



## **WHAT'S THE MANATEE?**

The Manatee is a literary journal run by the students of Southern New Hampshire University. We publish the best short fiction, poetry, essays, photos, and artwork of SNHU students, and we're able to do it with generous funding from the awesome people in the School of Arts and Sciences

Visit <http://it.snhu.edu/themanatee/> for information, submission guidelines, and news.

# **The Manatees**

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This year, due to lack of photographic submissions and our need to balance our wonderful literary works with pictures, we gratefully accepted the work of high school student Kelsey Escobar.

Thanks Kelsey!

The Manatee Staff



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**BOW- ELIZABETH DiVenere**

# **PARADISE LOST...**

**KYLE HOAK**

The golden gates are nothing more than a tragic memory...

I hear no laughter, only a bloodcurdling shriek....

I despise the light; I love only the hideous darkness...

I welcome the company of devils; they are genuine cherubs,  
as well as seraphs and orphans...

The bats and ravens chant my name. The spiders walk down  
the cold dark aisle, in the dim glow of the sapphire embers...

I laugh before tragedy, I cry before comedy, and I am fully  
amused with death...

I feel no love, I feel no pain, I feel only the sweet caress of  
oblivion...

Whatever I had lost, I have recently found the truth that is  
paradise...

And now the bell tolls the bewitching hour. The clock has  
just struck thirteen...

## **FOUND POEM: RIDER-WAITE TAROT DECK**

**LAURELYN ESTES**

Ryder-Waite of various fates

Wearing faces for words

Iconographic cards

Deal a hand of Destiny.

Expressly for games

Games of your life

Hints and stepping stones

Masters of making meanings

Ten cards in an ancient spread

Twelve cards in a Celtic knot

Rider-Waite waits unseen

To spin your wheel or cut your thread

Kings and Queens, Knights and Pages

The Wheel of Fortune spins again

Strength and the World and the Sun and the Fool

The Chariot carries the cards away.

## NERDGASM

ALLISON RACICOT

**A**fter waiting in line outside of Comic-Con's infamous Hall H for three hours and sitting through six different panels – some good, some great, some... expendable – the time has come for the *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* panel, and for me to see Jason Schwartzman, who is, in fact, my favorite Jew. I'm not even sure if he *is* Jewish, but he's my favorite, regardless. Excuse my ridiculous fan girl banter, but I'll be the first to admit that I swoon over this man the way that teenage girls do over Taylor Lautner and his impossibly chiseled abs. I'm breathing the same air as this man and I'm about to see him in person, albeit from the back of a room with about 6,500 other people. He's got the perfect hair length, a lovely jaw line, and he looks great in a pair of thick black-framed specs. This is an incredibly attractive individual we're talking about here, both physically and mentally, and he's not to be taken lightly.

Edgar Wright, the director, takes command of the room with his squeaky British voice to introduce four of the seven Evil Exes included in the movie, one being Gideon Graves, the seventh Evil Ex, the most evil, most daunting Ex of them all. Here he comes, here he is, the lovely Jason—  
BAM.

He's got a mustache. And it's not *just* a mustache, either; it's the dreaded porn 'stache. The sight of this thing hits me like a freight train. It's comparable in scope to the piece Robert Downey, Jr. tried to rock a year or two ago, and Jason's seems to be having the same negative effect on me. Expecting to see him with the clean-shaven look he sported in *Scott Pilgrim*, this hairy intruder came as quite the shock. Sure, I can deal with the look for an hour or two while watching *The Darjeeling Limited*, but seeing it in person is just a completely different experience.

Listening to him speak, I know that he's the same sweet, friendly, down-to-earth Jason that I've read about in interviews and heard on talk shows, but it's hard to get past the mustache. I can't help but wonder if his wife, a fashion designer, approves of her husband's newest venture, and I try to comfort myself by thinking that he's growing it for a new movie role or something.

After the panel, *Pilgrim* fans are directed toward an event called the *Scott Pilgrim* Experience. The Experience, which took over the Hilton hotel across the street, includes free T-shirt and flipbook making, video game testing, and most importantly, meet-and-greets and autograph signings. Jason is scheduled to be at one of those meet-and-greets.

The idea of meeting him thrills me to no end, and I'm confident that I'll be able to put the mustache aside if the event does happen to arise. I decide the day before to put everything else I was planning to check out on Saturday on the backburner so that my plan of action is focused entirely

on meeting Jason. The Experience doesn't open until ten o'clock, so I get there at eight, waiting with about one hundred other *Scott Pilgrim* fans. I had skipped breakfast, so the sight of another part of the Experience, a giant red truck offering free garlic bread, is a welcome distraction—except for the fact that the truck doesn't open until ten, either.

Once we maneuver our way through the Experience and have acquired our share of freebies, a friend I met while waiting in line and I stake out our spots in the autograph line, which at that time consists of about fifteen people. While waiting in line, I start looking at everyone around me, and for the most part, no one seems especially excited to meet Jason, arguably the least known of the three. The girl next to me hasn't even heard of *Scott Pilgrim*; she's just a fan of Michael Cera and wants to meet him. I'm toying with the idea of asking him to sign my copy of *Rushmore*, but I don't know how many things they're allowed to sign, and I don't want to risk getting kicked out of line.

By the time noon—the specified signing time—rolls around and Edgar, Michael, and Jason take their places on the stage, the line has unsurprisingly grown to a few hundred people, at least. Jason's at the end of the table, and I make a split-second decision that because he's on the end, I really wouldn't be holding anyone up if I asked him to sign something extra; it'd be a different story if he was in the

middle like Michael, but he's not, and that's that.

Edgar comments on my *Big Lebowski* shirt and how excited he was to meet Jeff Bridges earlier at the Con; Michael signs my poster and accidentally misspells his own name, quickly adding in an "A" with a tiny arrow; and before I can blink, Jason's sitting right in front of me.

"Hi! How are you?" He smiles and takes my poster.

I tell him I'm doing well, what about him? He is, too. I feel like I'm doing a decent job keeping eye contact with him. I'm proud of this, especially because I had been nervous that his mustache would have the same effect on me that some facial piercings do—I end up focusing more on the piercing than the person, which can make things slightly uncomfortable.

While he's signing, I make some type of hesitant noise, like I'm about to say something but then cut myself off, and he stops. He looks at me, a little taken aback—probably because I sounded like some small object was lodged in my throat—and I quickly blurt out how excited I am to meet him. He sets his Sharpie down and looks at me again, his eyes a little wider than before. It's as if he's more surprised to hear these words come out of my mouth than that terribly awkward noise seconds earlier.

"...Really?" he asks, sounding afraid that this is some kind of prank, that I'm an undercover agent from *Punk'd* or something.

I feel like I'm not even talking to one of my favorite actors—he makes me feel so much less nervous and spluttering than I thought I'd be—he's just like any other person, except that hundreds of people are lined up so he can sign something for them. It feels like it would be entirely possible for me to pick a place for the two of us to meet up and eat lunch at later. I smile and tell him that of course I'm really excited to meet him; he's one of my all-time favorite actors.

"Aw, come here." He leans across the table and gives me a hug. It's slightly off-balance—he's on one side of the table and I'm on the other, plus I'm wearing a backpack that's bigger than most small mammals—but it's still a hug, and he adds, "That just made my day; thank you so much!"

Any sin this man has committed—past, present, and future, fashion-related or otherwise—is officially forgiven.

I tell him about how we play Coconut Records, his newest music project, at work all the time, and he seems genuinely flattered. While I'm waiting for my friend behind me to finish meeting him, I decide to grab a close-up picture of him. He's busy signing her shirt, and I'm perfectly fine with any picture of him, but as he's handing the shirt back, he notices me again and flashes a thumbs-up.

I don't even care anymore: mustache or not, he's the best, and his wife is an incredibly lucky woman.

...and he did end up signing my copy of *Rushmore*.



## **WHAT WE DID WHEN WE WEREN'T DOING OTHER THINGS IN BED**

**STEPHANIE MILLIGAN**

“You look like a chicken,” I’d say  
as goose bumps rose on your flesh.  
Hot summer moments, only a sheet  
for cover. I’d slowly trace circles,  
letters, or lines on your pale  
sensitive skin. Tiny bumps would appear,  
copying the motion of a wave  
as they raced across  
your side. Eyes closed,  
you’d smile. I’d do it again.  
And again. You’d return the favor,  
but no repeats. I couldn’t  
stand it like you could.  
I was envious of your control.

It's been a few years since I played  
the role of the one who gives  
you goose bumps.  
But the look in your eye, before I shift  
my own away, tells me  
that you could use a fix. And the other day  
when you removed your sweatshirt  
and your t-shirt rose with it,  
almost instinctively I reached out  
to touch your side, but pulled back.



