Dove in the Chimney
Jordyn Strong

Hello, sir! What news from the Promised Land?
I need a little hope to conjure up some faith.
In the dark deep of the ocean I search for peace.
Only to realize it must be in the bright deep of the sky.
And she comes along with a beautiful complex.
Making me believe there are no bees in that hive.
O what a world to execute the soul.
Light in a small box never to reach out.
I think I need a whole lot of grace.
To help me believe this is all shadow.
O good God, part this Red Sea!
I always think I’m so clever.
When all I am is the dove in the chimney.

All About Us
Katie Harmon

They roam the halls of our schools
Every day without a word.
We worry about getting a good grade on a big test;
They worry about getting anything from life at all.
They can only keep going, hoping, praying that one day
Maybe someone else might care.
To them high school is not four years of fun and friends. Instead,
It is simply a preview of the loneliness to come.
They keep looking for answers; none of it could ever help.
No drug or drink or pill could cure all of the pain inside.
And what do we do to help?
Do we show the love of Christ?
No. We stay trapped in our cliques where we feel safe. After all,
It is all about us, right?
Deaf and Blind

John Dement

If you can’t stop the radio,
how can you hear what the silence has to say?
And if you can’t stop the video,
you’ll never see what beauty is to be seen.
Hey brothers and sisters in the band,
I’ve got a desire to be creative,
but the creative spark just won’t fly.
Why? I can’t think…maybe it’s me.
So let’s all push play one more time,
sinking into this poison that fills our minds,
allowing escape from who we are,
blinding us from the sight of who we want to be.
Check out our new record.
It scored high on the charts.
Sounds so great,
a bit like them and a lot like those three.
So here I sit under the sapling tree.
Head phones in ears, songs ablaze
as I sit in the insufficient shade,
I think this is me but where’s the creativity?
The heat is too much,
so I leave the tree for a house with A/C,
but there’s no stop. Never push stop,
only the pause before the next play.

If you can’t stop the radio,
how can you hear what the silence has to say?
And if you can’t stop the video,
you’ll never see what beauty is to be seen.
And as I sit in front of the television,
I begin to pray to the God I think I love.
Speak to me, Lord, throughout this day.
Show me what beauties you see
from your heavenly throne up above.
Aching to be alone,
the tears freely flow
as I refuse to let go.
Dawn’s warm, bright light
brings sweet relief.

Late into the Night

Kate MacMillan

Late into the night,
icy and black,
when all appears to be still,
my enemy prowls.
With no moon’s spotlight to guide him,
he creeps from tree to tree
on harvested cropland’s edge.
Not a sheep stirs.
Pausing at the red barn,
he unlocks the metal gate.
Without hesitation,
he boles my name.
Within seconds,
his presence infiltrates
my very being.
Aching to be alone,
the tears freely flow
as I refuse to let go.
Dawn’s warm, bright light
brings sweet relief.

Broken Watch

Davis Branch

A broken watch relieves a fear
Retreat, regress, relive, go back; a desire
Don’t let the second hand come back to life
Because this watch is broken; this sundial is stopped
Retreat, regress, relive, go back; a desire
I can’t think of a better time to repeat the past
Because this watch is broken; this sundial is stopped
Time is everything to be afraid of
I can’t think of a better time to repeat the past
Time is nothing. No, time is everything
Time is everything to be afraid of
12, 11, 10, 9, 8,…this is the way it should read
A broken watch relieves a fear
Time is nothing. No, time is everything
12, 11, 10, 9, 8,…this is the way it should read
Don’t let the second hand come back to life.
Stand. Rise.
The Tide Has Turned
JUSTIN GROV

I heard you thinking aloud again.
The way you do
When you think no one is listening
wants to listen.
The audience has really enjoyed your show.
Pits of laughter.
Standing ovations.
You can bring them to tears.
How strong!
Honest!
Fun!

Scrubbing with a soapy towel,
The make-up smears:
Drips
slowly
off
The point of your chin.
A small puddle forms on the sink,
And you always miss the spot above your ears.
Paint blending with the hairline.

Eating Disorders of the American Church
ALEXANDRA RAE BABYLSKI

We’ve resorted to being bulimic.
Throwing up
what little nutrition we’ve eaten—
and the body is waxing thin
unaware it’s being beaten
from a disorder that’s within.
Verging on the anorexic
—we cry, we bleat
sitting at a banquet
complaining that there’s nothing to eat
when in reality we’re overfed
and so soon misled.
Our teeth have grown soft,
the meat so difficult to chew,
and lactose intolerant;
the milk feels heavy too.
His eyes were still shut as he walked into the kitchen. The smell of coffee was weak as he placed bread in the toaster set on high. The cold air from the fridge startled him, making his resistant lids open a little bit more. After pouring a glass of milk, he returned the carton and grabbed the homemade jam—made by her, not him. This was Saturday morning.

The kitchen, dining room, and living room, though part of one room, were separated into impracticable nooks by half walls. He looked around noting the long patterns on the carpet cast by the sun through the lace curtains between the heavy drapes. The room was a deep purple, made deeper still by shadows. The curtains and the color had both been picked out for him.

