

Aurora

2017



Aurora

Over 147 years of production

Aurora is the literary magazine of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, celebrating the diversity of art and literature that students, faculty, staff, and Alumni have to offer. The legacy of Aurora continues thanks to many caring editorial staff and students, who have upheld the Woods' oldest publication.

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Editor's note

What a year it has been! As always Aurora is a magazine this campus can take pride in and the magazine's role as a 147-year-old tradition is no small feat. As this year's editor, I am proud to present Aurora's new look. Sometimes change is a beautiful thing, and this is no exception.

I and the entire Aurora staff would like to thank those who have submitted work to the magazine. Without you, this magazine would never have happened. Without further ado, I would like to welcome you to this year's issue of Aurora Literary Arts Magazine!

Nyctasia Fitton, **Editor-in Chief**

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D S Thomas

A Hymn to Lure Hypnos

A hymn to lure hypnos
Kiss my brow
so tenderly and guard me
from your brothers, three.

Desire me
in your Mother's kingdom
until I am Hemera's again.

Over and over
rest my worrisome heart
Curer of Day's Maladies.

And I will bring
the fumigation of poppies
to consummate our meeting.

I will sing this hymn
and propitiate and pray
for your nightly return.

Sing to me also,
if it is not hubris to presume
that it is your evening song I hear.



Emily Humphrey
Dream Big Little One

McKenzi Kumpf

The Sun's Decent

Forty-five minutes ago, we arrived at a small beach on the coast of Lake Michigan. Our shoes were left abandoned in the car as we took off down the shore trying to reach the furthest point of the peninsula before the sun dipped below the horizon. Unfortunately, time was not on our side. It seemed that no matter how far we walked, our desired destination still remained a silhouette in the distance. As the sun sank closer to the skyline, the terrain turned from the soft damp sand, which I loved to sink my toes into, to a mix of small and large rocks that had me cringing and complaining with each step forward.

We accepted the fact that we would never reach the peninsula before the sunset, so we began to look for the perfect vantage point to sit and watch. Sitting in the sand was out of the question because it had vanished beneath the water or turned to rocks thirty minutes ago, and the brush kept creeping closer to the water throughout our entire journey. It seemed that nature was going to force us to stand, but, as if it heard our pleas, we came across a log big enough for the four of us. So the City Boy, the Boy who desired adventure, the Boy whose heart was in the future, and I sat down and waited for the sun to disappear below the skyline.

While we continued to gaze at the sun as it drifted closer and closer to the horizon, I allowed my mind to wander. I thought about how much we experienced during this trip to Michigan. We conquered the sand dunes, ate wild mushrooms, started a fire on the beach, gazed at the stars, and now we were finishing our vacation by watching the sunset over Lake Michigan. I always question time because it's crazy how a moment can seem to last forever, but even moments have twilights and night must soon fall.

As I watched the sun's decent, I am faced with the reality that these moments with my friends will make their way over the horizon as life demands our presence. Eventually, the sun would fall below the skyline, and we would begin our long trek back

down the shore to the car. Before we would know it, tomorrow would arrive, and we would pack our bags, load the car, and begin our seven-hour drive back home to Indiana. But that was tomorrow, and the sun had yet to set.

Now was the time to sit and enjoy the company of the ones that shared this summer adventure with me. While each of them made my life difficult in one way or another on this trip, the friendship they offered was genuine. In the end, it was our friendship that made the journey to this place one to remember, and this spot became the moment where we stepped back and basked in the memories that we had created.

Finally, the sun was inches away from the horizon. I gazed out over the water, watching the sunlight dance across the surface of the rising and falling waves. The gentle breeze brushed the hair from my face as the cold water rushed over my sore feet then receded back into the lake. For a moment it felt as if the world was holding its breath, waiting in silence for the sun to cross the skyline. When the horizon caressed the burning sphere, it set the sky on fire. I smiled and marveled in the beauty that a single sunset held, and each of us applauded the magnificent scene that lay before our eyes. For me, our applause was more of a toast to friendship and to the moments I wish could last forever before they disappeared over the horizon.



Amanda LeeAnn Perry

Follow Your Dreams

Karen Munoz

Autumn Leaves

The crisp air caresses my face, gently, playfully,
In the breeze, autumn leaves sway gracefully.
The colors of autumn stem from emerald leaves,
Coming of the season preludes to Hallows Eve.

Cold autumn nights clash against the hues,
As the artist's mind creates worlds from muse.
Laughter abounds amongst holiday cheer,
Undoubtedly, my favorite season is here.

We gather together with a sense of belonging,
Filled with glee for hayrides and pumpkin carving.
Nostalgia reminds of bonfires gone by,
The season's end is where leaves go to die.

And when these autumn leaves decide to go,
I'll remember this feeling of awe and woe.
An extreme winter cold behind the chill leaves,
I'll weep not for my beautiful autumn leaves.

Betsy Arseneau

The Pen

Striving to write since I was about fifteen
Words swirling around in my head
At some moments it seems
Not written down by a pen.
A fear of uncertainty
Soaring all the way up to ten.

The cycle on repeat
Starting and stopping like a washer gone bad
But inside of me
A creative mind lingers in my head to grab.
But on one cold spring day
A pen I clutched
And held tightly in my hand
The words flew out of my mind so fast
On to the fragile paper
But could it last?

When words finally put together
Perceived to be a light
A numbness came over me
That I am to write.
Whether good or bad to someone else
Undoubtedly a bell

Ring out loud for me in my heart
I could tell.

Days press hard
And writing doesn't flow
Piece by piece
A jigsaw puzzle that never ends
Many nights in a row.

Several avenues I took in finding
The missing piece of the soul.
But a striking cord like music
When the black ink of a pen rolls.

Much to still learn about this quest
But putting my mind to rest.
Maybe a written word soon out
For the world to see
And only if I believe.

Amalia Ramirez

The Other Me

She stares back at me

Mimicking my every move

Like an annoying sibling

Our eyes meet searching

For each other in them

Do we share the same dreams?

And fears?

Has she made the same mistakes?

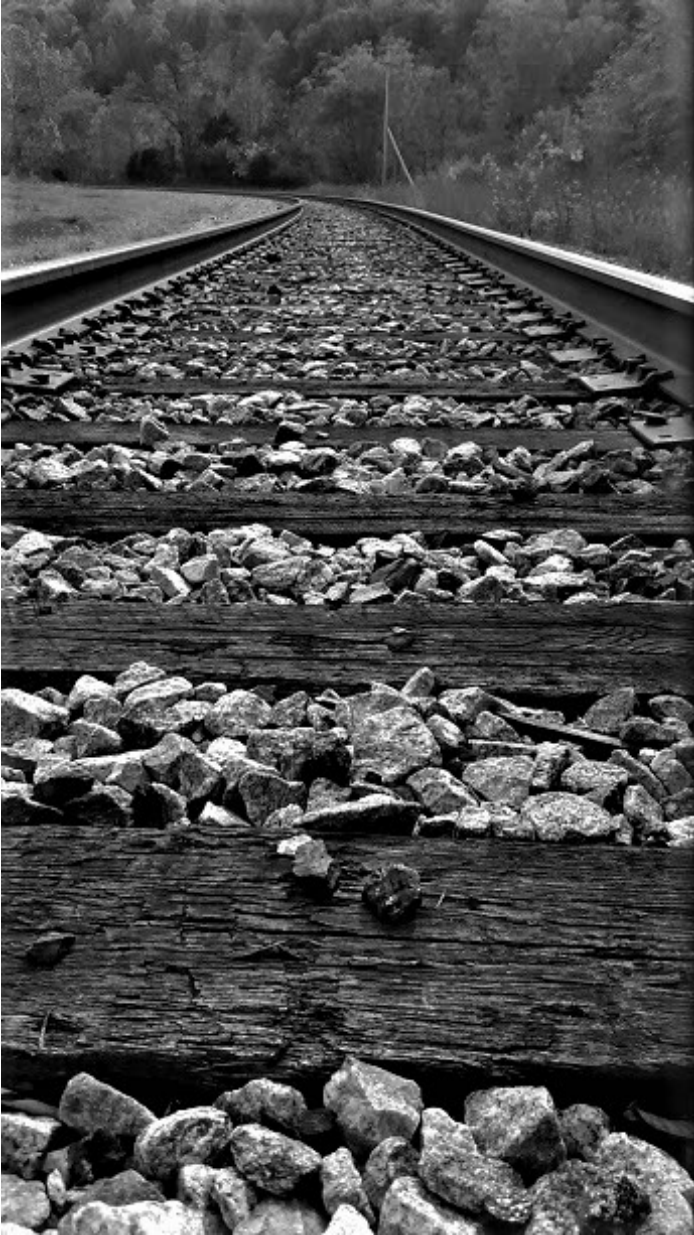
Is she stronger or weaker?

What does she think of me?

We turn retreating into our worlds

Where does she go?

The other me



Alexandria Price
Railroad Ties

Jessica Bolis

Love Letter to Home

The constant faint smokiness in the air from both the wood stove and her dad's pack-a-day habit...the croaking frogs outside her window kept her awake or lulled her to sleep...the drip of the coffee pot, regardless of the hour. For twenty-plus years, that had been her home. Once a brown wood on the outside, in her teens that was replaced with pale gray vinyl siding. It was where she took her first steps. Where she refused to sit in her highchair because she wanted to sit with the grownups. In the hallway, she had fought with her sister, even going so far as to stomp on an already broken toe. Everything that had happened to her went down in or around that house. It was on a hill with a gravel driveway that separated her house from the grandparents' house. There were many walks for her between those two buildings (a scant 50 feet apart) as a tot that continued even to her young adulthood.

