

5TH

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ANNUAL



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ALL IS FADING BY CAROLYNN BULLARD

DOVE IN THE CHIMNEY

JORDAN 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 HANKINS

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.
Amen, and I push play one more time today,
unknowingly walking farther and farther
from the message that the song of silence has to say.

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.
Now as I walk on, I am enticed by the shade of a bigger tree.



BROKEN WATCH BY RACHEL KAZ

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 hollers 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

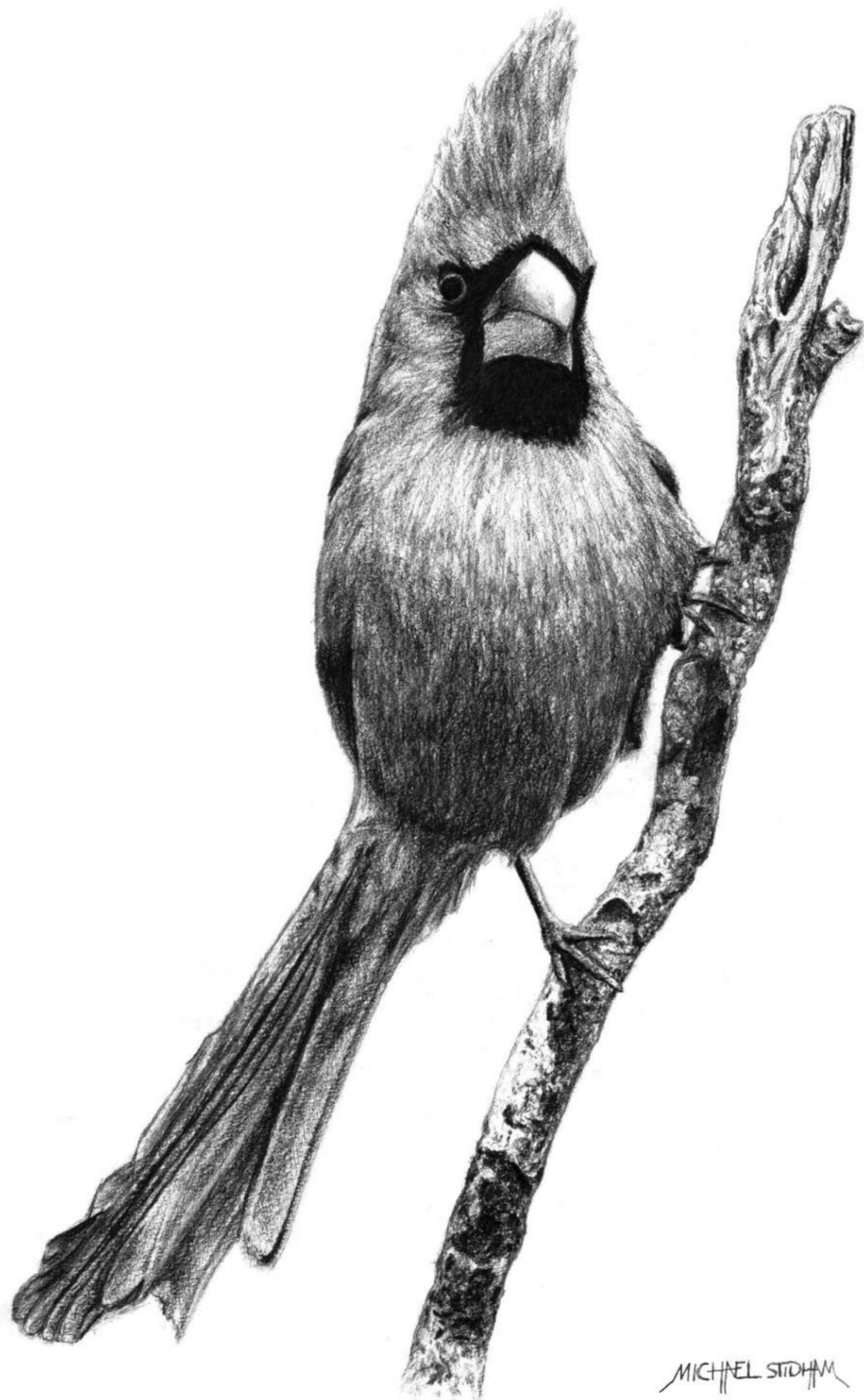
I can't think of a better time to repeat the past
Time is nothing. No, time is everything
Time is everything to be afraid of
12, 11, 10, 9, 8,...this is the way it should read

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



HE'S THE MAN

LAUREN MULLER



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.

