

# *genesis*

volume XXXII



spring 2002

Bobby Bell ◊ Christie Blizzard ◊ Sharalynn Cromer ◊ jack D. ◊ Jessica Fields  
Kali Fields ◊ Jennette Fulda ◊ Melody Gascho ◊ Jackie Janeksela  
Christopher Kiess ◊ Ray Koleski ◊ Kimberly McClish ◊ Sherri Rainbolt  
Johanna Salazar ◊ Eric Sharp ◊ Rae Solorzano ◊ Michael Springer  
Annette Vazquez ◊ Emily Watson ◊ W.H. Womack

Cover: **I See Myself Inside II** *(after Gorky)*  
Christie Blizzard

**Best  
of Issue**  
Artwork

## **A Note From the Senior Editor**

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The following statement is probably pretty trite, but I'm going to say it anyway: I can't believe it's over. I am, of course, talking about my "reign" as Senior Editor of *genesis*. My experience as a member of the Editorial Board has been fascinating, frustrating, rewarding and tiring, but I'll tell you this: I learned about the inner workings of a literary magazine and above all, I have thoroughly enjoyed myself. I have had the chance to read stacks of student poetry and prose, and the opportunity to see work by visual artists that took my breath away - slides, photographs and original pieces that awed me with their beauty and depth. I've watched writers grow as they progressed through their various creative writing classes, and seen artists mature as they moved through the ranks at Herron. I have had the chance to work with my peers, and to learn about leadership and balance. My parents always told me about "learning experiences," and I never really understood what they were talking about until I joined the *genesis* staff. I am extremely proud of this magazine and how much it has grown in the past few years. I look now to the new editors to pick up where I leave off.

I hope and trust that readers of this issue will enjoy and appreciate the poetry, prose and artwork contained within. Every semester, it is both gratifying and difficult to select the work that becomes the next issue of *genesis*. This issue serves as a "fitting farewell" because it includes some of the best work I've seen since I became an editor.

A big thank you to the editors (both past and present), IUPUI faculty and staff, and the folks at Western Newspaper Publishing - your efforts did not go unnoticed.

**Chi Sherman**

## **A Note From the New Editorial Staff**

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Beyond the amazing array of art, poetry, and prose, the Spring 2002 edition of *genesis* represents the grand finale for our graduating Senior Editor, Chi Sherman, and Associate Editor, Lindsey Holloway. Yet, every ending is also a beginning, just as the circle completes itself and continues the journey anew. So it seems most fitting that Spring 2002 *genesis* debuts Associate Editors: Pat Harvey, Katie Kreiger, and Tracy Martin. We appreciate the generous tutelage of Chi and Lindsey and we are excited to inherit and pass on the traditions to future generations of *genesis*. This issue of *genesis* is an appropriate tribute to both the efforts and expertise of Chi and Lindsey, as well as an excellent display of the creative expressions of our fellow IUPUI students. Enjoy!

***Pat Harvey***

***Katie Kreiger***

***Theresa Martin***

# ***genesis***

Established 1972

Indiana University - Purdue University at indianapolis  
English Department  
Cavanaugh Hall, Room 502L  
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Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

## **Senior Editor**

Chizoma (Chi) Sherman

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Katie Kreiger  
Theresa Martin

## **Publication Design**

Lindsey Holloway

## **Faculty Advisor**

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## The Leech Street<sup>1</sup>

John Donne (1596-1633)

I wonder if you would on Sunday  
for Thomas and Emily<sup>2</sup>

would you hold the cloth over each shoulder with need  
paying the dirt from the grave  
like the heart in your hand<sup>3</sup>

or would you let each word run down the bridge of your nose  
and the day should fold around your feet<sup>4</sup>

# genesis

1607

each time you went out  
I've been clapped against the frame  
approaching

And I questioned each wash<sup>5</sup>  
each bundle you pressed<sup>6</sup>  
close to your chest

I searched your purpose  
trying the load must be heavy  
and hard to carry

when you returned  
I noticed

the stain between your teeth  
the gap behind your eye

1614

the spinning of the loom  
changing

1619

through the cracks of your fingers  
the dirt, the white, and the rickens  
all by spinning

and when I thought to sit behind the garage  
dangling from the sky,

operating the loom  
and the jolly babies

for Thomas

<sup>1</sup> The Leech Street (now called St. Peter's Church).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Emily.

<sup>3</sup> This line is an allusion to the story of the man who had a heart on his back, which he carried around with him. The story is told in the Bible, and in the story of the man who had a heart on his back, which he carried around with him.

<sup>4</sup> This line is an allusion to the story of the man who had a heart on his back, which he carried around with him. The story is told in the Bible, and in the story of the man who had a heart on his back, which he carried around with him.



## Thirteenth Street<sup>1</sup>

Jackie Janeksela

Best  
of Issue  
Poetry

I wonder if you would do laundry  
for Thomas and Beulah<sup>2</sup>  
would you push the cloth over each shutter with force  
prying the dirt from the weave  
like the heart in your hand  
or would you let each word run down the bridge of your nose  
as if the day should fold around your shoulders.

Rita<sup>3</sup>  
each time you went out  
the screen clapped against the frame,  
applauding

And I questioned each wash<sup>4</sup>.  
each bundle you pressed  
close to your chest  
I questioned your purpose  
knowing the load must be heavy  
and hard to carry.  
when you returned  
I noticed  
the stain between your teeth,  
the gap behind your grin.

Rita,  
the spinning of the laundry  
changes

And  
through the cracks of your fingers  
the darks, the whites, and the colours  
lull by, squirming  
wondering if Beulah is still behind the garage  
dangling from the sky,  
squeaking out babies  
sweet juicy babies  
for Thomas.

1 The street Rita Dove lived on in Tempe, Arizona.

2 Dove's grandparents

3 Rita Dove is an African-American poet who has written many books of poetry, including *Mother Love*, *The Yellow House on the Corner*, and *Fifth Sunday*. She was also awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1987 and was appointed Poet Laureate of the United States in the same year.

4 Upon winning the Pulitzer Prize, Rita Dove, according to Professor Lois Roma-Deeley of Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix, Arizona, did her laundry over and over as a way to deal with such great acknowledgement.

## White Spaces

Jennette Fulda

Best  
of Issue  
Prose

She is my first real friend, my best friend. We play pretend on the playground, yet I don't remember how we met. I think we were talking in line before class, two girls in ugly plaid uniforms. But I lie. I can't remember because our friendship is without beginning.

♦♦♦

She grows up quicker than I do. She is five feet tall and I am only four foot seven. When I come to see her, she doesn't look different. I only moved a year ago.

We listen to pop music by bands I have never heard of and we play games that I have never played. She asks me if I like to drink coffee or if I've ever let a boy feel me under my shirt. I tell her no because I am too stupid to lie. "You're so naïve," she says. And I ask her, "What's naïve mean?"

She's two months younger than me, but rotations of the earth don't mean that much.

♦♦♦

When she starts stealing signs from the roadside, she doesn't tell me. When she learns how to light a cigarette one handed while driving, she doesn't tell me. When she starts going to keggers with her posse and staying up past Cinderella's bedtime, she doesn't tell me. When it happens, she doesn't tell me. I am a thousand miles of telephone wire away and I only see the air brushed photo of her life, never the acne faced negative.

♦♦♦

One day she e-mails me and tells me about it. She writes like it's no big deal, but I can hear her sniffing in the white spaces between the words. I stare at the pixels on the screen, wishing they'd rearrange themselves into an e-mail about puppies and flowers and gum drops. But the monitor refuses to change the pattern of light it throws across my face. I reconnect to send a reply and the dial-up modem sounds like her screaming.

♦♦♦

I drive up to see her, but my timing is bad. Her family is moving across town to a house-with-a-lake. Not just a house they are mindful to tell me, a house-with-a-lake. Her old home is empty, except for the gerbil in the closet that her parents wouldn't let her have. The house is naked without its

---

inhabitants and I feel guilty for glimpsing it without its clothes on. We leave just as the new owners arrive. She parks the car across the street and sits on the hood, watching them unload a paisley couch. Unaware of its close rescue, the gerbil runs thoughtlessly in the wheel inside its cage. She has set it on the trunk and I hope we don't drive off, forgetting it is there.

That night at the house-with-a-lake, we go to the dock and lie down. The night is transparent and the ambient light of the city doesn't vibrate here. The sky suddenly has more stars than I ever knew existed. Like the universe spilled powder sugar while baking the galaxy.

Seeing the sky for the first time, I have never felt so tiny.

I can feel the swirling of the universe and I spread my arms out to hold on. I turn my head and see the shadowy outline of her body lying beside me. She appears peaceful and untouched as the universe sways around us. Maybe she only appears still to me because we are orbiting together, distant but traveling parallel paths. I think she is like the sky I see above me, different but the same.



She loves a boy now. He doesn't have a name, only initials. Two letters of the alphabet stand for the names he won't tell her. So she makes up silly anagrams of what they could mean. He switched seats in the movie theater to be next to her, because he wanted to "sit near the center." He puts her hands in his pockets to keep them warm, even though her nails are ragged and gross from where she bites them. He's the only one who can make her giggle, really giggle like a carburetor the mechanic will tell you needs fixing. Like for a moment she forgets she's supposed to be sad.

She says she loves him because he snores. I ask her why. She tells me, because after it happened, there would be times when she couldn't sleep. Her brother knew something was wrong, but would never ask what. So he would come in with his pillow and his blanket. He'd linger in the doorway for a moment with an odd stare, a quiet question, and then wordlessly lie down on her shaggy carpet and go to sleep. The sound of his snores would ebb against the silence and she could finally sleep.