With the coffee and the now buttered and jammed burnt toast, he sat at the dining room table. Saturdays were typically uneventful days, but today was different. He needed his suit and not just one of his usual suits, but his special tailored pin striped suit. It just so happened that this special suit was currently at the dry cleaners. I must call her, he thought as he bit into his toast. He smiled. Just the way she makes it.

The bite was followed by some of coffee, made lighter and weaker with creamer. Coffee was his only guilty pleasure because she disapproved of it; too much caffeine. Although she knew that he knew that she knew he drank coffee, she would just give him that knowing smile and a little wink. "Tea. Now there is a respectable drink," she would tell him. He didn't know how she knew, but she did. She always knew.

I must call her.

He lived a few blocks away from her in a gray stone building that glared at passerbys. At least that’s what he had thought when he moved in, but now he saw it as protective of its occupants, keeping out those who had no business there. Plus, it was she who had found the apartment and suggested it. She must have liked it. The building was close, and it was safe.

If he wanted, he could walk to her. However, he hated the jeering folks who sat on front stoops along the street. Their stares were from jealousy. They didn't have safe apartments or steady jobs or enough food, but above of all, they didn’t have a lovely woman to manage all of that for them. Their jealousy disgusted him though he could hardly blame them.

If he chose not to walk, he would have to take the bus. This too made him uncomfortable. All those people, all those eyes, all those germs. No, thank you. The bus was faster, and so the weight from all those stares would obviously be felt for a fraction of the walking time. Still, this was not enough to tempt him. On his last bus trip, the stares had been so heavy he could not bear it and had to exit the bus before his stop.

It had been around 4 p.m. on a week day, and the bus had been packed. He sat in an aisle seat next to an old woman who smelled unmistakably like cat food and urine. On his lap rested his unnecessary briefcase full of the unimportant papers he liked to look at to avoid the other passengers. His briefcase was heavy, and he had to look at those papers. Then the old woman with her grizzled finger tapped him on the shoulder and asked, "Don’t you think you should let the young lady sit?" Out of complete horror, he closed his briefcase and left when the bus stopped. The old woman had touched him. For the next two blocks all he could smell were cat and old.

No, he would much rather call her.

Having finished his breakfast, he placed the dishes in the dishwasher. The cleaning lady would run it when she stopped in tomorrow. Every week, the little Mexican woman intruded on his seclusion. She was unwelcome even if she was only cleaning. There was only enough room for him in his apartment. That was the way he liked it.
Poetry
Melissa Madson

Poetry is...
The iridescent shadow of the soul,
cast at the dawn of passion,
in the rising of reflection,
silhouetting language's figure
on the footpaths of our minds.
Just Like the Rest

Keith Gregory Poulos

Yes, we’re listening to you
Yes, every word you say
Though incomprehensibility is a major factor
Your communication system is flawless
We will deny those others who mock
Those who lack acumen for their own comfort
Who choose invisibility over invincibility
Who deny any higher intellect other than their own
They will spend their life searching
Only to avoid that which they desired most
Life ensures uncertainty

Unpredictable consequences of a life sure to be lost
Only one will unify in the end
Believe me, the corners will chip away
Leaving only the outline of something so inviting
Yet so undeniably treacherous
Like an ancient brick tower overhanging a cliff
So unkontrollable is the mind
So twisting and deceiving
What is reality?

Is it not what is real to me?
Or is it simple interchangeable facets of concepts
Impersonating existence in order to increment my morale?
Such a laughable thought, this idea called boundaries
I laugh, yet I force employment under it
A scope of viewpoints tears us all apart
Yet one will unify in the end
Twist the knob until the focus is clear
No longer rationalizing in my own ignorance
Those who ask shall receive
And those who seek shall find
In wisdom lies humility
And in humility a look from the outside in
Only ask and you shall receive
Such tranquility, such purpose
I have received it all
One will unify in the end.
Walking Through the Dark

The weeds here are so thick. They really should be cut out. They aren't the kind that are beautiful when touched and swayed by the wind. No, these are the kind that scratch and claw at your legs when you walk in shorts. They stick to your clothes and make you feel as if you've taken a pollen bath that triggers your histamine radar. At night when I walk through their thickness, they are the kind that I won't stumble across some disgruntled snake or find a tick hiding in a fold of my leg. My steps are higher than normal. My feet don't drag at all. When my foot descends, I flick it to the side to feel out potential rock or feel a root, that I am sure will put me in intensive care, or whisk away some predator lying in wait for his midnight snack.