## LAST NIGHT IN PROHIBITION CHICAGO

ALORA HEFFERNAN

**T**he room was painted yellow. She was sitting in the window seat staring at the city below her. It looked ugly in the early afternoon sunshine and she wished it was night, when the city glowed. She loved when it glowed; it was when the city was everything that she wanted it to be. Full of life, rhythm, excitement, and adventure pouring out of every building and alley; even now during the prohibition nothing could stop the life that poured through the Chicago.

Rosalie could see the trolley making its way downtown and hear the ringing of its bells calling out as people ran their errands and went about their business. She could see the steel frame of the new Pittsfield Building being built across town.

She pulled the curtains back to feel the breeze that was coming in from the open window. It was sweltering; even the breeze was hot and humid. Rosalie could feel herself sticking to the wall through the thin fabric of her light jersey blouse. She pulled away from the wall a bit as the rotating fan blew on her, allowing the change in airflow to reach her. The apartment was small, with three rooms: bedroom, small kitchen (very small), and a slightly bigger living room, where Sam was pacing at the moment, but it had its own bathroom. It was nicer than she'd expected for this point in her life.

She turned her face away from the glass when Sam

finally spoke.

“It’s not a problem, not a problem,” he muttered to himself over and over again.

Rosalie went back to looking out the window, waiting for him to say something coherent. She traced the pattern of the window seat cushion, thinking about what brought her to this point.

“All right,” Sam said finally stopping his pacing and facing her, “This is what we’re gonna do.”

Rosalie sat restlessly in the chair waiting. The georgette fabric of her light shift dress was still too heavy and even her silk stockings felt warm. She was sweating and uncomfortable and wanted nothing to do with what was about to happen. She sipped from the glass of smuggled vodka in her hand. It was doing nothing for her nerves or the temperature. She scooped a piece of ice out of the glass and sucked on it, hoping it would cool her down from the inside out.

“His car just pulled around the corner,” Sam said from the other side of the room where he’d been hungrily watching the street.

Rosalie choked on her ice cube.

Sam paced the room and glared at her as she stood and tried to cough it out. “For God’s sake Rosalie, sit down,” Sam snapped, stalking back to the other side of the living

room, "I need you to be charming enough to get the money this time."

Rosalie sat back in the chair, "It won't work, Sam, he's a good kid."

"I don't care, he likes you."

"I don't want to do it, Sam. He *is* a good kid, I'm sure we can figure out another way to pay them back." Rosalie looked down and adjusted the way her beige stocking was twisting near the strap of her pastel pink Mary Janes.

"We don't have time, Rosie," Sam walked over to her and placed a hand on each arm rest, "Moran wants his money and we don't have it."

"Well, that's not my fault now, is it?" she snapped back.

Sam leaned over her his face a few inches from her own, "They don't call him 'Bugs' for nothing, Rosalie, you get that money or we're both going to be in the dirt somewhere so mutilated that no one will recognize our faces." Sam voice softened as he leaned closer, "You don't want to be responsible for that, do you, Rosie? Just play your part, no one will get hurt. He can afford it no problem and we'll be home free. We'll go somewhere nice; you'd like that, right? If we got out of Chicago, maybe head towards one the coast? What do you say, babe? Somewhere you can sit by the ocean all day, where it's warm and you can sit by the water."

Sam's green eyes never broke contact with Rosalie's

blue ones as he leaned down and kissed her lightly. Rosalie stayed stock still. When Sam lifted his head a little she was still staring wide eyed at him.

"I hate the heat," she said. Rosalie narrowed her eyes and looked away from him. "I won't do it. You shouldn't have gotten mixed up with the North Side Gang, Sam. You're small time, always have been. You shouldn't have promised them you could smuggle that much spirits out of Canada." Rosalie tried to stand up but Sam's hulking figure was still leaning over her and he shoved her thin shapeless frame back into the chair with one hand.

Sam's face hardened and his voice gained an edge, "Listen to me, you're going to do it, you two bit con-artist or I'm going to do something far less pleasant."

"No, you won't dare harm him, you stupid thug, his daddy owns one of the largest companies in the city. Everyone's got their hand in that pot. I don't know how you think you're going to get away with it. I won't do it."

Crack. Sam's backhand snapped Rosalie's head to the side. She could feel her cheek swell instantly and tears sprung to her eyes.

"You will because I told you to," he said, stepping back and walking to the bedroom. He shut the door.

Rosalie touched her cheek gingerly with her fingertips. Her skin was flaming hot. She gently held her cold glass against her cheek and waited. She didn't have to wait long before the knock on the door. She stood up and walked

over to the door, working her jaw as she went. She painfully tacked a brilliant smile on her face as she pulled the door open.

"Harry," Rosalie purred leaning against the door frame. She angled her body so that her unswollen cheek was facing him.

"Hello, Charlotte," Harry Burman said, placing a chaste kiss on her proffered cheek. Rosalie moved backwards into the room so Harry could enter. She was unnerved when she felt twinge of annoyance at the fake name.

Rosalie gestured towards the sofa with her hand. "Can I get you a drink, Harry?"

"A real drink? Charlotte, you're corrupting me," he smiled as she wandered to the side board. She could feel his stare roam over her as she poured a generous amount in his glass and refilled her own. His eyes traveled up her delicious legs, on display up to the knee thanks to her beige stockings and short hemline on her straight shift; rose-colored evening dress. She sauntered slowly back to Harry, his gaze locked on her bare shoulders as she handed him the glass.

Rosalie sat down next to him, still careful to keep her smarting cheek out of Harry's line of sight. She took a sip of her drink and toyed with the string of pearls she wore.

"You're quiet, Charlotte. Is everything okay?" Harry asked looking quizzically at her.

"Oh, yes, everything fine, how was the race track

today?"

"Wonderful, I wish you could have come and brought me some luck but I did all right..."

Rosalie's attention wavered as Harry talked about his day at the races. He was different than her usual mark. Rosalie generally relieved enormously wealthy old women or couples of large charitable donations. On occasion she spent a few weeks conning decent sums out of short stack gangsters. Harry was different. Yes, he fit the filthy rich criteria, but he was young... only a year or two older than herself, maybe twenty-six, and relatively inexperienced in the heartbreaking realities of life. Rosalie had no desire to be the reason that this happy and innocent young man turned bitter and hateful.

Rosalie blinked suddenly, realizing that Harry was now inches from her face and staring intently at her, looking concerned. He smiled a little as her gaze cleared and she snapped her head back a few inches.

"There you are, Charlotte, are you sure you're okay? You were just wool-gathering for a few minutes." Harry didn't pull back, maintaining close proximity with Rosalie.

"I'm so sorry, Harry, I got lost in my thoughts," she said quietly.

"You looked positively far away, darling," Harry said watching her closely.

"Yes, well, it was positively rude; I don't know what



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came over me.” Rosalie turned to reach for the glass she had placed on the end table next to the sofa. She took a steady gulp and replaced it. Harry gazed at her intently as she turned back around. “What?” she asked.

“Charlotte,” Harry said sympathetically. He reached out and gently took her chin between his forefinger and thumb and turned her now bruised face towards the light.

“Oh damn, I forgot,” said Rosalie irritated with herself for forgetting to keep her face averted. She had become quite distracted.

“Charlotte, who hit you?” Harry asked quietly. He moved his fingers ever so gently up to trace the bruise. Rosalie winced. “That fresh? Charlotte that must have just happened!”

“It’s nothing, walked into a door frame trying to put my hat on earlier. I got upset with it after that and decided to go without the cloche this evening.”

He looked disbelievingly at her perfect finger waves, “And your cloche didn’t mess up your curls at all?”

“Harry, leave it alone,” Rosalie said pulling away from him and standing up.

“No, Charlotte, you don’t have to take that kind of treatment. I don’t know who did it to you, but if you’re involved with one of those gang thugs, let me help.” He was

looking at her with such earnestness that Rosalie didn't have the heart to lie to him anymore. She had to face it, she cared for this mark. She couldn't con him, she didn't even want to.

"Harry, just leave, please just go home," Rosalie begged. She started ushering him towards the door.

"Darling, please don't push me out. Just let me take you out of here, I can protect you, Charlotte. I know you don't think so but I can, I'm not as naïve and powerless as I let society think I am," he said, looking in her eyes and holding onto her hand even as she attempted to shove him towards the door.

"Please go," she held his gaze, hoping he would just move. He started to turn but it was already too late. Sam threw open the bedroom door and stomped towards them.

"What the hell? Maxwell?" Harry shouted looking confusedly from Sam to Rosalie.

"Damn it, Rosalie, I warned you!" Sam shouted picking a vase up off a table as he continued towards them.

"Rosalie?" Harry tuned towards Rosalie who had turned white. Her wild stare met Harry's just as Sam reached them.

