

Janus
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1999 Janus Staff

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THE TAO OF WHO

Rob Hawkins

(Winning Poetry)

All things are hazy here, in the hours when purring dreams rub up against waking and gently lick its eyelids. Here, dreaming or waking, and I know not which, I perform my crude vivisection, examining the pulsing heart, and lungs, and the connective tissues between self and soul, as foreign to my wondering eye as the smallest of silicon circuits, *"I have practiced doing nothing, nothing!"* yet I dare toward diagnosis. Doffing calvarium cap, I label the inner parts: here my science, here my art, and that lump there, that forgotten song my fingers plucked on Friday evening, played and forgotten the stuffed bear squeezed as mother read me childrens' stories. I take them delicately, yet firmly in hand, as she kneaded homemade bread, or held her instruments in serpentine surgery; that story she told me once . . .

"But professor, when do we sew him up again?"

Despite tears, that was never part of the plan.

Perhaps it would have been best to assume emptiness inside . . .

Better for mother. Better for the snake.

I start awake and scramble to close my spread ribs . . . nothing.

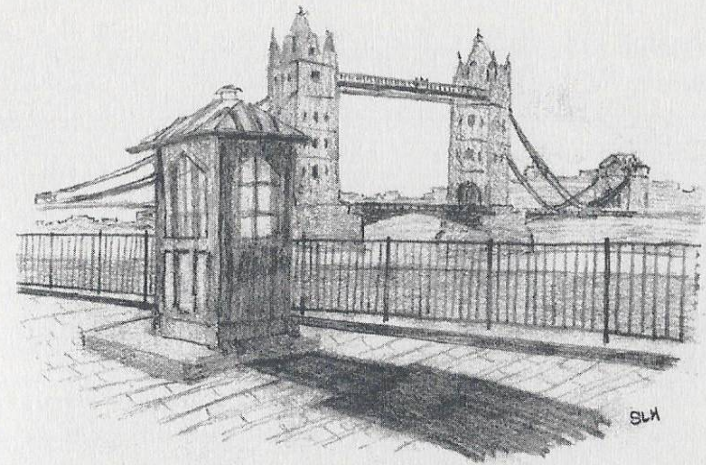
I hold nothing close, that old bear.

"I have practiced doing nothing, and everything has fallen into place."

Tower Bridge

Stefani Hathaway

(Winning Drawing)



Idea of Order at New Orleans

(With Thanks to Wallace Stevens)

Molly Selders

(Winning Prose)

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.

Strands of her black hair inched free from the paper cap affixed to her head with a few stray bobby pins. She slammed the tray down on to our small metallic table. Hot chocolate and steaming cafe au lait slopped into the white saucers. She set the beignets, piled high in a paper carton and liberally dusted with powdered sugar, in the middle of the table with a flourish. The petite Asian woman distributed the drinks quickly, confusing the order. "No, Ma'am," Andrew started, "I had the . . ." She didn't acknowledge that she had heard him and set the check in a fresh puddle of coffee. She made a hasty exit as graceless as her entrance, Andrew questioned, "Do you think that she knows English?" Brian and I shrugged. I started the drink exchange, and traded with my mother, who was smiling across the table from me. She was surprised when I grabbed her cup and replaced it with mine, oblivious to the fact that the waitress had confused our drinks. She hadn't even heard Andrew's question. My mother becomes practically stone deaf when the slightest amount of background noise is introduced in a room. This open air cafe provided enough to keep her in a private world. We were each spending this first morning engrossed in the sights around us. People watching was an all consuming activity. But Mom broke the amicable silence between us first out of motherly concern. "Molly," she said, turning to me, "Are you cold?"

"No, Mom."

"I'll be happy to give you this sweater," she urged.

"Mom, I promise I'm fine. And besides, I have a jacket."

"I know, but sometimes you need two layers."

"But that doesn't make any sense, you'd be left cold!" I said with the same exasperated voice I had perfected at thirteen. She was right about the weather, the March wind was blowing, giving everyone a flushed face. I reached for the sugar dispenser, and stirred an enormous amount of it into my reclaimed cafe au lait, knowing that when I finished my drink, a quarter of an inch of sugar sludge would have settled at the bottom of the cup. The tables were so tightly packed together at the Cafe du Monde, that there was no room to comfortably read a fresh morning copy of the *Times Picayune*. But there was no need for added entertainment. We were spending our Spring Break in New Orleans, and for the time being, that was enjoyment enough. I relished the idea of the day spread before us. Presenting this city's Cajun food, street performers, and haunted spots, to people who had never seen it before was no task, just a pleasure. I've decided that it is only in returning to a place that you truly develop a connection to it. With it. Giving others your perspective, creating it for them, gives the place an identity in relationship to you.

For he was the maker of the song he sang.

Brian's steady, appraising eyes fixed on the saxophone player who stood on the other side of the low fence that separated the cafe from the public sidewalk. The tall thin black man exuded aristocracy. As he played smooth notes on the shiny brass tenor sax, he moved with the music, swaying gently. It was very clear

that he was not prostituting his talent for us. In fact, watching him was a humbling experience. He controlled this scene, giving his art, a perfect offering, to us.

Brian's head abruptly swung toward me as the musician played the opening notes for one of "our" songs, "Kiss to Build a Dream On." Brian is a Louie Armstrong fanatic. His love for Satchmo dates back to 6th grade, when he lived in Germany. I imagine he looked then, much like he does now, without the tweedy beard of course. Features decidedly smooth and rounded, even dark, but inconsistent. Vivid blue eyes. He stood, that evening in his twelfth year, with his nose pressed up against the glass window of his family's apartment, furnished by the Army. Staring out into the blackest night that he had ever seen, his throat must have ached with a feeling of loss, and of pure, biting grief. The whole world around him, and not just the country, had become foreign. Earlier that evening his mom had announced that she and his father were getting a divorce. Their final parting, hours later, was anything but amicable. His father had been removed from their cookie cutter home by the Military Police. A radio was on in the kitchen, and as he continued to stare out into the darkness, Louie Armstrong's voice filled Brian's ears. "And I think to myself . . . What a wonderful world." That single line became the catalyst for Brian's almost instantaneous realization that his life would go on, things would work out, he could take care of himself. He reminds me often that our worlds are self-created. I forget easily.

Back at the Cafe du Monde, I returned his glance, and smiled at the significance of the song. But my mother's presence at the table kept me from verbally acknowledging what we both knew. This song symbolized the creation of our own world, our own order.

*It was his notes that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.*

The saxophonist shifted his focus to a table in the corner closest to him. There, a couple in their early thirties with two small children were seated. Well bundled against the brisk morning, the oldest, a toddler wandered close to the table. The baby was securely fastened in an umbrella stroller. Under a stocking cap, the chubby, pink and white baby was a sexless, beautiful little human being bundle. The mother picked at a beignet, fried and coated in the sugar, popping small bits into the baby's toothless mouth. After thoroughly gumming each bite, it lunged forward, neck craned, mouth open toward the mother, baby bird-like. Older brother could manage the breakfast food on his own. Powdered sugar and saliva formed a thick paste on his fist and navy jacket. But he was disinterested in his treat, and instead, stood in a locked gaze with the musician. The man leaned toward the toddler, jaunty beret slipping forward on his head, and played a glossy version of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider." The difference between them was several feet, but after regarding the giant solemnly, the child stretched his arm, suggesting the half chewed beignet as an offering. A striking scene, but one in which I was merely an observer. Just four tourists witnessing the establishment of an order.

