

THE ANNUAL
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◦THE MARE WAKEFIELD BAND

◦BRAD NELSON

◦THE DAVID BOWERS STRING BAND

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Spitting Empty Shells

my eyes fire shots at the
slick words that drip like a bathroom faucet
from my pen and
crawl across the paper
like a pathetic
army obscene.

I meant to watch the
sunset this evening but
it was so damned windy
I sat on the couch
and brooded
instead.

it scares me
facing the things that
make me sick inside
and when I do I
usually find that
the pain

it marches

like a brutal
band of soldiers
across a
barren
battleground.

-Brad T. Bush



Such Brilliant Moonlight

Poised in a pinnacle of sky,
daylight's young sister
alive and wondering about
flowers asleep and closed,

Midnight rooftops like mirrors,
birches weeping streetlight
moving easily with night.

-Sean Patrick Hill

search for an understanding of the attributes and behaviours of sub-atomic particles. Since the Universe and thus Physical Reality are made of sub-atomic particles, it helps to know what they are and what they do. One of the first postulates of Quantum Mechanics is that there is a fundamental, mathematical possibility for any given physical event to occur. Your chair could burst into flame given the proper amount of time. Quantum physicists often amuse themselves with solving equations for the probabilities of certain silly events occurring. Yet, there's nothing logical about this. Any sane person's Universe doesn't spontaneously combust everyday. But, apparently that's not what it's saying. This postulate considers the inherent infinite nature of the Universe. And since Fiction is the unlimited characteristic, this is where reality becomes distorted. Reality is infinite and has no form; this, according to science. Modern Science is saying distinctly that our universe is Fictional; Truth is an illusion of the mind. Neils Bohr (an eminent twentieth century physicist) once said, "An independent reality in the ordinary sense can neither be ascribed to the phenomena nor to the agencies of observation."

Physicists are currently working on something called "Super String Theory", which holds that the universe is composed of miniscule,

sub-atomic strings of energy. Now that sounds like fiction, but currently it's the best model we have for explaining the phenomena of nature.

"Reality can't be perceived without the Mind. The Mind has to interact with Reality to perceive it. And interaction inherently alters True Reality (which is fictional anyway)."

Another famous theory is the "Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle", which elegantly yet strangely claims that measurement inherently interferes with the nature of the object being measured. Interaction alters Reality by its very nature. And then logically, how could you know the world without interacting with it? But that's the strange Truth this Quantum Theory proves. Reality can't be perceived without the Mind. The Mind has to interact with Reality to perceive it. And interaction inherently alters True Reality (which is fictional anyway).

So Truth as a rule for reality has no rules. This is what I think about during the nightmares (in dreams or Reality). Fear seems to disappear here; when you notice how fright is all made up. That's the sweetest part about Truth being Fiction; you can

deal with change on an infinite level, thus never ceasing to grow. All energy as endless as the sky.

-Simon Manso



Truth is Stranger Than Fiction

The fire is warm. The ground is solid. The music is tickling my eardrums. Suddenly, a disturbing rendition of "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" comes on the stereo.

Impulsively, I scuttle across the room to turn it off. I see my hands stretched before me. My finger flicks the stereo off; still the music continues. It stretches to a stop two minutes later in a prolonged deceleration. My reality has been altered. The accuracy of my senses has been thrown out the window. What was once the color blue isn't a color anymore: it's the taste ofrancid bacon. And what I hear is what I see. And a person's eyes are vortexes to the soul; ever spinning spiral eyes. At the present this is Truth. Tomorrow, Truth will be much less interesting than what it is right now. Logical deduction tells me that truth is relative. Relative to time; relative to place; relative to the mind. But I thought Truth was Truth. Y'know, biblical Truth. The stuff God and Jesus and the Universe rested upon. The absolute firmness of Truth is now Jello. Reality just cancelled out the Bible. "What's going on?" I've run into a conundrum of biblical proportions. "Ah, it's simple you see," says my Super-ego. Oh, so truth is perceived, eh? And perception is a faculty of the mind, eh? Well I know that the mind isn't always in tune with reality (let me tell you about the guy who constantly repeated, "Jesus, jesus ...". So, I guess that if Truth is to be perceived through the mind, then what we regard as Truth is inherently relative. And relativity is as far from absolute and firm as you can get, right?

"But I thought Truth was Truth. Y'know, biblical Truth. The stuff God and Jesus and the Universe rested upon. The absolute firmness of Truth is now Jello."

Within the constructs of Relativity, Truth is fiction. Relativity is as bizarre as fiction by far. The fact that Time and Space are relative to your velocity is extremely weird. If I wanted to live forever, all I'd have to do is travel through the universe near the speed of light. No need to conjure up a fictional fountain of youth; all I need is a really good spaceship. Which, incidentally, we already have.

Earlier this century, man-made fiction merely fantasized about reaching the moon (many people still believe it was a hoax propagated by NASA and the U.S. Government, thus refusing to believe Truth isn't Fiction). In the twenties

and thirties, we made "ridiculous" motion pictures about shooting a bullet with people in it to the moon. Now, America has a "been there, done that" attitude about our entrancing silver satellite. Truth is, our past fictional dreams about the future brought us "the future". Fictional causes produced real effects. Fiction directly influenced reality. I'd sum it up with the ol' saying, "You get what you dream for."

Fiction and Truth, in one sense, are the antithesis of one another. Fiction has the characteristic of being unlimited: a free range of ideas not tied to the concreteness of reality. Instead, Truth has the attribute of being in concordance with reality. Truth is limited. Truth has to agree with fact. Although, Carl Gustav Jung once stated, "The distinctive thing about real facts, however, is their individuality. Not to put too fine a point on it, one could say that the real picture consists of nothing but exceptions to the rules, and that, in consequence, absolute reality has predominantly the character of irregularity." I understand this to mean: Truth has no foundation as a rule for reality. Truth is simply a probability. And probabilities aren't certainties; they're statistics.

Enter the surreal world of Quantum Mechanics. Quantum Mechanics is a branch of physics which involves itself in the profound



Get Over It Buddy!

My problems dissipated, dwindling down to pebbles on an amber beach
my sickness subsided like her blue tent that I went looking for in the forest,
I so wanted to see her
She was camping with her friend and I was alone,
my emotions did not get the better of me, I held them like the original King Kong,
like two snakes; they writhed and spat and tried to bite me,
but I held on and tamed them
my love came to meet me; I was in the shower feeling strange and sick and love bubbled up
in me and wouldn't let me go down the drain
my parrot in my head that said, "Polly wanna cracker," over and over but I didn't want a
cracker, I was cracking up, has flown away
a guardian angel of gossamer wings has draped her kindness inside
and my eyes feel less painful and red
my tears have fallen but more should fall for all the bitter hatred I see outside
my strength came to me; a horse galloped across the field in the sunlight
I never get too old to be treated like a baby; if you want to kiss my forehead and
say goo goo goo that's okay;
if you want to tickle me and make silly faces that's fine; if
you want to hold me in your arms and breast feed me that's okay with me!
when I'm sick an old home remedy I use is I wear a special old sweater that a friend
gave to me and I chug strong herbal tea, then I forget what it is to be me
I can't remember my name, where I came from or who sent me
the creature who loves all life would not want me sick
my fever breaks, my equilibrium rejuvenates, my friends all call me up

-Captain Caterpillar

high school. He and I did everything together in my senior year. I had been devastated to hear of his death by suicide eight years ago in California. That is where I thought he had been buried. I couldn't believe my eyes. I reached down to feel the cold metal plate under my finger tips to make sure that it was actually there. I started to cry.

I never had a chance to say good-bye to my friend. I think this was his way of giving me the chance. I also felt a great loneliness on that hill. I really wish he had seen all he was giving up before it was too late. It is my belief that his spirit is lonely for the wife and children he left behind. It is this gift he has also given me. He has reinforced the notion of how good life is and how much I have to be thankful for.

"I never had a chance to say good-bye to my friend. I think this was his way of giving me the chance."

Amantha was getting a little restless at this point, so we started back down the road. She was concerned about my being upset. I told her about my friend, how much I missed him, and how glad I am to have both my daughters in my life.

I never would have looked at that

marker or known who was buried there if an unknown force hadn't shown it to me. I am convinced that I felt the spirit of my dear friend guide me to his marker, and to see all I am blessed with. I have had several encounters with the unexplained, but none have had as much meaning to me.