"Sam, no!" she yelled as he lifted the vase to bring it crashing down on Harry's head. Harry saw it coming just in time and the vase smashed on his elbow. He cried out and clutched his arm to his body. Devoid of a satisfactory

weapon, Sam made a swing at him but Harry stepped out of reach.

"Charlotte, what is going on?" Harry yelled putting a chair between himself and Sam.

"It's Rosalie," she said as tears began streaming down her face, "My name is Rosalie."

Harry looked at her but Sam blocked his view as he tried to knock Harry out again.

"Max or Sam whatever your name is."

"It's Sam," Rosalie shouted from her side of the room.

"Fine. Sam, I thought we were friends? If she was your girl why didn't you just tell me?" Harry asked ducking and moving around the chair again.

"It's not about the girl, you idiot."

"Come on, whatever it is I'm sure we can work it out."

"Sam, what are you going to do?" Rosalie yelled, "You know you can't kill him. Bugs would kill you!"

"I'm going to ransom him back, you idiotic whore, now help me knock him out!" Sam yelled advancing on Harry again.

"No, I won't do it!" Rosalie yelled moving towards the door. "Harry run, just get out of here."

Sam let out a strangled cry and picking a decanter up from the sideboard, threw it at her. Rosalie shrieked and ducked. Harry moved putting himself between Rosalie and the advancing Sam. The gesture reached to the very core of Rosalie. No one had ever protected her. Rosalie watched as Sam picked up the end table, dropping her glass to the ground with a crash. Harry tensed for the blow and started to push Rosalie towards the door but Rosalie already knew she couldn't do it. She couldn't let Sam kidnap Harry. Sam would take him to Bugs to be ransomed and Bugs would kill him. Bugs would kill them all.

Rosalie used all of her body weight to switch Harry's momentum as he pushed her towards the door. Off balance by the sudden lack of resisting weight, Harry tripped forward and Rosalie slipped past him towards Sam.

"Run!" she yelled at him, making eye contact as he fell past her. She hoped her eyes said how sorry she was.

Rosalie turned to face Sam just as it was too late for him to stop his swing. The last thing she saw was the oak wood of the tabletop before stars popped and her world went dark.



## **YEARLY LOVE**

**CATHERINE SHANLEY**

Summer green, what you promise me.  
Pure happiness, then you'll show it's all a dream.  
Summer green, you lowly harbinger  
Trick me into thinking there's no danger.

Summer honey, sweet and lovely.  
Pure fucking pleasure,  
it could not get better.  
Summer honey, I'm far too happy  
but I think you stay to showcase your beauty.

Summer bitch, finally scratch my itch  
it bleeds when you go  
and I think you know.  
Summer bitch, I could marry you  
but I'm not worthy and you become cruel.

Summer love, never lost my trust  
but she's a cruel muse, never gives enough.  
Summer love, every good bye, abrupt  
cant you know my pain that I must give you up.



**WATERFALL-KELSEY ESCOBAR**

## **MOTHER AND CHILD**

**SUZANNE WRATNI**

A child lost her innocence  
A mother yelled angry words  
A child thinks she knows it all  
A mother's words were never heard  
A child walked away in tears  
A mother feels her pain  
A child has so very much to lose  
A mother tried so hard to explain  
A child doesn't see with her eyes  
A mother sees with her heart  
A child has forsake her home  
A mother's bond has been torn apart  
A child has romantic fantasies  
A mother lives in the real world  
A child has led a protected life

*MOTHER AND CHILD-SUZANNE WRATNI*

A mother knows that life is cruel  
A child will have to soon realize  
A mother does what she thinks is best  
A child will become a mother  
A mother knows that she is blessed.





## **BELOVED DEATH**

**MARIA MATOS**

**I** am abducted. The dread steeds blacker than night tore from the Earth, fire roared and burned in their eyes. A strong arm grasped my small waist, pulling me into a cloak of black fire and darkness. The small narcissus flower that bewitched me had been a mere trap to lure me into Death's cold hands.

I am separated from my mother. As I was taken deeper into the depths of the Underworld I shed bitter tears not from the fear of what awaited me in Hell, but the fear of never feeling the warmth of my mother's embrace again. Torn from the bosom of nature and pushed into the cold and lifeless after. I weep and grieve in the arms of my captor.

I am in the dark, haunted by the grieving souls that cry out to me. I shut myself away from it all, even when Death carried me into his threshold. I lay in his bed of black and silver silk, my eyes watch as his large hands undress me. His hair spilled out like a black curtain that framed his face and cold silver eyes. As I soon come to realize what was to become of me, my fear blinded me and stole all the words from my lips. I was too frightened to feel how tender he was being, how careful; I never saw the sadness that plagued his eyes or the loneliness that had frozen them. Tears continued to fall from my eyes; Death kissed and drank every single tear until there were no more tears left to shed. Then his lips found mine; he kissed and tasted my untouched flesh.

That first night in Hell, Death did not conquer. He left with a stolen kiss, leaving his hunt bare and frightened.

I lay in the bed, staring up, with nowhere to go, a trapped prey. Confusion wraps around my naked body and mind. Why de he not finish and taken that which he desired? No woman would come to his bed. My mother had known that he lusted after me. I was spring, pure and innocent. Death craved my warmth and body.

I am alone in Death's bed. Though still frightened, I slowly come to realize the true nature of my captor. Death was meant to be feared and loathed but never loved. Denied of the warm touch of a woman and her sweet embrace. Frozen by the choking loneliness, Death was driven by the desire to take, that which was so long denied. He then took me, the most coveted and desired. Death wanted to be the one take me; it would be his revenge. But Death was not cruel; he stopped before it was too late. He had left ashamed and loathing himself.

I embrace Death. I shook his frown into a face of puzzlement. Death is a man, capable of feeling, a wounded soul hiding a gentle heart. Our lips became stained red by the pomegranate that bound us forevermore. His hands caress my body; his lips taste me. Tenderly he spread me apart as he delved inside my warmth. He broke through the innocence and awakened a woman. It was a painful transformation, but I embraced it. In me he poured his seed and tears. Our hearts pounded against our chests as our lips were sealed against each other. That night, warmth had melted the coldness of Death; spring spread across his reign,

birthing the Elysian Fields.

There is light in death. He is Hades, King of Souls and King of the Underworld. I am Persephone, his Queen and the light in his reign. We are the Wolf and the Lamb, lovers that should never be, and yet we still love with burning flames that not even Aphrodite herself could ever imagine.



## SPRING PORTRAIT

SUZANNE WRATNI

heads of golden daffodils tremble  
touched by unseen winds  
the rhythmic swaying hypnotizing  
darting bumble bees as they seek  
the sweet nectar that nourishes their  
wide banded bodies  
tightly belted in black and yellow  
they dive downward  
reveling in the bounty they have found  
dizzy with the over indulgences of spring's  
first offering... an insecticidal drunken binge  
playfully, they buzz  
stopping here and there to alight  
upon the grass or a window shutter  
faded a pale blue from last summer's

*THE MANATEE*

relentless sun, basking  
pure contentment, fully sated,  
flying off to slumber in the  
cool shelter of the barely budding  
lilac bush... dreaming, pondering  
of another feast when they arouse.





**PATH-KELSEY ESCOBAR**

## DEAD MAN WALKING

MEGAN KIDDER

"Lame!" She boasted from the passenger's seat of his silver BMW. "Lame, lame, lame!" she continued, laughing.

"It was not lame!" He was laughing too. "It was a really scary movie!" He clenched the steering wheel in faux fear of the film they'd just seen.

"Oh, come on, it was a mash of boobs and slaughter by machete to the tune of strategically heavy bass," her face was lit up in the dashboard's greenish glow. She seemed even more flawless than usual in such a forgiving light as it accentuated her emerald eyes. She was wearing a deep green pea coat and jeans. Her long dark chocolate hair cascaded down past her shoulders in luminous waves, moving as she spoke theatrically.

"How philosophical of you," he could only smile at her. A muffled alternative rock station played on the lowest volume in the background. In that moment, when he looked at her,

everything felt perfect.

"I've got it all figured out," her voice was a perfect combination of sweet and raspy. She struggled not to let her infamous smirk appear when she was attempting to be serious. He knew her better than that.

"It still scared me," the street seemed to glisten from the dampness of a previous rainfall, the lights gleamed yellow and red off of the pavement as they slowed to a stop.

"Did you know that your dreams are a reflection of what you thought about thirty minutes before you went to sleep?" He relaxed against his seat, raising an eye brow at her as they continued waiting for no one. The street was completely empty at eleven thirty on a Friday night. "It might be a smart idea if I took your mind off of the movie," even the way she blinked intrigued him.

"I think that might be a good idea," escaped in a warm breath.

The vacant parking lot seemed as good of a place as any to veer into with its secretive single street light. In the idyllic corner of the property, he cut the head lights and shut off the engine. Leaving them with the whispering of the radio and that familiar illumination to set the mood they were aiming for.