A young woman, looking very pregnant, mounted the steps only to find all the seats occupied. He knew this but pretended to be busy. She stood holding onto the bar barely keeping her balance. He was afraid she would fall and fall onto his briefcase, spoiling his illusion. He felt the stares of others but remained seated. 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.

He only spoke directly to the woman once when he thought one of his music boxes had been moved. This was in the first month of her weekly visits. He was not sure if it indeed had been moved. The point was he now never worried about it. He had made sure of that.

He closed the dishwasher, then picked up the phone. The numbers he punched played a melody, a lullaby. He had heard it so often that he knew not only the numbers, but also the tune by heart. It was comfortable and familiar. What was not familiar was that the phone just rang four times...five times...six times...

Looking quickly at the microwave, he noted the time. 10:23. She should be awake by now. What's today? Saturday. Today is Saturday. He ran through her schedule which had years ago been committed to memory. Nothing. It never changed. She should be there. Recent conversations replayed. Nothing. No explanation as to why she would not be where she was supposed to be when she was supposed to be there. Nothing.

He hung up. Did I dial wrong? Never. He picked up the phone again. The lullaby he played seconds ago was now harsh in his ears. Waiting. Third ring...fourth ring...fifth ring...sixth ring. He slammed the phone. Ridiculous! She should be there. I need my suit, and she should be there. She is always there, so why wouldn't she be there this time?

He dialed again, and the phone rang once...twice...three times...four times...five times. He could always reach her. He could always talk to her. She had made a point of that. No matter where he was, who he was with, or how late the time, he could reach her. Although she made him check in with her often, he liked the assurance of knowing that he could always get in touch with her. Once she hadn't answered the phone, but that was when she was sick.

Sick! She was sick then, so she must be sick now. She had to be sick. Of course. He would wait a few minutes and try again. He sat down at the table and felt his muscles relaxing, his heart rate slowing, his breathing leveling. One minute longer like that, and he might have lost it. He chuckled to himself. Always overreacting. She would be ashamed.

She had told him to always be in control of his emotions; "No one respects an emotional man." He assumed that her hus-

band had been this type of man. He never asked. If she didn't speak about her husband, she had reasons, and this satisfied him. He was not worthy of remembrance, whoever he was.

He picked up the phone and dialed once more. One...Please...two... Please... three...Pick up!...four...Please...five... Pick up!...six.

He slammed the phone and sat down again. It was a trick. She should have told him if she wasn't going to be home. She, of all people, the courtesy Nazi. Why did she not answer? Even if she was sick, the phone was right next to her bed on the stand between the lamp, the tissue box and a book, probably a romance. Why did she not answer? This was a mean trick.

What have I done!? What could he have done to make her angry this time? He could recall nothing, but that didn't mean he hadn't possibly made her angry. Spiteful. He shivered. Hers was an anger he feared, not because it manifested itself in a rage or violence or even tears. Hers was a weapon of the most treacherous kind, well hidden. She would smile as she used it. It was like a small smooth blade that was sharp and thin, so when it was swung at your middle, it could be seen only by the light reflecting off it. You flinch and shut your eyes. When you feel nothing, you are shocked and gingerly open one eye and then the other. And you again see her and the blade, but then you see your entrails on the floor at your feet. That was her anger.

He was panicking now. Heavy breaths. He could feel everything—the beads of sweat, the pounding heart, the trembling hands. Black was enfolding his sight. As the floor tilted severely, he watched as the long patterns disappeared from the carpet by clouds passing over the sun. He could hear nothing except the internal commotion. Muffled, cotton-like.

That shattered with the scream of the phone.

And everything stopped.

He sat still for a moment waiting for the second ring. It came. Every sense returned, and every nerve revived as he ran and slipped over the linoleum floor to the phone. "Hello!? Hello!?"

At the sound of her voice he broke into a sob and demanded a reason for her cruelty. Mother explained that she had just returned from the dry cleaners and was on her way to drop off his suit.