What are ghosts? I feel they are messengers sent from God to show us things we miss every day. I had been too wrapped up in my everyday tasks to appreciate all that I had to be thankful for. Lenny had three children and a wife, yet it wasn't enough to keep him from putting that gun in his mouth. I have a feeling he will be wandering alone for a long, long time to come. This is a fate I hope to avoid and a lesson well-learned.

-Sally Jayne Kuhn



Spirit Life

I believe in ghosts. I have had several encounters with unexplained phenomena, but it has been quite a while since the last one. In fact, it has been over thirteen years since I last had any feeling of spiritual company. I have become used to being alone—until last Thursday night.

My eldest daughter, Elizabeth, has decided to play the French horn in sixth grade this year. I am pleased she has found something to occupy her time before classes begin each day. This new interest came with an invitation to join a University-sponsored horn club, which meets on the first Thursday of each month. Last Thursday was the first meeting.

“I have had several encounters with unexplained phenomena, but it has been quite a while since the last one.”

I drove Elizabeth to the meeting at the Dunn Center on Willamette Street. My youngest daughter, Amantha, and I were not in the mood to sit and listen to twenty amateur horn players for seventy-five minutes, so we decided to take a walk.

We started down Willamette Street toward the Safeway on the corner of 40th Avenue and Donald Street. About a quarter of the way there, I saw the old Rest Haven Cemetery across the road to our right. I said to Amantha, “Since it’s still light, let’s go see who’s living there.” She was so agreeable, she said, “Sure, Mom.”

We crossed the street and started up the winding road running through the green grass filled with grave markers. We would occasionally stop to read a few of these markers because I have always found graves and the dates on them interesting. I also have known several people in my life who are buried up there, but I never expected to find another name I knew.

We continued up the drive to its crest. By this time, it was starting to get dark. Amantha was making spooky noises to see if she could scare me. I told her, “You better watch out, little girl; the dead people are going to get you.” She doesn’t believe anything I say anyway and replied, “Yeah right, Mom. Ghosts aren’t real.” I asked her if she was ready to head down to the store now

that it was getting dark, and she said, “Yeah, let’s go.”

As we walked down the slope, we were remarking on the placement of several markers under the various trees planted throughout the cemetery. We wondered what it would be like to be up on a nice green hill overlooking the valley. We passed a fork in the road. For some unknown reason, I looked back over my shoulder. In the fading light, I saw some markers near the fork in the road that seemed to stand out or shine more than any others. Curiosity compelled me to take a look at the names on these markers. I walked the short distance back up the hill. I saw a few markers that had recent dates on them. Amantha spied one from this very year. So far, I had yet to touch or disturb anything near or on any of these graves. It was then that I saw the marker covered with leaves.

It was the marker closest to the road. I kept thinking how I would feel if my grave hadn’t been taken care of and looked so messy. I reached down and brushed away the handful of leaves covering this shiny marker.

The first thing I noticed was the date: 1989. It was for a person who had been born in 1963 and had lived only about twenty-six years. Then I looked at the name: Leonard McVay. I almost stopped breathing!! Lenny was a very close friend of mine in



Mending

With an echo of familiarity, the words flint
against the stone of my memory, well
before recognition ignites.
That face— a mere dropcloth laid as a phalanx
against dream-driven waves of retaliation;
your breakwater remains uncharted.
The cadence of you arrives as a postcard
of my farms' veins, of my oars' reining,
the writhing between oases palms.
Oxen at the plow, you furrow this life's virgin
sod and plant me with the winter wheat:
again, we ripen on together.
At sabres' length, shall we dance, or knot ourselves
as kittens? Here, I content myself to be your sleeve
and offer up my warmth and shelter.

-David Guy Evans



tori cruel

walking home with my ankles
pinned
you'll never know how hard it's been
you'll never know how hard it's been
but then
you've never cared –
i've been hobbled like this
for years on end
hoping maybe your magic lies
those burning eyes
could put me out of my misery
turns out we'd all rather watch the pain
guess it's my turn to steal the

show

and tori cruel
smiles a half-moon grin –
eerie,
so white it's almost blue

is she a prophet?
a puppet?/divine?
when's it gonna be my turn to burn
when do i get to fly close to the sun
(when oh when is she gonna be me? please...)

tori cruel
a flying girl
a shooting star a
death rattle
yeah she continues to splinter me
and i keep on trying to sand it all smooth
but damn if my wax wings don't fall apart
every time –
i'll never fly like her
i'll never fly like her
i'll never fly like her

-amelia arianne reising



Replay

If there was one time I could replay all of the charms of your desires and blue eyes,
then I might sense a bit of emotion and deny that we ever had anything.

But that's just crazy talk.

it's funny how mood swings like this force you to sit at a computer and type cathartical
dribble.

But it helps.

It's all funny, when you look back at it. I know thirty years from now, I'll sit back with a
high-ball scotch and smirk at teen-age love and catastrophes, and such.

But today I'll sit here with milk and toast listening to slow beats and rubbing my eyes.

Like they say, you get what you pay for, if that's the case then i got a discount, 50% off!

Yeah, just watch me stare out the window sometimes, and you think, God what a morbid
son of o' bitch. yeah, that's me Ace, that's me.

As long as I come around the mountain with chicken and dumplings.

I just hope I'll sooner or later become desensitized to all of this emotional shit so I can get
on with my life. Back to conversation party talk. Scratching surfaces and no more.

Back to old pals, old styles, back to comic books and pornos, to all of the days before I
began to notice differences.

So if, only if, the TV doesn't kill me first maybe the cream skin of your belly will.

-Adam Louie



Ranting Over Lunch

I see them watching me
with their dolly eyes
and painted smile

All the way from New York City
where all the stuffies go <oops>
They are scheming
and planning for their
summertime escapade

Who are they seeing through
their stained glass window show?
I know they can't see my black
and blues

I'm wearing too much
white
this time of year
The light shades me nicely

I'm not loving you
now ... Can't recall my
ever trying

Do I throw you off – Doc said
I do it sincerely
and subtly

Mommy, you taught me well
(I get the goods from her, you know)
Mommy, I've burned you out
just thought you should know it

Blew my brains out over coffee and a salad
Boy, he was something sweet

Made me a misses
made me a misses

...What he made me miss it?

There is something more
in these dirty panties than
just a dream – wouldn't you know it

I just woke up

-Sheri Takemoto



July Ide

Red blood (of course) and cherry tree
Indian man now
memory, sad blood
spilt on the plain in the
mind universal of Ole'
Virgin (yah).
the South (tar)
paper shacks and clay, hear
the cry of the crawdads and things from
the Bottom,
where red is Black.

Blood whip crack on the back and,
back to blood again, ain't I?
Well blood machine makes sense
to me,
Rage is red literacy.

White skins come to mine eye
and the skin of my hand
(tell me soul, too)
white magic white crow, white
thinkin' of white talk
on purity purity (repetition
of obscurity), snowwhite
heroes leap from the white
pages of the bible, the americans
press (white) flesh.
My white looks pink
with blood, my white boss
talks of life before
the Flood.
my white.

Blue sky on the blue bay,
hey charmed my blues away today.
muddy water howlin' wolf howlin'
of home in the blue rain,
the blue pain,
comin' down like fleeting velvet, blue
makes the Road banish and become obstacle.
Blue is the light of angelsfucking blue
is the light of newdawn sayin' "Go to sleep, boy
and forget the truth."
(become blue)

-Jesse Steinman



Cubensis

Old Man Coyote my guide
by laughing river buddha,
I symbiotic with fungi—
mushroom shaman and
all the watershed awake
a water hole portal
a midnight fountain.

All around
firs bow to mud
and praise moon,
shadows web
clouds net stars
old cherry tree queen
catches rain
and ashy summer wind,
Cottonwood translates breezes
into hushed rustling.

Ghosts dance in night's field
reaching from wet grassy cradles
to holes in the sky
tickled by stars.
And I born from
hungry belly praying
painting mind like
rose gardens in
secret night;

Then growing dawn
sad conqueror
chases shadows underground;
Old Man Coyote hides
falling down, a pile of bones—
the castle wall
returns to piles of flagstone,
truth returns to mystery.

Raven wakes
croaking,
it is his day now.

-Sean Patrick Hill



Free From Geddon

I had been happy, ha!
I can wallow in misery,
I'm just her vanity mirror.
Everyone I know is unforgiven
And so that's what I RECEIVE.

We're waiting to find ourselves CRUCIFIED
this used to be our only comfort.
Living in the rain, confessing all to paper,
and knowing they won't want me until my death.
I want mountains and oceans and better than
I can be.

