

# ***DENALI***

**2016**

*Literature and Arts Magazine*



Editor-in-Chief  
Jessica Graham

Thank You  
To everyone who submitted their work!

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Over the year that I was given to work on this project, a lot happened in my personal and professional life. My life was upheaved and rerouted and made new in ways I never expected. It was difficult and heartbreaking, but I discovered new aspects about myself. As Zora Neale Hurston put it, “There are years that ask questions and years that answer.” This year answered questions that I didn’t realize had been asked.

I found the answers through both chosen and forced self-reflection. I had to find out what made me, me. It wasn’t easy to look at myself, really look and to see my flaws and acknowledge them; to accept the flaws I cannot change and to start the process of working on the flaws I can change.

I found that several of the pieces that were submitted this year delved into the ideas of upheaval, reformation, and self-reflection. Each piece in this magazine represents someone, their perspectives and how they interact within their environment. So I hope, that throughout this edition, you discover things about yourself and your view of the world.

Sincerely,

Jessica Graham  
Editor-In-Chief

“When you light a candle, you also cast a shadow.”  
-Ursula Le Guin

# A Goodbye Kiss

By JA Scott

It was a goodbye kiss,  
for all three of us.  
No, it was entirely innocent.

I was dating her that  
year, secretly so her parents  
wouldn't find out the we  
had, apparently, found true love  
in the eighth grade.

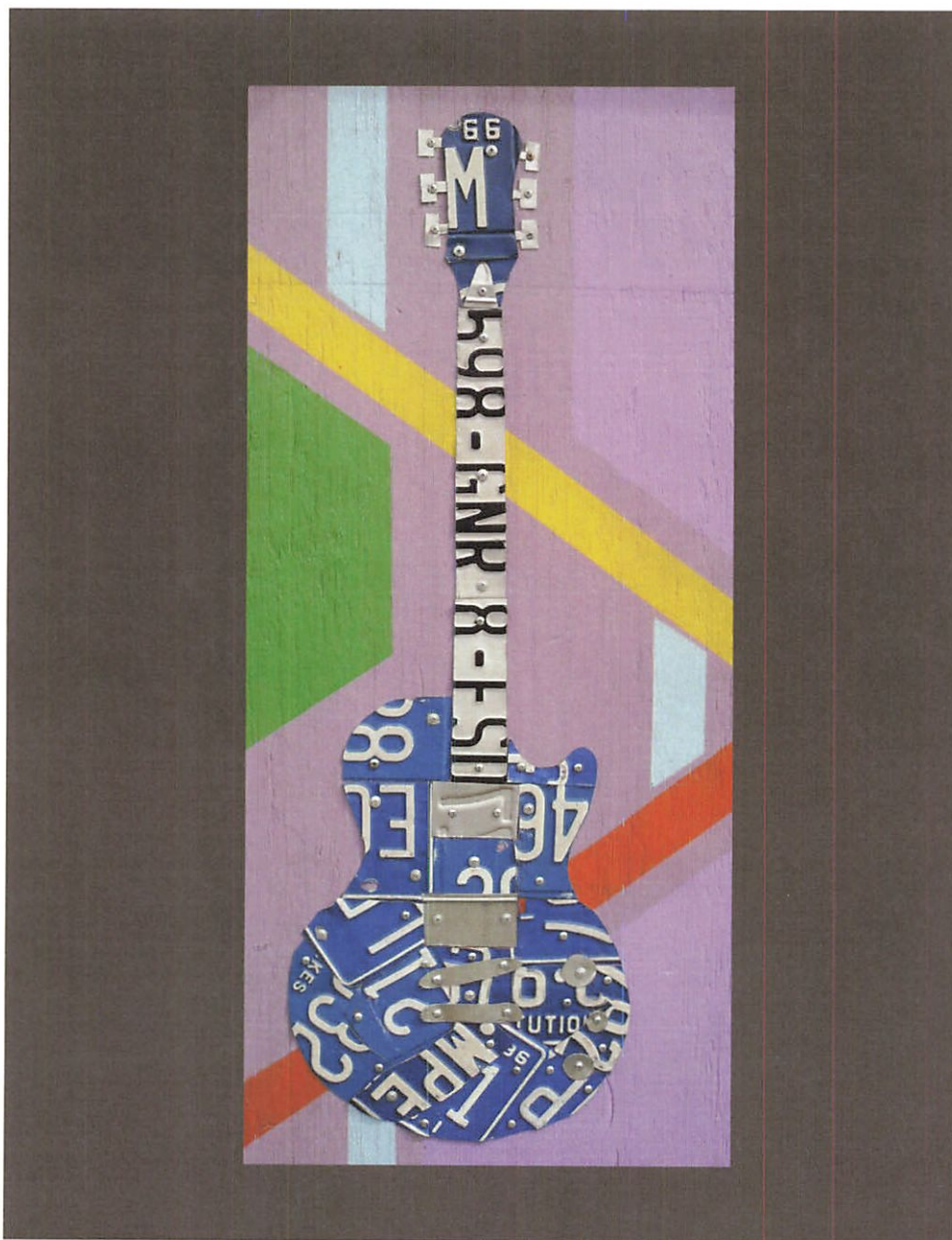
Soon, however, borders would  
divide us, end us.  
A goodbye kiss was the only  
possible answer to the odd,  
adolescent silence as we stood  
next to her locker under  
the watchful gaze of  
Mister Matthews.

He stood by his door,  
clad in Hawaiian shirt and  
vigilant eyes, no doubt  
thinking on all of the  
math I did not do that year.

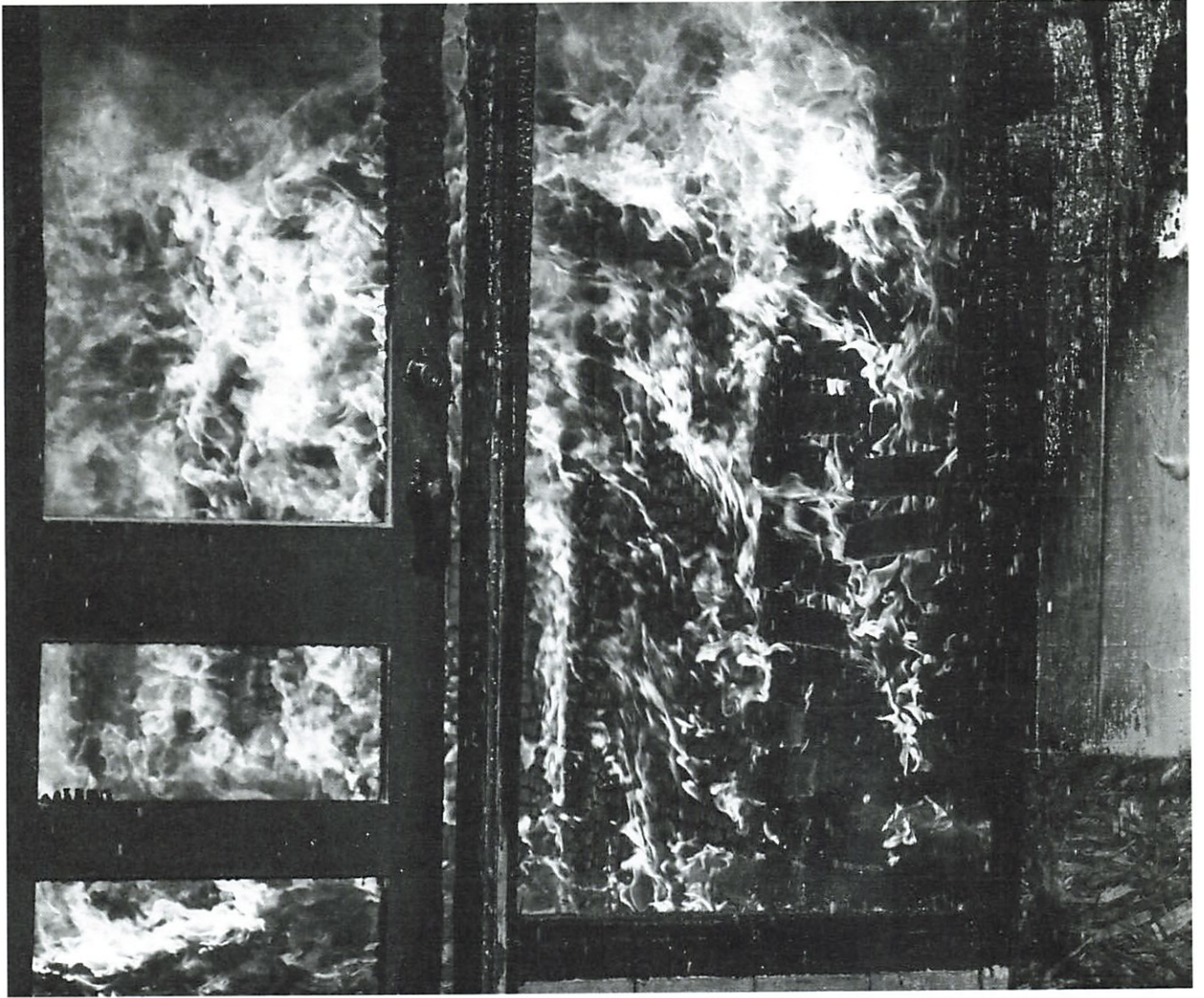
Love, however, has no fear and,  
as he stood across the hall,  
we had our goodbye kiss.

