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MINDLESS SEX

They touched so softly and simple, like a
Secret slightly stolen, their breath
Quick
and warm against the neck, their hands
Willing to waiver war, it is another moment
Twisted and trapped in time, but there is regret
Because they know nothing will come
Carefully calculated and cunningly keen,
They think their hearts aren't ripping and
Rolling with
remorse, they speak
Of nothing, not even a notion, at times
Hiding and hunching from the
horror
Of finding a future forbidden from them
Instead they persistently push forward
Their forbidden feelings of fear and fury,
Because for one more night, they,
The thieves
of night knock, knock again and again,
Hoping that for one night the torture will
Slowly subside and be
sweetly sustained
One more night, they too try to escape through
Endless ecstasy, but even their perplexed
Pleasure isn't perfect, their hurting hearts too
Will break, because their feelings have
Driven
been
down deep into a place
Where even passion is poisoned
And permanent pain finds it is place,
It is wrapped intricately around other
Tearful memories, for it too is tainted.

Poem by: Allison Gerli

VENICE



*Third place in Janus graphics
Photo by: Allison Gerli*

I TALK JUST THE WAY I EAT

Me

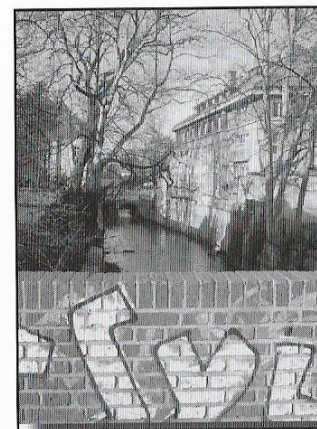
I talk just like I eat

The same amount and size

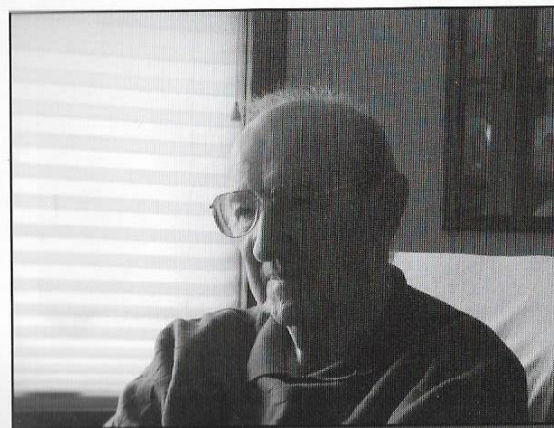
So recently I have gained

A larger set of thighs

Poem By: Ashley Nelson



*In Contrast, Photo by:
Elizabeth Blood*



Waiting, Photo by: Jessica Chase

Why Not Frown

Do you remember that afternoon?
 Soaking rays in the red brick heat,
 sand and volleyballs flying while
 you were high and I said no,
 I'm not mad.
 She asked to take our picture. Precious.
 The light hit my face and cast
 yours in shadow which,
 to be honest, really is your color.
 Despite the recovered explanations,
 the raunchy beer wafted up
 from the deck and I knew
 your smile was a lie.
 Your eyes betrayed that smile.
 When I stumble upon that photo
 it's all sunlight and shadow
 forthright and flimflam.
 My smile matches yours.
 Too bad I'm wearing sunglasses.

Poem by: Elizabeth Blood



Urb. Photo by: Elizabeth Blood

O, GIRLS

Emily and I told Becca, our four year-old sister, that she had to do it if she wanted to be a big girl. She'd been hanging on to that purple Barney doll for too long, we said. Even though she loved it, slept with it, and talked to it – it had to go. I was eight and Emily was six, and we knew a lot about being big girls.

In the months that she had it, we had threatened to throw it away or do something equally awful, but usually just to get a rise out of her. Whenever we threatened a siege, she would hide Barney underneath the bed, the covers, the crack between the wall and the bed. But we were never fooled. After enough teasing, however, I guess we convinced ourselves that, as a necessary part of her development, Barney must be gotten rid of. A rite of passage, if you will.

Becca, however, did not agree with our advice. She watched "Barney and Friends" nearly every day, her little legs barely hanging over the edge of the couch, secretly hoping that her stuffed animal would turn into gigantic real Barney. Just like on TV. She told us that she would get rid of it someday, but she wasn't ready yet. One day, after pestering her about it and nearly convincing her, Emily and I left the room to plot. Becca hid Barney for the last time.

When we returned to the room, Becca and Barney were no where to be seen. We deftly searched for Barney, finding him again between the bed and the wall. We went to work. As she came back into the room, minutes later, she shrieked, "What are you doing?!" her high-pitched voice squealing. The fluffy white stuffing lay everywhere on the floor. Our backs were turned and, though she couldn't see for sure, she knew what had happened.

"Becca," I started, turning around, "now you won't be attached to it anymore! Now you can be a big girl!" I said this as if I'd done her a favor. At the time, I thought I had. She looked at me for a second, like she believed me. Her trusting gaze was gone as quickly as it had appeared.

Emily and I had, using scissors, cut Barney around the neck just far enough to get our little hands inside of him and pull the stuffing out. It flew from our hands, clung to our clothes, and piled up around our feet. We did leave the head still somewhat attached.

"MOMMY! COME HERE AND LOOK WHAT THEY DID!" Becca screamed as she tore down the hallway to the kitchen.

Our mother coolly came down the hall and into the bedroom the three of us shared. She paused a moment, looking at the stuffing and the emptied Barney. I saw the corners of her lips move. "Oh, girls," was all she said. We could tell she thought it was kind of funny.

~ ~ ~

Becca was our family's very own "Daddy's Little Princess." (Fortunately, she missed that t-shirt fad by about five years.) She was undeniably cute, but that drove Emily and me crazy. She got almost anything she wanted. All it took was batting her doll-face eyes or cooing, "I love you, Daddy!" Consequently, she became our lucky charm, too. Whenever we wanted something that we thought we had a poor chance of getting, we would send Becca off. "Daddy will say yes to you!" we reasoned. Sure enough, because of Becca's asking, we went on those unlikely days to the zoo, the movies, the candy store, you name it.

She did other things better than us, too. Emily and I played soccer, but Rebecca juked the other little six year olds on the mini-fields and scored hat-tricks before we even knew what they were. Emily and I took gymnastics lessons, but Rebecca could cartwheel on the hi-beam. Emily and I did softball, but Rebecca played catch with dad in the back. Once, when we were little, Emily marched up to our dad and poked him with her stubby little finger. With that same finger, she wagged it back and forth at him and said, "Why do you treat her like a princess? And don't deny it. Princess." [wag] "Princess." [wag] "Princess." [wag] All he could do was laugh. This little child was wagging her finger at him; wanting him to be ashamed of himself.

~ ~ ~

When Becca was eight, Emily and I had grown into a particularly mean stage. Or maybe we were just bored. Between us we concocted another clever scheme. Johnathan Taylor Thomas was the child star guy for young girls at that time and one of Becca's favorites. On a summer day after one of his wonder-year hits was released ("Huckleberry Finn," I think), Emily and I crafted a letter, posing as JTT himself. We even managed to get a thirty-five cent stamp from our mom. The envelope was utterly convincing.

"Dear Rebecca," we wrote. "I really want to meet you. My favorite colors are blue and white, so you should wear them and I'll recognize you. Let's meet at the El Chico off of the Broadway Extension."

"Oh my gosh! Oh! My! Gosh! JohnathanTaylorThomas wants to meet me!" She was practically screaming as she jumped up and down, grinning with everyone of her little pearly-white teeth. To top off her excitement, this meeting also meant that she would get to wear her brand-new navy blue and white polka dot dress.

I don't remember actually thinking that Becca would completely buy the story. Surely, I thought, she will be smarter this time around. But she did buy it. And we had to tell her. Yet, again for effect, we decided to wait to tell her the truth until after she had gotten dressed. In our big-girl wisdom, this was just another stage in the necessary hazing.

Once at dinner I remember Becca making mom and dad laugh. When this would happen, Emily and I would remain stoic, letting her know that we didn't think she was funny. This particular time, though, dad got angry. He was tired of our big sister vs. little sister face-making across the table.

"Stop rolling your eyes at her," he warned sternly.

"What are you talking about?" I questioned, knowing perfectly well that the nonverbal communication between Emily and me was very, very expressive.

"You two. Constantly making faces about her! Why do you treat her that way?"

Emily and I had to apologize. But, I really felt bad. Becca was our sister. For years Emily and I had played "jokes" on Rebecca, "messed with her" in every way we could think of. And Becca usually took it like a champ. But, then I realized that a lot of the time I thought what Becca was saying was actually really funny. She had learned how to joke back, but in a different way.

We both picked up this movie character's voice who talksch like thisch. So, when sche and I schtartet conversching, it kind of annoyed Emily. More and more, I was able to relate to Becca for one humorous reason or another. Around the dinner table, the rest of the family came to laugh in agreement. When I wouldn't return the lazy-eyes Emily made at me, she learned to try to accept the new balance.

Dad still tries to tell us that we are jealous of our little sister, that it's why we used to be so mean to her and why we still tease her. I don't know that I would call it jealousy, but I have always been bewildered by her. For every time we were mean, for every time we played a prank, Becca would soon forget about it and pick right back up, wanting to be friends. There was a switch, though I don't know when it happened, and the relationship between Becca, Emily, and I changed. Becca stopped being the only one trying to be friends. I left for college and she moved into the room Emily and I had shared. When I would return on breaks, I found that I had taken Becca's place as the odd-sister-out. Talking to her now about our antics, she seems to see it the way our parents did then. She's kind of grown up, which I guess is what we were going for.

Prose by: Elizabeth Blood

ODE TO THE GREEK MONSTER AND THE HILL THAT PROTECTS THEM

I CRIED IN A STALL.

WATCHED THE WORLD FALL.

BEHIND THE CLOSED DOOR.

COULD HOLD MY TEARS NO MORE.

EMOTIONALLY THEY PULLED THE TRIGGER,

NOW I MUST TAKE THE ROAD THAT'S BIGGER.

FIRST I CLOSED THE DOOR ON THE STALL,

MY FACE REFLECTED IN THE WALL.

MY TEARS PLUMMET TO THE FLOOR,

MAJORITIES THE PIMP, MINORITIES THE WHORE!

THEY ACT NICE NOW, WELL GO FIGURE.

I BUT A CORPSE, THEY THE DIGGERS.

IS THE WORLD NOTHING BUT A HUGE STALL.

I YELL TO THE CEILING, "CURSE YOU ALL!"

A LAKE OF FECES, I HAVE NO ORE.

LIFE IS A CHALLENGE, I MUST ADORE.

I WRITE THIS TALE WITH MUCH VIGOR.

THEY ARE THE ONES THAT CALLED ME NIGGER!

Poem by: Robert Davis

Dear World, I am leaving you because I am bored. I feel I have lived long enough. I am leaving you with your worries in this sweet cesspool - good luck.

-A suicide note left by the British actor, George Sanders

FAILURE AT FINALITY

He made up his mind on a Tuesday. On this particular Tuesday he, Mr. Frank, was sitting outside a stereotypical coffee shop with his worn planner open on his lap. Stereotypical pseudo-intellectuals sat at the metal tables around him, talking about stupid, stereotypical pseudo-intellectual topics that didn't matter in the scheme of things. Mr. Frank glanced at his bland, but expensive, stereotypical coffee drink in its tiny little white coffee cup. He stared at this cup a long time, at least thirty seconds, before he tore his eyes away from it. Mr. Frank slowly closed his planner and set it next to the cup. I'm tired of debating this, he thought as he lifted his balding head.