With the beignets becoming cold, hard rocks, we decided to leave the restaurant. Time for some serious sightseeing. Paying the bill, and walking past the musician we dropped some change into his red, velvet lined saxophone case. Andrew stopped, then hurried to catch up with us. "Jesus H. Christ, Brian, did you see how much money people were tipping that man? It's as much as

I make at the Red Lobster in a lunch shift. Here's what we've gotta do man. You, me, and Molly can each take up an instrument, we could come here for the summer and play, find some really cheap apartment and . . ." These schemes are part of familiar Andrew-speak, invariably addressed to Brian, because he will go along with them for the longest amount of time. I am the boring realist in our group. Convinced that a profession in history doesn't pay enough, Andrew has resigned himself to a state law school after college. But he isn't thrilled with his plans, and creates adventurous scenarios for summers and vacations as a result. Colorful interludes, against the bland backdrop of life in Oklahoma.

Casually walking on the smooth flat stones that pave of Jackson Square, we side-stepped the large, irregular puddles left by the shop keepers when they washed their sidewalks. Glancing up, my mom and I decide to go browse in a linen shop, while Brian and Andrew continued to explore. They tossed over their shoulders that we could meet in front of St. Louis Cathedral and decide where to go for lunch. Mom and I turned and walked up the small shallow steps to the store. This is a nice vacation; I am used being the lone female in our group. The tiny shop was crammed with very delicate, very expensive lace. "It looks like Martha Stewart threw up!" whispered Mom. We studied the finely sewn christening dresses, transparent and handkerchief in their weight. While we may not have said it, we both know that we are not thinking of the past, when I was that size. Instead, our expectations are turned toward the future, when my mother's grandchildren will be christened. I am grown, and we are better friends than we have ever been. But she is still my mother. This point is emphasized when I ask her

what she is thinking about, as we move toward the sachet section. "I feel guilty," she says, holding a small lacy pillow to her nose.

"Why Mom?"

"I left your father all alone with the dogs."

"He wanted you to come Mom, he said so, and certainly he can take care of the dogs by himself. Come on, Katie is 16 years old, the most exciting thing she does all day is breathe."

"Sometimes I wonder," she says impatiently. "When I called yesterday he said that he was running out of dog food. I asked him if he looked for the extra bag. He said yes, but I know that he just stood in the kitchen staring at the ceiling. I swear sometimes I threaten to string everything up on the ceiling so he can find it!"

"Even so, we are only going to be here for a few more days, he can take care of things. You have to give him a little credit."

"You're right," she concedes, but admits, "I miss him. He loves it here in New Orleans." I do not say it, but I know what it feels like to miss a person . . . a spouse . . . like that. And I realize that our roles have become more similar than they ever have been.

Agreeing that iced tea had become a necessity, we left the store in search of "the boys" and some lunch. Only in the South can you get such good, clear, clean, tasting iced tea. It is an especially good complement to Muffuletta sandwiches from Central Grocery. Large rounds of Italian bread, piled high with assorted Italian meats and cheeses and dressed with vinegary olive salad, one sandwich easily feeds two people. "Can you believe that the line at the register goes back to the door?" questions Andrew, ignoring the olive oil trickling down his chin.

"Damn, Brian, we should bring jars of this olive salad back home and sell it to people . . ."

*But it was more than that,
More even than her voice, and ours . . .*

We return to Jackson Square, overfed and content. We stopped to watch various street performers, including a mildly talented tap dancing boy. Andrew gave him a dollar and muttered, "He may not be any good, but he has to work a lot harder than any of the other performers I've seen."

"He really ought to get a new talent," remarked Brian. The square has changed since we last left it. Local artists have set up nomadic shop against the majestic backdrop of St. Louis Cathedral. A comically varied cast of characters is seated behind easels. A nun, an overweight man in his 40's with a long grey beard, a young tidy looking woman who paints with her dog beside her. The pictures that they offer us use very different mediums, ranging from, pen and ink, to charcoal and water color. The subject is the same, the Crescent City. But, the subject is varied. Some focus on the architecture of the French Quarter, others the Garden District, still others, jazz clubs. Andrew studied each of the different works carefully, but undecidedly. Then, he reached in his pocket and pulled out a wallet. I was genuinely surprised. Andrew is a student and a wonderful storyteller, but he has never been a fan of art. When I first met him, he was adamant about his indifference. "I'm not saying that I hate art. It just doesn't mean anything to me," he stated matter of factly.

"Come on, don't you just have a photograph, or picture or

something that you like to look at," I said in disbelief.

"Why should I? I could just look out the window. That's real anyway. Art is boring . . . just like plants. Why the hell do people like plants? They're just green, and they sit there," he said enthusiastically. But here we are, two years and 800 miles later, and Andrew is interested in buying a sketch. But these are not just any drawings. These scenes are of New Orleans, something that he can't look out of his room and see. I know now he has become a buyer in order to preserve the moment, in order to make the city his.

*. . . there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang, and singing, made*

I am slowly sipping my Mint Julep, allowing the ice to dissolve into the bourbon, trying to keep the flecks of fresh mint from sticking to my teeth. Sitting in the Palm Court Jazz Cafe, listening to the finest jazz ensemble I have ever had the pleasure of hearing, a perfect moment. The walls are covered with pictures of famous blues and jazz performers. Sweet Emma's gnarled face smiles at me, toothlessly. I've heard her voice, and it perfectly matches that face. Joyous, erratic, undisciplined. My mother rattles off stories to us about parties she went to and weddings she attended.

"So afterward we all decided to go up to Tan-Tara. We took Julia's brother, remember she was the bride, and he had just gotten out of the monastery. It was during the Lake's biggest season, so the hotel was almost booked. The only room available was the Presidential Suite, so we took it. We had to sneak in the other three that drove up with us, and of course, there was only

one bed. Well, we flipped for it, and the monk and I (and oh, by the way I was 8 months pregnant) got the bed . . ." I allow myself to appreciate the fact that my mother really did have a life before me. A non-motherly life. She had an identity outside and distinctly separate from my own. I shared a glance with Brian, who was enjoying a Kahlua and coffee, and Andrew, very drunk off of his eighth vodka tonic of the evening. We three knew that earlier that night, on the river boat where we had dinner, Brian asked me to marry him, and I said yes. But the ring isn't on my finger. Brian didn't have a chance to talk to my parents before we left, so we haven't made any official announcements. But I liked that moment in the Palm Court Jazz Cafe, letting myself settle momentarily on this cusp of a new, life-changing event. Slightly frightening, marriage is a true hallmark of adulthood. But I feel more reassured than anything. Knowing what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life doesn't seem nearly as important as who I am going to do it with. I have made a very good choice.

The band breaks into "Wonderful World" and Brian asks my mom to dance. No one else in the place is dancing, but that doesn't matter to any of us. Not after the liquor anyway.

Andrew, dressed to the nines, turned to me and said, "I guess if I'm ever going to dance with you, it would be right now." Getting up abruptly and walking from the table, I realize what an honor that has been bestowed upon me. The man who doesn't dance, realizes the importance of the occasion, of the song, and is willing to risk embarrassment. In hindsight, I'm not even sure that there was a dance floor in the restaurant. But it didn't matter.