I sit on the bottom bunk of the beds her father assembled. Everyone in the dorm had to build their own beds. "cheap bastards," she mumbles. The triangle brace is bent and the apparatus sways slightly as her roommate

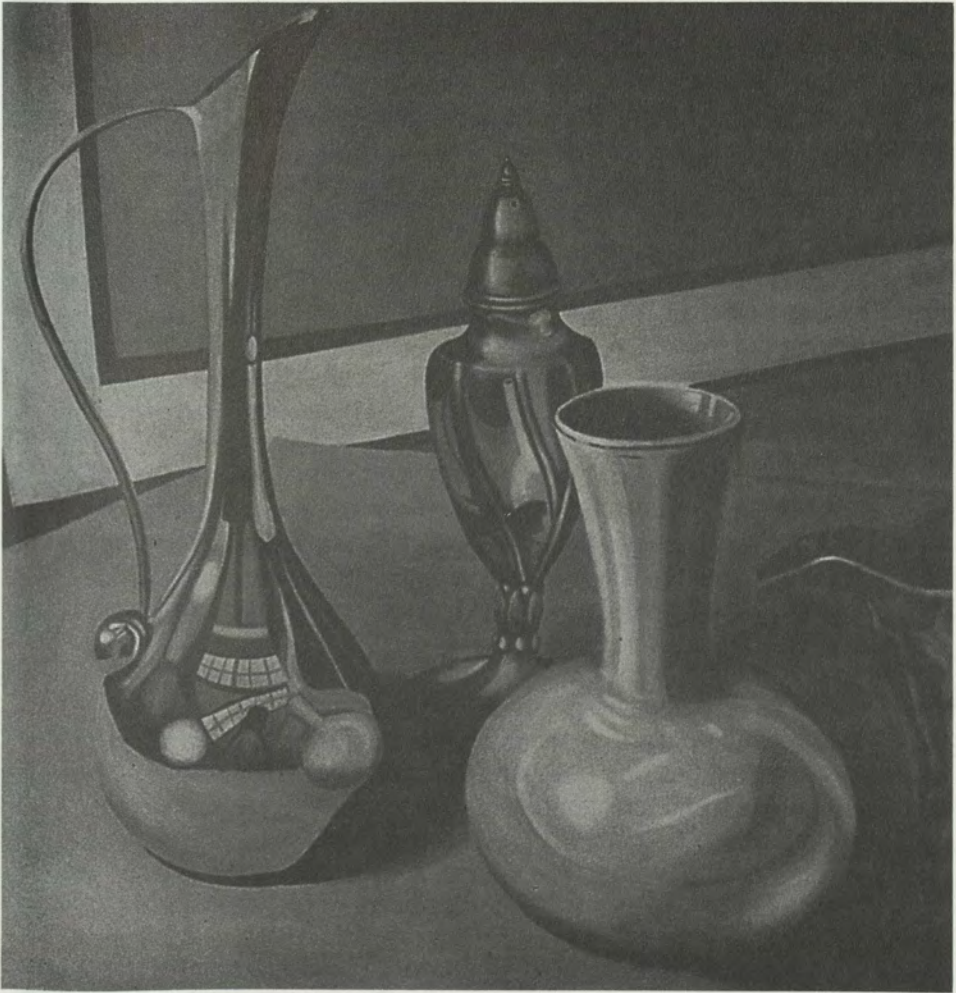
rolls over in her sleep. I hope that I am not crushed by a freshman and her stuffed teddy before the sun rises once again. The open window chills me, but vents the smoke winding from her fingers. She gently taps the cigarette on the rim of a soda can. I hope no one tries to take a sip from it.

"i regret a lot of stuff," she tells me, speaking in lowercase letters. "but it's all part of me now." Our eyes connect like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. "and i like who i am."

Her lips curl like the smoke drifting to the ceiling. I think for once we have stopped playing pretend. We sit until the sun rises. Somewhere across the world the sun is setting. I cherish the breaths in between.

# Still Life with Self-Portraits

Johanna Salazar



was all the days gone by, the days of  
of Tullia's dead father, across the  
in white, before the cigarette smoke came  
and the, and the smoke, and the smoke,  
along to the other side of the wall,  
that wanted to give the world all a run  
in its history. A yellow light and sound  
converged over the door - like a great,  
waving sign of what's ahead.

## **Memoir in Blue**

Kimberly McClish

---

I rode home from the hospital in a midnight metallic Galaxy. Girls were abundant that week in March. A boy's blanket swaddled my delicate limbs. Inquisitive blue eyes, the star of my tiny face. Robin's egg bows and barrettes would culminate in a blue on blue floral dress in the third grade.

My great-grandmother's favorite color was blue. She complained that blue flowers were few and far between. She baked blueberry pies and every quilt she stitched wore shades of blue. She was buried on a warm day in March in a cornflower dress and a faux sapphire broach. But the sky betrayed her, glowing only gray.

I sat on a beach with a boyfriend. He played Rhapsody in Blue on a mournful soprano saxophone as azure tides broke on the sand. White frothy caps teased us into cerulean ocean. We ended the affair, me in a marine ball gown, he in a Marine uniform of strong naval blue.

I graduated in a sea of blue robes from a tiny high school lettered in royal. Hungry for adventure, I boarded a plane with my blue covered passport clutched in my sweaty hands. I am met by a city shuttered in delft, reclining beside a waterway. Blue jeans mark me as American. I am lonely and buy a blue Persian kitten. I name her Elvis and dance her around in my arms to the tune of Blue Suede Shoes.

Yesterday my cousin's daughter stayed with me. I emptied her bag, searching for toys packed from home. Her giant box of crayons tumbled out on the table. Cascading from the box came the blues of my memories. I smiled as I picked them up and took a moment to savor each glimmer long past. I noticed something else that made me smile, each shade of blue crayon was well worn. Tiffany-swathed in a baby blue tee-asked me what I was doing, and I told her I was just thinking about my favorite color. She said, "Mine is blue. What's yours?"

## **the purple chairs and loose tables of the abbey, may 1998**

Bobby Bell

---

soft lips gently pressing against  
hot white porcelain, enjoying  
the steaming labors of  
boiling water, sumatra  
and an under-appreciated filter,  
as aquarius and taurus learn  
the age-old mysteries of life,  
wrapped up in the plush velvet  
of purple high-back chairs,  
underneath the blue painted cartoon  
heavens and clouds that stare down  
motionless and ever-dreaming  
to match the spectacular radiance  
radiating from youth  
and love and desire  
sitting at the rickety table  
that could create a river of coffee,  
beaches of sugar and salt,  
with the perfect nudge.

## **Yellow**

Bobby Bell

---

It was the Dial soap that started it,  
sliding into the crusty socks, which  
painlessly crashed the coach flight  
from hand to hamper. It sparked a print war,  
as the yellowed Wall Street Journal attacked  
Superman, who was brittle and without cover  
from all the days gone by. The natural starch  
of Collin's dried t-shirt armpits threatened  
to ignite, before the cigarette smoke came along  
swirling and dancing throughout the room,  
adding to the already-thick film on the wall  
that wanted to give the daffodil tile a run  
for its money. A yellow shirt and towel  
converged over the door - like a great  
warning sign of what's ahead.

## Sweet Sweet Sunrise Dripping from Black Coffee

Rae Solorzano

---

Before there was light  
there was six a.m.  
There were cold winds  
and iced window panes.

My soul was not yet  
sufficiently uncoiled from  
the night's solid slumber  
to fill my awkward limbs  
and I fumbled with the filter  
and the beans.

With half closed eyed and feet  
held high from the cold tiles, I  
sat wrapped and waited  
for the rooster's new dawn.

Oh sweet, sweet sunrise  
dripping from black coffee  
before it may even be  
announced  
the morning had slipped  
into my cup.



## Juice

Eric Sharp

Orange gets such a bum rap. I mean, really, orange is a retailer's dream: it has the fashion shelf-life of a fruit fly. Orange is the sweater hanging its head in the back of the closet; the other pair of Chuck Taylor's still in the box, bought in a buy one, get one half off sale - the absence of moderation. Orange is used to scare us: biohazards of HIV/AIDS and blood products; traffic jams and school zones; bleached bones and hobgoblins; the core of a Camel; my brother's hunting cap. It is the presence of extremes - embarrassed as an out-of-work actor, drunk at an open bar benefit. Orange, born of yellow and red - a June Gemini draping tiger lilies, calming their carnivorous ways, devouring bees and admiration. Orange seeps out from under my eyelids, laying under the sun, popping tangerine half-moons into my mouth. It is the blending of hollandaise and paprika, the cooling skin of Velveeta cheese. Given the right light, orange is in us all. A squeamish pumpkin still on the vine, veining green and yellow, growing bold.

## How to be a Good Husband

Sharalynn Cromer

---

Two days after the second miscarriage,  
she slides down the shower wall and spills  
your open bottle of shampoo, her head  
barely missing the soap ledge.  
God, probably, up to no good.

She wonders if this is it, if she'll die  
naked, if all her friends will imagine her  
just like this, lying at the bottom of  
your bathtub. Remarkable what thoughts  
will haunt a person as they gasp and beg  
their lungs to inflate.

Anxiety attacks we call them now.  
One hundred years ago she might have been  
hysterical, swooning, taken with spells.  
Now she's an easy diagnosis. Take this pill,  
light a candle, get a massage, or something  
for crying out loud.

She wants to tell you that she's a bad wife,  
that she wishes she were still your girlfriend,  
that you still made out in movie theatres  
and held hands in the grocery.  
She wants to say that she's sorry for forgetting  
your allergy to sesame seeds.

She wants to pinpoint the exact moment  
when your marriage became ordinary:  
Remember last Christmas in your truck?  
Driving back from Chatanooga? That was it.  
You were not moving, just getting smaller  
and smaller.

Her ex in Peru wrote her beautiful  
letters; he watched the Andes rain forced  
down in sheets and sighed for her. She imagined  
they could see one another then. That he  
could even feel the distance between you and her,  
between your body and hers,  
in the same truck cab, watching the same  
mountains in the rear view mirrors.

She imagined that her ex understood her loneliness, that he understood her better than you did. Lies we tell ourselves are cancer cells, replicating at will. She feels her betrayal eating away at her bone marrow and her kidneys.

She reminds herself of your elopement, laughing all the way across the Atlantic, swearing to each other that your great-grandchildren would tell this story. She reminds herself of the omelets you used to make every Sunday morning, and the way you sang Johnny Cash in the kitchen with your spatula microphone.

When you hear her collapse in the shower and run to rescue her, keep all this in mind. To be safe, keep it in mind every day for the rest of her life. Then you will know what work is. Then you will understand the dark chasms we must cross to deserve one another.

Here's my grandpa, he's on his prolegu...  
of two time pain trees of Dickens' teacher.  
He will say "Don't just" what's ending  
he says that "Gavin" liberal book reader

They aren't impressed by words, or by  
people like us who speak them.  
The fact we read their daily responsibilities  
to what they know, so carefully.

Every year there he left in love  
with a Dresden girl who made good waffles.  
Her father was a professor. A Nazi, but a  
professor, a regular guy, just like you.

Morgan with the big bald head was at Omaha  
beach, the only guy in his boat that night  
out of the water. Survivor guilt or something,  
he doesn't say much.

# Communism Sacrifice (or Split Family)

Melody Gascho



The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.

The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.  
What you thought to be  
the end of the world is just  
the end of the world.  
The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.

The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.  
The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.  
The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.  
The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.  
The world is not that good for anything  
just waiting to be won.

## **The Sociologist and My VFW Bar Boys, May 1995**

Sharalynn Cromer

---

No one here is conspicuous or clean,  
no one orders the cabernet.  
They sit by theater - Europe, Pacific-  
and tell bigger and bigger tales.

Are you thirsty? You should order  
a drink. Non-drinkers make them uneasy.  
There is a society of participants, a code  
you can't crack through observation alone.