I know the way by heart, but there is something about walking through those tall stalks in the uncertainty of barely full moonlight, that makes me get that tightness in my chest which reflects the unceasing doubt in my mind—the kind that causes you to forget what you were doing or saying and induces an almost catatonic motion that depends on routine and refuses to accept reality. I feel a leaf grab onto a hair on my leg, and I give it a violent and patellar reflex-like shake as if I were losing a deadly spider ready to consume its trapped prey. I hate walking through the grass in the dark. Actually I hate walking, period, in the dark. The grass and weeds and thorns just make it worse. I can't really explain what comes over me, nor why I feel like walking a straight line is so difficult. To the side of that thick patch of anxious weeds runs a long cement walkway, and even walking on that path at night makes me nervous. I know it is laid out directly in front of me with a small kink at the midway point that bends to the left and continues on uphill. But even with the help of the friendly moon, I can't seem to trust my eyes enough to walk without wondering if I will stumble off the path, down the hill and land in a cactus patch or in the stagnant, pooled water at the bottom—a result of a leaky water main. So I stay to the far left side, where there is only a slight drop off the concrete pavement; at worst I might turn my ankle. With the side and tip of one foot, I feel out the concrete blocks that line the sidewalk for the first few steps, trusting them more than I know I should, but after that, I must rely completely on intuition—or faith—depending—like life.

The weeds here at this part are so thick that they have begun to grow over the path and hang out their branches and limbs longingly, like crazed fans trying and reaching just to touch their favorite superstar as they walk the red carpet. "Thank you. Thank you," I think. "Sure I'll sign some autographs. Yes my latest work was brilliant, I'm glad you think so." I wave at no particular person, smile for the cameras and continue mentally preparing my response for the inevitable questions about my failed marriage to a soap opera star and who that girl was they saw riding with me on my Harley in Italy. So far I've thought of, "It is truly a shame that it didn't work out between her and me, but she is a great person, and I hope that we can still be friends," and, "Oh, her. She is quite exquisite isn't she? I guess you being the paparazzi and all will find out soon enough. Won't you?" Afterward, I hear a light chuckle ruminate from the reporters who are furiously scribbling my answer into their notebooks, and I notice that distinct click of the tape recorder of the stop button being depressed on countless miniature tape recorders, marking the end of my contribution to this week's gossip column. As the panel finishes their interrogation, I follow the touch of my admirers' hands to the end of the red carpet. Finally, I look back and realize that from where I am now, the path is clear and without peril, that the moonlight had always shone bright enough—that my eyes simply lacked the ability to understand it, and how, looking backward, I should not have worried at all. Faith is like that.

Andrew Milacc
Sand
—wedged amid
Poetry
and
Lyrics
Stuck between
rhyme
and
reason
My cool
and soothing
rhythm-n-blues
wars with
My politically enraged
Hip-Hop
Fighting the urge
to unfold a
poetic ballad
To instead create
lyrical spits.
Oh No...No...
Aye yo...check this...listen...
Brilliantly. Spoken Word inscribes the utmost deepest
Harder to decipher than your English paper's thesis
Ayo pess this, you can catch me but no way you can keep this
Squander my poetic talents so heads will seriously read this
No recognition unless my rhyme tears down a well-known crew
Ultimately, vets look down on me like "'scuse me, who are you?"
......Sigh......
Sleek and aerodynamic
as if sliced by that two-sided sword of old
such is the nature of my art
borne from an age of wonder
grown into independence
now cursed with schizophrenia
on this poetic landscape
my "Musiq Soulchild" challenges
my "DMX" to a duel.
Heartfelt sentiments
clash
with Street-bred aggressiveness
each too bold to let the other speak
on its own.
Claws are bared...
Guns are drawn...
Round one...
......Oh buddy...
Nouns, verbs, predicates/ I manipulate for the cause
'cause it's causing my desire now/ for rhyming in my drawers
I'm playing now/ but check it how/ it can deliver you a stroke
Like Mos Def/ I'm here and laughing/ but son, I ain't no joke
Conscious and Argumentative/ I'm Distant and still Relative
So strong on each side/ can't even calm it with a sedative
A sophisticated homie/ simple stanzas couldn't hold me
Growing aggressive with these lines/ And only MORE can console me
Whether it be a flowing rhyme, it's still poetry to me
Whether it be in verse free, it's still poetry to me
So see me, and my rhymes, and all God made me to be,
See my dichotomy...Welcome. To Me
I had just finished my 8 a.m. English class. I was tired and desperately needing something warm to perk me up, so I trudged down the hall to the campus café to buy the largest cup of tea I could find. Now with tea in hand, I found a secluded table and sat down to pass some time away reading my favorite book, Pride and Prejudice.

As I eavesdropped on their conversation, I overheard the young woman remark, “It would be my pleasure to edit your research paper for you. Who better to come to than an English major!”

I was well into my second chapter for the morning, when I was startled by the eloquent voice of a young woman. She was sitting at a table not far from my own, talking to a rather plain-looking young man. As I cleared my throat. “Well, you know, not everyone—”

“Indeed, what we do as English majors is art and demands real God-given talent. We must make sure that those so blessed with this talent succeed and those who aren’t so blessed…well, don’t succeed, to put it bluntly. You see, our duty to humankind demands we be this way. The responsibility rests upon our shoulders to make sure fine literature and quality writing are preserved.”

“That’s true, I guess. I mean, I do admire how passionate English majors can get when it comes to literature and how they can communicate so well in writing,” expressed the young man. “I wish I could write like you English majors do. I struggle so much….”

He drifted off and turned his gaze to the floor. Staring blankly at the man for only a moment, the young woman reflected, “Hmm, that’s one thing I must say about writing. I’ve never struggled with writing. I’ve always gotten A’s in my English courses and have been published numerous times in the campus literary magazine. In fact, I’ve been published in this year’s issue. I think I have a copy in my bag...ah, here it is!” Flipping to the page she wanted, she shoved the magazine into the young man’s hands. “Read that!”

