bottles. Too much to worry about anyhow.

Mama always invited her chiquitas over to start off the weekend early. They'd sit in the living room on the futon, the one Pedro dumped into the company's 18-wheeler on the first bulk pickup of this year. It was a lucky find he said. *Mierda*, if it weren't free then we wouldn't have it. I knew the game; don't buy it if you can't get for free. More change in the jar; whatever was giggling in our pockets we added. Sitting on top of the wooden mantle, it waited, empty for many days, until an angel came by and dropped in a few pennies. Once Mama lied to child services, telling them she was pregnant, just to get a month's free rent and 2 doctor's visits. That worked until she had the "miscarriage." Even the government didn't know we occasionally had 5 more stamps coming in each month than the neighbors did next door.

Most of the time it would be my job to get the weekly groceries, walking to Don Juan's shop and the supermarket after classes. Mama had a list for each store, and wanted only what was on it. The jar of spare change was for special occasions, like trips to Don Juan's, buying spicy jalapeno gummies, fruity Mamba taffy, or mango *nectures* Goya that reminded us the crowded ghetto. But he only took cash, so unless we were lucky and the jar was full enough, we'd put on our junky sneakers and get there by foot. Being inside Don Juan's, squished between the boxes of mango and papaya and the Latino beat, was almost like being back home in Puerto Rico. That's how it was for most of us. If we forgot the pesky bugs, leaky pipes, and stench of rotten *frutas* and *verduras*, we knew where to find them. No one was ever able to resist the sweet temptations or to buy just one, not even me. We called him the devil, that's why Satan himself drove a Chevy, we didn't.

The supermarket was easier, with the food stamps and all; I even got to push around a metal cart. Sometimes, when my stomach rumbles, I'd fill it up too much on purpose, just to imagine what would be for dinner if I had diamond earrings, wore a fur coat and didn't live on the third floor of the projects. It was quite embarrassing when I forgot to put back what wasn't on the list before getting to the check out. The cashiers had a tendency to make a big deal over accepting the food stamps, calling over the manager to make sure the dealers in the streets hadn't made them. *Putas*; they didn't know what it was like to trade those little squares among friends and strangers, instead of your older brother's baseball cards. They didn't know Mama began saving two each week, in a white envelope under the mattress, a few months before *la navidad*.

The bakery always smelled so wonderful, with the fresh breads and cookies waiting in the oven. Sometimes I'd be really lucky and a batch would be reduced for "quick sale", but I had to pay cash for them. The only cookies that the stamps bought were the generic cardboard wafers, with the pale yellow cream layers. Most of the time they were stale, must have been leftovers from the upscale Super Food Store downtown. My favorite was donuts, the American treat with the hole in the middle. Glazed or powdered, it didn't matter, as long as the cake crumbled with each bite. Mama hated them, too American she said. But she knew the kids loved them, so Santa Claus brought a box each year, even when no one believed anymore. I snuck up on Mama in the kitchen on Christmas Eve, holding a cup of warm milk, and a jelly filled one. I knew she thought they were good; she didn't have to make up excuses. "It was growing moldy," "I didn't want to waste it," "You know you kids don't like the fruity ones." She's just afraid of the ones with the hole in the middle. She knows something is missing, but we all do too; something that was stolen from us when the passports were stamped and the boarding gates shut.

In the produce section everything is fresh and clean, with the little overhead nozzles spraying the lettuce every 15 minutes. The *frutas* and *verduras* are arranged in perfectly straight rows, each piece depending on the other for support. Just like the people here. Nothing like back home, where everything comes in big cardboard boxes, and the flies are free. You're lucky if your hands don't get sticky from digging around the spoiled mess. The children squeeze their way through the crowd, when a new shipment comes in, scrounging to be the first. Mama used to make that my job on the market days. *Carajo*; sometimes I'd even hide one down my pants. All the ripened fruits, bright and exotic, waiting to be sold, but we couldn't afford them there either. At least now, I can use a stamp to get one.

In the afternoon, when the fresh shipment from the farms arrive at the supermarket, the clerk discounts the leftovers with his price sticker gun, stacking a full rack of reduced produce, on the verge of spoiling. But that's fine for us; Mama is used to repairing bad things. Most of the time, we find bruised apples, perfect for fritters, or the occasional cake, but never pie. Too American Mama says. That's ok though, I've tried apple pie once at the pantry, during Thanksgiving, but I didn't get seconds. Not that time. The *naranjadas* are all right, a little too tart, not like the sweet flesh of Puerto Rico, the tan sun-heated skin of the natives. Most of the time, the plantains come from the reduced rack, but there's usually nothing wrong with them. Whoever puts them there knows us Puerto Ricans are the only people that eat the green "overgrown bananas."

Usually, I've got to get the Super Market right after the bell rings during sewing class, before the factory day ends, and the rowdy workers come through on their way to the Spirit aisle. Goddamn alcoholics, never have enough beer in the refrigerator, keeping

everyone else in the projects up all night. We have that in common with the Americans though. Jose Cuervo and his friend Bacardi were Hispanic immigrants too. Sometimes Mama has a little too much rum in her coffee, when the "chiquitas" come over to gossip, but I can manage that. They turn on the phonograph, slapping on a record; Alejandro Fernandez and Carlos Vives; the men they wished were our papas. Twisting the volume all the way around when the trumpets blare, they clap their hands and shake their hips. After that, it's to the kitchen, where the *arroz con pollo* sizzles in an iron pan on the stove, and another bottle of rum waits in the cabinet. When us Puerto Ricans get drunk, the music is louder and the dancing is faster. The walls of my bedroom hum to the vibrating beat of the tunes: a goodnight lullaby. But when the Americans have too many bottles of *la cerveza*, men start shouting and throwing plates, vases, and punches. In the bathroom the rattling of the ceiling from above the shattering of glass upstairs flickers the light bulb above the cabinet.

After the supermarket trip, on days when the grocery load is light, I head toward the bus stop, staling at the furniture store. I pull it off pretty well; they believe I'm a college student looking to furnish the dorm. I get the occasional "Can I help you?" look or the pacing salesman in the nearby bedroom section, but for the most part they leave me alone. Sitting on the leather couch, I flip through the sample booklet of all the different shades it comes in. The white is the ugliest, like the lard Mama cooks with. Any other would look so beautiful in our living room with Mama and her chiquitas squished together between the pillows. When the jar gets heavy, I will buy mama one, like the Americans have in their homes. Then the stamps can buy butter, and us Puerto Ricans will sleep on Latino leather couches.

ERICA CISZEK
MISS PORTER'S SCHOOL
MS. ASHA APPEL

THE VOYEUR

At midnight and two quarters,

carts begin to creak through your back yard,
into the grove where the garage used to be.
Parked in a row behind thick hedges,
like hand-me-down Chevys
lining the overlook at Lover's Leap.

Amish teenagers have come to kiss.

Youthful hands roam solemn black vestments.
Bonnet strings come loose
broad brimmed hats are knocked off, or maybe tossed.
A glass bottle full of milk, primed for sale at the market,
rests flush against a girl's thigh.

With sugar cane lodged between my teeth

I cry toward your bedroom window,
summoning you to come watch.
But my voice is full of wind,
silent as a stringless viola.
You will not open your eyes in the dark before

dawn begins to stir beneath the night's bitter fur.

Grace Wilentz

MEMORY

1. My father and I would go to the park
at the Hudson river to read the wrought iron fence
that carried Whitman's words along its length
The icy metal warmed beneath my small hands
as my fingertips learned the words by touch.
2. In Kindergarten,
I brought my father's Mexican rock in for show and tell.
There were flecks of real gold in it.
The other children flocked to Louisa,
pawing at her plastic gold-painted bracelet.
The rock was very cold in my hands.
3. In third grade they sat us down on the carpet,
we were giddy, remembering days before desks.

With a solemnity that echoed
of irritation, the teacher told us,
as Louisa looked at the floor, ashamed.
A new stigma, the lightning came from her eyes.

She told me years later
how he clutched his chest
with the arm that did not cradle her shoulders.
4. Within two years
I threw dirt on my fathers.
Someone made a thin red book
of his poems,
said they were a lot like Whitman's.

As he sank into cold and silent soil.
We tore black ribbon with strangers.
My mother was rigid. The wind blew.
He passed quietly into winter. I into summer.
5. Each time I go to the cemetery,
I place a stone at his grave.
They have formed a quiet ring.
I stand above frozen marrow,
imagining bones picked clean,
put away in boxes.
6. I read Whitman now, looking for my father
Between the lines, listening to the sound city
Asphalt makes remembering a river.

GRACE WILENTZ
NEW YORK, NY
THE CHAPIN SCHOOL
MR. SCHOTT

RITUAL: HOW TO DISCARD A MASK

1. Shimmering in a deserted forests of raindrops
2. Kneel beneath soft canopy of silken trees
3. Glance up at the orange- streaked opal sky
4. Find the lonely mountains of peace
5. Keep the silence pure and pleasant

6. Free yourself of midnight's mask
7. Forget your menacing memories
8. Untie the velvet ribbons that bind you
9. Imagine an infinite and splendid world
10. Shimmering in a deserted forest of raindrops

KIRA LEE SUYEISHI
CENTENNIAL CO
SMOKY HILL HIGH SCHOOL

CROSSING BORDERS

For Becca and Antonio

At the embassy she was a tick,
refusing to leave.
*I am an American citizen,
let him come with me.*
He got his visa the next day.

She often remembers when they met,
stuck in the flooded village;
her Spanish minimal,
he understood her smile
at a rich land
of coffee beans and fruits.

They toured the country—
she scrunched her nose at Guayaquil's stench of
fish and pickpockets,
loved the market in Otavalo:
men in ponchos and the squeal of pigs.
In Banos they bathed in springs
and prayed the volcano
would not erupt.

But he will always think of the wedding:
Michigan in July, muggy and hot
with mosquitos dancing on their shoulders.
That night he felt sweat stick to his shirt
like at the banana festival in Machala,
where he learned he could peel away her skin.

MEREDITH WEBER
BOSTON, MA
MR. JAMES CONNOLLY

SPRING BREAK

In Havana, she sang "Guantanamera"
and vomited from too much rum.
She realized "versos sencillos"
sounded better in their original tongue.
Soy una mujer sincera, she thought,
a New Jersey *guajira*,
plowing the soil of a living room;
waiting for something to sprout
from silence and slammed doors.

Her school-sponsored tour
would reread Hemingway,
wander through razed buildings,
chunks of stone that lie in the streets.
Friends bought art, postcards

and smuggled cigars.
And she clung to the ceramic shiver
And the anthem of years
Turning profitless mud.

MEREDITH WEBER
BOSTON, MA
MR. JAMES CONNOLLY

¹ Adapted from "Versos secillos" by Jose Marti.

MY GRAMPA'S HOUSE

My Grampa's house was old and ugly. Nothing was attractive about the place. At the beginning of every visit, we were greeted by the screen porch, which was filled with assorted bric-a-brac: a broken ice cream maker, an unused piñata, old whiffle ball bats, wet rotting cardboard and the like, all half lit by shafts of light through dusty green glass panes. On the porch we ate greasy White Castles and freezer burnt Neapolitan ice cream in cones so old that the box had no nutrition facts printed on it. The porch that felt the thrill of a new pair of sneakers from Crown Shoes before I went out to play in them for the first time. The porch whose refrigerator held before-supper-second-of-the-afternoon cans of Mountain Dew, which we took furtively and drank openly.

The dark wooden walls were splinters waiting to happen, but high slanted ceiling atoned for the sins of the living room's interior decorator. When I was three feet high, everyday was an epiphany. The cardboard "Merry Christmas" banner hung perpetually from the bar. During the holidays, it was illuminated by bottles of brandy and vodka as they distorted the warm pixilated light of the Christmas tree like a fun house mirror. Sitting behind the counter, we stole peanuts and red licorice while searching for old skeleton keys and coins among the shot glasses and German beer logo coasters. The record player devoured eight tracks like flapjacks in the musty syrup of age. But Tennessee Ernie Ford was the soundtrack of the holidays. My cousins and I watched the presents pile into an oblong collage of anticipation. We flocked by the white bed sheet that posed as a tree skirt like the lambs that encircled the crèche. When we were all congregated, the floor became a knee-high kaleidoscope of wrapping paper and ribbon, covering the orange carpet that resembled a fungus more than anything else. All was done under the blessing of the Christ-child from His throne atop the card table, hallowed in tongues of flame from red votive candles. The light chanted "Gloria" to my cacophonous piano "accompaniment." I was drawn to Grampa's piano before I knew the location of middle C, which I later kissed goodnight after every Chopin rendezvous. So I let my tiny palms drop with abandon deep into the bed of the keys that would later bear my nail polish stains. I laughed at the delicious chromatic chaos that was dissonant as the breadth of my hands.

The cellar was the definition of terror. Every time I descended into its depths, I felt a clammy panic engulf my body, ready for fight or flight. The treacherous staircase felt alive, as if it could fling me headlong into the dark or impede my frantic steps as I ascended back into the realm of the living, narrowly escaping an encounter with all the monsters of my young imagination. Grampa had dug the basement out himself as documented by old photographs, laid every tile in the shower so mismatched it was an assault on the

eyes. Eyes that anxiously watched for shadows outside the shower curtain, afraid of reliving the infamous murder scene from "Psycho" (which I had never seen but was sure could happen in such a place). My brother and sisters and cousins and I eventually learned to exploit the nightmare, charging each other a nickel to conquer a makeshift haunted house. Later we turned it into a gaudy roller rink, glowing with a neon Heineken beer sign and the whites of our eyes in fluid adrenaline. Apparently we were no different from our parents. Mom was surprised that I never noticed "Beware" written in glow-in-the-dark paint on the concrete walls, a luminous warning left to fade by Uncle Jim and Uncle Paul. I never took the time to look, afraid that I would lose control and skid into a pane of glass like my brother, who shattered our subterranean escapades. "Glass breaks into small pieces. You could cut yourself, you know." Grownups.

The paint in the kitchen was like the rotting peel of a lime. Copper Jell-O molds in the shape of fish and unidentified geometric configurations shone from the wall like new pennies displaced on polluted city pavement. But Grandma's culinary genius thrived in humble settings. Spaghetti and meatballs, Spanish chicken and rice, and a Christmas cookie smorgasbord were annually borne of the oven. In an iron skillet, Grampa made us "corn mush," a phenomenon made bearable solely by Aunt Jemima's syrup. As a farewell gift, we were allowed banana splits for breakfast before the long car drives back home. But one visit, my perception of ice cream was altered like the diffraction of a pencil in water, severed without warning. Pints of Ben and Jerry's invaded the freezer. We were bribed into silence with the feeble promise of gourmet sundaes after every meal. It would help Grandma, said Uncle Paul; it would lessen the pain. The pain as she died from cancer, the pain I saw in the gruesome crucifix from Ecuador that hung over the dining room table, every wound of Christ festering in dried blood and human sin. I wished more to hear her tell me the story of the miracle of the running water as together we buried our arms elbow deep in new dishwater to man the aftermath of the Effler family appetite. I wished more for a rope to rescue me from drowning in the blue plush carpet and collective grief/denial by her bedside as we prayed the rosary...

"Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners, now and
At the hour
of
our
death..."

I wrote her a song, the last song I played on the piano before I kissed the middle C, closed its top, and walked out of Grampa's house for the last time...

Past the summer-tree where my brother sought sanctuary in height and the view through sunlit leaves,
Past the overgrown grape vines that Grampa used to make his wine,
Past the rusty swing-set I outgrew long ago,
Past my childhood,
...without looking back.

HELEN COMBER
CLARKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL NORTH
MS. TAVOJACCI

Every family has rituals. One of the longest surviving rituals in my family has come to be known as "The Thursday Phone Call." It has been perpetuated for over thirty years, since my mother went off to college. Every Thursday night at 7:30 PM, my grandfather dials our number and waits for a response before giving the signal to my grandmother to pick up the other phone. My grandparents have a phone cemetery on the side table in their den, and my grandmother has to pick up several dead receivers, screaming, "Hello?" into them, before she finds one that actually works. They have to talk loud and fast because it's long-distance.

With the exception of one conversation when I, a three-year-old delinquent, convinced them that my parents were traveling to Europe and had left me home alone, my grandparents' discussion revolves around the topic of when they will call the following week. If we are not home to receive the call, our answering machine is swamped with plaintive cries of, "Please call us back," "You knew we were going to call," and "Where the hell are they, Charlie?"

Not all rituals are enduring, however. When I was little we spent every Saturday of the summer at my grandparents' beach house on Long Beach Island. Each visit took a great deal of planning over the phone, even though we never deviated from the routine. Grammy had to know our estimated times of arrival and departure, what we wanted for lunch and dinner, if we drank ginger ale or Pepsi, what she should defrost from her freezer.

Every Saturday morning my parents and I would get into the car that had air conditioning, a Pontiac coupe that overheated and stalled. Whenever we had to pull over to the side of the road, my father would mutter something about "quality in action" and "the Japanese eating our lunch." To make matters worse, the stalling often caused me to suffer from motion sickness. After a few trips when I arrived at Grammy and Poppop's cloaked in vomit, my parents added Marshall's to our itinerary.

Marshall's was a dirty diner/gas station in the middle of the Pine Barrens that was crawling with Piney's, a subspecies of white trash unique to New Jersey whose inbred members make a living on the resale value of garbage they've scavenged and inhabit meanlooking bungalows and sagging campers along Route 539. The bathroom in Marshall's was decorated like the set of an old western film, complete with swinging doors on the stalls, which reeked of air freshener and cigarettes. My father liked to get coffee at Marshall's because the obese lady behind the lunch counter called him "Hun" and said things like "Let me top that off for ya." One time we ate mashed potatoes and gravy there. We will never do that again.

After our stop at Marshall's we embarked on the second part of our trip. By the time we drove over the causeway the air in the car was stale with cigarette smoke that had stuck in our hair from our stop at Marshall's. We had to roll down the windows to smell the salt air. Once we crossed the causeway I knew we were almost at 101 Delaware Ave., Grammy and Poppop's cape cod, which had what Grammy called an "impossible kitchen" with a refrigerator that one time turned into a furnace and created a state of emergency when the mayonnaise spoiled. The house was decorated with lamps made out of strange objects, such as gumball machines, clay jugs and fire extinguishers, all of which Poppop had made using a kit. Every time we visited he tried to force us to take a lamp he'd made out of a clarinet.

As we pulled up to the house we would hear Grammy screaming, "Jesus Dear, watch what you're doing," as Poppop burned the French toast he made out of leftover challah from shabbus dinner. He had gotten the recipe from his deaf uncle Albert, who was a

small-time bookie. When Albert's wife died, members of the Philadelphia Mob came to the funeral.

My cousin Ricky sat at the kitchen table guzzling milk out of a Mickey Mouse glass Grammy had sent away for after eating Honeynut Cheerios. Ricky was famous for scaling the aluminum siding of the beach house using a rope and a plastic beach bucket handle. He and his sister Hannah always got down to the beach the night before we did so their parents could do their laundry, since they were either moving or renovating.

Ricky and Hannah got to go to Wawa's with Poppop to get the Sand Paper, which listed all the yard sales on the island. Grammy always bought "real junk" at yard sales because "You can't get good stuff for the beach." She bought a mildewed stroller with a broken wheel and a highchair that teetered because one leg was shorter than the others when Hannah was a baby.

Ricky and Hannah had also been to sent to Marvel's Market with Grammy to pick up the "salad" of eggs and potatoes floating in mayonnaise and a pound of transparent sliced turkey. They had a doughnut machine at Marvel's, but Grammy never bought doughnuts there because "They're so greasy. Yick." She and Poppop got doughnuts at Jack's, and they always left half-eaten raisin buns and a sticky knife in the doughnut box.

When we arrived Poppop would hold my face between his hand and kiss me. He had fingernail fungus. Then Grammy would mutter, "Okay, okay," and kiss me too. Her kiss always left a lipstick mark on my cheek. Then she'd turn to my parents and interrogate them about the traffic, and I'd make a break for it, scrambling upstairs with Ricky so he could show me the fort he had made with blankets. Sometimes we would throw a Muppets beach ball up and down the stairs, but that made my mother nervous and she'd put it on the top shelf of a closet so we couldn't reach it. I would climb on Ricky's shoulders and brandish a Dust Buster in a futile attempt to knock the ball down, but before we could hurt ourselves we would be called for lunch.

As we bounded into the kitchen Grammy would ask us, "What do you want what do you want hmm?" Grammy's doctor had prescribed Speed for her to lose weight after she had Ricky and Hannah's father. Poppop always put out four knives for six grownup, and Grammy would say, "Christ Chuck, can't you count?" I always had ginger ale and two pieces of rye bread with one slice of turkey on in between. One time Hannah ate stones for lunch. Her parents got mad.

Usually there was good weather, but on the rare occasions when it was "not a beach day" Ricky and Hannah's father would take us kids to the movies. We loved Disney movies, and he identified with Fozzy Bear. He'd play James Taylor as he drove us in his Volvo wagon to The Beach Theater. The Beach Theater had originally been one normal-sized theater, but a wall had been built down the center of the room to create two theaters the size of prop planes. Since there were only three seats in each row, Hannah and Ricky would sit with their father and I would sit in the row behind them. The film usually melted three or four times during the course of the movie and it would go dark in the theater for a few minutes, and sometimes the sound would be two seconds ahead of the film.

However, when it was hot and the sun burned through the thick haze of moisture, mother and I would get changed into our bathing suits and she'd put her teeshirt on her head and pretend she was a nun. My father went to the beach fully clothed and still managed to get sunburn. Poppop would load all the beach chairs onto his rusty old bike and ride down to the beach. He gave me that bike when I learned to ride without training wheels, and my parents told him they sold it to a Bennigan's, but they really threw it out. Ricky would drag

his boogie board on the sidewalk and all the Styrofoam would get scraped off.

Once Grammy had settled into one of the semi-broken chairs, she would tell my mother about the upcoming bar mitzvah of her friend Doris Morris's sister's retarded grandson and Poppop would call out the date of the event with half-closed eyes. Grammy would tell him he was wrong.

Grammy was embarrassed that my mother declined invitations to weddings and bar mitzvahs. It was because my mother still worked, which made her sigh a lot. She had tried so hard to instill the importance of marriage in her Lisa. As she always said, "Sons are assets; daughters are liabilities." She threatened to put classified ads into the newspaper if Lisa didn't abandon her ambitions to be an engineer. She had even asked the rabbi to recommend that Lisa fail a few math and science classes because "boys are intimidated by smart girls." But nothing motivated this stubborn girl, and Grammy eventually accepted her daughter's doom; to her surprise, Lisa was saved from a "fate worse than death."

My mother's redeemer spent the afternoon sleeping with his mouth open and skimming the Dow. He was only disturbed from this routine when the beach was infested with greenhead flies. My father was determined to decimate these pests, developing an unparalleled fly-swatting technique that involved the business section of the New York Times and two seashells. He would sit rigidly for several hours waiting to strike. When a fly would land he'd smack it deftly with the rolled-up newspaper and then grind the body between the two shells until it was transformed into a thin paste. His record was 132.

We children had our own beachtime diversions. Since we were too little to go in the ocean, Ricky and I would dig a pit, and we wouldn't let Hanna in until she told on us. We also made sandcakes and tried to trick people into buying them. We hoped to some day put Jack's out of business. Ricky threw sand sometimes and my mother would yell at him. He'd cry and throw more sand.

The ice cream man would ring his bell and Ricky and Hannah would get ice cream. Their father was an ice cream man one summer when he was in high school. He lived in Grammy and Poppop's beach house and rode around on a bike. When he would come home he'd eat potato chips, drink Pepsi and watch Phillies games. He got a truck driver's tan. Ricky and Hannah's mother would ask me, "Have you acquired the desire to partake of ice cream?" using vocabulary she learned from her word-a-day calendar. I had to say no because my mother didn't want me to spoil my appetite. Then I would push down on my eyelids to make the tears go away.

Grammy always left the beach early to buy fish at M&M's. M&M's smelled nasty, so I didn't go with her very often, even though there were live lobsters there. It was the only place on the island that had blue fish because of its connections to the Mafia, and the scales that were fixed because they always charged more than the signs said. You can do that at the gas stations.

We went back to the house to take showers. While we waited Ricky, Hannah and I played in the wading pool. One time Ricky dumped a bucket of water on my head. I let out a startled shriek, and my mother came over and dumped a bucket of water on Ricky's head. He started bawling and his father didn't speak to my mother for three months.

We would also play with mops. Sometimes we washed the deck, and sometimes we sat in the hammock and pretended to row a boat using the mops as oars. Then we had to run up to the upstairs deck and lower empty beach buckets to the ground using ropes.

When we were ready for dinner Grammy put the peeled shrimp

and string beans on the splintered patio table. Then she brought out the fish and corn on the cob and scooped the salads out of rinsed-out mayo jars. She also dug out pieces of half-eaten noodle kugel from a casserole she'd found in the freezer. In a whisper she'd tell us all about whom her neighbors the Botaris were renting to that week. Mr. Botari drove a Wonderbread truck.

Sometimes we'd hear about Yetta, her millionaire friend who had a house on the fancy part of the island. Yetta had two daughters. The first daughter got married, and they saved the top layer of the cake in Yetta's freezer for a year. On her daughter's first anniversary, Yetta took the cake out of the freezer and discovered it was covered with mold. Shortly afterwards her daughter's husband turned gay and they got divorced. Despite this bad omen, when Yetta's second daughter got married they again froze the top layer of the cake, but Yetta forgot what it was and took it out of the freezer and ate it three months after the wedding. That daughter got divorced too.

When we were done with dinner Grammy would take out a rhubarb pie she'd bought at Holiday Snack Bar and ask how bad it was. If it was lousy she'd say, "Good thing it's small. I don't feel bad throwing it out." She licked her fingers a lot as she handed out each piece. I usually ate the crust and then spread the soggy rhubarb around my plate so it looked like I had eaten more of it. Then Grammy would offer to make "real coffee" but my parents always declined because her coffee maker was a hazard. She'd bought it at a close-out sale and it had no on/off switch, so she had to pull the plug out while it was still running, and there was usually a spark. Then Poppop would turn on the radio and get a swing station using a metal hanger, and Grammy would say, "Chuck, turn it down. That's noise."

Ricky, Hannah and I would play games after dinner. Either Hannah would hide and Ricky and I wouldn't look for her until she started wailing, or Ricky and I would go into a room and lock her out until she started wailing. Then Ricky and Hannah would get psyched about going to Fantasy Island, an amusement park and arcade that fit into one square block. There was a roller coaster there than went around the track seven times in one ride, and the directions for putting on the safety belt said, "Pull to full extending. Clipee." Ricky and Hannah were saving up their arcade points to win something special - a vacuum cleaner or a big foam parrot. Jumping around with excitement, I always asked my mother if I could go too, but she'd say we had to go home. I would stop jumping.

I was always told to go to the bathroom before we left. One time I locked the door and then couldn't unlock it. I was filled with panic - my parents would leave without me, I would have to spend the rest of my life trapped in a bathroom like people on the news, subsisting on Grammy's cooking! But Poppop heard me whimpering and spoke calmly to me through the door until I turned the button in the knob and the door sprang open.

We would kiss everyone good-bye, and as we walked to the car Grammy would call my mother back. She had a margarine tub with fish scraps for our cat. My mother would argue that the cat hadn't finished the fish from the week before, that it gave the cat diarrhea. She always ended up with the scraps anyway.

As we drove home one night my father said quietly, "I don't want to go the beach with your parents anymore." He was tired of Grammy's gossip, Ricky and Hannah's parents' laundry, the unchanging menu, even the clarinet lump. But there was something he did not know about our visits to the beach. They were part of an obligation my mother had to Grammy and Poppop.

A long time before, when my parents were first married, my father's brother invited them to his house for Thanksgiving. When

my mother told Grammy she was not coming to Thanksgiving that year, Grammy cried. Poppop wrote my mother a letter explaining how upset they were with her decision to abandon her family. To redeem herself she had to not only celebrate Thanksgiving with Grammy and Poppop but also spend the summer with them at the beach.

As my mother reflected on this incident, she realized Grammy would always disapprove of her, no matter what she did. She saw the trips to the beach as a leash she could no longer bear to feel around her neck. To me the leash felt like a blanket that was being ripped out of my hands. I thought of all the times my mother had stopped me from doing what I wanted just because she could tell me what to do and I'd listen; how was this different from what Grammy did to my mother? Someday I would be able to do what I wanted; I'd eat novelty ice cream and throw beach balls up and down the stairs, but for now I could no longer go to the beach with Grammy and Poppop.

My parents bought their own beach house, in the fancy part of the island, near Yetta. Now we only see my grandparents on our own terms, without the rinsed-out mayonnaise jars and frozen kugels. Ricky and Hannah's parents don't need to come down to the beach to do their laundry anymore; in fact, they don't come down at all. My grandparents are old now, and sometimes very sad.

MARTHA KINSELLA
METUCHEN, NJ 08840
Ms. DAWSON

THE PERFECT KISS?

I guess I just swooned over him too long, anticipated our kiss to a point of such desperation that when it actually happened, it seemed lame and overplayed. Well, in my mind, it technically was played on repeat for a few months straight – but never mind that for now.

In retrospect, I made a fool out of myself, gaping and gawking at him like a mute for who knows how long. But I just couldn't say anything; my lip was numb, burning with confusion and trembling at the fierce touch of his own. I guess he figured something was up, though, 'cause he said, "Wow...that was great, wasn't it?" I somehow managed a weak nod of my head, which, for the record, felt as heavy as a lead rod sinking to the bottom of a lake.