I was hypnotized by media,
and my substance walked away with god
for lack of concern.
So life becomes as false as it ever was
before I danced with fantasy.
I listen to B screaming,
She wants to be safe from the storm.

She knows I can't sample happy
Without tragedy destroying my kind pain.
Death would be easy.
She makes me see that.
She cuts herself, and I'm already dead,
But she's dug me a comforting hole to lay in.
So here I am for all to see,
Judge and crucify me.

-Torch



Unspoken Agreement

You suck.
You and your deep voice amongst sighs of ecstasy.
Your attempts at conversation
 as your strong hands enclose each hip
 and move my body against yours.
Your unshaven face rubbing my neck,
 the taste of your ears.
The comfort of my naked chest against yours,
 feeling the shape of your stomach.
Your slight reactions as i run my thumb underneath your waistband.
My pillow,
 your shoulder.
The reassuring sound of your obnoxious snoring.
Not sleeping, in peace, in your arms.
Attempting to get up—
 you holding me back.
Lying with you in the innocent hours of early morning.
Your messed hair, tired smile and
 sweet, brown eyes.
Your shirt— tossed on the floor,
 my heart— lying beside it.
I undid your pants,
 you undid my soul.
Relentless tears of rage
 while the realization sinks in
 that my hand was replaced
 and your heart was never there.
You suck.
You suck for breaking an unspoken agreement
 that I'd patiently waited in line for.
And you really suck for denying it was ever there.
You suck for all the daily reminders of what I had
 for such a short, sweet time.
And you especially suck because I still love you,
 with all of your unforgivable, unspoken faults.

-Heather Hafer

anything new. When I was seven, he beat up my first boyfriend because he didn't give me a rose on Valentine's Day.

Years later in life when he had a home of his own and was in an established relationship, I actually thought he was doing okay. But one day his boyfriend came home and found him dead of a drug overdose. As I grieved, I looked back on our childhood as the best time of our lives.

When my friends and teachers asked me how I put up with him, I always had the same answer:

"What am I gonna do? He's my brother. Besides, I don't want anyone else."

-Jessica Parsons



Alone

I hear the voices of my ancestors travelling on the winds,
they wail the pain of centuries.
I cry out to the Great Spirit asking for answers
for a path to the forever land.

I feel alone, in gatherings of people I love.
I feel alone, in the presence of strangers.

My father is with the spirits as is my mother,
I seek their words to guide and comfort me.
The pain of living tests my soul,
I see the Great Bear but can't hear his guidance

I feel alone, in gatherings of people I love.
I feel alone, in the presence of strangers.

I want the empty cavern in my heart to fill with warmth
To feel the need of another for my touch
to taste the heat of the sun
Fear of the path makes me dark inside.

I feel alone, in gatherings of people I love.
I feel alone, in the presence of strangers.

Oh, Great Spirit
Hear my tears fall
Let me know how to go on
Help me hear the Great Bear's guidance.

-Pat Crawford

old enough to drink," I pointed out. Fred was only seventeen.

"Hey hon, you aren't either. Sweet, innocent Charlotte, not even a teenager ..." his voice trailed off. he reached around to his back pocket and pulled out the color photograph of Jesus with the corners fraying and the inscription on the back. I think it was from Jesus himself. He had written, "To Fred. Be a good kid. Love, your Father."

"See, look at him, Char. He has the power to corrupt your mind and that is what I want in a man."

"See, look at him, Char. He has the power to corrupt your mind and that is what I want in a man," he stated, pointing to the cross over our mantle. I glanced over at the half-naked man. I wondered if I'd ever get to kiss him. But he'd probably condemn me for thinking sinful thoughts. Bad idea. He looked so sad and the thorns were probably hurting his head. I bit my cheek to prevent me from crying and I went over to the window above the couch. The stars were out and a few lonely cars drove by. Where were these people driving at 1:30 in the morning?

"So, do you think that we'll bomb Vietnam?" I asked Fred trying to get the lump out of my throat.

"Hell Charlotte, I don't know.

Don't think about that stuff. You're only eleven freakin' years old. Have another drink." He pushed the vodka bottle towards me.

This was not the first time I'd drunk. A few weeks prior my best friend Ryan McCallister had celebrated his bar mitzvah and we wound up in the bathroom drinking between kisses. He wound up holding my head over the sink and in the morning I had remembered little from the night before. Not the best idea I ever had.

It was almost midnight after Fred pointed out Jesus' sexiness. He only told me of his secret desire to sleep with Jesus in the Saint Mary Magdelene's Church. He never told our parents that he had the urge to sleep with the man they both worshiped.

"Fred, I'm going to bed," I said, lightly touching him on the shoulder. In the short minute that I had thought about Ryan, Jesus, sinks and alcohol, my brother had passed out. I quietly turned off the lights and set the bottles out back.

"Good night, Seanie," I said to my orange cat and I fell asleep in my jeans.

I was walking across a giant field with a penguin in my arms. He kept quacking and so I put him down and he motioned with his wing for me to follow him. I did and glanced down to see my pink Converse melting away to reveal just my feet on the

cold, wet grass. I looked up and did a double take. Before me was a gate and beyond it was a team of older boys playing football, all without their shirts on. One of them came towards me and trampled me down.

"Hey you!!" I tried to yell but my words were whisked away by his hand going down, down, deeper into my throat squashing all my attempts to scream.

I sat straight up in bed, my eyes wide. I had to get out of my room.

I yanked off my favorite sweatshirt and headed towards the living room. Fred was watching "How to Marry a Millionaire," with Marilyn Monroe.

"Hey, what's wrong? Upset stomach? Want some?" he asked, offering me a glass of clear liquid.

Thinking of myself tripping over my own shoe and crying over a bar mitzvah, I shook my head and went to the kitchen to get Pop Rocks.

"Hey Char, did I tell you I beat up Brendan Collier on Wednesday?" Fred called to me. "Oh, the usual Pop Rocks and 7-up. When are ya gonna grow up and eat Oreos?" he asked, seeing me curl up in Dad's favorite chair.

"I can't, you dork. I get hives," I reminded him for the millionth time, feeling the cracking and fizzing in my mouth. Hearing the stories wasn't anything new. When I was seven, he beat up my first boyfriend because he didn't give me a rose on Valentine's



Pop Rocks, Penguin Fights and A Little Piece of Heaven

He was my brother; what could I do?

At age seventeen my brother Fred stole Mrs. Fischer's cat and drowned it in our pond out back. Fred stole the cat to prove to my parents that he was actually capable of doing something dangerous. Something dangerous was exactly what I knew he would do one of those days yet I knew he would never lay a hand on me. Maybe I was lacking security in life, but at least I knew that. All the kids in our neighborhood were scared that my brother's hand would wind up across their faces, and most of the time it did.

"At age seventeen my brother Fred stole Mrs. Fischer's cat and drowned it in our pond out back. Fred stole the cat to prove to my parents that he was actually capable of doing something dangerous."

My mother pulled us off to church every Sunday and Fred would be the last one out the door and the last one of us to leave the church. During opening services I would sometimes glance over at my older brother's face and he would be looking at the Reverend's face like he was God himself. Strange how he was such a devout Catholic (he even carried a picture of Jesus in his back pocket) yet he lied, stole, and engaged in so many fights that after awhile I just tuned all the details out. I'd get pissed at Fred and feel really sorry for the kid that got hurt at the hand of him, whether it was Brian's black eye, Martin's sprained wrist or Jason's sore arm.

I think that my brother and I were on a scale. When he was above me with age and experience, I was underneath with my lack of security. Yet we were equal in the fact that we needed each other. Seven days a week my brother would come home and Mom would be waiting for him with the phone. On the other end would be the mother of the newly injured kid yelling at my mother for being a terrible parent. I would cower under the kitchen table and cover my ears when they were screaming. I hated hearing people get mad; what was the point? They were just crucifying themselves to each other. On Sundays though, from nine until eleven, our family had our little piece of heaven with Fred. He was actually pleasant to my parents. It was a little game we played: terrorize, be nice, terrorize, be nice, repeat, repeat, repeat as often as this child lives with you. One night my parents drove up to Seattle to a vending machine

convention. My dad had this wierd fascination with the dropping coins and the dropping candy. We had about four of them in our house. All my friends thought my parents were really crazy but they loved to spend their allowances on the Oreos that were inside. I couldn't eat Oreos because of the cream filling. It made me break out in hives all over my neck. The first time I ate one I was four and my mother thought she had poisoned me with her meatless loaf. I never really actually figured out what was in the meatless loaf. She always said nuts and grains, which reminded me of bird seed.