"I am going to kill myself!" Mr. Frank announced out loud. He exhaled, and looked at the others in the shop. Mr. Frank waited for a response from anyone, but everyone continued to sip and chat. He knew he had said it loud enough, but no one seemed to notice at all. He had been half-expecting a fellow coffee drinker to tell him that suicide was wrong, or at least to say that the coffee here wasn't that bad, but he got nothing instead. Mr. Frank felt invisible.

###

Mr. Frank opened the door to his tiny, overpriced apartment and slumped in. He left the door open behind him as he examined the room before him. The walls were whitewashed, and each wall had two paintings depicting various scenes of nature. The grey shag carpet was always well-vacuumed and clean; there was not a single stain to be found. At one end of the room was a sturdy, black walnut shelf in which was placed a small, flat screen television. The opposite end of the room had a black leather couch with a glass coffee table in front of it. Mr. Frank had envisioned all the parties he could have in here when he first decorated the apartment years ago, and now the room just made him sad. All the parties and group gatherings Mr. Frank had attempted to organize always failed because barely anyone would show up. The only good that came out of those plans were extra chips, salsa, as well as several sausage and cracker trays that could last him a few weeks.

Mr. Frank shut the door behind him and lay flat on his couch, staring at the ceiling. He thought of his announcement at the coffee shop and yawned. As Mr. Frank started to rub his eyes with the palms of his hands, he wondered who he would tell about his upcoming suicide. I've got no family, so I don't need to worry about that, Mr. Frank thought. He had grown up in an orphanage for most of his childhood, and then hopped through a few foster families until he was eighteen. He had never felt close to any of them and visa versa. Mr. Frank had done exceptionally well in high school and on the ACT, and it helped him to get a free ride for college. But, good grades didn't get him friends, so he didn't have any life-long buddies to tell, either. Next, Mr. Frank thought of those at his job, the people he invited over for parties, but who never came. No, he could tell no one there, either. He didn't understand why, but he wanted someone to know what was going to happen to him. Mr. Frank wanted someone to give a damn, but it was this very lack of connection with others that made him hate his life.

He stared around at the bland living room. I can't die until someone knows I'm alive first, Mr. Frank decided. Otherwise, it would be like the thirty-nine years I've spent on this Earth didn't exist. He shut his eyes tight, and eventually he fell asleep while he was contemplating all the ways he could kill himself.

###

Mr. Frank sat in his grey swivel chair in his cubicle at work. He was staring at the black, plastic phone in absolute boredom, waiting for it to ring. He was a secretary to the assistant of the assistant to the head executive of Smile Med. Smile Med. was a company that helped market anti-depressant materials, and Mr. Frank had been working for them for over five years. He had majored in Classics in college because he never felt any motivation or love towards any other subject, and thus picked his major much too late in his college career. Classics was easy for him because it encompassed ancient literature about dead civilizations and required very few credit hours. After Mr. Frank got his Bachelor's Degree, he told himself he would go to grad school.

But, he landed an intern job at a small business, and job after job followed that one. The idea of grad school disappeared long before Mr. Frank became a secretary.

Mr. Frank still didn't know who to tell his secret to, and he was beginning to wonder if he should just leave a simple, cliché suicide note lying around in his apartment and be done with it. Someone would read it eventually, Mr. Frank pondered as he fingered his mustache, like the landlord, or a new tenant, or

"Excuse me?"

Mr. Frank momentarily paused his thinking. He thought he actually heard a voice. Normally, he could go all the way to lunch without a single phone call, without even talking to a real person.

"Excuse me!" the voice reiterated.

I did hear a voice! Mr. Frank spun around in his swivel chair and was startled by the woman before him.

She leaned against one side of his cubicle, her plump arms crossed just above her stomach. Mr. Frank couldn't help but to notice one of her middle buttons of her blouse was missing, revealing a glimmer of what lay hidden beneath that shirt. He forced his eyes to snap back up to her face, and focused on her eyes. She looked young, early thirties, maybe, but she was beginning to get crow's feet at the corners of her dark brown eyes, and smile lines at the edges of her pink mouth.

"Are you Mr. Wheynar?" the mystery woman asked briskly and quickly, as if she were in a hurry.

"Mr. Weiner?" Mr. Frank said, lifting one eyebrow.

"No, Mr. Whey-nar," she emphasized. She tapped a tiny foot impatiently. "Are you, or are you not?"

Mr. Frank hesitated. "Um, well, yes? I mean," and he coughed, "yes, yes, I am Mr. Whey-nar." He felt a twinge of guilt as he lied, but perhaps this woman would listen to him; he was getting desperate, after all.

The woman uncrossed her arms and stood up properly. "Thank God," she said as she let out a heavy sigh. "Do you have any idea how hard it is to find you in this mess of cubicles?"

Mr. Frank blinked. "Erm, very hard?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. She sat in Mr. Frank's extra chair, a cheap, uncomfortable one that had been the predecessor to his prized swivel chair. He was suddenly glad he had been too lazy to toss it out. "Anyway, I'm Bailey Addams. I was just recently hired by Smile Med., and they told me you would have great advice for a newbie in your department..."

As Bailey went on about how excited she was to be working for Smile Med., as well as some of her favorite marketing strategies, Mr. Frank noticed what looked like a coffee stain near the edge of her skirt. It made him wonder if Bailey liked coffee as much as he did, if maybe she was klutzy and careless. Then, he found his eyes running past her skirt, down her crossed legs, around her sturdy ankles, and then back up her legs again. Her legs were obviously darker than the rest of her skin as the result of crappy pantyhose, but he liked that. She's not perfect...she's beautiful.

"I'm sorry, what?" Mr. Frank blurted. He made himself look away; he felt like he was gawking at Bailey, and the last thing he wanted to do was to make her think he was some kind of a pervert.

Bailey paused for a moment and looked at him. Her stare felt powerful, almost as if she could read his mind. "I said, 'I'm glad to finally have a chance to be in a career that I enjoy,'" she repeated, and then cleared her throat. "Is this...is this a bad time, or...?"

Mr. Frank sighed. This is ridiculous, I'm wasting her time, he realized. "You know what, Ms. Addams? I'm not Mr. Weiner, or whatever his name is. I'm Mr. Frank," he admitted, irritated at himself. Lying was something Mr. Frank had never been good at, and who could have any respect for a lying suicidal person, anyway? But least I got her to talk to me!

Bailey's face twisted angrily, and she shot up out of the chair. "What the hell is wrong with you?" she spat. And, within a few seconds, Mr. Frank's hope stormed out of his cubicle.

"Damn!" he cursed, as he swiveled back to his original position. As he started to stare at the telephone again, a slight smile flickered on his lips. At the very least, she knows my real name.

###

The busy street lay before Mr. Frank. He had left work early that day to make sure he was in time for rush hour. He left his car in the Smile Med. employee parking lot, and started walking on the sidewalk. Now that Bailey knew his name, surely that was all he really needed....right? As he stood on the edge of a crumbling sidewalk, cars zooming past him like multicolored blurs, he knew now would be perfect. Mr. Frank realized how easy it could be for him to jump out in front of a car and end it all in a matter of moments.

As he watched car after car speed by him, Mr. Frank thought of his past. He remembered how painful it was to feel like he didn't belong any where as a child, and how badly he wanted a loving mom and dad. He was never satisfied with any of the foster parents. Mr. Frank thought of how he was always teased through out school for keeping to himself, for acting different and out-of-place. So, this is what it is like to have one's life flash before their eyes, he mused. How utterly pathetic.

Mr. Frank took a deep breath, straightened his red and blue striped tie, and then ran out into the middle of the busy street.

The next few seconds felt like they were in slow motion. He heard the screeching of tires, screaming, and honking. Mr. Frank could smell burning rubber and exhaust, and suddenly, he felt a violent tug on the back of his sports jacket, and his body hit the pavement violently. The world felt like it was spinning like a top, Mr. Frank's eyes couldn't keep up. What he didn't feel was any horrible pain, and, for a moment, he didn't understand why people made such a fuss about being hit by cars. Oh, this isn't bad at all, he thought deliriously. Mr. Frank felt dizzy and disorientated, and it took him a moment to clear his head.

"OH MY GOD!"

Mr. Frank sat up abruptly at the screeching voice. He expected to see people surrounding him, in tears and horror-struck, but instead, he saw that he was sitting in a gutter, alone and wet from street drainage. He saw a sports car, a shiny, 2007 Mustang GT to be exact, in the middle of the street, along with several other expensive vehicles strewn about the place. The Mustang was snow-white, except for the bright red smear on the hood and grill. A crowd of people surrounded the front of the vehicle, some shouting for a doctor and others calling for help on a cell phone. A hysterical young woman was screaming "OH MY GOD!" every thirty seconds, and, before he knew it, the woman ran up to Mr. Frank and gave him a big hug. It felt warm and peculiar.

"He saved you!" she squealed, tears streaming down her heavily make-upped face. "It was so...heroic!"

"Saved me?" Mr. Frank mimicked. He started brushing old cigarette butts and other rubbish off his jacket and pants.

"YES!" the woman screeched. "OH MY GOD! You were about to be struck by that vehicle, and some old man yanked you out of the way! He gave up his life for you!"

Mr. Frank put his head in his hands. "Dammit, I was so close!" he muttered. He looked up at the woman with tears in his own eyes now. "I almost died! It could have been so easy!"

The woman gawked at Mr. Frank in confusion. Mr. Frank listened to the sound of distant ambulance wails and shook his head in disbelief.

###

The next day at work, Mr. Frank walked to the coffee room to fill his mug. When he opened the squeaky door, he walked right into Bailey. Her own cup of coffee teetered in her hand, and then splashed all over her pointy, bright red high heels. Bailey yelped in pain, and Mr. Frank hurried to grab some nearby paper towels.

"Ms. Addams, I'm so sorry!" he said, sincerely. He bent down on his knees and began to wipe her shoes clean. He looked up at her apologetically. "Are you alright?"

Their eyes locked for a moment, and then Bailey turned away, swatting a stray strand of dark hair away from her line of vision. "I'm fine," she replied quickly. "It's only coffee."

Mr. Frank nodded, and then finished cleaning up the spill. He stood up, and brushed dirt off of his pants. He looked back into Bailey's pre-wrinkled eyes, and they shared an awkward moment of silence. She turned away from him again and leaned against the nearby sink counter.

"I...I read about you in the papers today," she said slowly. "That accident must have been horrible. I just wanted to say that I'm glad you are alright. You are okay, right?"

Mr. Frank furrowed his eyebrows. "I've never felt more alive in my life," he replied bitterly. She doesn't know a thing about me, he thought. What would it matter to her if I was alive and kicking? "But, why? Why are you glad?"

Bailey shrugged. "Because, well, I don't know, you seem like you have a lot more life to live. I don't think you're ready to die just yet."

"And the old guy who saved me was ready to kick the bucket?"

Bailey shot him a scowl. "Well, you don't have to be a prick about it!" she shook her head, and rolled her eyes. "Geez, I'm just saying I'm glad you are okay! Don't analyze me!"

Mr. Frank sighed. Why do I always have to be sarcastic like this? No wonder people shun me! He scratched the top of his balding head. "Well, thank you, Ms. Addams. I really do appreciate your concern," he told her and meant it. "I guess I'm still a little mixed-up from yesterday. It didn't go quite as well as I had planned; I don't mean to take it out on you."

"Hmm...You know, if you ever need someone to talk to, I'm only a few cubicles down from you," she said causally while she refilled her coffee cup. Her eyes flashed at him, as if trying to read his mind again.

Mr. Frank felt his face get hot and his stomach twist. He hadn't had that sort of feeling in years. What was it about this woman that interested him, exactly? "How about right now?" he blurted, dizzy from the rush of blood to his face.

Bailey smiled brightly at him, and agreed.