SPIDER BLOSSOM BY JUSTIN DAY

POETRY

MELISSA MADSEN

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.

ASPIRATIONS

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 uncontrollable 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.

JUST LIKE THE REST

AMADEUS DEKASTLE

THIS BITTER DAY COMES TO A CLOSE
 PEOPLE WALKING PAST MY WINDOWS
 HEADS DOWN WITH SHUFFLING FEET
 HAIR PARTED AND LOOKING NEAT

 TOWARDS A DISTANT GOAL THEY GO
 WITH MERELY SADNESS AND SORROW TO SHOW
 ONE DAY THEY WAKE AND START TO CRY
 WHILE I WATCH.... KNOWING WHY

 THEY YEARN FOR MORE!
 OF COURSE THEY DO!
 THE TV SCREAMS, "IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!!"
 BIG HOMES, CUSH JOBS, AND FANCY CARS
 THAT'S WHY THEY PUT IN UNTODDLY HOURS

 TRUE, IT MIGHT OFTEN BE SAID,
 SUCCESS.... IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD
 REACHING IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!
 YOU'LL GET THERE AND YOU'LL BE JUST FINE!

 "TISK, TISK," I WHISPER TO NO ONE
 AS I SHUN THOSE I'VE NEVER KNOWN
 BUT THEN ACROSS THE STREET I SEE
 SOMEONE IS STARING STRAIGHT AT ME.