A honey bee had the nerve to sting her during one of these said walks. Very fortunate that she was a tiny little thing as her foot instantly swelled like a balloon, forcing her to abandon the notion of walking. Her grandmother had been the one to find her and carry her back home. However, the house across the driveway was no stranger's den either. It had been her refuge... when her siblings were fighting with the parents or she just wanted some peace and quiet. At Mamaw and Papaw's, it smelled of bacon and books and mint. Many afternoons were spent sitting next to her grandmother on the couch reading a book or a newspaper or magazine. The desire of reading was born there, next to Grandma on the couch. Her patience and support nurtured the love from learning the alphabet through to chapter books. That same patience was evident in the days spent applying the Calamine lotion when a case of the chicken pox attacked the entire second grade class.

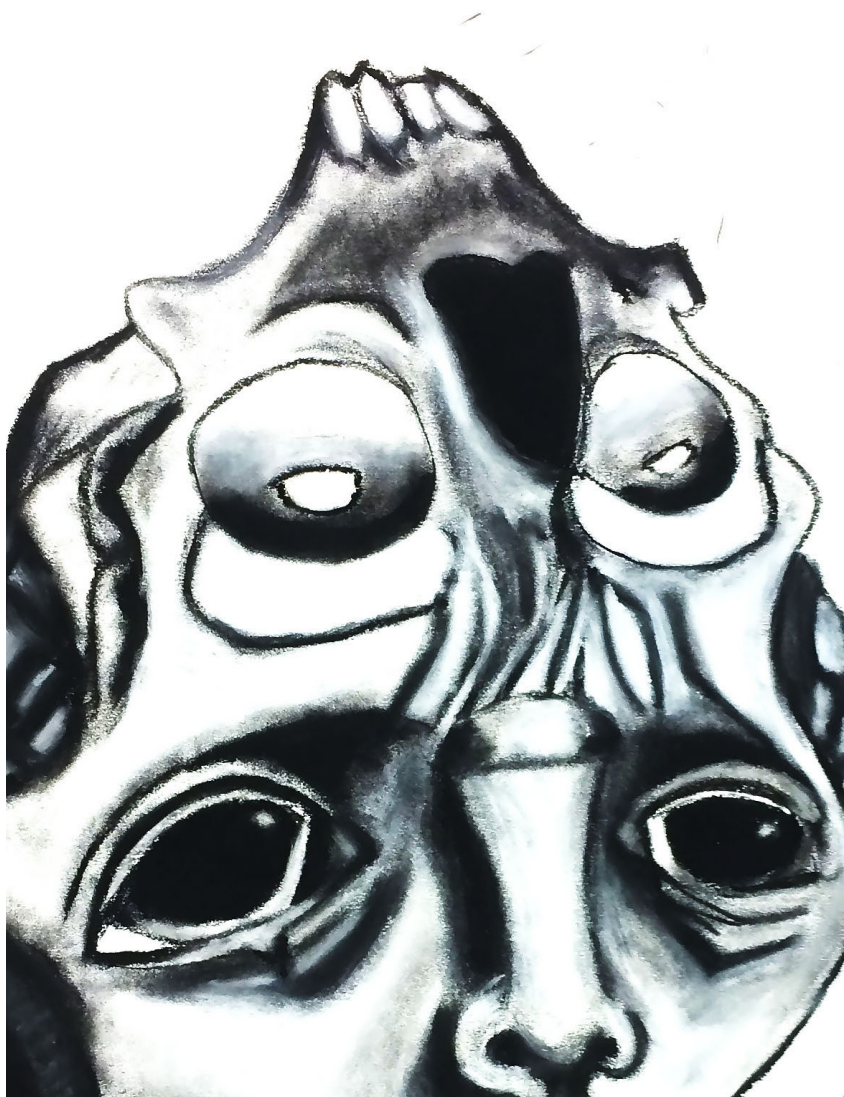
Across the driveway from that escape, there had always been so much ruckus, drama, and noise. It was full of activity and people. At one point, three generations were all living under one roof. Although the grandparents had a cozy little house of their own, most of their time was spent in the one with the pale gray siding. It may have been because that was their home too and all

their most loved humans were housed there. This little girl's dad had built their home from simply a concrete slab garage sort of a deal. However, it served as a warm and loving, secure place to the two parents, four children, two grandparents, and several grandchildren (not to mention a few neighbor kids and relatives along the way) who inhabited it. This building was not just a living room, kitchen, two bathrooms, three bedrooms, and a family/television room. It had been everything to her...her entire childhood. The floors creaked. It was drafty. There were many times it was cramped beyond comprehension (and possibly fire code). The house had witnessed its fair share of tears, laughter, babies, kisses, fights and all the life that makes family interesting, maddening, and amazing.

Dorothy had it right when she said those famous words "There's no place like home". Growing up, she had the great advantage of giving two places that title. Today, she looks around her house with its kitchen, living room, two bathrooms, three bedrooms, and family/TV room with the realization that she had attempted to recreate some magic of the house on Bixler Road in the physical sense. However, this home has not witnessed her family yet. It is just a baby itself. There is a quiet, not in a bad way, but in an introspective, rest-while-you-can capacity. Sometimes it is deafening and scary to her, as loud was always the normal. Once a month or so, she does try to return to the house where the frogs still croak and it continues to feel like a home, but not quite hers anymore. Even there, it is quieter. But on holidays or maybe a Sunday brunch everyone is there and all the crazy, ruckus madness returns. But then people go back to their adult homes with their own children, making new home memories. At the end of the day she returns to the quiet of her current address. As she climbs into bed with her husband and her miniature pinscher, it occurs to her that this is home and the memories are on their way.

Hayley Cooper

Black Hole Sun



Macy Dorman

A Punk Oasis

He always sang on the night of his last show he wanted to be singing so loud that his heart exploded. It was lyric that I wanted inked on my arms one day. I was situated in the hot pole barn in backwoods Indiana between a girl who was having a pretty good acid trip, kissing my shoulder, and a guy who could have been my dad's age, crying and holding my hand with a toothy smile while he shouted every other word coming from the stage. I was in love with the thick air.

It was the last day of Plan-It- X fest and the last show. The last show Ramshackle Glory would ever be performing together at the last PIX fest there would ever be. It would be the last night Pat would ever sing on a stage. The last few years of my life had been supplied with a soundtrack that was just his songs. But he needed out of this scene. So we waited for the end, all of us in that barn.

The thing about the folk punk scene is that we love communal living and stealing too much to be any good at money. We knew that it would end one day, but it was kept hush until the last day. The yellow shirt venue workers broke the news. The studio, the festival, it would be a magical and extinct thing soon. It had given rise to more music and coaxed out the voices of scared little queers on the run. This place was supposed to be our home, a real way to live and be with each other. I was drunk with amputees, travelers, star children, and people like me for the first time in my whole life.

To me this was never just a party place to listen to off-key music. In my room, locked in a trailer in backwoods Indiana, the voices of song by these anarchist hippie punks made a warm soundtrack to waiting for this. PIX was a home that I hadn't ever felt before. It wasn't being quiet and good in a fucked up idea of pastoral rural heteronormativity anymore. It was: making buttons out of old pogs, getting tarot cards read in exchange for a smiles and secrets, coming clean by being dirty kids who didn't give a shit about acting the right way.

The singer for Jesus and His Judgmental Father came to sit at a lake next to me, and asked to share an American Spirit. I had never heard of their band before that day. They asked my pronouns, nobody had done that before. They loved my smile and they loved my clothes. I loved their songs and being there; comfortable outside under the pines in this hidden place. I told them that not all of Indiana was like this. I told them how much I wished that it could be. I let them know I didn't want to go back to anywhere that wasn't this place.

They said, "Macy, you'll make it back to a place like this someday. If you can't then know we all will miss you. Save a seat right here. At a pond in the middle of Indy-fucking- ana. If there's an oasis here, there could be one anywhere."

This was a promise I held onto when I saw Pat take the stage, he was tired. He was leaving us, leaving the scene that I needed now more than ever. But nobody could hate him when he'd given years and years of himself to the movement. We could only hope he knew how loved he was while he sang that last song. He didn't look at me, he closed his eyes while the we shouted the ideas he had given us right back to him. The lyrics were for all of us, and though it was just a dream, I could hold onto the idea they were for me.

And he said "Your heart is a muscle the size of your fist. Keep on loving, keep on fighting. Hold on for your life."

We lit a fire on the houses holding us back in our hearts. We had to leave behind to get here. We were louder than the slurs that held us back could ever be. No more fags, no more weirdos, no more dykes. We were just people there, just punks. We weren't going to be held back by anything at PIX. At that last show it was like our hometowns never even existed.



Karen Hoffman

Hungry



Jeanne Rewa
Chinese Watercolor Horse

Jennifer Jewett

“Where Have All the Colors Gone?”

Bright and vivid colors of our happiness
So much rain has fallen
So much color washed away
Muddled by the elements of pain

All the tears that have fallen
Our whole world is turning grey
A few more drops of sorrow
Will let the black bleed in

How do we pour the color back?
Bright and vibrant
Just like it used to be
To give us back our reverberant universe

I fear the gray will turn black
Even if I only blink
I hold back my tears
I fear the drop of one more tear

I hold the drops behind the curtain of my eyes
I fear the drop of one more tear
Terrified to make the tiniest ripple
Afraid I will let the black flow through

I watch the edges of the gray
For just one little bristle
Of color to come back in
To redeem us from the black



Karen Hoffman

Flower

Jennifer Jewett

The Park

“Please, please, please Becky,” she whined as she jumped up and down in the kitchen chair, upsetting a small glass of orange juice in the midst of her fit. Adelaide had been begging her nanny to take her and her brother to the park since her feet hit the floor that morning. Becky scowled at her from the kitchen sink, “Well that’s no way to convince me to take you anywhere. You know better than that little lady.”

“I promise I’ll behave, I promise,” Adelaide mewed in her sweetest little voice. Becky sighed as she placed the last dish in the cabinet.