###

Their conversation seemed to last for hours. He began with telling her that he planned on killing himself, and it made her laugh. She told him how ridiculous it would be for him to kill himself, that he had a good career, and he had a lot of years left to accomplish whatever he wanted; killing himself, she explained, would be such a waste of a good life. To this, he laughed. He could hear his phone ringing from his cubicle, but he didn't care. Mr. Frank hadn't talk to someone like this for as long as he could remember. He told her all that he could remember about his life: his love-less and lonely childhood, his tormented school years, and his empty adult life. Mr. Frank told her about how, at one point when he was younger, he had wanted a family so badly because he had never been a part of one, but he didn't know the first thing about being a father or husband.

He found himself revealing parts of himself he never truly realized until he said them out loud. It felt like he had had a granite gargoyle perched on his shoulders for years and years, and it had finally crumbled away.

Bailey listened to him, and he listened to her. He found out that she had never fully recovered from a divorce, even though it had been three years since she and her ex-husband parted ways. Mr. Frank also learned that Bailey had always been trying to impress her parents because they idolized her successful older siblings, and she never felt she was good enough for them. She also told him how much she loved animals, and that "You should get a pet," she suggested.

"They make you happy, and studies say they can even make you live longer."

Eventually, the assistant to the assistant to the head executive entered the break room and asked where in the hell Mr. Frank had been. Their conversation had been broken-up, but later on, Bailey left a tiny post-it on Mr. Frank's desk. With very messy handwriting, she had left her number and a message that said: "Call me anytime you need to talk." Mr. Frank slipped the post-it into his worn wallet, and he kept smiling during his drive back to his apartment.

###

It took Mr. Frank a week to get up the gonads to call Bailey back. They talked to one another as though they had been best friends all their lives, and the feeling was foreign, but wonderful, for Mr. Frank. One day, Bailey and Mr. Frank went to a local animal shelter together, and he adopted an overweight, black cat named Max. The owners of the shelter had convinced Mr. Frank to adopt Max by saying that the enormous cat was declawed and not afraid of water, which would make bathing the cat less of a chore. Next, the two went and bought all the necessary pet cat supplies at a local department store, and Bailey tried to tell Mr. Frank everything he could possibly know about raising a cat.

That night, Bailey even went inside Mr. Frank's apartment to show him how to set up the cat litter box in his bathroom.

"And, after you put in the liner, all you have to do is pour in the litter, and there you go!" Bailey said, with a chuckle. Fat Max watched them from a distant corner with bored eyes.

Suddenly Mr. Frank was well aware of how close he was standing next to Bailey's body, and he backed out of the bathroom quickly. He started scratching the top of his head nervously and made some dumb comment about how he needed to change the light bulbs.

Bailey ignored his words, and moved closer to him. Her body was no less than six inches away from his, and he fought an instantaneous urge to take her up in his arms. I can't let myself get attached to anyone, he told himself, or I won't go through with the plan. I'm tired of living in this lame world, and I'm determined to be rid of it! I'm not going to fall for this girl, only to be let down by her.

Bailey stepped even closer to him, close enough for Mr. Frank to feel her warm breath on his face. "Thank you for today," she whispered.

"For taking you to an animal shelter?" he said bluntly. Mr. Frank was screaming inside his head; he wanted to move, but his feet felt like they were rooted deeply into his carpet.

"No, for being such a good friend. For listening," she explained. Suddenly, Bailey's arms wrapped around his flabby chest, and her warmth and softness enveloped him. She pressed one side of her face against him, and embraced him tighter. At first, his arms hung in the air, like he had just let go of some sort of invisible monkey bars. Then, slowly, he hugged her back. He had never held a woman in this way before, and for the first time in a long time, Mr. Frank felt genuinely happy.

After the hug, Bailey said she had to go, and Mr. Frank walked her to her car. He waved goodbye to her as she left the apartment's parking lot, and waited until he saw the glimmer of her taillights disappear down the street. Mr. Frank sighed and looked up into the night's sky. Had he been able to see a star through all the city pollution, Mr. Frank would have made a wish on one about Bailey.

###

Mr. Frank filled his bathtub with water and stared at it for several seconds. Bailey and Mr. Frank hadn't talked on the phone in a long time, and he had been avoiding her at work. He had told himself he only wanted someone to know he existed after he died, and he was scared he was getting too close to Bailey. Mr. Frank knew he liked her; in fact, he felt stronger feelings than just "like," and it frightened him. There is no way, he contemplated as he gazed at the glimmering bath water, that Ms. Addams could be interested in a suicidal weirdo like me. However, his thoughts would drift back and forth through all the talks he had had with her, and their embrace. And, although Max was a relatively good cat who did nothing but attack moths and flies in Mr. Frank's apartment, he wasn't a great companion; Max couldn't talk to Mr. Frank or drink coffee with him. He sighed as he inserted the toaster's plug into the wall. Mr. Frank knew he had to kill himself before he let the situation get any more complicated, and this time he decided to die by a rather classic equation: toaster + (bathwater + Mr. Frank) = death.

Brrrrring-Brrrrring!

Mr. Frank jumped when he heard the phone ring. He sat the toaster on the edge of the tub, and scooted by Max, who had decided to lounge right in the middle of the black-and-white tiled floor. Mr. Frank picked up the phone and heard Bailey's voice.

"Hi!" she exclaimed ecstatically. "I haven't talk to you in ages! How are you?"

"Erm, actually, Ms. Addams, I'm a little busy right now," he explained to her.

There was a moment of silence on the other line. "Is everything alright?" she asked hesitantly.

Mr. Frank brushed his mustache with his hand. "Yes, of course. I was just about to—" Mr. Frank stopped when he heard a splash and the crackling sound of electricity. He dropped the phone, and ran to the bathroom. His stomach dropped when he saw the toaster, as well as a very dead Max, inside the brimming bathtub. "Son of bitch," Mr. Frank cursed, rolling his eyes at the large, bobbing ball of fur. Why didn't I pick an intelligent feline instead of one who liked water?

Mr. Frank left the bathroom and picked up the dropped phone. "Ms. Addams?" Mr. Frank said.

She answered him in a frantic tone, desperate to know if he was okay.

"I'm perfectly fine, but, for lack of a better word, Max is toast."

###

When Bailey insisted they find a place to bury the fat cat, he couldn't tell her no. He had been trying to distance himself from her, but it wasn't working well at all. After all, Bailey loved animals, and Max's death was due to yet another one of Mr. Frank's failed suicides. He felt like he had to make up for it somehow.

Together, they got into Bailey's small, electric-blue, 2000 Ford Escort to find a place in the city's outskirts for the burial. Eventually, they picked a peaceful valley beside a gravel road, and Bailey pulled the car over. When Mr. Frank stepped out of the car, he took in the beauty of the countryside. He hadn't been outside the city in a couple years, and it was refreshing to see wild grass and trees. The sky above them was a breathtakingly bright blue, and the sun reflected off subtle hints of red in Bailey's hair. She had walked about twenty feet in front of him, into the tall grass, prickly weeds, and black-eyed Susan's, to find a prime burial spot for Max.

Bailey slipped her hands into the pockets of her blue jean cut-off shorts, and surveyed the land around her.

Mr. Frank wanted to tell her that he thought she was the prettiest woman he had ever seen, that he liked how she could make him smile just by simply smiling herself, that she was the only person who had ever noticed him in his entire life, that he thought she was funny and caring and...and...His mouth opened in a desperate attempt to exclaim his feelings, and instead he asked her:

"Do you want to do the digging or shall I?"

###

Mr. Frank lay on the couch in his apartment, his hands crossed over his slight beer-belly, his eyes focused intently on a fly on the ceiling. Three days ago, Max had been buried. And, on the car ride back to the city, Bailey had let go of one of her hands on the steering wheel to give Mr. Frank's chapped left hand a gentle squeeze. It had only lasted for a second, but it kept replaying through his mind. Every time he was around her, he felt like she gave off energy, almost like a sort of electricity that kept sparking him back to life. Mr. Frank was always so aware of life when he was around her, and yet, when he told her that he was very certain he wanted to kill himself, Bailey never took him seriously. She said he was too full of life to die, that it was too soon for him, but more and more he felt like she was the one who was too full of life. Then, Mr. Frank realized something. If Bailey, for some odd reason, starts to care about me, my suicide could really hurt her. And that was the last thing he would ever want to do.

Mr. Frank got off the couch. He had to end this now. He had to stop pissing around and actually kill himself. There is no way, he assured, that I can possibly fail a third time. Mr. Frank walked to the sliding window doors in his bedroom, and then walked out onto the meager balcony. He grasped the iron railing and peered down at the parking lot below. Mr. Frank thought of Bailey once more before he flung one trousered leg over the railing.

He decided against allowing his life to flash before his eyes again, seeing as it was particularly depressing the first round of attempted suicide. So, he focused on Bailey, and for a split second before he pulled the other leg over the railing, he wished he could at least say goodbye to her.

Mr. Frank shook the feeling away, and swung the other leg over the railing. His hands grasped the railing behind him tightly, and he waited. His hands were clenched so tightly, almost as though they had a will of their own. Mr. Frank glanced again at the parking lot and wondered where his body would end up. Part of him wanted to land in a parallel parking spot only because he never really got the hang of parallel parking to begin with. Then again, his fingers refused to budge, and he couldn't believe he was actually hesitating.

Mr. Frank shut his eyes. Let. Go.

His fingers released their death-like grip, and his body lurched forward. The wind howled in his ears and created such a pressure against his body that Mr. Frank felt like he was suffocating. And, instantaneously after he comprehended that the wind was choking him, he hit something solid. It felt like a thousand baseball players had simultaneously beat him with wooden baseball bat. Intense, incomprehensible pain was Mr. Frank's final memory.

###

His eyelids popped open, and he was disappointed to see that his afterlife happened to take the form of a hospital. Mr. Frank had expected either to see the fiery bowls of Hell, or to see beautiful angels flitting about. He saw neither. Instead, a nurse in Tweety bird scrubs leaned over the foot of his white bed, staring at him with a wide smile on her face.

"Hello, Mr. Lucky," she announced, the wide smile still dancing above her chin.

Mr. Frank cocked one eyebrow. "Lucky? You mean?"

"Yes, darling," the nurse interrupted. "You are alive! And thank God you are awake; there's a lady here who has been trying to break down the door to see you!"

"Huh?" Mr. Frank was completely confused. How could he be alive? I fell from a five-story building...I should be modern art on the parking lot right now. He lifted his head, and noticed his neck was in a brace. He also saw that his right leg and both arms were in casts. Mr. Frank felt like a piñata.

Before he knew it, Bailey burst into the room and started crying. She flung her arms around his chest, and Mr. Frank made a feeble attempt to hug her back. Instead, he ended up looking like an upside-down turtle.

"I'm so glad you're safe! If you hadn't of landed on top of that poor woman, you wouldn't be here!" After a while, Bailey's words ran together, and Mr. Frank wanted to scream.

"I fell on top of someone? I lived because I just happened to fall on some woman?"

Bailey nodded as her lower lip quivered. "Yes. She's dead and all, but the point of the matter is, you are here, you are alive!"

Mr. Frank's heart sunk while he watched Bailey cry into his hospital clothes. Should I really keep fighting this? He lifted his left arm just high enough to stroke Bailey's hair. It was soft, just like the rest of her. Bailey raised her head up when she felt his touch, and, for the first time, her eyes were not trying to read his mind. They looked hurt and scared and confused all at the same time. Mr. Frank sighed. That's not what I wanted. Not at all.

"Ms. Addams, would you like to go out for coffee with me?" he asked, smiling weakly.

Bailey chuckled in the midst of her tears. "Of course I would," she choked out. "And please call me 'Bailey,' silly. I think we're past formalities now." He tried to hug her, but instead he did another great impression of a turtle. Bailey laughed at him and once again wrapped her arms around his chest.