She found herself unbuckling her seat belt and leaning toward the driver's seat in an attempt to get her lips touching his. The first peck was soft and light, but enough to rattle the butterflies that were asleep in her stomach.

With eyes closed, lips and noses still touching, they felt each other smile. Then, they shared another kiss, this one a bit harder than the last. He slid her body toward him as they continued kissing. Her left hand found its way to the side of his neck. She held him there, gently fiddling with the edge of his short dark hair. His hands stumbled to the glassy coffee tinted buttons of her coat, unfastening them without looking. The kisses were rhythmic as their breathing fell in step together. He kissed her neck, his scruffy stubble tickling her soft skin. With both hands, he slid her jacket off. She let it fall as she inched closer, almost sharing the driver's seat with him. Feeling as heated as the fogged windows, she held him there, her eyes burning into his. The world outside the front seat was



nonexistent.

"I love you," He looked up at her. She had her back facing the steamy windshield as she faced him, her legs bestride his lap.

"I love you more," she pecked him on the nose. She knew that her positioning wasn't why he loved her, she appreciated that.

"Doubtful," he felt the warmth of her blushing on his cold hands as he touched her face, running his fingers through her locks that seemed like silk.

In rebuttal to his comment, she kissed him, pressing her entire body against his. Her smooth mane didn't seem as interesting after she executed this maneuver. His hands fell to her waist, holding her there as she continued to devour his kisses. His fingertips graced the hem of her baby blue long sleeved shirt. His cool palms ran up her warm stomach, stopping at the edge of her bra.

"Excuse me," he could tell she was smiling as she spoke, eyes still closed.

"Yes?"

"Oh, nothing," her breath caressed his face. Even in the dark he could make out her sexy smile, he replied with a similar smirk of his own and they continued kissing.

He began pushing her lacy undergarment over her sufficiently endowed chest. Suddenly, they were startled out of their bliss.

*THUMP!*

Both heads snapped to the rear window of the passenger's side. She gasped loudly, frightened as ever. She instantly clung to him as their senses heightened, trying not to succumb to a heart attack.

"What the *fuck*?" He was beside himself as his head

raced in a million different places. His thoughts were as cloudy as the windows of the car.

"What was that?" She sat up and fixed herself, easing back into her seat.

"I have no idea," his jaw clenched as he tried to peer out of the windows without seeming suspicious. He saw three looming figures, congregated around the site of the noise. He cautiously reached behind him to the floor of the backseat and slowly withdrew a metal baseball bat.

"Why do you have that?" Her skepticism was more out of fear than anything.

"Protection," he looked out through the fogged window, trying to gain confidence. "I guess."

"You're not going to...use that, are you?" He could hear the fright in her voice.

"Just stay right here," He ordered with one hand on the door handle.

"But," her emerald eyes started to tear up.

"Eden, please just stay here where you're safe."

"Cade!" He could feel the desperation in her voice tugging at him to stay.

"Edie," he took her face into his hands, looking her straight in the eyes with his hazel glare. "I will be right back!" She knew it was no use fighting it, and his use of her nickname signified that he was promising her as best he could. She nodded as her eyes burned with tears. He pulled her face to his and kissed her. "I love you," he said and opened the door. The dome light seemed to make it all real. She was unable to control the trembling as he closed the door behind him.

"What is *this*?" Cade noticed a substantial rock on the ground next to his recently dented car. It seemed a perfect match.

There were three men, all in their early twenties dressed in baggy jeans, oversized t-shirts, and wife beaters, despite the late fall weather.

"What does it look like, tough guy?" The runt of the group was vocal in his bandana, trying desperately to resemble 2pac, if only 2pac had been a scrawny Caucasian male.

"Dude," Cade couldn't believe what he was seeing. "You ruined the side of my car!"

"Yeah? I could ruin your face too," he clearly had an attitude along with other issues.

"Look, I don't want any trouble at all. I just don't quite understand why you'd throw an object at my car," Cade thought maybe being calm and collected would be his ticket out of there, until they started to get closer like a gang of sharks.

"Because you look like the kind of guy who has shit we could use," another member piped up. Cade never thought he could be intimidated by a twenty two year old who resembled a white rapper, but he was.

"What kind of... shit?" Cade was willing to get out of the situation.

"Money," the one Cade decided to name Julio, answered, getting closer. By this point, Cade's body was against the car, hiding the bat behind his legs.

"Yeah, goods like that, Rich Boy," they had decided to name him too. The bandana clad leader of the gang was almost in Cade's face. He didn't smell nice.

"Go fuck yourself," Cade spat to the rough looking front man.

"EMPTY YOUR POCKETS, RICH BOY!" He smelled of stale beer, cigarettes and a slight skunk like mist that could've been marijuana or a lack of showering.

"I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING THAT YOU'D WANT!"

They laughed in his face.

"Doubt it, Mr. BMW."

"Good idea, steal my car, go ahead! I can give the police an excellent description of all three of you!" Cade had never felt this livid about something in his entire life.

Eden could hear muted shouting outside of the car. She didn't like the way that the three figures were surrounding Cade. She knew she probably couldn't fight them, but she had to get out of that car and do something. Going against Cade's wishes, she carefully opened the car door and emerged.

"Who is this babe?" One of the minions asked Cade as Eden tiptoed around the corner of the car.

"My girlfriend," Cade's teeth were clenched. "Eden, GET BACK IN THE CAR!" His eyes were pleading. He never yelled at her, but he was desperate.

"No, honey, stay," the guy in charge said, turning toward her, licking his lips as he looked her up and down. She instantly regretted getting out of the car. She could've just stayed inside and called the police.

"Hey!" Cade was ignored.

"What do you say, baby?" he raised a greasy eyebrow at her followed by a wink.

"No thanks," she was nervous but still managed to wrinkle her nose in disgust at the proposition.

"C'mon," he was not as good at crooning as he thought he was, but he drew closer.

"No," she backed away, her flat bottomed boots slipped on an unsettled rock. The pebble rolled under her heel, causing her to lose her balance at a time when clumsiness wasn't ideal.

The creep caught her as she began to fall. As much as she squirmed, he touched her arm and said, "Hmm, looks like I

swept you off your feet."

"Get off of me before I vomit," she struggled, but his grip was past the point of uncomfortable.

"Oh, come on, Sugar," he seemed amused at her discomfort as he smiled at her.

"Stop touching me."

Cade tried to make his way to her but Julio's little sidekicks grabbed a hold of his arms, knocking his baseball bat under the car with a loud metal echo. He scuffed his feet across the ground, trying to break free to help Eden. Instead, he was forced to watch her get harassed.

"LET HER GO!" Cade, infuriated, was ignored again.

"Shhh," the slime ball attempted to calm Eden as he smelled her hair.

"You're disgusting," she huffed at him, too revolted to even cry.

"Aw baby, why you gotta go and ruin my good mood like that? Doesn't a pretty little girl like you wanna have some fun?" His ignorance made her despise him even more.

"No," She rejected everything about him, she wanted to run but the grip he had on her arm kept her frozen in fear. Fear of her safety and Cade's. He must have been able to feel her terror through her sleeve because he squeezed her arm harder.

He then boldly tried to kiss her. Eden surprised him a bit by spitting in his face as his grimy lips tried to invade her personal bubble. In the midst of his shock, she tried to wiggle away. He abruptly grabbed her by the hair on the back of her head and tossed her onto the car.

"STOP TOUCHING HER OR I'LL KILL YOU!" Cade couldn't handle the rage pumping through his veins; the protruding one on his neck was a sure sign of this. The makeshift guards had a death grip on him, no matter how much

force he used, they had him tightly.

"Whoa, wait, Richie Rich," he held Eden against the car as he faced Cade, looking him straight in the eye. "I haven't done anything to your girl...yet," he shot Cade the most stomach turning of smiles.

"YOU BASTARD!" Cade could not break free, no amount of yelping he did could loosen their grip.

Cade had to watch Eden sob as their attacker pushed her against the hood of his car and held her there as she tried to scramble away, kicking and screaming. The monster grabbed her face with one hand and squeezed her cheeks together, forcing her to look at him.

"STOP!" She tried pleading.

"I wish you'd just cooperate, honey," he was so close that he breathed on her neck.

"Stop calling me that, you piece of shit!" She tried to kick him as she shrieked, but missed.

"Oh, feisty," he found a way to make any response in his favor as he smirked. "I'll just have to be rough with you then."

He put all of his weight upon her and kissed her neck as she squirmed. He reached his filthy hand with fingernails, blackened by dirt and cigarette ashes, toward her chest and tore open her v-neck, exposing her camisole and the lace trim of her bra. Her shirt was ripped to shreds as his face twisted with satisfaction. No amount of kicking or screaming could free either Cade or Eden. She could see the assailant's face through blurry tears as he pulled down the left side of her tank top, breaking the elastic strap, revealing her blue bra.