Shifty got his leg blown off at Bastogne  
but Davis never had any eyebrows. Don't believe  
his Japanese torture story. They  
all brag about their grandkids now.

Ask about them, ask to see  
pictures. Only inquire about their wives  
if you know they're still living.  
Grandkids are safe territory; start there.

My great uncle Jack flew right beside  
Enola Gay as she dropped American physics  
all over Hiroshima. Don't bother,  
he won't talk about it. But the catfish is good tonight.

Here's my grandpa. Here are his photographs  
of Iwo Jima palm trees, of Okinawa beaches.  
He still says "Damn Japs" without apology.  
He says I'm a "damn liberal book reader."

They aren't impressed by books, or by  
people like us who worship them.  
The facts we read bear little resemblance  
to what they know. Be careful.

Kenny over there, he fell in love  
with a Dresden girl who made good waffles.  
Her father was a professor. A Nazi, but a  
professor, a regular guy, just like you.

Morgan with the big bald head was at Omaha  
beach, the only guy in his boat that made it  
out of the water. Survivor guilt or something,  
he doesn't say much.

Oh, them. They're Vietnam. Vietnam  
has the run of the place on weekends,  
but Tuesdays are WWII. I'm not sure  
what they're doing here. Catfish, maybe.

The skinny one behind the bar was a medic.  
Had his hands inside every hole  
the Germans could make in a body.  
He has mixed drinks ever since.

They were young once, younger than you.  
They weren't always the Greatest Generation,  
that's for the books. You aren't writing a book,  
are you?

Listen. Invite yourself over to their house  
for a beer. Bring the beer. When their buddies  
aren't around, you can still see their lips  
quiver and their eyes smart.

You can see why their mom called them  
Baby Boy. If you stop asking questions, you  
might find them back in the foxhole with no  
socks humming Amazing Grace,  
making deals with God.

## What the Kurt Vonnegut in Me Loves

Michael Springer

---

When the internet news site I accidentally ended up on  
screams out the top story "More Anthrax Scares,"  
and  
two headlines later  
poses the troubling question,  
"Is Lance Out of 'NSync?"

## Metalanguage

Jennette Fulda

---

I stole the English language  
from off my teacher's desk  
hid it in my backpack  
where I tortured it with matches  
and sticky chocolate fingers

But somehow it escaped  
from other people's lips  
in eternal conversations  
and proceeded to entrap me  
within the confines of its limits

## Skin Deep

W.H. Womack

Pictures that describe a feeling once allowed  
with a thousand painful pricks.  
Permanent reminder left etched  
long after crimson smudged  
experiences are wiped away clean.

Encircling an ankle, riding high upon  
a breast. Hidden under a sleeve or pant leg,  
sitting where eyes don't often look.  
They want to be revealed, but don't touch--  
for this creation's painful past still hurts.

Displayed trophy from battle fought,  
we sneak a peek or stare, with  
mixed wonder and jealousy at  
the tiger pouncing, names spelled out  
or thorny rose artfully drawn with care.

Left to wonder and be tantalized  
our feelings kept under our skin deep.



## mental

Jackie Janeksela

my father is finnish  
therefore i am finnish

if my grandmother is schizophrenic  
what does that make me

am i to believe every noise  
in my head is a potential voice  
without a name  
or that everytime i eat five potato chips,  
i must eat one more  
because i am obsessed with even numbers  
or that it is vital  
that my closet be colour coded  
and sleeve appropriate

i will admit i refuse to eat red and blue m&m's  
due to the poisonous dyes in those particular colours

i am not afraid to tell you that  
in order to fall asleep i must be laying on my back  
legs about shoulder width apart  
and both hands under my buttocks  
because it serves the purpose of warmth and protection  
from the skeleton under my bed who needs a set of hands  
to be fully functional

i can also inform you that my shoes have to be tied  
equally tight for proper and efficient walking

so am i to assume that eating the crust of my sandwich  
first is odd or that counting the number of steps i take  
is a waste of time or that the fact that i must twirl and twist my hair  
every single day is simply weird  
i find it very necessary to dispose of all fruit outside  
because they are bio-degradable and because it ensures  
there is more space in the garbage which equals  
more room in landfills

i know that my dog really does understand me  
when i bark at him because he barks back

well, i will tell you that these are things i do  
not to entertain you or piss you off, but  
because they have become a part of my daily life  
so excuse me while i count the number of words on this page  
to make sure they're even

**Secrets**  
Melody Gascho



I know that my dog really does understand me  
when I bark at him because he barks back  
well, I will tell you that these are things I do  
not to restrain you or put you off, but  
because they have become a part of my daily life  
so even as we walk I count the number of words on this page  
to make sure they're even

There is a very necessary to declare of all that outside  
because they are bio-degradable and because it ensures  
there is none - back to the garage which means  
more room in the garage

I am not a genius just eating the crust of my sandwich  
but a girl or man counting the number of words I take  
in a week or two or just the fact that I must feel and what my hair  
every single day is simply wild

I can also remind you that my shoes have to be wet  
exactly like the perfect and ancient washing

It is not about to let you that  
I am not about to let you that  
I will want, I want to let you and this is why I want  
to let you know that I am not about to let you that  
I will want, I want to let you and this is why I want  
to let you know that I am not about to let you that

It is not about to let you that  
I am not about to let you that  
I will want, I want to let you and this is why I want  
to let you know that I am not about to let you that  
I will want, I want to let you and this is why I want  
to let you know that I am not about to let you that

## Spell Against Writer's Block

Michael Springer

May the fountain of youth be this pen, flowing, endless, clear and refreshing,  
May my thoughts and words improve over time like a bottle of wine or  
a best friend;

May my typewriter clatter obnoxiously all night, pissing off my roommate;  
May my old poems keep getting worse because my new poems keep  
getting better;

May I never say the same thing twice.

May I only be washed up right after stepping out of the shower,  
May I prove to my parents that it isn't, it was never, a phase,  
May I graffiti every Steak N Shake or Denny's placemat I come across.

May my pen never dry,  
May my stomach never settle,  
May inner turmoil always come out,  
May the right thing always come a little too late to say,  
but early enough to be written.

**Furious Flirting** *after Maureen Seaton*  
Emily Watson

---

It's the kind of flirting when you finally say  
to hell with being subtle and bat your eyelashes

like you've stabbed yourself with the mascara brush.  
It's when you rip the Supremes' "Can't Hurry Love"

out of the tape deck and blast the Exciters' "Tell Him"  
and decide you'll do just that.

It's the kind of flirting when you squeeze  
into your Wonderbra and shimmy

into your little black dress; you dig out the strappy sandals  
and smear Vixen Red enamel on your toes.

It's the sassy walk that gets a guy to open the door for you,  
the coquette's smile that gets you a free drink at the bar.

My mother said you have to be careful with  
furious flirting; use it flippantly and you are just trifling

with a young man's heart. She said,  
"Save it until you mean it

and then it's the kind of coy seduction that  
made your shy father get down

on one knee with a ring  
after just four months of malt-shop dating."

Furious flirting, when you think you're going to stamp  
your feet and gnash your teeth if he doesn't fucking

kiss you soon. It's when you're flushed,  
breathless, before he even turns onto your street

and you put on fresh lip gloss and give him a look  
that dares him not to walk you to your door.

Your girlfriends say, with mixed awe and disdain,  
that you're throwing yourself at him

but all the same, they get out of the way  
because they can tell that this is furious flirting-

when you're through with being hard-to-get  
and you honestly don't give a shit

if he thinks that you're desperate.  
You just want him

to like you back, and you're tired of playing  
that nonchalant game.

**Karina, Karina**  
Annette Vazquez

Photograph  
Annette Vazquez



## Whipped

Michael Springer

I am inspiration's bitch  
like when I set my whole evening aside for her company  
from 6 till bedtime, and I wait for her patiently  
until I'm too tired to wait longer,  
and an hour after I get into bed she shows up,  
insisting on fucking right then;  
like when she walks out the door fifteen minutes later.

I'm inspiration's bitch  
like when I ask her for a commitment and she laughs at me,  
like constantly wondering if I'm losing  
whatever it is in me that turns her on,  
like how I always wonder if there's going to be a next time around,  
or if maybe its all over  
and its time for a greatest hits package.

I am inspiration's bitch  
like when she runs off for a few months  
without letting me know beforehand,  
then blows back into town  
and stops me on the way to class,  
demanding me right then and there,  
like the way I can't turn her down  
without risking her never coming back.

I'm inspiration's bitch  
when my every movement is for her pleasure  
and she disregards my needs,  
like the way I would blow off anything to be with her,  
the way she only comes when it is good for her,  
the way she brings meaning and purpose,  
the way she's all I got, all I want.

## **The Invisible Woman**

Christopher Kiess

---

It's cold in here. It's the same everyday and everyday is the same. Eight a.m. - I am out of bed and into the routine that I call my day. Quiet mornings here in this cold house are a prelude to the rest of what does not fill my day. The linoleum chills my feet as I walk to and fro in the kitchen preparing my breakfast, readying myself for the day to come. Eight thirty a.m. - the coffee is finished and I see the pot as half empty.

Monday mornings are the strangest of them all for I have spent much of the weekend in seclusion with no one to talk to. Living alone can, sometimes, do strange things to you. Yes, it is Monday morning and I will see Mrs. Young at the corner gas station. She will say, "How do you do?"

I will smile my best smile and say, "How do you do?"

My voice always startles me after not speaking for some time. I am shocked at the way it sounds and it is as though someone else is speaking through my mouth. It is distressing to think that maybe I have lost myself in the solitude of the weekend - spinning and twirling round in the internal darkness that consumes me. Then, suddenly, from the deep recesses of my being, I have a horrid thought. What if I should lose myself at some point and become something else - someone else? Is it possible to wake up one morning as a different person? And would I know if I were different? I push these thoughts back into the depths from which they arose. I speak to myself and concentrate on my voice. I soon become accustomed to it. The stranger inside me is gone, but I often wonder who it is that appears so elusively and draws me away.

Who am I? I am the invisible woman. Nine thirty a.m. - I walk through the office. No one looks at me and I am glad of it. I am not a poster girl or model. I do not look like the other office girls and have long since given up trying to. Very little make-up adorns my face. My business suit is conservative and my blouse is always buttoned to the top button. I prefer anonymity to the glances of men who would see me critically for that which I am not. They know nothing of who I am. I keep my hair short for convenience and choose not to spend hours getting it ready in the morning. I am sure that I must not be very much to look at. This is why I am the invisible woman. No one sees me.