###

It took Mr. Frank weeks and weeks to heal. But, because Bailey helped Mr. Frank through the healing process, it wasn't so bad. He learned even more about her through this, and he couldn't believe she spent hour after hour looking after him. Mr. Frank earned an incredible amount of respect and appreciation for Bailey, and gradually, the urge to end his life dissipated. He wanted to be here for Bailey; he wanted her to know that he wasn't going to take her for granted. As soon as nearly all Mr. Frank's injuries had mended, he decided to meet Bailey outside his apartment when she came over for her daily visit. I'm tired of debating this. Mr. Frank decided he would tell her then; he was going to tell her that he loved her. It was a Tuesday, and he waited at least thirty seconds before he left his apartment.

"I'm going to tell her that I love her!" he announced to the empty stairwell.

As he hobbled down the stairs with a single crutch, Mr. Frank envisioned how he would throw down the crutch, sweep Bailey up into his arms, and give her a passionate kiss. And then, he imagined, I will tell her what I've been dying to say for weeks. A smile spread across his freshly-shaven face, and he opened the front door of the apartment building.

He limped out into the sunshine and let the soothing rays warm his body. Then, Mr. Frank hobbled to the edge of the sidewalk and look out across the street.

Mr. Frank glanced at his watch. It was a little too early for Bailey to show up.

But then, there she was. Bailey's curvy body appeared around the corner of another building across the street. She didn't notice him, and instead she walked straight towards a nearby, overpriced coffee shop. He forgot that sometimes she liked to surprise him with a coffee during her visits.

"Bailey!" he yelled. "Bailey!" Mr. Frank started limping across the street, and just as Bailey's hand touched the coffee shop's brass doorknob, she turned around and saw him. Mr. Frank smiled at her and waved, leaning heavily on his crutch. "Bailey, I love"

Smack.

A hefty delivery truck for a chain of toy stores smashed into Mr. Frank's nearly-healed body. The truck tire's screams echoed those of Bailey's, and, much too late, the truck screeched to a stop. The truck driver exited his vehicle, and when he saw Mr. Frank's body several feet away, he got extremely pale, and then fainted. Cars from all the other nearby connecting streets stopped, and people from everywhere gathered around Mr. Frank's body: the pseudo-intellectuals at the coffee shop dropped their cups and ran to the scene, Mr. Frank fellow apartment tenants and even the landlord left the building, and the drivers from the stopped cars left their car doors hanging open to see what was going on. The last member to join them was Bailey, now a hysterical mess of a person. She couldn't stop herself from screaming "OH MY GOD!" every thirty seconds.

Mr. Frank was aware just long enough to see those gathered around him, and to hear Bailey's frantic screams in the distance. "Well, shit," he managed to gurgle before leaving the world he had finally learned to love.

To run away from trouble is a form of cowardice and, while it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill.

-Aristotle

First place in Janus prose
By: Megan McCormack

Ice Photo by: Allison Wisniewski





Fjord, Photo by: Fon Komkai

My Apple

If apples were oranges
then you'd be easier to peel
One hard dig at the top
and your skin would slip off
underneath my pale fingers

I could separate you into sections
and underneath another layer of milky skin
would be tiny little citrus beads
that make you sweet or sour
or however it is you feel like tasting
(like treating me)
today

But you're still an apple
and I'm afraid
of coming at you
with a knife

Poem by Sarah Blackmon

FISH

Fish born in vastness

Darting in daring, drifting in desire

Newness birthing content

Fish swims in ripples

Shimmering in sparkles, sliding in seaweed

Ignorance keeping content

Fish thrashes in netting

Turning in twine, twisting in thread

Enlightenment killing content

Fish rests on platter

Relaxing in rawness, respite in rigidity

Death kindling content

*Third place in Janus poetry
Poem by: Ashley Nelson*

A TREASURE HUNT

Jackie is thirty-five year old woman
 Has three beautiful kids and one charming husband.
 She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Penn State
 Now she works full time as a real estate agent,
 But still manages to make it to PTA
 She bakes the best cookies on the block,
 While still keeping her
 near perfect figure
 On the surface life seems great,
 But looking closer things seem perhaps...a little different.

There are sketches done in blues and reds.
 She does them in secret, quick moments, stolen from her kids,
 They represent a passion that she used to have.
 Next to the sketches are smelly
 diapers from last week,
 with lipstick that are horrible she shades of red,
 But she just cannot let go of them.
 On top of the tissues are sticky notes with to-do-lists,
 Things that she will probably
 never get done—
 the house, get a pedicure, do laundry,
 Take a nap, clean out car, fix sink,
 And clicking noise coming from the furnace,
 Buy new cleats for Jack, Email Lindsey,
 And perhaps, work on a better sex life (?).
 One note is stuck on an old picture of her
 and husband,
 Back when they were skinnier and happier.
 Hidden underneath are an empty pack of cigarettes,
 That no one knows she occasionally smokes, not even Tom.
 Beneath those are papers from work
 papers of houses, that she had so diligently sold.
 Now they are simply padding, for Q-tips and Kleenex.
 Deep down at the bottom is a pregnancy test,
 Wrapped intentionally with toilet paper,
 negative.
 It was
 She cried when read it,
 But out of happiness, not sadness.

Here is where her secrets lie and her true ambitions,
 Here is where her family and friends can never look,
 For she can't reveal this side of her.
 No, instead, she will wake up
 and do it all over again,
 The way everyone expects her to.

The Importance of Electric Can Openers

I have a scar on my index and middle fingers, just under my knuckles. If I lay my hand flat, the two skinny, pale lines fit almost perfectly together. To anyone else, they are barely noticeable, but to me they stand out. Everyday, when I press my pen to a notebook or force my fingers to rhythmically type out the words inside of me, I see them glaring back at me.

My mother left my father, an abusive, drug addled man, when I was only two years old. Getting away was what was best for her, best for me, best for my sister, best for us. However, leaving my father made our already thin-stretched budget even smaller. We moved between various homes of friends and my grandparents for years before finally settling a few blocks away from my grandparents in southern Arkansas. My mother worked double shifts at a weed eater factory in a nearby town to pay the bills and the rent of a rusty trailer behind the town baseball field. She'd wake at four AM and gently shake my sister, Amanda, and I awake, dropping us off at my grandparents' house. A kiss on the cheek, "Be good girls," and off she went.

At school, the children next to me turned their noses up at Salisbury steak soaked in grayish gravy. But I would devour the meat like substance, mixed with a scoop of cold, box mashed potatoes. Enough salt and pepper made anything in the Delight Elementary School cafeteria palatable, even when it was served on a plastic green tray with swirls of orange and brown, making it resemble vomit. Sure, I would have liked the pepperoni pizza lunchables or peanut butter and banana sandwiches that the other kids pulled out of pink and blue lunch bags, but school lunches are paid for by the state when there isn't enough money for things like a phone, a microwave or even an electric can opener.

After school, my grandmother would pick Amanda and me up and keep us for an hour or two while my mother slept and cleaned. We'd go home and spend a few hours with her until the girl that lived one trailer over would come to watch us. My mother would cook dinner and leave for her second shift, her frail arms already strained from the grueling work at the factory. The babysitter would leave after my sister and I fell asleep, and my mother would return to sleep for a few hours before starting this cycle over again. Some days Mom would be so exhausted that my sister and I would spend the whole day with my grandparents so she could rest a little more. At one point, she developed carpal tunnel so severely that she had to have surgery. At first she didn't know how she was going to pay for it, especially since she wasn't able to work before or immediately after the surgery. After she missed a few days of work, the weed eater factory realized it took at least three strong men to do the work she had done in one shift and agreed to pay for it.

Dinners usually consisted of some cheap supermarket staple, like hamburger helper or ramen noodles. Ramen noodles were seventeen cents a pack at the local grocery store and some weeks we would eat nothing else. My mother boiled the noodles on the stovetop and mixed the seasoning packet with the water, never draining it, so the meal would seem bigger. One day there were only two packs left, one for me and one for Amanda. After my noodles were cooked I carried a steaming bowl full into the living room to watch television while I ate. But when I did, the noodles toppled over the hot water scalded my arm. My mother cleaned up the mess and poured half of Amanda's food into my bowl. She didn't eat that night. She rarely ate at night.

Amanda was inflicted with a rare kidney disorder that nearly killed her several times. "They either die from it or they grow out of it," the doctors at Arkansas Children's hospital would say. All the medicine Amanda was on made her weak. Her immune system was so low that she had to be kept away from large groups of people. Something as minor as a cold could kill her. This meant that she had to be home schooled. When Mom asked the factory for a leave of absence to take care of my sister, they said no and fired her. We had to go on government assistance and draw food stamps. I tried my best to shield this from the kids at school. They already made fun of me for getting free lunches.

At this point, we were living in a small house that was about 150 years old. The paint was peeling and the house was drafty, but it was better than the trailer, which burnt to nothing in an electrical fire when we were in the process of moving out. All of our belongings except for a lone cassette tape were packed up in boxes inside the trailer when it happened. Luckily, my mom was fixing up the new house that day, and my sister and I were at my grandparents' house. I was sleeping, exhausted from an all night trip to the emergency room with an ear infection, when someone came to tell us the news.

When my mother would cook, she would hate to use a can opener. We had an old crank style can opener that rarely worked, and the bones in her wrists ached from years of working in the factory. She'd curse at the can opener, and often tell us before her birthday or Christmas, "Please, this year, get me an electric can opener." I cannot recall her ever asking for anything else. But no one ever got her one. We always forgot, or money was just too tight.

One night, in the kitchen, I was opening a can of chicken noodle soup. My impatient mind had learned that if I could manage to get the can open half way, then I could bend it and pour the contents out without having to struggle with opening the other half. But when I tilted the can, my hand slipped and the jagged edge sliced into my fingers, exposing little bits of bone as my fingers leaked bright red onto the floor. I screamed and my mother ran into the kitchen, cursing, "I hate this damn can opener. This wouldn't have happened if I only we could afford an electric can opener."

My sister's condition slowly got better after, what seemed at the time, endless rounds of hospital visits, prednisone bottles, and prods from doctors, nurses and med students. My mother went back to work, and my step-father got a promotion. We were still under an enormous debt, partly due to all the medical bills, but things were looking up. However, we desperately needed to move out of the old, broken down two bedroom house we'd been living in since the trailer burnt. It took years for us to get a loan big enough to cover a new home, but we finally did when I was sixteen. We were still poor, but nowhere near as poor as we had been. I got lunches at the reduced price at school instead of for free.

I could buy some of my clothes at the mall instead of in thrift stores and Wal-Mart. But my mother warned me, "Things are going to tighten up again when we get the new house. It's a big loan and the interest is high because our credit is bad."

By some miracle, it happened. I'm not really sure when. All of the sudden, we had money. I could go to the dentist, or eat dinner in a restaurant, or go see a movie. We got a computer, new furniture, cell phones. Contrary to the picture I have been painting, I was told very little about our financial situation when I was growing up. Most of what I knew I inferred or overheard. I figured out later that my step-father, who I have called Dad for most of my life, became Director of Operations at his company, or in layman's terms, the boss, even though he started out sweeping the floors. The house was being built and more and more money was coming in every month. My mom was working part time for the first time in her life, a sort of present from my dad for all her years of hard work. My dad even bought her a Chrysler Sebring as a surprise, the first new car she'd ever owned. I was going to one of the top high schools in the nation and colleges were already offering me scholarships. Our lives were playing out like a Horatio Alger novel.

One night, at a sleepover, some friends and I made ramen noodles. When I came home I asked Mom if we could get some for the house. "It's been such a long time since I've eaten any ramen noodles. We used to eat them all the time, Mom. Why don't we anymore?" "Because it's all we could afford," she replied with a laugh, "We won't be buying any more ramen noodles, ever again." My college dorm room is one of the few that you will find that doesn't contain any ramen packages.