# Blue Tones

By Deeja Sol-Moon







## Burning to Learn

By Jessica Graham



## Lunita Lullaby

By Anonymous

There was a universe between my twin and me as he sat across from me at the dinner table. He couldn't see that my cells had mis-replicated themselves across the galaxies of my lungs, forming mismatched constellations. Orion's belt was now wrapping itself around Virgo's neck.

I knew I had to tell him. But he looked content with his sofrito verde as he unceremoniously shoveled it into his mouth. I had planned this dinner just to tell him. I thought his favorite dish might soften the blow. I laughed at the thought I was trying to make my cancer easier for someone else. The doctor hadn't been so kind.

"What's so funny?" Jayden asked looking up from his half-finished plate.

"Oh, nothing... I just... nothing. Don't worry about it. How's the sofrito?"

"Delicious!" Jayden smiled his big goofy grin, showing a green pepper sliver had lodged itself between gum and tooth.

I smiled half-heartedly. I cursed the lungs in my chest. I wondered if the one cigarette I had smoked behind the high school gym because I wanted to look cool in front of a guy I couldn't even remember the name of was the cause

of the cellular mutation. I sighed but it turned into a cough. More and more the air in my lungs seemed to force itself out with hacking and wheezing. The cough continued longer than it should. Jayden was looking concerned; he half got up like I was choking and he would perform the heimlich. I motioned for him to stay seated. Finally, I could breathe again.

“Are you okay,” he asked sofrito temporarily abandoned.

“Yeah I’m fine,” I replied automatically then shook my head. My lungs had done what I could not, providing the opening line for me to introduce the elephant in the room.

“Okay, I’m not fine. I... I don’t know how to... oh god. Okay, here it goes. I... fuck. I have cancer Jayden. It’s, uh stage four. It’s in my lungs and everywhere else. You know when I went to get that cough checked out a month ago? Well, they found several growths in the x-rays. So, uh yeah. I just. I haven’t told Dad yet.”

Jayden stared at me. He had gone pale under his usual olive complexion. I could almost feel his heart skip a beat. We had shared everything. We had shared toys, chores, rooms, and even a girlfriend once, though that was unintentional, but we couldn’t share this.

“Mia. I don’t. I mean when do you start chemo?” Jayden had closed his eyes when he opened them again there was a resolve that I didn’t have, that I couldn’t seem to fathom.

“We’ll get through this. Cancer treatments are getting better every day right?” Jayden asked more to himself than to me.

“Right,” I whispered realizing that I was comforting him, instead of him comforting me. It was my lungs that had betrayed me, not his! I needed comfort, I needed someone to cook me my favorite meal! Tears started falling from my eyes and I looked away. Jayden had only seen me cry once before, the day after our mother’s funeral; when we were only eight years old. Mom had died in a plane crash, of all things, she almost never flew but our aunt was in the hospital in Puerto Rico and she had gone to see her. Just like back then, I was crying for myself, for my twin, and for my father.

Jayden didn’t say anything, he just stood up and came over to hug me. My tears brought his arms around my shaking shoulders. He rested his chin on top of my head, a comforting gesture he’d done a thousand times before, but it only made the tears fall faster. I stared angrily at the peeling wallpaper of my studio apartment, tears making hot trails down my cheeks as my heaving sobs drowned out the street noise from outside.



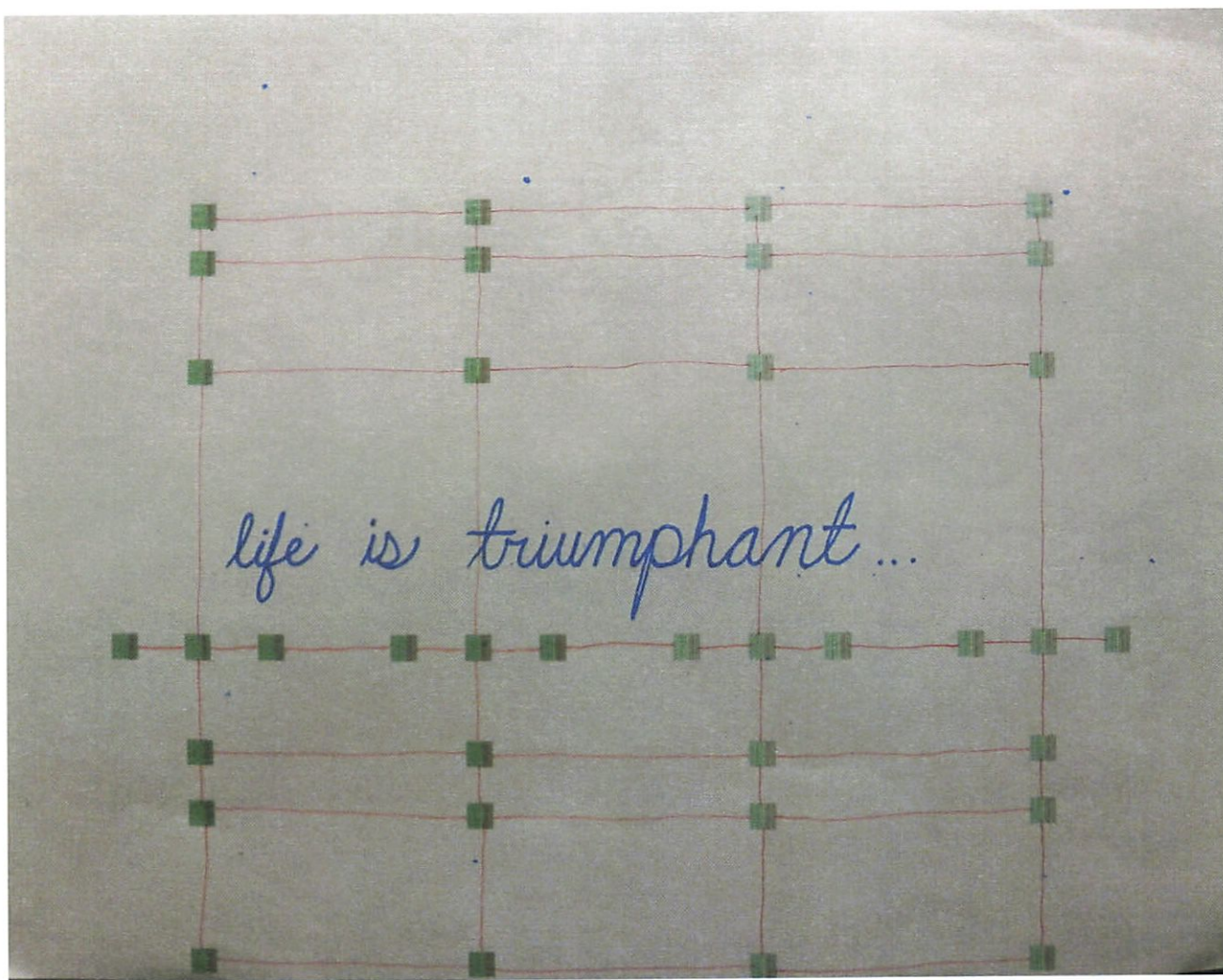
“Luna, lunita cascabelera. Eres tan linda, tan hechicera. Tu luz se cuelga por mi ventana, y al yo dormirme te digo adiós,” Jayden sang as he rocked me slowly back and forth. It was a lullaby our mother used to sing as we laid in our beds and she’d rub our backs. Our father couldn’t stand us speaking Spanish after our mother passed; it reminded him too much of her. We had lost our Spanish words in our teenage years; by the time we were out of college we could barely speak it. But this lullaby stayed with us. We sometimes sang it to each other teasingly when one of us was acting like a child. I sang it to him some nights when we were teenagers and the street lamps looked like stars through our windows but he couldn’t sleep because of the nightmares of plane crashes. We sang it to each other drunkenly while walking back from house parties thrown by people we wouldn’t remember. I sang it to him the night of graduation when he was scared of the future. Now here I was in my tiny Brooklyn apartment terrified of my lack of a future, my brother singing our mother’s lullaby.

My heaving sobs turned to coughs that shook my small body. My lungs would not let us forget. Jayden pulled away, a distant celestial body that could not understand the supernova in my chest.

Months later I asked him to put the lullaby on my tombstone. Jayden hated the idea of even talking about it. But our father had not visited me since I was

put in hospice care. I asked for it in English. I did not want my death to cause our father any more pain; he was already a white dwarf star in a cold galaxy. Jayden promised my tombstone would read, "Moon, little beguiling moon. You are so pretty, so enchanting. Your light comes in through my window. And when I go to sleep I will tell you goodbye."



