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Spring 2013

Cover art by Jeff Skansgaard
Untitled

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Fix bayonets
By: Justin Daniel

The night was dark, the morning wet,
With silent whispers from all around.
Then came a call, "Fix bayonets".

The rain was dancing, the moon was set.
Feet where raping the peddled ground.
We fixed bayonets, and slowly crept.

From the line, our feet did step.
Then with a thundering stampeding sound.
We charged! with fixed bayonets.

Upon the ground, we laid the threat,
Peace for country that day was found.
For that is why, we fixed bayonets.



The Changing of The Guard
By: Erika Adams

To Believe
By: Justin Daniel

I've heard the sermons,
listen to the prayers.
I've done the research,
on what is there.
I've read the books,
on history.
And listened to the scientists,
debate all three.
But there is something,
I want yet to achieve.
What do I want?
perhaps, to believe.

Genuine Meetings in Present Time
By: Michael Kleis

I like to stay in my own mind
I like to take a stroll through yours as well
Each memory a piece of history to reminisce, each brain cell a stem rooted to blossom into the
fruit of bliss
The nature of the mother soil, comforts every idea we share through a conversation
The lack of hesitation is positively energized through meditation, gently pouring out water of
imagination
Feeding and feeding our thoughts, each water drop splashes deep within our passion
Intrigued by intellectual stability, the most powerful type of fashion
The meeting of the souls, crossing paths our reality comes together fast
But only when we take the time to speak, is when the birth of nature comes at last
We relate to the past, worry about the future
The power is in living now, now is the setting place for life's adventure

A Moment in the World

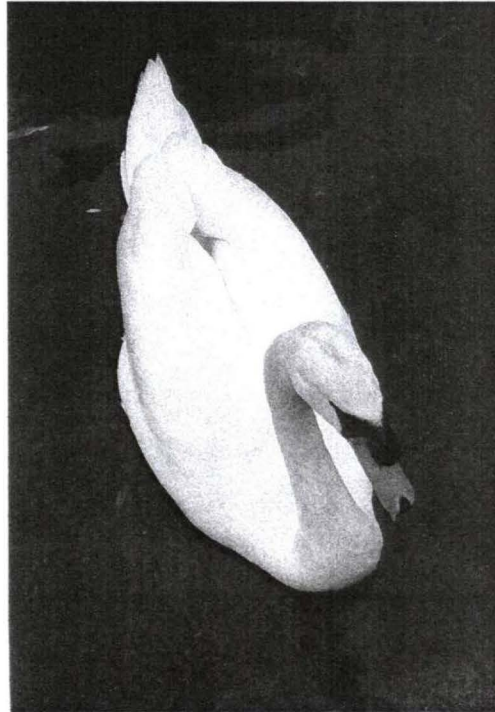
By: Justin Daniel

A moment in the world, but a breath of time.
No hesitation, when you hear loves chime.

The completeness of the moment, a joining of the dual.
If it is real, it will be times subdual.

We have times breath, the moment, prime.
No need for words, with just a look, we mime.

Emotions take hold, to move instinctual.
Just you and I, the moment, perpetual.



English Swan
By: Erika Adams

Walking Testosterone

By: Michael Kleis

Straight postured, swing in every step, walking testosterone

Heterosexual energy, post-teen pre-adult sex

Rat a tat pat on his legs with the finger tips of drum sticks constantly in rhythm

Hollywood loaf warms the right leg

Legs stretch up the steps two at a time, a dime rolls by but won't stop for me to find

I briefly ponder possibilities of ten cents being the next best thing to do

Knew the best was next to skies of blue, clouds of smoke consumed and my lungs blew