"Please, just stop," all of the screaming had gotten to her vocal chords. A whimper was all she was able to muster.

"STOP IT!" Although her ears were ringing she could still hear Cade screaming, which oddly put her a bit at ease.

The goon looked at her jeans, she couldn't say a word. She could only imagine what was going to happen to her. The thought made her want to throw up the popcorn she'd eaten at the movies, which seemed like a lifetime ago.

"YOU SICK FUCK!" Cade couldn't take this anymore. He was not going to let this animal hurt Eden anymore than he already had. In one adrenaline fueled motion, Cade dug his heel into thug number one's foot and his teeth into thug number two's arm. Both hoodlums winced in pain as Cade dived to the baseball bat, his brain didn't even register the movement.

"I WILL beat your brains out, I mean it!" His hand was tightened around the bat and his eyes were filled with rage as a low voice came from within him, a growl.

The two helpers seemed to trade glances and backed off. The leader had his hands on the belt loop of Eden's jeans and before he knew it, the cold metal bat collided with the side of his face. It burnt like hell and knocked him into a state of confusion as blood trickled down his cheek. He was surprised to see the rich boy with a bat held in hand and ready, with blunt force.

"Get away from her!" Cade saw a sharp piece of metal catch the glare of the far away street light. A knife, this ruffian had a knife. "I'm not scared of you," Cade was more confident than ever. Without hesitation, he huffed and smacked the offender's hand. The ping of the bat clattered along with the sound of breaking bones. Eden sat on the hood of the car, cringing at the noises.

"AHHHH!" The aggressor fell to his knees.

His boys didn't stick around for much longer after they saw their partner's hand, a mangled black and purple mess. The monster wasn't going down without a fight. After his buddies left into the night, he tried throwing a punch with his other

hand. Cade brought the bat behind his shoulders and wacked him in the stomach with a home run worthy swing. He doubled over and fell to the ground, trying to reach for his knife. All Cade could see was this freak ripping open Eden's shirt and it was as though he blacked out.

Cade's voice rang out in a scream as he brought the bat into the assailant's shoulder. "You! Filthy! Son! Of! A! Bitch!" Cade flung the bat into his flesh after every word. It wasn't long until the fog lifted and Cade realized he hadn't been fighting back for a few minutes. Their attacker lay still, face down on the asphalt.

Everything stopped for a moment.

Eden and Cade stood over the body. Eden's hands covered her mouth in total awe. Cade couldn't even breathe as they looked over the body on the ground.

The only source of light was that of the dim streetlight many feet away. Cade looked at Eden's face, pale with terror. He finally realized what he'd done. Cade instantly dropped the weapon to the ground; the metal ping reverberated off of the pavement when it collided.

"Cade..." Eden was almost breathless, "Is he alive?" She looked like a mouse in a trap, squeaking in shock. It made his heart sink. Everything was silent except the ringing in his ears. He kicked the leg of the assaulter, he was lifeless. Even through his shoe, Cade knew there was no chance of this man being alive.

"Cade..." Eden couldn't say anything but his name, as she backed away from him. "Cade."

"Edie," He felt his throat tighten and his eyes swell up with tears as he stood watching the dread in her stance as he tried to walk toward her.



"Don't talk to me," there was a hiss about her voice as she hugged herself. Her expression was unlike any other he'd ever seen upon her face. It was a mix of a stoic stun and tears.

"Eden, I didn't mean to," he was crying now too as reality began to emerge. He took a few shaky steps toward her, as he reached out his hand, she didn't even wince. "He was going to hurt you! I was trying...trying to protect..."

"You killed someone, Cade!" Her hurt green eyes seemed to cut through his flesh and straight through his heart.

"He was hurting you!"

"You could've called the police," she retorted. Her face was once vibrant and rosy, now it looked pale and sunken in as she glanced everywhere but his eyes.

"I didn't think I had time," it was almost as if the statement had come from someone else's mouth, but the way it tasted indicated otherwise.

"You didn't have to kill him," her voice was raspier than ever, it hurt to speak.

"I'm sorry," he whispered not only to Eden. He walked closer and reached out to hug her. Thirty minutes ago she was kissing him, touching him with a want like she'd never let go. Now she pushed him away.

"No, not yet," She talked to him like he was a different person, avoiding his stare. "I'm still not okay."

They couldn't do anything but stand there in the cold. Eden hugged herself as Cade buried his trembling hands deep in the pockets of his jeans. He blinked his tears away so he could see her without blur; she was still as beautiful as he remembered despite the events that had dramatically changed her evening, her life. He couldn't lose her over this, she was far too important to him. As corny as it sounded, he needed her, especially now when he didn't deserve her at all.

"What do I do?" He'd never cried like this before, the tears felt scorching as they trickled down his cheeks like a faucet.

"I don't know," She was crying too. Somewhat unattractively, she wiped her nose on the back of her hand and repositioned her stance. As she did so, he saw her torn shirt and a scrape below her collarbone from the struggle. He didn't know how to ask her for more when she'd already been through enough.

"Will you help me?" His voice cracked.

"Why should I help you?" Her new demeanor was both blank and cold.

"Because I love you," he didn't even have to think about it. "Eden, I would do absolutely anything for you. I promise that if you just help me figure out what I'm supposed to do that I'll make it up to you. Anything you want, it's yours. I'll forever be in debt to you; I'll make sure that you have the best life you could possibly have. I will love you until the day I die and then some. Eden, despite what I might have done, I am nothing without you. I can't possibly imagine bringing you home right now and never getting to see your beautiful face again. I cannot do that, Edie, please... I love you," for reasons completely nontheatrical, he fell to his knees, sobbing. His head was pounding, if he could've died right then and there, he would have.

She walked to him. Standing over his quivering body, she reached down and grabbed his hands. She pushed out a smile as she stood him up and wiped his tears. "You better not be bullshitting me."

They smiled through their sadness and it was in that moment that Eden George decided she would stick with him through this, no matter what the consequences. He was still the

same Cade she knew and loved. She didn't let him answer her as she pulled herself together and said, "Quick, let's go to my house, I think I have a plan."

"A plan?" Cade was taken aback as he sniffled.

"We're going to run away," she said it with the utmost confidence, he couldn't refuse. He couldn't even respond.

Without hesitation, they got into the car, silently. Adrenaline was racing through their veins. They drove away, leaving the biggest mistake of Cade McAllister's life in a bloody mess on the pavement.



# TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

## *THE TRIP WILL BLOW YOUR MIND*

CHERYL NELSON OBRIEN

Where meet unknown seas and wizen'd suns  
and minds marching toward blank horizons,  
where roaches roar and seafood screams  
and captive souls dare not dream.

Where leaves turn fiery with trees yet green  
as you ride the high tide of a breeze unseen,  
turning brown, withering, landing in a yard  
raked into a pile, set ablaze and charred.

Where ashes to ashes and dust to dust  
mean nothing to you because the next gust  
will whip you up... up... up and away  
*to infinity and beyond* ... so they say.

Where terminal velocity no longer applies  
moving faster and faster you continue to fly  
and gravity can no longer hold you down  
or keep you chained ... eclipsed ... earthbound.

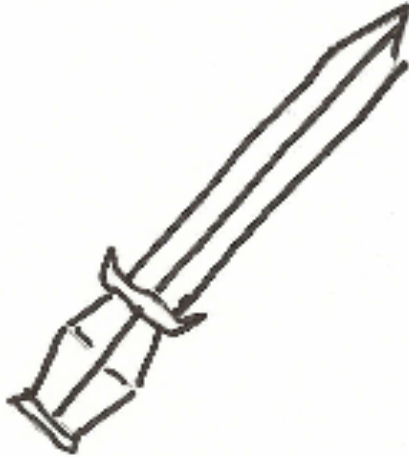
Where Damocletian swords hang by a hair  
as you sit for hours in your chair and stare  
those swords ready to sever old mind from new  
some go in a moment ... others, in a few.

*THE MANATEE*

Where truth has died, blitzed by lies  
that feast like flies on its blood-spattered cadaver  
its perverted corpse melts the mind and warps  
the soul pushed off the wharf adrift forever.

Where bridges are burned at critical points  
when mental coup d'états surreptitiously anoint  
newly enlightened minds with how to achieve  
a new civilization...simply said, the end justifies the means.

Where deception demands sacrifice of your personal morality  
in the fiery furnace of a "higher" reality  
and sadly it's surrendered with nonchalance  
a living sacrifice to the ersatz religious renaissance



## REST IN PIECES

CASSANDRA LEVESQUE

**Y**esterday morning, the store workers had dumped all of the oranges from the latest shipment out into the bins in the produce section of Hannaford's. One particular orange, who we shall call Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>), was very confused by this point, since he and his family had been yanked off of their tree in Florida and shipped up to New Hampshire. When he heard that they had been plucked from the tree just before the frost hit, he was grateful, but now he was very confused. Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) had lost track of where exactly he and his family had been taken during the trip, and was now trying to orient himself so he could go find his family.