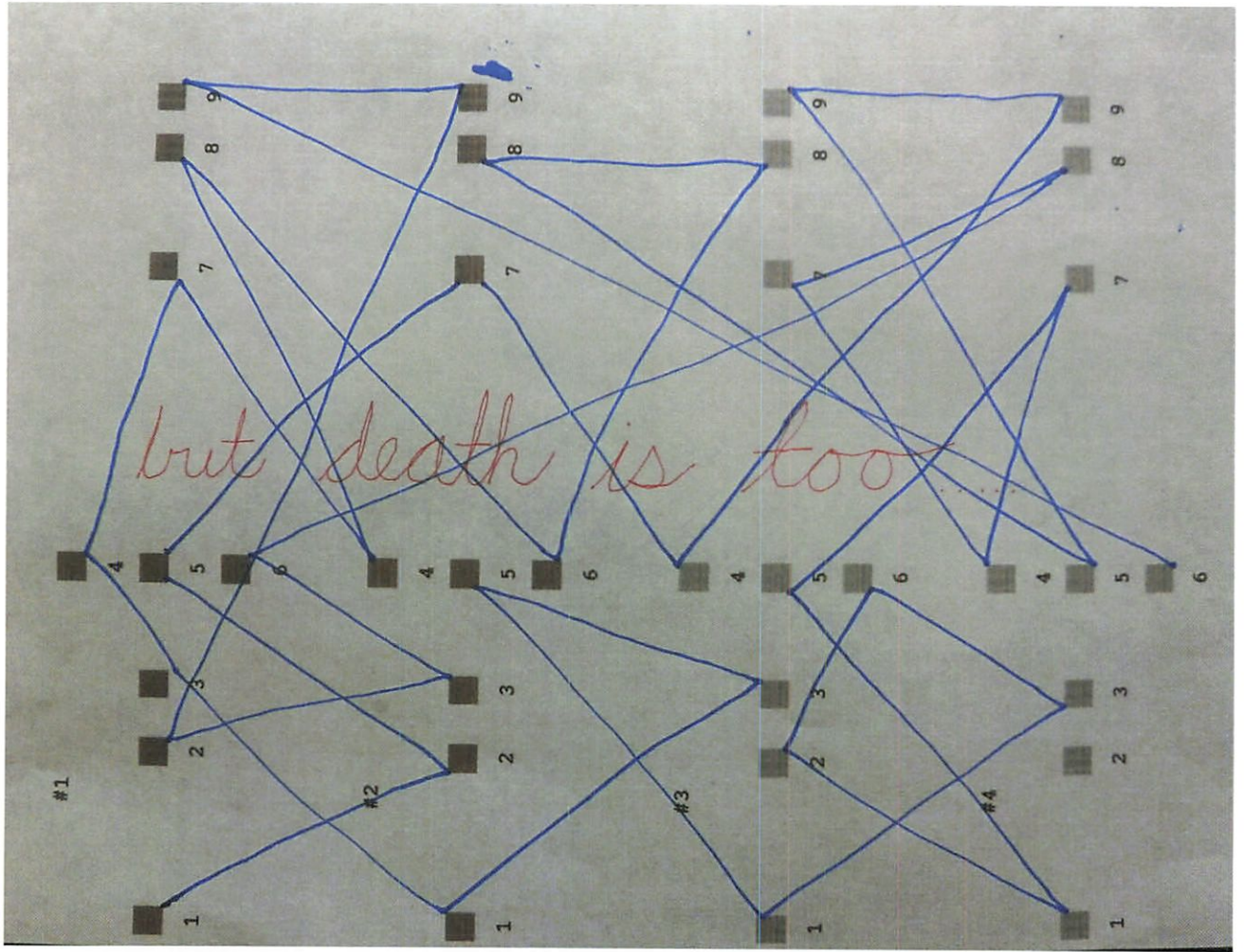


## Untitled Part 1

By Maddie Marbas

## Untitled Part 2

By Maddie Marbas



## Three Young Girls Lost on the Galactic Edge

Excerpted from A Warrior Goddess of Atlantis | in the Time of War

By Leo Rivers

### 2 - **“Incident at the Bookstore Counter”**

before my shop counter  
a credit-card proffered  
- someone’s Platonic Form  
of a daughter,  
milky lilty voice her  
curtsy tilt  
of doll face  
and down cast eyes  
with her  
“thank you sir” -  
something off kilter  
I looked up for real at her...

her ash and perfect  
ironed hair she was all  
porcelain doll and a silence in motion  
unseen  
since that mean old Queen

ruled a British Empire  
and hovered over her Throne  
like a dirigible  
tethered  
over a field of bones.

a Girl Scout of some  
high Masonic Degree  
she wore a tartan skirt  
strictly to a perfect knee  
and a chestnut vest  
covered with every  
complex patch  
and bronze award  
ever awarded in Girl Scout history!

every measured inch  
a perfect Lady  
in miniature -  
odorless  
and groomed to  
some Bonsai Garden level  
of paranoid order  
and her smiling



smiling smiling  
so frightened me. you see

her eyes were of some wretch  
clinging to the bars  
of a caged window  
in an institution  
of incurable insanity.

never free never free never  
free please have mercy  
please please please  
free me mister        “no

honey I am so sorry”  
but  
your raptor faced momma  
in her \$2000 power suit  
with matching beige everything  
is looking at me  
like a mouse in the grass, so please

I'll just put this book in a bag for you



honey

( I am so sorry)

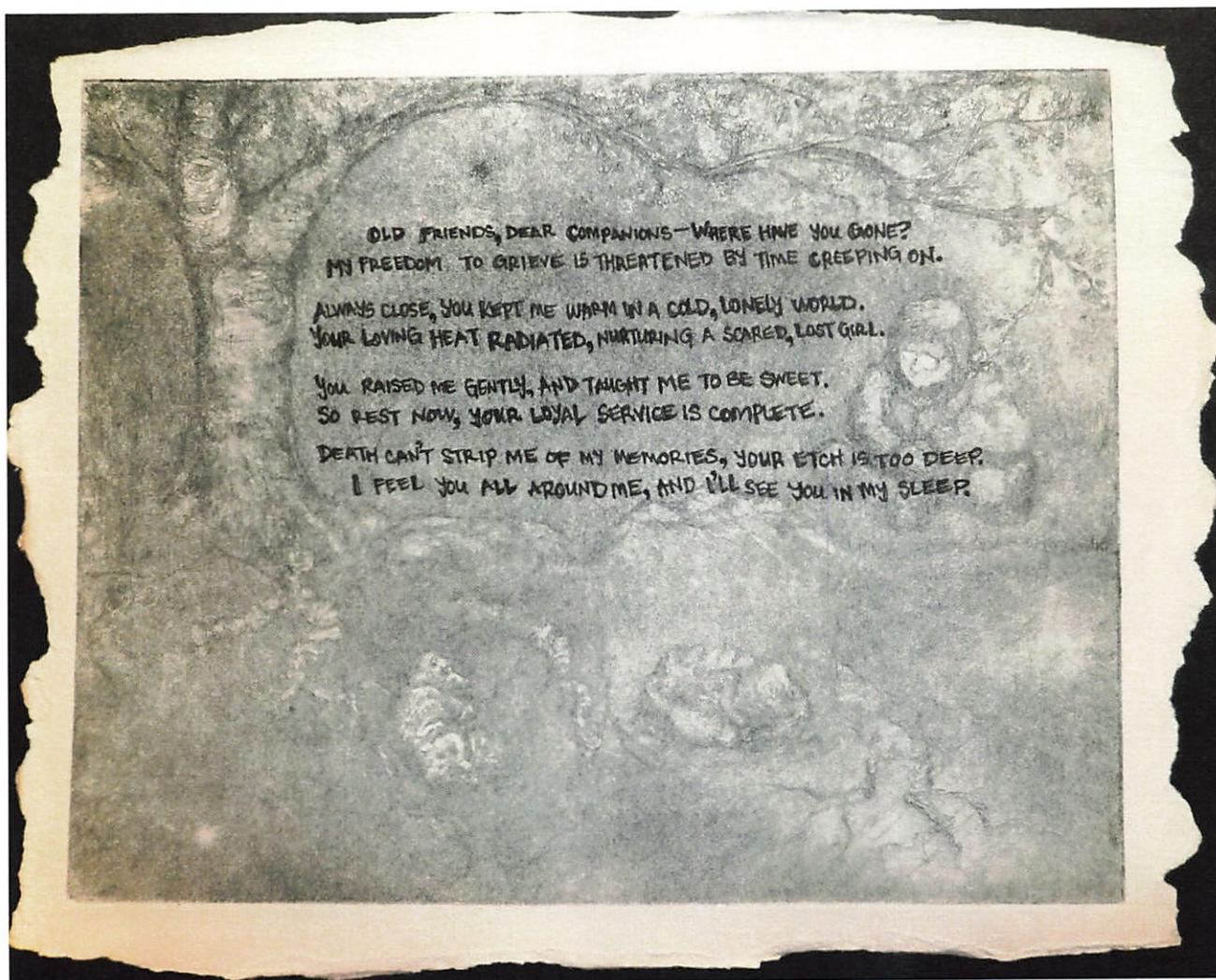
"I hear the tour is interesting  
Indian lore, stuffed beavers, dioramas  
of panthers meeting lions  
in the jungle  
samples of gems found  
in lava  
cowry shell necklaces  
necklaces of animal bones" - then

they're gone with a raisin eyed  
smile from momma  
that could turn birthday cake  
to stone,

air dead as the ugly calm  
before the cyclone.

there is no god - no sir!

if there were a god  
he'd save her.