Over the next thirty minutes, the young woman pulled several magazines and a profusion of article clippings for the young man to read. With a thick stack of papers piled in front of him, the young man finally said, “It’s been great reading all of this, but I’ve really got to go. When do you think you can get the paper back to me?”

“Well, it depends how much work it needs,” chuckled the woman. “The last time I edited someone’s research paper—”

“I’ve really got to go. I’ll be late for my class if I don’t,” he said, rising from his seat.

“Oh. Well then, I’ll walk you to your class.” She gathered her stack of papers, carefully organized them, and placed them back in her bag.

I watched the two of them walk away as the young woman linked her arm to the young man’s and resumed her story. “As I was saying, the last time I edited someone’s research paper it took me an entire month! You wouldn’t believe the plethora of mistakes I found!”

“When I could see them no longer, I sipped my tea and reopened my book. “Ah, yes, chapter fourteen...”
Rarely is there an absence of noise—a time in which there are no vibrations to resonate which clear all paths to higher thinking, moving a mind toward a state of deeper reflection and rich contemplation.

When there is no sound or projection to lessen the limits of the mind and measurement of thought, silence is extended to our human ears to enhance and increase the process levels of ideas and deeper intuition. Gentility and human strengths are no match for these momentary gifts, here and gone, given without command or prediction. They surface and vapor by the parts of seconds which come erupting at the mere inclination of an inhale and exhale. Atop a city building one finds this peace under the brilliant illumination of boundless neighboring stars. With the mind one can grasp so tightly the atmosphere, a mystery so heavenly strung and feathered through the miles, beaming darkness as powerful as the night amongst fields of lights down to the corner of our world, wrapped around by human hands and nature’s vines, and then back again to the expanse of the universe never seen or known but believed.

It is these moments, the absence of noise, that belief, true belief, a doubtless and confident knowledge of the truth is surfaced and the most tactful process of attaining and comprehending reality of where one is and what this great globe on which we walk is realized. This revelation, a spiritual epiphany, a divine realization, hardly compares to the furious swift minutes of a day in a city street. The rush of a machine, the clanking of engines, the release of steam, the throbbing pump of blood through a vein, all expose less concentration onto the elements of life that matter the most; the answers that demand questions rather than the questions that demand answers. The spiritual man will not last long in this kind of world. He is merely blinded from the supernatural world around him. Any amount of attention to a world of constant noise and movement will mute the whisper of God. His tone will distort and evaporate like the mist of morning dew against the blazing glow and heat of the sun. The calling of God will drift away and boii to another world as if it had never come to this corner of our universe. The stillness of space, the universe, the soil on which we carry ourselves is where such a faith can creep into a heart and the softest whisper of the Being, the Author of our life, can be heard and can assure the heart and stir the soul, presenting a solid form of evidence that the supernatural is at work.

When the eyes of a man’s heart stay gazed toward the soil, the material and the temporary, instead of the eternal and infinite, the supernatural becomes nonexistent. A man’s days are then ruled by the everyday obstacles and insignificant troubles. The big picture is erased. A man must place his head in the clouds where he sees the landscape of life, not just the mountains but the absence of mountains, the valleys. His mind must be closer to Heaven, heavily drenched in the thinking patterns of eternity. Must earthly man stay earthly? Must his soul be buried and blind to all the miracles around him? Miracles are the moments woven between every inhale and exhale. Have we forgotten the magic found in a baby’s cry? The beauty in the holding of hands? The fantasy of a family? The romance that sparks between the peanut butter and jelly on two slices of bread? The human mind has not reached the clouds, but has consequently become too logical. Humanity has become too swift to stop and smell the roses. Stop. Be still. Know that He is God.
I think there’s ink running through my veins
It certainly explains all of these bloody stains
Welling up on this pure white page
Sad manifestations of ill-begotten rage
The dark fluid flows straight out of my heart
Spilling out, forming blots from Rorschach’s cards
They all blend together till my perception is hard
Freud would ask what I see in these stains of psychiatric fame
But to my derivative unoriginal mind they all look the same
This pen’s the IV dripping life from my fingers
Ink from my heart covering countless perfect papers
As inspiration stirs the ink flows true
Draining out of my hands dripping black not blue
Each word that is formed is a part of my soul
Every time it is read that’s a part that you stole
As long as my pen leaks I can never be whole
But it’s better to be partial than never to be heard
So the life blood of my soul flows till the very last word
All the while I scream out loud as if I’ve something to say
Knowing all along I said the same yesterday
I splash all these words that can’t be erased
Hoping only that you can read what’s written all over my face.