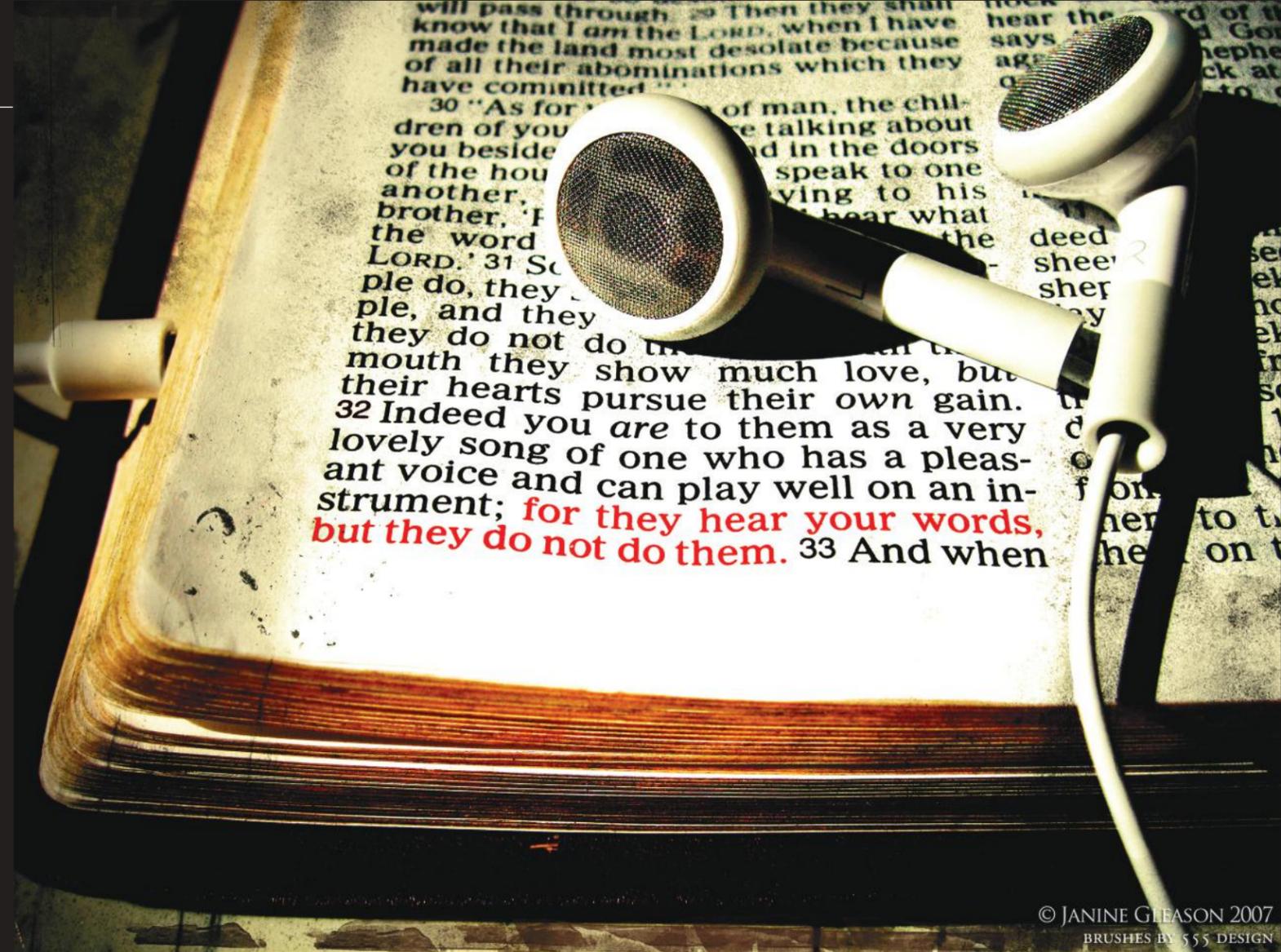
WALKING THROUGH THE DARK

ANDREW MILACCI

THE WEEDS HERE ARE SO THICK. They really should be cut. 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, each step is one of blind faith—hoping 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 loosing 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



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BRUSHES BY 555 DESIGN

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 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.



BROKEN BY BRIAN JOSHUA ABE

SPLIT - TORN

[DUET]

BRITNEY SHELTON AND NICHOLAS STEVEN GEORGE

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 peep 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*

USELESS EDUCATION

LEAH HIRD

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*.

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 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!"

Slightly adjusting her glasses, the young woman continued, "The only thing I ask is that you do the initial proofreading to catch any silly mistakes. I can't stress enough that my biggest pet peeve is to read a paper full of mistakes that any third-grader could correct. I remember the last paper I read for someone. It was loaded with misplaced words and fragments that she could have easily corrected had she taken the time to read it. What's worse, moreover, is that the content was just as bad. It was a paper on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. Her misinterpretation of that story was nothing short of a catastrophe!"

"Was—was she...an English major?" stuttered the young man softly.

"Fortunately, she wasn't. She was a math major or some other silly major. I can't remember. All I know is that I was relieved to discover that she wasn't an English major. Her paper alone told me she knew nothing about the art of writing and interpreting literature. The Department would never have had her, I'm sure!"

The young man shifted in his seat and cleared his 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 myself: 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 out 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...."



HITCHHIKER

SUSAN [LUCY] NICKERSON

A lonely old traveler,
side-of-the-road shopper—hoping for a friend.
Hand out, silent pleading—
going anywhere or nowhere.
Every belonging stuffed into that suitcase
weighing him down.
Read it on his face—
the expectation and disappointment of each passing car.
I slowed down as I got close—just enough
so I could look into his eyes.
I saw the desperation and the hope mingled there.
Averting my eyes, I continued along—my father's mantra
playing in my head about the dangers of hitchhikers,
—glancing back in my rearview mirror, I watched him struggle on
with his baggage in the bitter cold—
and as I drove away, I said a little prayer for him—
that someone else might have enough faith in him to stop,
and I only hope that he really was one of the nice ones—

THE TROUBLE

WITH BELIEF

JUSTIN KEITH MORGAN

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 throughout the miles, beaming dark-

ness 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 boil 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 naturally becomes nonexis-

tent. 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 romance that sparks between the peanut butter and jelly on two slices of bread? The human mind has not reached the clouds, but has consequentially become too logical. Humanity has become too swift to stop and smell the roses. Stop. Be still. Know that He is God.



DSC_0496 BY NATE VANDERENDE

COLORED KUDZU

CHRISTOPHER RYAN KNIGHT

A BRILLIANT MULTICOLORED NIGHTMARE
THAT KEEPS YOU SITTING UP IN BED,
A XENOFICTITIOUS EPISODE
GANESH, WITH HIS ELEPHANTINE HEAD,
COMPREHENDS. AN INNOCENT CREATURE
WHOSE HEAD WAS UNPLUGGED AND SPINEWIRED
TO A HUMANOID ON HIND LEGS
WITH BLACK HAIR HIDDEN BY SANDED JEANS
WHO RIDDLES YOU WITH FLASHBLASTED
HAPPENINGS CREEPIER THAN FRANK'S METALLIC GRIN.
COLORED KUDZU TANGLING SLEEP,
VINES TOO BRIGHT TO ALLOW UNAFFECTED REST,
LEAVES TICKLING YOU UNDER COTTON SHEETS.