Anyway, Mom and Dad were in Seattle and Fred raided the liquor cabinet. My attempts to resist died pretty quickly. The strawberry daquiris reminded me of the Pop Rocks that I basically lived on. Other kids had Oreos and I had the Pop Rocks.

I was floating around in this altered state of dreamy wonderland when Fred called out, "Hey Charlotte, come here. I wanna show you something." I slowly turned towards him and accidentally tripped on my shoe.

"Oooooops!" I laughed, pulling myself up unsteadily.

"Um, I think you should put the rest of that stuff away. We're already pretty trashed," I said, gesturing towards the half-filled bottles on the oak kitchen table. "You're not even



Remains

the Sun raises
with a Mexican passion, all is quiet
cacti, dry
forgotten machinery
broken bones of dinosaurs of long ago
School house all of Onyx
Empty vandalism
windows gone
semi-precious stones, once housed precious minds
remains
one small cemetery,
the wind, blowing an empty beer can up the hill
echoes of laughter
sounds of love
empty cries, hollow sounds
many toiled, men in the earth, women above.
What remains
sun, wind, & that damn beer can

-Jim Home

crossed the tile floor boldly, their eyes fixed on the glass cases before them like fierce stars. But this gigantic effort was only to be met with sour, sorrowful disappointment. All that was left on the platters were a few paltry slices of cheesecake and keylime pie. A sign hanging above the espresso list on the wall that read "Not just desserts" in large, art-sy letters summarized Lou's sentiments exactly. But then Lou thought to himself, with philosophical resignation, that he would have been even unhappier if the shop had had what he wanted.

"..when Pete and Lou had brought their selections to a shaky little table of their own, they witnessed a murder."

Minutes later, when Pete and Lou had brought their selections to a shaky little table of their own, they witnessed a murder. There is a shadow of a doubt as to whether it was in fact a murder, but Pete and Lou report that the victim was not moving when last they saw him. Lou was sitting across from Pete, and he had absolutely nothing to say. This made both Pete and Lou uncomfortable. They squirmed. They writhed. Psychologically speaking, it was torment for them, there together at the

dessert shop. Consequently, Lou tried to eat his strawberry-coffee cheesecake as quickly as possible, but as quickly as he ate it, his mocha latte was cold when he was done. Lou contemplated the coldness of the mocha latte in order to keep himself occupied, but he kept on sipping at it so as to force out the silence in his throat. The young white persons were leaving, and though Lou nearly hated them, a deep sadness overcame him as he watched them go. He suddenly felt compelled to run out and join them, to ramble through the open night with drunken love. Of course, he did not do this. He never would have done this.

Pete, unlike Lou, was oblivious to his dessert and its quality and to the customers coming and going. He wished to leave. He wished to go and find someone more talkative, someone less hostile. So Pete and Lou sat, still and silent. Now and then Pete would ask a question he already knew the answer to and Lou would answer it with as few words as possible. Pete had just asked Lou if he had enjoyed his dessert when both their eyes fell on two drunks in the alley across the street. They were struggling, grappling with their hands, and shouting incoherently at each other. One of them took out a knife and stabbed the other. The stabbed drunk fell in the gutter and lay still. The stabbing drunk ran out

onto the sidewalk, trying to conceal the knife. A cop car pulled up beside him.

So Pete and Lou had apparently witnessed a murder. Pete attempted to act astonished and angry. Lou tried to conjure up similar emotions and again sympathize with Pete. But both ended in annoyance. They were unable to feel anything. They had no passion. Lou, for one, felt barren. The victim was lying motionless in the gutter, and Lou felt nothing.

So Pete and Lou left the dessert shop defeated. They went home in silence, in continued silence. They could not say what they wanted to say to one another because they did not know what this might be. So they parted in awkwardness, and late that night, Lou curled up in the comfort of his own mind.

-Eric Nelson



Not Just Desserts

Streets cut between the little shops and cafes, streets that were like black ice with the shimmering rain running over them. All of it was crouched on a steep, tricky hill deep in the city, and wires running between the dim buildings further confused the scene. They were all closed: the cafes and bookstores, the salons, the boutiques that sold expensive used clothing, they were all closed, and their plate-glass windows were dark. But crammed near the end of an alley, the dessert shop was still open. It was late that night. So Pete and Lou went there. Neither of them wanted to go, especially with one another. But they went for the sake of Lou's mother. She had railroaded them into it. Her warm smile made them feel comfortable. She wanted Pete and Lou out of her closet-size apartment, and she wanted to entertain hopes that they, her boyfriend and her son, would come to an understanding. That was what the excursion was all about. So Pete and Lou went there, to the dessert shop.

"She wanted Pete and Lou out of her closet-size apartment, and she she wanted to entertain hopes that they, her boyfriend and her son, would come to an understanding."

Lou was responsible for the awkwardness. He had an aversion bordering on revulsion toward people he had not known for a very, very long time, even though he loved people, all people, in his heart, loved them down to the very root of his being. With clenched fists he sat in the car on the way to the dessert shop. Indeed, his whole body was stiff and clenched. This is the manner in which he recoiled when alone with someone new. He could not control it. He did not understand it.

When they arrived, Pete, the boyfriend, had trouble parking. With the car on the steep incline of the hill outside the dessert shop, Pete tried to back into a narrow, crooked spot on the street, but no one would let him in. Pete cursed this. He cursed with emotion. Lou attempted to sympathize with a little laugh and by groaning at the other cars, but this was obviously forced, uneasy sympathy, and, of course, it only served to further aggravate the situation. But somehow, perhaps miraculously, the parking was completed, and somehow they, Pete and Lou, were able to get into the dessert shop without letting their masks fall off, so to speak.

Stragglers huddled around their shaky little tables and their little plates. And a small group of extremely white and young persons near the shop's window burst into aggressive laughter that was aggression. These people gave Lou an acute kind of agony and embarrassment. Blood rushed to his face. He tried to turn his attention to other matters. The smell of the shop attracted his interest for a moment: rotting wood? rotting wood with droplets of steamed milk? he could not make it out. He decided to focus on appearances. There had apparently been an attempt on the part of the owner of the dessert shop to decorate his establishment in a manner that would appeal to his customers. And therefore the decor was rather artificial: purposefully mismatched antique chairs, olive and autumn walls with very expensive student art, and so forth. Nothing new. Lou was disgusted by it. He wanted to feel sympathy for the owner in his attempts, but disgust overwhelmed him.

Pete and Lou made their way to the counter in a heroic fashion. That is to say, despite the various distractions that assailed them (aggressive laughter, bare legs, student art) and despite the unfortunate aversion that was growing between them, they were able to pull together, focus on their objective, and overcome the challenge confronting them. They



Soporific

One Thousand eight hundred forty-
two textured peaks (again)
on the sheetrocked underbelly
of my ceiling.
Much as I've tried, the rain-chilled
ice pick lodged oh, so deeply
within my head
would not be warmed, cleansed
by any amount of shower water.
Perhaps, like Medusa's blood,
the sweat from my hat's band
will curdle
that bankrupt of spirit,
that parentless, festering, pond scum unfit for ...,
but I digress.
Then, Consolation would be my sleeping
potion
and I,
and he,
who snatched my favorite, faithful hat
in departing the bus,
would each dwindle into a righteous,
if separate sleep.

-David Guy Evans



My Child

My child born;
the perfect baby it did appear ...
all ten fingers,
all ten toes.
Her spirit freshly come
from our home above.

But,
life is imperfect
and the body
(home of her spirit)
was, after all, not perfect.
The mind unable ...
I grieved. 'Til today,
as I looked deep into her eyes.
I saw her. *Really* saw
her.

Looking past the body
and into the eyes,
I met my child ...
the perfect child
with spirit freshly come
from our Home above.

-Janet P. Humeland



I'm Becoming

From the mountain I see shadows creeping,
dancing, sleeping,
unconscious wanderers weeping in the enigma of her light,

Disappearing spectors becoming ash in swollen moments
of God's hate.

She's dropping the rain,
She's dropping the rain
And I'm becoming water.

From above she notices that
I stand still in fear.
Fear that the angels may come and ask
that I step down from this self-crucification

But it warms me,
it warms me
And I'm becoming blood.

Now she stands on the edge of nowhere,
looking out into forever.
Knowing she will soon be going home.
She says her prayers and walks the road.