## Untitled

By Leah Pipkin



# Untitled

By Rob Rothschild



## Putting on the Ritz

By Darlene Colborn

There's a place I call home known as Oregon.  
Osprey, Canada Geese and Blue Heron live here as well as Flamingos.  
Yes! Flamingos! They belong to a clan that migrates here in summer by the  
power of magic  
Year after year after year they are drawn by the water  
which they will make hot and the sauna  
wood they will burn making stoves glow.

Stoked evenly and smokeless for five days the fires glow  
as the people from all around come to Oregon  
to gather at the Oregon Country Faire and the Ritz Sauna.  
From Washington and California and beyond, the clan is known as the  
flamingos;  
they chop wood, lots of wood, to heat water  
and to practice the mysteries of magic.

Jugglers and stilt-walkers entertain with magic  
and eyes fill with wonder as laser lights glow.  
People eat, buy crafts and make merry in the time free from the Winter Waters  
of the Southern Willamette Valley of Oregon.  
In the warmth, people return to celebrate and the flamingos  
light the fires once again in the sauna.

For 40 years the flamingo people of the sauna  
have returned for the fun, for the magic  
and to become reacquainted as flamingos  
to remember each other and to bask in the glow,  
to rejoice in the sky-covered showers of Veneta with hot water.

Who'd a-thunk it? That this place made green by water  
would house a world-class wood-fired sauna  
right here in Western Oregon?  
A thermal siphon state-of-the-art outdoor sauna runs, it seems, by magic.  
Folks come in dragging and leave all aglow  
from this place put together by flamingos.

Yes! Souls get replenished thanks to those flamingos  
who chopped all that wood, heated all that water  
With inner hearts set aglow  
faces flushed by not by heat of the sauna  
instead, as if by magic  
of the faire gathering of flamingos in Oregon.

In the glow of the Country Faire Clan Flamingos gather  
in Oregon each year to heat water  
and create in the Ritz Sauna an atmosphere of magic.





## Untitled

By Lena Adams



## Bottle Caps N Peace

By Deeja Sol-Moon

# Earth's Rules

By Carolyn Coolidge

I'm not sure  
What to say  
As we endure  
To live each day

The cost of life  
Seems spent so free  
By what we do  
In this consuming spree

Let's start over  
Let's start again  
The climate is sober  
Will life still win

Another chance  
To pay our dues  
To give us a stand  
So let's follow Earth's rules





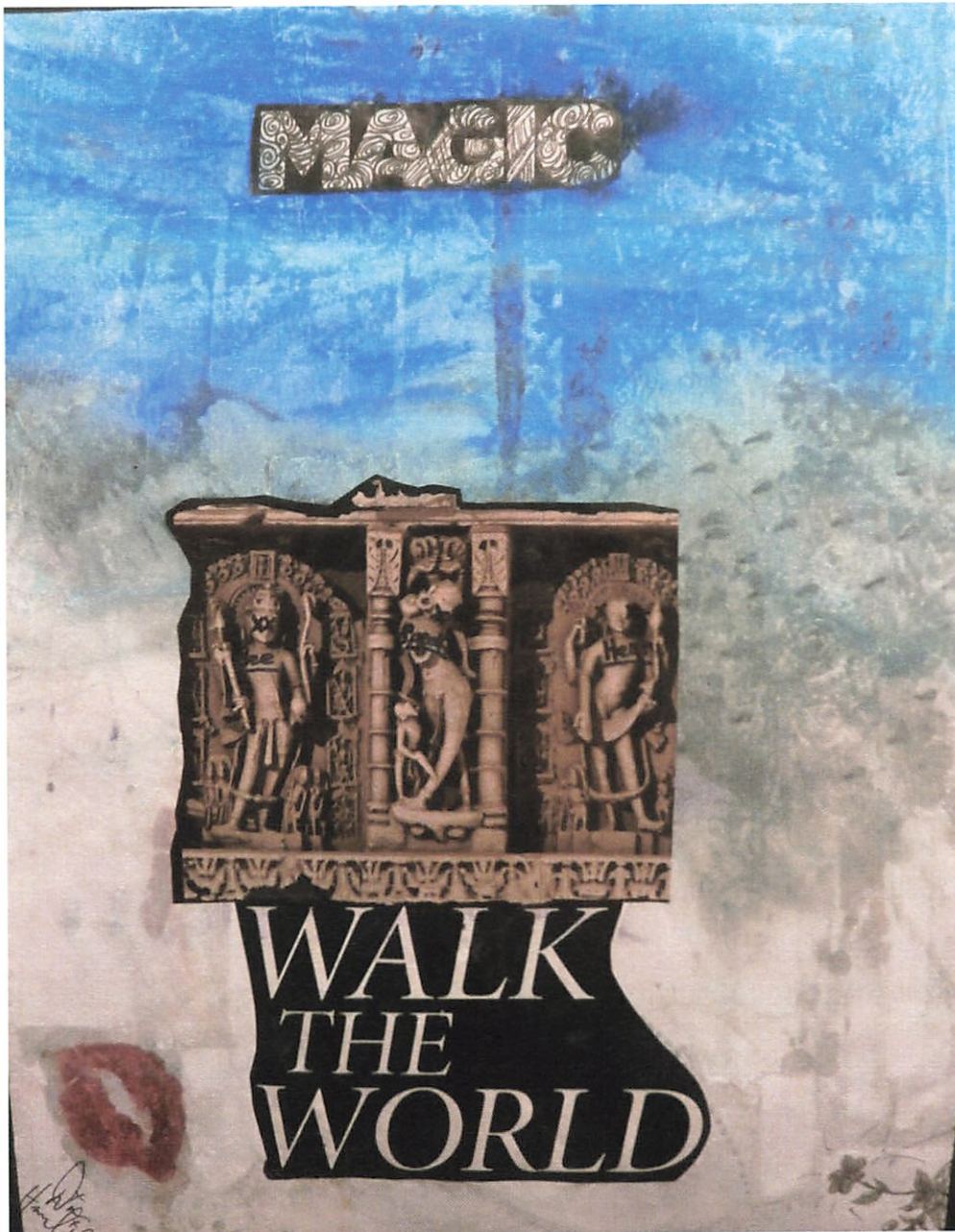
## Returning to the Earth

By Emily Smith



# Guidance Counselor Part 1

By Diana Hamlin



# Recollections/Yellowstone

By Kathy Vukasovich

1.

Snow on my lashes  
Warmed and winter nestled  
Whistle pig napping

2.

A howling white chill  
Your face- summer's faded smile-  
Stark pentimento

3.

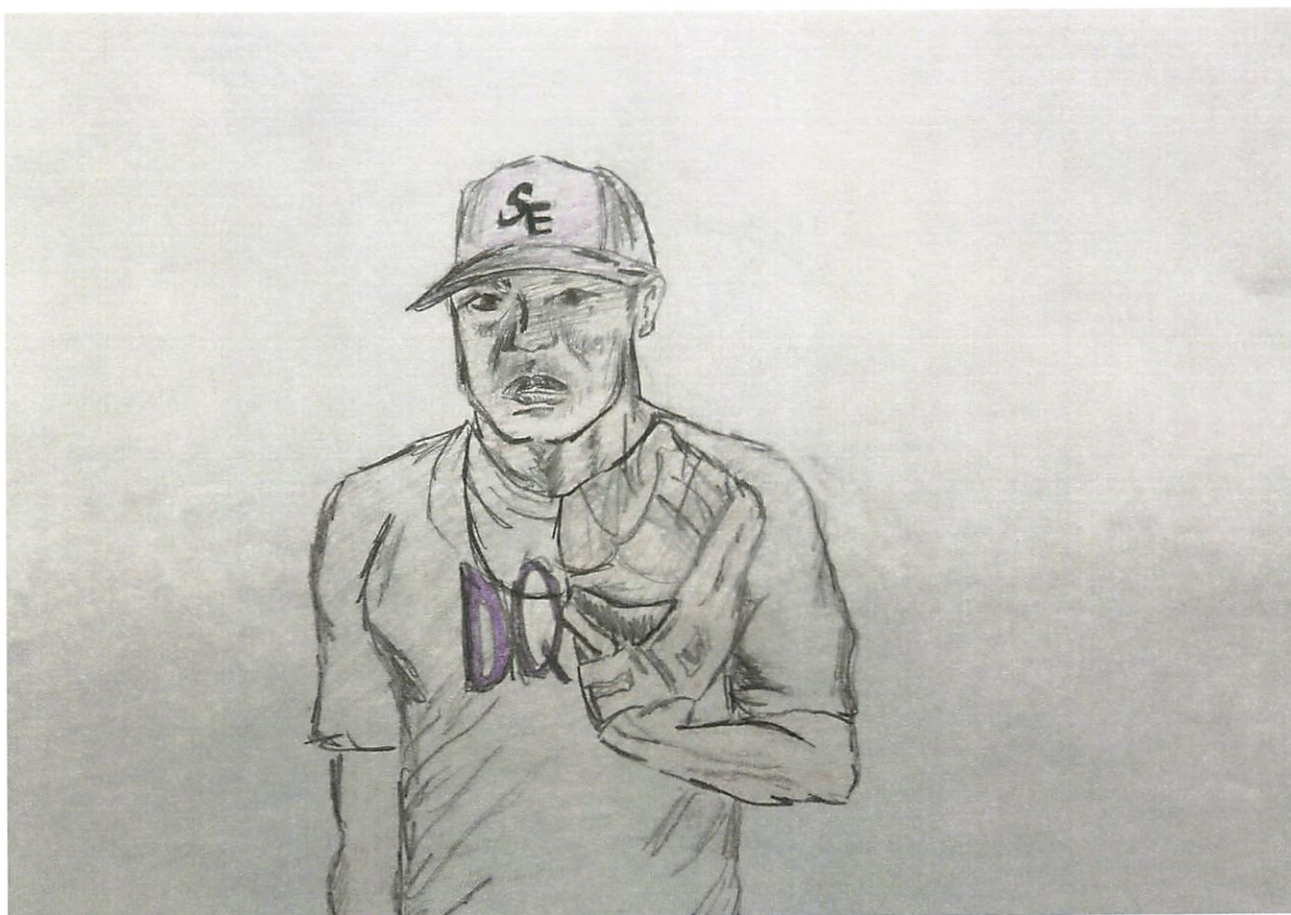
Steamy green mattress  
Undulating curly brown  
My Bison pillow