They live on ice cream and cigarettes.
No true native can deny himself one—
Or both—
Of these simple, yet indulgent, pleasures.
Pedestrians march and meander along
Led by capitalism and cobblestones.
The streets are wide enough for everyone—
All partake, and must return for more.
Yellow, green, black, red, and blue pedal past.
They are strong, young, skirted, and barefoot
And do not converse with me, but
Stop to buy books, water, and avocados.
Mark Twain eats blueberries and
Observes the bedlam from above while
Tom and Huck work the river below,
Derailing cargo ships rafting to France.
I watch the grass grow where I sit
On the banks borrowing sunlight,
Sharing Riesling, names, and Jesus,
Discussing diamonds, cabs, and English.
Marx plays chess with the homeless
And the crazies that meet at the library.
He spends his spare time collecting
Glass bottles in plastic bags on his handlebars.
There are dollar shots at The Dubliner
Tonight. Music struts the town bouncing
Off the ground at angles, exiting I Punkt,
Entering heads and doorways of the unaware.
I quit early; in an hour no one will know I am gone.
Quickly trekking alone, I head to Hemingway’s.
Always open, dark, and warm, he
Pours Earl Grey and words into my life.
I slide past and explore the faces around me.
Everyone belongs and yet no one owns this town
They are all searching, and will be forevermore
What they want cannot be bought with Euros.
His name was Shamus.
Oh, how Irish—
The Americans marvel
But the Irish are perplexed.

His last name, it's Duncan,
A point worth knowing,
When pain has silenced,
Answers worth holding.

A walking contradiction,
Shamus and Duncan,
He wore his cap low
And carried no rosary.

Your name is not Shamus Duncan.
What is the truth?
My name is William,
That is the truth.

Some ideas, he said,
1) Do not ask questions,
They are not needed,
Here, in Norn Iron.

"You're a loyalist?"
"No, I'm a Catholic."

The bigotry is fuming
And hatred is uncertain
When the political and
Religious line is blurred.

"You're a Protestant?"
"No, I'm a Republican."

2) When the Paras
Say no ball,
Don't kick it
in the street.

The murals scream
"For God and Ulster."
But violence belongs to neither,
What is the truth?

Since when is killing
A man before the eyes
Of his wife and child
An act of loving thy neighbor?

3) Claim Christ and nothing else.
Like John the Baptist,
You can be anti-establishment,
But your last name betrays you.

Wallace is it? That's easy,
I know what you are,
Protestant and Loyalist.
They are one in the same.

It is an uneasy juxtaposition.
See, He wears a blue jersey.
She has on a green one,
Immediate disdain.

Eirinn go Bragh,
And Long Live the Queen.
Words from the Pope
And Anglican theology.

They are intrinsic
And inseparable
There is no need to ask
Which of the two I am.

Christ walked as a servant,
A holy, humble man.
"Walk as He walked" was missed
By morbidly distorted Christianity.

I am William Duncan,
Shamus to you.
I am a follower of Christ,
And that is the truth.
I brushed some dust from the sleeves of my once beautiful silk blouse. I tried to weave my fingers through my hair, but my fingers got stuck in the amounts of knots and grime. Everything around me was shuffling and waking up for the morning sale. The humans were briskly walking to and fro, collecting things, setting out things, arranging things. A hand reached into my mangled box and forcefully shoved me on a back shelf with some other toys. I couldn’t say they were really toys at all. They were more like mutants in that some of their eyes were missing, some arms were ripped off, and most of their clothes were rags. I should have been shocked to see such broken toys, but my life was not much better.

I could show you every broken piece of me, and tell you a story where I was gently held in the arms of a man with gentle eyes and his smiling joyful daughter. I remembered our Sunday afternoon stroll in the baby carriage. I was the only thing left to put me in a beautiful box with pink trim and whipped through my eyelashes. I was cleaned up a little, and my clothes were brushed and put into a little bun on the side of my head. I began to feel beautiful again. I still had scars from the dog bites on my arms and legs, but I tried to ignore them. I smiled when a customer came into the yard and winked my little blue eyes at them. I smiled when a customer came into the door and winked my little blue eyes at anyone that looked wealthy.

One man did finally purchase me. I was sold for five dollars and put into a little brown box with a ripped bow. From there, I arrived at an orphanage where five or six girls tried to share my time. I was thrown on the ground, trampled on and pulled against because of the children’s fights. I was finally thrown in the trash. I was taken to the bottom of the hill where I was dumped in an alley way.

In the pile of trash I sat and thought. I thought about my first owner, the kind man with the gentle eyes and his smiling joyful daughter. I remembered our Sunday afternoon stroll in the baby carriage. I remembered the fireside songs we used to sing together. But now I was broken and useless. I thought I would never see the man and his daughter again. I fell asleep, trying to keep myself warm.

All of a sudden I was awakened by a shuffling noise. I was taken from my pile and shoved in the back of a bicycle. I was taken to a house with boxes all over the yard. I saw a “For Sale” sign pinned at the front of the yard. It wasn’t until the morning when I saw where I was: a yard sale.

How I did I get to this place? I asked myself. I brushed some dust from the sleeves of my once beautiful silk blouse. I tried to weave my fingers through my hair but my fingers got stuck in the amounts of knots and grime.

I heard my name. That is all I’ll ever be. That is all I’ll ever be. That is all I’ll ever be.

I was taken into the nice man’s arms, and he turned to the chubby man who was smoking.

“I’ll give you two hundred dollars for her,” said the nice man.