Occasionally stepping on each other's feet, until I realize that I

should probably let him lead, I acknowledge that we share one of the deepest and most fulfilling platonic friendships of my life. But I only say, "You are going to be really busy at our wedding." He looked at me with a puzzled expression. "How are you going to pull off being the maid of honor and the best man?" He looked nervous, maybe visions of being forced to wear pink organza rushed through his mind. But then realizing that I was kidding, he only laughed, understanding my sentiment. Letting the music wash over me, I remember hoping that he and I would always share the kind of look typified by the toddler and the saxophonist only two days earlier. That our worlds, and orders, created and shaped on this trip, should continue to be as entangled as mine had become with Brian. But I let the reflection go, so as not to disturb the occasion. And I think to myself. . . *What a wonderful world.*

Condensation

John Willock
(Winning Photo)



Wooden Spoons

(Dedicated to my Grandmother)

Eliza Wessinger

up at 5 a.m. talking about spirits
with a woman i have missed
for a long time
where have you been in there?
don't you remember?
(wooden spoons)
mom's birthday
she stands there looking at me
fading and then walks away
why can't i have another 5 a.m. with you?
am i selfish to ask?
(wooden spoons, remember?)
hospital beds and monitors
only until all is well
i will wake up every 5 a.m.
it means that much
it means that much to me
please don't forget what i look like, ok nanny?
seven years old in the back of a pick-up
don't you remember?
"yes, honey, wooden spoons"
stay near me
don't leave me again
at least not for 5 a.m.
i'm not ready for this sort of thing
not again

Analysis
(For Carolyn and Chuck)
Rae Bigham

The world beyond the edge of the paper
Beyond the period or comma
off the margin and out of ink.
This is the world to which I belong.
An empty page stares
ink blots and words are scrawled across it
and yet it is empty
Void of meaning
of purpose.
Once it all meant something
but the pieces were
separated
detached
like a child's plaything that has lost her interest.
Someone forgot to replace the pieces
to reconnect them
and remember what it meant before
it was broken.
A loss of everything
for now nothing has meaning
Bereft of beauty
now the page stands

stark naked
and yet covered in
black
blue
green
red.
All eyes stare
searching for the meaning of it all
and now nothing is there but marks on paper
and the sense that nothing is left
to discover
to explore.
We have drained away purpose
and all that is left is explanation.
Look beyond the paper
Create the world
The World will create Meaning.

Within these city walls

Kurt Pankau

Within these city walls, I can hear the birds,
Beautiful birds, whose plumage rivals the sun,
The mighty sun, the sun of suns set high and frameless in the sky,
Shining down golden-marble pillars that bathe our fragile universe in light,
And inspire songs for those same birds
Whose bittersweet dronings echo and dance
Within these city walls.

Within these city walls, there is a mother
Who weeps over the disappearance of a child she's loved
For fifteen years,
A child who decided that he didn't need to bother anyone ever again
And so he did bring the brilliant scene of his life to a close
With eleven bullets, the first ten on the street, the last in his skull
The same street, in fact, where he had ridden his bike 5 years ago,
The same street where he had played with trucks and cars only ten years ago,
And was nearly killed by a careless motorist but lived and was so
thankful to be alive,
The same street where his mother weeps now
Within these city walls.

Within these city walls, I can see a man
Whose troubles ebb further and further from the center of his brain
With every glass of cheap booze,
That he can never get enough of, but that his wallet still aches from
And his mind is flowing gently-like a river of slush, ice, mud, and alcohol,
Still traversed by mighty ships that are too busy to stop and aid a drowning
swimmer

That is still drowning, only not in a river, but in a tavern.
Within these city walls.

Within these city walls, I am ashamed that I associate
With people too busy killing themselves and each other to notice
A drowning man or crying mother or even the sweet song of the birds,
Within these city walls.

Tracks
John Willock



Sieg Hail To Der Bus-Fuhrer!

(A play in one act)
Andrew Matisziw

FULTON, MISSOURI: MARCH 5, 1946

(A yellow schoolbus rolls down a dusty country road. Aryan children aged between 3-6 are in the bus and they are singing and sitting strangely still in perfectly matched pairs.)

CHILDREN: (singing) Sieg hail to der bus-fuhrer, bus-fuhrer, bus-fuhrer, Sieg hail to der bus-fuhrer, bus-fuhrer Herr.

(Sirens blare from a police car, and Adolf Hitler, who is driving the bus, pulls it over on the street across from Westminster College. The officer and Hitler exit their automobiles and they meet in front of the bus.)

COP: (with a lisp) Do ya know how many miles an hour you were going back there? (He spits chewing tobacco to his side.)

HITLER: Nein, I use the metric system; I have no clue about miles!

COP: Oh, tha metric system, heh? Ya must be one of them fancy learning lads. (He pulls out his club and beats it into his hand.) Driver's license and registration, please.

HITLER: I have no driver's license and registration. I am a citizen of Germany!

COP: Oh, so you're a fancy learned lad, ya come from Germany, and ya don't have a valid Missouri driver's license; it must be muh birthday. (Cop beats a side compartment of the bus with his club.) Whatcha carrying in here, Sissy-boy?

HITLER: (opening up the compartment full of guns and explosives) I, um, I am transporting these weapons to be auctioned off to raise money for these poor children who were orphaned by the war. (gestures towards children on the bus, who are pressing their faces against the glass windows)

COP: Do ya have licenses to carry them there firearms?

HITLER: Nein.

COP: Children, huh? Well, I'll make ya a deal. I'll forget about your little violations of the law if ya let me borrow a little boy and a little girl for about fifteen minutes.

HITLER: (Enraged) Nein, I would never subject these children to your hickish pleasures!

COP: (Turning red with embarrassment) Well, uh, good choice. Uh, that was just uh, uh, a test, heh, heh. If ya said "yes," I would have to uh, arrest you. Since ya rejected it, I, uh, I have to let ya go now, bye. (The cop nervously runs back into his car and he drives away.)

(Hitler goes back into the bus, and he turns to speak to the children.)

HITLER: Now, mein kinder, my plan will be complete. After faking my suicide in a Berlin bunker and secretly forming my ultimate army of preschool children while hiding out as a schoolbus driver for almost a year in Austria, (pants for breath) I will strike back against the alliance and throw a final, deadly blow against Truman and Churchill! Now, Heinrich, give me the schematics for destroying the world!

HEINRICH: What does schematics mean?

HITLER: Plans. It means the plans!

HEINRICH: Plans?

HITLER: The piece of paper that I gave you to hold before the trip!

HEINRICH: Oh, the piece of paper . . . Well, I got hungry and I . . .

HITLER: And you did what?

HEINRICH: I ate the piece of paper.

HITLER: (apalled) You ate the piece of paper?

HEINRICH: Only after I ate my jar of paste and my box of crayons. (He holds up an empty jar of paste and an empty box of crayons. He flashes Hitler an innocent grin of multi-colored and paste-covered teeth.)

HITLER: You are grounded, you sick paper, crayon, and paste

eating freak! You are probably one of those children that sniff gasoline!

HEIDI: I need to go potty!

HITLER: Nein, I'll say it only once more. There is no time for potty in world conquest!

(The girl's eyes tear up.)

GUNTHER: Eva has cooties!

EVA: No, only you boys have cooties!

HITLER: Silence. None of you genetically perfect warriors has cooties. We all know who has cooties, right?

CHILDREN: (all) Yes, mein fuhrer.

WOLFGANG: Yucky; someone made a stinky.

HITLER: Thanks for sharing, Wolfgang.

ANNA: Can we go play now?

HITLER: We are here to conquer, not play!

GRETA: Ouch, I'm telling der fuhrer. Bruno is hitting me!

BRUNO: Liar! You're making faces at me!

HITLER: Shut your traps! Greta, quit making faces at Bruno; and Bruno, quit hitting Greta!

BRUNO: But I wasn't hitting her!

HITLER: Yes you were, you little liar!

BRUNO: I'm not a liar, mein fuhrer!

HITLER: Enough! I am sick and tired of all you children! If you all don't behave, the Bogeyman will come and eat you all alive!

(The children's eyes and mouths open wide and they start screaming.)

HITLER: Put your gun away, Arnold!

(A gunshot echoes in the bus.)