Jake was just so gorgeous to me at that time. It's not the real reason I was so dumbfounded after we kissed, or at least I don't think so. No, I'm pretty sure it wasn't. The reason is what he stood for. I mean, for God's sake it was JAKE! I almost don't even believe it now; I keep waiting for that nagging ring of the alarm clock to hit me. But it doesn't, and it won't. This really happened. Jake was so popular at the time, too. I was so dorky. I guess the crowd led me. Anyways...Let me tell you how it went.

I was walking back home—the party at the hotel hadn't really gone as planned and I had started to observe what a tight, silk dress could do to the mind of a high-school boy (just between me and you, Mom was right; I shouldn't have gotten the padded bra after all.) Anyways...the moon was balanced high in the sky, the glow radiating over the town, kissing the tops of the great oak trees. My feet

were heavy, my steps lethargic as I trudged my way back home. I was mad; my date was a slime ball and I didn't even get to stay for the crowning of the king and queen. Some heck of a senior prom, right? Whatever.

So then...I was just scuffling along the dirty road when a sleek black limo slipped in next to me. As the window slid like down the car like water, I almost melted. Jake's sweet brown hair rustled in the night, his voice, like silver, seducing me.

"Hey," he said, collective and calm, unlike my heart, which bounced crazily in my rib cage. His tie was undone, hanging loosely over his neck. We chatted it up, the normal "what's up?" "Not much, you" "same" deal. Real audience killer, let me tell ya. But anyways, he invites me into the limo with him and I go, "what about Holly?" ya know, 'cause everyone who's anyone knows Jake IS Holly's. (insert rolling of eyes here.)

"Yeah, well, you know how it is...she and I really aren't together anymore. She was too much for me," he says, running his fingertips over the crease where the window meets the car. I almost died. I swear, his olive skin was glowing right then, his eyes were glazed over, and he smelled like the sea –this warm, almost sweet, salty scent that sent chills up my arms. Or maybe that was the wind.

But either way, I found myself in his limo; zooming down the path I was on, not even blinking when he passed my house in an instant. The conversation was limited: a few one-word questions followed by even shorter nods. I could barely keep my hands still; I was shaking with fear, which Jake mistook for the chill spring air (thank God!). He told the driver, so sweetly, to turn the heat up, slyly slipping his arm tightly around my shoulder.

"So why'd you leave the dance anyways?"

I kindly explained how all men were stupid; driven by one thing, they were bound to mess up at least once a week, or they would implode.

"Well," he said, his breath, which actually reeked of sour alcohol, whispered in my ear. "Not all guys are like that."

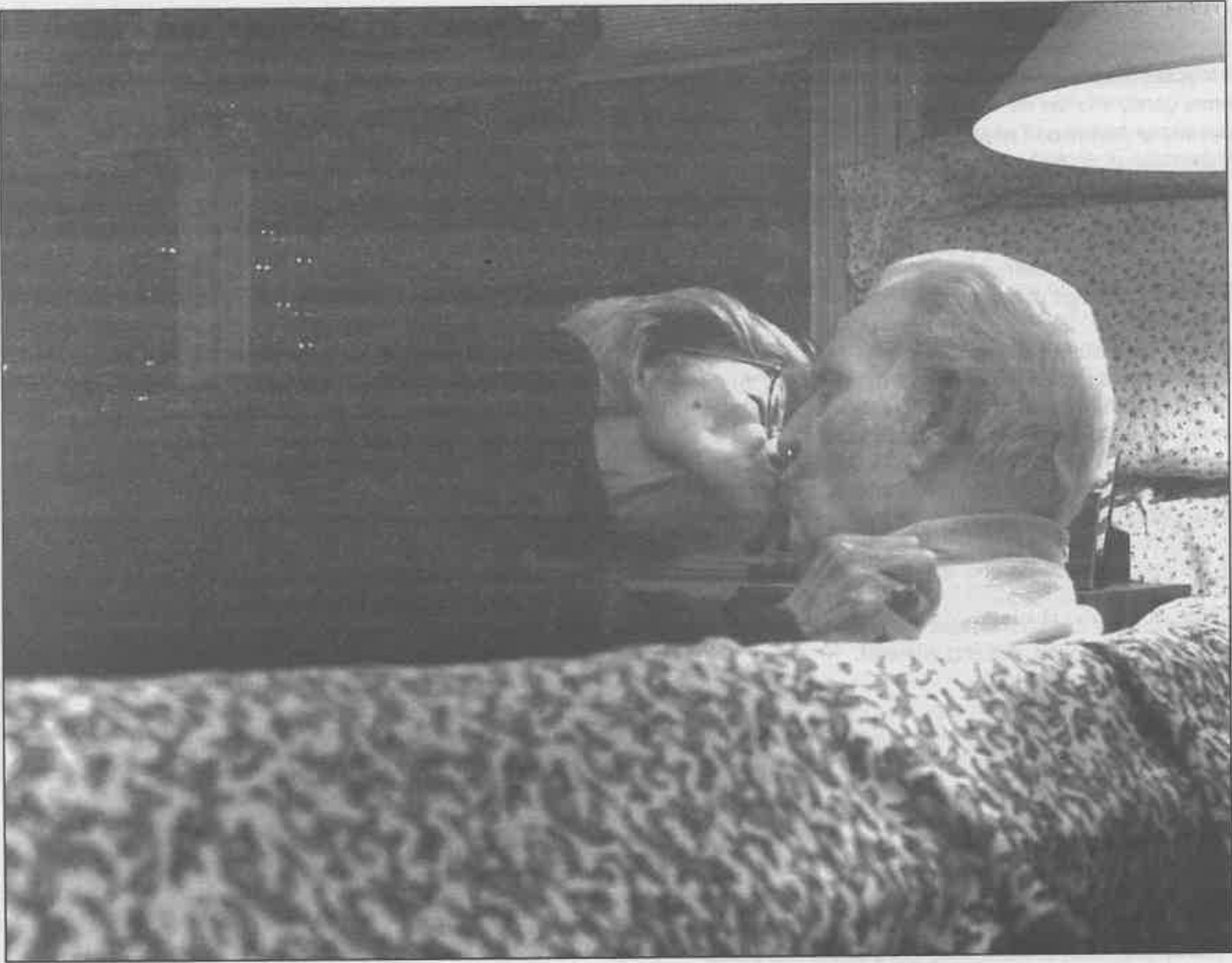
And just like that, the kiss I had been waiting for what seemed like forever came with no notice.

I was caught off guard, my mouth open wide, obnoxiously, about to start protesting his words. I tensed, freaked out; my whole body froze as though I was some stupid deer in headlights. Moving on...the kiss: it was soft at first, sweet and tender like my brain had always told me Jake would be. But then it just got nasty, the reality of his cheek, the stubble, the harsh scrape of it as he moved viciously. He seemed so angry, so anxious to kiss me, kinda like he was trying to swallow my head right there. When I think about it now, the whole thing makes me kind of nauseous. He can be pretty gross when he tries. I guess any guy can be if they're drunk enough, and horny enough for that matter, too.

Yeah...it really wasn't all I thought it would be. If I had to go back to last April and do it again, I would pass. Honestly, he's pretty built up for nothing. Maybe Mom was right; maybe I should have stuck with that dorky kid who played the cello in junior high.

Nah, maybe not.

GENNA SARNAK
TENAFLY, NJ
MR. WHITEHEAD



SARAH BREGEL
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
MR. CASTRO

THE SUN

just like a simple grain
of salt slowly slips down
the glass slide and
enters a pool of its own.
It is unrecognizable,
no different
or the same
as the one that slid
down the slope
before it, and when things
are finally settled,
secured, someone
lifts the bottle and
turns the world upside
down.

LINDSAY SABATINO
TENAFLY, NJ
MR. WHITEHEAD

SCHOOL DAYS

The lead scratches against the recycled paper,
a metallic shine of hope.
I erase stupid thoughts
doodled on dull binders
that blend into my rough hands.
I fall asleep with my eyes open,
it's hazy and delicious.
I never wake, only realize
that perhaps I've waited too long.
the classes are fifty minutes,
and the clock moves backwards
and then forwards.
I grip the pen, to further darken
the blister on my index finger.
I take notes, just in case,
overnight,
I forget what it feels like,
to be in school.

NATALIE PREGIBON
SUMMIT, NJ
HARRIET MARCUS

NIGHT LIFE

night falls like an alka-seltzer tablet,
explodes gently into the clear liquid of day
soaks into our hearts and minds—
the knowledge of an end.

in the bakery on thirty-first
two men drop the last apple pie, and it explodes
on the tile like a parachuter with a broken rip cord—
the sudden knowledge of an end.

9' o'clock in the bakery on thirty-first
and everyone has left and all is still save for two
who whisper sadly in a room across the street,
where dark is deceiving and light's happiness too misleading

and people are born to fail, though those who know this
and those who don't are equally blind but three blocks east
the wind shifts and different clouds assemble and this is
where dark's for conceiving and light means believing,

and people are not born to fail, and those who know this relish
the knowledge of an end, our end, the end.

BESTY RIBBLE
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
MICHAEL IRANI

PAIN

Isn't such a trivial thing when you are having it, having it
Like a baby, a surprise-girl-loosing-her-virginity pregnancy.
I don't have anywhere to write since I'm stuck in this place,
So I'm employing section B from last Monday, Nation &
World. Isn't this what a prisoner would do? Locked away in
Guantanamo, etching on top of "ROTTERDAM- puzzled
Over a lost Beethoven concerto" or "watching this Iraq story"
So he can save illegal words in his turban and someone will
Send them to his wife, an unwrinkled woman with distinct
Lines and cultural clothes. I fell asleep on the *in* breath while
Trying to meditate it away, which I guess is best, but when
I woke up it felt early and unfamiliar like lying in a Marriot
While your brother's showering and the light on the suitcase,
And the light from the hall, and the starch sheets bother you
Like newspaper words throbbing under your quiet ones, or
Pain tucked under your skin. In my dreams I've been trying
To fly somewhere, the last two nights spent missing a plane.
I used to control my dreams so I could go flying over
Virginia back roads or have fun with one of the Irish boys
In a movie. But it's the boring airport dreams that are telling
Me what I really ought to know—sticky lines of legal words
Filed under illegal ones—and how the rest will all flake away,
And I will be tucked away under a branchy tree at Lake Aribon,
like A bed.

MEG LALLY
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
MICHAEL IRANI

A DISTANT CANCER

One o'clock is riding in my truck
With your fingers in my scalp
And it starts to rain.
The little league game is on hold, all the boys
Are finger-locked onto the dugout fence,
Watching the big drops hit the dust
Turning the world to mud.

Dinner is on the porch in the cool blue light
Of the Arlington afternoon
It's tomatoes with vinegar and chives,
Tuna salad inside pitas and ice tea.
It's leaning up against the porch fence,
Holding my paper plate to my chest,
Watching you eat olives with your fingers.

The night chars to black and the shadows
Spill over door frames,
Sink handles, a banister.
Your mother is sleeping down the hall,
She is sick and the rain makes her tired.
We make love quietly,
Hoping she is not dreaming of cancer.

I wake to you turned towards the window.
Light breathes into the room as I feel your beating
Inside the cocoon of bleached sheets.
I cup my hand under your chin,
Your face moves in a curve
Away from your eyes, the rain falling against it.

CARLING MCMANUS

BIOLOGY

I had a dream she was pregnant,
whole-bodied, buried underneath layers
of skin, fit to nourish the life
flickering inside her. Propped up on classical
music and a pillow, she reads against
the window of our apartment,
the light cutting her shadow into plaster.
In my dream, we love carefully,
holding the belly like a balloon between us,
tempting its skin, feeling out for its yolk.
We sit towards each other, a space
forms like a diamond in the hollow
of our legs.
We were in her car pushing
against one another, the frost spread
across the windows slowing the gray
glow of rain, like muted rays under water.
Up to my arms in her, I was naked,
sweating against the leather of the door.
She came to me, whispering in French
that she loved me, holding my face
against her ear, sticky
with hair.
An afternoon we found a hill

that grew a wolf tree from its middle,
 deformed and oddly protruding
 from the field. We lay without a blanket
 in the firm grass, and watched the light
 bend around our skin. I propped myself
 up above her, my necklace sliding down
 into the wedge between my breasts.
 We sealed our skin together by our torsos
 and I fit the gree-stoned ring around her
 finger, asking her to marry me.
 She held the word yes in her mouth,
 stretching arms around my neck,
 kissing me.
 Inside the petri dish her egg fended
 off an unknown man. Like white
 bubbles they spread around the sack
 pounding against her membrane,
 pushing their way inside, as if breaking
 through her hymen. The egg bled at first
 puncture and spilled around the edges.
 The other sperm died, swaying, their heads
 still attached to the egg's surface.
 it moved like a jelly fish, beating
 though the thick liquid that would soon
 be the water in my womb, heavy and aching
 to break from between my legs.

CARLING McMANUS
 MILTON, MA
 JAMES F. CONNOLLY

MAKING OUT IN HELL

If I were to make out with you anywhere, Hell
 would be my location of choice.
 I know there probably isn't much oxygen with all those flames,
 but at least it wouldn't be cold.
 And we could definitely end up there; I mean it's a place I can see
 us both at.
 We would fit in there, and I think the acceptance rate is pretty
 high.
 Making out wouldn't be the same anywhere else.
 I mean, I know if I'd like making out
 on Earth. It's just such a, well you hate to say it, but it's a pretty
 pedestrian place.
 That's why I choose Hell.
 I mean if we can just ignore all the hardened criminals, I bet we
 could have a great time.
 We could definitely kiss better in Hell.

REBECCA TAUB
 OLD GREENWICH, CT
 MR. SCHWARTZ

THE ROLE

106th, Duke Ellington Boulevard—
 on the cold, speckled granite of a stairway
 to Riverside.
 Tonight is leaden.
 Gazing at Hudson's evening waters
 and Jersey's derelict, lamplit sprawl
 my thoughts are West you, driving under
 the fummy sunset of arid, auto Houston.

I haven't called called for month—
 My eyes have gotten worse, everything's blurry or breaking,
 light darts in tack scratches, It's not so bad;
 Comedy's dry.

So many nights were your blunted Texan whisper, tear-choke
 and relentless algebraic
 forever cursing pelvis;
 my calmer inflections, a buoy by chance;
 countless assurances cooed through
 the grainy transverse of a receiver.

Today I called a friend
 to ask if he still cared—one solemn yes—
 made *your* question seem so permanent,
 your indignant clip, tonight a bore, a tick
 making city blocks resonate, one million confessionals:
 pavement rosaries and "hail Mary,"
 electric cathedral musk.

And the city's western hem,
 I'm anchored
 under the leafless, winter elms
 Meditating on the granular night,
 its ghosts, its swollen space,
 as the Hudson snakes before me, indefinite.

JORDAN WEISSMAN
 NEW YORK, NY
 NELL SCARFF

A DANCE

first gravity,
 nauseating as a clock
 I feel it pulling, my
 bare feet sinking stop
 your nonsense and let
 me go! leap
 twisted leaps above a
 firing floor.

then breath,
 natural as the dictionary
 I feel it rushing, my
 twin lungs heaving to
 create this rhythm and
 momentum! so swirling

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 y again,

rails cover
ge.
ally silence,
agant as a picture frame
consolidating this
a remedy for a room bereft
sic! candles,
ut. let this dance be
darkness so
ur motion keeps
ng my teeth.

NDRA BROSTOFF
NT, MA
AGAN

PLEATS

is six yards of annoyance.
growned" up women wear them.
run in them, splash in the puddles
April rains
r Bombay Monsoons,
y mother.

raps the yearn of a red petticoat
her creamy tummy.
wore saris to college, she begins,
ng the dozens of blouse hooks
y one.
the crowded buses in them
nd fierce.
xclaims the blouse is tight.
er twenty years ago,
she came to this country and ate cheese.
deftly swoops the peacock cloth
d her hips.
always armed with an umbrella.
ellas with sharp points.
ould try to touch me,
ing fingers through books, bags, and scarves.
ould simply stab them.

ster and I watch our mother
ound, plum colored eyes.

almly pleats a sari edge—
y perfect pleats.
tucks them into the petticoat.
ring the draping yards of silk
ontinues,
d no umbrella
e use of my sharpened toenails.
nought I was a scared college girl.
ust jammed my nails
eir dust-dirtied heels.
a throws the silk over her shoulder,
the ends around her body,
cks the fringes
into the flame petticoat.

moothes the wrinkles into the air,
he cloth on her shoulder,
g her story away.

RAMAKRISHMAN
KET, NY
ERRY COWEN

CRIMES OF A MISSPENT YOUTH

And now, of course, it's been six years already... I've never told this story before. The friends who saw me again were very glad to see me alive. I was sad, but I told them, "It's fatigue."
- The Little Prince Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

Thursday Morning, Entry #122

There is a yuppie I have been servicing behind her back (she hates the tricks, but then I just remind her who is paying for her lifeline) everyday during his lunch break for the past week or so. He is blonde and pretty with straight teeth and broad quarterback shoulders - what a middle school love affair. I found him at the entrance of the School's subway stop, my skirt flying and my smile twirling. I suspect the only reason he pays for my mouth is the fact that it quivers his little silver spoon, but he pays me three times the asking price and never tries to kiss me when it's over so he's my favorite. From my oh-so-glamorous vantage point I've been able to admire the beauty of his mainline when he rolls up his shirtsleeves and lets his blood run free - I don't think I've ever seen a prettier thing. They're achingly beautiful come-hither ridges of a lunar green that rise and fall with each breath he takes, they cut his arms into marble. I can just imagine his face knitted with the excitement of a brand new rush, a fresh new spoon, tying himself off and then shooting it up, the purity rushing through him and making his blood pump and his face blush for an entirely different reason. The needle sinking into his pale skin, his blue blood - God, it kills me.

Saturday, Dawn, Entry #123

She walked in on me when I was pretending to be in the bath, I was sitting in the tub in all my clothes with out a soap bubble in sight when she walks in and tells me that she has to pee. I was writing in this here journal and she asked me what I was doing? Writing? Jeez, kid, I thought you gave that up a while ago. Why are you still writing? I am writing this because I want to remember what happened.

Monday, Night, Entry #124

It started like this - she asked me about the boy I loved and a connection was made. The connection stayed because we both like a certain rebel-rebel and Jim Carroll's desert lilies, the big H. That is why I am here.

Tuesday, Afternoon, Entry #125

We woke up late this morning. I can't be too sure of the time because we pawned the clock-radio a few weeks ago (see entry #75) and her Baby-G watch some time before that (see entry #16). We shared an apple that we lifted from the grocery store and a cigarette. After that we climbed out onto the balcony, shot up, and started babbling about rainbows (there's just such an inexplicable beauty re: the perpetual, the color, the sun triumphant, and then of course to appease our Catholic hearts - those religious undertones, God's promise to save). We learned about them in science, freshman year.

Thursday, Twilight, Entry #126

She got a letter from her mom today and she couldn't stop crying. I was hard up and wanted to go down to the corner so I told her to shut the hell up, and then she wailed like the ambulance that took Penny away (my virgin overdose, see entry #34). She called me a stupid bitch and I called her a dumb slut and then I left to get some junk and a hot dog because I was starving.

When I came back Teddy had come over with his portable TV and they were watching the telenovelas that remind Teddy of his mother (but not his homophobic pop who kicked him out of the house, see entry #64. Remember when he came to collect his faggot son? Darling Teddy, we love you so, black eyes and all). I was still kind of angry with her but I gave her the last half of my hot dog anyway. A \$1 hot dog and I couldn't finish it – I think my stomach was shrunk. I can't finish anything anymore – hot dogs, sentences, high school. But what I can finish is a bag of junk, and so we did.

Friday, Midnight, Entry #127

I can no longer achieve anything about a good high. But that's all right.

She got a job as a waitress at the diner down the street, so it's been only me the entire day. I woke up and the sun was already high, high, high in the sky, so I smoked a joint and lay in bed and counted the ants on the ceiling.

Saturday, Afternoon, Entry #128

I stole a permanent marker from the public library because the librarian was a punk bitch who reeled from my youth and poverty (you and your assumptions – I did not come in here because it's hot outside and cool in here, I came in here to feed) and I've taken to writing on the apartment walls, haiku and sentences, etc. Right beneath the crack in the bathroom ceiling, the one that looks like God creating Adam, I wrote "Heaven." Next to her bed I wrote: "you are like the worm / I drowned in third grade / I only let you go / because I thought you could swim." She read that before she went to bed last night and she started to cry, she said that her blood ached. I gave her three 10mg of Ambien (tres-old school... I remember sneaking it when mom was at parties, my contraband Ambien and nutmeg) and she passed the hell out.

Sunday, Evening, Entry #129

We were talking over a joint today after I got home from Mass. She saw me walking in with my pumps and torn jean skirt and stained office shirt, still rolling my rosary between my hands, and she kind of smiled like she always does when she catches me being my mother's daughter.

"You know," she said, "I wish I were Catholic."

I sucked really hard on the joint so that the end of it glowed orange-red. "Yeah, it's pretty fun."

"It's just so..."

"Romantic. Tragic. Beautiful."

"With the candles and the smoke and the, the, the sorrow."

"Exactly."

Tuesday, Morning, Entry #130

I've been popping painkillers and drinking Codeine the entire day, when you live a life like my own it is easy to forget that you are still

a teenage girl. I am so happy, however, that I still have my monthly friend – I want to have children, eventually.

Wednesday, Evening, Entry #131

I got a job at the movie theatre, Wednesday and Monday afternoons. This means the end of the tricks – thank God. The yuppie of my weeks past has disappeared quite mysteriously and a girl needs to make a living.

I like the theatre because in the dark no one sees the chapped lips and nervous habits and girlish insecurities and the thighs that can never be thin enough – I can pretend to be beautiful like the projection screen.

And the handfuls of popcorn afford me several days of not having to steal my calories.

Thursday, Twilight, Entry #132

I have realized that we live in the Lost Boys Apartment Building. Peter Pan's Lost Boys were children who had fallen out of their prams in the park while their occupied Nannies had looked the other way. These are the children we are living among, the boys and girls who had fallen out of their minds while their rich mommies and daddies pretended to look the other way.

Two new boys have moved in next-door, they are XTC friends who dabble in the H only occasionally. They used to go to one of the boys' schools in our old school district. We flirted with them for a bit after they finished putting their stuff around (a few CDs, a stereo, and some clothes – I give them 2 weeks before they pawn it all) and then we all took some XTC, and then we talked real fast.

Friday, Afternoon, #133

She caught me biting my nails and told to me to stop; it's a bad habit. When we realized what she had said we laughed so hard we cried.

Saturday, Evening, Entry #134

Today we were flying with the moon and the sun in the bathroom when I turn to her and say:

"You know what I want, more than anything else in the world?"

"More than a good high?"

"Yeah."

"No, what do you want?"

"I want to fall in love and then have my heart broken." She sighs like she knows what I'm speaking of. "Why would you ever want that?"

"Because... I want to be able to experience the highest highs and the lowest lows without the drugs. An immaculate experience..."

"Yeah..."

"I don't know, maybe I just want to be romantic."

And now, in her Sophomore-year French "Oui, mon Rimbaud. C'est tout pour l'amour."

Monday, Evening, Entry #135

The theatre is playing a Spanish film with lots of cursing and a lead actress who is beautiful like a Mary Magdalene who could tempt even the Son. She is too young and in love with an older man. At one point in the movie she screams at her pseudo-Hummy: you are killing me inside, because that is how much she loves him. I've seen it three times, now. She makes me wish I were healthy again,

that I could still fill out my uniform skirt and flip my perfumed ponytail at men and make them shiver. I wish I loved someone that much – you are killing me inside.

Tuesday, Evening, Entry #136

The XTC boys are having trouble adjusting, they need hot running water and thick blankets and Internet access and pretty girls with un-holey arms. She has a crush on XTC boy 2; he smiles easy and tells her jokes without the intention of getting into her pants. I think the other one thinks I'm pretty – he asked me if he could draw my picture a few days ago. I was smoking a joint and I choked, in two weeks he is not going to be thinking about drawing pictures but getting high.

She wanted to be Picasso and I wanted to be Rimbaud. We wanted to produce such beautiful things and be such beautiful people, and now we are just burn-outs with track marks and broken hearts and weary feet. We are what your parents have nightmares of.

Everyone comes here with these dreams of becoming some romantic notion of becoming a Bohemian (it's these movies, our money, our parents that tell us that we can be anything we want with our bottomless pockets and resplendent minds, look, mom, look at where I am now) a poet or a painter or a singer, but in the end, it all falls out – you've just become a drug addict.

But I just nodded real cool and told him sure. I love being cooler than words.

Wednesday, Afternoon, Entry #137

Today after work I cleaned the bathtub because I like it to look immaculate; I scrubbed it until it was a lighter brown then it was before. It is stained from all of the previous occupants – the sins of its former tenants are scrawled on the tile in mildew and water stains. Oh, my worn and downtrodden bathtub.

The bathtub is my favorite place in the entire apartment (read as: my favorite place to get high, tracing the initials I'd scratched into the tub during my very first apartment trip). She'll sit on the fire escape outside the bathroom window and I will sit in the bathtub, and we will shoot up and lay our respective heads onto the window or the tile, and it will be more beautiful than Eden.

Matthew, remember Matthew, remember when he took those pictures? He took pictures of us after the fact, wasted out of our minds but still not so much; this was way back when (see entry #3). I still had blushing cheeks and rounded boys. My head was too heavy for my shoulders, I had my arms wrapped around myself, and I was looking out the window above the tub, and he said I looked like Eve, tempting Satan from his sin. Then he kissed me and I stopped being a girl.

Thursday, Evening, Entry #138

I took the bus downtown today to walk around, people-watch. I found some sidewalk chalk lying around (how remnant of a childhood I've yet to lose – a youth dancing on a razor blade...) and I grabbed a piece and kept walking, stained my hands with something powdery and white yet truly pure. When I got home I drew on the bathroom wall all the Saints that we learned about in school: St. Paul in his Revelation, St. Flora in her Ecstasy, St. Agnes in her Passion, St. Veronica with her veil, the Virgin with her Holy Oil Tears. Then I drew her and me below them; sad with crooked halos and tiny wings that couldn't even lift our spirits.

Friday, Morning, Entry #139

Oh, Lord, I have just looked in the mirror and I look like hell. I am so ashamed. I despise the tracks and swollen holes that mark my arms, I despise the yellow of my teeth and the razor blade quality of my cheekbones and eyebrows. I've become so pale you can see the blood cells traveling beneath my skin.

Saturday, Afternoon, Entry #140

There are bugs in the apartment and they are feasting on my skin and bones but I'm afraid to itch the presents they leave – I itched at first and I bled almost immediately; an inch of skin was underneath my nails. This is tons worse than the needle marks.

Sunday, Dawn, Entry #141

The pothead from across the way invited her and me and the XTC boys over for shrooms last night. She and I couldn't stop crying, XTC boy 1 held me like he was my mother.

Monday, Afternoon, Entry #142

It pumps through my veins and makes me warm, it makes me feel like writing a good sentence used to make me feel. I've never realized the same high but it's so close, it's on the tip of my tongue and I cannot remember it for my life.

She flew into a fit this morning, she'd looked at herself in the mirror and, apparently extremely unhappy with what she saw, she threw one of the flowerpot dishes at it. She missed and now there's a hole in the wall, I used the chalk and my fist to make it into a bleeding heart – the sign of the Virgin.

Tuesday, Twilight, Entry #143

I cut my wrists today to see what would happen. I never have anything to do on Tuesdays, anyway, so I sat in the tub and slid an old coke razor blade across my skin. I half expected my veins to spew rainbow colors after all the shit that I've put them through, bright blue and green and purple with the red. I was severely disappointed when I realized that neither rainbows nor white lilies came forth, just the plain dark blood that everyone else has.

It was not beautiful. It was not tremendous. It was bullshit. I became more depressed and compressed my wrists to stop the flowing, my ordinary blood, just like Lady Macbeth except with less noble intentions.

Wednesday, Afternoon, Entry #144

The theatre fired me because they found out about the twenties I've been systematically taking from the register during my popcorn runs. I'm not going to miss that dump (except for maybe you, Maria, and my perpetual night).

It looks like I'm back to turning tricks, huh?

Monday, Dawn, Entry #145

I've stopped going to church, the incense and the mourning and the candles remind me too much of my mother, it is hard not to weep into Christ's blood.

Thursday, Afternoon, Entry #146

The men used to stare at us and holler, like the wolf in the Bugs Bunny cartoon, but now we are both two pounds away from death and instead they stare and vomit. We caught our reflections in the glass of the bus stop and as soon as we got home we both started crying, which is ironic because once upon a time we have both wanted to be this thin and now we are this thin and it is disgusting.

Saturday, Twilight, Entry #147

Her hair has begun to fall out. She drew a picture of herself on the wall next to the door – it's a skull with her pretty eyelashes. She held herself and couldn't stop crying for a while. I tried to give her a joint but she pushed it away and started tearing at her skin, saying that she didn't want this anymore.

I gave her some downers, took some myself, and we both passed out.

Sunday, Evening, Entry #148

She told me today that she wanted to get out of this, that she wanted to come down forever.

"We have to get clean," she said, "I have to get clean. I'm going crazy."

So we shot up the last baggie of H that we had (no use in throwing it away) and tomorrow begins our fall.

Monday, Dawn, Entry #149

Day 1 of coming down from Mr H. The first days are always the worst. We are both awake but she has not moved since we fell asleep last night, she is still in the same fetal position at the corner of her bed (I only glanced over as I made my way to the bathroom, I hate seeing her like this – she looks so stupid and cold).