“She’s only twenty-five cents,” remarked the fat one.

“She is worth more than that to me.”

And with that, he paid his money and put me in a beautiful box with pink trimming and drove me home.

Right when we were pulling up the driveway, I heard the sound of running feet. The little girl was so excited that as soon as her daddy parked the car, she had unwrapped the box. She took me into her arms and squeezed me so hard, that I never wanted to be let go … ever again.

The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you … I will plant her for myself in the land. I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people, You are my people; and they will say, ‘You are my God’” (Hosea 3:1-3, 2:23).

The Lord will grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland of joy instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting, so they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, in Zion, giving them a garland of joy in place of mourning: “For all the people who sailed on the seas of the sea have fallen; all who sailed on the sea have perished.” So it will be with all the nations that fight against Jerusalem. (Isaiah 61:3).”}

---

**scarlet**

A parable about redemption.

for Rosealee, Vicki & gomers everywhere.

C.M. Dennis
The Snork

SARAH JOSIE ZACHAR

The Snork! His name was Snork, and he was a large, colorful sea creature that lived in Mgregor's town. The shopkeeper said, “I'm assuming you're here because your old pet is dead.”

“No, No!” Mgregor shouted, extending his money. “I want my own pet, not a dog or a bunny.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. As the boy peered inside, he said, “I'll be perfectly frank. This is a Hickleback. It's a special breed. If you want to be cool, this is what you need.”

Though a fish smiled at Mgregor with a row of teeth so sharp they tickled his head. “This isn’t what I want to buy,” Oh, they browsed over pythons, and pigs that could fly; rainbow lemurus, spickles, doorks, they looked low and they shrank and slid. Well, Mgregor shook his head and began to say goodbye, when a sudden squeaking sound with a movement caught his eye. “What’s in here?” he asked, looking in the box.

“Why that’s a Snork. Don’t remove the locks. Trust me boy, you don’t want one of those; they’re nothing but trouble, and trust me, it shows!”

“I want it!” The boy snapped, shaking his shoe, “I want it now, and I don’t care by whom!” The shopkeeper was quiet. There was something he knew. “Alright, my boy, now here’s what I’ll do. I’ll give you the snork, and you listen, you hear? There’s one simple rule.” He drew the boy near. “Whatever you do, no matter how much the need, you must never give into the snork and his greed.”

Mgregor laughed and stretched up to look tall. “Why, I laugh at your warning; that’s no trouble at all!”

The shopkeeper chuckled and watched the boy go, “Maybe he’ll learn a lesson, but you never really know.”

The boy took the box home, with a haughty sort of flair. He extended his hands and stack his snoot in the air. He went to his room and he locked the door, slid down his slide and placed the box on the floor. “Come out, you snork. You’re my new pet, and you’re the best one ever, I’ll bet.” He untracked the locks and what did he see? A sight that would seem strange for you or for me…”

An animal pink, with a long nose like the snork’s, he began to bleat. Mgregor expected he would. The snork stared at him, and then cried, “Speelunk!” The snork said, shaking his leg. Continuing to squeal, he began to beg. “So you’re hungry?” said Mgregor. Not making his pet wait, he filled up his pet’s bawl. That snork, he ate. He ate and he ate until not a crumb stood. Mgregor never expected he would. The snork stared at the bowl and began to blast. Mgregor explained, “You sure can eat!”

The day went by quickly, but by the end of the night, the Snork cried for food, even with no light. “Be quiet!” Mgregor moaned, sighing with a heave, “O r I promise you, no matter what, I will make you leave!” He listened to the Snork, who again began to squeal before long, Mgregor had served his pet a large meal.

In the morning, the sun rose, bringing blustering heat. Mgregor, he was shocked, how this can happen, I don’t really know.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. “This is the only magic store in town.”

Mgregor muttered in jest. “This new place should have my pet, and it will be the best.”

“Greetings, young lad!” The shopkeeper said. “I’m assuming you’re here because your old pet is dead.”

“No, No!” Mgregor shouted, extending his money. “I want my own pet, not a dog or a bunny.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. As the boy peered inside, he said, “I’ll be perfectly frank. This is a Hickleback. It’s a special breed. If you want to be cool, this is what you need.”

The day went by quickly, but by the end of the night, the Snork cried for food, even with no light. “Be quiet!” Mgregor moaned, sighing with a heave, “Or I promise you, no matter what, I will make you leave!” He listened to the Snork, who again began to squeal before long, Mgregor had served his pet a large meal.

In the morning, the sun rose, bringing blustering heat. Mgregor, he was shocked, how this can happen, I don’t really know.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. “This is the only magic store in town.”

Mgregor muttered in jest. “This new place should have my pet, and it will be the best.”

“Greetings, young lad!” The shopkeeper said. “I’m assuming you’re here because your old pet is dead.”

“No, No!” Mgregor shouted, extending his money. “I want my own pet, not a dog or a bunny.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. As the boy peered inside, he said, “I’ll be perfectly frank. This is a Hickleback. It’s a special breed. If you want to be cool, this is what you need.”