“I suppose Addie, but if you start acting up or picking on your brother, it’s straight home and down for a nap.” Adelaide jumped off the chair like she was jumping from a burning building and took off running down the hall. “Preston! She said yes! She said we’re going to the park!” She screeched with the excitement only a six-year-old would have over such a small triumph.

After Becky had cleaned up all of the carnage from breakfast, which consisted of spilled juice, sloshed milk from cereal bowls, and what seemed like a hundred errant pieces of cereal off the kitchen floor, she peaked into the living room to see what Addie and Preston were up to. Preston was running in circles around the coffee table with a plastic clothes hanger that had been transformed into a steering wheel, vrooming and screeching in his pretend race car. Addie was sitting on the couch brooding very quietly, which Becky had learned that a miffed Addie was a disaster waiting to happen. Just as Becky was about to turn around and head upstairs to get the children’s things together for their outing, Addie slung her foot up onto the coffee table sending her brother over her outstretched leg face first into the floor. Becky ran across the living room to the wailing little boy laying sprawled out face down on the rug. “Adelaide!”, What is the matter with you?” she shouted at the little girl. “He was getting on my nerves,” she

shrugged, looking very indifferent.

Becky scooped up the little boy in her arms and turned around to Adelaide, “I told you that if you picked on your brother we weren’t going to the park.”

Adelaide looked at her and said very matter-of-fact, “You said if I picked on him at the park you’d make me come home. We aren’t at the park yet.”

As soon as Preston heard what Becky said he blubbered in between sobs, “I wanna go to the paaaark!” Becky’s heart sunk at the sight of the poor little boy in her arms. Preston usually got the slanted end of Adelaide’s misgivings. He was only four years old and couldn’t understand why he couldn’t do things because of his sister. She couldn’t take one and leave the other, and she couldn’t let the girl get away with her bad behavior.

But today Becky couldn’t bear hurting his feeling and reluctantly contracted her punishment. “Fine Addie, we’re still going to go. I’m not going to punish your brother for your meanness. But there will be a consequence for this when we get home,” Becky said as sternly as she could.

“I wanna take my tea set with me,” she chirped as she scooted off of the couch and headed upstairs like nothing had happened. Becky turned her attention back to Preston and after checking him over to make sure he had come out unscathed, she carried him upstairs, to get him and his sister ready to go.

Within the hour Becky had the children ready and all of the particulars they needed for the park packed and ready to go. Adelaide had managed to make it through without any other tyrant attacks on her brother. Becky took Preston’s tiny little hand and slung the huge tote bag over her shoulder full of snacks and juice and toys the children had picked out to take with them to the park she hoped that the rest of the day might still be salvaged and at least moderately uneventful. As they headed out the front door, Becky made one final attempt to urge Adelaide to behave. “Please Addie,” almost pleading, “no more trouble, and absolutely no more picking on your brother. Do you understand?” She

She looked at Adelaide hoping the little girl couldn't see the worry on her face.

"Sure," Adelaide said sweetly. Becky stopped and let go of Preston's hand to lock the front door. "Hold onto the railing, Preston," she said absently as she turned towards the door. She heard the shuffle of sneakers and the scramble of tiny feet and instantly whirled around with a jolt of panic. In the split second it took her to turn around on the tiny porch, Preston was already tumbling down the four short steps onto the sidewalk.

"Preston!" she screamed as she rushed down the steps. She was down on her knees scrambling to pick the boy up when she heard Adelaide giggling behind her.

"Adelaide!" she roared, "Get down here right now!" Becky sat on the ground rocking Preston in her arms trying to soothe him. The little boy was scared to death and crying uncontrollably. She was certain he had broken a bone or worse. Adelaide took her time coming down the steps to Becky. She looked up at Adelaide, infuriated. "Why did you do that? You could have killed him!"

Adelaide stood and stared at her and the crying boy. After a few moments said calmly, "But I didn't kill him, are we still going to the park?" There wasn't a trace of remorse on the girl's face in spite of what she had done. Her indifference made Becky even more angry. "We most certainly are not going to the park! Get in the house right now!" she growled, trying to maintain what composure she had left. Becky struggled to her feet with Preston in her arms. She looked around for the tote she'd flung off her shoulder in her panic. She had no idea where it had landed. She looked down around her feet and saw blood on the sidewalk. She pried the little boy's arms from around her neck, pulling him back just far enough to see his face. His mouth was covered with blood and she realized a considerable amount had run down her shoulder and onto the front of her t-shirt.

Gripped with fresh panic, she abandoned her search for the tote and rushed up the stairs, stopping only for a second to see Adelaide standing by the door staring at her. "Now, Adelaide!" she yelled as she held the door open to let the girl pass her into the

house. As soon as they had made it inside Adelaide pulled off her sneakers, threw them down the hallway, and screamed at the top of her lungs, "I hate you, Preston! You always ruin everything, you little cry baby!"

Becky couldn't believe the way that Adelaide was acting and couldn't stand the sight of her for another minute. Losing all hope of being the composed and proper caregiver that she had always considered herself to be, screamed at Adelaide, "Go upstairs right now and don't come back down here until I decide to come get you!" Adelaide turned on her heels and dramatically stomped up every single step until she reached the landing and flew to her bedroom, slamming the door behind her. The loud noise scared the little boy who had lulled down to a constant sob, and he wailed out again and started crying even harder than before.

Becky took Preston into the kitchen and sat him down on the counter. She knew she needed to make sure that he wasn't hurt so badly that he needed to go to the hospital. There had been a considerable amount of blood, but now looking more closely at the little boy's face she realized that it had seemed worse than it really was. There was only a small cut on the inside of his little lip.

After she calmed him down and cleaned his face she took him with her into the living room. Preston snuggled up to her on the sofa and she let him lay in her lap until he fell asleep. She knew that he must be exhausted and although she didn't usually have the children lay down for a nap until after lunch, she decided since Adelaide was already in her room and Preston had fallen asleep that she would take him up to his room and lay him down.

She carried him upstairs to his room and tucked him into his bed. She peaked into Adelaide's room before she went back down stairs. The little girl was stretched out across her bed breathing softly. "Please, stay asleep for a little while," Becky whispered, as she pulled the bedroom door shut. As Becky walked down the stairs she realized she had forgotten about the blood all over her t-shirt. She sighed as she turned the corner into the hallway. She hadn't done her own laundry for a few days, and decided it would be easier to grab a dirty t-shirt out of the hamper than to go rummage through her room upstairs and chance waking up the children.

As Becky dug through the dirty clothes hamper in the bathroom she thought she heard a door open. She stopped looking through the basket to listen for another noise. It occurred to her that Preston might have woken up, so she grabbed the t-shirt off of the floor that she had discarded as too dirty to put on, threw it over her head and walked back down the hall towards the stairs. An overwhelming sense of panic hit her the second she heard the scream. She broke out into a run down the hallway and could hear the banging and clunking before she reached the end of the hall. As Becky slid around the corner her feet got tangled up in something and she tripped and fell onto her knees in front of the stairs. Becky looked up and instantly knew what she had tripped over and began to scream. In front of her was Preston sprawled out on the floor at the base of the stairs. "Preston!" she screamed again as she picked up the boy. She looked at him in horror and started sobbing as she rocked his lifeless small body back and forth. He wasn't moving or making a sound, no cries, no screams, nothing. Becky's eyes shot around the room looking for Adelaide. She had a horrible thought that Preston hadn't fallen down the stairs on his own. Her eyes rested on the landing of the stairs. There Adelaide was, staring down blankly at the scene in front of her. Becky screamed in terror, "Adelaide, help me! Go find my cell phone now!" She yelled.

Adelaide stood staring at Becky as if she couldn't decide what to do. After a few seconds Adelaide started slowly down the stairs. "Hurry, Addie!" she screamed. Becky turned her attention back to the lifeless child in her arms. She broke out into a fit of sobbing when she saw his face. She knew that no matter how much she screamed at Adelaide to hurry and no matter how fast help came, that it wouldn't help Preston. She knew he was dead. Becky felt Adelaide tap her on the shoulder. She looked up and reached out her hand to take the cell phone from Adelaide. But Adelaide stood in front of her with only her small sneakers in her hands. "Adelaide, what are you doing?" she said in a panic, "Get my phone!" The girl stood and stared at Becky with the slightest hint of a smile curling up on her lips. Finally, Adelaide seemed to come out of her daze and said in a soft, calm voice, "Can we go to the park now?"

Becky stopped rocking back and forth and stared at the little girl, filled with dread as she realized what Adelaide had done.

Alexandria Price and Sierra Smith Swickard

Bull Ties

We live in a home
in a city so grand
but no where to roam
they've run out of land.

We know a safe place
a home made for two
no traffic to face
only the wild to subdue.

We go visit yearly
a six hour drive
a vision so clearly
the past comes alive.

We go down with grandpa
and a brother or two
sometimes there's grandma
There's so much to do.

We know they're ahead,
so tall we can't see,
an old mountain bed
so covered with steam.

We unpack the truck,
we race for the rooms
a fight get's us stuck
until a train whistle blooms.

We run out at high noon,
to see it roll by.
Its gone past us so soon
The tracks help it fly.

You can look on for miles,
with old friends and new
to love, faith, and smiles,
and an old-fashioned view.

You can see past the old roads,
the tracks and the fields,
full of deer, bears and toads.
The gravel in wheels.

You can see through the ivy.
The trees in their trenches
full of raindrops sitting slyly
on leaves and on branches.

I go to the porch,
my favorite spot
I jump on my perch
an overturned pot.

I watch as my family,
all covered in mud
hikes very lively
to check out the flood.

I know that one day,

this all could be gone,
but for now I will play,
chasing the dawn.

I chase down my brothers,
and I look to the past
to know there are others
that will soon join the cast.

I'll sit on this porch
watching my kids,
my past is the torch,
that no one forbids.