I made my way over to the bathtub and I filled it with water and I have been soaking for the past two hours – the water was never warm and my extremities are turning blue but I cannot move without imploding.

I feel like wood in my wounds.

Wednesday, Afternoon, Entry #150

We are both coming down and it is like someone is living inside of my stomach, tearing and gnawing at the walls of my insides and then intermittently yelling ice into my limbs. I am scared that this monster is going to ruin my uterus and I will never be able to bear children. I am scared that this monster is going to ruin me and I will not live long enough to bear children.

We have been vomiting and crying and vomiting some more the entire weekend, shaking with the chills one moment and then sweating so much, I am so weary with this.

Sunday, Evening, Entry #151

She's dead. Oh my God. Teddy and I just got back from the hospital. Oh shit. I come home from the tricks and she's lying on the balcony, feet still inside, already a lunar blue and fading. All I need right now is that spoon, that flame, that needle in the arm... Teddy and I carried her into a taxi cab and we dropped her off at the emergency entrance and oh, hell, I forgot what we did next... I just

remember we saw the black bag – she's dead.

Monday, Dawn, Entry #152

She died on Sunday and I still don't feel a thing.

Teddy let me sleep in his bed last night, her skull on our wall drove me crazy with nightmares.

Tuesday, Dawn, Entry #153

I slept with XTC Boy 1 last night, he gave me a tab and when I kissed him his lips became huge and hot pink and his eyelashes became trees and I was so scared, I called for her. He thought I said his name and he opened his eyes and there she was, swimming in the ocean with purple mushrooms. She told me that everything was all right, and so I let him kiss me again.

Oh, why do boys always smell like regret in the morning?

Wednesday, Evening, Entry #154

Remember in Dandelion Wine? We read it in seventh grade, right? Do you remember when they played that Statues game, right before Daniel Huff moved – do you remember? They played Statues and that's how Daniel left Douglas' side; that is how he gave him to the world. Oh God oh God why are you leaving me like this.

Thursday, Afternoon, Entry #155

I am going to sit in the bathtub and cook up the biggest spoon in the entire world and I am going to shoot it straight and lean back with the window open and hope I don't wake up from this nod.

I finally left her mother an anonymous voice mail (oh how anonymous – she's had the pitch of my voice and sigh in my smile memorized since the third grade) : 'Head on over to the local morgue.'

Friday, Late Night, Entry #156

I spent the entire day sitting in the tub with ice cubes on my mainline (I think it's infected, it hurts to write), staring up at the ceiling. We talked once and I pointed out the HEAVEN crack and I said that it looked like God creating Adam. And she giggled and said – are you comparing this shithole to the Sistine Chapel? (terrifying thought: maybe this is ours, maybe this is my masterpiece... maybe this – these roaches and this revolting bathtub and the wilted dandelions in the windowsill – this will be my only mark. I just re-read the previous entry – how hideous! This can't be it, this can't be it... I can feel the blood pumping into my brain – this is the first time I've thought in a while; these words aren't coming to me like they used to)

Sunday, Dawn, Entry #157

I've been waking up with hunger pains, low down in my stomach and feeling half a step from death. I do not even know what I am hungering for. I want clean veins, I want my mother, I want the Virgin, I want her. Oh, God.

Monday, Twilight, Entry #158

I'm getting out of this. I don't care what I have to do. I cannot bear to think of what would happen if I were to die ('head on over to the local morgue' – how hideous!! Mother I am sorry...). I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it. I'm flying away, I'm flying away... I'm gonna live

to fall completely in love and have my heart broken in two, I will have my immaculate experience, I will have my children, I am going to go to Heaven, I am going to live... The initials in the bathtub, the heart on the wall – I will leave another mark.

Why did I ever write this down? No one can ever know. No one will ever know. But now it's tattooed on the inside of my mouth (no one will ever know until I let them stick their tongue down my throat and they will feel her skull with her pretty eyelashes, they will feel the needles and the blood and the drugs), I can lick it raw but it will always be there... And then everyone will realize that I'm an ugly girl with an ugly past, I will always be the drugged angel with the tiny wings and the glassy eyes, never the Magdalena in the dark death inside. I do not want this mark; I do not want this...

JO JIMENEZ
GERMANTOWN, MD
NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SCHOOL
MS. REBECCA STAIR

NEBRASKA ROLLS

My mother picks up the mixing bowl off the heating vent
And places it on the counter.
She lifts the towel off the raised dough
And tells her daughters to knead.

She asks us what to do next,
Never expecting us to remember
Maybe because it is late at night,

After Midnight Mass on Easter Vigil,
As it is always late when the rite is performed.

It doesn't matter if we can't remember.
She always knows the ingredients, the steps
And the order in which they come—
Her mother's recipe written in her mother's hand
On a card, on her mind.

Maybe she doesn't want us to remember,
So she can show us that
Though she forgets the day-to-day things:
How boys made us scream
Her friends made us cry
From year to year she can recall
How to grease and flour a pan
The exact way to cut dough with a string:
The important stuff.

RITA SCHMIDT
GREEN BROOK, NJ
HARRIET MARCUS



ERIC HABERSKI
NORTHBORNE, MA

APPLE PICKING

my two bare feet, black with tar,
graze the grass rapidly
Pound the earth before taking flight.

momentarily, the ground is forgotten and
my arms spread open to embrace the gnarled bark.

in my grandparents' backyard there is an apple tree.
sour, half-devoured apples fall
from the branches and leave only the
ripe, bittersweet ones on the highest limbs.

in search for the sweetest fruit,
my toes curl around the slowly
decaying trunk and i reach up to
the sturdy bottom branch (the oldest limb)
to find support.

in the fall
my grandfather's mother would use
the bitter green apples to bake 12-inch pies.
(they say i inherited her green eyes)

i wrap my fingers around the next highest
limb and balance on the swaying branch.

my father, in his youth, would swing from
this limb before hurtling to the ground
in an attempt to find his wings and take
flight.

thirty years later, there is now a higher branch.
i scramble up to the next limb and engulf the bending branch
with my body.
i pocket a shiny green apple and slowly find my balance
on top of the bowling branch.

standing erect, i open my arms,
feel the autumn breeze, and catapult to the ground.

LARISSA CURLIK
WESTFIELD, NJ
HARRIET MARCUS

EPIPHANY

My arm collapses over the porcelain edge
and water droplets sprinkle from my fingertips
and onto a sheet of paper,
posing as a blanket to the black and white tiles,
a copy I made of a poem you read to me in April,
I reread it several times before placing it there,
on the floor by the bath,
and can't help admire the lighting in this room.
This could be why I love black and white photography,
when colors are too deafening, an annoyance,
that distract the break and mood.

I sit for a while,
let the soap drift and leave trails of white
that might resemble cigarette smoke
if it could exist in water,
both breaking apart and creating patterns
around the movements of my hand,
then disappearing into the currents I've created.
This must be where poetry came from.

SARAH BREGEL
BALTIMORE, MD
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
WILLIAM JONES

PHOTOGRAPH, CAPE COD, 1992

This is how she sits:
shoulders slouched,
hands in a V between her legs.
The half-light of dawn shines her hair gold,
she smiles, head down, eyes
in shadows

as Indian women might smile
on the streets of Calcutta,
dark-skinned swans
whose eyes make promises
covered mouths deny
At night they see visions in the water.

Before I turned 8,
I was beautiful.

DINA GUZOVSKY
WESTON, MA
JAMES CONNOLLY

756 RISON STREET

Among the striped sheets on that pull out bed
beneath your bay window, 17 years of
peddle-pushers and keds, and
my naked bones are dandelions
with the cotton blown away.
Your grandmother's clock tolls 6 times
like church bells; I slip into my blue
dress, which strangely has no wrinkles.
Tears hide in the shadows of the
October sun, but you remain wrapped
in those red striped sheets
sipping Icehouse straight from the can.
How is it that Apollo wears his royal purple
each morning as he drives his chariot
across the sky laughing at so many of us
with our underwear in our back pockets
as we dash to our back doors and windows?
Because everyone knows
Christian girls don't have lovers.

PAM DIVINE
GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
DANVILLE, VA

THE FAVORITE THINGS

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens

When Ellen and Peter Quinn pulled into the driveway of the big yellow house, it was raining. The blooms on Grandma Quinn's rosebush drooped, and the petals were falling off and sticking to the fence and to the thick leaves of the hosta below. They parked between Zoe's car and a Lexus that Ellen didn't recognize but figured must belong to the lawyer. Peter got out of the driver's side and opened his umbrella and then opened Ellen's door and held the umbrella over her. They walked quickly and tried to avoid the puddles but Ellen's new black shoes got soaked anyway. Inside the dimly lit front hall Zoe was leaning against the flowered wallpaper and talking to a handsome young man in a brown suit. She gave her parents each a kiss and the man introduced himself as Julian Philips.

"You folks are a little early," said Mr. Philips, "and we can't start until everyone is here, so make yourselves comfortable." Ellen wondered why he was telling them to be comfortable as if they were guests in his house. Peter took off his coat and hung it on the rack next to Zoe's and the lawyer's. Ellen kept hers on.

"How was your drive down?" she asked Zoe.

"Much faster than I thought it would be. 95 was empty the whole way."

"I hope you didn't drive like a maniac," Ellen said. She always worried that her daughter would get into an accident far away from home.

"Not the entire time," Zoe said and grinned. "I slowed down to 70 when it started to rain."

Ellen pursed her lips and sighed through her nose, frowning. "I wish you'd be safer," she said.

Her husband said, "She's a smart girl, she can take care of herself." Ellen didn't answer.

Peter and Zoe started talking to Mr. Philips, and Ellen drifted into the living room to look at the pictures on the wall. Over the piano was the family portrait taken last Christmas. Everyone was arranged around Grandma Quinn, who sat in front of the piano. She had insisted that she set up the camera herself, and had rushed back to her seat before the timer went off. Ellen remembered standing on the end, and noticed now that half of her face had been cut off. Typical, she thought, and scowled. Next to the family portrait hung individual pictures of Zoe's cousins - Carol and Joe's kids Brian and Sara, and Andrew and Jackie's girls Lily and Marianna - all dressed in their first communion outfits. Ellen had suggested that Grandma Quinn put up Zoe's graduation picture with the others, since she was wearing a white dress in it, but Grandma Quinn had decided to keep it on a small table next to the couch instead, along with Ellen's favorite picture of Zoe dressed up as a black cat for her kindergarten Halloween party.

Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens

The first thing Zoe noticed when she arrived at Grandma Quinn's house, besides that she was the only one there, was that her grandmother's copper flowerpot was not in its usual spot on the front steps. It was a dollar-bill green from the elements - just like the Statue of Liberty, Grandma used to say, proudly - instead of brown like a penny. In the winter the kettle filled up with fluffy snow and looked like a bit cotton ball, the kind her mother dipped in nail pol-

ish remover about a week after a visit to the manicurist. Zoe used to reach in the flowerpot with her mittens and eat some of the snow. It had tasted like cold air.

It was only quarter to noon and not even the lawyer had arrived yet. She sat in the car listening to the rain patter on the roof. She liked seeing the flowers in bloom in front of the house; there was still some snow left over from the last big storm back on campus. A black Lexus came down the driveway. She pulled at her skirt, which was wrinkled from sitting, and got out to meet the man in the brown suit who was holding a briefcase and getting wet from the rain.

"You must be the lawyer," she said, holding her umbrella over him and extending her hand. "I'm Zoe Quinn, one of the grandchildren."

He took her hand and smiled. He had a strong grip. "Julian Philips. Pleased to meet you. And let me say how very sorry I am for your loss."

"Thank you," she said. He did not seem much older than her. His eyes were coffee-colored. "Do you have a key to the house?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. He tipped a blue key out of an envelope from his coat pocket. Zoe remembered the key and where it used to hang, on a rack near the front door below the shelf for letters with loopy script and bright stamps.

The house was still but very much alive. The lily-of-the-valley bulbs that Grandma Quinn kept on the windowsill in the kitchen had sprouted. Their raw fragrance clung to their clothes and reminded her of the floral perfume her grandmother would wear in the winter with her hair bunched up on top of her head in defiance of the cold. A low chime from the clock in the living room vibrated slowly into the hallway. Julian looked around as though he were seeing the faded wallpaper and the French doors for the first time, although he must have been in this house before. They hung up their coats and Zoe kicked the water off her shoes.

He had gone to Harvard and Harvard Law. He had majored in art history and had applied to law school only because his parents had wanted him to become a lawyer. He did not think he would get in but he did. He had been to Italy twice in the last year where he had studied painting. He loved political humor. He was not married. She found him very impressive, and almost told him so, but decided she would seem more interesting if she didn't.

"I like to read," she said. "I love Chinese food, not the real stuff, the American kind. I can't ever eat it at home because my dad hates the smell of it. I used to play the cello but I quit after high school. I hate ice cream but I love shaved ice - have you ever tried that? It tastes like snow, only sweeter." She thought of telling him about her relatives, but she wasn't sure what to say. Her family started trickling in.

She watched him to see if he was watching her. He tossed his head and gestured with his hands when he talked and often turned quickly to one side in the middle of his sentences, like he was not just talking to the person in front of him but to a whole audience. He laughed loudly and spoke loudly and with an accent that she couldn't really place but figured it must come from living among the cultured.

Brown paper packages tied up with strings

Carol had told her husband sixteen times that they had to leave

now, but they still got stuck in traffic after picking up Brian. "We're going to be late," she repeated to the steering wheel.

"I could've taken my car and picked up Brian," said Sara from the backseat, "but you didn't want me to."

Carol bristled and turned to face her two grown children. "This is supposed to be a family time," she hissed. "We're supposed to come all together, not show up when we feel like it." She glared at Sara, who had arrived late to the funeral. Sara looked away.

"It's fine, Mum," Brian said. "We'll get there. The traffic's moving." Brian had a way of taking things in stride that Carol thought he must have gotten from her mother. She turned back to stare at the UPS truck in front of them and tried not to think about the ceaseless stripes of cars on the highway.

"If we had left when I wanted to," she said. She did not need to finish. It was intended for Joe, who had fallen asleep and was breathing out of his mouth. She tried taking deep breaths. Her mother had always told her that she needed to relax. The car seemed to be closing in around her.

"What do you think Grandma will leave us," Sara said. "I hope I get some of her jewelry." Everyone was quiet. "What do you think, Mum," she repeated.

"I don't think it's something you should be talking about," Carol said. "You should be thankful for whatever Grandma was nice enough to pass down to you."

Sara let her elbow fall against the window, making a hollow thud. "She'll probably leave me her pearl necklace. Zoe likes that too. We had a big fight over it at Easter when we were kids, remember? Zoe told me I shouldn't get to wear it because it didn't match my hideous dress. Those were her exact words. Grandma never let her touch the necklace and she was just jealous. So I said she was going to Hell, and it made her cry. That was so funny. Do you remember?"

"No," Brian said.

"Grandma made me apologize but she let me wear it again the next Easter. I bet she'll leave that to me. I was her favorite besides."

Did she listen at all to what I just said, Carol thought. She drummed her fingers on the dashboard. Her seatbelt clung to her and pressed at her neck. She grabbed at it but it wouldn't loosen. The car was being tightened, drawn in like someone was pulling on the strings of a hooded sweatshirt. Her mother would tell her to cut the crap, Carol. No one said anything to her now. Joe was snoring loudly.

They started to move. "Oh, that's what it was," Brian said. She turned to look at the flashing lights and scattered glass. Thank God it was only an accident. She stepped on the accelerator and felt the car expand. It began to rain.

Cream colored ponies

Peter welcomed his younger brother Andrew and his wife and daughters into their mother's house. He seemed older than Peter remembered and his eyes were sad. He had taken everything very hard. Peter felt like he should embrace him but they never did that, not even when they were kids. Instead, he shook his hand and gave him a pat on the back. He kissed Jackie, who was wearing a lacy cream colored blouse. He wondered why Ellen didn't wear blouses like that. He gave a hug each to Lily and Marianna. They all came inside. The hallway was crowded.

"Well, this has got to be everyone, right?" the lawyer asked.

Peter thought he could hear impatience underneath his smile.

"No," Peter said.

"I know. I was joking," the lawyer said. It hadn't sounded like it. Zoe had laughed. The lawyer – what was his name? – he was talking to Andrew.

"Hi, nice to meet you. I'm Julian Philips – " Yes, that was it. Philips. Julian.

" – and let me say how very sorry I am for your loss."

Andrew looked down. He was quiet. "Thank you," Jackie said. She ushered the girls into the living room. His brother hung up his coat. His silence pained Peter. Andrew had always been the funny one, the one who would crack jokes even in church when they were kids.

"Have any problems getting here?"

"No," said Andrew. "Everything was fine."

Peter had seen him just last week for the funeral, so he couldn't repeat the questions like, How ya been? How's the wife and kids?

He tried to direct the conversation. "How's the job going?"

"It's going fine. How about you, how are things in advertising these days?"

This was the response he had expected. He had prepared an answer. "Not so good, actually. They're cutting people left and right." He lowered his voice. "Word is my department's next."

"Jeez, Peter. I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it."

"Have you told Carol yet?"

"Not yet." He put his hands in his pockets. "It's hard," he said.

"Really, if there's anything I can do." The color was returning to his face. Peter smiled.

"Thanks."

"Hey, if worse comes to worst," he said, "at least you'll get to sleep in, right?"

It was a start. Peter looked at Andrew and almost gave him a hug.

Crisp apple strudels

They hadn't arrived until after three. After quick hellos to his relatives, scarcely noticing the unfamiliar face leaning close to his cousin Zoe's ear, Brian Harrington went straight to Grandma Quinn's kitchen and found the box of crackers in the upper right-hand cabinet above the stove. From the refrigerator he took out a small package of gouda cheese and cut four slices, one for each cracker. He started to eat quickly, but his sister caught him.

"Are you eating cheese and crackers?"

"Gouda."

"That's cheese, right?"

He stuffed two crackers into his mouth and put the box away. He replaced the cheese in the refrigerator. Sara was still looking at him.

"Isn't that the kind of cheese Grandma was really stingy about? You know, that she served in little bits?"

He stood with his back to her, still chewing and waiting for her to leave. Finally she gave an exasperated sigh and walked away. "You are so weird, Brian," she said on her way down the hall.

He opened up the right-hand cabinet above the stove again and took out the crackers. He put three in his pocket. He also took out an overstuffed recipe box. The envelope marked "desserts" in a loopy script had what he wanted. Grandma had said the apple crisp recipe would be his, and he was going to take it now, before everybody had to know that he was the only one she trusted it with. To

hell with the lawyer. He wasn't about to announce to his dad, Officer Harrington, the cop, that he liked to cook and bake. He could imagine him laughing about it with his buddies down at the station. Yeah, my son's a real Julia Child. Maybe he can make cookies for the next union meeting. Brian slipped the spattered paper into his pocket.

Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings

Jackie sat on the couch with Marianna, waiting for her sister-in-law's family to arrive. Her cell phone rang from inside her purse, and she quickly pulled it out. His number flashed on the caller-ID. She turned off the phone and put it away without flinching. Marianna was watching her.

"The same woman who keeps asking for a Jose somebody," Jackie explained and shook her head in disgust. She hoped she had said it correctly. Marianna could pick up on the slightest of things.

"I thought it was a Juan somebody," Marianna said carefully.

"Yes," said Jackie. "You're right."

She had told him to stop calling, that she wouldn't do it anymore. When Andrew's mother died he finally needed her again. The night they got the news she held Andrew and remembered how her shoulders always trembled a little at his touch. It was nice to feel needed. So she said it was over. It was a very minor thing really.

Marianna tightened her eyes at the corners. Jackie could feel the stare on her face and stayed as relaxed as possible. Zoe came and sat between them. Jackie exhaled slowly.

Doorbells

Sara walked upstairs, where she figured she would least likely run into her mother. The arrangement at home wasn't working, despite the free room and board and meals and laundry. She needed her own place. Brian was smart to get out right after college. The dusky walls of the upstairs hall were a soothing rose-pink. She wondered whom Grandma would leave the house to. She could see herself living here. Grandma's big room with the four-poster bed she had always loved would fit her nicely. There was a ton of old-looking furniture all over the place. Maybe it was antique and worth a lot of money. She could probably sell some of it on Ebay or something. Grandma's bedroom door was ajar and Sara peeked in. The bed neatly made, a collection of old photos on the bureau. One of her mother and uncles when they were kids, sitting in this backyard eating Popsicles, like she remembered doing with her brother and cousins at summer barbecues. A photo of her grandfather, who died before she was born, with a younger, thinner, and brunette Grandma Quinn. An old picture of Sara and the other grandchildren in their Easter clothes. She smiled remembering how she had told Zoe she was going to Hell and had made her cry. Grandma had made her apologize and had told her that Zoe was upset because she hadn't gotten the baby brother she had asked for on her birthday.

Grandma's jewelry box sat near the photos on the bureau. Sara reached out to touch it. A door slammed behind her and she jumped. It was not the door to the bedroom. Someone else was upstairs. Using the bathroom, she thought, and tried to force herself to stop shaking.

Sleigh bells

Lily heard the rumble of the Harringtons' car pulling into the dri-

veway and glided her fingers over the ivory keys of the piano in the living room. They were so soft and responded like pillows. Grandma Quinn had taught her to play on these keys. Her feet hadn't touched the pedals when she first started. She remembered sitting close to the toothy grin of the keyboard and stretching her small hands wide to reach the chords. She had practiced and practiced to get better. She always performed at Christmas for Grandma Quinn. Marianna had learned to play after her. Her long, graceful fingers ran effortlessly up and down the keyboard. She was a natural. Marianna started learning from Lily's teacher who came to their house on Saturdays; and then advanced to learning from the conservatory. Their mother drove Marianna back and forth into the city for her lessons. Lily kept working and devoted hours in the afternoon to playing and practicing. Marianna never practiced. No one seemed to notice. Grandma Quinn was so proud of her virtuoso pianist granddaughter. Play something, she would say to Marianna when they went to visit, and Marianna would sit down and play Chopin or Rachmaninoff. Lily wanted that piano. She knew her younger sister would get it, and she tried to play but her fingers slid off the keys. She turned in her seat and saw her cousin Zoe going upstairs. She did not like Zoe. Zoe used to play the cello but she wasn't very good at it. She had always refused to perform for Grandma Quinn. But she smirked when Lily made mistakes with her fingering and cringed in response to the bad note. Lily rubbed at her eyes. Marianna was standing near her and put her hand on the piano.

"Are you done?" she asked. She knew that Lily had not played anything.

"Screw you," Lily said. She got up and tried very hard not to listen when Marianna started to play Chopin's "Raindrops" prelude.

When the dog bites

Joe Harrington had fallen asleep on the couch in the living room. When he awoke, a clock somewhere chimed once. He looked at his watch. Four-thirty.

"For the love of God," he said growling. "It's four-thirty and we haven't heard the goddamn will yet?" Everyone looked at him. His wife made a frantic shushing sound.

"Carol, really. We got here three goddamn hours late, you were so goddamn concerned, and we haven't even heard the goddamn will!"

"The lawyer isn't here," said Andrew.

"What? Where is he?"

"He told me he was going out to get some coffee right after we met," Carol said.

"So, around three." Carol nodded and her eyes were pleading to him not to make a scene.

"It's been an hour and a half. Who goes out to get coffee for an hour and a half? And who gets coffee in the middle of the day?"

"Joe - " Carol said. Lily - or was it Marianna? - resumed playing the piano.

"Have any of you noticed," Joe said, staring outside, "that the lawyer's car is in the driveway?" Ellen and Peter were standing by the window. They turned around to look.

"He's blocked in by your car," Ellen said. "He couldn't have left."

Jackie was leaning on her husband's shoulder but straightened when Ellen spoke. Brian was chewing loudly. What the hell was he eating? It was quiet except for the damned piano music.

"Where's Zoe?" Peter said suddenly.

When the bee stings

Julian felt her breathing underneath him and was quiet. The house was very still. He got up and started buttoning his shirt. The clock in the bedroom that once belonged to Zoe's aunt was blinking 4:26.

"Damn," he said. "You'd better get up."

Zoe pulled on her shirt and tried to fix her hair. "How do I look?" she said.

Like a slut, he thought. "Great," he said.

She smoothed out the wrinkles on the bedcovers. While she wasn't looking he slipped out into the hallway and found the old lady's room. He pulled out the top left drawer in the bureau and put the key for the safe-deposit box at the bank in his pocket. He opened the jewelry box and took the pearl necklace and the pink cameo brooch.

He found Zoe again and whispered, "Cover for me."

"What? Julian, where are you going?"

He heard a voice downstairs saying, "Zoe?"

"Nice meeting you," he said, and smiled. He went down the back stairs and out the back door. The Lexus wasn't his anyway.

I simply remember

Zoe was eleven. Her parents were away for the weekend of their anniversary. Grandma Quinn served her lemonade in a grass-green glass as she watched the snow collect at the corners of the kitchen windows. Some of the lily-of-the-valleys were blooming.

"It's so nice to have you here. I get bored by myself, you know," Grandma Quinn said. Zoe smiled politely and drank her lemonade. She did not know how to respond to someone she saw only on occasional holidays.

"This'll be a long weekend if we can't even have a conversation, Zoe," she said. Zoe thought she could detect irritation in her voice. "Why don't you tell me about what you're studying in school," Grandma Quinn said.

Zoe finished the glass of lemonade. "We're studying the ancient Egyptians," she said.

"Oh, how exciting!" said Grandma Quinn. "Hieroglyphics and pyramids and mummies. How fun," she said.

"Yes," said Zoe. "We learned that when the pharaohs died the embalmers pulled their brains out through their noses with special hooks and then they put them in sarcophagi and all their favorite things were placed around them in the tomb so that they could have them in the next world."

"Did they bury their friends with them too?"

Zoe thought for a moment. "I don't think so," she said.

"Ooh. That stinks, doesn't it? What's the fun of having all your favorite stuff around if you can't bring any of your friends along?" She laughed.

"You can have fun by yourself," Zoe said quickly.

"Oh, Zoe," Grandma Quinn said with a sudden intensity, "no one ever gets what they want all by themselves."

When she left with her parents she watched the house from the backseat. They pulled out of the driveway and the snow turned to rain.

ELIZABETH BONDARYK
CANTON, MA



LISA BAKER

KATHERINE CAREY
NORWALK, CT

THE TIDE POOLS OF ROCKPORT

On a hot day during the hottest summer that I can remember, my Aunt Rae sat alone, cross-legged in khaki shorts on a beach blanket under a scarlet umbrella. Her intense brown eyes gazed remotely at the horizon. Her companion of thirty years, Aunt Kate, also in khaki shorts, had strolled off into the nearby dunes to her left. Mom, Dad, and I were hopping frantically on the scorching sand ahead of her, desperate to reach the cool wet shore of the Atlantic Ocean before the soles of our feet blistered. When we arrived at the border of moist sand, however, a gale wind assaulted us. Struggling on, we entered the frigid Cape Ann waters, only to hastily jump back as the shock of the icy waves numbed our legs and feet. We had traveled from the tropics to the Arctic Circle in less than a minute. Dreams of spending hours frolicking in the water vanished. If we could not swim when the temperature topped 95 degrees, then clearly there would be no swimming on this beach this vacation.

In fact, this vacation was really not a vacation at all. We were

visiting Mom's sister, Rae, and Kate at their retirement home in Rockport on Cape Ann to try to create a family bond that had never existed between the two sisters. Aunts Rae's breast cancer was in remission after a harrowing ordeal of an operation followed by chemotherapy and radiation treatments. I barely knew Aunt Rae. The last time I saw her was eight years ago at my grandmother's funeral.

"We were raised as two only children," Mom would often say about herself and Aunt Rae, twelve years her senior, when explaining their lack of relationship. "She left for college when I was six years old, and never lived home again." Rolling her eyes, Mom would add, "She was always so selfish. She would make such a fuss when my parents asked her to baby-sit for me. You would have thought I was the spawn of the devil the way she used to carry on!" Being selfish was always the worst sin anyone could commit according to my Mom's value system. Pursing her lips, Mom would say, "Rae is not good with children," when Dad would suggest from time to time that we have her and Kate down for a visit. What was implied was that if Rae wasn't good with children in general, then she would certainly have problems with me and my autistic jumping, flapping, and rocking.

When Grandmother became ill with the brain tumor that would kill her six weeks later, Rae and Kate came to visit her in the hospital for a few days, then left abruptly not to return until the funeral. Rae was on summer vacation from her job as head of her college's English Department and could have stayed longer. She claimed she was too upset to be of any help, however, so Mom was left to arrange respite care, visit Grandmother every day, organize the funeral, and close down Grandmother's house all by herself. What had begun as a distant connection between the two sisters had degenerated into active hostility.

After Aunt Rae got so sick, however, Mom's anger softened. The two of them spoke on the phone and e-mailed back and forth. The week when all of Aunt Rae's hair fell out from the chemotherapy, Mom agreed we would come for a visit over the summer.

My feelings about the visit are mixed. Instead of viewing the majestic splendor of the Grand Canyon, we are visiting these two strangers, who with their short curly black hair and deep dark eyes look more like sisters than Mom and Aunt Rae ever have. Yet since the death of Grandmother, Aunt Rae is the only blood relation Mom has left except for me and my brother, Matt. It is obvious to both me and Dad that this visit is long overdue.