Meditated and focused, spit word of poetry to the queen in front of me

Relatively smooth she replies with eyes of seductive fantasy

Our souls escaped into dreams of love, for this lay I am humble

As I am constantly in search of a feast in the ruby fruit jungle

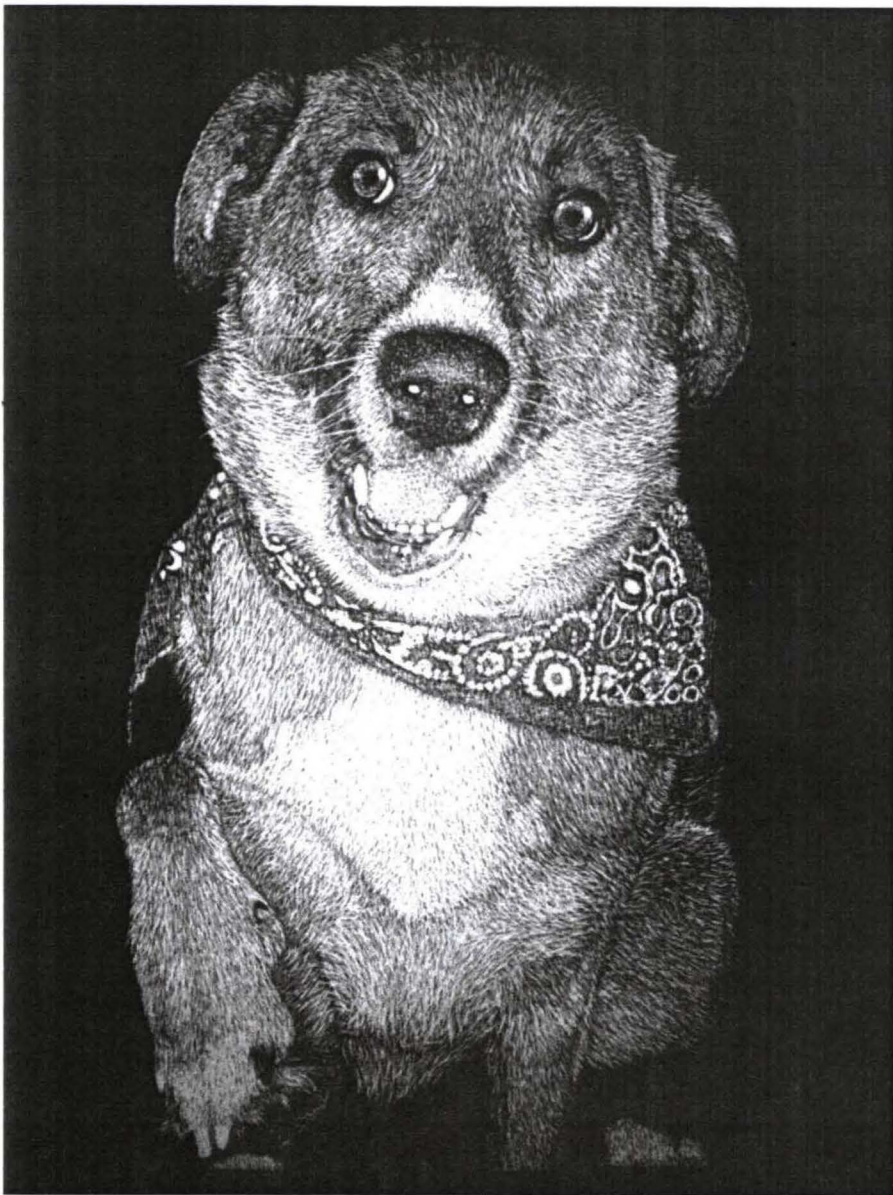
Sexually driven and physically fit

Calm Sativa lit as I take a hit and sit satisfied

I continue on through adventures of possibilities

Living life cause' really, reality is just our imagination

Painted by our abilities



Untitled
By: Jeff Skansgaard

The Value of a Dragon's Hoard
(Excerpt)
By: Erika Adams

Vireus stretched luxuriously and curled up again upon his bed. His dreams were filled with the vivid colors of gold and silver, emerald and ruby. Also in his dreams was his family. His parents, cousins, and even better, all of his ancestors, were all perched upon pile over pile of treasures from time immemorial, like powerful kings upon their thrones. Only these thrones, instead of being paltry chairs, were made of coins, jewels, even crowns.

Vireus sighed happily in his sleep. *Ah . . . how wonderful it is to be a dragon . . .*

For that is what Vireus was: a dragon.

Even better, said his dream, *a dragon with a hoard.*

A deep rumbling shook the earth beneath the cave in which Vireus slept, interrupting his beautiful reverie. The suddenness of it jerked him awake. Vireus snorted sleepily and blinked a few times to adjust his eyes to wakefulness. He let out an enormous yawn — showing rows of fangs that were over half as long as a full-grown man and easily just as thick — and clicked his tongue drowsily.

His lovely dream had been cut tragically short, but in the end, he did not mind. Vireus was well used to these earth tremors which were perfectly natural within the mountainous terrain where he lived. The rumblings seldom occurred and were so deep underground that they were rarely noisy or violent enough to cause him any long-lasting annoyance or discomfort, and in any case, he was by nature a fairly heavy sleeper. But the biggest reason for Vireus' contentment was that, with only the exception of the absence of his kinfolk, his dream was a glorious reality.

Vireus stretched himself again, his enormous bones cracking with a sound of boulders splitting and his gleaming metallic scales rubbing against each other. He settled himself again comfortably again upon his bed of gold with the air of one who is at complete peace with the world, letting his eyes gaze lovingly at his wonderful hoard. Gold coins, giant pearls, precious stones, all shimmered and glittered flawlessly with a sheen — Vireus was particularly pleased to note — not at all unlike that of his own golden-green scales.

Even his assortment of armor and swords he held in high esteem. He knew, of course, that most of his kind would disapprove of this collection in particular. Indeed, Vireus himself had a blatant lack of love for humans — except of course, as a “home-cooked” meal. It always disgusted Vireus to think of the ways in which the use of these beautiful riches of the earth was always ludicrously abused by humans. Especially, he pondered with loathing, the way humans walk clankingly and clumsily in the full metal suits believing that they make the

humans invincible, and the manner in which they foolishly wave their swords like broken windmills with complete disregard of their surroundings in the vain hopes that they will strike their enemy before it strikes them. And yet (though he couldn't fully explain it and would never admit this aloud) Vireus had always admired the way suits of armors stood with the hilts of their swords clasped in their hands, full of impeccable splendor and silent dignity. Yes, he decided, armor and swords do much better without humans to sully the art of their creation.

And yes, just as it was in his vision, Vireus was completely surrounded by vast amounts of treasure that would make even the most modest of men goggle with awe and greed. *Not that there are any modest men*, he thought with a sardonic snort.

Another deep rumbling boomed within the cave, though not from the earth this time. Vireus stretched once more, bellowing "Tis time for breakfast!" out loud.

He leapt off of the heap of gold coins which served as his bed, landed with a graceful flip onto the stone floor – he was in such a wonderful mood this morning he felt like showing off even to an cavern devoid of other living creatures – and strolled with proud satisfaction past his other mounds of treasure.

Vireus reached the mouth of his cave and breathed in the fresh morning air deeply. From this peak he had a magnificent view of the rest of his mountains, one of the reasons why he made his home there in the first place. Beyond them were the forests which made up part of his favorite kingdom for snatching up the delicious humans who lived in a village nestled just beside the forest like a kitten beside its mother. Vireus bared his teeth with cruel pleasure at this analogy: he always relished the pitiful helplessness of humans and the ease with which he took them as they ran in panic at the sight of him.

With all these wonderful thoughts to lift his spirits even higher, Vireus ran to the edge of the cliff surrounding his cave and hurdled himself into the open air, plummeting toward the jagged peaks below. If anyone had been on the mountain just then, they would have witnessed a most spectacular leap more than worthy of the equally spectacular creature that Vireus was. But the onlooker's breath would have been taken completely away at the sight of Vireus then unfurling his beautifully massive wings just as he threatened to be swallowed up by the jaws of the peaks. He lifted himself swiftly but gracefully and flew away toward the rising sun like a reptilian angel. If, of course, one could imagine such a thing.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW

By: Katie Benusa

If only you could know what happened that night,
but my secrets remain behind closed doors.
I will forever keep my lips shut tight,
never to divulge the tragic horrors.