When the humans walked away with the now-empty bins, he turned to the oranges next to him. He said hello, but they ignored him. Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) then turned to the oranges on his other side and received the same treatment. Now thoroughly confused, he turned to the oranges below him and was shocked to see that they were dead.

After a few moments spent hyperventilating, Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) pulled himself together and managed to roll over the dead oranges next to him and made his way to the next bin. He was met with carnage here too, although the others had not been dead long enough yet to start rotting. He

frantically rolled around, searching the bins, hoping that somehow, against all odds, his family had survived the trip as he had.

Then, just when he thought he'd never find them, he spotted his sister near the edge of one of the bins.

"Orange (the 464<sup>th</sup>)!" he shouted happily, rolling a little too quickly towards the edge in his haste to reach her. He was saved by the lip of the bin, and rolled to her side with only a slight bruise near his stem. "Sister!" he shouted as he reached her, expecting her to turn towards him as she always had back home.

When she didn't, he rolled over to her other side and recoiled in shock. Somehow, his sister had sustained horrible injuries on the ride down, injuries which included a gash across her face, and what looked like a nick from a knife near where her stem has been attached. The smells of rot and mold were very strong on her, but Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) couldn't stand to see his sister like that. He carefully turned her over, so that her fatal injuries were hidden, and she was beautiful in death as in life. Then, he rolled sadly away, stumbling over the other oranges in the bin.

Finally, he paused near an upper corner of the bin. He turned towards the carnage in the bins behind him, and suddenly a great fury replaced the sadness that had filled him before.

"I shall kill you all!" he screamed. "All of you humans, who callously allowed my sister and all of these other good

oranges to die! I shall carve your faces and bruise your heads as you have done to them!"

He paused, and looked around. Suddenly, he saw that there were many humans rushing around, and he felt a fierce joy, thinking that they were scurrying in fear of his mighty orange wrath. This feeling was crushed a moment later when a woman in a business suit walked up, examined the dead oranges, selected one, and walked away with it. Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) was now blind with fury. How could they just pick over the remains of his family and friends like vultures? How could they completely ignore his threat, and go about their scavenging ways?

Furiously, he rolled towards the next human to come close, gaining speed and bouncing over the dead as he went. Suddenly, when he had almost reached a point where he could spring out at the human's face, it said, "Whoops!" and caught him. He tried to attack, but the human just took a look at every part of him, fingered his bruises, and then placed him firmly between two other oranges so he couldn't roll away. Angrily, Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) tried to free himself, but by the time he'd succeeded, the human had grabbed three of the dead oranges and left.

Orange(the 463<sup>rd</sup>) paused. He realized now that a direct attack was useless. The humans were just too big, and there was no way he could effectively combat them alone.

He contemplated his situation.

He sat quietly in thought for hours, ignoring the



various humans who came up, grabbed other oranges, inspected him, and made selections of other, less bruised oranges.

Finally, towards the end of the day, he became alert. He peered around him, and saw that the humans were still in evidence. This time, however, they were more slow-moving, and many were either carrying big bins or pushing huge carts around, peering at everything. He suddenly noticed that there were other types of fruit around him, in different bins, but considering their conditions, he suspected they were as dead as the oranges he shared this bin with.

He studied the arrangement of the dead oranges around him, and the angle of the bins. He realized that he could potentially bury one of the humans in dead oranges, but that it would take skill, subtlety, and planning. He decided to think of the humans as prey, stupid creatures just waiting to be destroyed by the smarter predator. Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) chuckled to himself as he worked, rearranging the bodies carefully so that they were perfectly balanced to tumble down at the least provocation. Once they were arranged to his satisfaction, he squirmed down into the pile, right at the bottom. He felt the pressure as their bodies shifted slightly, leaning more on him as he pressed back on them. He hated to use them thus, but knew he had to avenge them somehow.

A little girl and her mother briefly paused by the orange bins, but the girl saw the deranged gleam in his eye, and screamed in fear until her mother took her away. She

was the smartest human he had seen yet, and was rather impressed that she, out of all of the humans who'd passed by that day, had recognized him as a force to be reckoned with.

The next woman was not so lucky. Nor was her son. Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) grinned as the little boy grasped him and then roughly yanked him out of the bin, causing most of the dead oranges to tumble out of the bin and slam into the boy's face. The dead impacted the floor hard. Some bounced but others, damaged like his sister, made a sickening splat against the linoleum as they landed, spraying everything with gore and an orange-scented mist. The mother was still shrieking as the boy struggled to free himself, dropping Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) in the process. Laughing in his mind, Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>) rolled away, heading towards the painted walls.

When he reached the wall, he turned and looked back at what he had done. He laughed as the humans slid and tripped over the dead oranges, but still couldn't shake the feeling that he should have somehow prevented the destruction of his sister's ravaged body. He glanced around him and spotted the door, thinking to himself, *If I can get away, her death and destruction will not have been in vain.*

He rolled his way along the wall, trying to go slowly enough that he would be able to escape unnoticed. The little girl from earlier spotted him, but her mother dragged her away before she could warn anyone that he was escaping.

When he reached the door, he paused, and looked

around in wonder at the white world he found himself in. The sky was stained orange, which he felt to be fitting given the situation. Storm clouds were appearing over the trees, and he knew he would have to make a clean getaway quickly, before they realized what he had done.

He rolled out onto the icy pavement, shivering in the freezing temperatures. He had almost reached the middle of the open space when a huge monster on wheels zoomed over him. For a moment he paused and looked back, but he realized that he had ventured too far to turn back now. More quickly now, fearing another of those horrible things, he raced towards the grey concrete edge of the open space.

Just before he reached it, another monster appeared from nowhere, crushing him under its black, grooved tires.

Rest in pieces, Orange (the 463<sup>rd</sup>). You have avenged your family.





**STATUES-KILEY MURPHY**

## **ANTIQUATED NOTIONS OF KIN**

**STEPHANIE MILLIGAN**

I caught a whiff of a passing  
thought, but it was stale,  
foundation wrought  
with cracks,

it floated by like it had every right  
to trip my senses and leave  
me slighted, amidst an aroma  
of envy.

it penetrated my brain, teased  
my memory, urged me to recall  
what had not been given  
to me

for a moment I faltered,  
let myself wonder,  
what it would be like to have  
a father with a mother.

but the scent's novelty died  
and with it a yearning for a life  
with both parents together  
again.

## **IMPERIAL GRACE**

**LAURELYN ESTES**

Bowing trees solute soldier winds;  
Stars shimmer in silent applause.  
Worshiping leaves precede royalty;  
Immense cumulus sweep to their throne.

Agenda paused by noble parade,  
Damp airs weighed down by imperial grace.  
Descending drops of majestic grandeur,  
Falling finery to nourish the innate.

Rising banners of mist and foggy flags,  
Vapory paths of past and present passage.  
Thundered proclamations in irregular beats,  
Festive lightning flaring throughout, then hereafter.

Tepid ambiance and a raining ovation,  
Plunging precipitation in turbulent celebration.  
The organic world graced with temporary luxury,  
Assertive soldier airstreams guiding regal gale on.





## **SCREWED IN**

**COLLEEN DECOURCY**

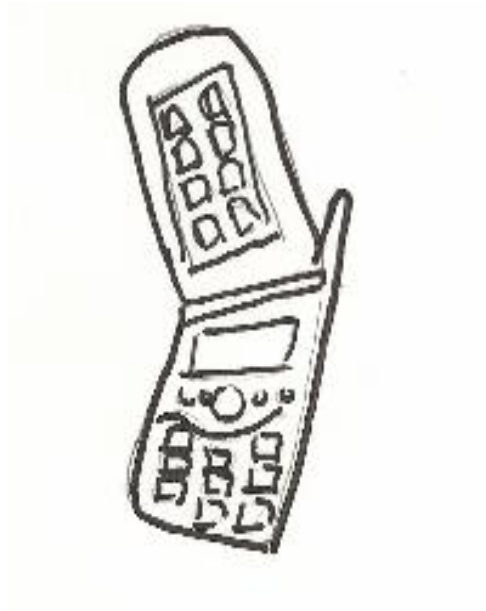
So maybe I'll shut my phone off  
Rather than deal with you  
And the probability that you won't call -  
You never call  
Anyway  
And rather than keep thinking of you  
I'll think of someone else.  
Or  
Maybe just me.  
And what I want to do today.  
And what I should have done yesterday.  
'Cause I can still write poetry at three in the morning  
While you sleep your lies away  
Crafting the energy to create more.