ARNOLD: Ow! Mein fuhrer, I shot myself in the leg with my pistol!

HITLER: I told all of you not to play with your firearms!

(The screaming and crying of the children increases and becomes a highpitched and maddening roar.)

HITLER: Quiet! Don't make me come back there! I'll use my belt!

(Hitler pulls off his belt in a threatening whipping fashion, and his pants fall down around his ankles. His face turns red with

embarrassment. Fed up with the children, he pulls the lever on the bus and exits out the door. Two inbred men stand at the corner of the street.)

CASH: Well I'll be, Darl. We gots Stalin rights here in our own hometown of Fulton Mo and his pants be down!

HITLER: I am not Stalin! I am Hitler, you buffoon! Ich bin der fuhrer auf Deutschland!

DARL: He's got a purdy mustache. Cash, I think he would like to meet ma.

CASH: Good idea there, bro. Get the bag.

(A brown potato bag is thrown over Hitler. The two men throw the bag containing Hitler into their mule-drawn cart. Darl looks around for witnesses. Cash whips the mule and the cart slowly moves down the street towards their home.)

GRETA: What are we going to do with der fuhrer gone?

BRUNO: (He hits Greta) Ha, ha! I am going to run with scissors! (Bruno starts running up and down the bus screaming and holding safety scissors.)

HEINRICH: I'm going to go sniff the gasoline. (He exits the bus and unscrews the gas tank lid and he starts smelling the gas.)

ARNOLD: Ach, I am bleeding to dea. . . (Arnold dies and

nobody notices because Bruno is making a scene as he falls down and impales himself on top of his safety scissors.)

(Heinrich wobbles back into the bus.)

HEINRICH: I wonder why der fuhrer doesn't want us sniffing gas. (He tosses the gas lid to Gunther and they play catch with it.)

(Sir Winston Churchill and President Harry S. Truman walk by the bus.)

TRUMAN: Have you written your speech to give at Westminster yet?

CHURCHILL: No, I'll improvise it as I go on. It won't be important; it is not like anybody will even remember it tomorrow. This cigar was really good. (He tosses the glowing cigar butt to his side, and it flies into the gas tank of the bus. The bus explodes into a ball of fire, and the explosion knocks Churchill and Truman to the ground.)

TRUMAN: Wow, we could have used an iron curtain to help shield us from that blast!

CHURCHILL: Hey. Iron curtain. I think that I could use that.

When the Music's Over
Sunnie Smith

We sit on the floor
eating our linguini and marinara on cheap plates,
sipping our wine from plastic cups.
We feel as if we are in a restaurant
though only a low rent apartment with no table.
Dinner finished,
our make-believe atmosphere changes
to that of a bar
as we listen to Jim Morrison's rich sultry voice.
Jim's words mingle well with the veil of smoke
hanging inches from the ceiling,
burning our eyes, yet we reach for more cigarettes.
Our scene changes again,
as we talk of sex over board games,
devourng cheesecake with a passion
greater than that of teenage girls after a traumatic breakup.
Except they don't drink White Russians,
or dance around half-naked
showing their breasts to the neighbors.
How many more nights will there be like this?
The last song plays
When the Music's Over.

Untitled
Libby Murrie



Precious Black Butterfly
Swiyyah Streeter

Precious black butterfly,
Come wrap your beautiful wings around my trembling, empty form.
Protect me until these cries of mine subside,
Or sing me a song that is both loving and wise.

Can you teach me to soar like that?
To leave the ground and french-kiss the sun?

How do you keep the winds from destroying the paints of your delicate art?
From ripping out your soul —
Blowing your blackness apart?

These are the secrets that I need you to tell,
If there is to be any hope that I too will prevail.

Friend, Nebraska
Jason Veach

Guess I can't imagine what it must be like —
Friend, Nebraska.

I. Just off the highway

Where the police station is a "Johnny-on-the-spot"
And you just might blink going through the
Unique and only flashing yellow stop light
Down on main street.

II. Tall tales

Back where my Pa and Nano met when
They were only 12, playing
Football in the alleys.
Back when Pa was workin'
At Great Grandpa Grandorff's
Ol' Phillips 66.
Back when he lettered in track —
Got the varsity jacket patches to prove it
Yet no report cards —
Must have burned down in the great fire.

III. Livelihood

A town of farms
Of grain and co-ops,
Silos and milo,
Winter wheat, spring wheat
All under the watchful eye of
Good men, tenants
Men named Penrod (son of Buck)
And Lavern.

IV. Squeedunk

Outside of Lincoln
And "Go Big Ed" country
(Remember Uncle Paul?)
Up the back roads from Crete,
And Beaver Crossing,
Up from Dorchester and Cordova —
Or Dogstretcher and Squeedunk
If you please.

V. Front Page News

A town abuzz with the vital news
That Crete's new church got stuck
Between Dogstretcher and Squeedunk
In a pile of mud
left from a late November downpour.
It was a hoot for me, big,
Front page news for the old Friend Sentinel —
THE weekly of these metropolises.

VI. Heritage

I hear stories, words with color
And vibrance
Life, and heritage
Proud to be a Grandorff
Cain
Schnase
Walston.

Guess I can't imagine what it must be like
But I can sure dream it.

1930's Standards For A Date Are Much Higher Than My Own

Jodi Fowler

She stood there on the side of 54 baptized
In chiffon and disappointment
Pieces of an old tire lay all around
Her pretty new heels sunk deep in the April mud
Like frightened clams digging a home
Her once-gloved arms were across her chest
Like two daggers removed from satin sheaths
Her piled-up ringleted hair fell now in straight strands
Like escaped convicts whipping her rouged cheek.

When the tire blew out he had said "shit"
Not darn or shucks or how about that
But "shit" loud and without apology.
He had looked so dapper at her door
With fresh-cut flowers and slicked hair
Like black eels across his white head
His dad's green Chevy in her driveway
Like an emerald in the April mist but
She died when he had said it as they
Drove down 54 because he exposed
His commonness like a black tatoo
She knew the first date would be the last
Like a surprising drink of spoiled milk.

She watched him change the tire
And the oil smeared on his pressed white shirt
Like streaks of shame across his chest
She tried to smooth the creases that were
Creeping up the ruffles of her skirt

Like spiders on a mission to her neck
Since she didn't feel like crying she just
Sighed a long deliberate sigh purposefully
Loud enough for him to hear and she
Churned the ugly dirty word in her mind
Like grandma churned the butter
To serve with Sunday's after-church meal.

Faucets
Steve Meinke



The Tranquil Moment of Eternity

Josh Shannon

My grandfather's name was Lacy and my grandmother's name was Pearl. Such simple names. If I could choose two names to carve into a tree, they would be Lacy and Pearl. One Sunday afternoon my grandparents were driving back from church. I can imagine their old, navy blue Ford truck as it bounced down the winding, gravel road. My grandfather lost control of the truck as they were turning a sharp bend. They jumped off the road like a wild mustang, flipping over as if trying to throw the riders off. Upside down, they slid one hundred yards into a tree, killing them instantly. Now, I realize that this would be the tree I would carefully, intricately carve their names in, giving them an epitaph of my own.

They were not found until the next day. I remember sitting in my geometry class in high school when I heard my name over the intercom. I wasn't paying attention and did not hear what the message had to do with. Startled, I looked at my teacher with a silent plea for an explanation. I can still hear her voice, "Josh, they need you down in the office. Have you been expecting this?"

Hesitantly, I replied, "... No." It was such a hard question to answer, to make the words come out.

She told me that I might want to take my books with me. I sat silently for a second, or a minute. Maybe I was waiting for the intercom to apologize for the interruption and announce that there was a mistake, that I was not needed. Maybe I was trying to deny the thought that was crawling, running into my head. Someone had died.