If only you could feel the fear I conceal,
the threat of an uncontrollable change.
Finding another part of me to steal,
and aspect of my life to rearrange.

If only you could save me from my mistakes;
teach me to let go of my bitterness,
so my heart can be cured of all the aches
and be brave in the face of hopelessness.

So if you knew, tell me, what would you do?

ESCAPE HIM IF YOU CAN

By: Katie Benusa

Like a storm appears on the calm skyline
he can arise from thin air, no warning.
A gale of thoughts spins my sanity's turbine
as he leaves me in a state of mourning
that steals my will to wake in the morning.
He is the only force that fogs my pride.
He unceasingly stalks me while scorning
every slur of speech and step I stride.
With nowhere left to run, here I reside.
Harbored safely in arms that shelter me
the pressure dissipates; ceases to collide.
For this fleeting moment; I am set free.
He had strength of will when I had none; and
that's the tale of how the noise had begun.

Miss Eleanor

By: Samantha Lepak

Miss Eleanor woke with a heart full of glee. She rose from her bed and got dressed gracefully. She took out her curlers and patted her hair, took out her best necklace, fastened with care. O'er her white silk dress knickers she buttoned a skirt made of rosy pink tweed, to match with her shirt.

Satisfied with her clothing, she stepped down the stairs and observed her cat Nickels who was resting there. She greeted him kindly and patted his head, but he stayed still and silent as if he were dead. The kindly old kitty, he liked to sleep in; he'd yowl all night, then slumber and grin as his lovely old lady each day said goodbye. He'd snooze 'til she returned, then purr at her side.

Miss Eleanor swiftly stepped out to the street, where emerald grass was blooming at her feet. She strolled down the alley, and waved to the potter who was busy with a customer and must've forgot her. She arrived at an alley and stood with a man who was round and was shaped like a coffee bean can.

"Good day," said Miss Eleanor, grinning politely, admiring the sun which was shining so brightly. "I do hope the traffic lets up rather soon. You see, my son's wedding is this afternoon. I promised him, this time, I wouldn't be late." And just then, the traffic began to abate. She crossed the street proudly, purse held in her arm. She greeted each person with manners and charm.

When finally she got to the old marble chapel, her heart swelled so sweetly like a great candied apple. She pressed on the door and stepped in with a hush, listening for the sure sound of wedding-day rush.

But the chapel was empty, save for the old rat who'd lived there for years eating bread, getting fat. Miss Eleanor walked up the aisle, quite puzzled. The whole church was silent and empty and muzzled. Where was the bride and the groom and the friar? It was still much too early for them to retire. Had she been late? Had she missed it again? She'd been known to forget things now and again. No no, she decided. That just couldn't be. She had planned for this

day since her dear son was wee. How unlikely for no one to be in the church. Perhaps they were outside, under the Birch.

Miss Eleanor stepped out the chapel just then. Where e'ryone could be was beyond her ken. At her feet, suddenly, she noticed some rice. It was white like the snow and the wintry ice. She bent down to pick some up from the cement. She wondered what kind of clue this could present. She followed the trail of the rice to a pond that, when she was a girl, she was really quite fond. At a bench near the water, two people were seated. The woman was clad in a dress that was beaded so expertly by the local tailoring man, it must've taken hours being sewn by hand. The man at her side was dressed in a dark suit with a pocket handkerchief colored like a ripe fruit.

"My son!" She exclaimed, hurrying to his side. The man turned his head and looked at his bride.

"Today has been splendid, my love," He did utter. "You look so lovely today, my heart is aflutter." The young lady blushed a deep red in her cheek. "Likewise, my dear. You look so very chic." The happy young couple engaged in a kiss which radiated emotion of newly-wed bliss.

Miss Eleanor's old eyes filled with bittersweet tears. She had missed her son's wedding, one of her greatest fears. But, here she was now standing next to her son and his beautiful prize of a bride he had won. She placed an old wrinkled hand on her dear child's shoulder, and the pride in her heart begun, then, to smolder.

The bride spoke again, with much love in her voice; her speech sounded songlike, by nature or choice. "My husband, in happiness, my sorrow gives way; if only your mother could join us today."