I won't bother being longwinded in this part of the story. I've written so many accounts of this that it exists more like a chapter in a book than a memory in my mind.

She died, suddenly, in a way that seems almost too ironic. Dad was following her home so they could go to the airport and stay the night together before he left for a business trip the next day. It seemed like all the things that were going right killed her. The new car, that slid out of control on some loose gravel, my dad's promotion that they were making the trip for, even the road, which lead to a rented house we were living in while the new house was being built. "She'd never been so happy; she had everything. You girls, the house, the car, your dad, everything," her friends still say.

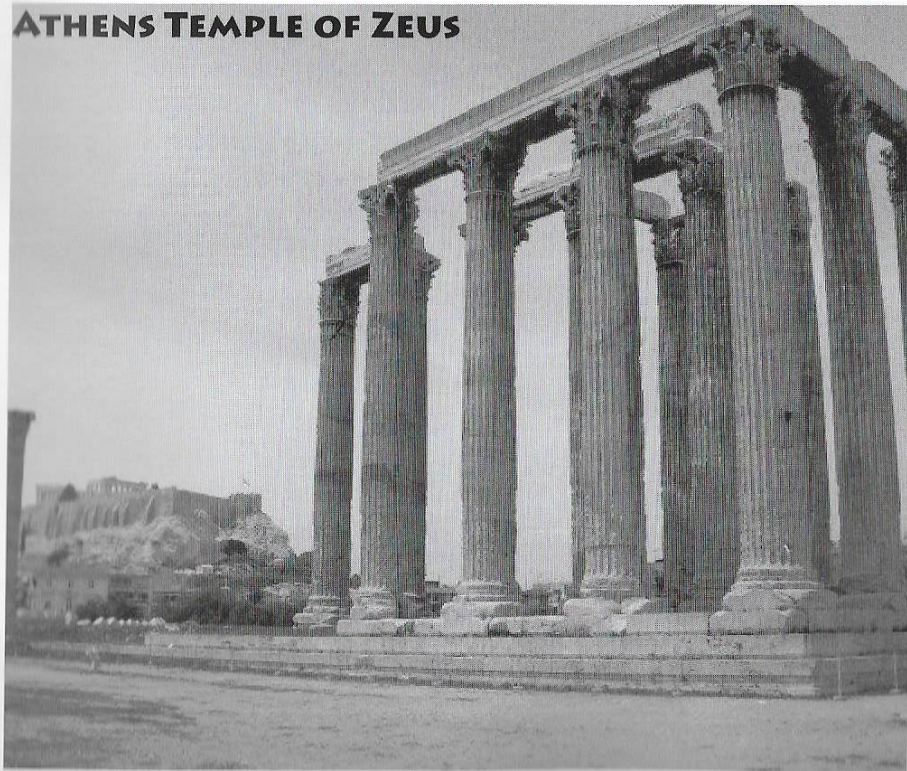
Last week I was opening a can of SpaghettiOs and having tremendous trouble. The can opener just wouldn't work. Frustrated, I remembered the old trick, open the can half way, lift the lid, pour into the bowl. I glanced down at the pale lines on my fingers and reminded myself to be careful. My mind flooded with memories of growing up, memories of having nothing. I juxtaposed these memories with a mental image of our new house, kitchen full of stainless steel appliances. I imagine walking in from the hardwood floor of the living room onto the cool ceramic tiles of the kitchen. I am opening the silverware drawer. There it is. An old, hand crank can opener. I suddenly realize that after all these years, we still don't have an electric can opener and I cry, for the first time in weeks. I think about buying one and putting it on her grave next time I come home, but it seems more like a slap in the face than a loving gesture.

I guess we'll never get one. I don't see the point, anymore.

*Second place in Janus prose
by: Sarah Blackmon*

First place in Janus graphics
Photo by: Allison Gerli

ATHENS TEMPLE OF ZEUS



Heartbeats

Poem by: Jessica Chase

I need to be there again

fitting neatly under your chin connected puzzle

i

e

c

e

s

forearms? four arms slipping around to hold two waists tight together and my

(yours feet yours...get it? no...?ok, I'll explain...)

feet between yours we get so close

I have a heart beating on my

LEFT

and my

RIGHT

mine mirrors yours and yours mirrors mine

we make a palindrome with this entwining

you turn the seconds into hours

but

when

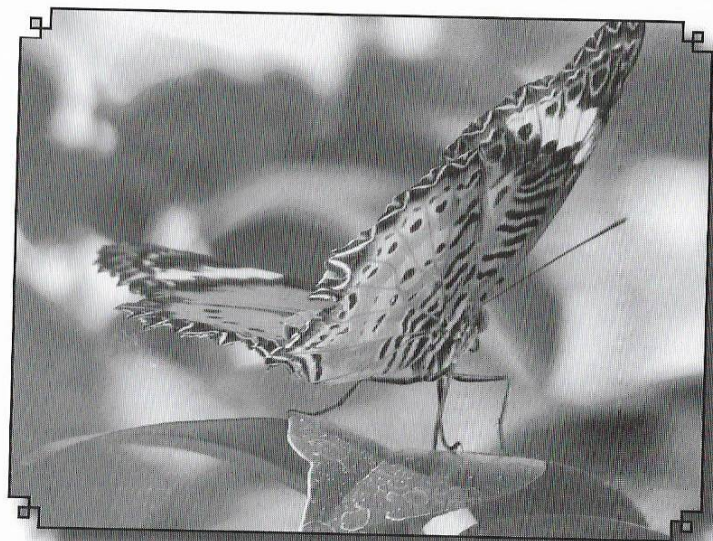
I

leave

your

side arms Embrace!

oh! the hours were only seconds



Take Flight, Photo by: Katie Pilgrim

TANTRA AD HOMINEM

If that you could know the trembling in my hand,

But alas, we have forgotten the art of calligraphy:

Letters no longer have souls.

If that you could know the trepidation in my thoughts,

But alas, we have forgotten the art of sharing:

Not what I have, but what I am.

If that you could know the trembling in my hand;

If that you could know the trepidation in my thoughts:

If that you could know these things:

You will have just begun to learn.

The enlightened is found in all places:

Ubiquitous;

The enlightened is found in this place:

Nowhere.

In this place the boundaries are redrawn;

The world is transformed.

If that you could know the trembling in my hand;

For that I will recreate language.

If that you could know the trepidation in my thoughts:

For that I will rediscover elatía:

PAXOMNICHRONOPOLIS.

In this place words forget their meanings

And even feathers cut like knives:

I (and) in (poured)

Am (out) piec-

(like) es. (water)

In this place all categories are transcended

And our enemies are turned to lovers:

We fight to the death,

Gaining wisdom from

Countless rebirths.

Can a canticle's antecedent be untrue?

Myth transforms the unreal into precedent:

In your eyes I see

Kaleidoscopic shards

Of glass reflecting

So many broken dreams,

But come with me

And we will discover

An Arcadia that is

Not yet in ruins.

Not what you have, but who you are.

Second place in Janus poetry
By: Travis Figg

Sexy Legs

Both of the young men stared at the photograph intently.

"You sure that's supposed to be your legs?"

"Yup, that's them."

"Looks more like a tree trunk."

"Hey..."

"Or possibly the missing link."

The shorter of the two looked up at his companion, scowling. His taller friend met his look.

"You have no idea what I just said, do you Clint?" the tall one asked. Clint's scowl deepened at his old friend. His mouth opened and shut a few times, and he finally just crossed his arms and turned back to the photograph.

"Trust me, I'm a shoe in for the contest," he said.

Clint Johns stared at the picture of his own legs. It wasn't all that often he got that unique opportunity. Sure, the legs were attached to his body, but who actually took the time to admire their own legs? Certainly not Clint, he'd rather be admiring the legs of his girlfriend, Mackenzie Ives.

"Sure, if they're looking for midgets with more body hair than muscle," his friend agreed. Clint ignored the comment. His friendship with Skylar was built on ignoring each other. After all, the two really couldn't be more dissimilar. Skylar looked like a renegade scarecrow that wandered into the punk-rock section of a popular clothing store. Clint, on the other hand, looked like a shaved dwarf who walked to Subway every day to lose weight.

"I've got muscle," Clint protested. "Check this out!"

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He lifted his leg onto the table they stood by, and began flexing the muscle.

"Hey look, Bigfoot's in our school!" Skylar commented. Clint simply flexed the muscle again.

The guy who ran the voting station for the school's sexy legs contest stared at the two friends. Particularly at the leg that had been hoisted onto the assigned cafeteria table.

"Uh, could you guys, like, not do that?" he asked. Clint stared at the student.

"What, am I turning you on or something?" he asked. He flexed the leg again. "Check that out! Bet you ain't never seen anything like that!"

"He'd have to agree with you there. Come on Clint, cast your vote and then let's get to class," Skylar yanked the leg off the table.

Clint snagged a piece of paper and quickly scrawled on it with the provided pencil. He dropped it in the box and then strutted off to class, leaving Skylar to cast his vote.

The announcement had been quite clear regarding the contest. Several male students were to take pictures of their bare legs and post them in the cafeteria. The entire school would then vote on which male student had the best legs.

As soon as Clint heard about the contest, it was all he could talk about.

"Dude, I'm like the sexiest guy in this entire school!" he said one day. Skylar, Mackenzie, and Clint were all standing around outside the school building, waiting for school to start. The announcement had just gone out yesterday, and not that many people really cared about it.

"Uh, Clint, your enthusiasm's great but..." Mackenzie started.

"But you don't have sexy legs. Let me put it this way. Your legs look like a slightly civilized monkey's legs," Skylar explained. He leaned against the table, and tried to not make it obvious that he was eyeing a girl who sat some distance away.

"Dude, I've got manly legs," Clint argued. He'd picked today to wear shorts, and was glad for the ease it would give him in displaying his "manly legs."

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"Look, Clint, it wouldn't matter if your legs were manly or not," Skylar pointed out. Clint and Mackenzie looked at him, both confused. The lanky youth sighed. "The contest is just another way for the popular kids to show off. It's like voting for prom king or something. Guys like you and me just don't win stuff like that."

"Were you thinking about entering?" Mackenzie asked. Skylar shook his head emphatically, following up with wild arm gestures.

"No way, I'm not that stupid."

"You're just shy. You've got the cutest little legs," Clint pointed out. He pulled at the leg of Skylar's dark jeans. His friend reacted by slapping the hand. The two scuffled playfully for a few moments, before Clint backed away, hands up.

"It's a waste of time," Skylar stated again. "Just ask Mackenzie."

Both teens stared at the female, who gulped nervously.

"Um... if you want to do it, you might as well try," she said after a long pause. Clint crowed and gave Mackenzie a peck on the cheek. He grinned madly at Skylar.

"Come on, bud, we've got a photo to take."

He flexed his legs again, admiring the view.

"Will you quit doing that?" someone hissed at Clint. He stopped flexing his legs and looked around. He'd been sitting in History class, and per usual, was bored out of his ever-loving mind. So he'd started in on his newest hobby.

"Doing what?" he protested as if he didn't know. He flexed his right leg.

"That," the student to his right pointed at the leg. "That's creepy, and it's distracting me from the worksheet."

"Oh yeah, wouldn't want to distract you from the worksheet," Clint replied. He bent his head and stared at his own worksheet. Incomplete historical facts challenged him, and he scratched his head with his pencil. Finally, he'd come up with the answer to the first question, when a piece of paper bounced onto his desk.

Confused, he jerked his head up and looked around the room. A couple of seats down the row sat a couple of football players. Jocks, the enemy of Clint's people. The short student unfurled the paper ball and read.

If you know what's good for you, you'll drop out of the contest.