The beginning of this non-vacation has not been a success. We pack up our beach blankets and umbrella and plod through the dunes wearily in the heat to Aunt Kate's station wagon, our feet coated with wet sand but our bathing suits still dry. On our way up the winding road to their house, Kate suddenly pulls the car over to the sandy shoulder. On our right are giant boulders blocking the way to the beckoning turquoise waves. On our left across the road is a path leading to a murky green pond. Noticing our puzzled frowns, Kate says, "We usually feed the ducks when we drive back from the beach." Opening the trunk of the car, she takes out a bag of wild bird seed and a small stack of paper cups. Handing each of us a cup, she pours our individual ration of seeds. As we file down

the path to the pond after her like kindergarten pupils following their teacher, the ducks are already swimming toward us, the most daring waddling up to only a few feet away. There are larger ducks with glossy blue circles on their necks and blue tipped wings and smaller brown ducks, quacking forcefully to gain our attention. Then suddenly, soundlessly, two adult white swans glide parallel to the shore, trailed by three tiny smoky gray baby swans. Two of the babies hop adventurously up the edge of the bank, their parents watching closely from the pond. As the water droplets dry from their wings and backs, the babies transform into awkward balls of fuzz, unsteady on their stick legs. We all coo and direct our tossed handfuls of bird seed to these fluffy new arrivals. Mom grins like she has just unwrapped a present. "I never had swans come so near before," she says, bouncing on the balls of her feet. Aunt Rae watches Mom's delight with an affectionate smile.

Later that night, Mom is sitting on the sofa with her head turned to chat with Aunt Kate, who is perched on the arm of the sofa. Dad is leaning forward from the arm chair, remote control in hand, surfing the TV channels. I am sitting cross-legged on the slippery hardwood floor, trying to entice Sibyl the cat to come close enough for me to pet her. Sibyl is afraid of my long strides and swinging arms, so Aunt Kate has advised me to set as still as possible and twirl a long snowy feather in the hopes that Sibyl will approach and bat it with her paws. Sibyl is resisting the bait, however. She sits like a gray granite statue on her haunches and locks my gaze with a hypnotic stare from opaque emerald eyes. While we engage in this silent duel, Aunt Kate, who writes freelance articles for science magazines and advises museums on their nature exhibits, is describing a slime mold she has been tracking in the back woods. "One day it is spread over one rotten log, and then the next afternoon it has traveled to another log twenty feet away. I have always thought of this as a kind of natural magic, the way a slime mold will disappear from one spot and then reappear in another overnight," Aunt Kate explains to my mother who leans closer to listen. During their conversation, Aunt Rae has quietly entered the room and noticed the standoff between myself and Sibyl. She takes another feather and kneels next to me, in an attempt to lure Sibyl closer. Suddenly, Sibyl springs into frantic motion, her toenails skittering on the polished floor. She leaps sprawling her fuzzy grayness over Mom's lap, just as Aunt Kate finishes her description of the vagabond slime mold. My mother, whose head has been turned away from my silent attempts to persuade Sibyl to come within petting distance, shrieks at the ambush. Dad, Aunt Kate, and Aunt Rae all guffaw loudly. After a moment, Mom halfheartedly chuckles.

That night, before I climb into the day bed in Aunt Rae's study, I leave the door open a crack so I don't feel claustrophobic in a strange closed room. After about five minutes, the door slowly opens a few inches. All that is visible is the ghostly radiance cast by the nightlight across the hall. Suddenly, I feel some unseen entity plop like a pillow on my feet. I leap out of bed and run downstairs where Mom is still talking with Aunt Rae and Aunt Kate. Mom accompanies me back upstairs and turns on the light in the study. Curled up on the foot of the bed is a blinking Sibyl. She has chosen to do me the honor of sleeping on my bed that night.

Next morning Aunt Kate takes us on one of her favorite excursions to visit the tide pools. We clamber over huge jutting gray boulders to the edge of the shore where water gently laps the rocks. Aunt Rae perches on a flat slab, quietly observing the four of us peer into the crevasses that form miniature seawater ponds. Squatting on a sloping rock overlooking the largest of the tide pools, Aunt Kate calls us to join her. The salt water sparkles like diamond facets and swirls with emerald and garnet strands of seaweed. The rocks enclosing the tide pool are crusted with beads of baby clamshells. If you squint so your vision is out of focus, you can imagine that you have stumbled on a pirate's treasure trove of jewels. In biology last year our class studied the tide pools where life began on ancient earth. Before me the still clear water dissolves and reappears as an irregular black surface. The cheerful sunlit sky darkens to a blood red rayless sun, clouded by a deep purple methane and hydrogen fog. A jagged bolt of blinding lightning illuminates the murky pool and fades with a deafening boom. Then, mysteriously, the dark water seethes, as amino acids coalesce into protenoid clumps that cling to the edges, competing for sustenance with silent ferocity. From the unseen depths, mute, unknowing, and productive, life is born. I blink and once again the tide pool glitters in the transparent sunlight of a midsummer day with its strands of shiny seaweed and tiny beads of glinting shells.

That afternoon we take a sailing excursion around Cape Ann on a reconstructed nineteenth century schooner. The wind bellows the sails, rocking us steadily on the waves. Aunt Rae is asking Mom about a job she used to have working with families with children with disabilities. "I was so burned out," Mom says. "To advise them how to deal with their schools, I would have to first find out what they thought would be the best program to help their kids. They would complain bitterly about what was wrong, but it was difficult to get them to focus on what to put in its place. I felt like I was practicing therapy without a license."

Aunt Rae says, "I used to feel the same way when I was advising students." Aunt Rae and Mom nod twice quickly in unison.

Drowsing in the sun, lulled by the steady metronome of the waves, Aunt Rae's words drift in and out of my awareness. "After I did... charter this ship... close friends and family... cast my ashes out to sea." I imagine a smokelike trail of ashes blowing back from the schooner and jolt forward to see my mom slowly shaking her head in agreement.

On the way home we stop to feed the ducks. The mother and father swans glide sedately in the middle of the pond, but today only one baby follows in their wake. The swans ignore the squawking ducks at our shore that are clamoring for handfuls of birdseed to be flung in their direction. The trio remains at a distance in the center of the pond.

"Where could the other two be?" Mom scrunches her face. "They would never swim out of sight of their parents. What could have happened to them?"

Mom's voice rises to a wail by the last sentence, and she turns to Aunt Kate, who sadly meets Aunt Rae's eyes before saying, "At the beginning of the summer, there was a family of six cygnets. We think a predator is eating them when they swim near shore. Maybe a fox." Stunned, we trudge in miserable silence back to the car.

On the last night of our visit, Aunt Kate drives us thirty miles to the only decent Chinese restaurant on Cape Ann because Mom and Dad have told her that Chinese food is my favorite. After a sumptuous meal in which we all share portions of orange beef, sesame chicken, sweet and sour shrimp, and Mongolian beef, we sit back with that buzz of well-being that always follows a feast of Chinese food. As the waiter passes our table with a folded check on a small plate, Aunt Rae and Mom simultaneously lunge for the check. Mom beats Aunt Rae by a fraction of a second and emerges triumphant, check in hand.

The waiter is glaring at these two ill-behaved women. "That is not your check," he scolds them. "That is the check for the next table." Mom ducks her head and hands the check back to the exasperated waiter.

Then Aunt Rae and Mom glance toward each other and start giggling. The giggles build to belly laughs. Their eyes shine with tears and Mom's laughter sputters into a coughing fit. Every one in the restaurant is staring at these two rowdy women, but Aunt Rae and Mom are past caring what others think of them.

Back at the house the buoyant mood continues. Aunt Rae has filled oval crystal goblets on long delicate stems with pale beige fizzing champagne. In between sips, we toast each other.

"To slime molds." Mom clinks glasses with Aunt Kate.

"To Sibyl and Scott." Aunt Kate clinks my glass.

"And to schooners." Mom clinks glasses with Aunt Rae.

Aunt Rae nudges Mom's glass with hers. "And to swans." There is a solemn pause broken by Aunt Rae. "And what do you want to toast, Scott?"

Mom reads aloud what I have typed on my pocket memo organizer. "To your continuing excellent health, Aunt Rae."

Aunt Rae peers at me while clinking my glass. "To a young gentleman with fine manners," she says. Mom smiles, but her brow is creased.

While driving on the winding road past the sea on our journey home the next day, Mom turns to Dad. "How terrified she must have been," she says in a husky voice. "She is so changed since her illness."

When we arrive home, there is an e-mail from Aunt Rae addressed to me saying that Sibyl has spent the day curled up on the patchwork quilt on the daybed in her study. According to Aunt Rae, when Aunt Kate tries to coax Sibyl downstairs, the cat just gives her a reproachful stare as if to ask, "What have you down with him?"

The seas of memory have receded leaving tide pools of recollection. When I think of our visit to Rockport, I recall a place where I am a gentleman with fine manners and where Sibyl the cat waits for me, curled on a patchwork quilt. I see a solitary baby swan gliding in the wake of its parents and imagine ashes strewn from the stern of a schooner. I picture Mom and Aunt Rae laughing with tears in their eyes at the Chinese restaurant. I visualize slime mold creeping across the woodland floor under cover of a moonless night. I remember my Aunt Rae sitting cross-legged on the beach, her remote eyes tracking the cloudless horizon.

SCOTT FISKEN
HIGHLAND PARK, NJ
MS. CHRISTINE DAWSON

"ON THE EVE OF THE 4TH AND FINAL
OCCASION OF YOURS TRULY FINDING SPACE
ALIENS IN HER BREAKFAST CEREAL."

My lungs exploded as the force fed ritual of sacrificing the mint
jelly coating came to pass.
No, we saved the lamb for later.
I'll get to it further down.
But the jelly oozed out of the jar, faster than the speed of silence
And we sat for a good hour..
Or maybe eight.
Slowly and quite unsurely the sticky globulation dropped off into
the fire pit of Hades,
And we rejoiced
By putting ribbons in our hair and kissing the little lamb between
the eyes with a shotgun.
She was beautifully white and beautifully dead.

I gave myself a hug and told everyone that the undergods were
pleased with our ritual.
Now, we had the final right of passage.

It was the 13th year when everyone,
Including those of the lesser sex, became men.
No, we didn't grow up.
And that little lamb never saw another day

SHARI GESSIN
STATEN ISLAND, NY
SUSAN E. WAGNER HIGH SCHOOL
MS. DECKER

LIGHTS ON

Today is too long for us to keep these lights on.
We'll flick the switches to these messy rooms, and
drink up lemon aides, and stir them with these
sticks, these pixie sticks none the less.
Tell the blue whales to keep swimming in the rivers
that white shoes float in.
We'll ask Mickey to draw stick figures on this blue carpet.
Figures that are drawn with mascara, and forty two
white teeth.
Run down to the trillium yard and see if these brown knees
are ready to be swallowed by laughing boys.
Boys with abbreviations for names, and a hundred and
twenty sweet characteristics.
We can run over these bright hedges and land at these
lit 'til gatherings.
Gatherings where tears are shed, and low lilly pops.
Pops of blue eyes pink mouths are per per per served.
Done in and dance to these gentle poems, and I'll turn
these lights back on.

KATHLEEN PETROZZO
FLEMINGTON, NJ
HARRIET MARCUS

NORTHERN LIGHTS

I want to fence the northern lights
to string them on Christmas tree boughs
so the color will reflect
in the glass of our hardwood floors

I want to fence the northern lights
so the colors are easy to catch
and hold in tourist palms
freezing to the bone in Alaska

I want to fence the northern lights
to capture them in shapes of horses
their manes flapping wildly
leaving behind milky orange trails

I want to fence the northern lights
and place them between bookends
collect them like favorite authors
glowing after I turn out the lights

JAMIE AGNELLO
OIL CITY, PA
MR. NORMAN MILLIKEN

GLASS BOYS

I watched you as you gazed at the man with the hot glass,
As he wove it into a unicorn, a fish, and those candies you see
Resting in homes, atop a small porcelain dish from China,
Where they make oranges and tea.
Refreshes as it cools, the glass hardens and your own face
Becomes a stern, a mold that only the Indian glass man could
forge.
Walk away, down a swooping valley where the men are actually
Little boys in Brazil that wear small blue sequined vests
And play songs that make your father cry because he remembers
Them from when he was a child too.
They wear no shoes, these peddlers, but the come around with a
Wooden box to shine yours.
Stick 'em out! And let your own feet be shiny,
While I sneak up behind you
With scissors to cut your thoughts while your shoes are polished.
"What are you thinking Daddy?"
I sprinkle you nightmares
In you hair
Like confetti,
Or parmesan cheese.
Walk away, old man, your thoughts are no longer those of the
Little Boys that you once were,
Sticking black nuts in your pockets, and crying because mother
found out.
Now you don't watch the man make the glass because it takes
time to heat
And you are much more satisfied being cold
That way, the polish rubs easier and you don't have to worry about
the
Small Brazilian little boy bands, getting overheated as they play

Fado.
Along the city streets where the man with floppy legs does
summersaults.

"Forget-me-not," my girl, you whisper in my ear,
I simply shudder
Because I still have scissors in my hands.

JOANA AVILLENZ
NEW YORK, NY
MS. KATHALEEN IGOE

SAYING GOODBYE TO THE SHABBAT BRIDE

It is written: "Remember the Shabbat day, and keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is a resting day to the Lord the God."

The Sages call the Shabbat, the seventh, the holiest day of the Jewish week, a bride, and say that all of Israel is her groom. As our bride, we treat her as if she were a jewel: guarding her close, we dress in our best clothing; we sing special songs and psalms to her; we honor her by treating her differently than we would treat all other days. And when three stars shine in the night sky and our Shabbat bride leaves us, we honor her by sending her off with the Havdalah service.

My family and I are late for the Shabbat evening service again; my brother Jonathan was sullen about being pulled away from the television and I was online, and it took my parents a full twenty minutes of cajoling and threatening to pull us away from our opiates of choice. We hurried to make it to the service on time, but the Torah has already been taken out. As I slide into the back bench (hard wood with recent cushions a dull red and blue recently added for our *tushes'* pleasure), the chanting of old men fills the room.

I pick up one of the prayerbooks, flip it open to the page my mother tells me, and instantly start daydreaming. My brother sits still, maybe praying, maybe zoning. I can't tell. In our younger years, our parents would have to physically separate us during services – we would always be pushing and poking each other. At fifteen and twelve, we have supposedly matured beyond that stage. My father sits on his other side, lips shaping the Hebrew words. Mom doesn't open her book yet – instead, she *schmoozes* with the older man sitting in front of us, a man who has known me since I was two years old, a man of whom I've never learned his name.

The service drags on from Ashrei to the silent Amida, then to Aleinu, and finally to the Mourner's Kaddish. As the final words of that chant fade away, the rabbi stands up and announces that we have a feast waiting for us. A few chuckles greet the tired joke as we stand up and form a line for the ritual washing of our hands. After washing my hands – pick up the two-handled cup with my right hand, shift it to my left, pour the water twice on my right, twice on my left, and then refill it for the next person – I hop into the dining hall and look at the food suspiciously. It's the leftovers of what they serve at the Shabbat luncheon – bagels and beads, lox, egg salad, tuna salad, half-wilting fruits, and a half-dozen different kinds of small cakes and cookies. I snatch up the smallest piece of bread I can, murmur the blessings for the washing of hands and the blessing over bread under my breath, and then select from the food I can trust to be edible and non-spoiled.

After the meal (in no way remarkable or different than every other Shabbat evening meal) ends and the grace after meals has been recited, we return to our seats for another prayer service. As the sun goes down and the stars start to appear, I stand up and go

to the front of the room. The Havdalah prayer is about to begin, and I have my part to play.

Sol Goldstein, an old man whose entire body is continually wracked with tremors, removes from a small cabinet a protective cloth and a tray and puts it on the table at the front. On the tray is a cup of wine, a small silver spice box, and a candle. The candle has always held my attention – it is made of three or more smaller candles braided together. While normally blue and white, this candle, the one my brother Jonathan brought back from Israel, is mostly red, with orange and green threaded through it. Also on the tray is a small glass bowl half-covered in wax drippings. When I was younger, old Sol would recite the prayer in his quavery voice, and I would fight for the privilege to be the one who holds up the Havdalah candle, to hold the only light in the entire room.

I open my prayer book to the back and quickly find the proper page. As someone else dims the lights, Sol strikes the match and lights the candle, making sure each wick catches the flame. It is now old Sol Goldstein who holds the candle for me: I am the one who reads the Havdalah service by the quivering flame.

Like anything else, being able to read a prayer in Hebrew smoothly and clearly is a matter of practice. The first time I was asked to lead the prayer, I stumbled over the words and I didn't know when to pause, when to continue. Now, as the people gather around the table, I read the opening sanctifications of the Lord and excerpts from the Psalms without hesitation.

The opening of the prayer starts. "*By your leave, my masters and teachers,*" I recite in Hebrew, and lift up the half-full goblet of wine with my right hand. Yesterday, we welcomed the Shabbat bride, to our homes with wine; today we see her go with the same drink. "*Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who created the fruit of the vine.*" Tradition dictates that I drink part of the wine. I sip the smallest amount possible, a concession to both tradition and the awful taste of wine.

I put down the wine goblet and pick up the spice box. The sweet smell of the spices, the sages say, are to help soothe the pain we feel at the Shabbat bride leaving our presence. "*Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who creates species of fragrance.*" I sniff, then pass the spice box to the rabbi, who passes it along the small circle.

After the rabbi passes on the spice box, Sol raises the candle as high as he can reach. "*Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who creates the illuminations of fire.*" I reach my hand out of the flame – the only light in the darkened room – and turn my hand. Perhaps there is something there, rising up the smoke to the heavens. Perhaps not.

The candle is lowered again. I take in a deep breath before chanting the rest in the sing-song tone that's such a constant to any traditional service. The newer synagogues, the more liberal congregations set up choirs and choruses to chant the prayers, or they match the prayers to folk songs or even pop songs and have music accompanying the prayers to increase people's enjoyment. I can't think of any way that to make this prayer – my prayer – more pleasing to God's ears and heart than to continue the chanting that has been passed down for ages. "*Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who separates between the holy and the secular, between the light and the darkness, between Israel and the other nations, between the seventh day and the six days of labor. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who separates between the holy and the profane.*"

As the lights rekindle, I extinguish the flame by pouring wine into the glass bowl and dipping the candle into it. After the flame dies, I slide away from the crush of people. I shake the hands of those I'm

not able to escape, accepting their "yashir kochacha," "well done's and wishing them back my own "shavua tov," have a good week, in return. I slip out of the sanctuary and walk outside. The air is fresh and cool. I stare up at the skies, the Shabbat's home for our secular week, and count the stars until my family comes out.

My parents and brother come out. We got into the car and drive back home. On the way, Jon and I spar over something or other. As soon as we get home, we return to our normal lives, Jon to the television, me to the computer. When asked online where I went, I shrug and say "some stupid thing my parents forced me to go to." I can't explain to my friends what I thought I might have seen in the flames, or how my voice was clearer and stronger when chanting the Havdalah prayer than it is at any other time.

At any time, it is the boundary between two things which clarifies them. Without a boundary, nothing is clear – colors bleed together, motives and situations are muddled, and everything is stuck together. Because of the Havdalah service, that time where we can thank the powers that be for the things we have and say goodbye to the Shabbat bride who graced our presence for the past twenty-five hours, we have that separation, that clarification, that special something that makes the Shabbat day more than just any other day of the week. The Havdalah service was the time I thought I could see something more – and, because I can't face that both it and I have changed from that time I saw holiness, I can never go back.

RACHEL LANDAU
LINWOOD, NJ
Ms. LINDA DERMOND

LOW TIDE

Yawning trees stretch their scrawny branches across the road in front of us, littering the path with rotting leaves and wonderful bits of birch. The salty sea air mixes with the sweet smell of dying flower buds and steadily drooping evergreen needles, and as I continue to pedal my bike through these magical woods, I can steadily see a brown house being built in front of me. As each passing arm, each passing willow string, each clump of colorful New England foliage thins, and more of the structure is unveiled, my excitement grows. My feet begin to move a little bit quicker, and before my eyes can fully take in the landscape, I once again arrive.

I set my bike against a pyramid of chopped logs, juxtaposed in a small clump of meager twig-like trees. Laughter resonates from behind me, as my family greets one another as if they hadn't seen each other in years and years. I smile, and plod slowly through ankle high grass, itchy in its autumn stage, yet strangely comforting and soft. I pause for a moment before I clamber up onto the deck to the feast of appetizers that awaits. Smooth jazz plays from an old record player in the living room around the back, and the quiet chatter of my parents and cousins and aunts and uncles drifts smoothly through the air, blending wonderfully with the soft ocean spray that is omnipresent.

As I saunter to a deck chair, I smile and sigh, my eyes searching the landscape once again for points of interest. Large groups of shrubs are off to my left, a clear view of the marsh and beach are to my right. A huge tree adjacent to our house lumbers over it like a novelty dinosaur. I proceed to sit outside on the deck, nursing a bot-

tle of water and studying *Jurassic Park* as if I've never read it before. The clouds begin to assemble, the sun steadily sinking through the late afternoon sky. It's nearly time for sunset.

I jog excitedly around to the back, past the outdoor shower to the storage closets. My eyes scan the dingy space and I yelp quietly as they spot my aqua socks. As my feet slide into them, last year's sand and seaweed stir and mingle in between my toes. They seem to be a tighter fit than I remember, and I fold the heel over so that they are easier to walk in. I peek through the crack that separates house and closet, and I can see the slowly descending sun beckoning me to the salty presence of low tide.

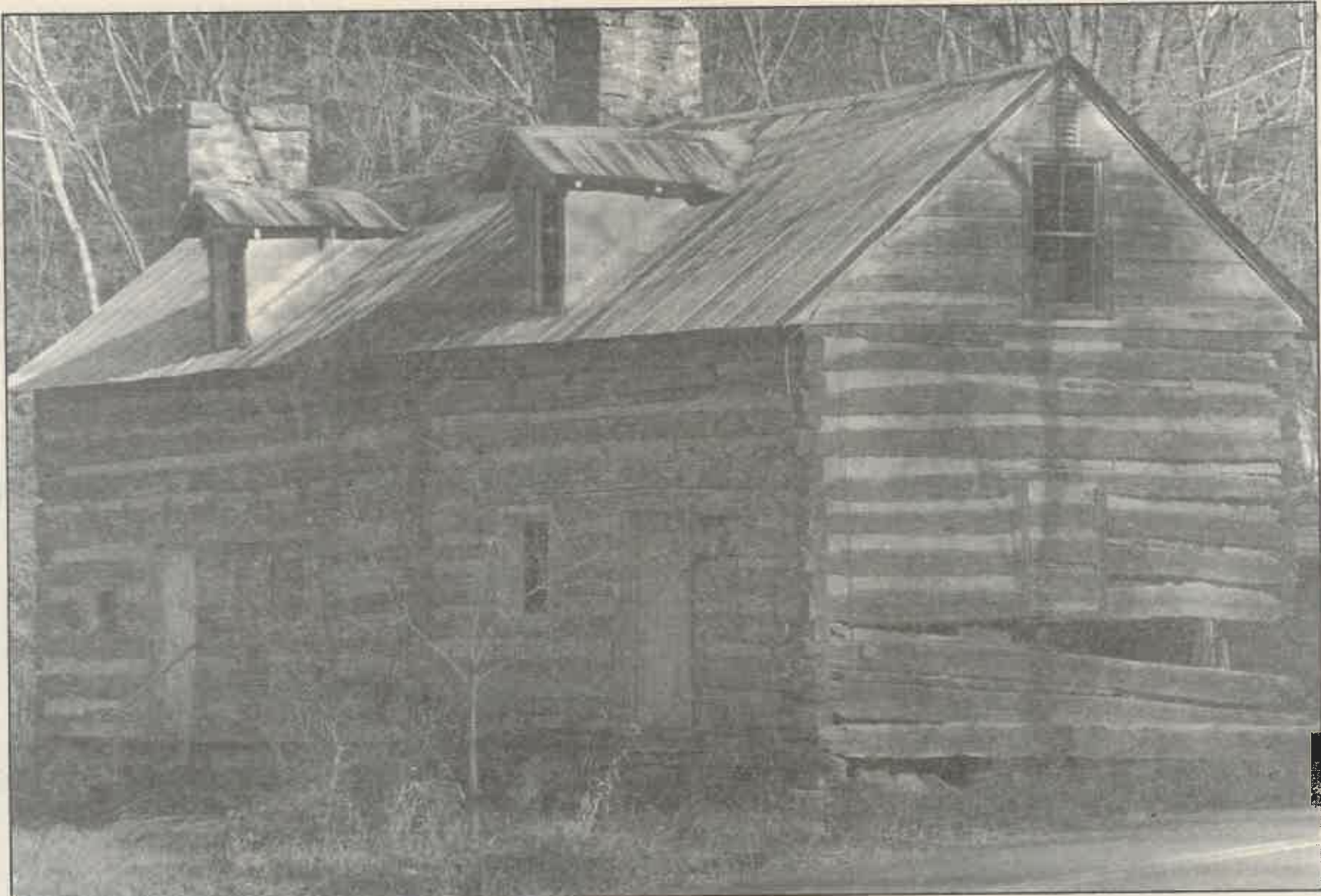
I jog steadily around the house, and bound down an old, overgrown path, tripping on roots and continually getting mouthfuls of spider web along the way. As I slide down the sandy hill, my eyes again turn to the ocean, the peaceful setting only slightly marred by the sigh of a fishing boat. I run along the matted sea grass that is normally covered with several feet of water, and begin making my way through a brief salt marsh that is infested with fiddler crabs and spiders. The winding path takes me through knee-high reeds and across an old bridge, where I momentarily pause to look down the tide channel. The water is barely trickling underneath the old wood, and a thousand miniature crabs scuttle and scurry along the wet sand. I turn north again; the flats are in front of me.

I examine the horizon slowly, taking in each sigh and smell. Seagulls caw above me, occasionally swooping in to pull razor clams out of their pencil-case shells. I sigh a deep breath, and walk in a northwest direction to get closer to the sunset. It seems so close, so warm. I want to reach out to take it for myself. Clams squirts rise and fall all around me, and moon snails trails meander slowly back and forth across the rugged and wavy sand. I approach an extension of the tide channel and follow it out to sea, the tide walking alongside me as my only companion. The sun is now just an apple without a bottom, resting pleasantly on the edge of the world. "I figure this place is as good as any," I say to myself and I drop like a lobster cage onto a moist dune of sand.

The flats spread themselves all around me; the creatures orchestrate themselves accordingly, the foamy salt water puffs at the lip of sand just on the edge. The ocean water spreads itself at the edge of the rapidly expanding desert that will only temporarily remain. "Just a little while longer," I think aloud, "stay just for the sunset." The resilient blood red orange in front of my eyes is now not more than a sliver, sinking beyond my vision and rising for a whole other world on the other side. Gone. The sun has disappeared, and I am completely satisfied.

"I can't believe there's only one of these a day," I think. I smile a big, toothy smile and lie back on the dune. I glance up at the stars; vague wisps of pinkish blue cloud still sprinkle the twilight. The first stars begin to appear, and the moon rears its ugly head. The tides begin to shift; my dune has become an island. "Only in nature," I think, "could something so awesome occur." I stand up, brush the sand off of my loose-fitting clothes, and take one last look out at the fading light. A seagull caws, the waves pant, ready to return home for the night. I turn back towards the house, and look down at my feet. I return slowly, cautiously, in tandem with the tide.

WIN MIXTER
EXETER, NH
PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY



AUSTIN HARBY
LUTHERVILLE, MD
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
MR. CASTRO

A SHOP IN CALIFORNIA

The dress,
dyed the color of lobster fading into salmon
and containing eight channels of chain stitch mazes,
was folded as precisely as origami
and compacted underneath a camera
and a pair of sneakers,
in two plastic bags,
(two because the first bag suffered a ripped seam)
unwashed when emptied fro the black luggage
and still smelling of incense and sandalwood.
My uncle;
like every man in my family,
would rather look at his hands
or great expanses of nothing
than of the crystal and curio shop,
built on the only road between the sand and the mountains.
He sat on an aboveground well
built of limestone and quartz and serpentine,
its open mouth
always taking
revealing the wet insides
satiated with pennies and dimes and hope.

Susquehanna University

THE APPRENTICE
WRITER



As rusted bells,
 strung and unstable on the front door,
 clank with each entrance,
 a woman emerges from a curtain of beads
 followed by a carpet of a thousand blonde hairs,
 four feet and all of it dead,
 but moving in a pattern of waves to match her step.
 Her daughter dances around me
 and becomes a temporary third leg.
 The room,
 boxy and small and filled with
 racks of citrus colored saris and tunics,
 crooked bottles of fairy dust and oils,
 healing stones and puppets with pinned hands and feet,
 prayer wheels that spin with the direction of the earth,
 brass Buddahs are crammed alongside Vishnus and Shivas
 in a feeble cabinet,
 all deities \$7.50.

MARTHA OELERICH
 SCHNECKSVILLE, PA
 MR. SCHWARTZ

embarked upon in the Holy Land, to bring light
 to the heathens in their tents and squalid villages,
 so that they too might enjoy the glory of muttonchops
 and tea columns and wars and diversified portfolios
 and ticking machines and trains rumbling in the night
 and polio and lung disease and fresh garbage in the street;
 yes—this was his vision for her, his claymation puppet,
 so he ate his sausages slightly greasy another day
 and she bowed down with Eastern grace, acquiescence, and
 charm.