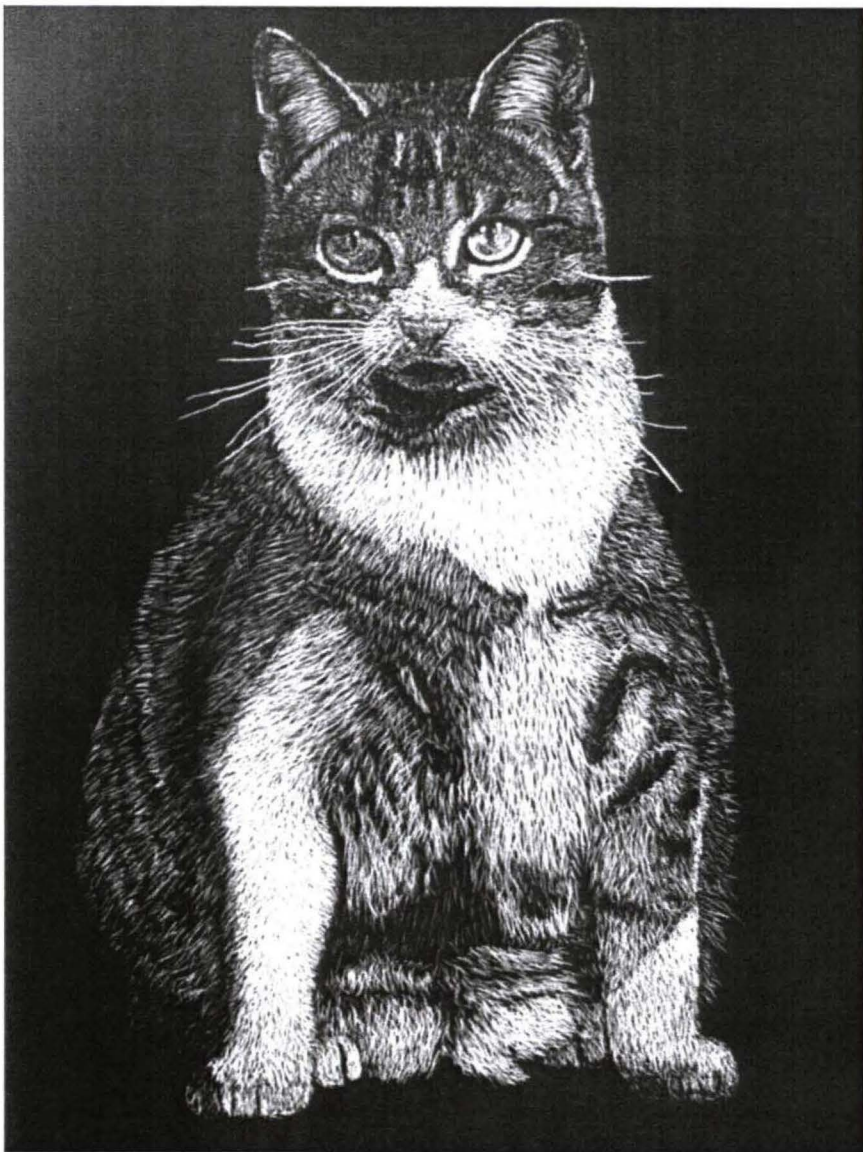
The groom nodded slowly, a lump in his throat. Miss Eleanor dried tears on the sleeve of her coat. "But I am here!" She whispered, stroking his back. "I must have been tardy, I must have lost track. But here I am now, my dear son, at your side. I discovered you here, with your beautiful bride."

But the man was still silent, a frown on his face. Soon after, a small smile danced in its place. "It's a shame," he spoke softly, holding his lover's hand, "but I feel she was present, in the friar, in the band, even in the boquet which she had helped select. I can nearly feel her with us now, primly dressed

in a rose-coloured skirt and a jacket to match, eyes shaded from sun by a large garden hat.”

The bride let out a giggle, then nodded so slight. “I think we should visit her gravesite tonight. We’ll tell her about all the beauty we’ve seen; the perfect ceremony, the grass newly green. And I’ll sing her the song that they played as we smiled, hand-in-hand, newly wed, down the aisle.”

The new couple embraced and shared respectful grins, with thoughts full of roses and sweet violins. Miss Eleanor sat on the ground at their side, looking at them and letting out a great, long sigh. She had missed the grand wedding, she’d forgotten the time. And as a reminder, the church bells did chime. The couple stood up and danced sweetly together, a scene Miss Eleanor remembered forever.



Untitled
By: Jeff Skansgaard

When a Whisper Ends
Justin Daniel

To a pause, the mind tends.
The moment, at the end of sound.
A feeling, that is so profound.
The thought, that makes us attend.
For the second, is just for lend.
The absence, for a moment surrounds.
This moment, is so renowned.
When a whisper ends.

Freedoms Burning
By: Justin Daniel

I saw on T.V. the other day;
Freedom was being thrown away.
The sky and stars in a blaze of anger.
Standing there was freedoms stranger.

I have seen hate burning through the lines,
My heart broken; I started to cry.
Why would anyone want freedom to die?
What was going through their minds?

When I watched glory being trampled on,
I knew something was very wrong.
I felt as if I lost my soul,
I fell to my tears below.

They burn the very thing they are looking for;
If they would just pick up what they have found.
They would not leave freedom,
Burnt on the ground.

A True Story of Darkness

By: Erika Adams

I dreamt that two children were traveling through a town in the night. They were friends. One was a boy, a human. The other: a girl. A vampire.

They had been meeting during the night; it was only time they could. They did not travel outside, but inside. The vampire girl was well-versed in secret passages, having lived in many places for many ages. The boy was continually amazed by her many talents. It was yet another reason why he loved her in spite of what she was.

As he approached the final cranny that would lead him home, the boy heard a cry. A giant crow was attacking the little vampire girl. The boy froze only for a moment before rushing to save her. He was weak and flightless, the crow powerful as it plunged the tiny room into even deeper darkness, but the boy kept trying to drive it away, kept trying to save his friend. For of all the reasons he loved her, the greatest was that she and he were the same in spite of everything. She was as alone as he was, she was as scorned as he was, but most of all, she was as afraid of this world as he was.

Of course, they both knew that the boy could never hope to fully comprehend the pain and suffering of one who is neither dead nor alive; neither child nor adult; neither human nor animal. And yet, even in his youth, in his own single lifetime, the boy had tasted that pain, and that was enough – for both of them.

The girl's eyes had emptied of tears centuries ago, but her cries were now all too real as the crow continued to gouge her with its claws and beat her with its wings. The boy fought the monstrous bird relentlessly to protect the only friend he ever had.

I struggled to free myself from this horrific vision. I barely opened my eyes, but the crow still lived, its feathers like black flames surrounding its cold, pitiless eyes and bladed beak.

Suddenly, the crow froze, but it did not fall. My eyes and my mind were now fully awake. The crow was a shadow above my door. I knew this now. I also knew that if I were to light the room, I would destroy the remnants of the beastly shadow once and for all. Instead, I let the darkness in all its forms be, and returned to the darkness of sleep.

Even the children of the night are still children, and they must do as all children do: Play, fight...and survive.

Lovely Curse
By: Eliza Kraker

Secretly,
I love my curves.
I think, you could trace my curves for miles
Like sloping hills and mountains on the horizon;
How pleasing it is to play the eye across bouncing silhouettes.
I think, whosever's eye I wish will get all of these
Secretly.