"Oh come on," Clint protested, turning to look at the jocks. He held the piece of paper up.

"Don't you guys think you're overdoing it a little here?" he asked. "You that scared of my sexiness?"

"Mr. Johns!" the teacher snapped. Clint jumped in his seat, dropping the note. He turned to face the teacher. "Continue your assignment."

"Sure," Clint replied. He took pencil to paper again, all the while eyeing the unfolded ball.

"You've got to be kidding me!" Skylar had read the ball, and naturally felt the urge to comment on it. "This has got to be the biggest cliché I've ever seen. It's like they stole it right out of a bad movie."

"I don't know, Skylar, you think they're serious?" Mackenzie asked, looking at her friend. Skylar shook his head and handed the note back to Clint.

"They're as serious as most jocks are. You might want to consider..."

"I ain't gonna here that!" Clint protested, snatching the note. Several other students turned to look at them. They were making a bit of a scene, but it wasn't like they were in study hall or something. Everybody talked in the cafeteria.

"Just look at the voting jars," Clint hissed, pointing over at the display table. The nervous student who Clint had molested the other day took votes from the few students who hadn't voted by now. "It's the last day and I'm leadin' by a ton! I told you I had sexy legs!"

Mackenzie and Skylar looked over at the jar, neither believing their eyes.

"It's probably a trap," Mackenzie stated.

"Carrie all over again," Skylar confirmed, nodding. Clint shook his head.

"You two just can't handle the fact that I might just be that popular, can you?" he asked.

"Clint, you can't be serious!" Mackenzie protested. She stared at her boyfriend in disbelief. Clint smiled back, pursing his lips and making kissing noises. Skylar rolled his eyes and hit his friend.

"Guys, I'm seriously not droppin' out," Clint stated. He looked oddly serious. Especially for a wise-cracking, perverted midget.

"It's probably a set up..." protested Skylar. Mackenzie nodded.

"I thought about that. Don't worry, I can take care of myself," argued Clint, grinning. "Just wait and see. They're announcin' the winner at a special ceremony tonight."

"We'll be there," promised Mackenzie. Skylar nodded. The three friends finished the rest of their meal in silence.

Silence dominated the entire gym for a few moments. The school's most popular teacher stood on the attached stage, an envelope in his hands. Word had gotten out that a freakish dwarf might win the contest, causing a couple hundred students to show up. They'd already announced the women's contest, a biggest muscle event that some cheerleader had won. Now tension was high, and everyone held their breath, waiting for the announcement.

"And now, this year's 'sexiest legs' contest winner is..." he tore open the envelope and flourished it, "Clint Johns!"

Horrible music played as Clint strut onto the stage. For the event he'd put on short-shorts, displaying his hair trunk-like legs for the entire gathered body. Several students cheered, and quite a few laughed. After a few moments of fanfare, the student class president climbed onto the stage.

"Now, to honor our sexy legs winner in the best way possible!" he stated. Then he pulled a can out of his pocket, and what looked like a razor. Clint's eyes widened.

"That's right, it's time to shave the sasquatch!" the leader crowed. The class went wild as several buff jocks climbed onto the stage and held Clint down. No one could hear the sound of the shaving cream leaving the can as it layered onto Clint's legs. The newly crowned champion kicked his legs and yelped in protest.

It did him no good. The jocks simply started shaving the impressive amounts of hair off Clint's body.

After several painful minutes, and a couple of purposeful misses, Clint's legs were smoother than many of the girls' in the audience. He stood up and faced the entire student body, which laughed at him. With all the dignity he had left, he headed down the stage.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, this year's sexiest legs winner!" the student president mocked as Clint headed into the nearby locker room.

Skylar handed his friend a towel as Clint walked into the room. Mackenzie ambushed him with a big hug.

"We saw, Clint. But they'd found us and put a couple of big guys in our way..." Skylar explained. Clint shrugged, and used the towel to wipe the blood and shaving cream off his nicked legs.

"Are you alright?" Mackenzie asked, sniffing. Her reddened eyes went to the damaged legs.

"I'm better than alright," Clint answered, the confidence back in his voice. Skylar and Mackenzie stared at him in wonder.

"Dude, I've got the sexiest legs, I won," he responded, grinning.

*Third place in Janus prose
By: Matthew London*



Christmas, Photo by: Fon Komkai

Grey Crayons

When I started kindergarten
Mommy told me we could keep it a secret
She read the labels out loud
Red. Green. Blue. Yellow.
"You won't get made fun of, this way."

Last night, sister got mad
I accidentally ripped out
Her doll's hair
Blonde strings on the floor
At least, I think they were blonde
Someone once told me
That Barbies are always blonde

This morning, I walked in, toting my plastic box
Full of crayons and their labels
Clank, clunk,
Cornflower blue slamming into electric orange and
whatever other silly names
This box holds

Teacher handed out papers
Blank rainbows
Desperate to be filled in by grubby child hands
But when I open my box
There is no paper description
Wrapped around these pieces of wax
The words burnt orange and goldenrod sit tattered in
my sister's backpack
Vengeance for the doll hair
And all I can think is
"This is the worst kind of punishment"
as my rainbow remains white
and I stare into a box
of muted greys.

*First place Janus poetry
By: Sarah Blackmon*

FRAT HOUSE DEBUTANTE

A little overeager

*made self-conscious of the sentimental mish mash that spills
through girls' teeth*

that spills through my teeth.

we learned early the art

of checking out

so began the dissection of body and soul

speed wine drinking and an Aphrodite role

mouths, flicker

they think mine will be a beauty that saves

when they look at me with those eyes, I am not me

or anyone, I do not

exist

a face and hips that read like a paperback

Marilyn, how did you do it?

You fed the hungry but I cannot celebrate

to know he will be hungry again tomorrow,

and the next day.

To know I will be pungent in a man's mind

until the next inspiring aesthetic, springs warm in his smiling heart

As if he knows her, but doesn't, but wants to.

As if they were two childhood sweethearts.

(It is this tender each time.)

Poem by: Anna Cherry



Switzerland, photo by: Allison Gerli

THE MUFFIN MAN FILES #1:

The Cereal Killer

The whites of his eyes were clearly visible as he writhed in silent anguish. I could do nothing to stop his pain, and my face was twisted into a look of horror. How could anyone do this to him? He had been innocent. His eyes opened wide as he gasped for breath and raised one pale little extremity up to point to his left. I leaned my head closer as he began to whisper. "Mrs. B-b-b-utterworth". I frowned and strained my eyes to get a better look. I noticed a pool of disturbingly dark, and seemingly thick liquid. Signaling that I would be back in a moment I stood up and tiptoed around the corner of the counter. There she was. Dead. I cried out in horror and ran back to his pain racked body.

"Who did this to you?" I asked with tears in my eyes.

"They said it was over, done with, f-f-f-finished. But I knew b-b-better. I knew there would be more p-p-p-p-p-pancakes". His body heaved in his final, doughy throes of death and with the effort of his last words he seemed beaten. Not long after his body stopped moving and remained very still.

"Huh?" He didn't respond. I couldn't believe it. I began to cry and as my tears began to cover the Pillsbury Dough Boy's syrup covered chef's hat I heard sirens approaching. The police were coming to try and solve yet another tragedy in our small town of Patisserie. I couldn't believe it. This had to be stopped. As the policemen swarmed the building I made up my mind. I waited long enough to hear a policemen near me vocalize the accusation that burned deep inside of me. I knew who was guilty of this heinous crime, and I only needed to hear my fears confirmed once! The Gingerbread Man and his evil horde of men had murdered Mrs. Butterworth and the Dough Boy, but why? They hadn't committed any crimes! There was only one person who could solve this mess, and something had to be done!

Here I was. Sitting in the legendary office. The Muffin Man was the most admired pastry on Drury Lane. I had never been to Drury Lane until today, and I found myself contemplating the possibility of the Muffin Man autographing my walking cane. The Dough Boy's last words kept ringing in my ears, and the scene of his final tragic moments swam before my eyes. What did those words mean? I kept seeing his frantic eyes and his little white arms reaching out to me. How horrific! I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths to calm my frantically racing heartbeat.

"I apologize for being so late!" Jumping at the sudden noise I startled my walking cane and my top hat. The Muffin Man had entered unnoticed and was standing behind his desk staring at me with a look of fatherly concern. "This is a terrible loss my dear Mr. Peanut", he exclaimed in his low voice.

"Mrs. Butterworth was a friend to all as was the poor Dough Boy! I don't understand who would want to hurt them!" I responded.

"Mrs. Butterworth was a very sweet woman. And the Dough Boy had a personality so soft and warm that will be greatly missed". The Muffin Man shook his head gravely and took on a tone of sorrow. Silence. I didn't understand. The Gingerbread Man had been wreaking havoc on our little town for three months now. None other than the three most feared characters this town had seen, Count Chocula, Boo Berry, and Frankenberry his brother, comprised his evil horde of men. With the murder of Mrs. Butterworth and the Dough Boy there was almost no hope left for the rest of us. The sweet natured innocence of our town was coming to an abrupt and violent end. Just last week we had lost Tony the Tiger in a tragic accident involving scalding milk. Boy he was great.

"What are we going to do?" I whispered.

"Somehow or another my dear Mr. Peanut, we will have to fight this evil fork and spoon" he said gravely. I nodded my head in silence. The last thing we needed in this town was a cereal killer. While I was not a part of the elite Breakfast Club I was concerned for their safety. Besides, we all knew that breakfast was the most important meal of the day.

The details of the murders took some time to be uncovered, but bit-by-bit the investigation uncovered the ugly truth. Mrs. Butterworth's death had been a cold-hearted murder and for some reason the Dough Boy had stumbled upon the scene. His death had been one of an innocent bystander, a boy trying to save a dear friend from a certain death. Although the murders had split the town in two with frequent arguing and hostility the town members still managed to award the Cookie Cutter Star to the Doughboy for his bravery and give him a place in the town's Hall of Fame for his courage and friendship. However, it was still not clear as to why Mrs. Butterworth had been murdered and if that was the case could Tony the Tiger's death have been a mere coincidence or a murder as well? Were they linked? These were the facts I was entrusted to uncover with the help of a few librarians. The Muffin Man hoped that by solving these murders we could somehow restore the atmosphere of our town before it was too late. Snap, Crackle and Pop were a rather rowdy bunch for any kind of public service work. However, somehow or another they managed to help me locate the files on both Tony the Tiger and Mrs. Butterworth.

Tony had worked at the main plant in the town called Cereals Inc. This plant incorporated three major branches of Quaker Oats, General Mills, and Kellogg cereals, creating new flavors, packaging, processing, and shipping them to places all around the world. He had been in charge of the janitorial staff and was seemingly of no importance in the company. This seemed rather odd to me, but I did not investigate the significance of this until a few days later. Mrs. Butterworth on the other hand had been attempting to break into a field known as "journalism". We didn't really know what this job entailed, but at that time the town of Patisserie did not look too favorably upon females striking out on their own. From local word I gathered that Mrs. Butterworth had been what some would say a 'feminist', yet another word unknown to me. I had first thought it to mean a preference to a certain brand of milk, but boy was I wrong! She had been working on an article of sorts that she was very secretive about during the last few days of her life. Four days into my investigation I stumbled upon a curious bit of information.

A biodegradable witness who wished to remain anonymous had seen both Tony the Tiger and Mrs. Butterworth deep in conversation at a discreet Waffle House off the corner of Buttered Toast Boulevard. This seemed to me a curious bit of luck and I went to the establishment to see if I could perhaps find an eavesdropper who'd be willing to share some details. Curiously enough I located one familiar face in the motley crowd gathered inside the small restaurant. Sonny sat in a small booth in the back looking rather dejected. He seemed to be avoiding any kind of eye contact with anyone and I thought back to his mental break down a few months back. We all knew it was going to happen. Who in their right mind would truly go cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs anyways? We all knew he was cuckoo about something, but it certainly wasn't that! I decided to put this little known fact aside and approach him to see if I'd have any luck in my search for knowledge.