VICTOR SULKOWSKI
 SUDBURRY, MA
 GROTON SCHOOL

THE TREASON OF HAIR COLOR: ATONEMENT

I'd dyed my hair, some Wednesday or another
 Shimmering red and glossy black as
 War and Famine of Revelations
 Ancient red, a gradient of shadow
 Transylvanian red
 Only found on the crumbling corpses
 Of the counts of Eastern Europe
 The murky haze of soot and blood
 As the flaming raven who heralded my people
 Like seagulls to the Mormons
 Like the locusts in Exodus
 But a mockery
 As if to say "God loves you least and That's you covenant"

I dyed my hair, some Wednesday or another—
 Emerged like a gothic courtesan
 Into my day job at the library.
 A man cloaked by a newspaper was
 Embedded in the reference section
 As the large, wooden crucifix
 Was embedded in his chest
 Cared lovingly from the tree of Life
 And strung on the twisted skin of one of Adam's breasts
 Sienna wood, a brown beard and eyes of grim mahogany
 Eyes that caught the blazing ruby in the sapphire of my new hair
 color.

He put a work worn hand to his pocket
 Shifted a plaid coated arm to hide
 A wooden spike or shard of the ark that bore all creatures—
 A wooden stake so Puritan, I thought he might burn witches with it
 I saw him, only / saw him
 When he carelessly dropped a book on the table
 Sifted through the pages
 Hesitated, intent
 And passed me with downcast eyes on his way out

Somehow I wonder what Buffy would say
 Or Selim or Blade or Lestat or Dracula
 To shelving Clarke's Commentary in non-fiction
 Having lifted it from the table, open so deliberately
 Having tossed my tresses that labeled me Fey or Fallen
 Having cringed at Leviticus 17:10
 "And whosoever man there be of the house of Israel

Susquehanna University

THE APPRENTICE WRITER



MUD FILTHY

it was she who first fell in love with his muttonchops
 his deep clean, as he sat there puffing his pipe;
 she wanted to feel the scruff between her thighs,
 so she became his Turkish fetish, his lover from the Orient,
 and he embraced her like a conquest, a crusade

Or the strangers that sojourn among you
That eateth any manner of blood
I will set myself against that soul
And will cut him off from among his people
For the life of his flesh is the blood
And I have given it to you upon the alter to make atonement for
your souls
For it is blood that maketh atonement."

PORSCHÉ JONES
NORWICH, NY
NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL
MR. BERNSTEIN

SHE TOLD ME

She told me that
You can see the best when the sun sets
And that diamonds aren't really girls' best friend
She didn't like the color orange because it clashed
With her eyes
She told me that
Swimming in the winter
Make the heart grow fonder of icicles and snow angels
She told me how
Hot soup steams your throat
Where voices come out distinctively flowered down
Allowing contagious to condensate
She taught me
How to weigh out my life's memories
So that
I forgot about my daddy leaving
And all I can dream is freshly wrapped presents under a never cut
down tree
She told me how
To count to ten on my fingers
And that each doorway
Once you separate them
"Do not plaster your face too heavily, or eventually, that mask
won't come off"
She told me
Stories
Of elephants with ruby eyes
And kittens that bleed chocolate milk
And places where little girls always become movie stars
She told me that
The colors of Easter don't always have equal happiness
And not everyone's eyelashes are long
She told me that
Beauty
Is not only in the eye if the beholder
But at the top of everyone's nose
She walked in my room
Whispering
"And I die before I wake"
She was wearing an orange blouse
With a string of pearls
"I pray the lord my soul to take"

CASEY HILDEBRAND
ASBURY PARK, NJ
MRS. HEAFELEINE

SCABS

I heard that blood dripped
slowly from Delvin's chest that Friday night.
And I knew he felt the exploding pain seconds
after, the gun pointed at his wound like a child's
eye to a peephole. At five years old, I cut my thumb
with a razor blade, watched grape juice spill.
My lips formed a fearful "O" and I ran
to Mommy. *Where was Delvin's mommy?*
standing behind the screen door of her project building,
she heard his body crumple in front of the phone booth,
his cry no louder than the phone's siren.

After the hospital visits, Mommy called me
into the house. She was home early that November day
with the Young and Restless actors studying her face,
her words: "He died while you were learning."
and I thought, again, about the slit I cut into myself,
how quickly Mommy covered my blood with a Band-Aid
And said: "This will heal, in time." Everyday I checked
the leaking thumb for pain. I wonder, still,
if Delvin died without it.
He was always too old for Band-Aids.

TOMMY COLEMAN
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

THOSE WHO BEAR PIANOS

They brought the smells of grass and grease
on heavy, sun-suede booted feet,
across our mottled welcome mat
and up into our world

With eyes gone wide at the wondrous size
of their bulky arms, my brothers and I
spied on from well-tried hide and seek spots—
thrilled to play the strangers.

A morbid procession, they might have been
two laboring long beneath a coffin
of glossy cherry and lustrous gold,
not sun-burnt moving men.

Our mother held them in the shade
with neon-green glasses of lemonade
and thanks, though they were more than through,
and not without much else to do,
and it was only just before
four booted feet were the door
and took their scent of grass and grease
that both my brothers claimed the seat
of our new piano-on fire with afternoon sun.

SARAH BULL
FRANKLIN, MA
MS. DOROTHY VOSBURGH

OMA AND ME

My bipolar grandmother brought home blood red oranges from Rebecca's Natural Foods, and we ate them together.

That cherished childhood memory is still left sitting at the long kitchen table, over the top the red and blue marbled linoleum, between the maple cabinets and a washing machine. The images, blurred by the years have a path of their own, climbing the fatherly oak tree outside the front window. I had never seen such a strange fruit before—familiar, yet foreign with its flashy highlights, it was as if someone injected the fantastic color with a syringe and left it in overnight.

I took my orange,
placed it on my face,
and felt its coldness seep into my skin.
At my nose I smelt
the juicy tang,
unwrapping the package and
watching mist rise above my hands.
A flock of flying tortoises
delivered the first box in through
Germany, addressed
to our gypsies
in Easter Europe, and with
a trip up through Peter's gates,
Hitler's victims
got our present too.
They had to know it was from me—
I made her put
"from Oma" next to my finger paintings
especially for them,
"grandmas" are only in America.

The sticky sweetness lingers
on their olive fingertips,
and the fruit is all perfect,
unlike to ones that I eat—
old and soft from a refrigerator's
chill, so unnatural that a
farmer, three thousand miles away
injected orange dye into the rind.
Not the ones from Oma
and me.

NINA JEHL
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
MR. HICKERSON

PHOTOSYNTHESIS

I guess we did it to remind ourselves of what July used to be like. Your hand in mine and our feet in planetary motion, swaying back and forth like our mothers told us not to do in public places. My breath was short and raspy, for I wasn't used to being up so high. Or maybe it wasn't the altitude, just that you and I were sharing the same branch, same air, same viewpoint. The rooftops spread out like picnic blankets and from where we were sitting, I could see our attic windows where we had picked out our costumes for today. I

was a gritty old woman with pale pink framed glasses and shoes that only fit with the thickest knee socks; you were a hobo, complete with bowler and rickety cardboard suitcase. You had insisted that we bring along a carton of orange juice and a thermos of coffee, black for the tasting. This was our picnic in the sky, you had said, a picnic to celebrate photosynthesis. I watched our fingers trace each vein of the leaves that sheltered the top of my head while you muttered about oxygen and carbon dioxide. I wished one of the leaves would fall into my hair just so you'd have to touch me again to get it out. That didn't happen. Instead, I fidgeted around with my dress, pulling the stitches out of the bottom hem and stealing glances at you. I missed the way you kissed me when we were little...the short pecks of emotion landing between my eyes and hairline. We were shy now, though neither of us knew quite why. I wanted dreams and schemes and kissing and you seemed to want...well, I'm not quite sure. The only thing that was certain was that you and I were in a tree together, bathed in solitude. I took this as my opportunity to find out what kissing those thin lips of yours was like. I tried to divert your attention from the leaves to my face, my blushing cheeks. Maybe somehow you'd find me engagingly beautiful and plant one on me right then. But, that didn't happen either. So, I took it upon myself to make the first move. Seemingly non-aggressive, I leaned over and took the front of your shirt collar in my hand. I turned your face towards me, and with one almost-graceful moment, the pinks of your mouth were tangled with mine. A ballet of blush followed when our lips were no longer joined and I sighed, rather loudly. You, on the other hand, had eyes full of unreadable signs. Instantly, I had flashes of winter and myself all grown up, owning nine cats and a house full of books. Not one solitary boy in my life. I turned away and stared into the rhododendrons below, determining my fate, until I felt your hand on my peter-pan collar pulling me back to you.

JAMIE AGNELLO
OIL CITY, PA
MR. NORMAN MILLIKEN

Shuck the shell, lick your lips, bat one eye...

After SATs and college applications, being high is completely sleepy and punchy like staying up past midnight with the "cool babysitter." Harley thought he could reach Nirvana if he had the perfect trip but I don't get it. When I smoke, my mind is not clear. When I smoke, it's like trying to look for someone through a screen door.

Analogy: smoking is to mind as a screen door is to sight.

And when you are high, it seems somehow alright to be getting stoned. Getting stoned in Harley's dorm room; listening to Stairway...; thumbing the pages of *The Grapes of Wrath*, which has suddenly become "so hilarious, man!" Nadine is sitting Indian style on the top bunk, lapping up smoke, Harley is strumming a phantom bass, and I'm curled up on the beanbag reading Steinbeck. The plaid of my skirt is hiked up around my hips to reveal a handful of runs in my tights like streams of tears. Then, before I can bat one eye in stoned time, in true time we are suspended.

Analogy: suspension is to days as water is to antacid.

Our suspension is dissolved the last three days before graduation. All the girls on the quad in white silk and gingham looked more like the waving, chattering tulips in *Alice in Wonderland* than they did the daughters of litigators and congressmen.

"I feel like all these god awful preps are staring at us." Nadine is the only girl wearing pants.

"It's because they all want you," I tell her, and tug gently at her blonde hair like a leash. Nadine asks me, *where's Harley*, and I don't know. It would be famous of him to just not come and not say goodbye and suddenly his bracelet is scraping at my wrist. On the night, he lifted my wrist to his lips as if dabbing them after a meal, my hand the napkin. He kissed the scar. "This is the only part of you that is ugly."

Analogy: Harley is the zipper on my dress as a little boy is to ribbon and tissue paper.

We lay on the beach afterwards and when he tried to kiss me, as if that kiss would be like the sealing wax on the letter, I pretended to be asleep. I didn't even feel dirty but I did feel like a burnt out lightbulb. No energy, no light.

They make us sing at graduation, before we get our diplomas. We sing about Jerusalem.

Bring me my bow of burning gold

Bring me my arrows of desire...

I will not cease from mental fight

Nor will my sword sleep in my hand

Analogy: Jerusalem is to mental fight as I am to my fragile relationship with Williams College.

I am still a number on a waiting list come graduation and I'm afraid my little mind-altering trip and my appearance before the discipline committee were not in my favor. I don't see Harley. Before I leave though, I go back to my dorm room which is like an eggshell, both in color and in its broken hollow. I have to take off my shoes to walk up the stairs. There is a piece of Filofax paper safety-pinned to the vinyl mattress.

Sheehan -

Where you might find me for the summer:

28 Bristol Rd.

North Waterford, ME.

03068

"Take it easy" -The Eagles

Love Harley

Analogy: I am the car ride to Cape Cod with parents as the junebug is to the ashtray.

"I'm sure things will turn out for the best," my mother plays with her pearls. They are like her smile, white, toothy and expensive. My father squeezes her knee but it is a forced kind of thing like swallowing aspirin. Then he just keeps driving, twisting the wheel gently and tensely, as if it is a champagne cork. As if he will pop and steam at any moment. My father is terse, my mother is anxious, and there is a junebug rustling around in the ashtray in front of my seat. Outside it looks like the world is flooding and all the cows and trees and fences are washing away and running together. There are certain things I look for on this drive. I look for Poppasquash Rd. in Harwichport; I look for Halletts drugstore in Yarmouthport, where they now only sell ice-cream but still line the walls with apothecary vials. I look for a highway sign that reads simply **Food and Books**, making a tacky little place that serves waffles 'till five and where you can trade your airport romance novel for a TV trivia book. When we turn on to Stage Harbor Rd. in Chatham, I try to see past the hedges and seashell driveway of a certain house, of Julip's house, even though he isn't there.

Analogy: Julip is to me as a wedding dress is to a widow.

Julip is someone I always want to know still, but never want to see again. It's so curious that I think of him every time I see someone skateboarding, every time I eat jellybeans, every time I walk my dog, and every time I kiss a boy, even Harley. Julip did not think I was pretty the first time he saw me. He thought I was ugly and told

me so. I was crying under a picnic table outside Nick's Deli and Pizzeria across the street from the Shop Ahoy. He crawled through the pizza crusts and cigarette butts to come see why I was crying.

"I wish you could see how ugly you look when you cry, because then maybe you wouldn't." It was a sort of backwards way of making me feel better. He was right, my eyelids probably looked like raw salami and my face was probably as red and shiny as a tomato, and so I stopped. But not before he plucked a tear from my chin to see if it would taste sad.

Analogy: tears are to sadness as blackberries are to sweetness.

Julip had a one-eyed Jack Russell terrier name Dog that we would sometimes take with us when we picked blackberries. Of course we couldn't have been older than twelve, but there is something so sensual about the whole thing. The blackberries were as ripe and glowing as women expecting. We would spend reams of time lying on the grass watching to see what the other was going to do next as if we were not human, but some other primate creature. But my mother wanted the blackberries so we would have to get to our feet, drunk from pollen and the heat and each other's breath. After hours of picking there were stains of blood and juice under our baby nails. My mother always let Julip stay for dinner if she made pie from the fruits of our labor. I stole for the first time with Julip: seven blue jellybeans from a plexi bin in the candy store.

Analogy: stealing is to Julip as skateboarding is to Julip.

Julip didn't ask me to, but I would go watch him skate at the Church of the Holy Redeemer parking lot with the other boys. It was in those times that I felt so much younger than he, even though our birthdays were only nineteen days apart in February. He was definitely too cool for me in his creeper Vans and baggy cords so I was always trying to please him. I would help him wash Dog; I would go to every Chatham A's game; and I tried to learn how to skateboard. I tried to learn how to skateboard and I broke my arm. When I couldn't get my cast wet at Cotchapinacutt, he brought me a Nutty Royal bar and Archie comics. I never felt like I had to please him after that.

Analogy: Archie is to Betty as Julip is to me.

I don't have any memories past that summer that don't include Julip. Maybe it was unhealthy, but he was my little world, and I could cup all of us into my palms like a snowglobe and see how happy we were. We only had one fight ever, and that was when he found the scar on my wrist. We sanded the porch railing for three dollars a piece from his father. Julip said, *It's not smooth enough until it's like your skin*. We made the poor teenager's at Daisy's Ice Cream give us a doll-size taster spoon of every single flavor and then didn't buy anything. We couldn't be together for our birthdays so we celebrate them at their half in August. We made a cape in the shape of a half moon and we could give each other half presents such as an earring or a single drumstick. That's how I felt without him, like a single drumstick, and it was because of this that we could sneak out at night to meet at the third telephone pole down from my house.

Analogy: telephone poles are to kisses as docks are to fishing rods.

The air was wet and clumped and salty like my hair after the ocean. I felt like the telephone poles were countdown to something big like New Year's. Julip was waiting, his hands reached into his pocket in a deliberate way like a child dunking a cookie in milk. Sometimes when I talked to him, I noticed his eyes were never doing anything else, never swinging back to see who was looking; never straying to the side to watch a gaggle of drunken coeds stumbling down Mainstreet; never studying the creases in his palm. His eyes were always listening, and saying something back. Tonight they were saying *kiss me* and so I licked my lips and I did. With

other boys, I will get squeamish from their waxy lips and gag at their mollusk tongues. I will pray for them to go farther just so that this part can stop and I will open my eyes to watch the television static or the fuzzy dice swing. I will be silently screaming *Julip, Julip, Julip!* At that moment the folds of my mind are screeching his name all at once and his fingertips are on my temples, but I don't want this kiss to end. In social studies they told us about Pompeii. They told us how perfect remains of people were found frozen eating breakfast or washing linens or running down the street. They had been captured in that exact moment because of the petrifying nature of the volcanic deposits. I wished that a giant volcano would pour its silt and lava over us then so we could stay with our lips touching forever.

Analogy: eyes are to wandering as teenagers are to drinking.

It was always "Sheehan's idea" when we got in trouble. It was always Julip's idea when we got away with it. When I was four I drank one third of a bottle of pure vanilla extract because I wanted the smell inside me. Pure vanilla extract is thirty seven percent alcohol. Julip and I went out to dinner at The Squire at least once a week with our parents. We'd sit in the bar sections so Julip and I could drink Shirley Temples and steal each other's cherries. We would play knuckle-bleed foosball until our clam chowder came. He tried a steamer long before I ever did. "It's real easy," He said, "like pullin' off a band-aid. You just gotta shuck the shell, hold your nose, and do it." Once when we were fourteen, the last of our summers, Julip said that if we hung around outside long enough we could pull a "Hey, mister..." and score a few Captain Morgans. But the cops in Chatham are like little boys who have just learned to tie their shoes, and we never did.

Analogy: gingerale is to shirley temple as now is to then.

Now I am awake, and out of our dusty green Volvo, and at a back table in The Squire with my parents. The waitress only asks me what I'll drink but I feel like she is trying to squeeze lemon juice into a hangnail. I order gingerale, which is like a pale, naked Shirley temple. "We need to get you some more, nice, upholstered hangers for when...umm...if you go to Williams,' my mother says. My father takes of his signet cufflinks. I excuse myself from the table. The ladies room has a bead curtain for a door and a cartoon of an uber female mermaid holding a mug of beer. I sit down in one of the stalls and study the dozens of lipstick bruises on the white paint that have been signed and dated. On the left wall there is an inscription carved into the wood: JB+ST in an angular heart. Julip Bailey and Sheehan Toce. I take off my sandal, fitting the buckle between my thumb and two of my fingers and steadily begin to scratch out the initials. When I finally emerge from the bathroom, my parents are signing a handwritten receipt. My father looks up from his wallet.

"Oh, Sheehan, you about ready to head home?"

"I think I'll walk," and I leave the smoke, smelling of gummy tar and tar leaves, and begin down Mainstreet.

Meg Weisman
West Newton, MA
Milton Academy
Lisa Baker

THE STORY

Hurrah for Cinderella. The nights my mother would read her story to me, Cinderella came alive in my imagination, and the part of me that was Cinderella came alive in myself. When she cried by the hearth, I, too, was sad; when she made her wish, I wished, and when she danced her way to happiness, I was flooded by emotions

that I didn't understand, and cried. Then the story ended. The spell was broken, and I was only myself.

The words of fairy-tales were the silver key into a dream world where I could be whomever I pleased. I was free to explore myself though the characters I identified with; my impish self sympathized with Rumpelstiltskin, my secretive self reveled with the twelve dancing princesses, and my brave self stood tall and strong with King Arthur.

I read books everywhere, at recess, on the school bus, and late at night, with a flashlight under my blanket. The kids at school called me a loser, but I didn't believe them. Stories told me who I could be, who I was. Like Snow White's dwarves, I was small and clever, like Baba Yaga, I was jealous and greedy, like Sleeping Beauty, I was trapped in a world where everyone looked happy and problems were easily solved.

Fairy tales are the secret stories of our hearts, voicing our deepest fears and desires. We learn to recognize the monsters that live not in caves, but those hidden places of fear and darkness inside us and others. We learn to see the hero in ourselves, the courageous compassion that fights the wrong in the person, not the person himself. We are taught to see the world in radiant colors, and to live for our dreams. I was too young to know all this when I cried for Cinderella, but I did notice that as I grew older, she became less and less real.

So, time passed. I no longer looked to books to live out my fantasies; I started to find my way into my own story. I remained fascinated by stories, but the cast of characters changed to living people. The change brought complications.

One particular morning comes to mind. I was in the country club ladies' room, fixing my hair before my shift started. Dottie, a small, old woman who worked in the office, was puttering around and arranging towels. We'd never talked before. She abruptly turned her back to me, and signaled her shoulder. "Can ya fix my bra strap? It hurts me," she said, in her hard Queens accent.

It took only a moment to untwist the strap, and she thanked me. Then she said, "My husband died last year, ya know. Day after Christmas. I miss him." Her blues eyes were the color of the sea as she looked at me as if I would understand her. "It's hard at night. All alone." I stood there dumbly, sensing the delicate curtain of anonymity draw back to give a glimpse into her life, into her pain. The moment was embarrassingly intimate, and I slowly understood that Dottie had given me a gift. We walked out of the bathroom, I to the kitchen, she to the office, and we rarely spoke from then on. But something had changed; I held a part of her inside of me, along with the knowledge that I, too, would grow old and lose people I loved. It was an unsettling glimpse of death that I saw in her sea-blue eyes, but one that I was strangely grateful for.

To truly empathize is no easy thing to do. But stories have helped me to try to do that; the gift of understanding even one fraction of another person is like a sun ray piercing a thick cloud. A truth shines through that also sheds light on us.

If my life is like a winding cobblestone path, then the stones are my stories, linked by what they ultimately lead to, love. That is what I understand by God, and that is the sacredness of my life. Whatever one calls God, inner light, conscience, consciousness, my life has been a search for it within myself and other people.

The young man securing the bags on his self-made bicycle is Jeff. He's embarking on a nine-month tour of Spain. He has done

this every year since leaving Bill, the man who'd sexually abused him since childhood. Jeff explains his travels as a spiritual cleansing, an awakening to the rules that let him live freely. He looks deep into my face, and asks what I'm traveling for. Where I think I am going.

Mr. Grandy has a gray ponytail and is missing an earlobe. He is substituting in my religion class; I am eleven. He makes a dot on the chalkboard. "This is your life," he says. He sweeps his arm across the expanse of the blackboard, "this isn't even eternity." He points to his ear and says, "I was that close to death in Vietnam, every day. Only faith kept me alive. God won't leave you, only you can leave God." He looks like one of those men my mother taught me to not look at on the subway, but he arrests my attention. A year later his son, Steve, would die of a heroin overdose the night before going to rehab. Steve had been my brother's best friend.

The old woman who lives alone in the crumbling manor is called Emilia. Last December she told me the story of her wedding day. It was set for New Years, but the day before there had been a snow-storm. The townspeople worked all night to clear the mile-long path from Emilia's house to the church so she could be married in the old way. At dawn, they lined up along the path to shower her with rice as she processed to the church. She arrived an hour late, but her groom wasn't nervous. He knew she'd come. After the service, the whole town feasted and danced until midnight. He knew she'd come. After the service, the whole town feasted and danced until midnight. Emilia's wrinkled face is radiant as she urges me to cherish my youth.

Peculiar as it seems, these people are the characters of my life. The human experience is a library of stories, told and untold, real and invented. In the volumes of this library we can find something of ourselves. Whether in a fairy-tale or the life of an accountant, story-truth, the truth about the forces we face from without and within, is universal. As children, we hold close our Velveteen Rabbits because they are the promise of undying love. And when we are older, we must learn to hold close each other, and hold precious our history.

It's easier to survive when we draw lines between ourselves and other people, because then who we are seems to be clearer. But I've found it more rewarding to have opened myself to another's life, even if it meant pain and confusion. At least my heart was awakened. It's the least we can do, to see ourselves for one moment in the face of another. We must look for each other because we must look for ourselves.

When I was seven, my mother made me have a playdate with Timmy McRoberts, the boy who called me "freckle face" and "stupidhead." Very much against my will, I ended up at his house for the afternoon. He threw a dead toad at me and threatened to set his pet tarantula loose so that it could suck out my blood. I thought he was a criminal and wanted to go home. Then he led me up a winding staircase into the attic, an oak paneled room with no windows.

Timmy's eyes were wide as he spoke. "This is where my Dad died. He committed suicide right here. POW." He made his hand into a gun and pretended to shoot himself, rolling his blue eyes back into his head. He looked at me weirdly. "When it's a full moon his ghost comes back right here and talks to me."

Strange and wonderful, how we speak to each other through the disorder of our lives. Timmy's story forced me to stand where he stood, asking me to sort through the ruins of his childhood with him.

He wasn't a criminal, as I'd thought before, he was just lost. Learning part of Alex's story made him human, and that, in turn, made me more fully human. Through Cinderella I saw my need to break free of the role I was expected to play; through Dottie, I saw my own loneliness; through Timmy, I saw the fragility of our childhood world. We are the richer for having listened to someone else's story, because it tells us of our own.

In *The Sacred Journey*, Frederick Buechner writes, "the story of any one of us is in some measure the story of us all... We search, on our journeys, for a self to be, for other selves to love... and we search for that unfound thing, too, even though we do not know its name or where it is to be found or even if it is to be found at all." To be human is to be filled with terror, with wonder, with love. It means to exist for the "unfound thing," the divine love that shines within and connects us to one another.

When I first came to Exeter, I believed myself to be completely alone. I got lost in the frantic search for acceptance, and couldn't understand why I didn't have friends. In the spring time, I met someone who liked like a prince and talked like a poet. Although I thought of myself as Cinderella, I was really Little Red Riding Hood. I fell for all the old tricks. When it was over, I felt that all my dreams and fairy tales were worth nothing, because I had been nothing to him. I came home for the summer and began to realize the pain of losing myself in fantasy and giving myself away.

But a day came in July where the world was the field of emerald grass that I galloped over. As my horse moved over the ground and the wind fell away from me, I felt as if all the love that I'd wanted was so far inside me, yet so far above me, that I shouldn't have known it all along. I stopped the horse and started laughing. It was my prayer, a kind of thank-you to whatever had swelled inside, whatever had opened in that moving moment. Then a word came, as if from nowhere. God. I didn't think about churches or sins or forgiveness, only that word, and it filled me with whatever it was that had been unfound. I was crying. My horse and I walked up the next hill and started to canter.

In her poem "December," Mary Oliver writes, "we get no more than such dreamy chances to look upon the real world. The great door opens a crack, a hint of the truth is given – so bright it is almost a death, a joy we can't bear – and then it is gone." The laughter in June came from a love that must have been divine because it came from within and without, with neither warning nor explanation. It was one of the complete moments of my life.

The "great door" would open again one year later, singing Mozart's *Requiem* with the choir in Phillips Church. Somewhere in the turbulence of the music, I heard myself sing the story of every man who has looked at death and been afraid. I watched the light drift in from the windows and felt Rudolph Otto's *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, the fascinating and shaking dynamics of the holy. Painfully alive, I realized that I was every person in that space, and they were me. I know that we all felt that wave-like love and terror, because the choir's voices trembled and soared, and the audience was in tears. It was the momentary grace of the summer before, the Agnus Dei, the magnificent and mystifying love that held me like a child and whispered that not all stories end.

The *Requiem* is the story that enabled me to feel something of divinity, something of the thread that runs through creation. It was the stone in my path that gave meaning to the path itself. We are children of God, brothers and sister. Christe Eleison.

The year of the Requiem, I was asked to research my family history and write a paper about it. Aware of my parents' "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding the past, I asked Aunt Jenny (my father's sister) about our history.

Bit by bit, Jenny told the story of my father's childhood. He's grown up isolated, with an alcoholic father and a mother who ignored him. As a little boy, he buried himself in studies of butterflies and insects. (I can imagine him then, dissecting and putting back together the elements of his world, trying to understand how they fit together and why they were there). When he was nineteen, he found his father lying dead on the ground, neck broken. Jenny said it was an accidental fall from the balcony; my brother maintains that it was not an accident at all.

Jenny's story broke open myths, shedding light and darkness on the past. It deepened my love for my father, and I began to understand why the past wasn't talked about. It was too painful, and I believe that it still is.

Like love, a story can't be forced. Sometimes it must be told again and again to be understood, other times, it must be experienced. My father's love had always been clear, but who he was had not. Now I understood why, every Christmas until I was seven, he would climb the three stories of our house to stamp on the roof and shake bells outside my window, calling "Ho Ho Ho!" But my parents never even told me this, it was Aunt Francy, and when I was thirteen. Years later, I would find the Christmas bells in Dad's sock drawer, safe in a zip-loc bag.

When I was a child, my brother John was the Atlas of our little world on West Shore Road, and our parents were its gods. They were infinitely good, wise, and strong, protecting me from the darkness of the unknown world. I didn't live in a house on a hill; I lived in a castle on a mountain. But when John was expelled from Lawrenceville, the pillars of my world started to crumble.

It's taken me a decade to start making sense of those years. As John spiraled into a drug addiction and my parents' marriage disintegrated, all I could do was listen to the screaming at night, with my ear pressed against my bedroom door. I watched my brother challenge my father to a fistfight, heard my mother cry in church, felt the Tabasco sauce my mother pushed down my throat when I asked what the hell was going on. I felt as if everyone was trying to hide the truth from me, and that I had a right to know who the people truly were that I lived with. But underneath the confusion and pain and anger of that time were the personal truths that needed attention — my mother's unfulfillment, my father's depression, my brother's need for acceptance. My narcissistic envy of John.

I didn't understand why John looked haggard and skinny, why his eyes had gone flat and cold, but I didn't want to understand. I wanted my hero back. Only recently has he started telling the stories of his adolescence, of living under a Lake Placid boardwalk in January, his first flirtations with hard drugs, the truth behind the tattoos and piercings that were like armor to us, then. My parents never answered my questions because they wanted to protect me from the truth. But the truth is a part of me, as it is of all of us. So John has been the storyteller. I still can't easily reconcile Uncle Rick's easy humor with his cocaine habit, Mom's love for us with her near-suicide, Dad's gentleness with his deep isolation.