I slowly rose to my feet as if I had just learned that my legs could be extended upward. Books in my hand, I started to the

school's office. I started walking towards my fate. It was a long walk anyway, but that day it took forever. I walked down the stairs to the first floor. With every step I took, my feet grew heavier and seemed increasingly harder to lift, my heart weighing twice that. I turned the corner into the main corridor.

This hallway, seemingly more than a football field long, was lined with trophies, memorials to past accomplishments that reflect the light coming in through the windows. They were not what was catching my lowered, locked eyes. It was my father. I could see him at the end of the corridor, pacing back and forth with his hands behind his back. He looked extravagant. His tall, masculine frame seemed to dominate the highest trophies.

But this observation is just a recollection. I was preoccupied with a much more darkening image. Who died? My mother... My brother? I had the whole length of the hallway to wonder who had passed away. No. No euphemisms. This was not what I was wondering. I was wondering who had died. These few, intense moments allowed me to understand what death is — for those left behind anyway.

Through the tunnel vision I could not tell exactly how far I had come or how far I had to go to find out... "Find what out?" I asked myself. I did not want to go any further; I had to.

Finally, I met my father in the hallway. While there was no physical distance between us, my father still was distant. He did not speak for a moment. He just looked around as if he were trying to escape, as if he were trapped in an uncontrollable situation where he could do nothing. I wanted to speak but I felt I would upset the already unbalanced man even more. Then, as if through a window of pure strength, my father spoke.

He told me with a trembling voice that his parents were dead. That was all he said. I can tell you how I felt at that moment, then you must decide for yourself if I am the root of all evil. I let up a silent praise that it was not my mother or my brother. I was

relieved. No, relieved is not the word for it.

And then I felt something. What kind of person am I? I know that I could not help but be thankful that it was not my mother or my brother but this thankfulness seemed to shine over the dark realization that my grandparents were dead.

I looked over to my left. Through the glass windows of the office I could see my mother watching me, waiting for me to notice her. She did not want to tell me, she just wanted to be there for me. My father put his arm around my shoulder and escorted me into the office where the three of us seemed to latch onto each other, holding on for life. It seemed as if we had to stay together or we would lose each other forever. We would be swept away. I realized then that I had to face a new problem.

At first my father was angry. He often asked why both his parents had to die at once. As a comfort, I told him it may have been best since living without the person you love and have been with for so many years is difficult, especially when all of your children are grown. My timing in telling him this was wrong. He became upset and told me that they were both in good health and if one of his parents did survive, he or she would have lived a full, happy life. This was his anger being channeled through his bitter lips. Of course, now he realizes that he would not want to face living without his wife, my mother, if she were to die.

I remember my mother telling me that she woke up one night shortly after the accident to an unfamiliar sound. She walked into my dad's office to find him on his knees. He was crying. He was down on the ground with his tears dripping on his open palms. I wish my father did not have to hide his tears.

I have only seen my father cry one time. It was when he brought me to college. It was the one time my father seemed completely vulnerable. It showed me how important I am to him that he would cry in front of me and let down all defenses.

He told me he loved me. My father was never really one to express emotions, but he didn't have to. I know my father loves me regardless of what is said or not said.

Not another word has been said about their death. Yes, I will hear an occasional reminiscence uttered from my father referring to his childhood, but that is all. I have noticed that my grandfather showed little emotion while I was around. My grandfather had never told my father he loved him until he was baptized. From my grandfather to me it seems as if our emotions are becoming more apparent. Our emotions are breaking through the division between recessive and dominant. Just as the transition from my grandfather to me has shown the rising and realization of emotions, the hardness has become soft — as most things tend to do with time.

* * *

I remember the fragrance of Lincoln, Arkansas during the Autumn months is like a flowing stream. It is a potpourri of smells, almost as if the trees, the flowers, the butterflies are all speaking with one, unending motion. Maybe it's the first time they seem alive. I remember how my father would take me to visit his parents in Lincoln. He would take me to visit his past. The highway to Lincoln is very natural, very snake-like. It's almost as if the road grew out of the ground to fit the contour of the land. There was no conversation between my father and I during the drive, but I know we were simultaneously receiving the same message and nodding with understanding. Maybe we were listening to what the trees had to tell us through the two-inch-cracked windows.

As we reached the rusty, steel-beam bridge, the gateway into Lincoln, I almost instinctively glanced down at the creek below, watching it break over the rocks. I could see the reflections of

those who frequent the creek through my mind's eye. I could see the old man gazing ever so slightly downward with his milky, white eyes. The color of his overalls and his faded denim hat were very discernable in the mirror-like water. I could imagine the children testing the water's surface with their bare feet while their shoes, lying on the shore, sighed with relief for a moment of rest.

We were approaching my grandparent's house, our destination. I was anxious to see what six months had done to my grandparents. They had aged considerably since I last saw them. My grandfather was wearing glasses now. My grandmother's face had become more wrinkled, giving her a soft appearance. This was expected of my grandparents. I should know gravity always wins.

As my father and I walked into their old, white house, we looked at each other and realized we had both discovered an unsatisfied need that was consuming our attention. This need may have been subtle at first, but when we walked into their house it became clear. We were hungry. We could smell the fresh cornbread my grandmother had made. The smell was an incentive to make ourselves comfortable.

My father and his seven brothers and sisters grew up on warm milk and cornbread. It wasn't much, but at the same time it was everything. My grandmother wore an old summer dress with white flowers scattered across the fabric. My grandfather, a quiet man, sat in the recliner that his children gave him for his birthday a few years back. He never had much to say. The look in his eyes told me he had had a rough life. This was now his time to rest.

He always had a somber look. His eyes moved from my father to me without seeming to move at all. When he did speak, it almost always had to do with when he, my dad, and his three sons were going to go to the deer camp. I went on

occasion, but I found that it was not a place for me. It was a place for my father, and his brothers, and my grandfather. I remember one particular hunting trip when my grandfather was loading a cross-bow and shot the arrow into his foot. Later that night around the campfire and the tired men sharing their hunting stories, my dad noticed the blood that had surrounded and dried on my grandfather's foot. When asked, my grandfather told his sons that he shot the cross-bow into his foot, but that he was all right.

* * *

I remember their funeral. We made our way to the church where my grandparents belonged. On the way we passed the scene of the accident. I wish death could not possibly result from the word "accident." As I looked out the dust-glazed window of our car, I could see the tree that held the mark of my grandparents. The car was silent. We only observed, maybe listening for a familiar voice from the tree or the surrounding life. Maybe they had a story to tell us. Then, we arrived at the funeral service.

I do not remember the service very well. I only remember that my brother and I were asked to be pall bearers. I didn't want to; I hated the idea of it. Carrying their caskets was something I did not feel comfortable even thinking about. I did it anyway. Maybe it's the idea of receiving a sense of closure. The sudden realization that they are dead. Or maybe it is the representation of a life cycle that I do not have the answer to or could even begin to understand.

Sometimes, my dad goes back to Lincoln, Arkansas. After all, he does have brothers and sisters who live in the area. My mother tells me how he will stop by the gravesite when he has time. He goes by himself and makes sure the weeds are not

covering the headstones and causing them to be forgotten. I can imagine my father sitting up there on that hill where my grandparents are buried. I can see him crying. I can see him laughing. I can see him whispering. I can see him. And I wonder if he feels calm when he smells the fragrance of the trees, the flowers. I often wonder if he hears the whispers of nature. The voices carried by the wind. The wind carrying the voices that tell him, "We're all right."