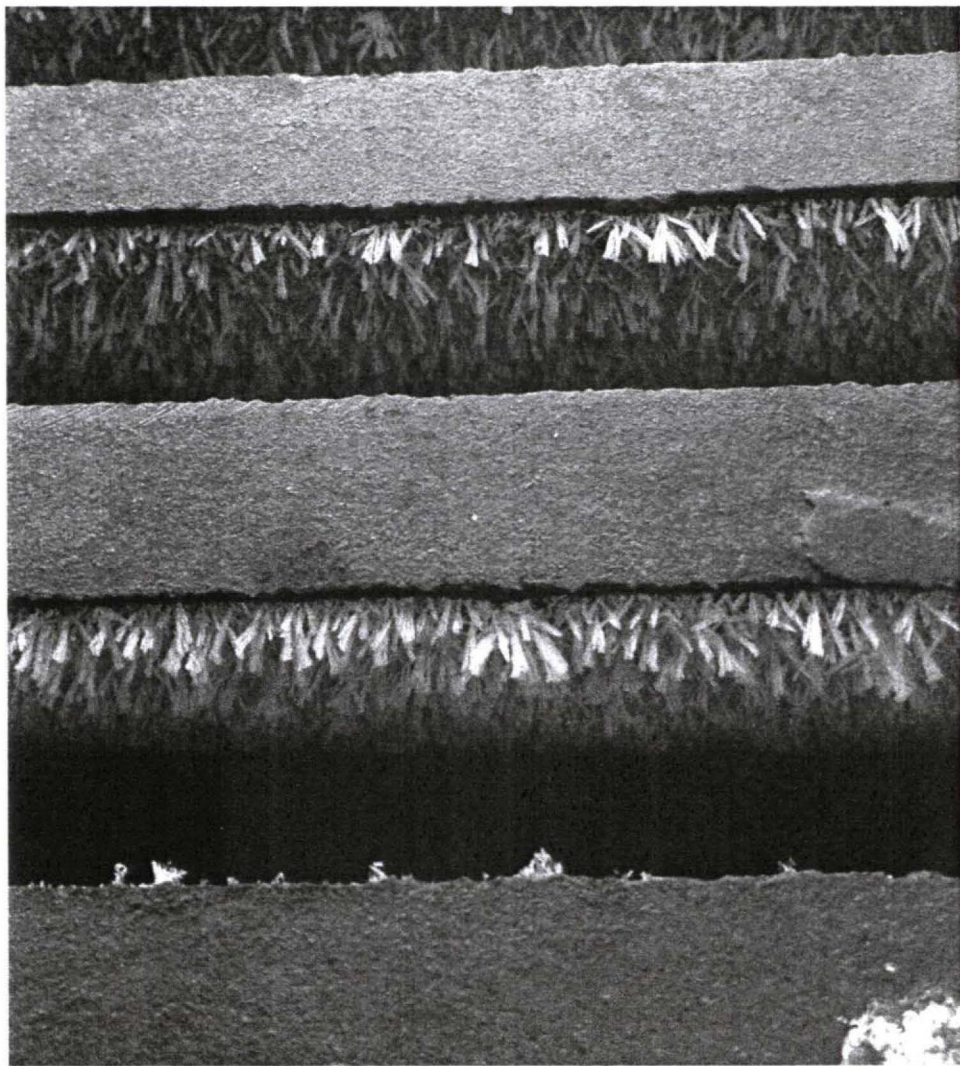
So I hide them beneath oversized sweaters
And every once in a while an older woman will ask
If I'm expecting.
A baby they mean but do not say,
They don't assume I woke up late
And had to clock in before dawn.
But that I am expecting
A crying,
Laughing,
Naughty,
Clever,
Soul.

No, I say, and hope not until I myself
Can be a strong, stable mountain.
Then I curse my curves.

Facing the Elements
By: Danielle Hamilton

She was tossing and turning in bed. Grateful she didn't have a digital clock lighting up the darkness of the room, reminding her that that she should be asleep. Instead, she laid in bed listening to the roaring thunderstorm. It was the kind of rain from the movies she liked to watch, the ones from the 80s. But instead of John Cusack standing outside blaring Peter Gabriel, attempting to show how much he loved her, she heard the rain make contact with the roof. Even the rain was feeling a connection with something... A rain drop by itself was one being. But when it made contact with a car, a roof, or a body, it merged. It was no longer just a drop, but a part of something bigger. It was a relationship, but not one she wanted. But she was rain. Rain can be brushed away, wiped off, and forgotten with so little thought. No one cared about rain. It was common; hell, in some places rain is more common than sunshine. She wanted to be more like snow. Snow is more rare, more welcomed. In snow there is a pattern, but is unpredictable. Each cold flake is beautiful, welcomed, and provides pleasure. It sticks and stays for a long time. But then, people grow tired of snow; they stomp it beneath their bodies to see the imprint they can make. They do not care about the beauty of it, just how they can impact it. They watch it darken with dirt and dust. They count the days until it is gone, and wait til the traces of the last flake have vanished. It is out of mind until five or six months or later, until it returns. She was still restless, as she kept adjusting, thinking of how she wanted to be loved for a long time, not just a season. She wanted to be loved simply, purely, and for everything she

was. She thought of great couples throughout time; Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Ophelia. Even the old man from *Death of a Salesman* had some on the side. What makes them all so special?! Why do their relationships stand out? Time. None of them had it, yet they all left imprints on their partner, and on us. For the days or hours they had together, it was intense, concentrated, and passionate love, it was a rare thing. She smiled...she wanted hail. She wanted something completely unpredictable, yet still beautiful at the same time. When it hailed, you took notice. Regardless of what you were doing, you watched and marveled. Not only were you completely enchanted by it, but as soon as it ended you kept watching and waiting to see if it would come again. Like hail, love stops you dead in your tracks. It affects everything. Once it has been in life, it is never gone. Lightning filled the room, and she thought of stolen kisses from people who do not matter; the raindrops. She thought of snow, and the heartbreaks that followed, and shuddered. That was a pain and darkness that was not healed until the warmth of summer was around, melting the remnants that remained in her heart. Then a smile that lit up the room. She had been in one hail storm before, the scariest, yet most exciting of her life. Somewhere along the way though, the sun came out and the hail melted. She sighed, pulled the blankets tighter and snuggled down. She finally drifted off and had dreams of a place with no rain and no snow. Just hail.