I found the frontier,
to the here and the now,
to all of the years,
that God will allow.



Carrie Chao
Where Everything Begins

Jessica Hood

To Sail No More

Today I will take my last breath. I have no doubts. Puff thought to himself as he examined the once exuberant curly haired boy that stood before him. No longer interested in the simple pleasures of his youth, Jackie Paper was becoming unrecognizable. A barely audible “hey” escaped through pursed lips as his lively thumbs danced over an unfamiliar device in his palms. Jackie took no notice to the once brilliant red sail that now refused to ripple with the breeze. Whether it was from the harsh sun or the dwindling imagination of Jackie that took a toll on their vessel, Puff could not say. However, he was determined to remind Jackie of the fun they once shared.

As their now decrepit vessel bled with steady laps of water that soaked Jackie’s shoes and Puff’s bare feet, the two stood in silence. Puff examined his growing friend with a sorrowful gaze. The realization that today would be his last weighed heavily on Puff’s heart. Jackie remained oblivious, not once removing his focus from the illuminating object in his clutch.

As Puff prepared to set sail he caught an occasional twitch curl up the corner of Jackie’s lip.

“It is good to see you.” A voice cracked through the dense autumn mists.

“Yeah, whatever.”

Puff’s heart sank at the nonchalant reply. He always knew this day would come. Even so, it was still difficult to accept. Jackie was maturing into a young man, leaving his childhood beliefs behind. Leaving Puff behind.

Puff brightened as a thought crossed his mind. “Jackie, did you bring me any gifts today?”

Jackie looked up at Puff with a queer smile. “Actually, I do have something.” As he fumbled around with his pockets in search of something, Puff smiled and clapped his large talons together in front of his chest.

Jackie withdrew a small carton that was adorned with a camel on its lid. Immediately, Puff’s smile transformed into a gasp of disapproval. He was barely able to catch the carton as Jackie unexpectedly removed one of the sticks housed in it and tossed the remainder through the wet air. Puff’s eyes stung with heat as tears threatened to fall. Jackie lit one end of the stick on fire and began to inhale smoke through the other.

Anger swept through Puff's veins but was quickly halted by overwhelming disappointment. He thought about crushing the small carton in his oversized grasp, it would have been very easy. Instead, Puff closed his eyes, inhaled slowly, and gently laid the carton on the gunwale. "No thank you," Puff sighed.

Jackie chuckled, "What's the matter dragon, are cigarettes no your thing? Does only natural smoke fill your lungs?" Jackie teased.

Puff offered a sarcastic smile. "What do you call that thing that emits light in your hand" The curious dragon prompted.

"What, you've never seen a cell phone before?" The corner of Jackie's mouth scrunched as one of his eyebrows drew in and the other simultaneously went upward.

Puff shook his head; his green eyebrows scrunching together. The device piqued his curiosity. "What is its purpose?"

"It lets me talk to people without them being near me." Jackie shrugged. He then chuckled to himself as he read something on the phone's screen before tucking it away in the same pocket he retrieved the cigarettes from. Jackie extended his reach toward the gunwale and removed another stick from the carton. After placing the carton in his pocket as well, Jackie lit the second stick and began to smoke.

A frown flashed upon Puff's face. "That doesn't seem too healthy," he scolded in a condescending tone.

Jackie shot a sharp look in Puff's direction.

"Where would you like to go first?" Puff abruptly changed the subject.

Jackie shrugged as he mumbled under his breath, "Home."

Puff ignored the insult and instead focused on the island before them in the distance. It was Honalee, and its flora seemed to wilt with Jackie's growing disinterest. Puff's shoulders and spirit began to droop as well.

"I thought we might visit the Isle of the Living Sneezes first. An old friend is looking forward to speaking with you." Puff was hopeful that Jackie would show more interest in their adventure at the mention of a favorite past time place. Unfortunately, Jackie seemed reluctant to go.

They sailed in silence toward the ever growing mound of earth in the north. With just enough wind to fill the sail, and no more, the mysterious blue depths surrounding the boat reflected the occasional cloud as clearly as glass. The dense mists thinned ever so slightly as the distance between the boat and island closed. The wilting plant life of Honalee seemed less vibrant in color than usual. It was quiet as well, eerily so.

Puff cleared his throat and peered at Jackie from the corner of his eye. Jackie leaned against the gunwale with his arms crossed over his chest; looking with disgust toward the sad spectacle ahead.

There was no dock to welcome their vessel, so Puff took a graceful leap over the gunwale landing with a gentle splash that disrupted the placid water only briefly. With one large talon grasping the thick rope hanging at the bow of the boat, Puff waded through the shallowing waters and hoisted the boat forward so that only a small portion of the stern was left to be caressed by the gentle laps of water. The larger portion of the vessel sat firmly upon stiff sand.

Now, upon closer inspection, Jackie and Puff were able to assess the full extent to which Honalee was suffering. The usually bright green foliage was dull; appearing more black than green. The flowers had lost most of their petals, and those that were still attached only barely hung on as they threatened to kiss the ground beneath. No voices or songs of the inhabitants could be heard echoing in the stillness.

Honalee looked like the eminent death that Puff felt in his heart. He feared there was no cure. A solemn voice whispered, "Jackie, Honalee needs you."

"What do you want me to do?" Jackie voiced. "I don't care about this shit hole."

Jackie's words cut across Honalee like a sharp blade, striking down the last few glimmers of hope. The trees simultaneously bent in distress. Those few remaining petals gave up their battles and floated to their earthen graves. The island itself shifted lower into the water, threatening to disappear entirely.

Tears threatened to wash Puff's cheeks.

"Besides," Jackie snapped, thrusting a finger in Puff's direction, "You are the magic dragon, not me."

"But Jackie," Puff sniffed and ran the back of one claw underneath his nose.

"Its Jack!" The boy corrected, placing his hands on his hips and pointing his chin toward Puff.

Puff scrunched his eyebrows and frowned. "Jack, my magic has faded. I am too weak to perform a miracle of this magnitude." Puff's gaze shifted toward his feet.

Just then a small creature peered out from behind one of the drooping trees. It was barely two feet tall, with features that were reminiscent of a small naked child, aside from the large nose that protruded from its forehead area and took up most of its

face. It had several little hairs that stood up at the top of its head and bulbous blue eyes. The creature hesitated behind the tree before slowly creeping forward out from the shadows.

“A living sneeze!” Jackie exclaimed in a puzzled tone. His eyes narrowed as he tilted his head to the right and opened his mouth slightly as if to say more.

Puff interrupted, “This is King Sneeze, Jacki... Jack.” Puff’s head sank a little and he peered at the boy sheepishly.

Jackie raised an eyebrow and leaned over, resting his elbow on the gunwale. He took the foot not bearing his weight and crossed it behind the other while fidgeting in a pocket with his opposite hand. Jackie withdrew the carton again, not yet opening it.

Puff questioned the king, “Is there something we can help you with your majesty?”

The bashful creature rubbed his palms together and bowed his head. With a nasally voice he stated, “Yes. I have come to ask a favor of our friend Jackie.”

“Not you too,” Jackie sighed, placing the carton on the gunwale and retrieving his cell phone.

The king shifted his gaze back and forth between Puff and Jackie, mouth unhinged.

Jackie turned his focus toward his cell phone. The small screen glowed white; the only visible source of light currently in Honalee. The angry black clouds above suffocated any light that attempted to escape from the hidden sun beyond.

“I... I thought you might be able to get us some chicken soup from Long John.” King Sneeze stuttered.

Jackie snorted out a chuckle, “What is chicken soup going to do?” He questioned without glancing upward.

“Well, it cured us when we were ill. I thought it might be able to cure Honalee of its ailment too.” The king shrugged his shoulders.

Puff, realizing the solution was not so simple as chicken soup, placed a large hand on the king’s shoulder. “I am sorry my friend. I am trying to remedy the situation. I do not believe that soup will work this time. I will see what else can be done.” Puff attempted to console the king.

The king thanked Puff and turned to leave. He looked back over his shoulder toward the boy and offered a faint smile. “Farewell, Jackie.”

Jackie remained focused on the illuminated screen. He did not offer a reply.

“Who are you talking to anyway? Puff’s voice increased in

irritation.

“A friend,” was Jackie’s vague response.

“Oh?” Puff inquired.

“It is a girl. No one you would know.” Jackie’s eyes narrowed as he shook his head slightly. His pursed lips twitched toward one side.

Puff could see that he was getting nowhere with this new version of Jackie. He decided to change his tactics. Puff’s eyes widened and he chewed on his lower lip. “Light up one of your cigarettes.”

Jackie glanced from left to right and then back at Puff. He raised an eyebrow, not certain if Puff was talking to him or someone else. He hesitated for a moment and then lit a stick.

“I have thought of an activity that will probably suit your tastes.” Puff smiled wryly as he continued, “We will take turns seeing who can blow the best smoke rings.”

Jackie’s face lit up. A smile wide enough to reveal the dimples in his cheeks spread across Jackie’s face. “This will be easy. I am a professional at blowing smoke rings.”

Puff looked around at the island, noticing that the trees straightened slightly. The flowers produced small buds in preparation to produce new petals. Puff thought the breeze even seemed to pick up a freshness. The dull foliage appeared to gain brighter hues as well.

The game of smoke rings began. Jackie offered to go first. He blew a circle into the air; tiny in size, but perfect in symmetry. Puff followed with a similar ring, not wanting to outshine Jackie in the first round. The game continued in such a manner for several turns. With each smoke ring, Jackie’s demeanor became more festive. The more Jackie seemed to be enjoying his time, the more Honalee came back to life.

Puff’s heart warmed. Even though this was not their traditional adventure, Puff had his boy back. The two were laughing and playing together once again.