Four thirty p.m. - I shower after a quiet day at the office and stand, soaking wet, and nude, observing my faults. I am not who the media says that I should be. I pale in comparison to those perfume ads with the copulating couples spread lewdly across the page. Mirrors adorn the bathroom wall-to-wall reminding me of who I am not. I rub the mist from a mirror as small beads of water roll down by breasts and off of my nipples.

These beads make the journey that no man dares to. They find their way to the patch of hair just below my abdomen and become lost in the emptiness. I know I am not fat. I know I am not unattractive. I know my curves are not in the wrong places and I run through this mental checklist in my head. I know everything that I am not. Yet, I know nothing of what or who I am. I have no item or list for that. I have only the expectations of society and glitzy media coverage with which to emulate. Could it be that I am only the compliment of what I have found that I am not? Standing here nude, I blush in realization of my inadequacies and cover myself with a towel while I trek my way to the bedroom in search of cover.

Five p.m. - its dinnertime. It is an odd thing to cook for yourself when you live alone. Not too much or you will waste what you cannot consume. Not too little or you will enslave yourself with your own eating habits. Tonight it is chicken with rice and a little white wine left over from Saturday night. The only sound I hear is my own chewing as I eat. The TV sits in the corner but I find it very poor company and prefer to eat in the silence of my own thoughts. TV only serves to remind me of those who have found who they are and are the carbon copies of what we should all be in society. Six thirty p.m. - dinner is finished and the paltry amount of dishes that there were, are clean.

The café at the corner is a place for me to gather my thoughts. People sometimes speak to me here. I'm sure they do not accept me for who I am, but have learned to accept me for all of my faults and for that which I am not. A hot cup of coffee and the buzz of conversation soothes me. Often, I like to just be around people to know that I am not alone in this world. The clinking of cups and the sound of the espresso machine all serve as proof that I am not trapped in a solitary existence.

The smells of coffee and steamed milk make me feel warm inside. I have chosen an anthology of poetry to wind me down at the end of this day. I feel the need to ease back into a social awareness so that I might better fall into the routine of the week. I open my book and look around the café at all of the people with other people. The lights are dim and here in the corner I feel as though I cannot be seen, but can see others. I feel safe in the shadows and I can see the entire café from where I sit. It is more than half empty.

A man at a far table is pretending to read, in between taking glances in my direction. His glances become longer each time he lifts his eyes and I begin to feel as though I am on display. I wish that I could reach out into the shadows and pull them in tighter to cover my being. I am initially embarrassed and a bit offended as his stares increase. However, tonight,



I begin to find it strangely erotic and wonder if he will come over to my table and act on his attraction - if that's what it is. I hope that I am fooling myself and am only imagining that he is looking at me. I look behind me more than once to make sure he is not looking at someone else, each time feeling foolish that I have forgotten my table is in a corner.

He looks young and smiles at me as we make eye contact. I smile back careful not to show my teeth because I have a chipped bicuspid that renders an otherwise perfect smile imperfect. He looks back to his novel and pretends to read some more while I do the same. This goes on for what feels like eternity. I want and I do not want. After a few more smiles and shifting around in his chair, he stands and begins to walk towards my table. His gait is smooth and with each footstep, my heart beats harder. It is almost as if he is in slow motion and I am petrified that I will fail this initial test of the mating ritual. I am almost sure that he will continue to walk past my table. My heart beats fast and I desperately hope that he will not. But, I also hope that he will. He stops at my table and I smile without saying anything to him. Sitting here in all of my imperfection, I am only now aware of how visible I am.

He asks if he may sit down and I concede. He offers me a coffee and I politely refuse. He makes small talk all the while stealing surreptitious glances at my legs and breasts. I laugh shyly at his poor attempts at humor. We talk for what seems like a very long time but can only have been an hour. We share stories with one another and fumble through awkward moments of silence while we try to think of something to fill the gaps with. It has been so long since I have had this sort of experience and I wish that I could hold onto this moment forever. We are sitting close to one another and I can smell his aftershave. I am excited at being this close to a man. I feel myself shedding my inhibitions and becoming close to the realization of what I may be instead of what I am not. I am so very close and begin to feel my own visibility, as a woman, is something to value.

The night is coming to an end too soon and we both must go. I wait patiently for him to ask me for my number. He smiles and moves close to me. He lays his left hand on my knee and tells me that his wife is out of town for the week. My heart plunges to the darkness within me. I immediately see what he wants in his eyes. I hear what he does not say with his heart and what he will never say in words.

Eight thirty p.m. - embarrassed, I make a lame excuse and stand ready to leave the café. He clutches my sleeve and tells me that he did not get my full name. I am the invisible woman.

## The Avenue

Sherri Rainbolt

---

Once upon a time I was a liquor prostitute  
in a mini and black bra  
selling shots of schnapps and Sex on the Beach  
I lingered over laps of men lighting their cigarettes  
I leaned in close so they could yell whispers in my ear  
"One more round," they'd say

Thirsty smoke groped me  
my heels adhered to the floor  
my damp hair clung to my neck like a man coming

I tempted them with specials  
I seduced them with my wit  
I teased them and they liked it

A drunk's dream, Jake called me  
I would bring his drinks before he'd order  
he was a regular  
scotch and soda with a Coke on the side

I never asked them to pay upfront  
some of them just did  
they knew how to get their every need met  
sometimes, if they were good, I'd give 'em a little somethin' free  
they remembered you that way  
they'd come back and pay you double

A few times some guy would get rough  
I'd have to cut him off and he'd get shitty  
he'd curse me and demand his money back  
Big Bob would muscle him out of my bordello of booze  
the background blues drowned his protests

Later on though, by last call, I'd be in the mix  
I'd be sipping drafts, sitting at the bar  
hustling an extra trick or two  
before the sun came up and I had to walk home

## Dayton

Eric Sharp

---

is a woman carrying an Encyclopedia Britannica  
wearing a red sombrero with gold trim  
coming loose around the edges.  
She opens her tome on my counter,  
points to Dunbar, Paul Lawrence  
and tells me again how she knew  
Monroe, Marilyn and DiMaggio, Joe.  
How, with a crinkle of her nose,  
Cary Grant also held membership  
in my secret society. This after the day  
I told her about me, trusting that she was crazy,  
but like Tolstoy - that she is rich and educated  
just playing at her insanity like a cat.  
Her girth is the First Street Bridge  
cemented in real and fictional shores.  
Her inventions rival the Wrights'  
melting land in to sky.  
Her eyes open as wide as the flood of 1913  
and "you're disgusting" spills from her mouth.  
The levees I've built, failed;  
the canals I've dug, unused.  
Her barge turned railroad car  
chugs off, down the mall.

## Buddha Smiling (What Moves and Locates Everything)

Christie Blizzard



## Summer Palace, Beijing

Emily Watson

Humid air pulls branches of willow trees  
and their usually fluttering leaves hang still  
as if they've grown heavy  
with the weight of a China summer.  
Speakers, hidden in the fragrant pine trees,  
project tinny recordings  
of traditional lilting melodies on erhu and sheng.  
Invisible particles of coal dust make Beijing  
air so thick that middle-aged women fear  
they will suffocate and touring college students carry  
herbal cough drops and Visene  
for their burning throats and eyes.  
Vendors call "Hallo, Hallo" to attract attention  
to their postcards, Kodak film,  
and "hand-carved" Buddha figurines.  
They cluster around weary Americans who  
will buy anything to escape the close mass  
of sweaty bodies.  
Those who peddle woven bamboo hats and painted fans  
enjoy a most profitable day,  
as do men with their refrigerated carts  
of cold bottled water and soda.  
Tourists hastily snap pictures and shuffle  
down the Long Gallery,  
anxious to return to their air-conditioned coaches,  
to move on to another site.

## **A New Title for *Rape of Europa***

Emily Watson

---

She awoke early from a dream  
of two womanly bodies of land  
arguing over Zeus's bequest of Europa.

You see, she  
knew all along.

She bid her handmaids to come  
gather flowers by the sea. After all,  
what girl wouldn't want a few witnesses  
to the foreplay of divine consummation;  
who else could convey news of her abduction  
to her father, King Agenor?

Perhaps she did not expect  
a white bull to emerge from the sea,  
but she was not surprised. She  
caressed his neck and draped  
garlands of flowers around his horns  
and finally climbed upon his back.

As soon as she was settled, the bull turned  
back to the waters  
and carried her away, across the sea  
to Crete

where he gave her  
three sons and a continent.  
What more could a princess desire?

You must have had some intuition,  
for your Europa sits erect,  
legs crossed demurely,  
head held high.

Though riding bareback on a bull,  
with porpoises leaping at her feet,  
she is tranquil and only rests  
her left hand lightly on his bovine shoulder.  
Her face is stoic, betraying only the mere hint  
of a smile at the giddy words of love  
Eros whispers in her ear.

You must admit,  
she looks all too pleased  
with herself for this to be titled  
her Rape.  
It is Zeus, chest puffed, mouth open  
and panting  
in the form of a bull,  
who looks frenzied and expectant.

Yet for all your insightful interpretation,  
you call your bronze Rape of Europa.  
Your scholars have renamed your work,  
the more appropriate Flight of Europa.  
They assume they know your intent  
better than you.  
What do you make of that?

**Flight**  
Melody Gascho



## Lazy Divey

jack D.