ICE CREAM
AND
CIGARETTES

NATALIE NOEL BULLOCK

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 most 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 Punk!,
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.

SPILLED INK

PAYTON W. HOEGH

LADRENAJE BY STEPHEN ABRAHAM

I think that 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.

SHAMUS,
SHAMUS DUNCAN

ASHLEY ANEWALT

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.



COLORADO BY HEATHER MCCrackEN

MIDNIGHT WRITE

ALEX LOIZOS

SO DOES THE FLAME NOT DIM THE DARK,
TILL THE SHADOWS CEASE TO CREEP?
DOES THE SHIMMER OF THE NIGHT'S BEACON,
NOT BEG THE EYE OF SLUMBER?
CAN THE TRACKS OF THE MIND,
NOT STAMP THE TANGIBLE?
SHALL THE ROMANTIC TIME OF LONESOME,
CAPTURE THE THOUGHTS OF NOON?
HOW THEN CAN SANITY SHINE THROUGH THE DOUBT?
HOW THEN WILL HUNGER SATIATE BY FURTHERING IT?
FOR NOT FROM INSIDE SHOULD THE ANSWER CLING.



scarlet

a parable about redemption.
for Rosealee, Vicki & gomers everywhere.

C.M. DENNIS

HOW 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.

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 got the scars. One of my eyes was broken from a dog bite. My leg was half chewed off from a cat. My once shimmering white and red dress is now the color of rust from being left out in the rain and cold. My matted hair was once blonde and curly. Now it is a place for ants and mice.

I used to not be like this. I remember days where I was gently held in the arms of

a little girl and her kind father. I was a very expensive Easter present for the little girl. I had everything you could ever want: a warm house, a play room with rocking chairs and a collection of clothes, shoes, and brushes. I had everything but one thing: freedom. I wanted to see the world and experience what real life was and see if there was any place better than my life now. I would soon discover that there was not such a place.

I snuck out one cold December night, right before Christmas. I remember trying not to make a sound as I creaked down the parlor stairs. I saw the cat's door leading

out to the screened-in porch and could finally see the city lights. The cold surrounded me and whipped through my elegant clothes.

I stepped into the yard and found a way to the street. I sat down on the corner to decide what to do next. Then a bus flew around the corner and stopped suddenly. The tires splashed frozen mud and street ooze onto my face. Gnarly hands picked me up forcefully and shoved me into a weathered satchel. "I found a good gift for my daughter for Christmas," I heard a voice wheeze from up above.

For a year I stayed with a violent child. She did not love me. She used me only as a chew toy for one of her many street dogs. I was thrown out into the trash the next year. Later a man picked me up. He turned out to be an owner of a local pawn shop. I was cleaned up a little, and my clothes were dusted off and washed. My hair was 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 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 strolls 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 shuffling noises. 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.

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 had a sticker placed on me: ".25¢." And I waited.

It seemed as though I waited all morning. I sat and waited through lunch, and I waited until the last item was sold off the broken tables. I was the only thing left to buy, and the sun was rapidly setting. And then I heard a very familiar sound: a Cadillac gently parked and a man in black pants stepped out of the car. He counted some money in his wallet before he walked up to a heavy-set man packing some boxes.

"Am I too late?" asked the well-dressed man.

"Late for what?" asked the chubby man with a cigarette.

"Late for the yard sale," said the man in the pressed black pants.

"Well, I think you're too late, old man. We only have a scrawny, ugly doll in the back that hasn't been sold."

"Ugly doll?"

I guess that is what I really was: just a doll that had been thrown out in the trash, trampled and broken. That is all I'll ever be.

And then an amazing thing happened: I heard my name.

"Scarlet. There you are. We have been looking for you for years. I am so glad that I finally found you."

He said my name. Nobody knew my name. Everyone called me "The Doll" or "The Thing." The voice was like soothing

waters, healing me from the inside out.

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 about 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, that He may be glorified (Isaiah 61: 3).

So no matter how deep we are in our brokenness, "He is deeper still" (Corrie Ten Boom).