-Torch

mobilize at a moment's notice if the need arose, and for our protection if civilians became enraged at our peacekeeping tactics and attacked us, though we were just following orders. We would be safer on the post – together – armed – than in our own homes, safer here than with our families and neighbors. There were already cases of people in the early stages killing the members of their families who showed no signs of illness, of neighbors seeing the first blush of red in a handkerchief and going next door and moving from room to room with a shotgun thundering.

I thought, too, that it would be more convenient to have us all here in one place if it became expedient to terminate us.

We had plenty of slack time and I read. I read *The Stand* by Stephen King, and *Earth Abides* by George Stewart. One man read the Psalms – aloud, over and over, as if somewhere in the words was sanity for all this madness. One of the other women read all the Oz books. She said that she had read *The Wizard of Oz* as a child after seeing the movie with Shirley Temple and was amazed and thrilled as an adult to find that there was a whole shelf of tales about Oz.

Each day we reported for medical check and one by one our numbers thinned until we were like the last leaves shivering on a tree after

a gale.

Then one day there were no deaths reported, no new cases of illness. And then another and another and another until the time of incubation had passed and people looked at each other and dared to smile.

People poured out of their houses, into the streets. Church bells rang, we shot our guns into the air, fireworks were set off. Strangers who would not stay in the same room with members of their own families a few weeks ago embraced. Someone suggested a silent prayer of remembrance for the dead and thanksgiving for our deliverance. And forgiveness for what we have done, what we have been, I added silently.

We met in the park for a picnic, barbequeing on the grills, wading in the lake, walking barefoot in the unmowed grass, playing softball – the soft thud of the ball echoing here where fifty people was a crowd and there were no cars rushing by.

A crow perched on the bleachers and a man quipped, “Look, there’s Randall Flag.”

There was some nervous laughter, but more silence. What choices might we have to make in the future? After the way we had devolved in the crisis, could we expect that we would be fit for a battle between the forces of good and evil?

That night the barracks were

nearly empty as most of the troop returned to their own homes. I sat on my bunk, remembering my final day at home. I had made a tea party for my three and five year old daughters, with Twinkies and Ho-ho’s – a treat I rarely allowed. They had both awakened that morning to the blush of red roses on their pillowcases. The little china tea set had red roses, too.

I dressed them all in white – new panties, and lace trimmed socks and patent leather shoes and dresses sumptuous with yards of white lace, as if they were making their first communions, ready for heaven. After the tea party I wrapped them in quilts, though it was summer, and put them in the car, locking the doors with the keyless security system. And then I left, going to the barracks.

“A crow perched on the bleachers and a man quipped, ‘Look, there’s Randall Flag.’”

I knew I would never go home again.

Everyone has left now but me. My boots echo as I drill, my voice reverberates in this hollow chamber. Each day I wake, pick up my gun and wait for orders.

-Bonita Rinehart



Following Orders

At first we buried the bodies in the cemeteries, neat graves with headstones and eulogies and scripture. Quickly we realized that there were going to be too many bodies and too little space and too little time for such meticulous pretense. We poured the bodies into mass

graves. We fed them like cordwood into the crematorium.

The cemeteries filled.

Families laid their mother, their infant son, their brother to rest in their yards – beneath the apple tree she loved to sit under, by the swingset he played on. The bodies that reached the morgue stayed there, sardined into the drawers, sealed in bags and stacked on shelves. People were brought into the hospital by hopeful friends or relatives – a cure must be in sight, they'll find the answer soon. The ill were placed on gurneys and rolled to the morgue where they lay side by side with the already dead – pleading to be taken away, their eyes going mad, too weak to get up and walk out of the sepulcher. The families and friends, exposed and perhaps condemned and lethally contagious, were led to quiet waiting rooms soothed by the music of Bach. They were given a cup of tea or coffee – sugared with cyanide.

For all our efforts at efficiency, where to put the bodies – all the bodies – became an urgent question. As factories closed down from lack of personnel we used them for giant mausoleums. In the shopping malls we laid homeless people in jewelry stores, the elderly and toddlers side by side, obliterated lines of race and gender.

"Some realized that the cup of tea or glass of milk held a lethal ingredient and protested. Then we had to use our guns."

Still the bodies kept coming.

I commented on this to one of the other peacekeepers, like me, set out to ensure that order would be maintained. I didn't know there were this many people in this city, I told him.

There aren't, he replied. They've been coming in from other places because of the hospital here – they think this is the place a cure might be found, a place they will be able to get the new penicillin and the bodies just keep mounting up.

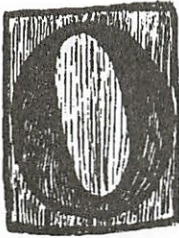
And they come here so they won't have to die alone – they can pretend with others that there is a chance, I added.

A chance. The elderly and young children and those already otherwise ill, recovering from surgery, or who have chronic medical conditions are the most vulnerable, the quickest to succumb. Since they are set for death, it is only logical to fix the hour for them. Some realized that the cup of tea or the glass of milk held a lethal ingredient and protested. Then we had to use our guns.

"The nursing home was our first termination assignment. After that we weren't allowed to live at home any longer."

Sometimes even now when I inhale I smell the coppery odor of blood – the blood that splattered on the walls, making crimson Rorschach blots, that splattered on the floors, leaving bodies like islands in the sea, that splattered on us – on our guns, on our clean uniforms, on our hands and faces.

The nursing home was our first termination assignment. After that we weren't allowed to live at home any longer. We were called back to the barracks the next day. They told us it was so that we could be ready to



On You And Pain

You carry your pain
not like a shirt or coat,
but like an orphan
whose cry is louder than
your own,
and whose grip makes
you forget all origins.

You, a temporal parent
will stand a witness to
his growth till one day,
when he bigger than ever,
will say with a man-like voice:
"It's time to part ..."

And you, puzzled by the
sudden silence and love that
took your heart,
will let him go ...

-Barbora Bakalarova



light show

i was a necessary object
biding my pain
hiding my shame
you were the invisible man
don't try to pretend
you ever let me
see you
and don't you call my name, boy
now that i'm gone
and you're missing me
i'm the laser baby
doodling on your toe tag
waiting for a tree to decorate

i'm still trying not to hate
i've quit working hard
at so many things
though i thought you see
seemed worth the wait
till i saw
i was a necessary object
a light show for your lonely nights
and she was who you could garden in

-amelia arianne reising

williams in doctor suit, what price cohesion? i don't know anything and that is that. this has nothing to do with nature.

but this does filled with spirit and breakfast drive we (the dog and i) enter a canyon around noon, through which we leave the car behind and streak down. the walls are papered with dripping ferns, some purple with time and seep leakings, run and forget hop a log that has fallen like a perfect wall to make a maze of sorts we navigate, but mostly laugh and play in we stop intermittently to share dog laughter on the clay that makes ground shrapnels of voices come drifting through further on.

“my face is streaked with mud and my pants almost wetter than my shoes. seldom do glimmers of childhood come flying so rampantly all exhibited and holding me like a puppet ...”

my face is streaked with mud and my pants almost wetter than my shoes seldom do glimmers of childhood come flying so rampantly all exhibited and holding me like a puppet, this is merely a watershed and old creek that has worn down the ground to make a chasm emptying into the ocean. for me there is a playground

and a sandbox at three the buttersmell of my desk in second grade sex and your bed later on. joy! here is what all the goddam philosophers and poets and theologians and singers and crappy pop artists talk about the pinnacle of experience the mountain's peak the lone bloom waxing minimal the laughter devoid of madness but filled with beauty the tiger's eye and a jester in full persuasion. from the squalor in the pit of my stomach to the very veins in my green eyes i am filled for once i am filled for once it neither does or have to make sense it has no mind nor needs one i am the dollar bill for a meal the offering of bread the smile on the whitehaired bum the grin on my dog the cheekbone glimmer of my mad friend in grace and all things hardly worth describing. morning laughter rain it was all worth it. we leave.

we have to, a smile nonetheless is the only possible reaction i can muster the elk pretend fighting near the dunes remind me of brown sentinels the engine runs and mingles with frogspeak the road leads on and back home this day of personal glory this fine morning. the only way possible to speak of independence let alone celebrate it. so, give me a glass of wine ...