4.

Meadowlark's aubade  
Shimmering beaver pond's light  
Bear on the trail - Yikes!

5.

Shrill summer twilight  
Nascent brown cache under log  
Black- furred reaper !



## Untitled

By Lexi Terramana





## Open Eyes

By Deeja Sol-Moon



# How Eating a Cracker Changed My Life

By Jesse Brandon Taylor

After the death of my older brother in 2001 I struggled to connect with daily life like I used to. Even before suffering this great loss things were not great at home; I grew up in a broken down trailer that was just as damaged as my parents' marriage. Most of my earliest memories don't occur until when I was about nine or ten years old. I recall a few select instances playing with my lifelong friend Daniel at around age five, but none of my parents together. The closest memory I can share of my mother and father in the same moment was the day my father and stepfather got in a fistfight in the front yard. I remember shouting to my mom as I witnessed this violence. If she didn't leave my stepfather she would never see my brother and me again. Shortly after this event my father, brother, and I moved from Oregon to Texas. The transfer was very stressful, and after being uprooted I was held back one grade. I'm sure deep down I have a good reason for suppressing so many memories of my early childhood. It was two years before I saw my mother again.

Throughout my early life I floated along and got by. I was a relatively happy kid in spite of my situation; following in my brother's footsteps mostly. Always seeking to belong in his circles, what he did, I did-until he was gone. From the age of fourteen and on through my high school years I still just floated along; but now I was alone and dealing with bouts of depression. On the verge of becoming a young man I was: indifferent to my studies, struggling with my sense of identity, suffering loss, coming from a poverty stricken and faulty home. I

found myself desperately wanting a sense of purpose, a direction in life. With neither the financial stability, nor the personal responsibility to succeed in a college environment. I was the perfect candidate for military service.

The Marine Corps recruiters read me like a book, and I don't blame them. In a way I think they saw something in me that I didn't even know I possessed; a fighting spirit. One sergeant asked me what I was doing with my life and honestly I didn't have a good answer. I was smoking pot and ditching class, oftentimes when I left school I would drive to the scene of my brother's accident and just cry alone. I wanted to be stronger; to run away from this nothing life I was living. Then the Marine Corps presented me with the opportunity to change; a way to progress my life further and advance my family name. As sad as I may have been I was equally stubborn and strong-willed. It all began with a simple challenge, "do you have what it takes?" Followed by "I don't know if you do." Taking the bait, I all but snatched the pen from his hand to sign my name. Some said I wouldn't make it, others that I was too weak and would break. In their defense I was a mere one hundred and forty-five pounds of teenage hormones; backed only by the sheer determination to prove them wrong. "Here's to everyone who never believed in me," I thought to myself as I walked away from my old life.

Marine Corps boot camp is thirteen weeks of vigorous indoctrination to America's warrior society. Rumored to be some of the toughest training in the world, recruits are challenged physically, mentally, and morally. Near the end of this cycle is when my "Cracker Story" takes place. Before one can call him or herself a Marine they must pass a test known as "The Crucible;" over fifty-four hours of marching, obstacles, team-building exercises, and combat assault courses both day and night.



One purpose of this methodical training is to strip away who you used to be and sculpt a person into the image the Marine Corps desires. Common beliefs and values can be shared amongst a vastly diverse group of people who are united by hardship. During this process I was essentially reduced to my more basic instincts, food was my Achilles Heel. I believe Mike Carrado, a Marine Corps Officer, and singer songwriter said it best in *On My Watch Tonight* with this lyric “I was broken down, built up, and reborn a fighting man.” Sustenance gave me the energy I needed to fight, and I had to fight to survive.

Before the culminating event known as the Crucible, each recruit was issued a three-day ration. Three MRE’s (Meals Ready to Eat) to last the entirety of the event, this translates to about one meal per day. The morning of day one I awoke to find two of my three meals were missing. Stolen, but by who? There was nothing I could do. If I were to report them stolen I would be reprimanded for lack of accountability. Still just as stubborn as ever I never asked for anyone to share their food. My thought process was at this point in training *not many people would be willing*. They need all of their food, and apparently mine too.

Day one of the Crucible begins hiking through the hills and mountains of southern California. We carry approximately fifty to eighty pounds of equipment in our packs, and always striving to remain within one arm’s reach of the man in front of us. You can taste the coppery hint of blood in your mouth, your lungs are working double time as you run, sing cadence, and scream “Aye, Aye Sir!” to commands. The first event is Movement to Contact. We run in leaps and bounds. The ditty is “I’m up, they see me, I’m down.” Sprinting and diving to the dirt, we alternate who moves so as not to become an easy target. The sound of simulated machine gun fire echoes ahead, and smoke grenades are used to conceal our movement. Inhaling smoke and dust we war cry past various forms of cover and

concealment. Crawling through the sand we use our rifles to lift razor wire as we push along on our backs, inching closer to our goal. Eyes, ears, and mouth are all full of dust and sand. You can feel the grit crunch between your teeth. The dirt mixes with the sweat dripping from our faces, and snot dripping from our noses. Mud collects in the hollows of our empty eyes, and on our upper lips giving everyone the illusion of a muddy mustache.

As day one fades giving way to the cold November night we have a short reprieve from our activities. The senior drill instructor speaks to us on our core values of honor, courage, and commitment. While the sun continues to set we clean our rifles and prepare for the night infiltration course. Maintenance always goes in the order of weapons, gear, then self. There will be little to no sleep this night; instead we spend our sleeping hours wiggling through culverts filled with mud and water. Carefully we step over trip wires rigged with bells to give away our position. Flares illuminate the dark sky over the ravine, all movement halts, for if you are spotted you start again. We close one eye to maintain our night vision and carefully move forward once again. There is not much reward for finishing first, we end up standing in formation sopping wet and covered in mud waiting for everyone to complete the exercise. The water begins to evaporate and the cold mud clings to your skin, chills set in and we can't wait to move. Hiking back to camp is no pleasant experience either, friction from sediment between moving body parts causes chafing. There are no warm showers waiting for us, only what you can accomplish with a handful of baby wipes.

Having consumed what little food I had, I began day two sleep deprived and starving. The day's training evolution included climbing wooden towers, crossing wire suspension bridges, and various obstacles while transporting heavy ammunition cans and supplies. This tactful problem solving with a taxed body



and mind can make the difficult seemingly impossible. That day we bonded together through both physical and mental trials.

One obstacle I remember in particular was a rope ladder, as it would be thrown over the side of a ship for troops to climb aboard. Your hands grasp the vertical ropes and you use the horizontal ropes as rungs to propel you up and over. I descended the reverse side then stumbled through the bottom portion of the net like ladder. After picking myself up I began to run to the next obstacle, while sprinting I spotted a small piece of a vegetable cracker lying in the dirt. Primitive instinct took over. Before I could mentally process what was happening, my body registered this crumb as required fuel. This was energy that I desperately needed. I slid to my knees like a soccer player who just scored the winning goal at the world cup. Scooping up the cracker along with a hand full of dirt, without hesitation I shoved the tasty morsel in to my mouth. I was truly afraid someone would get to it first. In my mind everyone out there wanted that cracker, but as Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle once said "Victory belongs to those who believe in it the most." I would have fought for that cracker.

Rising to my feet, I realized the gravity of what had just taken place. It was so clear to me at that instant, that cracker is now a marker in time. I knew I had changed and would never be the same. I guess this is why they say there is no such thing as a former Marine. It was not exactly at that moment that I had changed, the process occurred over time. Beginning with the signing of documents, then to get through training was several months. However, it only took me a few seconds to consume the cracker. The act of eating the cracker was only the catalyst that made me aware that a change had taken place.