Untitled
By: Jeff Skansgaard

Hickory Wind

By: Eliza Kraker

You're the best thing that has happened to me.
If I meet you in the next life it'll be better yet.
I guess I am lucky I found a hymn I'd never wish to replace.
One is enough to break my stitched-up-heart
That has never been
One day you'll pass under snow-laden pine boughs,
And I don't know where I'll be.

Cookie-Cutter Houses

By: Jennifer Zbacnik

Looking out the window and what do I see?
All the same staring back at me.
A white picket fence—
Mail boxes standing straight in a row—
A mom, a dad, a son, a daughter...the perfect family—
In each house lives nothing even as different than a flea.
I look to myself and what do I see?
An individual—
A woman—
A free thinker—
Someone different from thee.

My Echo
By: Samantha Lepak

Today, I heard a lonely crow
Release an empty cry.
His voice was coarse
And left a ghost
Until, again, he tried.

More silence filled the stagnant fog.
His echo died away.
He stood, a statue
On a tree
Eyes watered in dismay.

Then, from the mist, an empty voice,
Hard and wet with tears
Resounded, Echoed
Back to him
Beating on his ears.

Once again the crow called out
And gave a heavy sigh
But this time,
Once his echo faded,
There was a faint reply.



Untitled
By: Jeff SKansgaard

'Reveler Upon Opium'
By: Jennifer Zbacnik

Across the street, some drunkard was stumbling over his own feet and tripped on the curb. A lady wearing a tattered fur coat and red stiletto heels walked past; some guy whistled at her, they then walked in the direction of the cheap 'pay by the hour' motel. I heard a couple fighting in the distance and a baby crying. I sat on some newspapers in the most secluded alley in the Bronx that I could find. Fall was ending and the days were getting shorter and shorter. I looked down at my own tattered t-shirt, "I need a jacket." I said to the air. I was starting to smell of spoiled cabbage, and even though I hadn't seen my own reflection for some time now, I was sure my beard had grown pretty full and my hair was down to my shoulders. At first, New York frightened me at night, but after a while I got used to it.

A car passed by, it then came to a stop. A woman wearing fishnet leggings leaned up against the car.

"How are you tonight baby?" asked the woman.

"How old are you?" replied a man's voice.

"Old enough."

She bent down and kissed the man.

All of a sudden, I felt myself out of body.

I grasped the woman by the arm and led her away.

"You need to stop doing this. I'm a grown woman..."

"You're only sixteen. Go home."

She stared at me. Her red dress was so tight her breasts didn't seem to have an inch of fabric covering them. I looked up at her face. She was pretty under all her make-up.

“Where do you live, Olivia?”

“A couple blocks down the street.”

We walked in silence. Old newspapers were lifted up in the breeze. The street was littered with food rappers and scrapped paper. The shutters and doors on the apartments were falling off their hinges. After we walked for about a half an hour we arrived at the most condemned looking apartment on the block. She walked up to the door, and I couldn't find my feet to follow.

“Are you coming in?” She inquired.

I turned my back, “Go inside and get some sleep. You're too young to be out this late.”

Snapping back to reality, and still in the alley. The woman walked to the other side of the car and drove away. My mind kept on thinking about Olivia. How beautiful she really was, and how she deserved so much more. How many atrocious acts has she committed? How deep do her sins go?

All of a sudden, my train of thought was broken up by the sound of some guys yelling at each other across the street. One guy was holding a gun to a woman's head. A gunshot was fired and I again found myself out of body. I ran to the guy with the gun and knocked it out of his hand. I looked at the woman lying lifelessly on the ground. It was Olivia. I lay by her side and stroked her dark hair. I kissed her lifeless cheek, her lips, and her bosom. I was aroused by the beauty she had in death. But I was suddenly brought back to my own reality on the other side of the street and very aware of a sharp pain in my chest. I was shot. It was hard to breath and the world began to spin. All I could do was stumble back to my bed of newspapers and after that I can't remember anything.

The next thing I do remember is standing in front of someplace I had never been. I was at a playground covered in concrete, and it seemed as though the color green was never even heard of. It made me feel bad for the kids who had to play there. I remember when I was young, I would go to the

park down the block from my house, and the grass seemed to blend into the horizon. I looked at the building that the playground belonged to, and it seemed to be an orphanage. There's one on every block in New York, but this one, unlike the others, appeared to have a feeling of home. On the front steps sat a little girl. I was taken aback and couldn't help it but my jaw seemed to drop.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked the little girl.

"Nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Never mind. Have a good day."

But that little girl did make me think. I thought that I had seen her before. I started walking away, but the little girl followed.

"Whatcha doin'?"

I could tell she was the pesky kind of kid.

"I am going to...why would you care where I am going"

"I don't know. But you look hungry so I thought you would like my bun. I wasn't very hungry at breakfast, and thought I would save it for a snack."

"Speaking of grownups, you probably shouldn't be out here alone."

"It's alright."

"Thanks for the bread."

"Yup."

I started walking away, but the pest spoke up again.

"Will you come inside?"

"Oh, I don't know. I am pretty busy."

"You don't look like the busy type."

She had me cornered. "Fine."

We walked into the cold brick building. However, despite the exterior, on the inside it was warm and reminded me of some place I had been before. I felt as though I had lived in this place my whole life. We were in a room with a heated hearth and nothing else.

"Take a seat on the sofa."

I looked at the little girl puzzled, "But there isn't any furniture in this room."