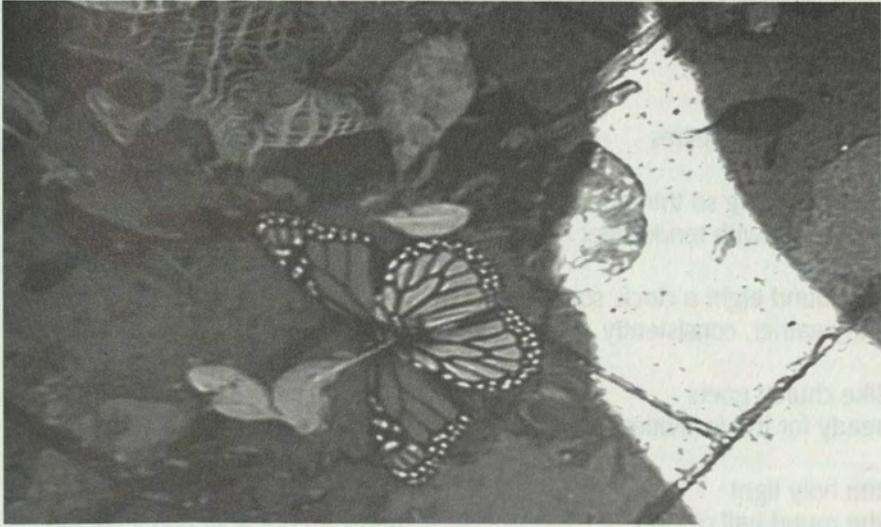


I'll see you later, in my dreams  
Cool breeze blows autumn sun through willow trees  
Casts the contrasts through thick air, shadows of leaves

Children laughing in the forest, stir the stars and streams  
Clouds shower lazy divey dreams that only night brings  
Hazel eyes exchange sleep meadow glances



**Fell**  
jack D.



Like a piano  
that fell from the sky  
Sound splintering  
awkwardly  
Moving out across silence  
with the grace of an invalid

## japanese beetles

Jackie Janeksela

there is no excuse  
for such fat bodies

tiny gold bowls  
copper kettle bellies

tendrils being so thin and sticky  
they walk with tender feet

at around eight o'clock, sometimes nine  
they gather, consistently

like church goers  
ready for the festivities

the holy light  
the round ball of God

i have heard them fall  
faulty little motors

their wings  
tawny crescent moons

hurried movements prepare  
for the coming of sky

black pods of rapture  
twinkling eyes of night

swollen pennies dance and  
make noise until i sleep

lay dormant and dumb  
when i wrestle with waking

## Cockroach

Eric Sharp

---

Croton bug, steam fly, Periplaneta Americana.  
a supposed survivor of the atom split,  
witness to the fighting, the fucking  
the walled up secrets of our kind. like a shoe  
gnome you work while I sleep;  
a spelunker of Cap'n Crunch  
a mover of mole hills, a scaler  
of slickened sink drains.  
on our way to the watering hole 3:15 am  
we are both surprised to stillness  
you stuck like a blackened piece  
of sidewalk gum, me caught  
between curiosity and revulsion.  
You break first, slipping like a vapor  
between cupboard doors under the sink  
I give pursuit and find you waiting  
in your gray half-lit world between  
the Drano and the Lysol. Your bobbing antennae  
telegraph my giant of an outline  
overripe with smells of sleep.  
My eyes scan your opulent exoskeleton  
Hearing its imaginary crunch under a newspaper,  
no a shoe, maybe the Drano.  
two evolutionary success stories meet  
sometime after high noon.

**The 5 O'Clock Rush** *(a poem in response to selfish poets)*

Eric Sharp

---

Crickets rotate belts on generator legs,  
tires rustle on sunned asphalt branches,  
coyote mufflers howl at stoplighted sky,  
the katydids hum of misaligned ball bearings.  
Waves of tidal human emotion  
beat this bench of concrete and glass.

I nestle in next to my window,  
spend my time eating a rushing,  
red tomato swollen with  
the care of my parents.  
I have quartered it, slowly chewing  
over a Saul Bellows novel  
nourishing my body  
with the minerals of my past.

On the window sill, my roommate,  
with his penchant for the aesthetic geometry  
of interior design, has placed  
Contemporary American Poetry, 5th Edition  
Between Shakespeare and Anne Rice.  
This book speaks of my poetic days -  
throwing off the shackles of school,  
surviving on a Star Crunch and coffee a day,  
writing about love, death, religion,  
how no one understands us.

Well, that's just ridiculous.  
This city buzzes with workers  
from flower to flower.  
Saul Bellow and the tomato  
don't know anything of each other.  
the words, the words, the words  
not us.

## Move

Jessica Fields

---

The soul  
tells the feet  
to move—  
    to groove.

The rhythm  
down the spine  
sends a shiver—  
    a quiver.

The music  
lets a heart  
forget—  
    regret.

## Stroke

W.H. Womack

6:00am

Reflections in the bathroom mirror again,

Tired eyes reminded by a left side slant.

Remaining live right fingers rise up to

Stroke the night's growth of stubble.

Some things never die.

He wipes dried dribble from a numb chin.

Facing up to what was once a whole

Now only half a man.

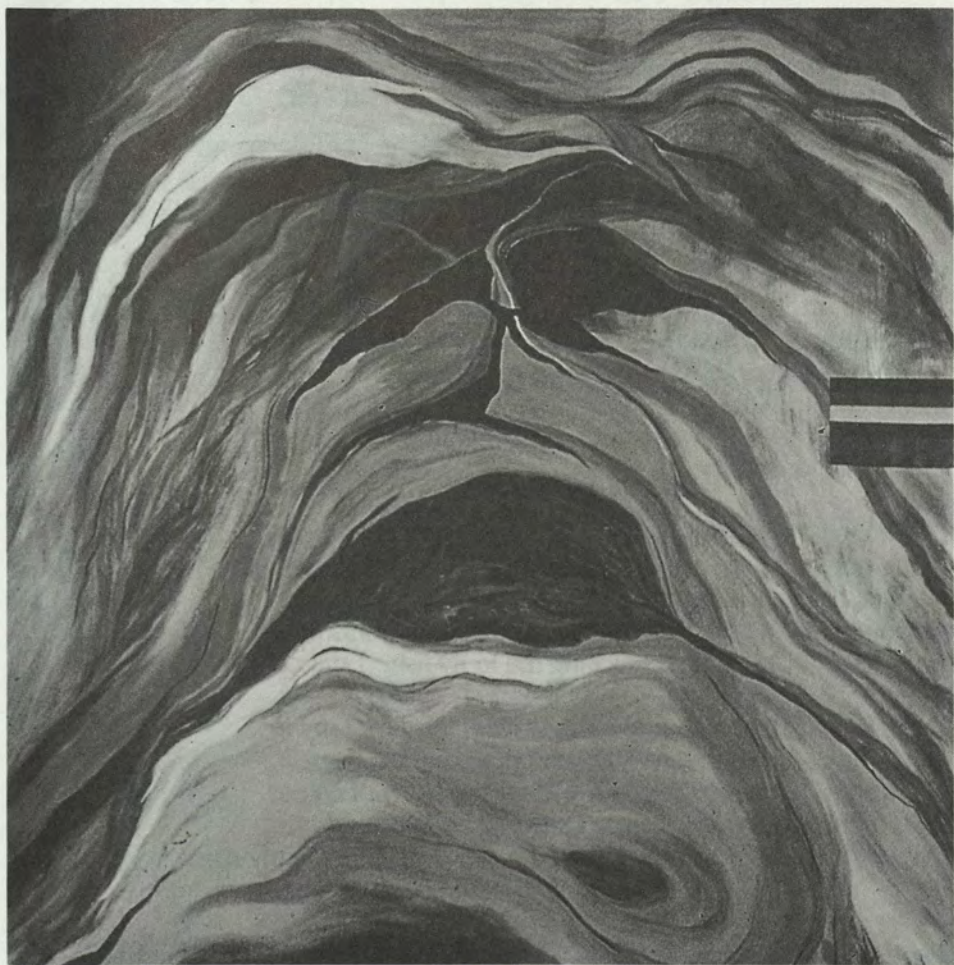
A crooked smile forms on his still silent mouth.

Maybe a shave tomorrow.

6:10am

## Recovery Room

Johanna Salazar



## Upon Leaving Rehab and Visiting My Dying Grandfather

Sharalynn Cromer

---

Others have used the chair, angled neatly next to your bed but I throw my coat and keys on it and climb in with you. We stare at each other for a few long minutes. Your glaciated stare asks me who I am, where I've been, what abyss I've managed to crawl out of this time. I could ask you the same things.

I smelled death on you the moment I opened the front door. Down the hall, your sisters shush the children, rub the backs of their own necks, busy themselves with baking. They shook their heads at me as if to say: *it's nearly done*, this life. As if to say: *Go ask him about Korea, about Kennedy*.

I've already memorized your stories, I'm not here to listen or to reassure you or to create a tangible, measurable moment that I can use in the future, long after you're six feet under, to make me feel like we had a special relationship. We had nothing of the sort. Love is not so compromising.

Down the hall, your sons are smoking and trying not to cry, trying not to look at each other. Remember when you kissed my eyelids-juju against tears? Remember when you forced me to read the World Book Encyclopedia H-I as punishment for smoking? Remember teaching me to fly fish? I still cast like a girl.

There is something Greek and tragic here; this is not my life. Remember when you threw a pitchfork at me, like a spear, and missed? I haven't forgiven you for the litany of crimes you committed against me but I promise not to forget that you were the first one to hold me, that you gave me my name.

*Where were you, baby?*

*Detox.*

*Were you toxic?*

*I realized I was ordinary.*

If anyone asks me if I have scars, I will show them this moment. I will tell them that we rested there, not touching or speaking, and all our mistakes and ill-gotten fortunes resurrected themselves and we could not hear your heart monitor over the bellow and roar of their noise.

Down the hall, your grandsons and their wives watch the evening news, rock their babies, wonder about the two of us back here- what I must be saying, whether or not this encounter will collapse



into a yelling match. Aunt Francis said, *Go easy, baby, please.*  
Go easy go easy. We aren't easy, though, old man. We need  
each other like junkies need smack, like fire needs water.  
I imagine myself burning up with you, my heart.

Later I'll be chain smoking on the back porch. Aunt Francis  
will be the one who tells me you're gone. I'll lean back against the house  
you built forty years ago and close my eyes and remember you  
teaching me how to break a horse. *Steady now. Easy, baby.*

**Kneaded Lesson** for Clearcie  
Kimberly McClish

---

Always start with the blue bowl,  
the one with the chipped rim  
that to my small arms weighed  
like discipline undeserved.  
She collected the ingredients;  
the yeast, home-ground flour,  
the butter we churned  
the day before. But the skill  
was not in the ingredients  
or the ability to follow  
a recipe. Magic resided  
in those ancient hands  
and she was sure she could  
pass the secret on to me.  
Dumped out, the dough became a lifeless  
meandering mess.  
Punching and strangling  
the mass, she said,  
"When it kicks it's ready."  
She ripped an arms amount  
and cupped it in her left hand.  
Give me your hand.

*This is important.*

She rolled it gingerly into my palm;  
ripped another for herself.  
Don't squeeze, let it tickle  
like an inch worm in your palm.  
Now caress the outer edges  
with the other hand  
and pinch to the center  
not too hard.  
When she finished, hers looked  
like the powder white breast of a Novice,  
mine like the squinting face of a spinster;  
spitting and cussing.  
We floated them into the pan  
nipple and nose down.  
And when we had a full congregation  
of plump parishioners  
the metal monster slurped them in.  
When finished they are golden bricks  
of fluffy angel clouds.  
And I am hooked,  
first batch to last.  
Infused with her sorcery.

## **Art of the Sister Story** *after Amy England*

Emily Watson

---

I. I was four and we were rummaging around Mom's make-up drawer. Emily found a bottle labeled Lauren Oil. She told me Mom had it specially made when I was born; it was a very rare kind of oil, made only from baby Laurens. "When you were small, they put you in a press and squeezed until the bottle was full. Look, Lauren, it's almost empty!"