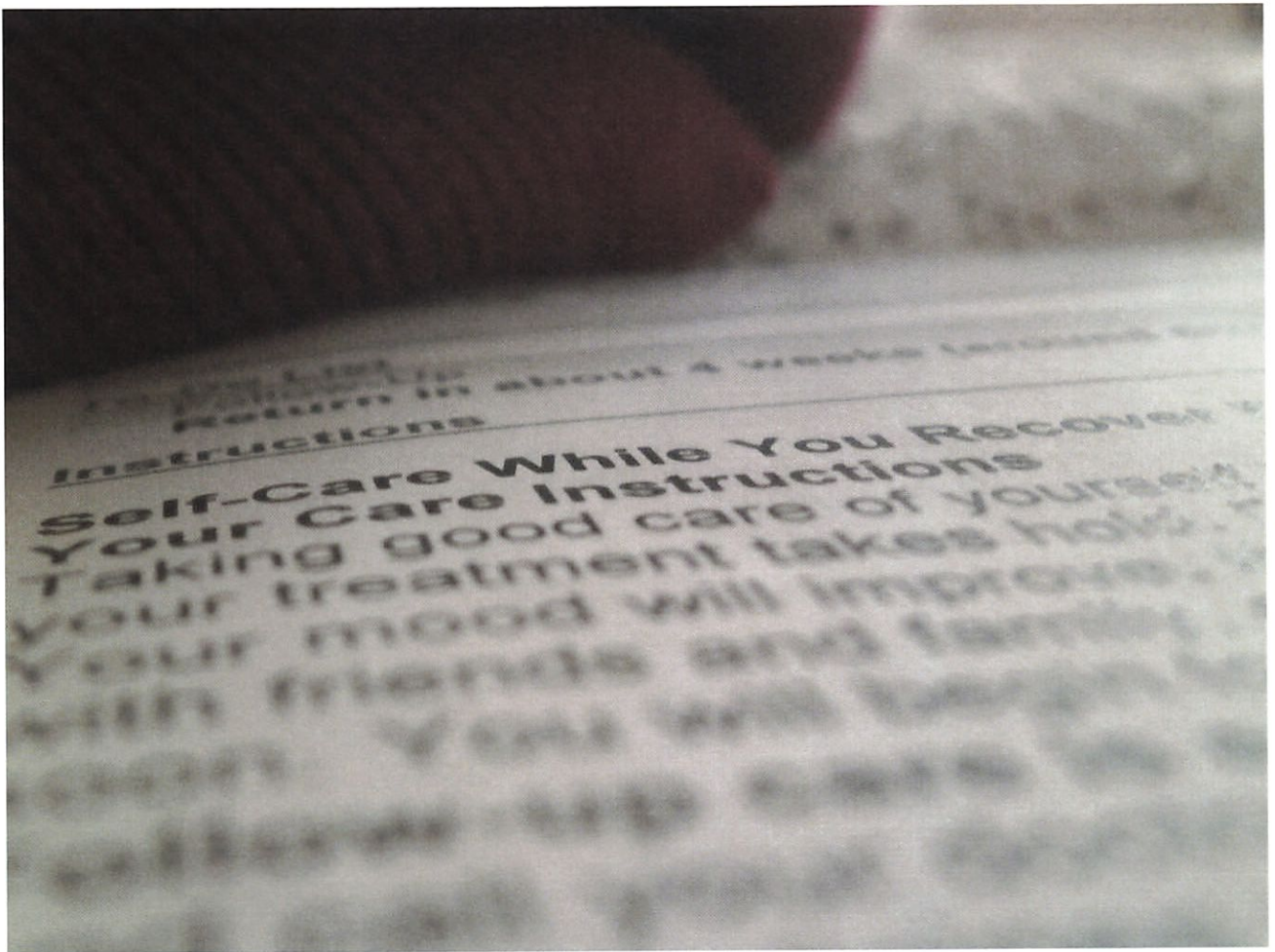
This discovery of my mental toughness would serve me well over the next eight years of my Marine Corps Career. During my enlistment, of those eight

years and over a span of four deployments, I would spend two years, two months and twenty-three days in a combat zone. I quickly rose from one leadership position to the next, always seeking more responsibility. Often called upon to make difficult decisions, I knew I could rely on my training and moral compass to lead me in the right direction. In the austere environments found on the battlefield, and with so many variables to consider this is not an easy task. Now in civilian life knowing the strength of my inner spirit continues to serve as a tool to help overcome life obstacles.

Recently I made the decision to return to school in search of higher education. Once again I find myself forging into uncharted waters, headstrong and determined to succeed, this time pursuing a bachelor degree in business. I delayed making this decision for several years out of fear of the unknown, for me college presents a whole new set of challenges and responsibilities. I have lead convoys through the deserts of southern Afghanistan. I was responsible for the lives of my men, but the thought of making a commitment to school was daunting. Because I suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder I was afraid of failure. Now, I have made a choice to overcome my fears and limitations. I am still at war, but it's only in my mind. I refuse to let this anxiety direct my journey. It has been nearly twelve years since I ate that cracker. I am bringing the Marine in me back out. I am taking control of my life.

# Recovery

By Emily Smith





## Coins

By JA Scott

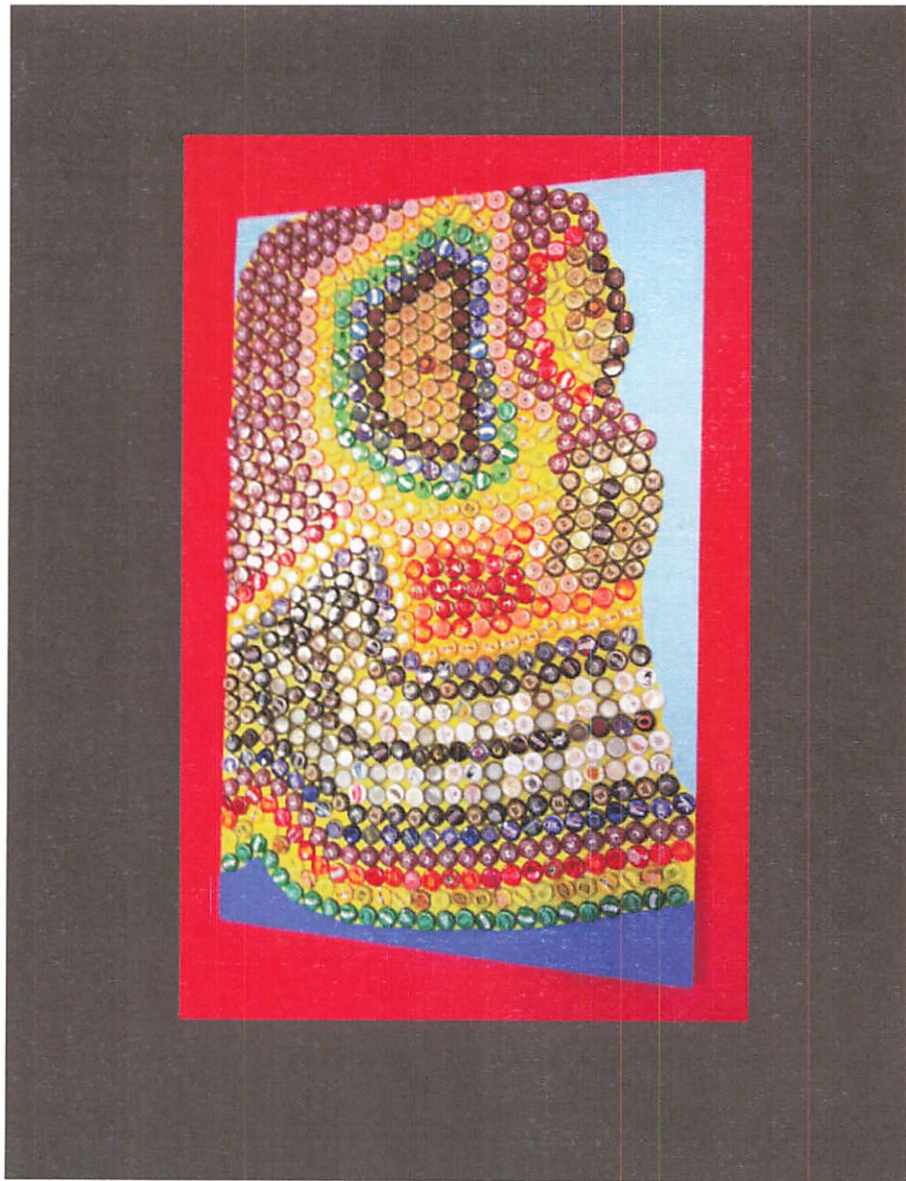
Coins, splattered across the  
hot flesh of the  
br    n   s    w lk.  
oke    ide a

Thank you, God bless,  
as bones clench for  
and flesh cries for  
                 higher.  
something



By Diana Hamlin





## Bottle Cap Skull

By Deeja Sol-Moon



# **A Prelude to DEATH!**

By Daniel George

When all seems lost and you fall into that perpetual bottom of the Bucket and you now truly believe that the only way left is up!

Then as you take your first step toward reality, you realize there's a hole in the bottom of the bucket... And O my GOD, there's a pit under the hole in the bottom of the bucket from where you can see there is no bottom, at all! It's a bottomless pit that just goes on endlessly forever and ever.