Various songs rose in the background to replace the silence that previously consumed the island. Jackie paused for a moment, cocking his head to one side, listening. A mischievous smirk flashed across Jackie’s face. One of the songs in the air was familiar. Jackie decided to sing along. First quietly humming to himself, then gradually increasing in volume until he was shouting the chorus, “Weave, weave, weave me the sunshine out of the falling rain. Weave me the hope of a new tomorrow and fill my cup again.”

Puff joined in and together they sung the words for a

second time, only to be cut off by the loud ringing of a nearby bell.

Jackie's hands raced around his clothing until they landed on the pocket where his phone rested. When he withdrew the device Puff was able to discern where the bell was tolling from. It was the cell phone that emitted the loud noise.

Jackie hit a button and placed the phone up to his ear. He strolled a few steps out of Puff's hearing range and carried on a short conversation with the phone.

Puff tilted his head, leaning one ear in the direction of Jackie hoping to catch part of the conversation.

Jackie removed the cell phone from his ear, hit another button, and shoved the phone back in his pocket. He briskly walked past Puff with a childish smile stretching from ear to ear. With a forceful shove the boat found its way back into the mysterious blue sea. Without a word, Jackie hoisted the sail and disappeared through the mists.

Puff heard a thunderous crash of falling rock behind him. When he turned toward the noise, the distant mountains could be seen crumbling. The trees all fell flat against the stiff sand as flowers shriveled. Puff hung his head and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, his feet were barely visible. Puff was fading away.

With the little energy he had remaining, Puff began the long trek to his cave. His tail dragged along the dry earth. Everything that he touched turned to ash and blew away with the breeze. Puff's breathing was constricted, which made the journey all the more painful.

Finally, Puff came to an opening in a hillside where his home lay hidden in the dark. With Jackie gone, and no hope for his return, Puff knew this was his final adventure. He was too weak to even cry. Puff crawled inside his cave just as his energy was expelled. Knowing he would sail no more, Puff heavily dropped to his stomach. The impact was more than Puff could take. There in the dark cave, just as Jackie's imagination did, Puff disappeared into a cloud of dust, leaving no trace of his existence.

D S Thomas

Eleusinian Haiku

Kore in the garden
gathering Sicily's bloom
the ground opens up.

Demeter searches
night and day for a daughter
the earth has swallowed.

Kore eats the aril
and, in doing, takes an oath
the earth goes barren

Demeter wanders
the mother laments and pines
until Baubo's jest.

Kore sits on a throne
now Queen of an underworld
so unintended.

Demeter consults
Helios, who knows the truth,
and offers its warmth.

Kore sees through shadow
sees the god of winged sandal
and light breaking through.

Demeter waiting
knows now the fate of her child
now one of two worlds.

Kore blossoms like spring
and returns, in the winter,
to underworld's realm.

Demeter, also,
waxes and wanes with the loss
awaiting her child.



Rose Mary Herrmann Watson

Smithville Memories

B. Farbo

Raise and Bury Thee! O Honky Tonk Banshee!

A Lament of the breathing sister.

In II & 1/2 Parts

I.

I-10 at US One Nine One the wind kicks up the dirt to zero visibility and most certainly beyond there is The Lady of the House a Banana Combed Blue Eyed Banshee on the early morning shift trying not to jerk First Daughter bald headed while pulling her hair into tight braids.

(White crosses!

Half-Ton Roulette!

Ahead!)

Plum colored skies the same shade as the eye baggage. Cold pickup cabs, spending gas, running from the fool's gold strike of daylight in the left side mirror. Cinnamon tortilla breakfast wrapped in a paper towel keeping the weeping melted Country Crock off of work britches. Beer cans that asshole needed to clean out, a tool box slamming addled cowboy bebop rhythms, plus a radio...

(I'll be fine and dandy

Lord it's like a hard

Candy Christmas)

At eighteen dad dropped dead, twenty married a year, twenty-two now First Daughter, wondering how at twenty-four they became so old with five acres, plus well, and a single wide. Twenty-six third last name, twelve acres and a double wide, twenty-nine Second Daughter. Job, different job, new job, old job, new jobs.

(The

Quiet

Prevailed.)

II.

The bathroom where First Daughter would try to deal with adolescent mornings a shot of DayQuil after her skull split from the two 24 oz. MGD's Union Made pounded nearly every night of High School chugged covertly while heeling flower pots. Now a shot or two from the boot and half a cigarette.

(Pulling slack so dirty.

Except when G-D
then intelligent design.)

Stiff ropes cutting backs of the Lady of the House's Marigolds in spiteful drunken atonement. Ropes when whipped into a jackpot of a dallied horn eat the fingers of the careless; when pulled round the ankles of the fleeing Second Daughter lead to Campbell's Tomato Soup bloody noses and possum hope.

(Attempt into good graces.

December 1994 Playboy found in a Paint by Number.

May every woman be so lovely at 40.)

Thirty-One prodigal First Daughter bespoke pin-stripe. A Derby break in the sea of Stetsons, always the gambler, no longer the gambled. Don't for the love of god play that fucking song from Beaches. Sticks like the vomitus of a bad morning on the boot, like green chilies, papas, masa, and Squirt. Six and one half missed theological points of a C student Methodist preacher reminded her that funerals are just a show.

(In,

up,

out.)

(Hallelujah! Hallelujah?
Raise and Bury Thee! O Honky Tonk Banshee!)

1/2.

Second Daughter broken like a cold bottle of Campari swung against a tree. Label holding the shards of the bottle together like hope. Lamed, put down, harvested like cotton, ashes in a box. Carted from New Mexico, to Texas, to Arizona.

(Two go rounds!

Half-Ton Roulette!

You're Dead!)

Glowing Senior picture, every rule followed, effort made, like the wreath of Santa Lucia on during the Third Sunday in Advent. Up on the same screen she and First Daughter were taught that their vaginas were like chewing gum, seat belts prevented obituaries, and Honor Role Students change the world.

(Therefore we

mourn

the feast.)

Cake make-up left on lapels by the Owl Ladies who by reflex engage in compassionate gossip. By the time they were through First Daughter smelled like the scent of retrospective a Avon catalogue, BBQ sauce, and condolences. Every awkward hug felt like iodized pity, every leaking eye suspect, roaming like steers in a catch pen gym.

(Have you

had enough

peach cobbler?)

(Hallelujah! Hallelujah?
Raise and Bury Thee! O Honky Tonk Banshee!)

~~(Amen.)~~



Carrie Chao

The Endless Chase

Jennifer Jewett

The Stone Man

I am in a dream,
I'm sure of it
There is a short straight path before me
I peer down the path not sure if I should go forward.
There is a fear that I do not understand

Through my reverence I start down the path
And come upon a beautiful wooden box.
The light reflects off of its shiny exterior
As though it is the center of the world

This box beckons to me
With wonder of what is inside
Beautiful and intriguing
Like a treasure chest
That must hold a magnificent gem
I feel a longing to look within

I am confounded
When I found only a stone man inside.
Whose eyes are closed,
Face somber and at rest
As if the stone man is dreaming my dream with me

It seems the statue is calling to me
I am powerfully drawn to the stone man
I step closer
And touch its smooth cold face
The sharp bite of a bitter cold radiates through my hand

It seems impossible
Because the air is warm and soothing around me
I feel sorrow for the statue that I do not understand
How miserable and cold it must feel inside

I step closer
And touch its smooth cold face
The sharp bite of a bitter cold radiates through my hand

It seems impossible
Because the air is warm and soothing around me
I feel sorrow for the statue that I do not understand
How miserable and cold it must feel inside

I can't shake this feeling
Although I know that the stone man is not like me
It cannot feel cold
Or warmth
Or pain

Despite my logic
Overwhelmed with the need to comfort this object before me
I lift it from the treasure box
My heart begins to waver
I need to fill the statue with my warmth
And end its cold and misery

I wrap my arms around so tightly
And the stone man begins to crack and break
I feel a wave of sorrow
As it crumbles to the ground

My arms feel empty in the void that's now there
I cannot stop my tears from coming
As I look down at my feet
All around me there is nothing left of the stone man
There is nothing left but dust

Rebecca Wilhelm

Grandma's House (A Ghost Story)

The first time I remember seeing something strange at Grandma's house was when I was about four years old. I was staying with my Grandma Gray while my mother was in the hospital. I was a new big sister and my parents would be bringing baby Grace Home from the hospital in a few days. Little did I know that what I saw was only the beginning of many strange things to come over the years.

Grandma kept her flowers in the basement bedroom in the winter months. My Grandpa Richard had made a small family room in the basement as you came down the steps. There was a wall that created a small hallway and a wall with a door separating it from the rest of the basement. I ran my hand down the smooth paneled walls as I walked down the steps. There was striped green and yellow carpeting on the steps and basement floor. The carpet was scratchy on my bare feet as I walked downstairs with Grandma.

Grandma had several potted plants that were kept in there but the one I loved to water was a plant that she called "Mother in Laws Tongue." The plant had strong leaves that shot upwards toward the sky. I loved the smooth feeling of the leaves. I ran my hands along the leaves and watered it carefully. Grandma and I went about the room watering her ferns, and her spider plants. The plants all had vines reaching from them that contained smaller versions of the spider plant. Grandma had called them spider babies once when I had asked.

"Jeannie, I think we are done now. It's time to go upstairs." Grandma said to me and she turned to leave the room. I turned to look back and that is when I saw it. There on the ceiling were hands. Hundreds of shadow hands were reaching from the ceiling and seemed to be trying to reach out for me. There were many different sizes and shapes but there was no mistaking that they were all hands

"Grandma, didn't you see that?" I asked hesitantly.

"See what?" Grandma had already walked further in the hallway and was putting her watering can away in the hallway

closet. I realized that Grandma had not seen the shadow hands!
“I have to go up to the hospital and see about your mother”
Grandmother said

I shook my head in disbelief and rubbed my eyes.
“Grandma, you didn’t see the hands?” I asked quietly.