He seemed to shrink beneath my gaze, but I asked if I could join him regardless of that. He nodded his head and I found myself staring a hole into his forehead to try and get him to look at me. When a few awkward minutes had passed he shifted uneasily and met my gaze.

"I know why you're here", he whispered seeming almost reluctant to speak. I blinked my eyes in a questioning manner and remained silent. "You're helping the Muffin Man with his case involving Mrs. Butterworth aren't you?" His precision alarmed me somewhat but I nodded my head and continued to stare at him silently. "You want to know if I know anything about what happened to her." He traced his wing alongside the line of crumbs on the table and seemed to await my confirmation. I nodded and he sighed. "Do you want me to get killed?" When my silence seemed to become unbearable he looked up at me demanding an answer with his eyes.

"No, Sonny. But I want to know why two other members of our community are dead" I finally responded quietly. He seemed to weigh my words carefully and finally shrugged his shoulders. I was about ready to leave, convinced that he knew nothing of importance when he reached out and restrained me.

"Wait." I stared. "If I tell you what I know, can you protect me?" His question was full of genuine desperation and I suddenly knew that he must have stumbled upon something important. I wasn't sure how to answer him. "I can't promise you anything Sonny, but I can say that you will feel much better if you tell me the truth and right the wrong that has been done". How moral. He once again weighed my words silently and finally met my gaze with a defeated sigh.

"Ok. I was here the night that Mrs. Butterworth and Tony met". My heart started to race. "She said something about wanting to write an article on what he knew, and that he needed to be specific with details and names and stuff". He was silent for a moment as if trying to remember exact fragments of speech. "He seemed real nervous but he told her something that must have been important. He said that a few weeks ago the Gingerbread Man had come down to find him with the head of Cereals Inc. He said that there had been some sort of problem with procedures and that Tony was supposed to destroy some mistaken bits of things for them. He didn't think much of it given that it was only some pancakes of Cap'n Crunch.

"Pancakes?" I asked warily.

"I can't promise you anything Sonny, but I can say that you will feel much better if you tell me the truth and right the wrong that has been done". How moral. He once again weighed my words silently and finally met my gaze with a defeated sigh.

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"Pancakes?" I asked warily.

"Defective batches of cereal" he said after a few seconds of calculated silence. "Tony was told to take them to Lake Choco and dump them so that they'd be far enough away from the plant to not get in the way of anything".

He paused again and looked around him nervously. I raised my eyebrows, willing him on. "Well, a few days later Tony found out why they

wanted him to dump that stuff. They had mixed the wrong ingredients and had somehow come up with some radioactive Crunch Berries, which had then been boxed with the rest of them and sent off. The stuff he dumped was the remainder from that pancake." My head was reeling. Did they know how harmful radioactive materials were to the environment? How dare they pollute the limited milk supply we so carefully maintained! I found myself gnawing at my pencil in agitation until I realized that I had lost track of what Sonny was saying. I shook myself back into the present and left my self-righteous environmentalist anger for another time. It was in that moment that I realized what Sonny had said a few minutes ago.

"The Doughboy! His last words were about pancakes! Could he have been talking about the same radioactive batches?!" I almost jumped out of my seat but Sonny remained seated and looking as calm as if I hadn't said anything. After a few minutes he continued.

"Mrs. Butterworth was writing a story on the whole thing." He paused after this and seemed to size me up before continuing his story. "The doughboy wasn't just an innocent bystander Mr. Peanut. He was helping Mrs. Butterworth with her research on the matter. He had discovered some documents from Cereal Inc. that chronicled the events of the day Tony had to dump the pancakes. I overheard Mrs. Butterworth talking to Tony about a confrontation between the Doughboy and the Gingerbread Man. Doughboy was proud of himself because the Gingerbread man told him that there would be no more pancakes, and that they were done. She said that later on he began having his doubts. He became obsessed with the idea that there would be more pancakes, as well as paranoid that people were following him. She said he was probably just developing Schizophrenia."

At this point he paused and pulled at his tail feathers nervously. "I think she was doing that journalism thing she was always running her pretty little plastic mouth about. Damn I hate those ladies that aren't 100% syrup. Everything has to be so fake nowadays." I frowned at this derailing of his train of thought but that seemed to be all I was getting out of him. That was enough for me. I very quickly thanked him and excused myself as he went off on a tirade about synthetic females.

"Holy cinnamon sticks!" The Muffin Man paced the room in an excited flurry. "That's it Mr. Peanut!" He chortled gleefully and slapped me hard on the back upsetting my top hat and my spectacle. I had never

seen him this jolly before. He was on to something and I was feeling rather excited myself. "We'll get him for this Mr. Peanut". He was pacing the room with his hands clasped behind his back, deep in thought. I could hear him whispering to himself. Something was happening, and I was going to be a part of it. The Gingerbread Man had been unleashing his evil for far too long.

Four hours later a town hall meeting had been called. The surviving town members crowded into the small Gingerbread House craning their necks to see what was going on. The Muffin Man clapped his hands together until the room fell silent and began his speech. "Ladies and Gentlemen of Patisserie, we are gathered here today to discuss a rather grave matter involving our self proclaimed mayor the Gingerbread Man. We have discovered evidence that says he is directly responsible for the MURDERS of Mrs. Butterworth and the Pillsbury Dough Boy. The crowd gasped and a flurry of murmurs arose from every corner.

The Muffin Man once again clapped his hands and the room fell silent. "We have not only discovered that our friends and fellow community members were murdered, but that some radioactive cereal has been unleashed to the shelves of many innocent people in the form of radioactive crunch berries. The left over berries were then dumped into the town's milk supply." Once again the crowd gasped.

"How dare you incriminate me!" Captain Crunch was belligerent! He waved his fists in the air defiantly as his face began to turn a bright red.

"He ain't blaming you for none of it unless you was a part of the crew responsible for allowing the dumpin' of radioactive crunch berries into our milk supply". Aunt Jemimah had risen to her feet and was trying to calm the angered Captain.

"Don't you speak to me you lowly syrup! You think you can say whatever you want but remember, it was someone of your kind that got murdered for opening her mouth and sticking her pretty little plastic nose where it didn't belong".

"Now don't you speak to me like that you old fart! Just because I ain't the same color as you doesn't mean you have to play a hate like that! I know my rights you unoriginal berry roller! Why don't you go fly a crepe!"

The room burst into noise once again and I slapped my hand to my forehead in frustration.

"No you silly syrup! Rights are for cereal!" giggled the Trix Rabbit seemingly unnerved by the commotion happening on either side of him.

"Don't listen to the long eared fool!" wailed L.C. Leprechaun. "He's full of blarney you see! Always trying to steal me lucky charms! Not to mention cereal from kids!"

"You white supremacist bastard!" Aunt Jemimah was still screaming at the Captain as Toucan Sam tried to push them apart to no avail. She had ripped his hat from his head and was berating him on the childishness of sailing around on a silly ship for days on end with no seeming purpose except to promote radioactive berries. "They're not even real berries!" she screamed.

"Well neither are you madam! You and your plastic! Why can't the females be made out of real stuff anymore! Plastic! Who are you kidding!" spit was flying from his mouth and his face was turning a shade of purple in his rage. Within the fray stood an angry Shrek shaking his fists at no one in particular and the very hard to locate Waldo causing a raucous in a subtle way. I was momentarily distracted from the uproar at seeing them at our town hall meeting. Besides, they had really only appeared on one cereal box. It seemed slightly odd to me and I was hardly aware of the Muffin Man screaming in his attempts to calm the belligerent crowd before us.

Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble had begun a fight of their own with Hungry Jack. "At least I do not like those of my own kind!" Hungry Jack was shouting at the inseparable pair of men looking from one to the other with a defiantly questioning look.

"And what are you trying to imply!" Bellowed Fred.

"I don't know. Fruity pebbles? Come on Barney!"

"Watch it!" Shouted Fred growing dangerously angry with veins popping out of his neck. "Or else I will turn you into a fruit loop, cover you in sugar and ship you off to a room full of kindergarten aged monsters!"

At this Hungry Jack paused for a moment seeming to weigh the possibilities of this latest threat.

Toucan Sam was beginning to lose the fight between the two belligerent parties now straining against him to fight each other. At seeing the commotion around him L.C. Leprechaun looked to Snap, Crackle and Pop and

screamed "Oh for the love of the great Rooster in the sky! This is not the way to behave! Go help that poor bird!"

"The great Rooster in the sky does not exist sir!" shouted the now purple Captain. At this L.C. bristled and was preparing to step into the already raging fight going on in that corner.

"How dare you speak of the Rooster in such a careless manner you pompous old fool!" He began to advance towards the captain as Toucan Sam let out an agonized scream.

I was snapped into action by the sight of Snap, Crackle and Pop running to the aid of Toucan Sam who was now being pummeled from both sides by Aunt Jemimah and Captain Crunch. How ridiculous! The sight of the poor Dough Boy once again swam before my eyes and I felt a strong anger welling up inside of me. Violence solved nothing! Why couldn't everyone get along! Jumping to my feet I climbed up on the table and brought my cane crashing down onto its surface. When this did not work I screamed at the top of my lungs and snapped the cane over my knee neatly in two fragments. The snap of it was like a small explosion and the room fell into an immediate and surprised hush.

"What is wrong with all of you!" I screamed almost in tears. "Why can't we just get along! Don't you realize what is happening? I was there! I saw the Pillsbury Dough Boy breathe his last breath, and I saw the look on Mrs. Butterworth's face as she lay there in a pool of her own syrup! That should not have happened! These were our friends, and our neighbors, and our co-workers! How dare you fight at a time like this! I don't care if you're a female, or if you're colored, or if you're trying to steal someone's cereal! The truth of the matter is that we are all members of this town, and we all have something to lose here! If we can't stand together now, we're never going to accomplish anything!" With this I began to weep, but I couldn't seem to stop talking.

"They should not have died like that. Tony was murdered for doing what he thought was right. I don't care if you believe that Mrs. Butterworth should or shouldn't have been a journalist. It didn't matter that she was a girl, or that she was not 100% syrup. Captain Crunch your crunch berries aren't real berries! Let's face it! We all have imperfections! We all have some sort of defect! How does that lessen who we are? And why should that matter?" The room had grown uncomfortably quiet. "This is our time to stand! It's been three months of this. The fact that Aunt Jemimah is a black woman made of plastic didn't get us here. The fact that Captain Crunch is a white supremacist didn't get us here either! The Trix Rabbit stealing cereal from kids or lucky charms from L.C. Leprechaun didn't do it either! I could care less what Barney and Fred do on their spare time!

And we do not HAVE TIME TO DEBATE WHETHER THE ROOSTER IN THE SKY EXISTS OR NOT! These things did not in any way get us into this situation or kill our friends! It was the Gingerbread Man and his evil men. Why can't you see that! Why do you guys have to fight each other? I don't want to fight against you! I want to save our town with you! If that's not what you want then so be it! But I'm not going down without a fight! Our friends deserved more than that and I'll be damned if they don't receive justice!" Exhausted I slumped down into a chair and sobbed quietly into my hands.

The room was unnervingly quiet. Not even a chair creaked and the moments seem to pass by endlessly with the silence broken only by my heaving sobs. Presently I heard a faint rumble of sound. It grew louder, and more persistent. Soon the sound had grown in strength and the floor beneath my feet seemed to be shaking. The noise had reached an almost deafening level by the time I slowly began to raise my little head to look around the room.