Oh, I'm sorry. You're not sleeping just meditating.

Well, meditate on this -

The fact that I might need you

And am successfully convincing myself otherwise.



## **DEAD RINGER**

**BENJAMIN GENTRY**

**T**he cool night air clung to the grounds of the graveyard as Don solemnly marched along. The heavy flashlight shook slightly in his old wrinkled palms. At the age of 68, the spring in his step had long faded and his nearly twenty years of maintenance and security at West Portland Cemetery had recently begun to wear on him. The job was indeed a quiet one and old Don Macabre enjoyed working in the fresh air, but the recent passing of his son Dennis had been incredibly difficult on him. As he drew nearer to his son's grave he grimaced and paused for a moment to take a deep breath. A dark movement entered the periphery of his vision and he turned to see the silhouette of a man a few yards away.

"Sir, the cemetery is closed at dusk, I'm going to have to ask you to leave," Don shouted clearly as he turned his flashlight to the mysterious figure. The man's face was hidden beneath a tattered cloak and he seemed unresponsive to the request. Don, growing slightly frustrated, walked closer to the man and repeated himself kindly. "Sir, you can't be here at this time. I'm going to have to ask you to head home and return tomorrow."

"A life must be given to undo death. You cannot cheat the reaper," the man replied in a mumbled, hollow voice. His face remained hidden.

“What?” Don began. “Who are you? Do you know where you are?” He then questioned, assuming the man must be confused or perhaps not right in the head.

The man raised his eyes to meet Don’s. His face was pale and rough, and his eyes were darker than the night – lifeless and daunting. The two men stared at each other for nearly a minute before the loud ringing of a bell forced Don to break their gaze and turn his head in the direction of the interruption. He aimed his flashlight toward the sound but it stopped as suddenly as it had started.

“What did you mean by...?” Don began as he turned back to the man, only to discover he no longer stood before him. Shining his flashlight this way and that, he confusedly searched for the cloaked man – but he was nowhere to be seen. Don furrowed his brow, wondering if he was losing his mind. Before he could come to a conclusion the sound of a bell loudly ringing once again cut through the silent autumn night.

Shivers ran down Don’s spine as he followed the ringing to his own son’s tombstone. He stopped and bent over to see a bell tied to a string hanging on a small mechanism next to the grave. Anger coursed through the old man’s veins at first while he tried to think why someone would deface his son’s grave. Then a disturbing idea struck him hard – he moved in closer to the bell and shone the light upon it. His eyes followed the string down into the earth. Horror swept across his worn face as realized what the other end of the string must be tied to.

Hysteria took hold of the usually rational mind of Don Macabre and he ran to the cemetery's shed to find an old familiar shovel. He panted heavily when he returned to his son's grave and dropped the shovel to place his hands on his aching knees and regain his breath. The quiet calm of the night was then broken by the dull sounds of the shovel churning up earth as the bell continued to ring – egging Don on in his ludicrous endeavor.

A loud wooden knock caused the elderly man to stop momentarily. Now drenched with dirt and sweat, he had reached the coffin. He grabbed for the flashlight at his belt and clicked it on. The bell had gone silent but he could now clearly see that his terrifying guess had been correct – the string was threaded through a tiny hole in the coffin. He took only a moment to wonder how this could be possible before he cleared the rest of the soil from the coffin and tossed the shovel out of the deep hole he had dug.

Don wiped some of the filth from his face with his sleeve and took a few deep breaths. Tears uncontrollably swelled in his eyes. He grasped the lid of the coffin and in one determined motion ripped it open. There his son lay in his finest suit with his eyes closed gently.

“What have I done?” Don sobbed. He placed his face in his mud caked hands and began to weep. His heart then leapt into his throat as he heard the now-familiar bell ring and felt a hand on his wrist.

“Dad? What... what’s going on?” A voice croaked weakly. Don immediately threw his arms around his son

and felt that he was now warm. He was now alive.

"Dennis..." Don sobbed, "I'm sorry son. It was my fault... I should've let you drive. I never should have..." He broke off for a moment before continuing. "It should have been me." He pulled his son back to get a better look at him.

"Dad, don't worry about it," Dennis replied. "Whatever happened, I forgive you."

"I'm sorry, Dennis. I love you, son."

"I love you too, Dad." There was a brief moment of silence throughout the night before Dennis realized the string tied neatly around his wrist. He pulled it loose and then spoke plainly.

"All right, come on, Dad, I'm not sure what's going on here but we should get you home," he said, utterly confused as to where he was or what had happened, but none-the-wiser about his supposed death.

Beneath the moonlight the two men climbed out of the large hole – one cleanly dressed in a shimmering black suit and the other stripped down to a dirt-soaked undershirt. The younger of the men shouldered his elder and carefully walked him to an old Ford parked on the side of the road outside the cemetery.

Don was nearly catatonic after the ordeal and merely continued to sob quietly in disbelief as he handed the keys to his son. Dennis carefully helped his weary father into the

passenger seat.

“It’ll be all right, Dad, you can tell me what happened when we get you home and you get cleaned up,” Dennis said softly after he entered the driver’s side door and took his seat. The engine whirred and the bright headlights sliced through the night. Don looked over at his son as they travelled down those familiar back roads. He didn’t pretend to comprehend what exactly was going on but instead simply smiled and wiped the tears from his eyes once more.

His now fragile mind travelled back to that horrible night just months ago. Why had he refused his son’s offer to drive them home? He had been stubborn and stupid and it had cost him the life of his only son. None of that mattered to him now, though.

Suddenly, Dennis slammed on the brakes, and the old Ford’s tires screeched as the car slid along the road. Don turned and looked out the windshield. It appeared that time had frozen as he caught the slightest glimpse of a man in a black tattered cloak standing deliberately in the middle of the road.

It was at that moment that Don Macabre understood what had occurred that night and he was ready.

## ELEGY

LAURELYN ESTES

I crested the hill and caught you in the headlights  
already broken, crawling, like a ghost in the night.

Palest white, so small and alone on the road  
and my cheerful mood plummeted, sorrowed.

I hit the ground running, breath lodged in my chest.  
You'd stopped your slow crawling and lay distressed.

Pupils consumed the color of your panicked eyes,  
your body fluttered with breaths, confused, surprised.

Sharp stones cut through my jeans to stab my knees.  
What to say to a stranger's dying cat? "Easy, beauty. Easy."

Your chest hit my hand with each rapid breath.

Silent, no cries, no blood, but near death.



*THE MANATEE*

Your hips had been shattered, hind legs lying unnaturally.

My hand was shaking as I pet you and spoke gently.

Words choked me to a whisper I needed to maintain  
vain attempts of comfort; no way to help stop the pain.

Could I kill you? It crossed my mind, hovered.

You shuddered under my hand and blurred

“I’m sorry, so sorry, I can’t, beauty, I’m sorry.”

I wish I knew your name—are you he? Are you she?

Drool soaked the fur surrounding your open mouth.

Nothing could save you, no prayers, no amount of wealth.

I continued speaking mindlessly and you stilled in surrender  
at the foot of a mailbox, outside the home of your sleeping  
owner.



**ENHANCED FLOWER-KELSEY ESCOBAR**

## **I CONCEDE**

**CATHERINE SHANLEY**

Waves that took my brother's blood  
in my heart always shook.  
Waves that took my brother's heart  
in my mind go by land and rook.  
Waves that fall as they may  
on Earth go by sea or brook.

Waves that climb and are not seen  
are still magnificent.  
Waves that take and know not  
are still innocent.



# A RARE AND PERFECT SYMPHONY

CHERYL NELSON-OBRIEN

Hush, close your eyes,  
and listen to Pan's pipes  
as the breeze  
freezes your face  
and a squirrel  
squeals with delight  
at the sight of a forlorn acorn.

Enter the percussion  
of crisp, crackling, catatonic leaves  
levitating in the freezing breeze  
and the brass horns  
of crows cursing the barren ground  
and chainsaws felling firewood.

As Autumn raises her baton  
Nature holds her breath  
as she splashes splendors along the ridges;  
golds, oranges, and reds intermingled with  
the spirit of apple tree trimmings  
curling up, perfuming the air.

Performing a rare  
and perfect symphony  
of sights, sounds,  
and smells  
awakening memories.

## GRANDMA FELL

JENNIFER FRYER

"Grandma fell." My dad threw the words over his shoulder as he hurried out the door to the house next to ours, where I imagined my grandmother laying in a crumpled heap at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

I asked my mom what had happened, and she said that my grandma had fallen, she was getting on in age, after all, and sometimes these things happened. Her story gave me little comfort, but for my own sake I forced myself to believe her.