My Hips Still Sway to that Same Black Beat Swiyyah Streeter

I still have my full lips.
And when I walk — my hips sway to that same beat.
My hair hasn't straightened out . . . kinky curls remain.
And when I look in the mirror —
My face stares back at me in brown unshame.
Yet New York says it's blind to my different form.
But they too see my full lips and non-white features.
They've seldom missed how my curls never straighten out quite like theirs.
And for all their "unsightliness" — they still notice that my hips sway to that same
Black beat.

Untitled
Ginger Dial



The Dreams of Bombyx Mori
Rob Hawkins

A strange rush of air, this bizarre urge
For weightlessness which diffuses through
Fluttering spiracles and invades the waning
Hours of sleepy metamorphosis, a grand
Departure from coddled infancy, chewing
On shredded mulberry leaves. The changing
Form twists and turns, forming the microscopic
Glory of scaly wings which soar on the sky-
Blue current of dreams, cutting quietly through
The medium of whisper-thin air, expelled in
Quick bursts of carbon dioxide. The clock ticks
To zero, and the squat body emerges, plump
And shining like a golden Buddha, tearing
Through the lavish fabric which adorned
The dynasties of four thousand years and
Thinly covered the residents of shallow graves
On the long road West, even as broad wings
Shroud its body now, filling with blood and
Struggling to unfold the hardening form of
Maturity. Six-legged and oddly unwieldy,
It waddles slowly across the narrow twig,
A moment on the tightrope, suspended in air,
And dropping quickly toward dusty ground,
Beautiful, bright, and earth-bound, landing
With the loud thump of a Newtonian apple,
Tarsi tickling the air as wings should, turned
Belly-up and bred by man, a silky prisoner
Of shimmering art which steamed in the tea-
Cups of royal garden parties, caressed the

Pale breasts of reclining ladies, and unraveled
Images of powdered gossamer forms, shining
Translucent before the light of his full moon.
These insubstantial dreams of Bombyx mori,
Loosely wrapped gauze against the night sky.

SCENERY¹ Rady Todorova

Act I

A heavy wooden door
A key
Thick darkness
Low ceiling, high floor
A pile of lies
Of books
Of silent notes
A world of piles
A wooden door back
A key
A sigh
Two suitcases and a pack
Escape
Relief

Act II

A mystic waltz
A lotus leaf
And water surface
A door and six walls
And inside
And inwards
And deep within

¹ This is an excerpt from the Universal Stage Manager's Guide.

And inward tide
Hundreds, thousands of miles
Open skin
Open heart
Fingertips and closed eyes
Escape
Relief

Intermission

Act III

Solitude
A memory or two
A smile of grief
And gratitude
A cup of tasty pain
A drop of sweet
A salty drop
A sea and rain
A northern breeze
A candle
One last movement
And absolute peace

the end

N.B. It is the exclusive responsibility of the Stage Manager to create indeed truthful and effective scenery for the play.

The Cleopatra Ode (Horace 1.37)
translated from Latin by Cathy Callaway

*I would like to dedicate this translation to Latin 203/398
(they know who they are!)*

Now friends, it is time for drinking,
for dancing on the floor with an unimpeded foot,
to deck the couch of the gods with outstanding banquets.

Before this it was wrong to bring out the special reserve
from its ancient cellars,
While the Queen was plotting a mindless ruin and funeral
for the Capitol and the empire.

With her polluted crew of men, foul in their sickness,
She was mad enough to hope for anything she wanted
drunk with sweet fortune.
But when scarcely one ship escaped from the flames,
Caesar returned her mind, panic stricken by Mareotic wine
to true fear.

By ship he chased her fleeing from Italy,
just as a hawk upon a dove or a swift hunter
upon a hare in the snowy fields of Thessaly,
so that he might throw into chains
that deadly "monster."

She, seeking to die more nobly, neither woman-like
feared the dagger,
nor with her swift fleet did she seek
secret harbors.

Enduring to gaze upon her ruined kingdom
with a serene face,
brave to fondle the harsh serpents
so that she might absorb into her body more fully
the black venom.

Deliberating on death the bolder yet,
She, scornful of the cruel transport galley,
and unqueened, to be led away, a not unproud woman
in a proud triumph.

Death and Taxes

Holly Sinclair

Hurts were rewarded with dollar bills
In my family, and when my mom got her divorce
It was implied that she'd be helped out:
A suggested rental, a loan for her car.

On the day my grandpa died
We were driving back from the five-and-dime
And saw my aunt Kitty, and the ambulance, on the street.
We pulled into a bank's empty parking lot
And collapsed and cried, we 4 cousins, on the side of the road
As the ambulance pulled away.

At the hospital the monitors were keeping him alive.
The family was there, all cousins, 7 years old and up.
That night we reached into our pockets
For dollar bills to lay upon his chest:
17 George Washingtons, 1 Abraham Lincoln, and
A Benjamin Franklin from my uncle who was well off,
Scattered over his pastel hospital gown like a spilled salad.

The next morning he opened his eyes and stared at us. Still, we
told him
He could go if he needed to.
They said his personality would change.
He was home in 10 days.

We labeled pictures to help him remember us:
Number 1 granddaughter won a scholarship to study in Europe.
Number 4 grandson lives in California.
Your son, David, recently built a house.

On the day before I left
To go back to school, Grandpa pulled out his wallet,
Muttered to himself as he fumbled for dollar bills, and,
Finding none, pulled out a gift certificate instead.
"Here, baby, can you use this?" He handed it to me:
A \$5 coupon for the corner convenience store.

Andrew
Amie Edwards



Sonnet
Rady Todorova

We had one thousand feet
And only one shoe.
At the very moment I felt complete
I realized it wasn't true.
As we traveled all around the world
We also stayed in one place.
The phoniness of every single word
Slapped me in the face.
As we're enclosed in our cage
We tried to reach out through the bars.
A Pocket Bible does not make one a sage
As naked eyes did not help us reach the stars.

If you really want to touch the skies,
You need much more than mere eyes.

Thoughts of youth and baseball
(for Nomar Garciaparra)
Jason Veach

I. Remembrances upon glory days

I took secret pleasure staying home in '88
Sick in the 1st degree by the jury's rendering.
And my punishment was to plop down on the couch,
Lights dimmed — like the entrance of our feature
Presentation — and watched my beloved
Oakland A's (since Dal Maxvill refused to
Transfuse the Cardinals, or redeem Jack Clark)
Battle and worship at the American League
Mecca of Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox.
Back when Mike Greenwell and Ellis Burks were young
And the cantankerous Rocket's fastball blurred like cataracts
Before his fall, and rebirth, like some Northeastern prophet.
On those cold, dreary afternoons under Fenway's lights
I took pride in watching Canseco and McGwire rough
Up weary pitcher upon pitcher. Bash Brothers,
Like young lovers full of power and grace.
And I rooted, as if the game were personal, some
Grade school vendetta that I took pleasure in
When the A triumphed, and Boston dug itself
Into hibernation once again. The feeling lingered
Like a sigh, and perched me on the cusp of nirvana.
Until the Series, until the gimp, Kirk Gibson, dared hobble
Onto the field and around the chalk basepaths at Chavez Ravine,
And challenge Dennis Eckersley. You can pinpoint the moment
When Eckersley's head turn and his heart broke. It was

While I slept sound in my bed, and cursed Gibson, Sax,
And Orel Hershisier. I awoke the next morning
Without the cockiness, as the Post unfolded the headline story:
Gibson, as if Robert Redford in *The Natural*
Donned Dodger Blue, homered, and foiled my dreams. It was then
That those lonely souls at Fenway resonated something
Audible. Something tangible—fear with a color and a name
And depression at 60 feet 6 inches.