The town members were smiling and clapping. Some pumped their fists in the air and others had begun to whistle and jump about. The Muffin Man smiled at me and was also applauding with a look of admiration on his face. My heart fluttered in my chest and my legs felt weak. There stood Toucan Sam with his wings hooked over the shoulders of Captain Crunch who clasped Aunt Jemimah's hand in a truce. L.C. Leprechaun grabbed the Trix Rabbit in a headlock and ruffled his hair playfully while Trix pumped his fist in my direction.

"Hoorah!" shouted Barney and Fred together after hugging awkwardly. Snap, Crackle and Pop whistled in approval and Sonny came out from beneath the chair he had been hiding under. He smiled at me shyly and gave me a thumbs up. The Muffin Man clapped me on the back and laughed heartily.

"I knew you could do it my dear Mr. Peanut!" he bellowed. "You've united the town. We've got a winning battle on our hands after all! Surely we will make the Gingerbread Man pay for his evil!"

I had done it. I had finally managed to convince them to unite. My heart beat quickly and the tears on my face dried over the smile spreading across my mouth. The deaths of Tony, Mrs. Butterworth and the dear Doughboy didn't have to be in vain. The Gingerbread Man could still pay for his evil ways and his evil horde of men could still go down with him! Cereals Inc. would be made to pay even if it was the last thing this town ever did! Things were going to change. I could feel it in my shell.

Second place in Janus prose
By: Claudia Cerna



Eiffel Tower, Photo by: Allison Gerli

LATE NIGHT RAMBLINGS

Can somebody tell me what it feels like to live,
 To feel that so-called wind in my hair?
 I want to be the everyman, the every-can,
 To everyone,
 To make a split decision without ever feeling split.
 The liver, the live-er, is livelier than most,
 More stories to tell, people to charm, places to see and go.
 Indecision clouds him not; the wind has passed him by a thousand-fold
 Everyman, to every man, is the greatest of the hosts.
 Me, the every man who watches the everyman, who wants to be the everyman,
 Studious to his ways I am.
 Should I tell him my story?
 A chance at life would be nearby, if so.
 The wind is blowing all around me, now all every man needs is a reach.
 But everyman soon takes the lead,
 He stumbles but a zero count, as true to his living life could be.
 What makes it my turn, the day I live, the day I am the live-er?
 The light is dim, the tunnel is long, but I think that's how I prefer.
 Comfort zone is the word of the day, the word of the week, the word of my life
 It defines the every man, though defied by the everyman.
 Freedom comes but once in a never,
 So every man must take hold and make it last forever.

But feelings have such an uncomfortable feel to them
 Right though to some, oh so wrong to the others.
 Living for every man just isn't the way
 Or we would all share the glorious moment of living for a day.
 Wind, hold on, your time will come again,
 Everyman is just around the corner.
 He smiles to the people whose lives he's just saved,
 Now they, too, can live at least for one more day.
 Me, the every man, realizes the time,
 It's half-past give up, I'm not supposed to be alive,
 Or feel alive.
 It simply wouldn't be me.
 So every man stay in your tunnel, and let the everyman be free.

Poem by: Logan Ray

Mankind's Attempt to Give Glory to God

Photo by: Jessica Chase



A True Memory

A tiny tingling

In my lower back

Began to grow

Into stabbing pains

That caused me

To double over

And stay seated

A tiny 4-door car

Filled with

Four people and

One pregnant woman

Sped down

A clear highway

At nine o'clock at night

I dressed in

The faded grey hospital gown

And was instructed to walk

While drinking a huge

Plastic jug of water

Which I complained



Old and New, Photo by: Matthew Langenhorst

About the entire time

The next day I awoke

Drowsy, hungry, unable to walk

In pain, but ecstatic

Because next to me

In a clear plastic tub

Slept soundly a perfect newborn

-My son

Poem by: Fon Komkai



Ice Storm, Photo by:
Courtney Richter

[BRIEF] MYSPACE REVOLUTION EVOLUTION OF A POOR COLLEGE STUDENT

11 Jun 2007

I don't trust car salesmen.

Car salesmen creep me out. This is nothing personal to car salesmen, it is simply an observation. I've been applying for jobs nonstop this summer and everytime I go into a car dealership to apply I just get creepy, schmoozer, rich-old-country-club-men-who-hit-on-the-waitress-after-one-too-many-Coronas vibes. Which probably means I am destined to work at one.

Applying for jobs sucks. After a long day of commuting from business to business to fill out applications with annoying questionnaires that ask you describe yourself in one word (a. honest b. trustworthy c. piz-zaz! d. neat--as if this would do any human justice), I feel like I already have a job. I feel like I should be getting paid. But I am not. I am not paid to write and rewrite references that will never be referenced, to be oggled by car salesmen, or to use up my precious gas getting lost trying to find businesses that I have never heard of, which always seem to be placed mysteriously in the woods on a backroad, and to have the word "Superior" in their title. But, I am a poor college student, and this is my fate for every summer to come for the. rest. of. my. life. (Until I graduate college). I sound like I am complaining but I'm not even upset. The real complaining comes when I actually have the job. To be honest I would just be happy to be working, somewhere, anywhere, that pays. I have to learn self-discipline and the art of sucking it up, son.

I haven't written or read near enough this summer, and I'm becoming more and more convinced it is essential to my mental health. I can't really explain it, it just is. Life is too strange and unsettling not to write about it. It at least gives you the illusion that you are coming to some sort of grasp of what it is because you're able to spit out perceptions in solid print-words. But, then, it is only an illusion. Just helps me sleep a little more I think. Every summer, I get these manic visions of all of the possibilities that lay before me to improve myself. Freelance writing--presumptuous, maybe, but it never hurts to be ambitious.

Relearning how to play piano. Become insanely athletic and star in Powerade commercials. (Not serious about the commercials, but serious about looking good enough to do so). Learn to be an amazing natural foods cook. Make up dances for the dance team back at school. Etcetera. The problem is that these moments come sporadically, in high-blood pressure, mind tingling, as-if-coked-out spurts; and I usually just end up reading or getting sucked into awful Lifetime movies in the time in between. It's like I'll be mosing along in my life, very numbly and comfortably, a human robot applying for jobs that I know I am destined to loathe, reading occasionally to avoid feeling like a complete and total bum, facebooking, whatever. And then some random times, some very inconvenient random times, it seems, I get this sense that I have a whole lot I could be doing and I am wasting time, and I get really excited and pumped and creative and ambitious. And then, bam, it goes away after a couple of hours, and my potential is left dangling in the air like an old cat toy. It is very sad.

15 Aug 2007

If God was a person I would tell him he was dead. I would yell at him. If God was a person, I would ask him just who the hell he thought he was. Bringing us here like this, with no clue what is going on. I would punch the wall behind his head. If God was a person, I would tell him how stupid he makes people. How he inspires them to say ridiculous things that never match up to what the others say. I would tell him how every one of them says different things, in his name, and none of them believe each other, they only think they are right. Ordained by God to know the truth, the only one, their own interpretations, miraculously infallible. Every one believes this, even if he doesn't say so. Even if he doesn't even know it. If God was a person, I would ask him what kind of sick joke he was trying to pull. I would tell him he was wasted tears, a bully, Queen Mary on her throne giving orders of death. I would laugh at him, and tell him I was still laughing from the absurdity of it all; his children's silly self-congratulated and subjective truths, their myriad whimsical convictions, the naivete so rich and thick that dripped from them when they smirked and corrected "Of course not. Actually..." If God was a person, I would tell him it was his loss. I would tell him I'm done, finished, it's over.

07 Sep 2007

I decided to believe in God yesterday. It was in Biology class, and it was completely anticlimactic, if you were wondering. I didn't have a grandiose revelation, an emotional tailspin, or anything like that; it was more like a quiet acknowledgement of logic. I think it was when the professor was drawing a cell on the chalkboard, and I was zoning out. I must have been thinking about evolution. Ironically, the last Biology class I was thinking about how that settled it--this primate-human hybrid Lucy woman they found X number of years ago--there was no God. Christianity was a sham. My entire perception of the world was fucked, and consequently, so was I. (I don't know why I still feel like a kid breaking the rules when I write out curse words. I type them out, look at them, think about deleting it and replacing it with a more benign euphemism like "screwed", decide that would be selling out, leave the word fucked, and then feel ridiculous for having thought about it so much, wondering if I am being more fake by saying a word I have to make a conscious effort to write. I guess I'm scared my cousin, or my dad, or my future boss will read this and be "very disappointed" in me. But honestly, sometimes one just feels like a grade school teacher if they say "Crud".) But this time, this class, there was no revelation like that. I practically slipped into the conclusion. I was very tired, so my thought processes were tortoise-esque. Had there been a little (whatever those things that are very long rectangles that have text running across them) over my head, it would have read my thought train like this: Evolution is weird. Everything came from bacteria? Well, I guess there it is. That is where it all began. Oh well. Wait, and before that? The universe, the bacteria? Where did it come from? The beginning of the universe, the beginning of existence of the rocks which blew up to create a universe, the existence of things existing. These things are unfathomable to me. They must have come from a different dimension. I cannot fathom another dimension. I cannot fathom God. Something, some power, must exist that I cannot fathom. Maybe that something is God.

That is roughly how it went. Very roughly. But anyway, it wasn't that exciting, like I said. I still don't know what kind of a God it is. Or if it is many gods. Or some giant energy with ideas (God?). Or if it is a diest God, or the Christian God, or some abstract nature-God. And I mean, it's not even like I had some experience with a God which makes me be like "There is totally a God." It's more like, there is a good chance that there is something out there unfathomable, and it must resemble something of a God; Guess I should put my chips on there being a God."

It's weird but I feel like sometimes people don't ever just sit down and think about how unlikely it is that there is nothing like that. It's like they hear about evolution and decide that explains everything, so there's no need for God. I'm not talking about in a life-need sense, I'm not even touching on that subject in this post. I'm simply talking about how little we really know, and how little we really question. We just think the way we perceive the world is the way it is. I mean, the other day in Psychology, my professor was talking about sensory experience and development in humans. There's something called "object permanence" which is our ability to know that if someone was standing in front of the class holding a red ball, and then threw that red ball into the hallway, that we could go out into the hallway and find it somewhere. But babies don't have the concept of object permanence because their brains haven't fully developed. They would think that the ball just disappeared--the idea that the ball was in the hallway somewhere would be absurd to them, unfathomable. And yet, we know, having better developed brains and thus superior perceptions, that they are wrong and we are right. So the perceptions are not just different and both equally true--the concept that the ball has disappeared may be just as true to the baby as the concept that the ball is in the hallway is true to the adult--but only subjectively; objectively there is something more true, that is, that the ball has not disappeared at all but is in the hallway. So that made me think, how can we be sure that our brains are THE ULTIMATE, the super-receptors to the truth of our surroundings, whether they be spiritual or tangible. Of course humans have the best working equipment yet evolved, but are we being even a little presumptuous to assume that our brains are perceiving the whole picture?

I think the fact that there are things we cannot fathom prove that they do not. We may be like refined versions of the little babies thinking, duh, of course the ball disappeared.

Prose by: Anna Cherry

Cinque Terre, Photo by: Allison Gerli



This Night

This night I sit in silence as the music
plays.

I will look at the stars when the rain stops,

But not yet.

This night I feign conversation with empty
seats.

Soon I will see the hunter stalk the bear,

But not yet.

This night I am aimless and divided.

Star-crossed and without buttress or facade,

Vulgar.

This night is the last night and the first
night

Of

All

Nights.

My tongue is dead against my teeth.

Your face is concealed by the menus arranged

Just so.

This night becomes Juliet becomes Shulamite,

And Jesus becomes Mercutio.

Poem by: Travis Figg

JANUS

Westminster College Literary Magazine
Academic Year 2007/2008

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Piesport Vineyard, Photo by: Elizabeth Blood