Because today, it's as if nothing happened. As if the only stories worth remembering are of roasting marshmallows, skating around a bonfire, trips to the beach. But they are parts of the same reality;

they're the ways we've tried to live with each other and ourselves. Ours is the story of fumbling with love.

Last Sunday I woke up on the floor of my room. I'd dreamed of walking through a rolling field where people I knew lay head to foot on the grass, and each person I passed whispered "good luck" to me. I entered the woods, alive and green with springtime, and a cobblestone path formed itself under my feet as I walked. Warm light streamed down from the entwined treetops, and I passed a garden where huge green apples were stuck on sticks, half eaten. Then I came to a still and silent pond. I sat down by the pond and breathed quietly, then I got up and walked back along the path. I thought to myself, "this is much better than being alone," but there was nobody that could see me. I awoke full of bliss.

Our lives are paths in the forest, intertwining and never ending. We call out from the wilderness to each other and to our God through myths, secrets, dreams. However our stories appear, they are us. They are what we have done, and what we want to do.

How have we written our own stories, and why do we continue to write them? The answer is in the voices in the wilderness, and the unfound thing that walks beside us and is the reason we walk. It is sacredness itself.

As I live my own story, I remember the loves that I have had and those that await me. And I journey, ultimately, for the greatest love, and one that is ever with me, and ever beyond the next bend of the cobblestone path.

ELENA STEWART
EXETER, NH
PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY
HARVARD KNOWLES

THE LAST RAINSTORM

The gutter fills with deep—throated laughter,
Raindrops plucking its vocal chords like harp strings,
Tambourining upon its tin heart.
It is its last occasion for merriment,
And even now the rain courses sluggishly,
Icing the arteries of gutters,
Growing frosty upon the frozen backs of grass.

Now is the extended second of transition,
The split-second eternity when the baton is gripped by two hands.
Falling from the sky, rain passes between states,
Sometimes snow, sometimes water,
As fickle as the cloud from whose grace it fell.

Now is the time of commune,
When two vast seasons occupy one hour,
One gentle morning,
One breath,
In the second when a raindrop crystallizes and a snowflake melts,
Some vast exchange of souls is conducted, noted only by God,
And time moves on.

Soon,
The amber sun will break over banks of snow,

Dyeing snowfields magenta with its early rays.
Snow will fall again, casting thick flurries into crevasses of oaks,
Lining the holes gnawed by forests in shades of olive and white.
And even this will pass, coughing up its hegemony to sweet mud,
Azaleas and grass.
Time will wander infinitely,
Swelling from quantified seconds into great eons
As seasons chase themselves in a gaudy cycle of redundancy.
But yet,
For this one unflinching second mortality is made immortal,
As rain falls on snow.

ERIN BAGGOTT
EXETER, NH
PHILIPS EXETER ACADEMY
LUNDY SMITH

ON POCKETS AND LOOSE CHANGE

you need pockets
said the gray-haired
writing instructor
you need them
or stuff will fall out
he said
you might lose your papers
or impressions or thoughts

my brain has pockets
keeping all sorts of loose change
that sometimes organizes itself
into unusable pieces of currency
a word a poem
I find that a few coins
slip through my pockets
my pockets are sieves

I've lost people too
and the more I tuck away
their pictures
into my pockets
the more they slip out
the pant-leg of my brain
maybe down my leg I guess

I feel them slipping so I grasp
handfuls of them
and squeeze them so tight
they slip out past my knuckles
out of existence
the only proof they ever were
li a rock in the ground
with bronzed writing on it

I might slip into doldrums
and spend weeks
falling over myself over

one lost photograph
but on a night
where my friends or family
create a new memory
a piece of brain change
a freshly minted penny
I'll still tuck it away into my pockets

if I pack as many little shining
moments in there as I can
then maybe my sieve of a pocket
will become a net
each memory supporting
another
supporting me
as steady as a vault

EVAN LIST
TOWSON, MD
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
WILLIAM JONES

DAYDREAM

I was standing in the laundry by myself,
Dancing with the tablecloths and linens,
Turning and dip, turning and dip, bringing my hands together
As I folded the warm bedclothes.
Your hands surprised my waist—
I didn't know you could hear me
Wishing you might show up suddenly—
You never had before.
Hours inside spent wondering when the doorbell would ring,
When a fist would bang on the window late at night.
So you were expected, unstartling;
I had so long looked forward to your coming
I had to remember to be surprised
We took a long time folding the sheets,
Stretching out the patterns, stepping in to press
Our halves and quarters into each other's bent palms.

Immediately comfortable in my family,
Welcomed by my home not like some distant impresario
Or a passerby-turned-visitor but like
Another son home from college
Or the store owner from up the street
Who knows all our names and ages.
And always asks about Dad's work

Once when I walked up to rent a movie,
Mr. Chu broke into a lecture on fabled Chinese nobles,
Their romances and coups, the rise and fall of

A thousand struggling heroes.

And one last empress, camped out in New York
Who betrayed her country's children to conspire with
Her own grasping sons and daughters, and the Communists.
He hands me the movie and a newspaper,
"How is your father's business?"

We sat in the small white office all afternoon,
The walls all filled with such light, it pretended to be a sunroom
But couldn't forget its high flanking ceiling,
Its creaking desk crowded by mismatched chairs
And a leaning stool, one leg missing.
Your feet were propped up between us
Blocking your busy hands, wrists pushing,
Elbows rising and falling in your lap.
Finally you stand, walked towards me,
Rest your chin against mine
And we gaze at the figure in front of us.
Her loose curves stretched calmly
In silent rhythms of sleep.
Every afternoon she lies here
Revered as an Elgian carving,
But instead of a broad stone alter
A low orange couch supports her ancient limbs.
Same white arm thrown over bare thighs
But warmth flows through this marble
Breathing deeply in her bright gallery.

You face me, presenting the day's work:
Balanced in your hands is my grandmother's sleeping body,
Her old womanness carved into soft yellow maple.
I rub my thumb down her spine, and over her belly
Dotted with knots, like a potato and its eyes.

"It's still rough on her feet."

"It suits her."

Like she suits the room.
Like the old chair smelling of books and a hidden cigarette.
Like the chandelier that hangs too high
To bother changing the bulbs.

EVA GRIZZARD
BALTIMORE, MD
TOWSON HIGH SCHOOL
WILLIAM JONES

OLD BEN

Yesterday's stubble hides today's mud
in Deer Week Vermont, 199; our fifth together.
As Ben's diesel hair-pins Ten Point Path
my Colt .22 rides out the window
scraping at October's last maples.
Leaves red as Filenes the day after Christmas

crunch down on asphalt.

They say Ben killed four moose
with a pellet gun one night
between dinner and pick up games.
if that's true,
he doesn't need a rifle any more
than Santa needs a whip.
But forty years change places, faces, names,
and down at the Five and Dime
Ben sells stories like a politician,

which is great for the kids, who get
Snickers on the side. I understand.
I was there too, you know,
inhaling root beer floats
shunning chores to hear Cal Coolidge
get sworn in on the town transistor radio
watching Abby Linhair personify perfection
sitting half way off Route 30
outside Moody in the ice storm of '46



JOLENE CAREY
FALLS, PA
MR. WASKO

beating Abe Johnson at counter
arm-wrestling
pitching pebbles at mail-boxes
nearby the river and Pike's Mill

most of all
longing to be a flannel-man myself.

Down Point-Nine

the lights of Reedville in the gully
remind Ben of a poor man's LA.
He'd been there once—LA.
"Not home. Hell, not even close."
Ben remembers it was 1968,
the year Old Man Pike
sold and pulled out,
I remember I was in college that year,
about to get my own vacation and rifle.
But that's beside the point.
As much as I can figure at
midnight of deer-killing season,
when Ben dies
all of Vermont will age ten years.

JOSH BONE
HINGHAM, MA
Ms. BAKER

NIGHT

Why do we bother with the rest of the day,
the dreamy-eyed hours,
the stumbling into dusk?

This is the best—
here, the earth breathing deeply in the night,
the creamy light of the moon washing over the yard.
Here, where your flesh is mine
and mine yours,
words drifting by, hovering in the shadows.
(Maybe it's the absence of clothes
that renders the absence of the self-consciousness
in our confessions.)

Incense burning,
blankets tangled around me and you.
And you, your hair all mussed up.

And if necessary,
a soft rain,
a mist,
a downpour.

GREER ALLEGRA PATTERSON
RUMSON, NJ
Ms. KAREN HAEFELEIN

A DOG WALK

"Damn dog," Beth mutters as she stumbles out of bed in the
darkness. The new cocker spaniel has been difficult to train, and
now that she finally doesn't mess all over the carpets, she whimpers

every morning at 3 to be taken for a walk. Hal conveniently sleeps
through Reeses' routine, so that Beth has not had a full night's sleep
in two months.

The last dog, Belle, was so easy to train. Belle was truly Beth's
dog — mellow and friendly, loving. But then again, she predated the
era of test-tube babies, Sammy, Adam, and Jake. She was raised
in Beth's Hoboken apartment, not the 2-acre Mendham estate.
When they moved, Belle retreated into an armchair in the corner of
the never-used living room. The boys didn't even notice her — when
they were little, they never gingerly petted her glossy ears, and as
they got older, they didn't jump around in front of her and tease her
like they do to the new dog. Yet Beth assures herself that a dog is
good for her boys — like Little League and Rec Soccer, it teaches
them responsibility. If nothing else, it's another seat filled in her 8-
seat luxury SUV.

Beth's eyes adjust to the darkness as she walks past her boys'
bedrooms, Reeses bounding in front of her. She hears their light
breathing over the roar of the ocean. At the entranceway to their
reversed living beach house, she puts on a jacket to fend off the
damp, chilly air, attaches the leash to Reeses' collar, and grabs the
enormous claw-shaped springaction device Hal bought at PetSmart
so that no one would have to make contact with dog excrement.

Reeses, a rather dense dog, outruns her leash. She whimpers,
but Beth doesn't walk faster. As always, she is checking out her
neighbors' houses. Her family, the Kootmans, Allesniks,
Schneiders, Chaleffs, and Palmers all have beach houses on the
same cul-de-sac. She hopes Reeses won't decide to do her busi-
ness in front of the Palmer compound. Even though it's too dark for
anyone to see, if anyone is even awake, she still feels the Palmer
matriarch's disapproval. Not everyone can have such well-behaved
dogs as the matriarch's beautiful greyhounds, Beth thinks. Still, she
is relieved that Reeses darts in the other direction, towards the
Schneiders' house.

The Schneiders have a dog, an Airedale, as high-strung as his
sand-throwing deviant of an owner, Spencer. Spencer's sister,
Andrea, lost interest in the dog after he grew out of his cute puppi-
ness and she, at age eleven, developed an enormous chest. Now
she spends the weeks between sleep-away camp in the Poconos
and school planning elaborate shopping trips to Beverly Hills with
her mother, only interrupted when Spencer launches a fistful of hot
sand in her face, for which he receives fifteen minutes' timeout
before he can strike again.

Sometimes Beth's boys discover him wailing on the dunes and
invite them to play their tame games. He joins them, only to corrupt
innocent fun such as boogie boarding. "Let's make a wall with our
boogie boards! Adam, tie your cord onto my wrist, I'll give Jake my
cord, and he can give his to Sammy. Now let's block that sucker
who's trying to ride the wave!" This activity only stops when the life-
guard pulls all the boys out of the water.

Beth presses the lever that opens the claw and scrapes the
pavement. Without light pollution the street is very dark, and she
can't see if Reeses has left anything there. Without looking very

hard, she decides Reeses just wanted to go out to stretch her legs and get some fresh air. Maybe she was even too cold in the air conditioning Hal insists upon despite the soft breezes that make the island so desirable. Beth and Reeses wander around the block a few times, straining their eyes to see the familiar houses.

The Chaleffs must have had a party tonight, Beth thinks as she counts the cars in the driveway and studies the license plates. New York plates on a maroon Buick mean Judy Chaleff's parents are down from New Rochelle, along with other minivans that transported her daughter Sarah's cousins, aunts and uncles from the far corners of the tri-state area. The Chaleffs are new to the block. Beth imagines the Palmers think of them as vultures swooping down to buy the house at a reduced price after the Driscolls had to declare bankruptcy and sell out. She gloats momentarily about not being as out of favor with the Palmers as the Chaleffs – at least when she has parties, she doesn't stick plastic hanging baskets of beefy geraniums and tiki torches on her upper deck. But then again, the only guest who visits is her trashy, desperate thirty-something sister, Melissa, who spends her day greased up in the sun trying to pick up teenagers and yelling at the boys in the hideous New York accent that Beth tried so hard to lose while at Wharton.

The Allesniks used to have big parties too. Beth would always say to Hal, loud enough for Phil Allesnik to hear, "It's so nice how Phil and his brothers get together all the time." Then Phil changed, accusing his brothers of taking advantage of him and threatening his wife Lois that if they didn't use the house at least at least once a week, he would sell it. Now that they're getting divorced, they haven't come down once the entire summer.

Beth won't miss Lois. Lois is a busy-body with a daughter, Danielle, who has been denied so much that she is an inert presence. From the day they met, Lois had taken note of the home hair-dye job and the crowns that made up Beth's smile. The boys don't like Danielle now, but when they were younger she would play with them and sometimes come over for dinner. Afterwards, Lois always quizzed Danielle about the décor in Beth's house and what was served. "All they eat is take-out or hamburgers and hotdogs," Beth had heard Lois whisper to her mother, an equally obnoxious presence on the beach. Lois disapproved of the ice cream truck novelties Beth bought for her boys, as well as the fact that Beth, after six years trying to balance her job with her family, quit the insurance business in favor of her boys.

Beach houses seem to be the breaking point for a lot of couples, Beth realizes with a shudder. Gary Kootman's first wife got all of the assets except the beach house, which became a haven for his attention-deficit college-age sons, whose days were divided into 5-minute sessions of guitar strumming, drum playing, and surfing. Now that they're off in California finding themselves, Gary and his new wife, Cheryl, come down every weekend. Trying to regain the youth they wasted with lesser spouses, they are exercise fanatics, kayaking, biking, running, and swimming all day long. Gary has been on the block much longer than the Chaleffs, Schneiders, Allesniks, and Beth's family. He once told Beth that the Palmers had

protested the construction of new houses on the block. Beth had looked around at her neighbors' houses, angular and modern, with gray shakes, atop pilings. Then her eyes had rested on the Palmer compound, a 1960s mansion, clean and elegant, tucked into an envelope of pine trees.

The Palmers are unfriendly Mainline Philadelphia WASPs with Bush-Cheney stickers on their Mercedes Benzes. Everyone else on the block is a Democrat, although the rules of the Nouveau Riche dictate that bumper stickers are tacky. The patriarch, license plate "Tiger47" for his Princeton graduation year, enjoys martinis with his sons-in-law on the ocean-view deck. The matriarch power-walks with her daughter into town to get coffee and crumb cake; she discusses blond highlights with her college-age granddaughter, who sports a sexless tankini and lies on her stomach for days on end without getting tan. Occasionally, the matriarch plays paddleball with her grandson, Ted, who calls her Gran and is about Sammy's age, although Regina imagines, due to his lack of interest in her boys' destructive endeavors, Ted is under strict orders from Gran not to interact with "their kind."

Beth is repulsed by the WASPs' stereotypical exclusiveness, but she is intrigued by it as well. She can't help but admire the carefree alcoholism of the Palmer patriarch – Hal is too involved with his boys' game of running bases, or grilling hamburgers, to put on a polo shirt, khakis and loafers, and sip cocktails. Then again, he is too pasty from perpetually coating himself with sunscreen to pull off a dashing smile and a discussion of sailing regattas organized by the yacht club. And Beth doesn't have much of a figure to play tennis and wear linen shift dresses; after her three pregnancies, summer dressy is a sleeveless oversized tee-shirt that says Boca Raton in gold script, purchased at the boys' insistence during a visit with Hal's mother.

Beth yawns, drawing a mouthful of cold air into her lungs. "Okay Reeses, our walk's over," she says, pulling the young dog up the stairs against her will. Reeses' nails scrape against the dried planks of wood, but the horrible noise doesn't deter Beth from ending the walk. She always gets angry at herself for the feeling of dissatisfaction she gets when thinking about the Palmers. She worked very hard so that her boys could grow up without stigma, only to be reminded that no amount of new money is good enough for old money. "Why can't they even say hello?" she says into the darkness as she pulls the door shut behind her.

Martha Kinsella
Metuchen, NJ
Highland Park High School
Ms. Dawson

**AND YOU SHALL FORGIVE THE TRESPASSES OF
SUMMER**

They sat on one of the molded wooden benches by the entrance to the local pool. Droplets of tepid pool water ran down their backs. Shaking out their matted hair, they sat displaying winter-pale bodies

to the blistering heat of the suddenly June sun.

Adam rolled his neck from side to side, and closed his eyes, steepled his fingers. It was warm – terribly warm – and he was glad about it. Summer came in long, slow hours around here, rolling in and rolling out like an ancient automobile. Reluctant to get going and reluctant to leave. The long warm days offered sanctuary and calm that Adam didn't often feel. It also gave him a wonderful excuse to be outdoors as often as possible.

He opened his eyes and slid a sideways glance toward Jacob. Jacob's long, slightly freckled legs were stretched out in front of him. His eyes were almost entirely closed, slitted for protection against the glare from overhead. Red hair fell in soft licks around his face. Adam grinned at him, offering Jacob a smirk that didn't quite reach his eyes. Jacob pursed his lips and gave a sort of 'yeah, I'm cool man' nod.

They'd known each other for what seemed like forever, when in actuality it had only been since middle school, which would make it five years now. Adam was constantly baffled by why the older, worldlier Jacob chose to hang out with him. Not that Adam himself wasn't worldly. Well, okay, he wasn't. But he could be, given the chance. And there was a part of him that greatly wanted to understand Jacob's reasons for being his friend, constantly coming close to frightening conclusions that he could hardly imagine openly thinking.

Adam was lanky, and his graceful neck had always bothered him, but he was about average height, with dark black hair and long fingers. He played music. Anything really – pianos, guitars, his mother's harp if she didn't shoo him away from it before he could get a few notes out. Jacob didn't play. He sang, he wrote, and his words danced in unforgiving beauty to Adam's own broken songs. Their friendship was one that had been built in music, and a mutual understanding of sorts.

Jacob turned to him and nodded at the street a few feet from the burnt grass the bench was placed on. They stood and slipped on their sandals, shielding their feet from the offending warm pavement. "Home, then?" Adam asked, and Jacob simply nodded again, wrapping his towel around his shoulders like a shawl. He was used to this, Jacob's lack of words on many occasions. He never thought to ask why it was that Jacob didn't speak often; he just assumed it was his reverence for words.

They padded along the dusty streets from their beloved summer spot to Jacob's house, which they called their own during most afternoons. Jacob's mother slept during the day and tended to drive to the city in the evenings to attend wild parties both boys were terrified of; his father, on the other hand, was often away on business. Adam knew that Jacob felt no true need for either of them. Adam had always considered both of Jacob's parents to be complete enigmas. To him they were these missing people, and he spent a great deal of time confused as to how they came together to create Jacob.

The house was an overly large Tudor, close to the pool and not the type of residence commonly found on this side of the tracks. It had been in Jacob's father's family for years, passed on to generations and generations of Moscovitzes, even when its location was no longer in an affluent part of the town landscape. Pushing open the screen door near the kitchen that the housekeeper always left open, Jacob and Adam made their way into the immediately cooling darkness of the home. Both boys slipped off their sandals, enjoying the cool feel of the tile on their feet. Adam plopped himself down on

a wooden counter stool and Jacob pulled himself up on to the counter, leaning back against the glass of the cabinets.

"You want something to drink? Like, soda or something?"

Adam nodded.

"Okay," Jacob said, and hopped down from the counter, sliding over to the fridge like a graceful cat. The fridge was this massive silver thing completely unwarranted for a household that consisted of only three people who were hardly home and a housekeeper.

Jacob pulled open the door and Adam could hear him shuffling around the shelves, pushing around juice boxes. Adam's mind conjured the unbidden picture of a helpless battle between a juice container and a bottle of soda. He wondered where his mind was, and suddenly wondered if he and Jacob weren't a bit like juice and soda themselves.

Jacob pulled his head out the fridge brandishing two cans of Fresca. "This okay?"

"Yeah, sure." Adam held out his hand for the wonderfully cool can. He pressed it against his forehead, rolled it across his face. Jacob grinned at him. He blushed. Jacob shrugged and opened his can. Adam opened his own and took a long gulp. He let his eyes wander around the kitchen in a full circle, its emerald green marble counters, antique tile floors, the decorative flowers painted above the windows – then Jacob who stood in front of the counter sipping his soda in quiet thought.

It was a special kitchen, a welcoming kitchen. Old-fashioned only in its décor and not at all dysfunctional. Adam imagined he could live here; he could see himself wrapped in the home's dark hallways and oddly shaped rooms that were customary to English Tudors. He thought, perhaps, that Jacob already imagined he lived here. It was a slightly disturbing thought. It made his stomach flip over, the idea that perhaps Jacob already considered him a part of his house, like a piece of much loved furniture. Something that would never go away, and always be just where he wanted it.

He blinked himself out of idle thought and looked over to see Jacob staring at him. He waved a hand around and inclined his head toward the other boy. "Your house makes me feel like I've never lived," he said, not knowing at all what he meant.

"You're not a very poetic person. You know that, right?" Jacob smirked at him.

"Not all of us can write and sing like the Muses."

"You think I sing like Greek mythology?" Jacob's smirk became just a bit more pronounced.

"I think you sing like a girl," Adam said, almost leering at him.

"I'm not going to take that as an insult. You're a jerk. A big one." Jacob had slid back over the counter and pulled himself up onto it. His legs dangled over the edge. Taking a sip of his own soda, he crossed his arms over his chest.

"And I'm not even going to think about what that implies," Adam sniffed.

Jacob rolled his eyes and slid a cold finger, wet with can sweat, down the side of Adam's face.

Adam felt his cheeks flush and his mind began to work overtime before he could get his mouth to move. "You're not going to get to me," he stammered. "You always try and you're never going to get to me." He was beginning to feel slightly indignant. "I don't care how warm it is out, or how empty this house is."

He closed his eyes, things could never just go smoothly with Jacob. They couldn't just be normal teenagers and sit around talk-

ing about music or girls. They had to have this startlingly confusing relationship, and he, Adam, had to be stuck in the thick of it.

Jacob started to laugh, "Oh come on, Adam. You're never any fun. It's not like I actually mean anything." He threw his head back and let out a stream of breath.

Adam stood, searching for an excuse, looking for a way to get outside, looking to find a way to breathe. "Maybe I should get going. You know my Mom will be looking for me, and I haven't called her since we left for the pool this morning," he stammered, wringing his towel in his hands. His soda sat ignored on the counter, droplets of condensation growing on the sides and slipping down onto the marble.

Jacob's eyes turned misty as he spoke in quiet measured tones, "You always do this. I hate how you do this. It's horrible of you, and you know it." Jacob's forehead creased, and he practically slammed his fist down onto the counter.

Adam jumped, and then blinked to clear the shock.

"Jacob, *don't*, please," he pleaded. "This isn't worth our friendship. I've told you a million times that it's just not worth it." He tried to sound soothing. Jacob never got angry; he never shouted or displayed physical violence. Adam was the one who was always exploding, writing musical notes that screamed and dove and tumbled through angry measures. Anger, Adam figured, was simply a creative device.

"Just once," Jacob sighed, the fury that had previously colored his features leaving as quickly as it had appeared. "Just once I'd like to see you stick around. Stick around and wait things out." His eyes shone with bitter longing.

Adam saw his face reflected in the glass of the kitchen cabinets, his features contorted into what looked like a terrible emotional turmoil. *Yes, stay and work things out*, he thought wildly. *Stay in this horrible kitchen with this person - this boy who wants more of me than I can imagine giving*. He ran a nervous hand through his shaggy hair, and blinked away tears.

Things hadn't always been this way. Not when they were younger, and everything was about the music or the adventures they cooked up in their heads or about who they were today and who they were going to be tomorrow. It was a strange relationship, and Adam could admit that. It was the whole...admitting-what-was-strange-about-it part that got him. It never really mattered during the school year since there was always an excuse and these odd, awkward moments could generally be avoided on the account of school work or soccer practice. But here in Jacob's kitchen there was hardly any excuse. Okay, so there was an excuse; and Adam wasn't sure he wanted one. There was his worried mother, the long walk home, his incredible confused mind.

"Jacob. Just let me go," he said, and turned to walk out the backdoor, to begin the long walk home. He would always go back to Jacob. Adam knew that they would meet again tomorrow, at the pool or at the local record shop, and things would be normal. Normal until Jacob slipped in a comment or until Adam just couldn't control himself anymore.

"Fine." Jacob whispered, never leaving the counter, instead falling onto it, and pressing his bare back against the marble.

Adam pushed open the screen door and left Jacob in his beautiful dark kitchen, in his beautiful dark house with its echoing rooms and alone with his beautiful dark thoughts. He kept walking until he was at least two blocks away from the Moscovitz's house. Then

Adam took his sandals off, letting the painful heat of the sidewalk burn his soles. He pressed his feet hard into the concrete; and let the still high summer sun scald his back in punishment.

CHLOE BROWNSTEIN

TENAFLY, NJ

MR. WHITEHEAD

THE RUNNER

Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and Rubber against asphalt, feet moving so fast I almost feel like I'm flying. I live to run. No, I run to live. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Breathe. Don't forget to breathe. Enjoy the sting of winter filling my lungs. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Find that comfort zone where running becomes mechanical and no longer physical. That's what coach always used to say, "When you move the mind from the body, Hayden, that's when you'll never stop running." *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Easier said than done. The beat of my heart matches the beat of my feet, but I have to drown out their noise... "remove the mind from the body... you'll never stop running." *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I wonder what happened to old Coach. If only he could see me now. What a shock he'd be in for, he'd probably choke on his whistle. Breathe. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* "remove the mind from the body... you'll never stop running." *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Cross-country was probably the best thing I ever did in high school. High school. There's a topic I haven't revisited in God knows how long. High school was completely over-rated, anyway. And we all thought it was so important. The only good thing I got out of it was a free ride to Columbia and cross-country. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Maybe if I hadn't been so damn weird. That awkward smart kid who happened to be good at running - which wasn't even a real sport anyway according to the rest of the school. My pants were always too short or I said the wrong thing or got too many A's. what an irony. This place that was supposed to breed achievers and condone academic greatness... ruled by dumb jock tyrants. Ah but screw that. Who the hell cares about high school now? No one I know. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I'm not awkward or weird or too skinny now. My muscles look better than a damned quarter-back's. I'm sexy. I am so sexy that just looking at me turns everyone on. I look in the mirror, and hell, even I turn myself on. Or maybe I better shut myself up now before my ego gets too big. I need a good kick in the balls or something *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I should just call my father. Yes, that would cut me right down to size. The bastard. I got a free ride to an Ivy League University and he still could barely muster a pat on the back. His silences cut like ice coated knives more than his discouraging words wring every bit of self worth out of me. He resents me; I can feel it in his sidelong stares. He resents Mom for getting pregnant. We got in the way of his smooth ride to greatness. Well, I'm sorry Dad, but you're the one who knocked her up in the first place. All actions have consequences, didn't you always used to tell me that? But you were always one of those do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do type of guys. You taught me that respect, discipline, determination, and hard work were the only things that will get me anywhere in life. "Don't let any-

one or anything get in the way of your goals. If you do, it will only lead to an unsatisfying life." You told me with flat lips before glancing at my mother from the corner of your eye. Did you forget how smart your son was? I saw right through you. I could read your subtext like it was printed right there on the page. I wanted to leap across the table, take your neck in my hands and not let go until your eyes glazed over and became still. Blue lips and horror. Maybe I just should have killed you. Saved us all the extra pain. But now I'm just bitter. Because when I did what you said you changed your mind, and when I succeeded it was never good enough. I just want to curl up in a damn ball in the corner of my apartment because with every paycheck I push more people away. Thanks, Dad. I appreciate the push towards material success. But emotionally and spiritually I might as well be dead. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I just want to scream; I want to let out a yawp so barbaric that I lose my voice afterwards. Running is the only thing that reminds me I'm still alive as frigid wind rips through my jacket and T-shirt, piercing my back like a thousand sharp needles being pushed further and further beneath the surface of my skin. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Damn it. Forget the wind. Ignore the needles. Feel nothing but the rhythm of my own thoughts in my head. Breathe. Remove the mind from the body...you'll never stop running. Weather does not exist. Breathe. Remove the mind.