"Of course there is. Look more closely."

Out of thin air a couch...my couch appeared! I was baffled by this sudden event, however I have been known to overlook things. So I sat down without making a rebuttal. The little girl gave me a smile, turned away, ran into another room and shut the door. The door opened again after some time had passed, I expected the little girl to be in the doorway, but when I looked up I saw that it was Olivia! I wasn't too startled by this. For the last five years, I have seen her everywhere, and lately it has gotten worse. I was seeing her in every one of my female colleague's faces at work; I saw her face on billboard ads; on television; in pictures on top of my mantle, on my bedside table, in my picture albums; and in my dreams. Her face haunted me every day. She was the only thing I could think of and it kept me from living my life; I quit my job and ran away from my reality.

"John, we have been looking for you."

She sat down beside me and put her hand softly on my knee.

"Why did you leave me then?"

"What do you mean? We've been waiting at home for you this whole time."

"But this isn't our home, Olivia."

“Yes, it is. You have been gone so long that you must have forgotten what it looks like. Look more closely, John.”

She took my hand and kissed it, then stood up and left the room. I didn't want her to leave.

The little girl emerged in the doorway once again, “Would you like to play hopscotch?”

It wasn't even a question; she grabbed my hand and we were out the door. However, the scenery had changed. The playground was gone, and in its place was my neighbor's house. There was an abundant amount of grass – more than there was in New York. I looked back at the building that we just came out of to see if it too had changed, but it had not. The little girl picked up a bucket full of chalk and started to draw on the sidewalk.

“Are you happy?” asked the little girl.

“Well, that's a strange question. Why do you ask?”

“Well, doesn't everyone want to be happy?”

“I suppose so.”

“So, are you happy?”

“Surprisingly, yes.”

“Why is that a surprise to you?”

“I don't know. I really shouldn't be. My wife and my daughter died in a car accident a few years back...I never could get my life back together again. It's weird, but I was unhappy until today. And this has been the strangest day I have ever had. To tell you the truth, I don't even know where I am. Things keep changing on me.”

An elderly man walked by with a dog. He looked at me and said, “Come walk with me.”

For a while we walked along in silence, and yet it wasn't one of those awkward silences. So I

decided to speak first, "Do I know you sir?"

"Yes, yes you do."

"Could you tell me how I know you? Because I can't recall."

"That, you will have to figure out for yourself."

"Ha! This is a strange day." I directed to the air.

"Really? It's been quite a mundane one for me."

"You're lucky."

"No, you are the lucky one on this occasion."

"Could you tell me why that is, sir?"

"That too will have to be figured out for yourself."

"What kind of questions will you answer then?"

"The right ones."

"What does that mean?"

"You'll figure it out."

This guy wasn't much help. I wished I could find a newspaper or something that I could read to help me.

"Where are we?"

"Home."

"What day is it?"

"It's every day; Monday, Friday, Sunday, all in one day. There is no time here."

"How old am I?"

"You're ageless."

"What does that mean?"

"It means age doesn't matter here. You could be whatever age you'd like."

"Am I dead?"

"No, you are finally alive."

I stared perplexed at the old man. What does he mean by all this? How could it be every day of the week all at the same time, and why would it not matter what age I am?

I bent down to pet the dog. I looked up for the old man, but he had disappeared. I took the leash and walked alone with the dog for a long time.

When I made it back to my home, I let the lead go and the dog trotted away. I walked up to my daughter and said, "*Mary, Mary, quite contrary. How does your garden grow?*"

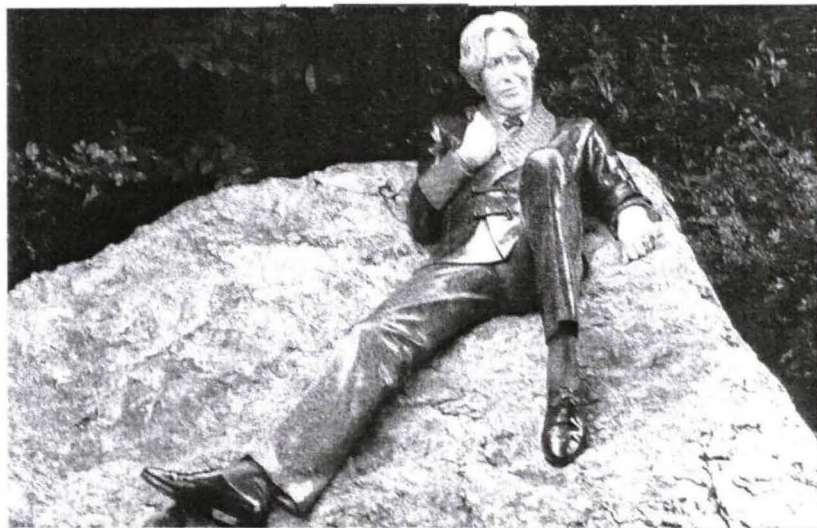
"*With silver bells and cockle-shells . And pretty maids all in a row!*"

"Oh, Mary I missed you."

"I'm happy you remember me."

I kissed my daughter on the forehead. My wife was standing in the doorway of our house. I picked up my daughter and carried her up the stairs. I kissed my wife and held both she and my daughter as tightly as I could. We walked into our house, found everything as it was and had always been.

I found my home.



Oscar Wilde
By: Erika Adams

Tibetan Orchard
By: Eliza Kraker

My sleeve is still wet
From when I napped and dreamed
I knew what could turn back time.

As each day is a little brighter
I awake to your warm back,
There were times we felt endless and complete.

I told you, your eyes mirrored the sea before a storm,
Or after...I don't remember.
But, I do remember the way you looked at me
and it's not how you look at me now.

What has changed?
I search for the answer
Clammy and damp
My cheek pressed into my forearm,
my sleeve is wet.