-Jesse Steinman

redwood on the way out because this is the only way i can come to grips with existing. we truly have no conception of suffering and probably never will my friend once blatantly put it to me. he's right whatever manic thoughts and anxious rituals that we perform everyday so that we can enjoy this little sliver of existence we are given can be nothing to what those starving and crying and dying are going through. my shoes cover my feet they allow me to forget the old man in egypt walking around with a sackful of pain on his back, feet naked and pressed into the shapes of bricks from having to walk on others' tears mixing in the gutters of dirty and forgotten streets, the cairo woman in black alley with a baby in her arms i gave her bread for which i received a forlorn thanks but left without caring really where she got her next meal, or even the crazy whitehaired man down the road who as a kid mom and i used to buy him meals and give him eggs from our chickens. truth is everyone exists in an amniotic sphere of misery, just some are hungry and alone and some have friends and dogs to talk to. we all die.

sometime very early in the next morning the cold is so unbearable for my bones which are way too used to the warmth of a house, come the rapture i'm fucked. the dog and i pack up and say goodbye to the beach and the moon which is idling on the

horizon about to leave my line of sight though we will probably meet again tomorrow night when i'm back in the mountain desert and angry hometown away from all this wonder. shivering and already lighting up another camel light placing it gently on my tired lips the sluggish car hops and heaves back onto the highway, we cruise together back down without a glance back until (and i head directly) we hit the cafe of morning goodies, opened less than an hour ago and the window are steamed sweet and condensation runs rivers into coffee cups and cheese croissants. goddam i do love this country sometimes. we stop at the store for trail mix and other provisions, people are actually awake at this hour i am almost unaccustomed to the garbled cacophony of morning voices intermingling. everyone in a hurry everyone got somewhere to go grab some cheese and ponder the wine section tomorrow in a few years i'll come back here and you and you and you and you and i will climb a mountain and exchange nirvana

"... the only thing that will ever truly exist is the ocean air running through my nose and out my mouth, tickling on my nicotine tongue."

together today though i am but 18 and cannot purchase you sweet delectable flasks of grapey goodness goddam how long have i been standing here and i must look like crap all crusted over with three hours sleep on a wet beach. my hobgoblin bitch awaits chained to a pole outside must pick her up a smack of salmon hell we're both on vacation and just as suddenly i stop, sneaking like a thief into the front reaches of awakesness is the new memory of a story heard through the grapevine about a dear friend of mine who just as suddenly stopped working and stared at his sandwich his own private naked lunch and could not function. he went to the hospital some months later and he is not here now though he wanted to come sometimes i cry at night at the ponderance of all his amazing glory everything he wants to personify he can with grace and therefore at the end of a week of whizzing hot brain others must gather for him through a cloud of good pills. why goddam why must i dream these things beforehand and write them later sitting happy and malcontent in my attic bedroom sometimes i unconsciously mimic his manifestations he might just walk on water someday if he sets his mind to it nevermind. find cheese and food and treat and pay for it with a tired smile among the goddam penumbras and aisles i find you william carlos

if not forgotten one more thing this is the scent of childhood and it will most likely be there much longer after i have been laid to rest in some thousand dollar chunk of ground that someone else bought for me because they thought the company of hundreds of other dead people smacked in rows and rows and rows would be pleasurable. what will my gravestone say? how the hell will i come up for something like that inking words on paper and let alone thoughtful talk seems so damn impossible even now as i am awake and walking around, those will be the last reminders every word counts and the only thing i think we can count on and rest assured with is the notion that we will certainly not be around fucking and drinking and talking and driving and laughing next time the ocean reclaims los angeles. oh well, i'll outlive the black dog and probably the car. passing the barrier of the dunes takes away road noises, automobile wanderers streaking up the gray tongue that is highway 101 running through my best place where nearly everyone is sleeping at the moment. when they awake (much earlier than i will) perhaps i'll run in and get a burrito (yes, a little donkey) before i have to return home where the job of a thousand coffees and false smiles is waiting for me momentarily i cannot fathom return at this moment i do not understand why it is necessary for me

to take myself away from the quiet solace of the pasture behind mom's house and operate for someone else eight hours of my precious life my only life that i will ever have and/or receive and i dare waste it on employment ... very unreal to me the only thing that will ever truly exist is the ocean air running through my nose and out my mouth tickling on my nicotine tongue. someday i must

“can't stand the thought of choking, the crabs plucking out my eyeballs and other entrails as i have sunk to the bottom where i will remain, though perhaps the idea is more tasty than centipedes and ants making a farm snaking through my body ...”

truly become a fisherman like the ones i saw in rags and never talked to on the mediterranean with sandal thongs and strawhats they day after day after day sat on the concrete walls containing garbage with twenty foot poles strung out into the water, lashed to a rock with a lucky bell that would ring if anything was tugging on the other end which means that he will eat tonight. very hemmingway, only lacking aristocracy and wine chilled in the water (they didn't speak my

language anyway). all this and i have never gone in the ocean i am way too scared. water is an extremely different medium in which to exist it kills more than air and hides tentacled things that want to eat me huge scaly monsters with eyes on their sides and basically scorpions that eat shrimp. i can't stand the thought of choking, the crabs plucking out my eyeballs and other entrails as i have sunk to the bottom where i will remain, though perhaps the idea is more tasty than centipedes and ants making a farm snaking through my body but i'll be in a pine box so no worries. to illustrate how completely separate the mental and physical planes are i walk on a gentle beach and think of nothing but death.

it's time again for sleep so many things are too overwhelming so i will turn my body down in my cheap sears sleeping bag and close my eyes, unaware that my tongue is probably lolling out of my face, that my vision can only ignore the stars passing stationary over the billionhead that is america. tomorrow of course is the aforementioned fourth of july i have already determined for myself and whatever karma or whatever that i can potentially scrape together with the rest of my days that i will consciously not participate. i will spend the day with the dog probably driving most of the time i will not stop at mcdonalds but perhaps i will stop and hug a

never got his name. the beach is damn cold this evening again though i refuse to sleep in the plastic bound luxury of the car, my tent is perpetually wet with dew but nevertheless a half moon rises with the tides, who come to greet him as if in prayer. the notebook is half streaked with blood and less with ink, it all diffuses into impressionistic slop with the moist air as the catalyst and medium with which everything flows the radio hums into the brushing reeds who dance with every perpetual gust of wind the dog runs and does her thing without my regards. though most families have left to rest for the big day of celebration and greekdrinking tomorrow, sick troops of highschoolers sit around fires and yell things into the ocean, mostly spit. the cut on my finger ceases throbbing and has been sanitized with chef boyardee sauce whose origins i can truly be only aware of in this forced kind of society where at least give or take a few degenerates five thousand people have inadvertently contributed to my material happiness and lifestyle on this day alone. the chop process deny progress craft manipulate pour squabble the poor they do everything and take their paychecks to the grocery mart where others perform tasks on a mildly different level to serve to serve to serve and perhaps be served with a sixpack of coors and a pack of smokes. nevertheless we are

independent and choose tomorrow to celebrate our vehement freedoms. tonight i rest however with the divine music of the stars wafting through the saline air at the particled edge of just another crazy land, my dog snuffling in the dunegrasses my cigarette lounging in my periphery and the solace of drunken thoughts to bide my time until my tired brain decides it's time that sleep was had. my jacket a pillow mine mine mine ... all mine. why the hell did i come here anyhow why does the edge call to me all the time reminders of acidic deja vus recollections and affirmations again that i am disappointingly unmad. my friends all remind me that they have crafts with which they perform expression, i cannot or do not perform

"... the moon has long passed my tent in transit; it hangs over the water like a thought on a string teasing the ocean ..."

my quiet intellectual times come in conversations and solace in places like the beach the goddam beach the same beach that as a child i sifted through the soft sand with sweet fingers half musing now but probably half asleep the whole time. a time ago when young adam and i went hiking on the bluffs fucking the ocean and almost falling falling into a few

hundred foot drop to the churning waters below beckoning behind calling to us give me your young bodies i want to eat you and as gravity is my arms and hands i shall have you ripped and bloody on my tongue stupid virgins taste best. we did live. stuck for hours struck dumb and speechless with vagrant thousand mile stares down mouths incapable of reason. we did live that's right we did sometimes i forget. i forget many things now that i am young and have lived for so long. how many thousand myriad webs have i spun with thoughts while staring blank up at the ceilings keeping myself awake with cigarette breaks and books and books and toys. the wind is no longer warm and therefore can no longer be considered a friend i am too apprehensive to stay inside so i shall wander (another task) the moon has long passed my tent in transit; it hangs over the water like a thought on a string teasing the ocean like a bully but the ocean is not to be tampered with, she can get so angry when tested and tonight she sucks up some of the moon back to her and diffuses it along her belly like a blood smear whiter than white. my tickling feet are of no relevance in this old game. i'll head south and the dog will follow exploring the kelp and clams that have been whipped up to shore whatever fish smell that hangs in the air has long since been accustomed to

Somber brown eyes pierce mine. "She says they just fall apart, Mom."