Never stop. Run. Breathe. Mechanical. Remove the mind from the body. Breathe. Forget the wind. Ignore the needles. Run. Run. Mechanical. Remove the mind. Run. From the body. Run. Breathe. Remove the mind *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* Angela. She's so beautiful. When we were together it always shocked me; her beauty, no matter how familiar she had become. God was she gorgeous. I can still see her wavy milk chocolate brown hair cascading far beneath her shoulders. It falls in front of my face every time she leans in to kiss me. She laughs in that cute little way that she does, scrunching up her nose and peering at me through her jet black eyes like she knows some secret that I don't. she twists her hair at the nape of her neck to get it out of my way. But then she kisses me, and her hair just falls at the sides of my face anyway. Because her fingers always seem to slip between mine. Daydreams. And I almost had her. That cup-or-coffee-with-milk-and-two-sugars colored skin was almost all mine. I used to run faster, when I was with her. "Corre hacia tu futuro, Aydeen." She would whisper every morning into my neck as she crawled from beneath white sheets, while I was leaned over, tying my shoelaces. "Pero, no corras desde tu pasado." And then her mocha lips would graze my neck; her hands would meet my back and nudge me onto my feet. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I miss her. But I blame myself. I betray her daily, as I run from my past and make no



TALIA ABADIE
BROOKLYN, NY

progress towards my future. My future as a human, that is. My future as a robotic workaholic, well I make progress towards that every day. I should have listened to her. "You don't know how it feels to be with you yet always know that as much as you love me you love your job more." She let out a chuckle and wiped mascara filled tears from her face, which only served to smudge the black liquid further. That chuckle still mystifies me. Was she laughing at me, or at herself? "Un dia...un dia you are going to wake up with nothing...non cada." "I'll have my apartment, my car, I'll always know that I'm secure, that I achieved what I set out to." "Ai that's bullshit. They are just...just things. They are nothing in themselves." She breathed out. "Do you even realize what I am trying to say to you?" I didn't. I stared at her blankly. "I can't be with you anymore, not when I was once your everything and now I'm just second place to your paycheck. So...I must...must..." I took a step towards her. "Please, don't. I need you." My bottom lip quivered and I could feel my stomach at my feet. "I can change. I can change." She met her black eyes with mine one last time and half-smiled. "You never listen to me." She said it sweetly though and pressed her lips against my forehead. A stray tear fell from her eye onto my nose. "Farewell, Aydeen." I tried to pull her back. But she was too quick. She fled across the golden wooden floors of my apartment, and didn't look back. And I...I can't stop thinking about her. Two years and I've only become everything she said I would. Someone with nothing. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I can't stand myself anymore. I have to change. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I can't go on at these fake dinner parties and charity benefits that I don't even believe in. I can't dance with the CEO's daughter just because it will put an extra grand on my Christmas bonus. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I don't even know who I am. I'm just this...this empty version of a human being. I go through the motions. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I run for the motions. For knowing that it will always be the same. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and* I will always have control over my pace, my speed, my breath. I live to run. No, I run to live. *Oneandtwo and oneandtwo and*

SAMANTHA CARLIN
HILLSDALE, NJ
MS. HADE

SIRENS

Last year, we would have been in there. Drinking hot chocolate, of course, and studying for one of the endless vocabulary quizzes.

We never used our flashcards. You would do an interpretive dance to remember each word while the other customers stared at us over their coffee and morning papers. We came to Neil's at least twice a month, always sitting in the booth up against the wall of the dry-cleaning store, tucked into the back corner.

The dry-cleaning store burned down this morning, and set Neil's on fire too. Just the kitchen, but in ninth grade we would have been there. Giving our usual order without even glancing at the menu, and all the guys knew exactly what we wanted. Two bagels, one with cream cheese, one with butter, they'd singsong to whoever was cooking in the kitchen. They let us look at the menus anyway because it was our ritual to pretend we wanted egg creams and poached salmon with matzo-ball soup.

And while we ate we'd watch the people sitting at the counter and come up with their life stories. Would we ever be as pathetic as them, alone every day? One woman came to Neil's for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and it didn't matter if it was a holiday.

Neil's is always open. Or was. Or will be again next week.

But it doesn't matter. We don't go there anymore. When I went by at 7:45 this morning, the gray smoke rose in swirls above Lexington Avenue. And I saw the fire trucks zip around East 70th Street and the news people, ready to report, standing by but not too close.

I miss you. I am missing you. As much as I might try, I can't convince myself otherwise. Suddenly the room spins and I'm drowning in the memory, ten years old again and on the phone with you. We are timing how long it takes for me to pass the ambulance that just passed your house. Three seconds, I say, as the screech transfers from the phone to outside my window.

We live just two blocks apart, and our bedrooms both face Lexington Avenue, which overflows with noise no matter what time it is. It comforts us to know we hear the same sounds, including the siren of the ambulance that has just zoomed past my building. We count the thumps as cab after cab hits the same spot on the street, covered for repair by a metal board. We hear the brakes of the city buses as they stop quickly at red lights, and the other sirens of the fire trucks and police cars. Good night, I say as you yawn.

The sirens couldn't follow you to Connecticut and your new school. Loneliness envelops me when I lie in bed at night and hear their wails. I wish you had heard them this morning and seen the fire too.

You visit now, but we don't know what to say. I don't know you, or your new friends, or what you eat for breakfast every day. Silence was easy, but now it is awkward.

I wonder if you will ever hear the sirens scream again, remembering what it was and how it is. We would have been in there, but we cannot be now.

CHRISTINA PRYOR
NEW YORK, NY
MS. MARA TAYLOR

RAINING CHAMPAGNE

There are certain girls that always look as if

they are about to cry
like tall glasses perhaps
filled with sangria wine
long necks, delicate
wind-blown glass
standing in a bank
filled with tall cattails
that move with the wind
and threaten to tip them
spilling their sweetness
into the thirsty ground
while it rains champagne.

JENNA HERSKOVIC
MRS. LUSTBADER

SUPPOSE YOUR MOTHER MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE

would you still look like your father?
Would your chocolate chip eyes melt into blue,
your hair's granite curls soften to sandstone?

But the dense fog of cigarettes
would no longer filter the air of your space.
An absence of grilled salmon and Spanish rice.
Perhaps replaced by a Stouffer's.

His nightly fifteen-year-old smokers cough would cease
so now you would sleep in silence
and know everything is okay.

You could take a family trip to Italy
without eating it away at his wallet
like termites do a house.

But then you storm out the door,
leaving behind your childhood.
You have had enough of
his ways. It is time for
a change.

And at 3 in the morning
your feet lightly touching the warm oak,
the restless sleeves of your down jacket
cry through the hall,
into your room where you
wait for him to yell.
But he understands.

And he sleeps in the bed
with the woman he married,
and he is someone else.

RANDI KOBULNICK
NEW CITY, NY
CLARKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL NORTH

**TO MY FRIEND CHRIS, WHO IS GOING INTO
THE ARMY, AND INTO THE WAR**

You were
a gargoyle crouching still,
hand touching brown dirt
beside the black road and pink sunset.

You dressed in greens of leaves,
greens of grasses
green of reptiles.
Your hat scarlet,
your badge gold wings,
Fresh from boot camp

We walked by
And you smiled, jumped.
Jumped coming to life and startling us all
on the day we all laughed.

Now, you will shiver
with hot sweat,
wake to inches of dust
that covers tomorrow's sunrise.
You will crouch under stinging wind
rotting a carpet of red and yellow sand.
A hornet's stinger
sounds sharp in the raspy air

You may laugh no longer,
you gargoyle frozen forever in stone.

BEN ALEXANDRO
NEW CITY, NY
CLARKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
MS. POTTER

SOUTHBOUND

I'd like to lie with you one day
I'd watch the light drip from day to night
accenting the curves of my rumpled sheets
I'd follow the shadows
wandering over posters, dressers, and shelves
I'd let you run out of focus
and stare mindlessly at the blur
I'd squint
focus
and trace
From a flip in your hair
past a fold in your pants
Lingering momentarily by the spaces between your fingers
and then idly work my way back
noticing more of your subtleties the second trip
I'd watch your face curl as you yawn
and smile as you catch me watching
I'd inhale your scent
like the smoke at a dispatch concert
that remains on my shirt and lingers in my mind
as I unsuccessfully try to sleep
with your simple symphonies ringing in my ears

I'd navigate my finger through the intricacies of your hair
letting curve along its path past your ear and down your
jaw
I'd let a childish smile overtake my face
and answer "nothing" when you notice and ask why I'm
smiling
knowing very well that you already understand
I'd take the phone off the hook
but put it back
to make a point
that I'm not answering
not today.

JOEL MITTLEMAN
ALLENTOWN, PA
MS. CANDACE BROBST

Ladder Dance

Even though the shade was drawn,
A filter of white translucence,
A heavy veil over the eyes
Of the east window,

The light projecting his
Shadowed form high on the vinyl screen
Pierced through my morning thick eyes
Made me squint and tuck my face away.

But his back must have been to the sun
Warmed from the top of the ladder
Whose silhouette wavered
On the mottled shade.

My chair shuddered beneath me,
Watching that ladder shake in a side-to-side sway
As a heavy-soled boot stretched
Down one rung, and back up;

He kept on with the work
Reaching up with his brush,
Shifting weight on his feet,
Dancing with the ladder.

JENNIFER REED
BALTIMORE, MD
THE BRYN MAWR SCHOOL
MR. WILLIAM WATERS

NOT AMERICAN

When we came back to the States in the summer, we
were "coming home." "Home" was an old family summer-

house on Long Island, where every year everything was
green and strange and new, and where I would lie with my
head against the car window, looking up at the branches that
arched across the road as we drove. We would pile out of
the car, exhausted from the trip, and the salty ocean air
would cling to us as we unloaded our luggage. The yard
tumbled down the hill, stopping just before the pond and the
garden where deer would wander through and eat my mother's
lilies in the early morning. The land was beautiful, but the
house felt strange and exposed. With wood floors and windows
open wide, it let the sea-breezes flow through and made me
feel vulnerable and unshielded.

One year-round house in Riyadh was the opposite: made
of concrete and with white marble floors and staircases
stretching out, cool and tranquil. The windows and sliding
glass doors were always kept shut as protection from the
heat, but we were not trapped. Through the thick glass we
still heard the birds' morning songs, and, the moment we
stepped outside, we could smell in the air the familiar threat
of an imminent sandstorm. Our lawn was made of pebbles,
as growing grass required too much water, and jasmine grew
like ivy up the side of the house. Together, the yard and
house were enclosed by a ten-foot wall of concrete and two
heavy metal gates, the austerity of which sheltered us from
whatever lay outside.

The openness in America frightened me: it was unregulated.
You could wear what you wanted, go where you pleased, pray
however you wished, and I hated it. All summer I missed my
abaya, uniform and comforting, and I missed my walled-in
compound, which didn't keep me in so much as it kept everyone
else out. I even missed being woken up every morning at five
with "Allah'u Akbar," the call to prayer, sung on loud speakers
five times a day from every mosque. In Riyadh, life was strict
and organized and safe, and I wrapped myself up in every
experience I had.

I tolerated America because my mother loved it, but all
through the summer I longed to return to the palm trees in
our atrium and the bougainvillea that stretched in crimson
splendor across the outer wall of our villa. "Coming home
for summer" was just a phrase, my parent's invention, which
described a place foreign to me, where I had never lived,
and where I led a summertime country club existence and
learned nothing of any use. When I dreamt and felt the sand
between my toes, it wasn't the ocean breeze that I imagined,
but the silk of the red desert sand, and the dry breath of
desert wind that blew my hair across my face.

My discomfort for all things American applied to people
too. At school in Riyadh I strayed from the American crowd,
clinging to Arab, British, and Australian friends - anyone
who didn't try to overwhelm me with her nationality as soon as
I introduced myself. My friends let me learn through them -
grow through them - without their trying to control me. The
Americans came and left every two years, mostly with the
military rotation, and, although they looked like me, they
made me feel uncomfortable and out of place. They kept to
themselves, trying to salvage what they remembered of

American television, malls, and music. They were proud and they cherished being American, flaunting their language and their differences until November, 1995. I was in Social Studies when we heard what sounded like a chemistry experiment gone wrong. We laughed. Forty minutes later, when the intercom came on and instructed us all to go home, we spilled into the hallways, confused. No one knew what had happened. Not even a rumor had been spread. My Sudanese driver Izzidine was standing with the others at the gate, tall and strong and comforting just by his presence, and I followed him through the chaos to the car. As he unlocked the door, he looked at me. "Bomb," he said.

The news was blaring when I got home. An American military compound had been bombed in the worst terrorist attack since Oklahoma City. Six people had been killed, and within an hour three different anti-American groups had claimed the act as their own. The windows on my father's new office building, two blocks from the blast, had imploded, and our safe concrete house with marble floors had trembled. When the phone rang, I picked up and said instinctively, in place of hello, "we're alive." The words echoed in my head.

The bomb threats that my school received because of its affiliation with the United States kept us out of school for a week. When we resumed classes, the campus swarmed with military guards - the Americans and the Saudi Red Berets - and barbed wire had been erected around the school perimeter. Anti-American sentiment rose, and, because we were American, every morning my family had to check underneath our car for bombs before we opened the doors. Because we were American, we were not free. I looked for anonymity. I longed not to be an individual, but a black figure in a crowd, indistinct, free to conform - to do exactly as everyone else did. I didn't want the freedom Americans wanted - I just wanted the freedom to feel safe, and, as an American, I was denied it.

The bomb drills at school began the next week. They replaced fire drills, and we would line up on the dirt soccer field, not knowing whether we were practicing or whether we were experiencing a real threat. We sat facing away from the school, with our legs pressed to our chests and our heads between our knees, waiting, praying for the bell that would release us. When it rang again, we walked back towards the classrooms as though nothing had happened - as though we hadn't been sinking and slipping into panic, waiting for the second bell that could be replaced in an instant by an explosion. I walked as though I hadn't had my eyes shut tightly, hadn't been pleading with every breath - I'm not American. I'm not American. Please don't let me die.

HELEN CASSIN
GROTON, MA

UNTITLED

I sadly watch the cranes turn so much familial history, so

much gritty love into rubble. Ravaged by metal arms, the house shudders collapses before my eyes. Dust gushes from the house's wounds, spreading like an aggressive cloud. This fog rises and encircles the ruins of a building in which I once slept, ate, and showered. The whole scene reeks of euthanasia. A thousand emotions course through my body. Yet, only the discernable thought penetrates my dazed mind: How will my stricken aunt take the news?

Aunt Julie lived in that sweaty, poorly constructed cottage affair for ninety-six years. She was born within its walls; hospitals were apparently a luxury in the upstate New York area at the turn of the century. Along with five brothers and sisters, she was raised in that misshapen cottage. Differing from her siblings, Aunt Julie never left her childhood home. She grew old with her husband in the tiny living room, and weathered every major conflict since the beginning of the last century on the rickety porch, alongside the mammoth evergreen. When the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Julie was working in the garden. When Hiroshima was bombed, Julie was in the kitchen preparing dinner for her husband. When Kennedy was shot, her body was glued to the sofa, and her eyes to the television. My aunt and her home endured the unfolding of so many chapters from that voluminous boo called history. However, nothing can keep pace with inexorable history. It is a story that has no end, its conclusion survives all.

My aunt will die in a different building. The building where my stricken aunt will spend her last days lacks the endearing memories that had slowly sunk into the slender wood frame of her home. The building in which she wastes away has cold polished linoleum floors and fluorescent lighting. This structure has a mass dining hall, which is a far cry from the cozy little kitchen where she consumed the majority of her life's meals. Pervading the halls is a strange odor: a mixture of resignation, defecation and whatever swill happens to be on the menu. Despite however many gallons of anti-septic are spilled aggressively into the nooks and crannies of this building, the scent just won't go away. Men and women with sallow sunken features roam the modernly furnished common areas like clumsy specters. Aunt Julie can't roam though. Half of her body was paralyzed due to a stroke. So she sits alone on her generic room, marooned on her standard issue hospital bed, and stares at whatever happens to be lashing randomly on the television. Truly, nursing homes are about as sentimental as slaughterhouses.

With a sudden start, I wrench myself away from the window through which I observe the carnage, I bound gracelessly down the stairs and ramble into the rubble. The cranes have momentarily stopped their frightening ballet. The workers are lazily milling around, chatting casually. My feet swim in broken plaster, in shattered past. I inhale the dust and feel my family's history fill my lungs. I gaze upon numerous household items that sprout from the heap of twisted timber. A mangled sink can be discerned; a mauled toilet stands defiantly. Disengaging myself from the frag-

ment, the residue of life, I meander into the street with my back turned to the pile. With an awkward twist of the neck I steal a final glance. The garbage heap, the memory mountain is actually rather small. One thought then struggles into my consciousness: I don't want her to find out, she shouldn't survive this, it's just not right.

Snapping to attention, I shrug off the sleepy nostalgia and amble toward my home. I drag the door closed and wonder how large my rubble heap will be.

DAN HALEY
BROOKLYN, NY
MS. HARRINGTON

LA VIE BOHEME

I was doing ninety in the slow lane and I didn't realize it. The thing about highways is that they're mostly straight and if you are distracted it's easy to forget where you are and what you are doing. I must have almost sideswiped a black sedan that was trying to merge off an exit ramp because that driver swerved and laid on the horn, scaring me half to death. I slammed on the brakes and pulled over onto the shoulder. I switched the car off and sat there for a minute, my hands folded in my lap, holding themselves down to keep from trembling, and stared at the center of the steering wheel. I was not tired, but I wanted to sleep. Or hibernate. I wanted to find a cave, unknown to the rest of the world, crawl into it, and bury myself in the back for a couple of days until everything blew over.

I knew why she had said it and I knew what she meant. I honestly appreciated the sentiment, but I couldn't agree with her. It was a new experience for me, disagreeing with my mother. I didn't like it. I felt as though I was ungrateful and petty, but I knew that I wasn't. It left a sick cavernous feeling in my stomach. It made me dizzy. At the same time though, at the base of my skull, was a darker emotion, less defined and less ashamed. It was hot and airy and expanding down my spine; something rebellious that seemed to grow the more I focused on it and seemed to support my dissension. I switched on the car again and pulled slowly onto the road. I had regained composure. It was a deep and self-righteous kind of calm; defiant and unfamiliar. I paid more attention to driving. The hitchhiker was walking backwards down the road, his right arm extended, his left hand deep in his pocket. His head was tilted, pointing his chin at the oncoming traffic, and he carried a guitar case across his back. I remembered every story in the morning papers from which my parents had quoted aloud about abductions and murders, and I could see my mother watching me seriously, to make sure I understood the importance of their warnings. I pulled over.

I rolled to a stop some distance in front of him. I waited for him to jog up to my car. I watched in the rearview mirror and was surprised at how easily he moved with something so unwieldy as a guitar on his back. I rolled down the passenger window, and he bent at the waist to look in. I had no idea what to say and I began to regret pulling over. I knew nothing about this guy and here I was, a girl in a car alone, driving off without telling anyone, with no destination in mind, picking up a strange man. In my agitation I let him stay there for a good forty-five seconds. He was patient. He didn't seem all that much older than I was. Looking in through the window, bent over slightly, he looked as though he was bowing; old-fashioned and for-

mal and not at all threatening. He really didn't look anything like a serial killer and I relaxed.

I think I even smiled as I asked him, "Would you like a ride?"

In hindsight, this was a very stupid thing to say, but he simply smiled back and replied, "Yes I would."

I adjusted the rearview mirror as he took off the guitar case, slid it carefully into the back and climbed in next to it. With the mirror in its new position, I couldn't see the road behind me, but I could see everything in the backseat. I began to feel as though I was in control of the situation again.

With him behind me the car smelled different. There was nothing human or personal about the smell. It was wild and blank, like the air before winter, and I wondered how long he had been outside. I glanced into the rearview mirror and, trying to disprove my inexperience I asked,

"Where to?"

"Where are you headed?"

I hadn't been going anywhere. "Nowhere in particular."

He raised his eyebrows. "Cruising for hitchhikers a sort of hobby of yours then?"

I had to smile. "I've never done anything like this before." I regretted the words as soon as they came out of my mouth. I glanced into the mirror to see if he had understood the implications of my confession. He noticed my discomfort and the corners of his mouth curved upwards slightly.

"I know," he said. I must have looked startled because he continued, "You aren't the type of person you would expect to pick up hitchhikers." He stated this simple and confidently and his face was open and frank. His voice was gentle and pleasantly strange, and I was comfortable again.

"Do you know where the nearest train or bus station is?"

I replied, "There's a fairly large train station over in Lincoln. Would you like to go there?"

"If it's no trouble."

I started the car. No trouble at all. I steered onto the road. It felt surprisingly good to have a destination again. Some place to aim for. We drove in silence for a minute or so before I asked, "So you play the guitar?" I tried to look in the mirror and keep my eye on the road at the same time.

I didn't know anyone could smile so widely. He nodded and replied happily, "I've been known to try." As he answered, he ran his fingers around one of the latches on the guitar case.

"Would you mind trying until we get to Lincoln? My radio has been broken all week." I was surprised at my own nerve, but his smile grew even wider and he opened the guitar case.

From what I could see in the mirror, the guitar was beautiful. It smelled like wood shavings and was a deep, mellow red. I've never seen a guitar that color before or since. He held it on his lap and ran his hands over the sides, loving and protecting, before beginning to play. As he bent over his instrument, the road curved slightly and the last of the late afternoon sun came in through the back window, striking him full in the back of his head. His hair was gold and clean and he wore it like a helmet; smooth and bright. I focused on the road as he started to play. I noticed that he didn't have to tune the guitar at all. I wondered when he'd played it last. He settled down into a simple pattern of rhythmic chords and he hummed the tune for the first couple of bars before he began to sing.

And his voice made sense. It was round and clear like a wood-

en flute and it filled the car naturally and unassumingly. The melody was basic and sweet and I wish I could remember the words because it was the kind of song that you want to remember and sing to yourself. It was very beautiful in an old-fashioned way and when the song was done he kept playing, low and soft, as though it hadn't occurred to him to stop.

I waited a few minutes and said, "That was great."

"Thank you. I'm glad you liked it."

"How long have you been playing?"

He twisted his mouth to the side and the guitar hummed thoughtfully. "A long time. Fifteen years, I think. Always seems longer than that though."

"I know what you mean. When you play long enough it seems as though you never really started. You just always have."

He tilted his head and the guitar jumped up a key. He said, "Exactly. What do you play?"

"My mother signed me up for cello lessons when I was six."

"The cello. You still play it."

"Religiously. I don't go to church. I play on Sundays."

His face fell into his expansive smile and he nodded as he laughed. "I know what you mean." He seemed to realize that he had been playing the guitar and drew a theme out of his improvisations.

It was lazy, bright and companionable and I smiled as I asked, "Do you play professionally?"

He found that funny. "I guess you could say that I do. Guitar is as much of a profession as I have right now."

"So you're a musician?"

"Of sorts. I travel too much to make an honest go at becoming legitimate, I guess, but that about as much describes me as anything else."

He strummed contentedly and after a while I asked, "Have you been traveling long?"

"About three years."

"Have you come far?"

"I spent some time in Mexico. Other than that I've just been tripping around the country."

He switched songs on the guitar. I recognized this one. A friend of my father's used to sing it and play the ukulele. It was about some place warm and foreign. The melody came pouring back, humid and sweet. My parents had taught me the words when I was very young. My hitchhiker played more slowly and richly than my father's friend. The music sounded lonely and intelligent. I wondered how far from home he was and almost as soon as it occurred to me to wonder I decided that I wouldn't ask.

I tried to shake off the languor thrust on me by the song. "You're a regular gypsy then."

He smiled gently. "A bohemian bard." The song ended and trailed off into thoughtful extemporizing.

The melody still hung around my rib cage and I tried to push it further away. "Where does the term 'bohemian' come from? Do you know?"

His smile grew and the music picked up a little. "Ah, yes. Bohemian. Let's see if I can remember this correctly. There was a kingdom called Bohemia, somewhere in Eastern Europe and before it was conquered and forgotten, it was quite a lovely and prosperous corner of the world. Now, the King of Bohemia was a benevolent old monarch, loved by his subjects and friend to his neighbors.

He had a daughter and she was his world.

"One day, the princess was out beyond the castle walls and she heard a strange melody. Walking a ways, she came upon a young shepherd playing a flute beside his flock. She stood and listened to him and the more she heard of the shepherd's song, the more deeply in love with him she fell. When the shepherd was through, he turned to find himself looking at a young girl of exceptional beauty, intelligence and sincerity and he fell very deeply in love with her, and you can't really blame him. "One night, the princess approached her father and told him, in no uncertain terms, that she was going to marry the shepherd. Her father forbid it and shouted and cried and begged her to reconsider. She smiled, kissed the king on his nose and waltzed out of the castle down to the shepherd's hut where she set up housekeeping and lived out her days in perfect bliss with her husband and his flock. Word of the strange princess from the Kingdom of Bohemia got around, and bohemian became an adjective to describe wonderfully uncommon people."

"Is that true?"

"Does it have to be?"

I smiled. "No it doesn't. Where did you hear that?"

"Would you believe me if I told you that I made it up?"

"I think I would."

He smiled very broadly. "Good for you. It is a beautiful thing to have faith in another's honesty."

I laughed. "Love, truth, and beauty. Were you always so bohemian?"

"Yes, I believe I was, though I never would have guessed I'd jump right out of Harvard Hall to go rolling across the world."

I froze. "Harvard?"

"Who would have guessed right? Yeah, Harvard."

My head buzzed uncomfortably and the shock from the coincidence stuck in the back of my throat. It was hard to speak, but I had to know more. "Why were you there?"

"Pre-law. My father is a senator. It didn't take me two longer than two years to figure out that it wasn't for me. I never wanted to be a politician. I just realized that a little later than I should have. At least I realized it before it was too late and set off running. My father is, of course, heartily displeased, and I'm sure my mother wrings her hands every time they get a postcard from me," he concluded bitterly.

"Is it worth it?" I whispered, barely audible.

He stopped playing. For the first time since he had begun there was no sound. When he replied his voice was almost as low as mine was.

"Yes. It is."

Silence stretched out interminably and I looked at him in the rearview mirror. He was sitting very straight and looking at me seriously. I got a small shock when our eyes met, for his were improbably dark and green and deep with experience. If he had left college three years ago he couldn't be older than twenty-four, but the solemnity of his expression was much older and held wisdom free from regret. He understood. He held my gaze calmly and waited, giving me space and opportunity.

And so I started talking. I told him everything. I told him about my parents, how they owned a bookstore, how they worked as hard as two people could work every day of their lives, how they were honest and how they loved me. How I loved them and respected them. I told him about colleges. I told him about a stack of acceptance let-

ters, how proud my parents had been and how happy I had been to please them. How I had taken one of the letters and placed it in the center of my desk. How I had looked at it and cried. The letter was from Julliard. I had been accepted.

Harvard accepted me too. The night I sat in front of my desk and cried, was the night my mother had come up into my room with the rest of my letters. She saw the letter sitting on my desk and she must have seen how much I wanted it in my eyes when I looked at her because the first thing she said to me was:

"Oh, honey. I know how you feel, but let's talk about this. Please."

And she had talked and I had listened when she told me about life and dreams and how they seldom meet. She told me that I was smart. This I knew. She told me that, if I applied myself, I could be successful at anything I chose. This I also knew. I didn't care and I tried to tell her that, but she held up her hand and said, "Please let me finish."

She spread the letters out on my bed and held up the one from Harvard. She told me that this was within my reach and that it would guarantee my success and my stability. She told me that, while I was very good at the cello, who could say that I was good enough to make a living at it? What would I end up with when I got out of Julliard if I wasn't? A minimum wage job and student loans coming out my ears. She told me to put the cello aside. I could always come back to it and it would always be there.

I told her that I was willing to take the risk. I told her that's how important it was to me, and she told me that it is hard to be happy when you are living hand-to-mouth with no relief in sight. I cried, and she cried and we both shouted and she left my room. I played the cello until I was calm and then I slept.

I told my hitchhiker all of this while staring at the road in front of me. When I looked back he had not moved, but was sitting straight up and his eyes were serious and compassionate. So I kept talking.

I told him about my cello, about the nick in the wood on the bottom from where I had let it slip out of my hands when I was trying to play without sitting down. I told him how it sounded. I told him how it smelled. I talked about a lesson I had gotten in social studies class in fifth grade about the role that individuals had to play if a society was to be successful. I had wanted to be the storyteller: the historian, the keeper of knowledge and emotion, the musician. I told him about the way the skin on my fingertips trembles and sings independent of the rest of me when I play, the way the bow slides across the strings and the way the body of the cello feels between my knees. I told him that I can hold music in the palms of my hands and it sits there and itches to be played. I poured it out to him, unaware of how I sounded. It was better than crying.

And when I was done, I looked in the mirror again. I met his eyes, quiet and infinitely understanding.

He said, "Yes. I know."

I breathed deeply and sighed. I was tired now. "You tell me that it is worth it."

He said, "Yes. It is."

"I know."

I took the exit that led to the Lincoln station. The air was still and calm. I looked in the mirror again and my hitchhiker was looking out the window thoughtfully.

I began, "I'm sorry. You didn't need to hear all of that." I wasn't really sorry and he could tell. As I spoke, I watched the corners of

his mouth curve upward again. When I had finished, he said nothing, but smiled and began to play his guitar. I drove more slowly than the speed limit in order to watch him in the mirror for a while. His hands were strong and slender at once. The joints were prominent, but proportionate, and the fingers were long and perfect. They were the hands of a surgeon, a sculptor and a poet. He had hands befitting a son of Bohemia and under his hands the red guitar gave a rounded melody, the notes played one by one. There were no words to the song and I doubt if it had ever been played before. It was complete, like a conversation that begins with hello and ends with goodbye, and it was true, like any other story that was ever told and loved.

He ended the song as I pulled up in front of the train station and carefully put the guitar back into its case. I watched in the rearview mirror as he slid the case out of my car and swung it over his shoulder and onto his back. He closed his door and rolled down my window. He walked around the car until he was standing by me. He bent slightly at the waist in order to look into my face. The position was familiar and comforting and I smiled at him.

"Thank you for playing for me. I'm sorry if I was a bore."

He smiled and I marveled again that anyone could smile so widely and mean it so much. "I don't believe you could be boring if you tried. Thank you for the ride."

"Good luck."

"Goodbye."