THE SNORK

SARAH JOYCE ZACHARY

FAR AWAY, IN THE LAND OF MGILL, where the pickle trees sprout down by the mill, there lived a boy named Mgregor McSpanky. His voice was whiny and his limbs were lanky. He wore flashy clothes, so all his friends could see; there was no one richer than he. He was pale and thin, and from what I can recall, he wore large shoes to make himself look tall. His mother told him greens would make him big and strong, but Mgregor insisted his mother was wrong. He grew up to be scrawny, much lacking in height, and despite constant correction, Mgregor claimed he was right. His parents gave him all he wanted and more; for if they didn't, Mgregor would roar, "I want it now! It's mine, can't you see? That rashtor, those guamplots, they all belong to me!" As this went on day after day, his parents gave in; they let him have his way. "Buy me those candy bars!" His friends he would shun, leaving nothing for them. "I want them all, every one!" He had his own way, with the world as his mart; he'd take whatever he wanted to keep in his cart.

He had everything, this proud little boy. Almost every day he got a new toy, a trampoline, a candy store, a pool painted blue. His go-karts could even cruise, yes,

all forty-two. Now Mgregor was bored on that fateful day, wasting time with his care-free play, he saw a dog outside, and though at first he didn't care, Mgregor soon remarked, "Why that's not fair!"

"Why should that boy and his dog have fun? Why should he have a pet when I've got none?" So Mgregor left, with ten dollars in hand, to buy himself the best pet in the land. Not an ordinary pet, no, that wouldn't do. Mgregor needed one special, maybe covered in goo! He found a new shop and as he stepped in, he swore, he'd never seen this establishment before. "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."

Though a fish smiled at Mgregor with a row of teeth so sly, the boy shook his head. "This isn't what I want to buy." Oh, they browsed over pythons, and pigs that could fly; rainbow lemurs, sprinkles, dodos, they looked low and they searched high. 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, stamping 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 stuck 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 undid the locks and what did he see? A sight that would look strange for you or for me...

An animal pink, with a long nose like a trunk, that beast looked at him and made a loud "Speelunk!" His yellow eyes, they wobbled and rolled, and he had five tentacles, or so I'm told. His skin was rubbery and bounced as he walked. As for Mgregor, well, he was definitely shocked. "Speelunk!" The snork said once more. It didn't seem like he would be a chore. The snork himself, well, he was quite small, and you would think this didn't matter at all. But Mgregor was angry. This was no fun. He needed a large pet, that could not be outdone. "Now

listen here, Snork, I want you to grow. But how this can happen, I don't really know."

"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 bowl. 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 bleat. Mgregor exclaimed, "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, "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 blistering heat. Mgregor, he was shocked, for the Snork had grown two feet. The boy stumbled out of his bed, and despite how hard he did look, in his whole library, he found not one helpful book. The snork's yellow eyes wobbled, and he speelunked once more. Mgregor didn't know exactly what he had in store. Again the snork pestered, he whined and he squealed, until twenty potatoes Mgregor found he had peeled. "I hope this will stop you!" the boy desperately cried. When the shopkeeper said the snork was trouble, Mgregor knew he hadn't lied. The snork gobbled them up and burped up a storm and by now Mgregor knew this growth was not the norm. The snork became bigger and bigger by far. This pink flabby animal was now the size of a car. "Why won't you listen?" Mgregor pushed his pet out the door. "I've never heard of anything so greedy before!"

Mgregor paled greatly. He knew the man was true. He led his snork back. He intended fully to sue, but a surprise greeted Mgregor, when he reached the store. It had disappeared; it wasn't there anymore. The boy began to panic; his rationale wasn't whole. He knew now the point. He couldn't take on this role. He had been too greedy, but the snork continued to eat. Before Mgregor could stop the creature, the snork had en-

veloped the street. The boy couldn't stop him, but how he wished he could, for once; a small boy remained where Mgregor once stood. "I wish I hadn't taken it." Mgregor thought about his actions alone. He began to wonder if he could atone.