II. Conversation with Nomar Garciaparra

I'd like to converse with you, Mr. Young Nomar
Garciaparra, about why you stand out among
A-rod and Jeter, the slick shortstops, and your peers.
Why you, Mr. Garciaparra—
Lanky and graceful like a stork slipped into a
Tutu—stood out even to the Splendid Splinter.
Young Nomar, from the Ramblin' Wreck of
Georgia Tech, who dares to shake the lightning
From the sky, who dares drive in 100 from the
#1 or #2 slot, you audacious workaholic. I sing
A song of myself, and I must sing a song of you
For you embody that childhood hope of a vacation
That is extended by snow or tempest. You are a
Fountain at which hope springs eternal, for those dreary
Beantown fans, downtrodden Celtics and Bruins
Worshippers who turn their lonely eyes to you
Woo, woo, woo.

III. Curse of the Bambino

For that holy grail,
You clench your teeth at the plate,
Young and oblivious to the curse laid upon your
Red Sox before your birth, wet and screaming
Into this world. Prior to the onset of WWII, or the depression
That was not so great.

Superstition still runs rampant, like a flash flood.
A foul plague upon your head, Boston!
Boil, boil, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble. Like
Geraldo Rivera and some show about
Al Capone's vault, or King Tut's unopened tomb,
Or that dastardly wacky witch that troubled
Bug Bunny, a curse was laid. Laid in 1919
When pitcher George Herman Ruth was traded
For \$125,000 in legal tender. And ever since
Then, young Mr. Garciaparra, hours and dust
Have dissipated old men's tears. The hound dogs
Cry at all hours of the night, and there truly
Is no joy in Mudville.

IV. History repeating itself

It is not that passion has failed to burn
In young men's chests, but so many have
Come before the cruel mistress of Fenway,
And have been left on their knees—
Dwarfed by the shadow of the Green Monster.
That 37 ft. Partition in left, a reminder of obstacles to come,

Maidens to free, and seas to part. Ted Williams
Patrolled the Green Monster, and while he could
Pilot bombs and eradicate and slay enemies in war,
He could never beat the elusive DiMaggio.
In the '75 Series, Bernie Carbo connected, conducted electricity,
And breathed life into Fenway with a 3-run homer.
In the 12th, Carlton Fisk drove Rick Wise's misnomered
Sinkers down the left field line. Watching, motioning
That sphere to curve fair, as if wishes and prayers
Could gently kiss the ball into the bleachers. Appealing
To Chaos, changing weather and conjuring storms upon
Butterfly wings. No storms, no clouds, but a parting
As the ball pulled fair. 7-6, a win. The monkey
In the terrace seats nearly choked upon its popcorn
And Fenway dogs. Onto Game 7. The curse might
Have been lifted, if not for the Big Red Machine.
A 3-0 lead vanished, and Joe Morgan's single in the 9th
Brought an end to Cincinnati's 35 year drought. Still,
There is no joy in Mudville.

In the 1986 classic, the Sox were perched upon awes and sighs
Trembling, holding a 5-4 lead in the 10th in Game 6
And after a wild pitch was uncorked, fate
Reared its ugly head again.
And Mookie Wilson's dribbler eluded Bill Buckner
Passing through his wickets like a winning croquet shot.
And again, they passed onto a seventh game,
And again found fate bitter.

V. Denouement

You may fight against the dying of the
Proverbial light Mr. Garciaparra,
Simply to avoid depression and the bottle
In this quiet town. But you must fight
With stronger mettle than those that came before
You. Recognize what absence and silence looks
Like, trace your hands across its lips.
Feel its breath against you. Keep desire
In your breast. Hear Ernest Thayer's
Words and do your best.

THE PETRIFIED FOREST

Rob Hawkins

Hot Arizona sands flow through my naked toes,
Swimming with red iron, cobalt blue, and fossilized fish
Whose caudal fins still thrash the waters of Triassic swamps.
They paddle silently through the bed of Lithodendron Creek,
Darting about the old wallows of aquatic reptiles, run dry long
Before five-fingered hands portrayed the figure who
Stalks them now; the Petroglyph hunter, pursuing his game
On the trail of geological time, tracking the dreams of a
Vanishing wisdom into the lunar landscape of the present;
Ragged, cold, and distant from the roving thoughts of man.
With pen and paper I follow him, rustling in desert scrub-brush
After feral words, letters which smear to painted images,
Flushing out simple visions which flap away on the wind;
That most patient of Southwestern painters, spending a billion
Brush-strokes on one slope of colored sand, and covering a vast
Canvas with breezes which once tousled the leafy heads of petrified
Trees. It carries the hunter's cat-calls back to me, a crackling
Transmission through the centuries: "Grasp it soundly on the first try,
There is no time for revision when writing on stone."

The Burning

Dana Thompson

It was the end of the road and Daniel couldn't take it any more. No more yelling to be the best, to beat the other 11 year-olds in his class, to study an extra two more hours for the National Spelling Bee that was a year away. Every time he heard his parents hateful words of diligence he felt ill to his stomach, and when they started pushing their agenda on five year-old Elizabeth, he would rush to my bathroom in order to spit up his disgust. No more could he take of crying himself to sleep, having to sneak to his sister's room in the dead of night to play with her toys. Lastly, his parents burning the doll house was, as people say, "the straw that broke the camel's back". Who would have thought the straw would be the wrong maneuver of his parents to burn that doll house, and the camel's back would be that of an 11 year-old boy?

The night before he had heard his parents talking downstairs in the den about the children, about how well they were coming along but it wasn't good enough. Elizabeth was playing *far* too much with the neighborhood children and not concentrating on her violin lessons, his mother said. His father agreed and decided to get rid of some of Elizabeth's toys as he did with Daniel's only two years previously. Beginning earlier with Elizabeth would make more room for progress, his mother said.

Later on that night, while in bed, Daniel saw his father carry the doll house his grandmother had given to Elizabeth out to the backyard to small bonfire that lit up the entire side of the house. Daniel could feel and see the shadows of the flames along the side of the house, then his father emerged from the back deck

with the grand toy in tow. Before his tears caught up to his silent screams, his father had taken an ax and chopped the house into large pieces and then fed those pieces to the flames of the bonfire. Daniel sat in his bed in total anguish as he saw the last of his childhood go up in flames. Daniel's decision was made right up to that point. No more pain for him, or Elizabeth, and there will be no time for pain for six month old Jessica.

The next day Daniel went about his schedule as he always did. 6:30 a.m.: Wake and Bathe. 8 a.m.: Off to school. At school Daniel began his daily courses of Advanced English, Beginning Chemistry, Introductory Choir, Physical Education, and Advanced Algebra. At the end of the school day, Daniel would rush off to piano lessons for three hours, then finally home where he had to do homework and other outside of school projects until his bedtime. Instead of crying tears of exhaustion and creeping to Elizabeth's bedroom to play with her toys, Daniel waited until the house was completely quiet with his family's sleep.

At 3 a.m., Daniel put on his faded jeans and school t-shirt in the darkness of his room. He didn't really care how he looked which was a change since his parents always had him dressed in pressed trousers, button-down shirt, far more presentable than those other children his mother would say. He opened the door of his bedroom and moved to Elizabeth's room. The only light that aided him in the room was the crescent moon night-light that he had given Elizabeth for her last birthday. He knew she was terrified of the dark, but usually one of his parents would go turn the light off in the middle of the night when one of Elizabeth's nightmares came to life. Daniel looked about the room, at the softness and innocence that barely remained in the

five year old's room. He walked around the room, not overlooking an inch. He brushed his rough hand over the spot where the doll house once sat. He broke away from the spot and over to the baby's room. He looked into her crib and saw the plump infant deep in slumber. He softly touched her rosy cheeks then left the room. He then moved to his parents room and stood in the doorway. He looked at the figures on the king-size bed only a short time, then shut the door tightly and locked the door with the master key he found in the kitchen.