“I think you are seeing the shadow from my spider plants in the basement Jeannie.” Grandma laughed as she explained to me. “What you’re seeing is the light coming in from the window and it makes the plants shadows look like hands. While I’m at the hospital I want you to play in the living room and mind your Grandpa. Your Dad is going to be working late tonight so you’re going to stay with us.”

While Grandma was gone, I sat on the brown living rug and played with my Barbie dolls. My favorite Barbie was a Barbie that was dressed in Western Clothes and I even had a jeep for her to ride around in. I had my grandparents dog, Fi Fi, to keep me company as well. Fi Fi was a small black poodle and she was my playmate. I would push Barbie in the jeep and Fi Fi would bark at me. Fi Fi also had a small ball that she liked for me to throw and she would bring back.

I looked in the dining room and saw that Grandpa was sitting at the table pouring something out of a glass bottle into a small glass.

“Grandpa, what are you drinking? Can I have some?” I innocently asked as I pulled up a chair to sit with him.
“Jeannie, this here is a grown-up drink.” He mumbled. Just then we saw my father’s green Ford pull into the driveway.

“Uh oh” I heard Grandpa say.

“DADDY!” I shouted as my father walked through the door. He was dirty and looked very tired. His eyes looked sad. I ran to his arms and he picked me up and held me.

“What ya doing off work so early?” Grandpa asked him. He took another drink from his small glass.
Daddy hung his head low.

“I was laid off today!”

“What do you mean you got laid off from the steel mill?” Grandpa said angrily. “You have a kid and just had another one born!”

“I haven’t been there very long so I was let go!” Daddy said quietly. He had his head down and eyes were looking at the floor.

“You’re nothing!” Grandpa said his eyes piercing and his fists clenched at his sides. “Look at you; you can’t even raise your own kid I have to raise her for you!”

“Come on Jeanie, let’s go!” Daddy said grabbing her and walking out the door. He put Jeannie in the back seat and slammed the door.

“Where are you taking that kid?” Grandpa shouted. “You don’t even have decent tires on that car.”

I looked out the back window and saw Grandpa slam the front door to the house. Daddy drove in silence to the house. It was very cold when we walked into the house. The hair on my arms stood up underneath my coat. I could see my breath.

“Sit here for a minute, I have to check our furnace.” After a few minutes, Daddy appeared with a defeated look on his face.

“Furnace is broken.” Daddy said with a somber tone. I knew that this was not good news. Daddy heated up the oven and opened the door for heat. He wrapped me in blankets and we slept on the couch. I had to keep my coat and gloves on to stay warm. Daddy didn’t know I heard him, but I heard him softly crying. I fell asleep watching the snowfall outside the living room window.

I woke up to the sound of Grandmas voice talking to Daddy.

“Now John, Richard was drinking last night and he didn’t mean what all was said....” I heard Grandma say. I opened my eyes and rubbed them. “It’s much too cold here in this house for Jeannie to stay here. Please let her come back with me. Helen can bring the baby, too, when she is released. At least stay with us until the landlord fixes this furnace.”

“I am only laid off, Eileen,” Daddy explained. “I am going to be called back soon.”

“I’m sure things will work out,” Grandma said. “Looks like someone’s awake! Jeannie lets go get breakfast and your coming home with me.” I was so happy I sat up and threw my arms around Grandma.

It was only a few months later when Mom and Dad told me that Grandma and Grandpa Gray had decided to move to southern Illinois to take care of great grandma Jennie. We were moving into Grandmas house. I was not very excited about this. The day we moved in, I looked up at the two huge picture windows in front. They seemed to be eyes staring at me.

“The house is creepy Mommy!” I said, clutching my doll. “Jeannie not now, I have a lot of unpacking to do!” My mother said, wiping her brow. “We are going to make you a playroom downstairs. Won’t that be nice?”

I stared at my mother. All I could think about was the shadow hands that I had seen. I was so relieved when my parents decided to keep the downstairs basement bedroom for guests. The downstairs family room became my playroom. I was happy if the bedroom door stayed latched shut.

I shared the small bedroom off the dining room with Grace. Daddy had taken the door off the hinges. The bedroom was very small. To fit my bed and Grace’s crib, there was no room for the door. The room was perfect. I had all of my stuffed animals lined up on one side of the bed. I had a picture above my bed that said “Mom and Dad love Jeannie!” The only window to the room was above the foot of my bed. Enough light poured in from the street that a night light was not needed. From my bed, I could look out of the doorway and see the entrance between the living and dining room. At some time during that first night, I sleepily stared out into the living area and could make out what seemed to be a man standing between the entryways. At first, I was sure it was my Dad. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. It was still there. It was definitely the figure of a man in all black. I could not see his face or make out any features.

I screamed, of course, waking everyone in the house up, including Grace. I quickly heard Mom and Dad’s footprints running to my room.

“What’s wrong?” asked Daddy

“Are you okay?” Mommy asked as she picked Grace up from the crib and held the baby close.

“Mommy, there was a man. I saw a man standing there.” I said while pointing out of the doorway into the dining room and living room entryway.

“It was a bad dream Jeannie.” Daddy said brushing the hair out of my face.

“No I saw it. He was right there! I was not dreaming, I was awake.” I insisted.

“Jeannie go back to bed.” My mom said carrying Grace with her to the living room. “I think your eyes were playing tricks on you.” Daddy covered me back up, kissed my forehead and he turned off the lights.

Over the next several years we continued seeing the man in black. Every night he was there. Watching. As Grace got older, she, too, noticed the man. We started calling him “The man in Black.” Grace and I quickly decided that it did nothing to tell Mom and Dad about the man. They did not believe us anyway. My mom would tell us we were just seeing Daddy since he was working odd shifts at the mill. We knew it was not Daddy. One evening while we were watching television, there was the sound of footsteps in the dining room. Grace and I were sitting on the couch. I looked out but no one was there! I could hear footprints but could not see anyone there. I shivered. The footprints came as close as the entryway and suddenly stopped. “Jeannie who is it?” Mom asked me from across the room. Daddy was sitting next to her on the small sofa.

“Um....no one is there Mom!” I said looking over at Grace. Grace had gone pale and looked in disbelief. Daddy quickly jumped up to check “Helen, I don’t see anyone there.” He replied. “The house it’s old, just the floors creaking.”

Grace and I just looked at each other. We did not know what to say.

As I got older, I had a terrible habit of eves dropping on adults. I learned quickly that this was the best way to find out something. I was always being shooed out of the room and I hated that. My favorite place to sit and eves drop was to sit at the top of the basement steps. From there I could hear my mother talking to friends or to anyone on the telephone.

One day aunt Pat had stopped by to see mom. I figured this was the perfect time to find out the current family gossip. Mom and aunt Pat were sitting at the table playing cards.

“I don’t know why Mom won’t stay with me when they come to visit.” Mom said.

“Richard doesn’t like this house Helen; he says he won’t stay here.” Aunt Pat replied. “Whatever happened to him in the dining room, he swears he won’t step foot in this house again. He says that he saw something.”

“Pat, we have lived here for years now and I haven’t seen anything.” Helen said. “The girls used to complain about seeing a man in the living room but I really believe they were just seeing John coming home late from work.” I could hear the shuffling of the playing cards.

“I don’t know. All I know is it was when Mom was with you at the hospital and Grace was born. He got into that terrible

fight with John. By the time Mom got home that night, Jeannie was not there and Richard was standing outside in the snow, refusing to go back inside. Whatever it was that he experienced made him give up his whiskey and he has never drank any alcohol since.”

I sat there with my hand over my mouth. Grandpa had seen something in the house! I wondered if Grandpa had seen the man in Black? I sat and listened eagerly for more gossip.

“Well, Helen I had an experience in the bathtub that one time after Gary and I got married and I were staying here. I swear something grabbed the soap right out of my hands while I was in there!” Aunt Pat replied. “I don’t even like thinking about it!”

“I think you just dropped it on your own!” Mom laughed.

“And remember when you saw that boy looking at you in the basement window and Gary, Richard and Larry and Uncle Bud ran out in the snow and no one was there? No footprints or anything?”

“Yes, everyone said I was making it up but I know that there was a boy looking at me!” Helen laughed. “I don’t know how he got away without leaving prints but I know I saw him dark hair, dark eyes and he had on a t-shirt which was very strange since it was so cold out.”

I quietly got up from the steps. My thoughts were racing and I could not believe that my Grandpa Richard had an experience in this very house. It sounded like Aunt Pat had too. I wanted to ask my Uncles if they had ever saw anything either. Instead I quietly walked out the basement door and into the yard to ride bikes with Grace and the neighbor kids.

Later that night Grace and I had fallen asleep laughing about our day. We had decided to make a girl only club. The only issue we were having is that we were the only girls who lived on our street. The neighbor boys kept trying to join our club. We fell asleep trying to scheme ways to make our girls only club work.

Awhile later we woke up to hear my mother scream loudly. Grace and I both sat up in bed. Grace flipped on the bedroom light since her bed was closest to it. I jumped on Graces bed and we both peered around the corner out into the dining room. We looked toward the back of the house where our parents’ bedroom was. There was Mommy standing with a

horrified look on her face. She was pointing at the entryway between the living and dining rooms.

“Girls, I saw him!” She explained. “I don’t know what I just saw. I came out of my bedroom to use the bathroom and I glanced up and there he was. Just like you told me all those years ago, He was just starring right at me. He disappeared when you turned your light on” Mommy covered her mouth with her hands.

We quickly rushed to Mom and put our arms around her. “I’m so sorry I didn’t believe you girls.” Mom whispered softly. “I just did not believe that it was true. All these years I thought for sure you were seeing Daddy when he came home from work. I’ve never seen anything this before. I will always believe what you girls tell me from now on.”