II. Ellen and I were playing in the kitchen while our sitter was asleep and she got out the scissors and said that she wanted to play beauty parlor. She looked at me and I ran down the basement stairs. I thought she would chase me but she slammed the door and locked it. She called through the door that I could come out when I was ready to play. The sitter never woke up from her nap until after *Days of Our Lives*, and I knew it would be another hour on the dark stairs before she found me. I finally said she could cut a little, thinking she would trim my bangs like Mom did; she cut one fistful of hair from above my right ear before I screamed and woke the sitter. When my mother found out, she spanked Ellen and gave me a pixie cut. Although we and all of our cousins were born chubby and blonde, we started first grade as scrawny kids with dishwater locks. I was mousy by the time my hair grew back and I always blamed her for the loss of my blonde curls.

When telling a story about one's sister,  
there are certain rules that must  
be followed. The actions of one's sister  
are told  
to elicit sympathy.  
To be effective,  
one must create a balance  
so as to  
make the sister's behavior  
unbelievable,  
and still maintain  
the story's credibility.

### **A. The sister must be inherently evil.**

There must be no question that all actions were committed with malicious intent. In a sister story, the evil sister must live with no other desire than to torment the good sister.

Other motives cannot be considered; the only valid story is one in which the evil sister makes a malevolent attack.

III. Of course, she gets her way with everything. She never wanted to share her car with me so she totaled three station wagons by the time she was eighteen. Now that I am sixteen, I'm not allowed to get my license because she was such a reckless driver. My parents say they learned their lesson about letting teenagers drive. The bitch probably did it on purpose so she wouldn't have to share her car with me. She's spiteful like that.

IV. It was Christmas and Shannon and I were posing for pictures on my new rocking horse. She had just turned three and was sitting behind me on the horse, holding onto my waist. I don't know what made me say it but we were rocking back and forth and I giggled and said, "Shannon, don't bite me," and she immediately clamped her teeth down on my shoulder blade. There was a round wet mark on my red velveteen dress and two bruised crescents on my skin. She always was a vicious child.

V. I run three miles every morning before I go to school and when I get back, I take my extra water bottle from the fridge, and chug the whole thing while I sit on the driveway and do my stretches. Yesterday Annie wanted to borrow my green dress and I wouldn't let her. I usually don't care if she borrows my clothes but I was grouchy because she woke me up at seven in the morning to ask me. She threw a tantrum in my bedroom doorway and screeched that I'd be sorry for being so selfish. I said something along the lines of "Whatever, leave me alone, I want to sleep."

**B. The good sister must be innocent of all wrongs.**

To tell a sister story right  
one sister's evil must be a foil  
for the other's virtue. Even if  
she deserved it, and she knew it,  
the good sister telling the story  
must make it clear  
that the evil sister's bite,  
cutting remark,  
or deceit,  
was not revenge,  
but pure spite.

Half an hour later, my alarm went off and I slipped my sneakers on and left. When I got back I grabbed my chilled bottle and took two Advil out onto the driveway. I took a huge drink from my water and spit it, and the Advil, out on the grass. She had dissolved a tablespoon of salt in the bottle.

VI. The day I announced that Jake and I were getting married in the June, my little sister announced that she and her boyfriend were moving into my parents' basement together because they were having baby in the spring.

VII. My older sister constantly tormented me and I awaited the day I would be older and bigger. We were playing hopscotch and I had just lost because she said I stepped over the line. Upset at the injustice of losing every time, I threatened her with "Just wait until I'm older than you, then you'll really get it." Rather than looking worried, she was positively gleeful; "Is that what you think is going to happen?" I was sure of it so I nodded and tried to look menacing. "Look here," she said, "This is square five, that's where you are; I am at square nine. When you are six, I will be ten; you'll never catch up, don't you see?"

**C. The passage of time must in no way diminish the bitterness.**

Years may pass,  
white scars from preschool teeth may heal,  
stolen blouses may have been turned to rags.  
Parental predictions may even come true  
and sisters may discover that once they grow up  
they are closer than friends.  
But there will always be the memory,  
for sisters never forget  
the crimes of the closest of family. When they are old  
and have children of their own,  
a younger sister will always remember  
how she was locked in the closet  
or told that she was really adopted;  
she will always feel that everything she did was second-best.  
An older sister will always bristle  
at the memory of finding her  
lipstick, broken, on her sister's vanity;  
she will always feel the hurt of having  
to share the spotlight with a second daughter.

My hopes and five-year-old dignity crushed; I sat down on the driveway and cried with the realization that I would always be the little sister.

## Negotiations

Sharalynn Cromer

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Mary, 1983

I was cast as Mary  
and all the other girls were jealous-  
She's half Protestant, said Mary Angela  
She's got freckles, said Patricia-  
But Christmas came and I dazzled  
the crowd with my heart-felt delivery  
*Unto me this day a child is born*

Mary Angela played a sheep, her nose  
painted black, two cotton ears clipped  
to her headband.

I asked my dad if Mary knew she was  
Mary, if she could see her halo crown,  
if she wrote Hail Mary Full of Grace.  
No, he said, she was just a Jewish girl.  
I asked my dad if I was a virgin.

The camcorder will not lie. Years later  
I watch the immaculate one,  
kneeling beside a manger, eyes searching  
the black auditorium for my mother.

Eve, 1992

I was passed over for Juliet  
and got stuck with Lady Montague  
who has no good lines. Backstage, between  
scenes, I let Romeo get to third base  
to the horror of Meagan Trueblood,  
his on-stage, star-crossed lover.

*I want to be yours*, he whispered  
more than once. But I just wanted a reputation,  
not a relationship. I couldn't put into words  
that the paved-over farms,  
video-rental chains, and drive-through  
pharmacies made me feel dim and slow.  
I wanted the kind of knowledge  
you only get by doing.  
I wanted to get us both banished  
from that Eden.

---

I never asked my dad much in those days.  
He had all the questions:  
When will you be back?  
Who's driving?  
Do we know her parents?

My mother and I passed  
in the doorways, hallways—our elbows  
or hips sometimes brushing—not recognizing  
one another.

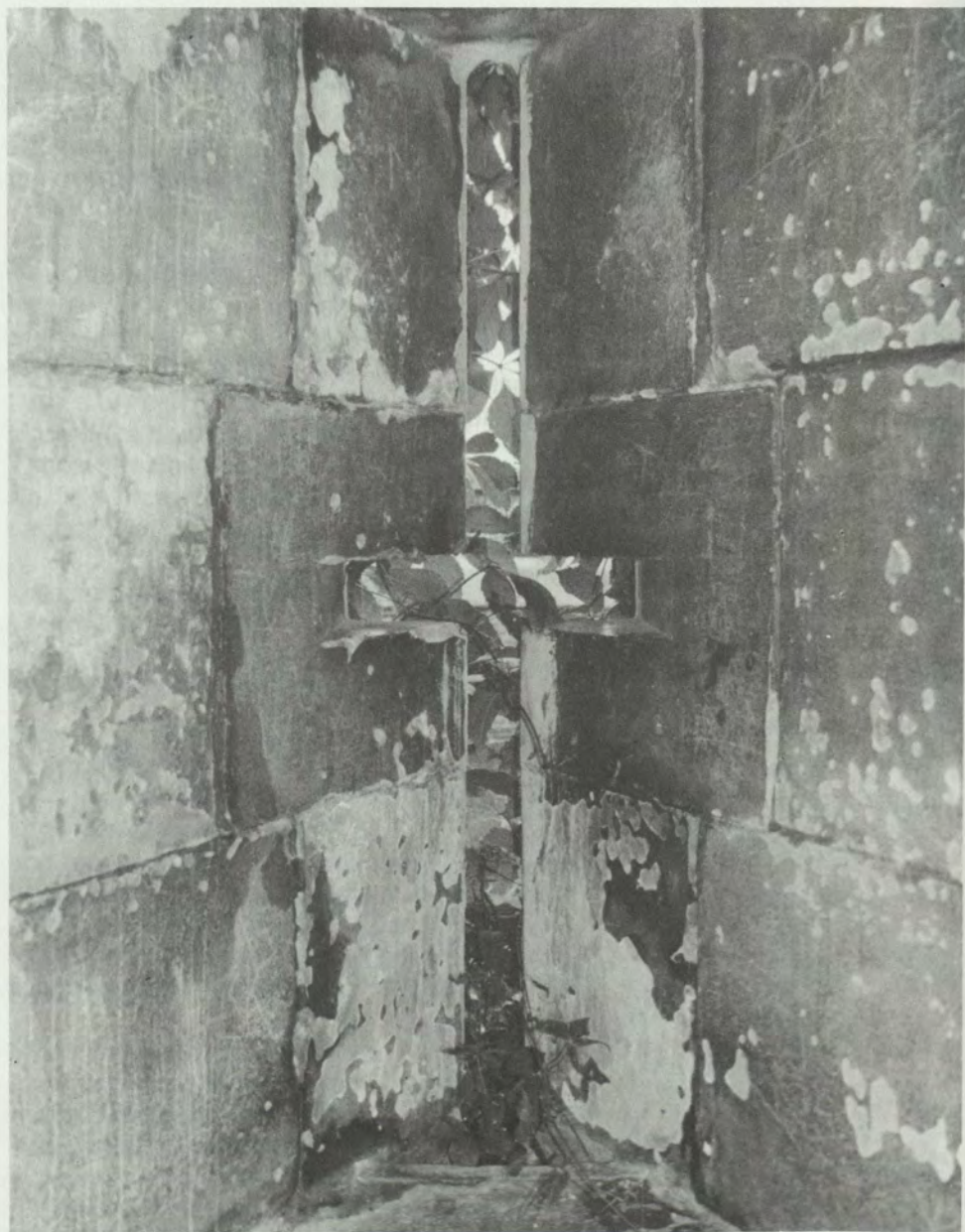
Comfortable in my own skin, 2001

I try not to think of it this way: that God  
exiled the mother and raped the daughter,  
then allowed us to worship  
the one who asked no questions.  
Christianity is a litany of countless  
sacrifices. We offer them even now.  
We compromise away our stories.

God, I will tell my daughter  
that Eve gave up nearly everything  
to be free of you, and that Mary  
never saw you coming.

**Castle Cross**  
Annette Vazquez

---



You only get my story  
I wanted to get as close as I could  
from that brick.



## Wed or Dead?

Emily Watson

*Gustave Courbet's painting, The Preparation of the Dead Girl, entered the Smith College collection in 1929 as a reworked The Preparation of the Bride; cleaning revealed the original subject.*

*Indianapolis Museum of Art exhibition catalogue*

A dozen girls in white frocks  
bustle to prepare for this Holy Sacrament;  
they tuck sun-bleached linens around  
a clean straw mattress,  
arrange flowers, and clear the table.