Daniel made his way to the backyard of the house and quickly went to work on his task. He went to the tool shack and found two containers of kerosene where he had put it after doing his chores earlier that evening. Daniel moved in a zombie-like state, not knowing if he was alive or dead, more than likely dead for he had felt that way for so long while being with his parents. Soon, he found himself splashing kerosene on every inch of his house. He moved around the house with the kerosene, seeing plenty of items of his now forgotten life. The bike his father said he would teach him to ride, Elizabeth's tea party set that was getting ready to be sent to the dumps, and Jessica's stroller that Daniel had pushed the infant in so many times for the pure joy of hearing the baby's laugh.

After the foundation of the house was doused in kerosene and the lurking smell of gas moved up through all the rooms of the house, Daniel stood in front of the house with the match that would end his suffering, his sisters suffering, and hopefully his parents as well. Daniel struck the match which almost woke him from his entranced state, but instead of talking himself out of the deed he was about to commit, he moved to the house and placed the match on the front step of the porch. The flames rose and

spread quickly because of the abundance of kerosene Daniel had used. He watched and followed as the flames spread across the porch, burning through the cable cords attached to the house, to the flower beds along side the house, and to the corner of the back porch where it exploded because of the gas in the kitchen.

Immediately lights of the neighboring houses lit up the entire street, and people came out wearing their night clothes. Women screamed in astonishment, men yelled for someone to call the fire department, children were crying because of the size of the fire, and Daniel stood in front of the house with fierce, silent tears watching the house burn. The fire trucks woke up the rest of the neighborhood, police lights blinded onlookers, and questions of what and why filled the air. Daniel was obvious to all that was going around him, he knew he had caused it, he knew he was doing the exact thing he saw his father doing the night before. He had burned the doll house.

Public Speaking Holly Sinclair

A teacher in sixth grade told me
I had no talent for public speaking
and that my talents were elsewhere, and so I lived elsewhere.

When I give a man a pair of scared little eyes
and tell him I have trust issues, I'm lying.
What I mean is, you're not good enough for me
but I'm going to pretend that you're better.
That way maybe I can touch you and you'll
put your hands on me.
When I mean you are not good enough for me I often mean
that no one is good enough for me.
I live so high and think that love is so wide.

When I sing with the radio in my car
I wish every man were a radio.
I imagine a man, a rock star named Max, who holds me in his arms at night.
Before Max it was God holding me in his arms; that was when I was a child.
Now God is a large black dot which suggests depth.

A moth yesterday
spilled its feathers on my car's front seat
as it struggled to jump out the window.
Earlier today I heard four birds
that chirped as if they were sounds mapped out on a grid.
Only write, I thought. Only write. And sing.

It was 1988. My teacher said
the distance
between a speaker
and a voice
is wide.
Is getting wider.
I reach through radio waves and black holes
to touch the rock that I am standing on,
to touch all of those girls.

Can I speak to the ideal that is in my head?
Or is it public?

Tornado Carrie Rogers

Your presence was known
At 4 p.m. with the
Sirens blown
soon after.
Your dust clouds
Furrowed in a scowl
You hurried and scurried
Across town warning
With a terrifying howl.
First silence, then prayer.
Families ran and
Cars sped.
In the aftermath
Houses were gone
And people were dead.
Now silence, then prayer.

Victim
Rae Bigham

Barbie doll stares at me from
sister's desk
tiny waist, big blue eyes,
golden hair, perfect teeth
 same face stares from
my tv,
 vacant eyes.
 plastic hair.
 painted teeth.
One of Beauty's victims.
 Empty face looks out at me
from a glossy piece of plastic
Nothing left but the shell,
 soul sucked out in surgery.
One of Beauty's victims:
 pool hall bimbo,
 glamour queen,
 mama with the tambourine.
Vacant minds in empty heads,
Beauty's victims all
not a worry or thought
among the group.
Nothing more to think
than how to delete a wrinkle,
a bit of flab,
a gray hair.
Beauty rules their minds
their lives.
And nothing matters anymore
but how to please their cruel queen.
And they will always be
Beauty's victims . . .

The Waters of Abandonment
Sunnie Smith

A lonely reed
sways in the murky water
of abandonment.
Excitement overcomes
as a gentle breeze sweeps over
the stagnant mire,
rippling the surfaces slightly,
then metamorphasizing to a gust,
pushing the thin reed down.
Again and again,
harsh winds come,
trying to break this true beauty,
but she will not succumb.
Even after all abandon her,
leaving her in this shallow, stale muck,
she stands tall in the sunlight,
basking in the rays —
the only comfort she knows . . .
But then,
the sun leaves her,
hiding its face behind an eternal infinity of grey clouds.
Her soul withers
and,
as another gust comes to destroy her,
he succeeds,
and this time,
when bent backwards,
she does not return to her upright position
but lies,
sinking,
in the cold, dead water.

Suzanne and Plans

Jodi Fowler

Suzanne
Didn't giggle at stupid jokes
To make boys notice.

Or let girls go first in gym
Because they were popular.

Suzanne
Refused to say thank you to
McDonald's drive-thru workers,
Just grabbed the sack and
Rolled the window up fast.

Suzanne
Would have entire conversations
Using only lines from movies
Without me even knowing.

Four years since high school
Suburban drama, to be continued

Suzanne
Can't be the sidekick --
This time, she's the star.
J-Crew on her hip bones --
Angular and hanging
Shock of chocolate hair --
Lawn-mowed and shivering
Eyebrows newly shaped --
Too thin and starving
Biting wit sharpened, but the same.

So we're in my car, it's past 3
I fold, unfold, fold the letter
It's her line, but she stumbles,

Hopes the scene will change
To the happy, chirpy friends.
Dad in Memphis, mom in sane

Suzanne
In different and between,
Wondering when she chose
This -- if she chose this,
Or if she's following the script.
December seeps in the crack
Because she's smoking and I
As usual, don't tell her no.

Suzanne
Knows the plans we made
To rise above 2-story houses
And lives, leave this place.
But we're 22 and back, I see
A zip code on her forehead
Like the mark of the beast.
Straight faced, she tells me:
I'm seeing a shrink, we smirk.
Straight faced, I tell her:
Amazing's rare, Suzanne,
You're it. But she barely even
Smiles as the credits roll.

You Say: "People will ask questions!"

Stephanie Barr

"So ask! You're **ON THE AIR!**
I'll be the first to tell you
Perception isn't always **reality**
What you *see* is hardly ever what you *get*
So Ask . . ."

"Girls are good kissers!"

Wanna know more?
wanna know more??
WANT to know more!

Reluctant? Resistant?
It's too **damn** bad!
Life is *queer* — get used to it!

MORAL SUPERIORITY
Wears the face of *looking right*
When it might be **wrong**
The proclamation
of people who consider **discrimination**
a safety feature.

"Saving Us From Sin" — **Fuck that!**
Times have changed!
ding*ding*ding* survey says . . . "IT'S OK TO BE GAY!"

No more *excuses* to *hide* behind **FEAR**
To *make allowance* for **HATE**
Black, White, Gay, Straight
All just variations on a theme.
EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE.

All men/women are created equal
The government wouldn't **LIE**

They said:
PURSUE YOUR LIFE
DEFEND YOUR LIBERTY
FIND YOUR HAPPINESS
Freedom to love??
Freedom to choose??

I say: Change is everyone's Responsibility
Knowledge is **Power** — So **ASK!**