Just when you thought this is it, you realize there's still something else waiting for you.

Watch your step, so you don't go falling into that hole in the bottom of the bucket.

Oh, wait, did you see that there's something moving down there.

Oh, Hell that's a serpent and he really looks hungry.

"Hey, Hey you up there. Can I get a helping hand down here?"

Yeah maybe;

"Good luck catching that fish,  
he sure looks like a big **ONE!**"

**Yours truly;**

**JESTER YOKES**



# Light Leak

By Anonymous



# Sacrifice

By Zachary Erikson

Despite the clothes sagging from the mans' frame, it still bore the rigid strength of a military career. The white hair on his head was shorn tight on the sides and barely an inch on top. Carefully clearing leaves and twigs from under a fine cherry blossom his hands were wrinkled and gnarled. The tree had been planted sixty years ago when the, then young man returned from the war in Afghanistan. An old and familiar voice called to the man that lunch was going to be ready soon and the grandkids would be there sooner than that. With an audible grunt he stood. Protesting knees popped and his vertebrae caught for a brief second. Stretching his back with his hands on his back he turned his face skyward. A noise caught his ears. A sound he had grown accustomed to but every now and then evaded his defenses and turned his stomach.

A helicopter roared overhead and Jake craned his neck to look for it. He had arrived in-country only a week before and had still not grown used to it. There it was flying about 500 feet off the deck and roughly a mile away. An Apache by the looks of it. A really bad-ass piece of war equipment and always a welcome sight if you had the misfortune of being on the wrong side of an ambush.

"Hey cherry, eyes to your zone don't be day dreaming back there! And tell your friend to move his ass too!"

Jake had been assigned to walk slack or rear guard position with his buddy since they were new. It was the one place in the line that, while still dangerous, he would be in the least amount of danger and could see and more importantly

copy whatever everyone else was doing in case of contact. Glancing behind him he saw his friend stopped a few yards behind and seemed to be sniffing the air.

“Yo Duke, get your ass up here!” Jake had just started to turn around when suddenly the front of the line was gone. The only evidence that there used to be people ahead of Jake was a single charred and smoking boot. Jake fought to regain his senses. His training taking over, commanding his body to move. He needed to be up and gathering intelligence for the rest of his squad which would soon arrive. However, he found that he could not and he had a growing concern was for his friend Duke.

“DUKE! DUKE! WHERE ARE YOU?!” Why can’t I move my head? Oh God why can’t I move my head or arms?

“DUKE!” The loud snap of Dukes’ native tongue alerts Jake to his position.

“I hear ya Duke, I hear ya, now shut up and go get help! Shut up before you draw fire!”

Jake felt another body next to him and it began pawing over his body, despite the danger and plea from his friend, Duke had come after all.

“You idiot I told you to go get help, Ok, Ok I’m glad you’re here, but quit prodding me it hurts. Why the hell ya got to bark in my ear? And why aren’t we dead yet?”

Jake finally saw the reason, impacted to the front of them was a boulder the size of a VW bug. It must have been tossed into the sky by the explosion, “I don’t remember seeing it as we patrolled, do you Duke?”

Duke only ignored Jake as he continued checking out his friend. Satisfied



that everything was mostly okay, Duke grabbed the collar on Jakes' fatigues and waited. It was then that Jake noticed a slacking in enemy fire and heard shouts behind him. Suddenly Duke took off running, jerking and dragging Jake along. The enemy immediately intensified their fire. Duke stopped and crawled on top to shield his wounded buddy. It struck Jake as funny to have Duke, who was only half of his size trying to cover him. Once their allies had suppressed the renewed gunfire Duke took off again. Once again the incoming fire intensified. Again it was suppressed while Duke became a shield. Two more times this occurred until they were close enough that two others from their platoon ran out to them.

While Jake was flying to a hospital his first thought was to find Duke in the crowded helicopter. Two men held him down while they checked him out and he neither heard nor saw anything of Duke for the duration of the flight. When they landed Jake was immediately put on a gurney and pushed to the triage station where he was released an hour later after surgery with minor shrapnel wounds to the legs and a repaired ruptured ear drum. Doctors said his temporary paralysis was caused by the fear that the I.E.D. going off so close to him.

"Where's Duke damn it, where is my friend? Why don't you know? He was brought in with me, he had to be!" Storming away before the medic could tell him anything, he sought out others that might have answers.

It took over an hour to learn where Duke was. Somehow in the rush to get Jake to a hospital Duke was left behind with the rest of the platoon. Their teammates saw this grievance mistake and immediately passed contact off to the reinforcements that was arriving and rushed Duke to the hospital. Entering the tent that he had been told housed Duke, he expected to have to fight Duke off him as he jumped up and tried to tackle him as was his custom greeting.

However Dukes' hairy body was almost completely shaved and covered in bandages. Duke cocked his head as he heard Jake enter. The doc put his hand on Duke to prevent him from moving. An unnecessary task because due to his injuries he could not move more that he already had. The doctor left them alone in the tent.

Jake sat next to Duke, "It's ok buddy I got ya, you're going to be fine." Jake held Dukes' head in his lap for several hours until Duke slipped away. Only then did Jake cry. Before boarding a plane back home with Duke in the bottom of the hold, their Commander came by gave a gold star to Jake and a PDSA Dickin Medal for his friend.

When he arrived home, Jake bought a cherry tree start and planted it in his backyard and in front of it on a cross he laid a clear plastic box with both medals on top. There he buried his best friend at the base of tree and cross. On a plaque he had inscribed "Here Lies Duke The Best Service Dog There Ever Was."

# What We Sow

By Anonymous





# STRANGE THINGS - NO EXIT

By Leo Rivers

## 1.NO EXIT from Atlantis

With the stress of credit debt always humming  
like Highway traffic  
outside a tract house bedroom window, and then  
the home of WAR just over the horizon  
of the light show on the television  
going 24/7  
like the Muzak at the mall,

how long can we go on in the Halloween Fishbowl costume  
of self-absorption  
like businessmen  
pressing their frowns into the newspaper Business Section  
on the subway, glancing up as if  
Sleeping Beauty herself had kissed *them*  
when the robot girl announces their station?

We are doing Something Somewhere.  
I don't mean me or you exactly,  
I mean we as 'us' or our Leaders,  
or you know, *Somebody*.

Mistakes were made.  
By Situations, (all by themselves),  
apparently  
in that They announced  
no names and  
no one accepted Responsibility.

Billions are spent invisibly  
every billable hour  
our Elected lawyers go on talking  
talking talking  
neither facing the camera  
nor the interviewer -

it's like they're dictating their memoirs,  
nose up, indicating the punctuation with their chin.  
A glance out at us like a flicker  
of nervousness, like a liar glancing at his watch.

I know *my* Party. I know  
the demographics they have assigned to me.  
But I don't really like them.  
I look at them. I see they don't see me.  
And I don't like anybody I see.

Maybe it's me. Maybe  
I just don't like *anybody*.

Drone killings in other people's countries  
by invisible agencies  
scares me.

Cameras on intersection stoplights  
scares me.

Police cars slowing down when I'm at the bus stop  
scares me.

Being able to hear my heartbeat  
even though it's beating slowly  
scares me.

And the way the other people  
at the shop where I drink coffee  
look mean if I say anything  
scares me.

Am I the only person thinking these thoughts?  
Am I alone in here,  
or did those shadows moving  
each hide a sniper  
like a wave a shark  
smiling at me in the dark?



The traffic comes and goes  
like waves outside the window.  
I shake my wrists because they hum.  
And then, I stand up and sit down again.

I sweep the floor. I sit.  
I stand up and sit down again.  
Still restless, I take a shower.  
I stand dripping  
like a hailstorm-beaten flower.

Atlantis is at war.  
It's not Our Town no more.

## **2.STRANGE THINGS**

The Fascist obsession with Legality  
that trivializes human dignity  
the way a spider does supper,  
busy, busy  
spinning a fly into  
a silky cocoon of invisibility  
that does strange things.

It does strange things  
this invisibility

of once human beings  
that when digested  
into census columns,  
transferred to punch cards  
and then cast, like a net,  
over those who huddle  
in the shadows  
of Black Iron wings,  
it does strange things..

Look, see...

- an odd duck, these camps like Ravensbrück  
where, I believe, that  
the same skeletal waif who is  
a selfless heroine to the Reds or Poles  
proves to be a collaborating cunt when  
betraying all others than those  
to their Blockovas

- putting their name on a List  
for a trip to the bathhouse.  
Can the same woman  
who deceives the Nazis  
into punishing guiltless Gypsies,  
(making them stand, dying in the snow),

justly be called  
a Saint and post-War Hero?

I look at my phone,  
the street light with a camera,  
those police dressed like robots  
in a bad Sci-Fi movie made for TV,  
and wonder if  
it's THEM AGAIN  
– or it's just fear of death  
and  
me being an old man.

This Fascist obsession with Legality  
– it does strange things.