Karen Hoffman

Burning Hope

B. Farbo

11 Haikus for 14 Years

A scab, scar or, bone
pick, pick, pick until bleeding.
Year after, year afte...

Boom! Went down, SO, fast...
Boom! He was split open too...
Boom! Only a sound...

In sorrow we shopped,
generic brand America.
Not "Name Brand" America.

Hearts and minds... minds and...
hearts. hearts and minds... Cash and...
shit and bullshit and...

Never forgotten?
Till checks and bodies bounce.
Hush. It was all for you...

Shaken grunts in boots,
need to shut their entitled mouths;
"Heroes" suck it up.

Selling of Spartan Shields,
has come to Main Street. Your street!
Surplus choke holds traded.

Cold leftovers, reheated
tools of revenge, turned on We.
Safety for nothing.

Waves of... Waves of...
Will wash up d/b-rown infant residue...
A human oil spill.

By the sword, and book.
By which book, and by which sword?
Defending whose name?

Can't wash out blood with
blood. Can't wash out blood with blood.
Can't wash it away.

D S Thomas

Of Maenads and Madness

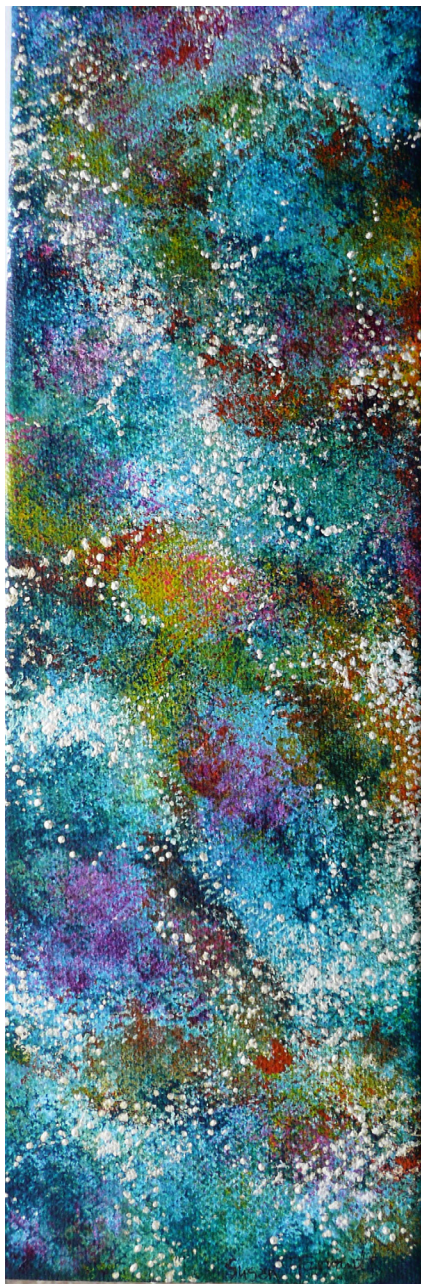
You are new among our wearied forms,
maddened and then exhausted by our rites.
Untouched by drunken, raging storms
that drench the days and plague the nights.
No invocation has passed your virgin lips,
no bitter curse you've thought to speak.
For you the shadow gently slips
from shuttered eyes and vision weak.
And look, your kylix is empty, waiting
amid ever overflowing drink.
Your unstained lips forever hating
that which brings us to the brink.
O, you'll hate the trances frenzied -
the odium of midnights wild.
You'll come to loathe a body envied
and find your own to be reviled.
But now you come with boastful wanting,
silent lips, and empty cup.
The dimly tacit voice not taunting -
to tell you we could eat you up.
So take the kylix, take the thyrsus

covered in the ivy vine -
and learn the dances, learn the verses
and think it wise to be called "mine."
But claimed you'll be, a wearied form
or, maddened, exiled by your zeal.
For those who chose to brave the storm
should be prepared for such ordeal.
Or think it wise to think me only
covetous of mystic rite.
A maenad mad and acting coldly,
inventing fear and baneful blight.
O, bear the deer upon your thigh,
pour the wine to fill your bowl
and pull the shutter from your eyes
and pray the madness makes you whole.



Karen Hoffman

Stop



Susan K. Tarrant

Essence

Karen Munoz

The Life Tree

The ragged breathing of Aurora Cousland became frantic every time she heard the crunch of the fall leaves and heavy footsteps intensify loudly behind her. All this running had a dizzying effect, producing a stomach-churning sensation, as foliage flew by in both directions. She had been on the run for hours, losing her bearings almost completely. Her own knowledge about her surroundings were few, for no one had ever reached the Kalcari Wilds alive. Only one thing she had known for sure; she could never return home. Home was not an option, especially after this morning.

All lines of thought left her as the ensnaring tree roots clutched at her aching feet, causing her to tumble down a steep slope. She continued down the incline at a brisk rate, limbs entangled together, prohibiting her from regaining her sense of balance. Head spinning, she had finally come to a full stop, nearly crashing into a bulky tree as she did so. Exhausted, uncomfortable, and out of breath, Aurora lay unmoving on the forest floor as she steadied her breathing. Gradually, she came to the realization of her muted surroundings. The silence confirmed that her pursuers had either left her for dead or had lost her when she fell. Breathing out a sigh of relief, she stood up and took in the unfamiliar environment.

Standing, she studied the circle of trees around her. Shades of emerald hung off of every branch of these colossal trees, like ribbons shifting in the wind. The sky darkened to a murky blue-gray, as the night gradually drew in. Aurora decided to camp for the night, for she could no longer see the route in front of her. Pulling her pack from her back, she rummaged inside for blankets to rest on. After arranging her sleeping place, she drew bread from her pack and began to eat ravenously. She washed it down with a swig from her canteen, and lay down to slumber. Soon enough, she was no longer conscious to all around her, as she passed into a deep sleep and began to dream.

The morning was a relatively normal one. The only thing

that differentiated today from all other days, was the war between the Salbo and the Kuvah people. Aurora was pulled aside by Tauren, her junior master. He seemed panicked, as one would, when hope was slowly diminishing. Shaky was he, as his strength faded with the land, as it did for all the elders and masters of her people.

“Listen, Pup. You must take this far from here,” said Tauren as he handed her the most prized treasure of Kuvah people. She looked down as he discreetly handed her the Lifestone. Her eyes widened as she studied the stone. It was warm to the touch, as if it had been sitting in a kettle of boiling water. It gave off a distinctive glow, like a twinkling star in the black of night.

“I couldn’t possibly escape from here. Why would you choose me of all the Kuvah people? Certainly there are some more qualified than I. What can I d-”

“Hush! I chose you, because you have the skill to carry out this task I have entrusted you with. I should know, for I trained you myself. You do this, because you must,” said Tauren. “You must take this to the Life Tree, and bury it deep, deep into the tree’s roots. Then, and only then, will we have a fighting chance.”
“But-”

“Go! You must go, before it is too late!” Tauren exclaimed, as he handed me a pack of supplies and shoved me toward the city borders.

Aurora, with tears in her eyes and determination in heart, ran for all she was worth. She reached the forest tree line and heard cries erupt from all around her. She turned, weighed down with worry over her people, and cried. It was short-lived as she noticed her rivals headed in her direction. One launched an arrow and it whizzed past her and embedded itself in the tree to her left. That was all it took, and she was running again. Aurora woke with a start, sweat drenching her skin. As if sensing her discomfort, the emerald trees she saw last night, began to fade, as the corruption took ahold. She packed her belongings up quickly, and began her trek through the forest once more. The

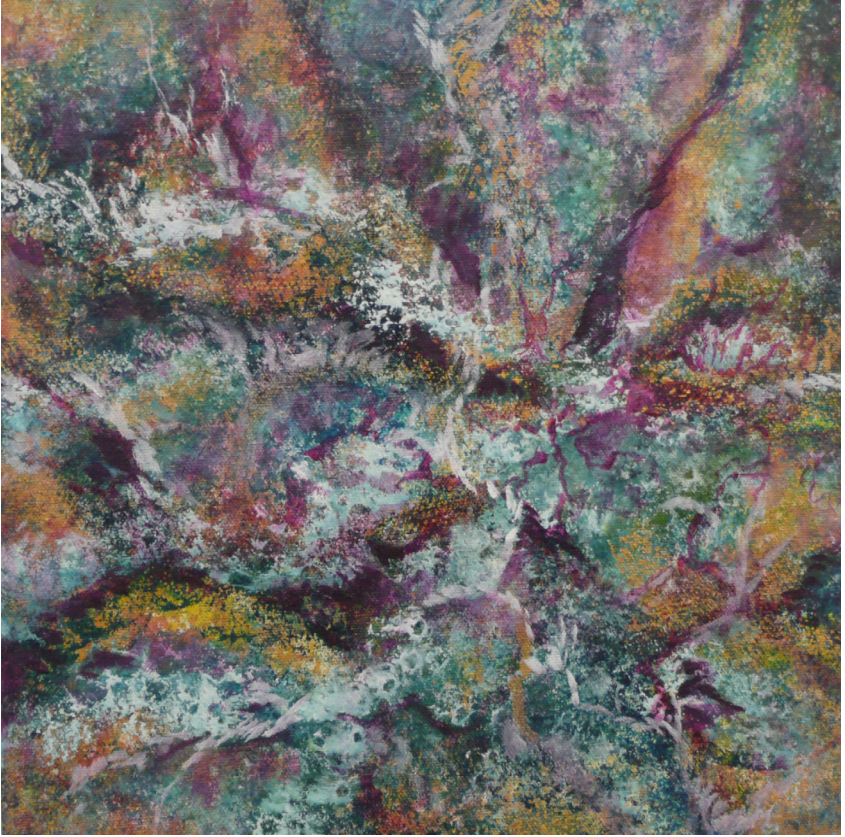
dream far from her mind, paranoia began to set in and she flinched at the slightest sounds. As time passed and nothing posed any threats, she began to relax. Sighing in satisfaction from the release of tension, she picked up her pace.