He hoped the snork had eaten enough, but oh, that old snork. He began to eat the boy's stuff. He ate the trampoline, the candy store, the pool painted blue. Why that snork ate the go-karts, all forty-two. Mgregor cried and yelled. He even began to plead, but did that old snork listen? No, he didn't heed. The boy didn't need the things, but he'd miss them, he knew. Ignoring his begging, up the snork's trunk they flew. "You can't leave me just one thing?! I need that diamond-studded cup!" Faster now, the items flew into the snork's mouth with a sh-lup! Despite Mgregor's wishes, without the slightest grouse, that snork took a moment. He ate Mgregor's house.

Now you must believe when I tell you this tale, the snork was now the size of a whale. Mgregor finally cried, "I swear I'll be good! I'll not beg for things, I'll do as I should! I'll be happy, and thankful, for what I own!" That pink snork, he began to moan. Slowly, the snork took one last chew, and with a loud bang, that snork, he blew. Mgregor Mcspanky learned something new that day, that being grateful is the best way. He never got his things back, but he gained some new friends, ones that remained with him, no matter what, through bitter ends. He became thankful for what he had. Little things meant a lot. He learned the lesson that he was forcibly taught. By this time, you may be wondering, did his thankfulness show? Yes, he's a pleasure to be around these days. It's true, trust me, I know. Yes, I'm good friends with Mgregor, and I still run my store. You can find me with lemurs, hicklebacks and more. I've seen you around, and I keep watch on you still, while munching a pickle from the tree by the mill. You'd better not keep dwelling on that one item of hype, begging your parents for money, and continuing to gripe. If I see you act like that, you know what I'll do? I'll pack up another snork, and send it right to you.

FELL TO SOAR

JENNIFER GELAR

Out of my hands, fallen leaves remain drenched
 from the night's rain, stained shades
 of red and yellow muddled on earth
 under barren branches
 Seemingly on their last breath,
 a facade. Interior veins flowing yet
 an emotionless manifestation
 in an 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.

SONG OF THE SPHINX:
A GRIEVANCE

KELLY HAMEN

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.

My voice is just a droning
 Through cries in the bazaars,
 Or through cattail clusters moaning
 Under hot and peppered stars.
 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 ask no one's permission
 To haunt these fertile shores,
 Though my haunting be presumption,
 Though my riddle seem a bore,
 And the storage bins of time
 disclose their contents nevermore.