## What Have We Forgotten?

By Anonymous

## Textured Stains

By Anonymous





# Transformation

By Zack Erickson

John had to admit, despite the fluffy appearance of his drill-instructors, they had molded him into a very effective Drop. Drops were what recent graduates from the academy were called. They were trained in environmental growth and development. Basically they made sure all plant life stayed watered so that it flourished on the planet. In addition they trained in fire-fighting, and drought relief. John enjoyed this work for many years but like most, he grew bored of the routine. He was addicted to the jumps he made during training. There was a great deal more excitement in emergency jumps; however, there were never enough emergency jumps for him.

Slowly, anomalies began to be detected in the air and new ailments in some of the Drops coming back from missions. Then, Drops stopped coming back all together. All the kingdoms met and accused the others of treachery. All of course denied. One day a Drop managed to return and told of his entrapment and slavery. According to him, his captors sealed him in a cage of clear material and later in a box with freezing temperatures. He was not sure how he escaped only that he noticed one day that the walls were gone and he could move freely. Further investigation was launched and it was found that there was a newcomer

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to their planet who was to blame. It was too late to negotiate with this parasite however. Their poisons filled and choked the air and many of John's friends stopped coming back. John had all the excitement he wanted now...war had come.

The war raged for years with some hard won victories but, still it seemed as though nothing was gained. Many of John's remaining friends joined H.A.I.L. (Hard Attacking Individuals), an elite fighting branch designed to train soldiers to act as guerrilla fighters for quick strikes with heavy damage dealing capabilities. Others joined S.N.O. (Strategy Knowledge and Observation), the intelligence division of the army. While they used more passive tactics than H.A.I.L., they still boasted several victories. A defect in John's genetics caused him to be passed over for both groups. Not wanting his friends to feel sorry for him, John decided that since he could not fight, he would train the new recruits that were joining the army and make sure anyone who would later join his friends would be the absolute best. The rush of molding new recruits quickly wore out sadly, and was starting bore him until Sara arrived. John would later describe her as "pretty as a dew drop in the morning," but at the moment he was dumbstruck and knew at once he was in love. He broke the rules constantly when it came to her. Letting her slack off on days when the barracks needed

cleaning and making sure she got more individual attention in training even when she did not need it. Anything to be near her. By the time she graduated to a combat unit John had pulled every string he could just to be assigned the same unit.

Sara, however, was not happy about this. She enjoyed the attention and favor she was shown and made sure to be as flirtatious in training as possible, but she did not share the same feelings that John had. John quickly learned that she had been acting when she avoided John at all costs. He was heartbroken. It was worse for John than it would have been for other people because of the strings that John pulled he was her squad leader, and only in the rarest of downtimes during training were they ever able to find time apart. April 5th would put their ability to be near each to the test when they received their first mission. The mission was to jump in and attack while the enemy made their morning migration. If the attack failed due to the enemy's shields, a H.A.I.L. team would be sent in as back up.

As John's squad screamed down to earth at terminal velocity, as only airborne units can, he spotted a perfect target. Using signals, he coordinated the squad to strike as one. Drifting into their places John noted that Sara was looking at him. A dangerous thing since an improper head tilt could send you

tumbling off course. He motioned for her to look straight. She clearly ignored his command and continued to stare. As John tried to correct her body position he also noted that she was drifting closer and they might soon collide. Sixty seconds from impact she was close enough that he could read her face. John saw in her face that she was terrified and probably locked up, but there was something else in her eyes that John could not read. John could have reach out and touch her if he wanted, but that might send him tumbling off course as well. Sara collided into him and instead of the jarring collision that should have happen there was nothing but their bodies, melding into one, and all his love for her, and he was surprised to feel that same love coming from her, also there was regret, regret from her not acting sooner. So, she did love him after all but perhaps Sara had been too scared to act or did not know how. It did not matter to John because they were not joined forever and he was the happiest he had ever been and when they returned from this battle they would be together,

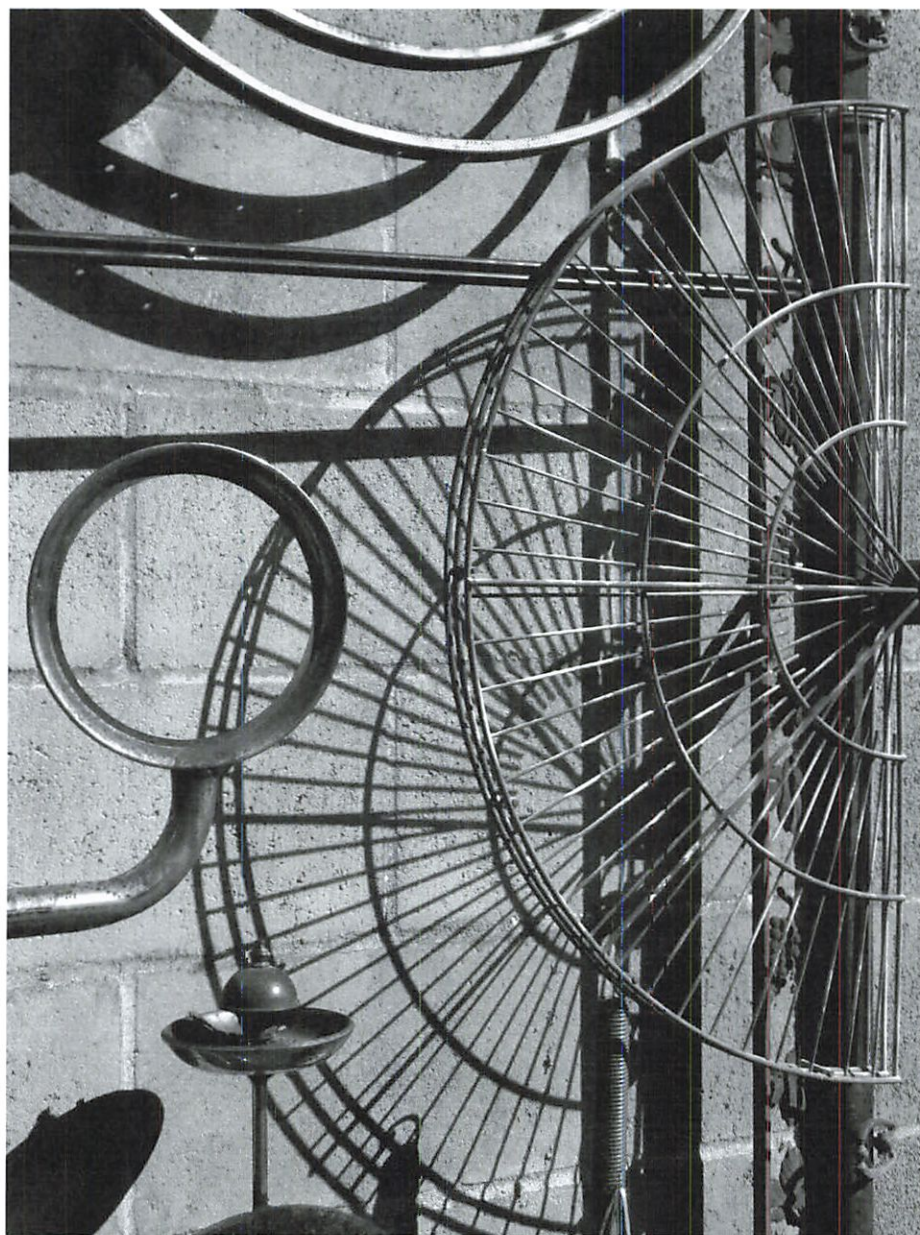
THWACK

Ah Damn, Jill moaned as the rain started to suddenly pound against her windshield. Hitting her wipers and quickly pulling off the road, she put the top of her vintage 57' Thunderbird up. Now where the fuck did this come from? She asked the sky.



# The Line Brings

By Emily Smith



## TIME SEARCHERS

By Daniel George

Limited in Eternity  
Consumed by Reality  
Defeated with the Past

Lost in the wondering of wealth unlimited,  
grasping time on a rich man's dream.  
Searching for the door to open a rainbow  
and forgetting the key.  
Listen my friends to words for words for thought.  
The door is as easy to open,  
as the key is easy to turn.  
Finding is in giving  
seeing  
Receiving is taking a gift concealed in  
the knowledge of understanding Wisdom.

Henceforth comes that eternal question!  
***“What did the fountain say unto the rainbow?”***  
***“Your Gold is my Youth!”***



## Fading Horizons

By Lisa Alvarez



## Through the Eyes of a Friend

By Larry Mustain

My story is one of dark resource and ever bending;  
through time it meets with great concern and fear,  
this life so dear and short, we grasp forever fending,  
he holds on tight, my friends last breath so very dear.

Cancer has ridden hard his body parts to mortal pain,  
which seeks to take his life in stages of sorrow.  
He resists his end, a mystery of will so unexplained,  
implores each moment, it is time he seeks to borrow.

Tortured hours of agony, I see the anguish in his eyes:  
grief so hard to watch it sets my heart to ache and twinge.  
Begging him to let go, my imploring he refuses, he denies.  
God should suffer such a fate! My thoughts are of revenge.

Yet, moments later he gasps then letting the struggle find its peace;  
his hand in mine, limp and lifeless, it is heaven he is soon to reach.