My heart throbs painfully. "I know they do, Tina," my mind replies.

... are less capable than I am of communicating the problems to those who could offer assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this rather lengthy letter. I hope to see you at the Womenspace auction in May.

Sincerely,

A Single Mom



still life with reclining nude

The quick walk from the car results in sulfuric patriotism, families dancing at sunset like they always have; this time to the tune of fifty dollars and cheap filipino firecrackers. i do not understand this ritual, though i usually participate at other's expense, which is usually how things go anyhow i have noticed a girl like i usually do when i am alone with a pad of paper to write with a frisbee for her dog. my particular dog, maniacally named happy after my grandfather (whose demeanor was usually anything but his middle name) will not or cannot fetch. It's one of many things that mom and i failed to learn her,

"i forget many things now that i am young and have lived for so long."

she doesn't usually come back when called either, which is why she's usually penned up and under the house, where she is at this moment as well. nevertheless as she has matured she has become a bit more obedient, though still has a propensity to roll in and eat excrement, which, though she is good company, makes her acquaintances less than palatable sometimes. she is a good dog. i'm climbing back to the car as i usually am, something i would like to quit, but like cigarettes, it always seems to be there. one more task that i preform on a daily basis, follow the girl through the smoke of america chase as far as the car will

take me and then go out to eat and read or talk. in this case i have the dog with me so i open a can of raviolis and eat them raw, carefully slicing my drunken finger on the sharp lid; shortly before my evening dash up the coast i found myself in the park drinking malt liquor with an obvious homosexual trying to get me back to his place for the evening, and a wandering black man who was much more interesting and therefore received much more of my attention as we wandered away. into the nightstreets we talked of progress and attention to evils, he with his pack on his back and feet in the street and i with my dog and car we left quickly each others company with a quick promise to fatefully meet again sometime which i assume we will.

Julie's golden head rests on my left arm, her behind curves comfortably into my side. Tina, the smallest, curls, fetal, on my stomach. Leah has tipped over – her left arm and head rest on my right hip. As we shuffle off to our beds, I decide that I must be doing something right.

I realize that many of my concerns are a matter of personal integrity and honesty, and I cannot change my former husband's lack of responsibility in those areas. To his credit, Paul does visit our daughters on a regular basis. In fact, he is a shining example of a "Disneyland Dad" – my daughters have seen every movie that has hit the screen in the last four years, and they get gifts and T-shirts from all the vacation spots that Paul visits ... Hawaii last summer.

I feel fortunate that I have left this abusive relationship, become involved with positive individuals and am making progress in my search for financial security. I am doing very well in school, and I plan to remain active in Womenspace as long as I am in the Eugene area. I especially enjoyed our trip to Washington, D.C., and was very touched by the generous donations of so many people who made the trip possible for me and other low-income domestic violence survivors. Participating in the rally at the Capitol with you and other legislators made me aware that, as a nation, we can mold a safer future for our children.

By the way, my daughters are award-winning and responsible young women, doing well academically and socially. Their continued well-being is my primary concern and joy, and I do give myself credit for their success.

With this letter, I believe I have raised some valid legal concerns. I feel that it is my responsibility to bring awareness to some critical issues. Many more families than mine are being affected by these support enforcement statutes, and some of the people most sorely hurt ...

Setting: Tina's bedroom, a Saturday afternoon, first week of December. She plays quietly with her Barbie dolls. Her seven-year-old mind has already grasped the physical abnormalities of the doll – the nippleless breasts ("she doesn't breast-feed her babies, does she Mom?") and the painfully tip-toed feet. But their silent mouths are perfect for role-playing.

Julie and I peek around the corner to see a one-legged Ken doll – guided by Tina – lurch towards Zippy, our gray tabby. Ken extends a perfectly manicured hand to Zippy's head. "Stay away!" shrieks Tina in the falsetto that we use to articulate Zippy's thoughts. Ken draws back. A blonde Barbie, resplendent in sequins, cuddles up to Zippy. Zippy purrs quietly. Ken advances again. "N – O spells NO! Keep your little plastic hands offa me!" Our personal safety talks have clearly made an impact here. Ken sails under the bed.

We creep away, holding our sides, shaking with silent mirth. Julie then shares Tina's Christmas list with me. Amid the wishes for Play-Doh and paint, I see a request for 'new Barbies, no Kens, please'. I query Julie about this – why doesn't Tina want a new Ken?

their hands meet with their coaches' in a ten pointed star for one last cheer: "GREAT GAME, BAILEY HILL!" Then our daughters fly across the floor to us. Kaylen's head hits Wendy's chest as Leah's head hits mine. The rivers flow, and my moist eyes meet Wendy's. Yes, for just these few moments, they're still our little girls, Wendy.

During the course of our divorce, Paul and his father formed a corporation around a part-time construction job that Paul had been doing. To date, I am certain that this corporation has been used to hide Paul's income and material assets. For example, Paul recently informed me that he used a consolidation loan to pay off his home and a dump truck. (His home is in the corporation name, and is valued at more than \$135,000. The dump truck is valued at around \$55,000.)

Paul no longer keeps a personal checking account, since he knows that it could be attached for support payments. Instead, he writes all checks out of the corporation account, including checks to our daughters' school for their fundraising projects. Paul also "barter" with other people. He recently informed me that he traded some hauling work for the use of a condo in Sun River for a week in July. I sincerely doubt that this type of income will show up anywhere in his corporate accounting. It is obvious to me that there is a problem with a support enforcement system that allows this type of activity to occur when the person in question owes nearly \$10,000 in child/spousal support.

Which state agency monitors a corporation? Just as importantly, does that agency share information with the Support Enforcement Division? Isn't there any way to prove that a nonpaying parent is using a corporation to hide his assets? I suppose that since Paul's father is a partner in the corporation, company assets cannot be attached. But isn't this just another form of evasion – not of taxes, but of financial responsibility?

I became aware that a law exists which would invalidate the professional licenses of persons who became more than \$2,500 delinquent with child support. Since Paul is a truck driver by trade, I have contacted the Support Enforcement Division about suspending his license. Although he is more than \$9,500 in arrears at this date, most of that arrearage is the spousal support. Each time Paul makes a payment, it is applied to the child support arrearage first – so guess what? He will probably never be \$2,500 behind!

Another piece of news that I just got is that the Support Enforcement Division is NOT responsible for collecting spousal support. I will have to contact a private attorney if I want that part of the order enforced. Legal Aid will no longer help people with support enforcement cases, and pro bono attorneys are very hard to find. Who is the loser here? I would say that my daughters are, since I am burdened beyond belief with work, homework and raising three children on my own without benefit of court-ordered financial support.

Setting: Our living room, 7:00 p.m., any school night. After a day that includes classes, several hours at my work study job, a board meeting with the FSS group at HACSA and a trip to Safeway, the intended stir-fry is amended to scrambled eggs. I sprawl on the sofa as my girls finish their dinner and the TV rumbles ... short moments? later, my eyes fly open. The TV flickers soundlessly; there is not a dirty dish in sight. But why ... am I ... so ... hot ... ??



No Kens, Pleaze

The Honorable Hardy Myers
Attorney General, State of Oregon
Department of Justice
1162 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-0506

Dear Attorney General Myers:

Through my involvement with the Silent Witness National Initiative, I have come to know and appreciate your support of legislation regarding domestic violence issues. With the help of Womenspace and my association with women like Sue Thompson and Emily Heilbrun, I have made great progress in overcoming my personal experiences with domestic violence. Unfortunately, in my case, the violence continues – in the form of financial control – the non-payment of court-ordered child support by my former abuser and former spouse, Paul B.

When our divorce was final in May 1995, Paul was ordered to pay \$1,175 per month in support – \$900 as spousal maintenance, \$275 as child support. Although this may seem like a generous amount of money, I had been a stay-at-home mother for nearly 10 years, and education was the only answer for my lack of job skills. I planned to attend college and raise our three daughters, and try to put together the shattered pieces of our lives.