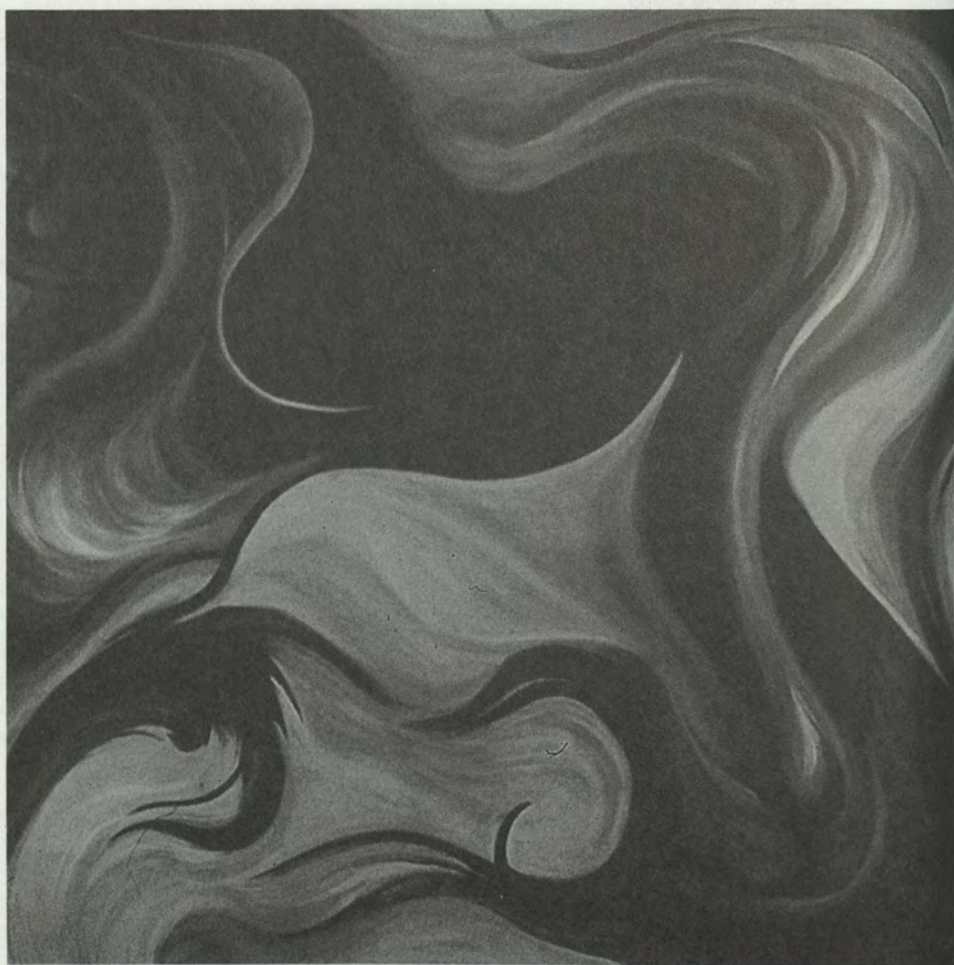
A few cluster around their friend,  
hurrying,  
as she wears only  
petticoats and chemise;  
they comb and plait her hair,  
tie a cross around her neck,  
dress her in the finest white stockings  
she has ever worn,  
give her soft leather shoes.

Years later,  
the slight retouching  
of the subject's face,  
a hint of alteration  
in the tilt of her head,  
would transfigure a dead girl  
into a bride.

Perhaps Courbet knew how  
French peasant-brides secretly wondered  
which was the worse fate-  
to be married to a simple  
farmer from a neighboring village  
or to be buried in a shabby pine coffin?  
The preparations of a bride  
or a corpse  
were the same  
but for a breath and a veil.

**Confusion**  
Johanna Salazar

What is Death?  
Luis Wilson



## Why Does She Like Me?

Ray Koleski

---

She likes me because I'm as rich as Bill Gates?  
While he gains in wealth, my fortune stagnates.

She likes me because I resemble Brad Pitt?  
Americans say "Never"; the Russians, "Nyet! Nyet!"

She likes me because I've Schwarzenegger's huge muscles?  
Mine? Not that big! More like his corpuscles.

She likes me because I can wiggle like Elvis?  
No challenge to him from my amateur pelvis.

She likes me because I've Chris Rock's roguish humor?  
My being that funny is only a rumor.

She likes me as Eminem, that bad, bold hip hopper?  
I'm just not that talented, and he's too improper.

Then, why, why does she like me with all of my flaws?  
What is the magic that affords me her applause?

Well, she uses my skateboard, which she thinks "divine"!  
'Cause she's all of eight years, and I've just turned nine.

## Just Another Stupid Question

Kali Fields

---

Why do I have to eat spinach

Why do I have to go to Sunday School

Why must I wear this frilly pink

dress with these doofy socks

Why do you have to leave us here

alone

Why doesn't he call us ever -

...but I sent him a card

on Father's Day

Why can't we go to Disneyworld

Why...

*ssshhh*

...but why do you stay with him if he beats you

Why must I go to church...but I can't feel it

...I *am* trying

Why is it so hard for you to smile

Why do you look so

tired

## Answers

Kimberly McClish

---

When I was three, I asked my mother why  
Louis had wheels.

"War," she muttered.

When I was four and three-quarters, I badgered my mother where  
Uncle Dennis had gone.

"Divorce," was her only answer.

When I was five, I wondered about Chris,  
who'd disappeared suddenly in August below water.

"Dead," she said dryly, closing the paper.

When I was in the first grade, I quizzed why none of the kids  
at school looked like Darnell and Joe.

"Racism," she growled.

When I was seven, I asked, in a whisper, why I was not good  
enough to win the drawing contest.

The award went to the teacher's son.

"Politics," was the confusing answer.

When I hit puberty, I was teased for being taller  
than the boys. Why don't I have a boyfriend?

"Be glad," she snarled.

## Liberation...Maybe

Kali Fields

As a child I detested all of the so-called girly things! Make-up, crying, and especially dresses! Wearing that inconvenient piece of cloth served only to invite reprimand from my mother. "Pull down your dress, Gloria. Your slip is showin'!" "Cross your legs Gloria!" "Chil'! SIT UP straight!" I wanted to ride the wind on horseback like Bo Derek- Grace the stage like Dietrich... elegance... in pants. I craved the powers of Wonder Woman! Burn the slips! Give me the star covered leotard! But my pleas were not to be heard in mama's house. Nor were they to be heard at Park Hills Boarding School, where I was sent after the 5th grade. At Park Hills, skirts were there to stay - for the girls at least. White buttoned up blouses with purple pleated, wool, knee-length skirts. For the boys, it was a measly navy blue blazer, complete with a shiny, golden stitched seal, (the color a magic headband would be) which in bold Latin script read: STO PRO VERITATE. They had their choice of slacks.

I wanted to be free! Freedom is what I deserved! How was I to know that all along, I had been headed in the wrong direction? And if it weren't for Juan, I would have still been looking down that long, dead ended road.

The girls at Park Hills did make attempts at establishing their individuality - every other Saturday, on our chaperoned shopping trips for toiletries. The expression usually took form in fire engine red nail polish or crimson kiss rouge. I, however, chose to spend what I had left of my weekly two dollar allowance on the two best buys at Hooks Drug store: Super bubble bubblelicious chewing gum...root beer flavored - my superstitious must before every one of my soccer games - and Carmex lip therapy, one of my few indulgences.

Next to Frizz Ease Oil Sheen, Carmex had to be one of the best inventions of the 20th century. This stuff was heaven for the lips! Or in the very least, Aspen or Miami. Smoothing it on, you could almost feel that crisp mountain air blowing against your face as you zip down those powdery slopes. Or, perhaps it rather feels like a cool breeze tickling your skin as you step out of the clear, blue Caribbean waters.\*

It was brought to my attention that Carmex, in fact, isn't so good for the lips. Apparently, it creates some sort of dependency. At least this is what Juan Jaramillo told me.

"A dependency?" I asked

"Yes. A dependency," he confirmed, and then he kissed me.

---

Juan Jaramillo, my hermano, my muy amigo, my...Chileno con carne. I thought that one was cute and quite clever for my wit. See, Juan was from Chile and as a 250 pound 12 year old, no one could deny his relationship with carne, neither personal nor dietary.

He and his family moved from Santiago in the spring of '74. His father, a partner in the Rockford Gold mining corporation, sent his wife, Juan and Juan's two younger siblings to America to stay with his brother's family. Although he had hated to resort to that, it was all that he felt could be done to help Juan manage his medical condition.

At nine, Juan was diagnosed with congenital heart disease. At the time, the only recommendation that the Chilean physicians could give was to balance his diet with the food group essentials and to discourage strenuous exercise. The diet part of the prescription was impossible to manage. At home Juan was fed nothing but rice, beans, some fruits and some vegetables. But on the streets, he would load up on any and everything that he could get his hands on; hamburgers, lamb sandwiches, chili, chips, candy. Eating was his passion. And as Juan's parents would find out soon enough that, so was soccer.

They didn't hassle him too much about his eating. They had thought that his love for food and his increasing weight would slow him down and prevent him from overexerting while at play. At least they would be able to control one of the potential dangers. But they were wrong.

Shortly after Juan's diagnosis, the emergency room visits began. Each time, Juan would be out playing a game of pick up futbol at the pueblo park. And each time his friends would come running, their little legs moving as fast as possible up the Jaramillo's long, graveled drive. By the time they'd reach the little brick porch overflowing with ferns, philodendrons and fragrant flowers of all sorts, they were bursting with anxiety. They'd pound loudly on the large yellow door, "Señora! Señora! Juanito esta mal! Juanito esta mal!" Even if Juan's parents hadn't heard what it was that they said the first time, they'd know from the tone of their straining and winded little voices and from the deliberate and desperate knocks that something serious had happened. Within minutes Juan's parents would return to the park where they'd find him faced down clasping his thick chest gasping for what air he could. They'd then whisk him off to Centro Hospital where he'd be stabilized, loaded up with saline and other nutrients, and sent back on his way. And every time, the scene was the same on the way home: Juan's father reprimanding him and forbidding him to play futbol again, Juan in the back seat like a repentant little child, "...so terribly sorry," his mother,

rocking his large, trembling body in her arms. He hated his illness. He hated that it kept him from living like a normal boy. Juan, of course, tears streaming from his eyes, would promise not to jeopardize his health again. And each time he would mean it. His father would gaze at him through the rearview mirror, always holding back his own tears, tightly behind clenched teeth. Two weeks after the fifth hospital visit and the fifth promise, the family was on the plane to Boston. They'd hoped that both a change of scenery and American medicine would be strong enough to protect their son.