The big man thought, and led Mgregor to a tank. As the boy peered inside, he said, “I’ll be perfectly frank. This is a Hickleback. It’s a special breed. If you want to be cool, this is what you need.”
I've asked no one's permission
To haunt these fertile shores,
Nor trembled at presumption,
Nor feared to raid time's stores,
For secrets left by man to hang
in cobwebs evermore.

It startles few, if any,
To hear me now it seems,
Though once I frightened plenty in
The blackest of their dreams,
Where naked souls can hear the ghosts
of past and future scream.

I chant my riddle weakly,
And whisper when I can,
Though every note so costly
May be lost amid the sands;
Its strains are drowned in winds
that gust through camel caravans.

Passing by no one can hear it
o'er the rattling of their cars.

When through the crackling speaker
Comes the call to kneel and pray.
All fall as though some fever
Wrapped their bodies in decay.
And my song beneath their murmurs
of devotion is dismayed.

On fiery hearths at night I
Hiss and sputter in the flames,
Or hum through static, whining
Through the television screens.
When some turn on the tap I mutter
through the water's stream.

No household channel pierces
Through the drums inside their heads.
My sharpened words are splinters,
And my riddle's charms are shed,
as deadened dreamers all along the Nile lie abed.

I've asked no one's permission
To haunt these fertile shores,
Nor trembled at presumption,
Nor feared to raid time's stores,
For secrets left by man to hang
in cobwebs evermore.

SONG OF THE SPHINX:
A GRIEVANCE
KELLY HAMEN

SONG OF THE SPHINX:
A GRIEVANCE
KELLY HAMEN

FELL TO SOAR

Fell to Soar by Ashley Witherington

Out of my hands, fallen leaves remain

from the night's rain, stained shades

of red and yellow muddled on earth
under barren branches

Seemingly on their last breath,
a façade. Interior veins flowing yet

an emotionless manifestation

in a facsimile of death

but an intimate emergence of life

behind their wallowing sway.

And with the human heart, an outward
rigid countenance of unbreakable sentiments

In actuality, a liquefied affection remains
buried beneath,
only unearthed in its proper period.

Out of my hands, an autumnal
foliage of personalities,
the human heart, through seasons of its existence,
falls.
In one period, only to marvel

in frosted beauty and blossom in blushing color,
ripened in accurate cultivation of persisted hope and faith
to soar in the wind of heaven's grace.

Fell to Soar by Ashley Witherington

SONG OF THE SPHINX:
A GRIEVANCE
KELLY HAMEN

SONG OF THE SPHINX:
A GRIEVANCE
KELLY HAMEN
Paralysis
CHRISTOPHER RYAN KNIGHT
A twenty-inch bicycle, newly purchased
from the local retail store, lies
mangled
upon
the concrete, loosely chained to the bike-rack
hosting others, while this one,
deleteriously,
all bent out
of shape, lies— the
fractured
frame unable to move its limbs,
the rubber handlebars devoid
as lame appendages
of any strength
to lift itself from its current
crumpled
position
on the ground, left unfixed
and motionless
till its owner’s return.

My Heart
S. MARK KUS
Who is the artist who can’t hold a brush?
Who is the teacher who is in a rush?
Where is the speaker who mumbles the words?
Where is the preacher who follows the herds?
What kind of singer could cause birds to flee?
What kind of musician can’t hear harmony?
Is there an actor who clams up on stage?
Is there a writer who can’t fill a page?

Find me a person whose dreams fill the sky
For I’ve a hand in each pot, and I’m wondering why
Why can’t the numbers rhyme with your soul?
Why can’t the heart and the mind share a goal?

I have a passion for all that I see
I spread myself out, for all I must be.
My mind strives to find the path of my heart
And my dreams are composed of the things I am not.

For I am that artist, that singer of songs
I am that poet who teaches the throngs
I am that actor who shows you the way
And that composer who stands up to say

That though I’ve no talent in writing or art
And though I’m not bold or overly smart,
I’ll open my arms to the chance of a dream
And let my heart and my mind be a team.
For centuries, humanity watched the sky, longing to dive forth into the depths of the universe, into that which could not be seen. For so long it seemed out of reach, and we had to content ourselves to merely see, look, watch. For so long we stretched with our hands, longing to touch the surface of the glistening depth that lay above us, to cause even a tiny ripple in the ocean of stars. But once we reached a new height in our existence, we realized that nothing was beyond our reach. We realized that anything was possible.

It was in this epoch of mankind that there arose a desire to conquer, not each other—for that had passed long ago, and the division that once had hindered our progression was behind us—no, not each other, but all else. We began to dream dreams of being princes, not in a lowly court of earth, but kings in the high courts of the universe. We desired to be free, totally free of any earth-bound tether, liberated from our original sphere. This desire extended to our deepest parts, the hidden places inside of us that wanted only what we wanted, and nothing else. We wanted to be masters of the sea of space and time, mighty dukes of our own destinies. And for the first time in our history, we had the means to achieve our ends. Nothing could hold us back.