My naivete about the support enforcement system allowed me to believe that I would actually receive the court-ordered support. The roadblocks that I have encountered are so numerous and ridiculous that I believe that there have been serious oversights in the current support enforcement legislation. My support amount was based on the amount of income that Paul earned during the ten years of our marriage. My current financial situation (rent subsidies, food stamps, etc.) is based on the amount of support that Paul has been ordered to pay, so that any lack of payment on his part results in a great deal of time, paperwork and effort on my part in order to stay afloat.

Setting: Kelly Middle School Gym – the final basketball game of the Kidsports season. Wendy and I have shuttled our daughters to practice, meetings and games for three months. Now, for the only time this season, their teams has lost a game, by one heartbreaking point. For all their cuddly Winnie-the-Pooh sleepwear and strawberry shower gel, these girls have played with a ferocious tenacity. Leah's nickname is Choo-Choo. Kaylen growls at opposing players.

Leah's eyes meet mine as cameras flash. Top teeth grip lower lip. The team receives their second-place medals, and



Plaid Bed Sheets

This room smells of dead cigarettes
and twice worn clothes
and so do I.
I reach into my head and it offers
back to me the things I
try not to hear,
the things that scald the back
of my eyelids when they are trapped in my mind.
I will toss and turn tonight
trying to make up my mind –

am I happy or sad?

It's hard to tell because the only person
who sees me is the mailman,
and he stops by briefly
without saying much of anything.

I stare at the books on the floor
and the pictures on the wall
and I scratch my belly
and wait.

for something
and anything
but mostly for you.

- Brad T. Bush

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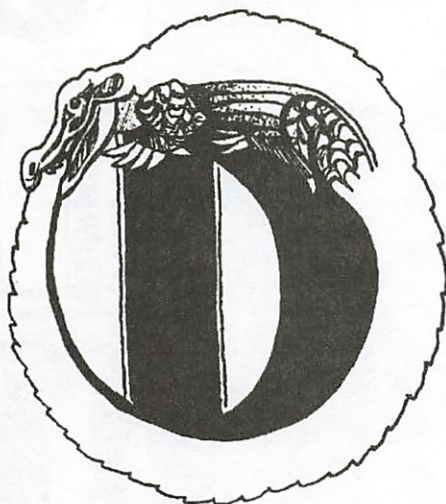
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Denali

ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

An incurable itch for scribbling takes possession of many and grows inveterate in their insane hearts – Juvenal

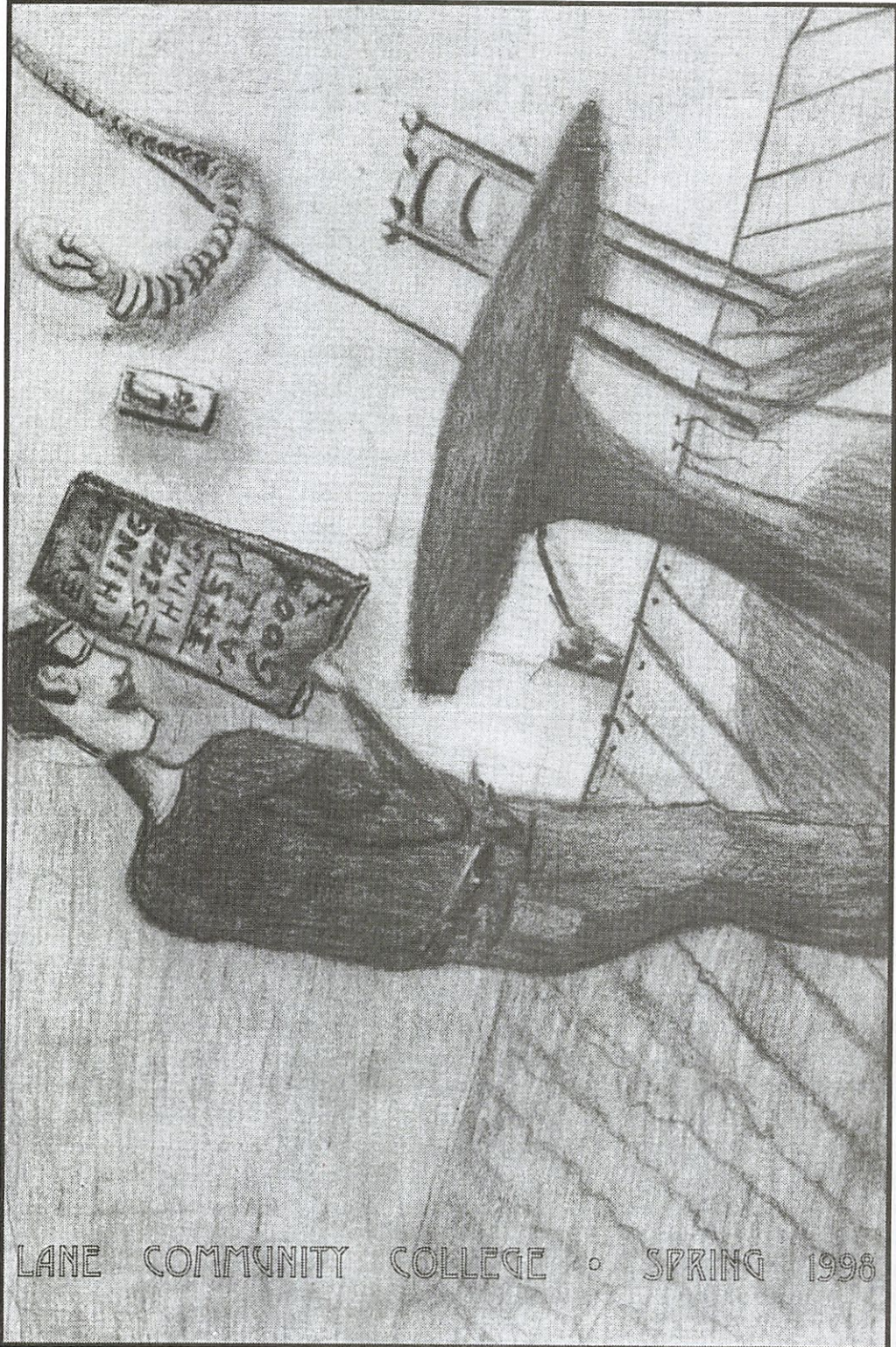


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c o n t r i b u t o r s

• **Barbora Bakalarova** – Is there anybody who speaks Czech...? • **Brad T. Bush** is currently a student at LCC and has been for a long time. Before that, he passed the time by “cruising the gut” in Salem. • **Captain Caterpillar** – an inchworm sort of guy but hey, someday I will be a butterfly!!! • **Pat Crawford** writes as a form of therapy. • **David Guy Evans** – I have inherited the wind and reaped the whirlwind: an apprentice storm-chaser. • **Katherine Gries** has an award-winning dahlia garden. In fact, Katherine has developed several unique strains which are all named for members of the *Brady Bunch*. • **Heather Hafer** understands more about the different attitudes of the moon than most of us know about the jam between our toes. • **Sean Patrick Hill** is a sensitive poet who becomes more sensitive with each pint of Hefeweizen he puts down. • **Jim Home** believes that flannel is a religion and domestic beer its sacrament. • **Janet P. Humeland** After leaving a promising career as a worm rancher, Janet has happily moved onto the government dole until her fear of dirt can be treated. • **Sally Jayne Kuhn** is the mother of two pre-teens, an English tutor, and soon-to-be UO student (thanks to Lane), who hopes to teach poetry,

Shakespeare and writing one day. • **Adam Louie** vibrates and giggles when you squeeze his red, furry tummy. • **Simon Manso** has developed a renowned book collection on autoerotic asphyxiation. We make no judgements, just write life insurance policies. • **Eric Nelson** – I want to curl up around your feet and kiss your crusty shins – I have lust in my heart! • **Jessica Parsons** is an only child in 1998. She is not allergic to Oreos. She is not 11 years old. Jessica has weird dreams and plans to be a famous writer so she can schmooze with Ms. Madonna. • **amelia arianne reising** – running away from the cold into the colder. • **Bonita Rinehart** has been published over 25 times in *Denali* since 1989. Who says you can’t sleep your way to the top? • **Jesse Steinman** does write good stuff, but doesn’t do windows; hence has removed them from his yurt. • **Sheri Takemoto** busies herself marking her territory around the vegetable garden after two or three glasses of water. As she put in the new berry patch and predators seem ravenous, any thirsty volunteers are welcome. • **Torch** – All we need is basics / for someone to drop the rain / so we can become water / & for someone to love us so / we can become blood.



LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • SPRING 1998