When Juan arrived in America, he had the misfortune of landing himself in the middle of the seventh grade at Park Hills, a place that was notorious for sending more than one student home crying from a brutal and ruthless tongue of an eighth grader. Most of the fragile few had in fact been transfers, virgins of Licking County life...and Licking County lickings. Having worn the same pair of pants, some grey cords with a brown, leather patch on the left knee, once for almost two weeks straight, destined Juan as a target. His size undoubtedly secured that destiny.

*"A refined and cultured community,"* the school brochure read. The kids at Park Hills took every waking opportunity to prove otherwise. Rarely did they call Juan 'crusty pants' or any one of their fat names to his face. No, they were much too *classy* for that. Instead, they would play crude (and cowardly in my opinion) jokes on him. They would leave loads of Hostess cup cakes and Twinkies at his front door. Literally, tens of them! They would sneak into his room late in the middle of the night and fill his bed with hot dogs and sausage links. Once, on one of these events, they stole his grey cords. This time, the Headmaster intervened and demanded they be returned at once or else...and they were.

Juan's parents didn't have to worry about him playing futbol with the boys. They never did invite him. The Park Hills boys were more straightforward about this though. They told him flat out "No." And period. They didn't know about his illness so I was sure that their rejection was strictly a reflection of their own selfish nature. Juan didn't ever pursue the matter though. He seemed content to sit along the sideline cheering me on at my own soccer games.

Juan, in fact, didn't appear to be bothered much at all by the taunting. Unlike any newcomer that I had seen before, he held his ground. It was almost as if he invited ridicule because he continued wearing the pants even after the taunting and he made no attempts whatsoever at losing the weight.



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I believe that it was Juan's causal and thick skinnedness that drew me to him. That and those cords, strangely enough. They spoke something that I had never heard before from within the walls of that school. And as worn and dirty as they were, they smelled of something that I had actually been craving for months: the sweet redolence of liberation.

Juan and I did become fast friends. We spent every moment of free time together in the school greenhouse chatting and tending to the bromeliads and violets and whatever else was growing at the time. One afternoon, I did ask him why he wore those pants everyday. He looked at me as if he hadn't yet made the same observation.

"Come on Juan. I mean, I don't really care. I'm just curious is all. Doesn't it bother you that people are always making their stupid jokes about you and your dressing habits?"

"Hum," he thought placing his chubby hand on his chin a la Marlon Brando. Then he turned to me and eyes me as if sizing me up.

"Oh quit it Juan!" We both burst out laughing. "I'm serious. I just..."

"Gloria, I know you're serious. Yes, that much I have realized about you. And it does amuse me much of the time. But these pants, they're not serious. That skirt you're wearing, it's not serious. The jokes done on me? They're not serious either and neither are the guys who pull them. At least not when they're pulling them. No. What is important is there." He took a finger and tapped on my chest. "What is important is here." Then he tapped on his own.

I sat there for a moment, trying to understand what he had just told me. I wasn't sure how to respond so I dug into my pocket for my little jar of lip balm and applied some to my lips. "And that stuff," he went on, "is bad for you. It can create a dependency you know."

Eventually we grew to become the closest of buddies sharing childhood joys and hopes and even the same chewing gum once for kicks. We exchanged innocent intimacies daily and enjoyed our many kindred moments talking, laughing, and just being close. We probably would have become even closer...if it had been God's will.

One afternoon, my soccer team had a match against Deerfield Academy. Juan showed up with two other guys from school. Even from afar, Juan was pretty easy to spot. I was instantly ecstatic. And although it wasn't a game of much importance, it was always a good feeling to have my buddy there supporting me.

Ten minutes into the second half we were up three to zero. I, as the goalkeeper, still had to remain concentrated on the game, so I hadn't noticed the gang of people gathered around the sideline viewing something. When my attention finally swayed in that direction, I tried with natural curiosity to see what the interest was. I thought that I heard someone murmur the name, "Juan Jaramillo." I perused the crowd but even as big as Juan was, I did not find him. I saw a tall slender man standing outside of the crowd shaking his head. I heard what sounded like a woman's shriek, loud and hysterical; it was the kind that always annoyed me so I rolled my eyes. With each passing moment, my attention waned from the game and more acutely on the mysterious event on the sideline. *Where was Juan? He was just there a minute ago. Perhaps he went to the sweet stand...* I chuckled silently to myself. *Yes, I'm sure that's where he is! Man! He's missing the drama over there! I'll have to get the scoop from someone else.* So I scanned the crowd to see who could be my informant after my game was over.

In this moment, I saw Holt, one of Juan's friends. Now Holt naturally had the look of a scared amphibian so it took me a few seconds to identify his expression as one of a uniquely troubled sort. I somehow knew that whatever it was wasn't good. A few moments later, I arrived to where Juan's body lay. I sat down beside him and placed his head in my lap. Softly stroking his round face, I rocked him gently until the paramedics came to cart his limp, lifeless body away, this time for good.

Looking back, it does surprise me that I didn't cry at all at Juan's funeral. I, much like Juan's father probably, much like many folks actually, thought that crying would reveal a weakness that I needed to keep hidden and protected from the imaginary knives and daggers of the world. I know now, though, that I didn't cry because, I didn't know how. I didn't know how to let go of someone who had epitomized the essence of liberation. I didn't know how to release a dependency that kept me so bound to something and then, to someone...so bound that it was as if it was still there. It was as if Juan were still there. I hadn't realized then, as I do now, the significance of Juan's words the day that I asked him about his pants. How could I have known then, that none of it really matters? The ridicule, the ridiculers, the worn out pants, the stupid skirts; none of those can define a person's freedom. That is something that must be sought from within.

I don't remember much of what went on the day of the funeral. I know that I sat in the pew, motionless, numb from thought to feeling. I can recall not feeling sorry when I accidentally smeared my make-up all over Juan's mother's blouse when we hugged. I remember not feeling grateful for the compliments given to me by the girls at school on my new

navy blue polyester pantsuit. But I don't remember the flowers the that everyone talked about later that were placed inside Juan's casket, framing his oversized body like dandelions on the edge of a peaceful pasture. I can't recall the words that were spoken by the headmaster of the school nor by the priest. In fact, the only thing that I do remember really was the cool wind when I exited the church. Because, it was in this moment, when I reached for my Carmex.

## Contributors

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**Bobby Bell** is a senior English major with a focus on creative writing. He worked at the *Indianapolis Star* for five years, but resigned to focus more on his classes. After graduating, he is getting married and moving to Boston.

**Christie Blizzard** is a young painter yearning to reconcile history with the now, trying to reconcile a visual image with a poem, trying to reconcile a metaphor with a thing. As Williams Carlos Williams writes, "Say it in things, not ideas." She does all of it to make an object that can satisfy the yearning to say what is only in the unsaid.

**Sharalynn Cromer** is finally finishing her graduate degree in American History. She mentions that she owes the federal government an obscene amount of money. She plans to move to the Badlands and hide out for several years until the student loan people give up. She would like to thank Terry Kirts, whose classes saved her sanity during her final year of grad school. His criticism and encouragement are much appreciated.

**Jack D.** feels poetry can be used to describe beautiful, harmonious moments but he finds it more powerful and useful when describing the strange and unknown.

**Jessica Fields** (*no biographical information available*)

This is **Kali R. Fields** final year at IUPUI. She will miss all of the beautiful people here, particularly the English Department, but now it's time for her to fly! ¡Hasta la vista! ¡Que Dios les acompañe!

**Jeannette Fulda** breeds flying monkeys in her basement. She is training them to yodel in French, dreaming of the day they take the music industry by storm.

**Melody Gascho** is a General Fine Arts major. Her work is mostly narrative with a Christian theme because her faith is important to her. She has always loved making art, ever since she was old enough to hold a crayon. She emphatically states, "I will never stop."

**Jackie N. Janeksela** is an English major who doesn't even know what being an English major means. She would much rather major in Contemporary Cartoon Watching (with a focus on SpongeBob SquarePants and Powerpuff Girls) with a minor in the Art of Popping Corn. She hopes to write a collection of poems on Finland after she actually goes to Finland. Her future plans include breathing.

---

**Christopher Kiess** states: Single white male, 30, seeks new style and prose at the risk of breaking all of the rules. Me: Rapidly aging, sophomore, English major at IUPUI who is heavily into non-conformity and sets only the highest standards for himself in writing. You must be fresh, inspiring, and a light in my darkness who bears the words which will take me to the next level.

**Ray Koleski** claims that his body is older than Methuselah, but hopes that his heart stays younger than spring. He expresses his appreciation to Karen Kovacik for opening the door to writing poetry.

**Kimberly McClish** is a sophomore English major. She wants to thank her husband, Jason, for always being her champion, and her academic guardians amongst the faculty (they know who they are).

**Sherri Rainbolt** is 35, a single mother by choice, and a full-time student at the Herron School of Art. She is studying Art Education with the intention of pursuing a Masters of Art Therapy. She lives on seventeen acres in the country, enjoys sculpture and working with children.

**Johanna "Jo" Salazar** has been preoccupied with creating artwork since her early childhood. As she has matured, her work has developed into painterly abstractions or organic and landscape themes. Color and emotion are more important to her than subject matter or recognizable imagery.

**Eric Sharp** is a senior at IUPUI hoping to attend graduate school next year.

**Rae Solórzano** is a Spanish Education major with a love for writing. This is her last semester taking classes before doing her student teaching in the fall.

**Michael Springer** is going to England this summer. He's going to be there for three whole weeks. He's not paying a penny of it. Ha ha. Just think: While you're stuck here, going to work and stuff, Michael is going to be seeing the museum and countrysides.

**Annette Vasquez** (*no biographical information available*)

**Emily Clare Watson** says it's a tough job being a karaoke diva and a poet, but somehow she finds time for both. Breaking away from her fans in the lounge is never easy, but the muse of poetry beckons.

**W.H. Womack** states, "Currently, I gain immense satisfaction from pursuing a degree in English -- except for that grammar stuff."

## **Invitation to Future Writers, Artists, and Editorial Staff Members**

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### **General Guidelines**

You may submit up to ten works of art, poetry, or prose. Include a cover sheet listing the title of your submission(s) along with your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and a brief biographical statement. (You need include only one cover sheet with all submissions.) Do not place your name on the manuscripts; *genesis* editors judge each piece anonymously.

### **Writers' Guidelines**

All genres should be typewritten; 12-point Times New Roman font is preferred. Fiction and nonfiction submissions should be single-spaced and contain 2,500 words or fewer. If possible, please submit both a 3.5-inch IBM-compatible disk and a hard copy of your work.

### **Artists' Guidelines**

Please clearly label your artwork with the title(s) of the piece(s). All mediums will be accepted, but slides are preferred. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your submission(s) so that artwork may be returned.

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If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail the editors at  
**[genesis1@iupui.edu](mailto:genesis1@iupui.edu)**.

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