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,

dejected,

of shape, lies— the

all bent out

fractured

frame unable to move its limbs, the rubber handlebars devoid

as lame appendages

to lift itself from its current

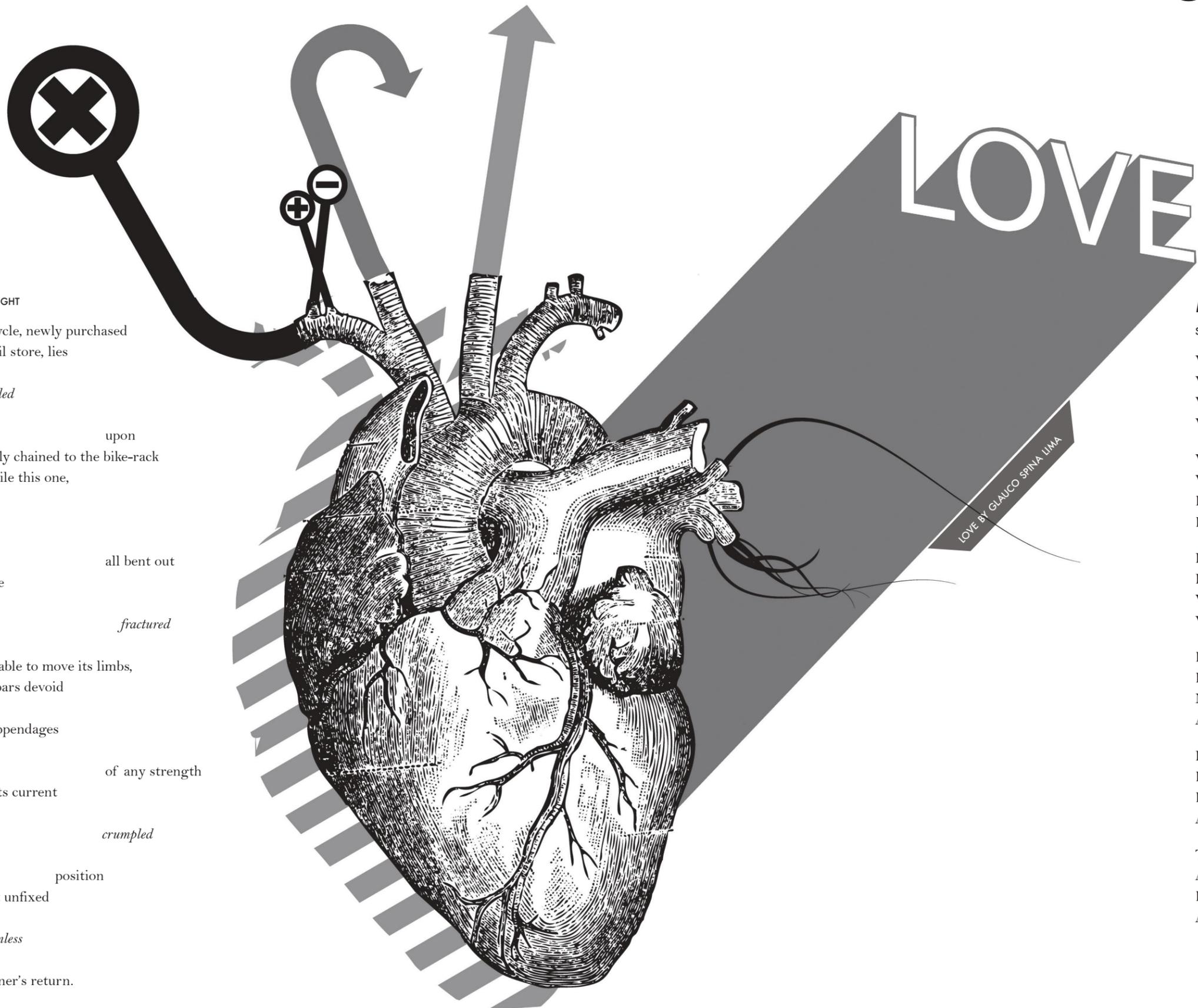
of any strength

crumpled

position on the ground, left unfixed

and motionless

till its owner's return.



MY HEART

S. MAYKULL

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



THE FALL OF APOLLO

ANDREW J. CLARK

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.

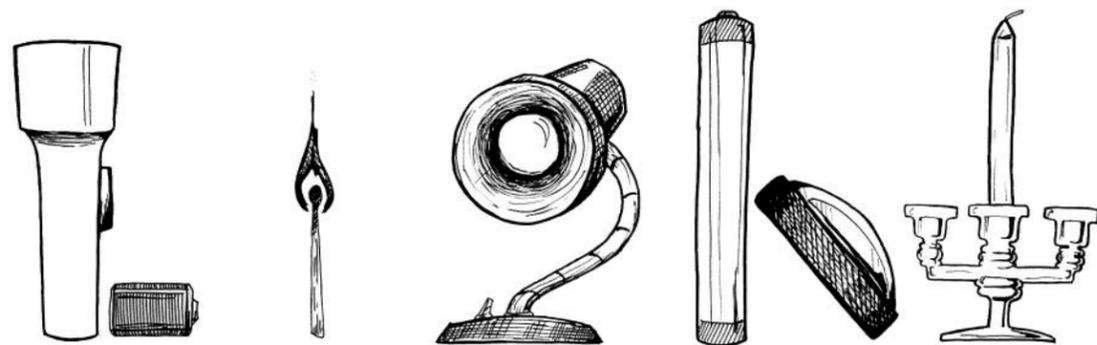
We had long ago grown tired of seeking after things that continued to elude us and cause disunity among our brothers. After all our battles, all our wars that had left our planet nearly dead, we finally realized that this elusive truth after which we had sought had caused us to all but destroy ourselves. 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 over-arching 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 pock-marked, craterous remains of our homelands, 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 humankind. 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. Regretfully, 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 the 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 weapons was created. It took nearly a generation to complete. Many perished in the undertaking, and they were honored with ceremonies and memorials.

Time passed, and we sprinkled the earth with our sweat and our blood. And slowly out of the dirt grew the machine, the largest construction to have ever been built by mankind. It was a spire of strength, a pillar of creation that jutted out of the ground, looking like an exten-

sion of the axis of the world itself. Those who had journeyed to the moon could see it clearly, and remarked on the beauty of its might. It stood as a testament to all 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 wide, 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 other 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 sunk 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.



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