We had long ago grown tired of seeking after things that continued to elude us and cause disunity among our brethren. After all our battles, all our wars that had left our planet nearly dead, we finally realized that this elusive truth after which we had sought had caused us to all but destroy ourselves. So, in order to preserve our future, we abandoned our old and archaic ideals, and began to seek a new belief. One that would unite us, one that would bring the entirety of mankind together, driving toward one goal and one overarching purpose.

During the Final War, when the bombs fell like thundering raindrops in a tempest that swept over us all, our land, along with all other lands, was ravaged beyond repair. The evidence of our foolishness not only extended to the pockmarked, craterous remains of our home-lands, but also to the sky far above our heads. Dust and air suffered a like fate, and the atmosphere became just as fragile as the earth itself. The Sun began to take its toll, and it was only a matter of time before we could no longer exist as we were. The light began to damage our home, and if one was too long in the beams of Sol, his life ended, poisoned by that which he had trusted and taken for granted. What were once the sweeping hills and valleys of our home, now were blasted and barren fields, an unfamiliar country. What we had once thought of as the source of life and warmth and light and meaning, was now our enemy. We had never realized how unkind, how uncomfortable light could be.

Mankind, or what was left of us, gathered together in a few large pockets of land that were still habitable. It was here in these, the new cities, that the greatest remaining minds came together. Philosophers, historians, theologians, mathematicians, theorists, engineers, scholars of every variety united to divine the future of our race. This summit was the beginning of the new age, the new era of mankind. They poured forth their hearts and minds on behalf of the rest of us, offering rebirth, offering transformation, offering hope.

This is the declaration that went out, echoing in the streets of the remaining cities of the Earth: "The time has come."
We, mankind, have managed to change everything that revolves around us, but we have chosen to ignore the core. We have revolutionized production. We have revolutionized survival. We have revolutionized culture, industry, art, religion, travel, economics, warfare, politics, government, philosophy and theology. Yet we have failed to revolutionize ourselves. There is but one Great Revolution left; that of the mind, the soul, the spirit, and the body. It's time we changed what it is to be human. It is on its way. The Dawn of the Mind is here. It is The Last Revolution of Existence. The Revolution of Being. The Revolution of Consciousness.*

Thus, the Trigger was conceived.

The outcry that followed was short lived, but violently intense. There were riots, uprisings, rebellions. The worst of these riots, ignited by a group called The Children of Phoebus, claimed the lives of more than ten-thousand people in a single day. Regrettably, even more cities fell. A dear price was paid. But when the dust cleared, we stood as one, with no opposition.

So the remainder of humanity was slowly drawn, one and all, into the last and greatest city left to us, and the Trigger began to be built. All of our remaining resources and energy were poured into this one vision, and the weapon to end all wars was created. It took nearly a generation to complete. Many perished in the attempt, but that we had become, that we had finally conquered ourselves, and could now move on to true knowledge, to true existence.

Once it was complete, we looked upon what we had built, and marveled at the greatness of it, and wondered at the immensity of what we could accomplish. The great shaft of the cannon rose into the sky, a powerful finger pointed towards the sun. Its base was big, and we gathered around it in the long shadow cast by the towering barrel. Here we held our celebration, surrounded by the last light of the sun, and rejoiced in our triumph, for the mastery of ourselves was almost complete. Soon our eyes would truly be opened; soon, our minds would truly be awakened.

Following our celebration, together we abandoned our last city, filling the streets in an exodus that was unmatched in the whole history of the world. Our footsteps were the song of the remnant, the sad and triumphant requiem of our race. We retreated to the side of the earth, and awaited the firing of the last weapon in the universe, the shot that would bring about our rebirth.

We felt the wave before anything else. The entire Earth shook with the blast, and the deafening roar of the shot followed closely behind. But those were nothing compared to what was still to come.

Our eyes turned skyward once more, not daring to believe that we had finally bridged the great divide. Yet as we watched, our hopes were met, and the line between our past and our future was drawn by fire. Our aim had been true: the shot sank into its target, the deep, brilliant core of the blazing star to which we had been tied for so long. The great and boiling ball flared as the shot struck its heart, and thus began the throes of its death. The small hole created by the blast became a fiery drain, into which the molten matter began to pour, and the star began to implode, collapsing in on itself. As it cooled, the once bright and shining surface began to change color, as a sickly patient loses his complexion. It cooled from the blazing oranges and yellows and sank into a deep, solemn red. The surface began to congeal and harden, forming a surface of gargantuan slabs of blackened rock, divided by seething cracks of glowing blood. There came a sound, a sound so great and terrible it seemed as if the very universe itself had gained a throat and was screaming; a deep, guttural roar of gravel that threatened to disintegrate everything that it reached through sheer anguish.

This eventually subsided into a dull and constant quake, and Sol began to die, shrinking, and decaying, the surface flaking away as pieces began to break off and were flung out into the abyss.

It was then that we, humanity as a collective, turned to face each other under the dying light of a murdered star, and saw each other for the last time as we were, as we had always been. And we knew that we would soon be something else. Nothing would ever be the same. We were the mightiest generation to have ever lived. We had accomplished the loftiest task to have ever been birthed in the heart of mankind. We had single-handedly extinguished the uncomfortable light. We had bathed the universe in darkness.

That was yesterday. Today, every man is free to see what he wants to see.