Graying trees began to fill Aurora's sight, as if the color began to fade from the world, and she assumed she was growing closer to her Life Tree. Surely enough, she caught sight of it, past a long tunnel of colossal, almost blackened trees. Feeling close to finishing her mission, she sprinted through the tunnel of trees. The path was narrow and it was not long before she found herself stumbling over various tree roots. The low-lying branches swiped across her face and snagged her hair, knotting it effortlessly. Despite the forest's attempt to hold her up, she trudged onward with sheer determination.

The light at the end of the tunnel signified that she had finally reached her destination. The view on the other side made her gasp in panic. The normally beautiful emerald leaves had faded to a midnight black and the limbs of tree began to droop. She hurriedly ran for the base of the Life Tree. She began to dig up the dirt as fast as she could, caking herself with dirt along the way. She was about to place the Lifestone into the dirt, when a hand snatched it from her. Mortified she turned, to see a Salboan man... no boy, around her age, clutching the Lifestone in his hand. She charged at him in an attempt to get the stone back. He sidestepped her quickly and stabbed her in the back, with the knife he pulled from his weapon belt. She cried out in pain as she fell to the ground. He laughed at her as he turned to leave.

Determined to save her people, she quietly got to her feet and ran at him. He swung around and stabbed her in the stomach, just as she thrust her dagger into him. His face changed to one of confusion as he slumped to the ground, hand on his chest. In his confusion she stabbed him again, this time in the heart. She dropped her dagger and grabbed the stone from his hand. She began stumbling toward the hole she had dug earlier, only to fall to the ground in pain. She crawled forward, ignoring the excruciating pain in her back and stomach. With a trail of blood behind her, she reached the hole and dropped the stone in. Reaching in front of her, she pushed the dirt back into the hole, burying the stone at the base of the Life Tree.

Her breathing became shallow as she watched the land change from a sickened black back to an emerald green. She took a slow, uneven breath and died. The grass became strong and grew tall, covering Aurora in an earthy scent as it buried her. The pool of blood that had formed around her body, dissipated, erasing all evidence of her untimely death. The Life Tree began to glow, as it healed the corrupted land. The Kuvah people fought back against the Salboans, defeating them with their new gained strength. Peace took over the land as a new people came and forged alliances with the Kuvah and all was well. And Aurora, she was a story to be remembered. Parents told their children and they told their children and she went down in the legends of her people. It has been said that when conditions are right, her spirit can be seen by the Life Tree, where she drew her final breath.



Susan K. Tarrant

Blast



Nicole Potts
A Horse of a Different Color

B. Farbo

Confessions of Adam's Second Wife

Look, I am not talking out of school here.
We both know he slammed it in the ice-box door again,
while attempting to make himself a sammich.

I did feel bad for him...
Got the frozen peas out, got him a beer,
walked him back over to his chair.

Wait that is a lie.
Damn ice-box beat me to it.

To be frank was glad it happened.
I was sick, and tired of him squishing it around at the dinner
table,
in front of the television, while changing the oil, or while looking
for work.
Left me wondering how it managed not to get all chapped.

Other men would come to the edge of our garden,
trying to sell me brooms, and ice-cream sandwiches,
their thoughts always a mystery framed in nicely tailored chinos.

When he moved his tall-boy,
and that bag of thawed peas away
the next morning

Could see how it slept like a little snake.
Staring at me, cold, and shriveled.
Then he got out of his chair, groaned, scratched his apples,
gave a tug on his weather vain of the obvious.

Went in made him breakfast.
He said all was forgiven.
That was a lie.

Just looking him square in the eyes, I told him to eat up.

You knew,
that I knew,
he REALLY needed to put some god-damn pants on.

It was time.

Karen Hoffman

Hapless Hope

Whispering pines. Hiss of lies from
Time long ago, slipping like sly
Snakes binding me. Cornered by lies
And left to die. No cares left but
The loss of hope. Flighting fleeing
But no escaping. Alone is only
One that cares. Deep in the depths
Nothing can reach. Faraway the
Sky candle shines. Yet life heat grasps
Not ice cold heart. Despair like a
Flightless blue bird. No one recalls
Lonely wanderer. Only the
Stout- hearted warriors, givers of gold
Dwell in earth halls. Light-of-battle
With battle-sweat, immortality
Only achieved. Moldy masses
Grave's embrace greet. Divinity
A distant star. Hapless hope is
The love of men. Wayward west they
Turn their faces. We condemn our-
Selves lonely exile. Wandering down
The paths of thorn, glimpses of light
Like a distant desert mirage.

Rebecca Goodman

The Spillway

In my bathing suit, I laid gasping for air on the hard rock shelf that had formed after the spillway. After both my cousin and myself had almost drown, I had let the rocks cut into my back. Somehow the whole ordeal made the pain the best feeling I had ever felt in my life. I gave myself a generous amount of resting before answering the screams coming from above on the bridge. I just stared at the underneath of that bridge, feeling vacant of energy. Exactly three perfect circumstances had taken place leading up to this moment. A ledge that my cousin had been walking on along the wall of the dam disappeared into the depth of approximately nine feet, the current rushing over the dam had hidden the whirlpool that gushed underneath and I had been the only one close enough to save her.

My family and I went for a visit to my Aunt and Uncle's house during my summer break. On the way to Michigan, the temperature outside was perfect for driving the car with the windows down. This gave me the ability to do my favorite driving pastime, hand surfing. I stuck my hand out of the car just enough to catch breeze in the cup of my hand and I was off surfing the waves at highway speeds. At the tilt of my wrist, my hand would get caught in the current, flying up to the highest point that I could reach and then at peak I slowly made the moves to do my all-time crowd winner. Slowly, I curled my fingers until my hand followed riding the rollercoaster down. I would then settle my chaotic riding to an intermittent short wave riding instead of climbing steep waves and tumbling back down, I enjoyed the control I had over the force of the currents.

Arriving at my relatives' house, I greeted all of them and then I went off to an adventure with my favorite cousin. It was as much of an adventure as their yard allowed but to us that was the whole entire world, at 12 and 10 we still had our imaginations to run wild. The small group of pine trees to the right of their backyard became an entire forest filled with every magical beast you could ever imagine. The sandbox became a desert or the beach of an island. The wooden playground became our ships, our restaurants or anything we wanted it to be. I always played captain. I always played mother. I always played leading roles. Sometimes we didn't play as humans at all. In fact, one of our favorite games to play were Horses. For hours on end or until we were called to come inside we would run around outside pretending.

we would be going on a real adventure. The excitement burst from our seams, we could hardly wait for the day ahead of us. I already planned on spending the day capturing animals. Usually only the second oldest, my favorite cousin, held interest with my endeavors but we didn't mind, we always had so much fun we never noticed the distance we had with everyone else. The trail we hiked through Michigan's wilderness had tall trees like something from the dinosaur ages. As we bounced along we found an abundance of wildlife and then came to a clearing.

Walking out of the edge of the forest, the oldest cousin who was still a year younger walked coolly out into the bright sun. I squinted my eyes, I had always felt envious of her way of making herself seem 10 years older. Suddenly, my favorite cousin was dragging me to the water that beckoned us to explore its depths. We fished, we swam, we collected shells, all the while the older cousin laid out tanning. I couldn't understand why someone would miss out on exploring for mere image but that was her thing. The younger cousin and I were more down to earth. We had finally made our way down to the other side of the dam where a bridge went across the water. In the shade of the bridge, we could pick and easily find shells while staying cool and out of the sun.

My cousin started picking her way across the wall of the dam where she had found a ledge to walk on, "Look at me!" she screamed smiling blindingly at me. Giving her a classic thumbs-up and laughing, I went back to my work. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her reach the middle of the dam. She disappeared under the water. My whole body felt hot. My eyes searched for her. Everyone started screaming all at once. It all felt like a race, everyone rushed to us. Then instinct kicked in. I jumped in after her under the rushing white waters. I found her but the struggle was far from over. I put myself under her and pushed her up I pinned her on the wall so that someone on the other side of the dam could grab her up and get her out but I had to keep her above the rushing waters for them to do so.

Then I realized I was still in it. All at once I felt drained of my energy. I felt myself let go. I looked up and through the murky water, I watched the bubbles escape to the surface. I thought about how beautiful it was. I wondered if this was how I was going die. I then looked down and a violent fear overcame me. I thought I had been seeing things but I could have sworn a black smoky crippled hand reached out for me in the depths of the spillway. That's when I started kicking. I fought the currents. I fought for control. I fought to reach the surface and get the grip of the waters to loosen on me. I broke the surface of the water and paddled to the rock shelf.



Karen Hoffman

Inside the Mind

Rosemary Burke Ciaudelli

Balance

Balanced on one toe and ankle of steel

The other leg lifted impossibly high,

She holds that pose with perfect poise.

Small hands graceful as birds.

Willowy body, pale and ethereal

Suggests fragility but

Appearance belies amazing strength.

Balanced now between woman and child

Poised in this breath-holding moment,

She is almost ready for the dance of life.


Should she choose ballet

There can be no balance.

Everything else must fall away.



Nyctasia Fitton
Experiencing Wonderland



Jessica Bolis
Carrie Chao
Rosemary Burke Ciaudelli
Hayley Cooper
Macy Dorman
B. Farbo
Nyctasia Fitton
Rebecca Goodman
Karen Hoffman
Jessica Hood
Emily Humphrey
Jennifer Jewett
McKenzi Kumpf
Karen Munoz
Amanda LeeAnn Perry
Nicole Potts
Alexandria Price
Amalia Ramirez
Jeanne Rewa
Sierra Smith Swickard
Susan K. Tarrant
D S Thomas
Rose Mary Herrmann Watson
Rebecca Wilhelm