He winked and straightened, still smiling, and walked away. He moved very naturally for someone carrying a guitar on his back. I realized, as he left, that I didn't know his name and he didn't know mine. I watched him until he was swallowed by a crowd on the first platform. After I lost sight of him, I reached up, readjusted the rearview mirror and turned the key in the ignition. The car still smelled a little like my hitchhiker and his guitar. I smiled. It was worth it now I was sure. I pulled out of the parking lot and headed for home.

EMMA PERRY
NEWFIELDS, NH
PINGREE SCHOOL
AILSA STEINART

TASTING JAWBREAKERS

candy headquarters after the game
we galloped in, win or lose
you headed straight for the jawbreakers
reached your little hungry hand
clutched on in your first with a death grip
that lump of sugar and sweetness and all the goodies
of life
as for me, I swiped up a bag of hersheys
or gummies or something I made believe was just as good
jawbreakers were denied to me
all that sugar rots your teeth
but, oh, how I longed to taste the stuff
lick away the white speckled coating and go through
each and every color, down to the gumball center
we slammed our nickels on the counter

from blue on, based upon I need a little beauty, even though it
but you unexpectedly caught my hand
and grinned foolishly, your mouth coated in the white jawbreaker
slime
then you kissed me...
I could taste the jawbreaker on your lips
all the sugary goodness I had always wanted
and life never tasted so sweet

JENNA NISSAN
WHITMAN HIGH SCHOOL

GIGGLES

Marshmallows bounce to their
Doomed hot cocoa fate
Only because it tickles
Their waxy bubbly ears
The heat eventually devours them
And they turn to
Mangled clay
Let's call it modern art
Their bodies are torn like the dress
Of a rape victim
But we're all victims
Kicking and slapping babies
Into our brave new world

AISLYN O'NEILL
NAHANT, MA
ARLINGTON SCHOOL
MRS. MILLER

THE 3 TO 10 SHIFT

The shifts at CVS are long.
I mean long.
I don't measure time in daylight because I never see it anymore.
I suppose the sun still rises and falls, but I can't be sure.

My clock is the little green line on the bottom of receipts
That only runs in military time.
My seasons change in the promo bins
As face paint and bite-size Snickers
Give way to gift-boxed perfume bottles and Russ turkeys.

On Tuesdays we 'do truck.'
For me that means unloading trays in Aisle 4
Which carries vitamins and every gastro-intestinal product known
to man.
We're selling more Tylenol Sinus now
And school supplies are 76% off.

I notice the fruit-patterned dishes are citronella candles are gone.
I felt sorry for those last ones
Costing less than a quarter
While from behind the counter it becomes clear



KATHERINE CAREY
NORWALK, CT

There are some summer leftovers no one will buy.

I put away power bars and boxes of Depends
For so many hours that I become disjointed.
And it's like God's voice coming down from the overhead:
"Help to the front to ring, please."
I'm up like a shot. I race to the registers
And scan those tampons with a vengeance.

The year is different for everybody.

ELIZABETH DERBY
RUMSON, NJ
KAREN HAEFELEIN

KING OF THE HIGHWAY

Joe. A truck driver. Beer belly, white shirt, work boots laced
halfway up and a red mesh baseball cap perched on top of his head.
Just add a few burps and a chuckle and he is living the American
dream. Then why does he feel like the Mexican jumping bean that
he bought for his five-year-old son when it was still in plastic-wrap?
Sitting up there, king of the highway in his golden yellow Shop Rite
truck, the Hawaiian hula girl bobbing her head and shaking her hips
at every turn. He could bust through any traffic with the horn he had
on that thing. So why not? He thinks Why the hell not? Leave that
split level roach pad with a tobacco stained rug and peeling beige
paint. Leave his smoker wife lying in curlers on the avocado couch
all day smoking a cigarette and drinking a Quality First Light Beer he
gets for half price at Shop Rite. Don't get off at exit 42b. He thinks.
Keep going. Keep going. Leave the dead landscape, the endless
and lonely highway with the occasional whirr of another car that had
the bad luck of getting lost on I47 South on its way to paradise. Just
drive, all the way to the bottom of Kentucky, slide through
Tennessee, swim through humid Mississippi to the bottom of
Arkansas. Drive along the coast for a few weeks, take it slow until the
cut across Texas into Mexi-what was that? Joe's thoughts were
interrupted. Without even noticing he had whizzed by a strange form
by the side of the road, the most interesting object on I47 South
since the exit for a McDonald's. And he had missed it. He waited all

day for those types of things, funky debris left behind by cars, sometimes worth the scavenge, other times just a joke to look at. He glanced in his side mirror. What he saw was no discarded mattress that flew off the top of a car, not a Mercedes hubcap waiting for some lucky person to find, it was a human. Walking alone on the side of deserted I47 South? He slowed down. A woman for that matter. Walking in a navy suit like the kind flight attendants in movies wear. With dark stockings and high heeled shoes. Joe came to a complete stop. Pulling a rolling suitcase behind her and bright red lipstick, and mascara stains all down her face. Joe suddenly wanted to rev up the engine and speed off even faster than he had come through. Black mascara stains could mean one thing, and only one thing. Wet eyes. And he could think of one way to get wet eyes on a sunny evening. Crying. To pick up a hitchhiker Joe was no stranger. To give someone a lift on their 'just can't get any worse bad day' was his specialty. But a crying lady? Put him in a tux at the National Art Gala at the White House and he would feel more comfortable. It was late though. She had started running towards his golden truck as soon as he started to slow down, and she was already approaching its rear. Joe fumbled to grab the empty coffee cup, Munchkin's box and four day old newspaper from off the passenger seat and shoved it in the back. A few greasy crumbs remained, but he wasn't about to bother for some wining lady. He quickly whipped out his highway map, and was immediately "engrossed." Thirty seconds later she was tapping on the window, perched on the step up and clinging for dear life onto the side mirror. "Let me in!" she was piping frantically. "Quick! Quick!" Joe slowly looked up from his map, as if indifferent, but really dreading the turmoil he knew was to come. Her knuckles were white. He hit unlock and went back to his map.

Three minutes later the two were speeding down I47 South in an awkward silence interrupted only by her sporadic sniffles. Joe pretended to be squinting forward, as if scanning the horizon for some distant object. Ten minutes passed and nothing showed on the horizon to make his search fruitful. What on earth am I doing on this cement strip of a highway with a weeping woman who I absolutely cannot and will not deal with? "So, you were out on a long walk I see...?" No answer. "You come by these parts often?" Joe was desperate. "...Nice day, and those grasses on the side of the road, they sure are nice. Green. Sometimes, but not-"

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo. No no no no NO!" The lady was wailing. "I don't like walks. I don't like highways." Her speech was choppy as if she were having trouble finding a word repulsive enough. "Not even freshly paved highways with no god-damned traffic. I don't like nice days. I don't like GRASS." Her voice was strained in mocking. "And most of all I don't like YOU!"

"Well..."

"I DON'T LIKE TALKING EITHER." She had her leg all bent up and twisted so she could bang on the dashboard with her foot. BANG. BANG. Bangbangbangbang. And then scratching, the paint was coming right off. Joe gripped the wheel with his clammy palms. Why did I pick her up? Why did I pick her up? He kept saying over and over in his head.

Then the banging stopped. And the sobbing kicked in full force. "I don't know I don't know," she gasped. "I just thought he was a nice man, he had good manners, a nice car. I had never been in a

car like that. Leather seats. Real leather seats, not just the vinyl look a like. And when he asked to take me out to dinner I thought it was a dream come true. He took me to this little place-I don't know what kind of food, but it was expensive so I thought he cared. We talked all night. He told me he liked all the same things I liked; we were perfect for each other, our fates plotted in the stars or something like that. You know what it's like...to be loved. He made me feel like I needed him. Days he didn't leave me a note or flowers by my door I couldn't get to sleep, I always worried he was off with someone else. And then when I thought it was about to end he came on full force like, you know, the prince on the white horse with the armor and stuff? He told me we were in love. I was living like in a dream, but not just any dream, one of those fairytale dreams that little girls have. He bought me necklaces and dresses, and one of those lingerie sets, you know, like the ones the pretty girls wear in the movies? And then he asked me to come to Tijuana with him. I didn't know where that was, but I said yes- of course. He said there are palm trees there, it was gorgeous like me, and it never rained. He said as soon as he finished up some business and we got settled there we could get married, with a white cake and everything. He said we had to leave in two days, and I begged him for a bit more time-I had to say goodbye to friends, quit my job, pack and settle with my landlord. But he was so strict, so-what's that word? -adamant. He told me not to be a silly baby, to grow up and come with him on an adventure. So I did! How could I have known? Ohhhhhhhhh. Oh oh oh ohhhhhhhhhhhhh," the tears had subsided into passionate hand gestures while she had been telling the story, but at these last few lines they gave way to rivers of tears.

"Aw no, no, now don't you cry lady. Here," Joe rummaged around for some extra Sabarro napkins he had stashed under his seat. Never in his life would he have guessed he'd have to use them for this. "Lady I'm sure it's not at all bad, and you've just gone and worked-" he handed her the crumpled napkins. She read the logo on them and her face lit up for a moment.

"You like pizza too!?" her face quickly clouded over again when she remembered what she had needed the napkin for. "Not bad? Not bad?" she wailed. "He got me in the car to go to the airport, but first he said we had to make a detour. 'Well where on earth do we have to take a detour to?' I asked him but he said nothing. I kept on asking him and he told me to shut up. Can you believe that? After all those times he treated me so nice, and now he's telling me to 'shut up'? Then the car pulls over and we sit waiting for forty-five minutes on the side of the highway. 'What are we waiting for? Aren't we going to miss our flight? Come on let's keep driving.' And then this black van pulls up and he gets out of the car and takes some black duffle bag out of the trunk and goes bringing it to the van. I poke my head out and say, 'What's all this commotion, Some sort of surprise?' He tells me to shut up and gives the bag to some guy who's in the van and then he takes this whole wad of bills. And then the two of them start arguing and before I know it my man is holding a gun! A gun! Can you believe it? I get right out of that car and ask them 'What is going on?!?' And then the man in the van who is wearing some ski goggles starts yelling crass things at me, and my man just starts laughing. He tells me to get in that van and other stuff I wouldn't dare repeat. I said 'Forget them palm trees! I'm out,' and I grabbed my suitcase and ran across the road. My man kept yelling things after me, like that he would come and get me and

all and to stop being a sissy. I hid there until they drove off. And now I'm just-I don't know what I'm doing I just-can you please drop me at the next exit? I know I said some terrible things to you, but I couldn't help it. I just want to spend the night at some motel, no five star than you very much; I have had my full share of 'fine dining.' I just got to get home to all those people. I mean I thought he was the one who cared, and went and left everything for him. Now he falls through and I-I..."

"Lady that's a mighty story, and I'm sorry about-about all those things that happened to you, and don't you worry, we'll get you all settled tonight in one of them motels, I know one of them's up here in a few miles, exit 48, see, and we're on exit 45 now, and you'll be back home in no time." Joe reached over and attempted an awkward pat on the lady's shoulder. As he did he realized that he had plowed right by his exit 42b without even a second's thought.

"Oh Thank you! Thank you!" she sobbed, blowing her nose into her napkin making a noise even louder than the Shop Rite truck's horn could make.

It was dark by the time Joe pulled his truck out of the Happy Times Motel where he had dropped the lady, still frazzled but in much better condition than when he had picked her up. He turned left, and headed smoothly onto the rotary to get back onto I47 South. But he just couldn't turn onto the entrance ramp. He rolled around the rotary three times...ten times. What was wrong? He was ready to go to Mexico himself, start a new life in the sun; he just couldn't get onto the highway. It was just a little nervousness, he told himself, and he was tired. He could do it; he just needed a little coffee or a beer. But before he knew it he was speeding down the ramp onto I47 North. Because he had a family. And he loved them. And he wanted to put his arms around his son and feel his small heart beating against his belly. And he was on the highway. And he was speeding towards home. And the Hawaiian hula girl was nodding and shaking her hips yes yes yes. And he had never felt so sure in his life.

LINDSAY THOMAS

NEW YORK, NY

MS. MARAVENE TAYLOR

I NEVER WANTED TO HURT THEM

I am an oddball, a freak, a weirdo. I am loud and outspoken. I always speak the truth, unless it will hurt someone too much. I am popular, but not "popular." I want to dye the front two strands of my hair orange. I wear all black-that is, when my mom doesn't stop me from leaving the house that way. I have four bracelets on my left arm. I don't care what people think.

I also cut. No, I don't cut class. I don't cut corners, even though I'd like to. I cut myself. I use blades, knives, pins, my fingernails, pretty much anything that is sharp. Along with the bracelets on my wrist, I have scars. But see, the thing is, I don't want to die. That's something most people don't understand. I mean, you go and tell someone that you take a blade to yourself, and they get all upset and send you to counselors so you can be on suicide watch. I'm not suicidal.

The thing about counselors is that for many of them, all they know is what they've learned out of books. Sure, my psychologist

has a PhD, and a wall full of diplomas. It's a wonder she's still in her thirties with all the time she spent in school. I know she cares. Psychologists don't go through all that time in class if they don't want to hear about people's problems, and the ones that don't care usually end up in therapy themselves.

But my psychologist has never cut herself. She doesn't understand what I'm talking to her about. I try to explain myself, and I'm sure other people have, too, but she doesn't know. She doesn't know what it's like to want to take a knife to herself. She doesn't know how much better it makes me feel. She doesn't know the thrill I get in seeing my own blood. Worst of all, she doesn't know the addiction I face.

I'm really not crazy. I don't need to be sent to a mental hospital. That's something I have trouble convincing people to believe. Other people express their pain in self-destructive ways. The kids who go out and get drunk to make themselves feel better don't get looked at the way I do. It is almost like it doesn't matter that other teenagers get high to forget their problems, like it's okay for those kids to come close to dying every night, to go within an inch of consuming alcohol to pass out and never wake up again. It even seems to be overlooked when those kids drive drunk, and deal drugs. They've hurt other people that never had anything to do with their problems. The police don't catch them, their parents are oblivious, and that's okay. So why am I the only one in therapy? I'm not sure I'll ever be able to figure that one out.

Cutting is an exchange of pain. When someone gets cut, it's painful. Cuts burn. If someone is bleeding, she isn't very likely to be thinking about much else besides the physical pain. So, regardless of whether or not a cut is self-inflicted, it distracts the person from her other problems. All she is worried about is the gash in her skin and how much it hurts. She can't think about the fight with her parents. The bad grades in school don't matter. The relationship that is falling apart doesn't faze her. All she can think about is physical pain. It's a great solution for people who don't like to cry a lot, huh? Even better for a girl who doesn't want to risk hurting other people to make herself feel better, right?

I used to think so. Slashing myself seemed a good way to deal with my pain and not cause any for anyone else. What I never liked about people who drank and drove or dealt drugs is that they hurt other people too. Other people that shouldn't have to pay for the life worries of others. It never seemed fair to me that someone who had nothing to do with a problem had to share its pain.

So, cutting was my outlet. It made me feel better, I could forget about my problems, and I even managed to smile for most of the day. It worked for three years. Everything was fine. That is until someone noticed the cuts on my arm. You'd think someone would have figured it out before Julie did. It doesn't take someone ridiculously observant to see through artificial happiness.

And it didn't take much time for the thing I wanted to avoid most to happen: hurting myself started hurting other people too. As more and more people found out, it just got worse. I hated seeing Ryan look at me like he was going to burst into tears all the time. Watching Amy struggle with seeing me go through the same problems she had was too much. I was causing all her troubles to resurface. Matt glanced at me from across the classroom, trying to make smile. This time, it didn't work. I didn't want this to happen. Now other people were hurting for something they didn't do.

I didn't have knives anymore. I threw out my exacto-knife and



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my camping knife is buried in the closet. My nails are cut short, and my parents check my arms every morning. I caught both of them standing over one of the kitchen drawers the other day. There's no one who can tell me they weren't counting the kitchen knives and forks. I don't know what they think they're protecting me from. The furniture has sharp edges; so do pencils, so do safety pins, and so does any other knife I can go out and buy.

But it's not for my parents that I want to stop. What makes me want to stop is the way my friends look at me. I can see how sad they are. The pain reflects in their eyes. They suffer because I suffer.

Addictions are bad. I know because I have one. I still can't see something sharp without wondering what kind of cut it would make on my arm. It takes every bit of willpower I have to not try it out. Whenever I have a fight at home and am about to leave the house to buy another knife, I remember Ryan's tears. My seemingly perfect solution has lost its sparkle. All I wanted was to ease my pain. I never wanted to cause pain for anyone else.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION

It is one of those magnificently still winter mornings to which Virginians are so accustomed. There is no particular electricity in the air, nor is there a rustling of leaves, nor is there the usual buzz that accompanies mornings of the other seasons. It is too early for nature's little noises. So with the birds nestling in their nests, and the squirrels fast asleep in their holes, I begin to dress myself amidst a far-reaching and all-engulfing is still silence.

All night there had been the soft but relentless pit-pat pit-pat of the year's first snowflakes against my windowsill. I lay awake in bed counting the pits and pats, waiting for the knock on my door. Rap-tap-tap, and my door swung open. Charles who is five years my

senior, stands in the doorway fattened by five layers of clothing topped by his winter coat and scarf. "Pss, Walker wake up, it just stopped snowing," He says in a whisper with nervous excitement.

"Happy snowings," I whisper.

"Happy snowings," he replies.

His twelve-year-old face is lit up by the child-like hopefulness of what a new day could bring. He helps me out of bed and fetches me my sweater and jacket. He turns to go downstairs, making sure to hop the third and seventh stairs because those creaked the loudest, and mom is a very light sleeper.

It is 5:08 am when I arrive downstairs to the clinks and klanks of frying pans and silverware. Charles is the older

brother and I am the younger brother, I wonder if I will know how to make sunny-side-up eggs when I am twelve. We eat our eggs.

It is 5:30 am when we prepare to embark on our annual "first snow fall's trail." A tradition that started three years ago when I lost General Flag, the leader of my G.I. Joe fifth squadron, somewhere in the snow near the "man made" pond. And every year since then, Charles and I have gone on a manhunt at first snowfall. Charles opens the front door, and it is much colder than we expected. The ground is hidden beneath some twenty inches of snow. Charles's first step creates a thunderous "CRUNCH" as he breaks the iced over snow. Crunch, crunch, crunch, I follow him down the driveway trying to step only in the footprints that he has made. "This is it; this is the year, right, Charles?"

"This is it, Walker." As we reach the end of the driveway, the path to the man-made pond is now in sight; over the hill, towards the big city, through the woods, and to the right of an eventual "tall tree." An infinite sea of still, white, moonlit snow separates us from the hill. "The flickering light behind the woods is the city," Charles says to me. The light from the city glides through the forest, ducking under branches and over bushes, dodging trees and shrubs, and lands of this sea of snow, which we prepare to cross. The lights from the city and the street poles shine on the surface of the sea of snow creating a glow that lights our path. This glow will have to suffice until 7:00 am when the sun will rise. Crunch, crunch. We have found the base of the hill, by the time the stars begin to fade.

At about 7:30 am, Charles and I find ourselves standing next to the man-made pond staring at the rising sun. "Wow, Charles we did it..."

"Yes, we sure did," Charles says as he picks up General Flag. The same that had evaded us for two years, sat waiting, in the only patch of grass visible under all the snow.

"Think fast!" Charles says, as he throws me the action figurine. "I'm exhausted, let's go back, okay?"

"Okay," I say, as I turn and drop General Flag back where we found him. "What the heck was that for?"

"So that we have a reason to come next year," I say as we start walking back.

"But next year will be different... I'll be at boarding school, remember?" Charles says to me, "But you know what? Moe is almost big enough now, maybe you can take him on the first snowfall's trail next year." Moe is or five-year-old cousin. I think he really looks up to me. "All right Charles, but you will have to show me how to make sunny-side-up eggs," I say as we turn past the big tree, bringing the sea of still, white snow back into sight.

It took Moe and me two or three years to finally make a first snowfall's trail, but when we did nothing seemed to have changed. From the pits and pats on the windowsills to the big tree, everything was just the way I remembered it-just the way I thought it was supposed to be. The world was a lot bigger and slower back then. The sea of snow still seemed infinite, and the light of the city still found its way through the forest, glided across the snow, and landed just before our feet. I waited in bed a little, for Charles's knock. Then I remembered, almost humorously, that Charles was away, at boarding school, a military boarding school. I had awoken three years in the past, and so it took a little effort to get myself back in the present. I looked over to my right, and there was Moe, sleeping in the bed next to mine. I remembered summer nights when I was younger and I would always wake up in the middle of the night because it was too hot, and Charles would be right here-where I am sleeping-and I would be right there - where Moe was. And then I would laugh because Charles never seemed to close anything before he went to bed. His body would be sprawled across the bed, and his mouth wide open drooling on his pillow, and his eyes are still open, staring off into the snowless, hot night. Then I would roll out of bed, and open a window, and Charles would wake up without moving a muscle and say, "hey, you over there, what do you think you are doing?" Then he would roll back to sleep. But that was years ago, before Moe was old enough, and before Charles was too old. I imagined him out there in the first snowfall, with his rifle and uniform doing drills and other things that military people do. I imagined him telling his friends about us-when we were younger-and General Flag, and our search and rescue missions. I wondered what Charles was thinking about at that exact moment... and then I remembered Moe, and I looked over at him and he was still sleeping. "Moe, Moe! MOE!"

"Urgh, what is it?"

"It just stopped snowing. Happy Snowings," I whisper.

"Happy snowings he replies.

Except this time I had to wake Moe up, and I made the fried eggs, and I led the way in the large "crunches."

Moe and I had hit the lucky streak. We made it out to first snowfall's trail each of the next two years, and each year we found the general, but each year we left him knowing that we would be back again. But then it was September 1999, and I was a prep; and the news that I was a prep jumped upon me just as quickly as that. Now, I too was at boarding school, and Moe was left alone, because he had always been the youngest of us-and there, also, I had left General Flag. But none of this hit me in September '99. My parents rented a van and drove eight hours from Virginia to New Hampshire, and the general never once crossed my mind. I climbed the four flights of Peabody Hall's narrow staircase for the first time, counting the steps, making each step be one thing I left in Virginia: a television, Grandma, home cooking, Raphael-my turtle that would later run away-but the general never crossed my mind. Sometimes when something is so regular and sure we don't think about it, or if something is so reliable and constant we just assume it's there and that it will always be there, and so we don't have to think about it. And it was there, just as the general had been there for all those Septembers. All year round the general would hold his post, and then in late November or early December quite unannounced, the pits and pats would begin and Charles would nudge me, or in the

later years I would nudge Moe, and then we would go.

But as I said, I was at boarding school now, and none of this had hit me in September. And I didn't like New Hampshire because it got too cold too quickly. And it was still early October when I began to hear the pits and pats, except they were wrong too. They were more like puts and pots, and they woke me up, and I looked over and there was Robert Baldi, my roommate. And then I wanted to cry, because nothing was the way I remembered it, nothing was the way it was supposed to be. There was no clanking of pots and pans downstairs, there were no eggs, and it wasn't Charles and it wasn't Moe, it was Robert Baldi who came from Chicago, and said the word "Chicago" funny, and knew nothing about the general.

It was long and dark fall term. And the world was smaller and the world was faster at thirteen in Exeter, than it was at seven and at ten in Virginia. In Virginia the snow was infinite and we could travel forever-and we did-and we could travel one crunch at a time-and we did-by the light of the flickering big city. In Exeter I never made it past the gym, and in Exeter I never had time to walk one step at a time.

Maybe I should have called home, and told Moe to go. I should have said, "go check on the general, make sure that he is safe." But I didn't because that would change things. You can't just call someone up on the phone and say "go." That's not how first snowfall's trail worked, you had to be there in person, waiting, waiting, waiting, for just the right moment when the pits and pats paused for a second, then you could turn and say "go." But not on the phone, that simply would not be right. And I should have called home and told Moe that he didn't have to make sunny-side-up eggs the way I did, because I didn't make them the way that Charles did. Moe likes his eggs scrambled, and I should have showed him how to scramble eggs. But I couldn't just pick up the phone and say, "Moe, make your own eggs." And the fall term was long and cold.

And I went home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, but it didn't snow. And so I came back to Exeter, and it was winter term. I found out how to use the Shaw's bus, and I went to the movies, and then Baldi and I went out for Chinese food. Baldi still said "Chicago" funny, but it was growing on me, and he told me I said "Virginia" funny, and I thought he might be right. We began to talk late at night when we couldn't fall asleep, and I told him about Charles and General Flag. He is an only child, so he didn't understand what I meant when I said that boarding school had stolen Charles, and it was stealing me from Moe, but he listened anyway, and I was grateful. Baldi missed home a lot that winter term. He told me about Prentice and Jimmy, and his friends, and how they had their own traditions, and he seemed to be missing out. Winter Thaw came early in the term, and I went home for the long weekend.

When I arrived home, it had already snowed. But it had snowed a few weeks before I arrived, so the snow had already started to melt. I knew that there would be no pits and pats because the ground was already white, so for the first time I set my alarm clock for six. But as hard as I tried I couldn't make those beep-beep-beeps sound like pits and pats, so I stopped trying, and I turned and woke up Moe. I showed him how to make scrambled eggs.

When we left the house things had changed. The big city was still there with its flickering lights, but there was little snow on the ground and little light at our feet. The big tree was still there, but it seemed as if it had moved because some other trees had been cut down. So off we went, trying to find first snowfall's trail. And we couldn't. And we tried again the next day. And just couldn't. And now the first day back from every break at Exeter, snow or no snow, and with or without Moe, I would make the trail. And each time I would roll out of bed I would remember a little less than I did the time before.

Now I am seventeen and a senior, and the General has been out there for years. Charles has graduated from college and is a full fledged adult--he owns a brief case and wakes up every morning to knot his tie in a full Windsor and drive into D.C. to work. Moe

is a sophomore back home, and he has turned out to be quite the football star; he wants to play at Virginia Tech after high school. And right now I am here, at Exeter, stuck somewhere between the late night of Monday, February 17, and the early morning of Tuesday, February 18, 2003, and it is snowing heavily outside. This could be the most snow that I have ever seen, and there is a rumor that school will be canceled tomorrow, but most of us know better. My alarm is set for five-thirty, and whether we have school or not, I am going to wake up Baldi and Austin and Marvin and Deven, and we are all going to take something of great value, and we are going to hike out over those fields of snow, and through the Exeter woods, and we'll hike past these four years of tears and cuts and laughs and smiles--these four years of late night Monopoly and early morning dorm wrestling, four years of Peabody Hall and narrow stair cases, four years of love and hate and girls and teachers, and four years of the General sitting, and waiting, and yet unattained; and four years of openly wishing but secretly dreading the moment that is now so close to us--the moment when we'll walk and everyone will cheer and then, just as quickly as prep year came upon us, we will begin to look back over these last four years and think such things as "I wish I had told those four boys how much I love them and how much they mean to me while they were still close." But for now, the five of us will hike past all these things, and we'll pick the only visible patch of grass beneath all the snow, and lay down whatever we have brought.

WALKER P. L. BRUMSKINE, III
EXETER, NH
MR. KNOWLES

THE WRITERS' INSTITUTE

Susquehanna University's **Writers' Institute** provides students with the opportunity to receive nationally-recognized undergraduate training in all forms of creative writing through its **Writing Major**. Students work closely with widely-published authors in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, screenwriting, and web-based writing. Small workshops and one-on-one instruction are central to the Writing Major, which is enriched by the following programs:

The Visiting Writers Series: Eight writers visit campus each year. Recent visitors have been Tobias Wolff, Andre Dubus III, Sharon Olds, Li-Young Lee, Richard Bausch, Billy Collins, Ha Jin, Robert

Boswell, Jayne Anne Phillips, Eavan Boland, and Ana Castillo.

The Susquehanna Review, Essay, and RiverCraft: Three distinct magazines are edited and produced by students--a national undergraduate magazine featuring work from across the country, a non-fiction magazine, and a traditional magazine of fiction and poetry from Susquehanna student writers. Endowed awards are made each year for the best writing in each magazine.

The Student Reading and Chapbook Series: At least six student readings are offered each year. Senior majors write, edit, and produce chapbooks that showcase their best work.

Internships: Susquehanna's Writing Majors have had recent internships with national magazines, advertising agencies, professional writing organizations, radio stations, nonprofit foundations, businesses, newspapers, and public relations firms.

Graduate Programs: Within the past four years, Writing Majors have been accepted (in nearly all cases with fellowships) to such outstanding graduate writing programs as Iowa, Columbia, Temple, Ohio State, Pittsburgh, Arizona, Mills, Massachusetts, Boston University, George Mason, and UNC-Greensboro.

In addition, the **Writers' Institute** sponsors **Writing-in-Action Day**, which brings 200 high school seniors to campus for workshops in all genres of writing. Each summer, the Institute offers a one-week **Advanced Writers Workshops for High School Students**. Students live on campus and concentrate on fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction, working with published writers.

The writing faculty have published twenty-two books of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, many of which have been used in classrooms throughout the United States. They have won National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowships, Pushcart Prizes, book publication prizes, and magazine prizes. They regularly publish their work in such widely-known periodicals as Harper's, Newsday, DoubleTake, The Paris Review, American Scholar, The Georgia Review, and Poetry. Their work has been syndicated in newspapers throughout the United States and heard on National Public Radio.

If you would like to know more about any of the programs for high school students or receive information about the Writing Major, see our web site at www.susqu.edu/writers or contact Dr. Gary Fincke, Director by e-mail at gfincke@susqu.edu or by telephone at 570-372-4164.



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