For the Love of Chocolate!
By: Erika Adams

Mr. Baxter Brown loved chocolate. He loved its sweetness, its bitterness, its darkness, its lightness, its crunchiness, and its creaminess. In fact, Mr. Brown loved every other kind of -ness that chocolate could possibly be. He loved chocolate so much that he not only enjoyed eating it, he also liked making chocolate, mixing chocolate, and even sculpting it! So, Mr. Brown went to a school that taught people to do just that. That was how he became a Chocolatier. He could make fudge that would melt heavenly in your mouth, cakes with as many layers of chocolate as you like (as high as you like), chocolate balloons as light and lovely as soap bubbles, flowers made of different colors of chocolates that brought joy to all the senses, chocolates made with the succulent tastes of the purest and most perfect fruits. He could even make chocolate animals and people that looked so real that it was very easy to forget that they were made of chocolate.

Yes, no one in the world who knew more about chocolate than Mr. Brown.

But . . . As hard as it may be to believe, there was in fact one thing that Mr. Brown loved more than his chocolate, and that thing was a person . . . Miss Charlotte. Whenever his mind was not on chocolate, it was on her. Her hair ran down her shoulders like waves of caramel,

her skin was the color of vanilla cream, her eyes sparkled like sugar crystals, and her smile was as warm and lovely to behold as a loaf of freshly baked sweet bread. She was the most beautiful lady Mr. Brown had ever seen, and he longed to speak to her.

Unfortunately, Mr. Brown was very shy. As he wandered around town one day, thinking of his darling Miss Charlotte who was as far away as ever, he spotted another gentleman giving a box of chocolates to a lady. This, of course, was not unusual, as Mr. Brown very well knew. There were plenty of men who often gave candy to their sweethearts. Suddenly, like an oven bell going off, Mr. Brown had a brilliant idea. He would open his own chocolate shop, just for Miss Charlotte! He would have every kind of chocolate ever made in the world. He could just imagine it . . . if a lady could be happy with a small box of chocolates, why, Miss Charlotte would surely come to him if he were to offer her a whole shop!

Mr. Brown went right to work. Being such a good chocolatier, it wasn't long before he had everything ready. He had not only found a building, which was large enough for his beautifully crafted displays of sweets, with a fine kitchen to keep his finer cookware, but even better, Mr. Brown knew that Miss Charlotte walked past that building every day, so she was bound to notice it. He also decided that, as part of the Grand Opening, he would give away his wares for free! Mr. Brown waited excitedly for Miss Charlotte to walk by his chocolate

shop. Surely, this would astound and delight her so that she would come to love Mr. Brown!

But . . . as Mr. Brown's mind was entirely on Miss Charlotte, he forgot that there were others who loved chocolate as well. Before you could say "hot cocoa," some children saw the shop and eagerly ran inside.

"Ohh, look at the pretty chocolate ponies!" a little girl squealed.

"I want the chocolate spaceship!" a boy shouted.

"Are those chocolate-covered apples?"

"Chocolate and marshmallows! Yummy!"

Surrounded by a multitude of hungry children, Mr. Brown hesitated, but only briefly. He promised free chocolate, and he would keep his word. Besides, how could he resist such cute little faces? There were even some adults who came, enchanted by all of Mr. Brown's sweet delights. To a small boy with a cap, he gave a white chocolate baseball with milk chocolate stitches. A smiling woman received a box of cookies shaped like various animals. He gave two beautiful tiny twin sisters each a huge chocolate teddy bear. And the father of a family of eight happily struggled to carry a multi-colored and multi-chocolate Noah's Ark out of the shop.

As the day wore on, Mr. Brown laughed with joy, seeing all the people rush from display to display. And so, he attended to every single person that walked into his shop, knowing instinctively what sort of treat suited each one. Finally, every piece of chocolate in his shop, from the largest cake to the smallest chocolate chip, was gone. Mr. Brown sighed contentedly.

“Hello?” Mr. Brown turned toward the door at the sound of a lady’s voice and could hardly believe his eyes. Miss Charlotte! “Is there any chocolate left?” she asked politely. Mr. Brown frantically ran about the empty shop searching for something he could offer her, but all he could find was a tiny daisy that had broken off one of the chocolate bouquets. Its petals were white chocolate, some chipped, and its leaves and vine milk and dark, now cracked. With a heavy heart, he brought the flower to Miss Charlotte, afraid of what she would think of such a small, broken thing.

“What is the matter?” she asked him with concern. “You were so happy before.”

Mr. Brown stared at her. “You were here?” he asked.

Miss Charlotte smiled. “Yes. I wanted to come in, but there were such a large crowd, and you were so busy with your customers.”

Mr. Brown hung his head and said sadly, "And now, after all this, I have nothing left but his little broken daisy."

She looked at the daisy, and then at Mr. Brown. "But it's lovely," she said.

"But what good is a chocolate shop with no chocolate?"

"What do you mean? Surely you could get more," said Miss Charlotte, confused.

"Yes, but ... you see ..." Mr. Brown said timidly, "I built this shop, for you."

"For me?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes. I built it as a symbol of my love for you, but I have nothing to offer now."

Tears ran down Mr. Brown's face, but Miss Charlotte dried them, saying to him, "But that isn't true at all. Look at all the people who came into your shop. I watched the way the children's eyes lit up, the way the older folks laughed like children themselves as you showed them your sweets, and the way you smiled when you saw their joy. Isn't that what the gift of chocolate is? Isn't that why you craft it with such care...to give happiness? That, Mr. Brown, is worth more to me than all the chocolate in the world."

Mr. Brown pondered this, and then smiled. He held up the little candy daisy and shyly said, "Miss Charlotte, will you be mine?" Miss Charlotte took the daisy, licked one of the

white chocolate petals, and kissed Mr. Brown, filling his heart until it was as full as a cream puff.

Soon after, Mr. Brown and Miss Charlotte were married. They now run the shop together, serving every person in town who ever longs for the sweet joys of chocolate . . . and the sweeter reminders that it brings.

THE END

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