The first time I went to visit my grandmother after her accident was more than a week later. My irrational fear of hospitals had kept me from going to see her, although I called often to ask how she was doing. Her room was small and bright, the window curtains flung wide open to let in the sun. The TV was showing a cooking show, the kind with jolly fat cooks and kind old ladies baking cakes for hours on end. She was lying in bed, tubes coming out of her nose and arms, but she smiled at me when I came in as if I had brought the sun itself to her.

"Hello, Kukla."

*Hello, doll.*

Her voice was creaky and small but the familiar Greek nickname from my childhood made the acid eating at the walls of my stomach settle. She would be fine, I told myself. Nothing was the matter. My grandma was okay. I settled myself in the chair next to her bed while she talked to my mom and dad, and watched her closely. Her skin seemed paler, and looked like worn parchment. Her hair was now completely grey, and so thin that parts of her scalp were visible. Every time my father clapped his hand to her shoulder I winced, convinced that her tiny frame would give way beneath his hand. The doctors soon came in and asked to see my parents out in the hall. I followed, leaving my grandmother alone in her small, bright room.

They began with the usual meaningless banter that doctors often use to prolonging the actual news they are trying to share as kindly as they can. They told us they had run some tests and considered her family history, and they had diagnosed what was causing her to act so out of character and grow so weak. The doctor looked my father in the eye for only a second before letting his gaze drift to his forehead.

“Your mother may have Alzheimer’s.”

The hospital walls seemed to be closing in and the sharp scent of rubbing alcohol made my stomach turn upside down. The doctors continued to talk to my parents; my mother, arms crossed and head nodding stiffly, and my father, face closed off and stony from behind his lumberjack beard.

I wasn't really listening anymore. The entire hallway fell silent for a second as the words sunk in. I made out only bits and pieces of the conversation.

"May? *May* have Alzheimer's?"

"It would appear that way, yes. Her mind is slowly deteriorating, and she's beginning to forget simple things like the date and perhaps things she has just done or said. We believe the fall may have been caused by a temporary blackout."

Back and forth they talked about my grandmother, and I had the sickening thought that while they tried to decide what the best choice of treatment would be, my grandmother was lying in her little hospital bed, completely oblivious to her own body and mind, watching jolly old chefs bake cakes.

I was nine again, sinking slowly into a recliner in my grandparent's living room, a cheese sandwich balanced haphazardly on my lap as one of the cats circled my feet. The rain outside pounded the window and I was grateful for the air conditioner keeping me cool while the muggy July air pressed against the glass, fogging it up in places. My grandmother was in the kitchen, cleaning up the breakfast dishes and listening to Greek music on a radio that she had in her pocket. My parents would pick me up later just before supper, but until then I would be sitting here, listening to the rain and my grandma's voice drifting out of the kitchen, singing a story to me in a language I couldn't understand.

After we brought her home from the hospital, my grandfather had an electric chair installed in their house. It snaked up all four flights of stairs, with an easy button controller right on the arm to decide direction. She refused to use it, insisting she was fine and that the doctors were a bunch of Greek expletives that didn't know what they were talking about.

She continued to hobble down the stairs, clutching the walls for support. Her symptoms quickly grew more apparent, as if the doctor's confirmation had given it the fuel to grow. She forgot how old I was, what season it was. She couldn't remember her last meal or what someone had just said. She would just sit and stare at nothing, while the rest of us tried to drape a shawl over a rapidly expanding elephant.

When I was younger, my grandmother's little alcove on the second floor was a sanctuary for the both of us. The second floor of her house was a loft that jutted out over the first, and in the back was a small little hideaway where she spent her late afternoons and evenings. The wall next to the alcove was an altar of candles, rosaries, and pictures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary stretched up from the counter top to the ceiling. It gave me a welcoming feeling, that wall, and I always felt safe after walking by it. Maybe that's why my grandma never left her chair; she felt safer with Jesus and Mary watching over her serenely.

Her actual alcove was overflowing with candy, knitted blankets, board games as well as electronic ones,



books, crossword puzzles, newspapers, and small toys. Nestled in the middle of the clutter was my grandmother's recliner. I used to sit in it all the time, watching TV and reading books while she went about the house doing chores. I was more at home there than in my own bedroom. I remember her telling me stories while she worked that made my sides ache with laughter. As I got older, I stopped sitting in the alcove, and my grandmother's stories seemed old.

She sat in her recliner, staring intently at the TV, which was broadcasting some cleaning product when the static faded long enough to hear it. Cat hair was piled an inch deep on the rug, but my grandmother remained oblivious. She didn't look at me right away, but when she sensed my presence she looked up abruptly, her eyes wide. She stared at me for a good long minute, her wrinkled face creasing in confusion. She opened her mouth to speak, and my stomach sank to the floor before she even began to talk.

"Who..."

"Jenny, grandma," I said quickly, "It's Jenny." She stared at me for a moment more, before her eyes focused and she smiled.

"Hello, *kukla*. How is seventh grade, hah?"

"Ninth, grandma."

"Oh, I see, you getting so big! I remember when you were only a baby. You enjoying school, eh? I know, you so

smart... so smart...ah...um..."

"Jenny, grandma."

The Virgin Mary looked down at me, her sad eyes making my heart ache.

I became used to the fact that my grandma had Alzheimer's, but that did not mean I had accepted it. As far as most doctors can tell it is hereditary, and a nagging thought stuck to the back of my mind that my father may get it, and after him, myself. I studied ways to prevent it very carefully, and began reading more than ever to keep my mind stimulated. My fear of Alzheimer's soon outweighed that of hospitals.

I watched my grandma carefully as well, observing her "good days" and "bad days." They soon seemed to be about the same, with her being almost normal one week, then completely gone the next. By my senior year in high school, she had not deteriorated any further, but she made little improvement. During my spring semester I began working on a family tree for my final project in English, taking care to make it as detailed and interesting as possible.

One night before a revised copy was due; I called my grandmother to check a few last minute details about her side of the family that my father couldn't remember. She answered them without hesitation, and began to tell me

story about how he father, while a Vicar in the Church, hid Polish and German Jews in his chapel so that the Nazis would not find them. She recalled the air raids in Cairo, where she was born, and how the Catholic school she attended had them bring gas masks to every class and performed regular bomb drills. She told me about her mother studying in Athens and how she herself went to France to study at Notre Dame.

That night she called me five more times to tell me stories, giving me details about her first husband, my dad's biological father, who was from Manchester, England. She gave amazing details, recalling names and dates as if she were reading them off of a piece of paper. I sat on the floor of my living room, phone clenched between shoulder and ear, scribbling notes down frantically into my notebook.

My grandmother's voice became more animated and happy, and I knew she was excited, and possibly proud to have remembered so much. I choked out my thanks and several I-love-you's, and as I was hanging up the phone on the second-to-last call of the night, I could swear I saw tears in my dad's smiling eyes.

# **DELVING TOO DEEP**

**STEPHEN LOWTHER**

What happens when you delve too deep?

Where the blood doesn't flow, drip, or seep?

Each day that passes I grow wearier.

My skin dries up while my mind grows dreary.

I watch as it gets irrepressibly eerie.

I'm lost in the world where the boogeyman sleeps.

On the way down, my face is ripped and torn.

After each blow, I regret being born.

I cannot deny it, I'm going insane.

No pleasure anymore, just riveting pain.

The colors have faded, now bland and plain.

I don't think I will survive this scorn.

I hit the bottom; nothing to feel.

*THE MANATEE*

I start to wonder, is this for real?  
I look around, to see what is here.  
I'm met by pure Nothing, both distant and near.  
Yet Nothing isn't quite, as it appears.  
Nothing is like me; too damaged to heal.

But here I sit, amidst my confusion.  
My blood evaporates, meeting diffusion.  
Lost all my hope, can only wonder, "Why?"  
Will I see the light? Sun? Or Sky?  
I see the devil now; he laughs and says, "Hi."  
I must give him credit; it's the perfect intrusion.

"For your soul," he says, "And I'll release you from this  
place."

But I laugh, and look him directly in the face.  
"You can't have what's not there."  
But I guess it'd be fair.

To take a look inside.  
This big ol' heart of air."

He looks inside, but to his disdain.  
He finds no soul, just a big bowl of pain.  
His eyes widen, I don't know why.  
It looks almost like, he's going to cry.  
So I smack his face, stare into his eyes. (And say,)

"Do you think you can help me?  
I'm going insane..."

## **THE NIGHT IS FOR**

**SUZANNE WRATNI**

As clouds roll by a pale moon  
Morning stands close... it comes too soon  
Let me have a few hours more  
For quiet thoughts, the night is for.

Concealing tears and hands being wrung  
What choice have I? What's to be done?  
A skyward glance, a pace of floor  
For love's been lost, the night is for.

Stars align, they take their place  
They have no decisions to make  
Have not a clue what lies in store  
For memories, the night is for.

*THE NIGHT IS FOR-SUZANNE WRATNI*

The cover lifts, it yields to day,  
And thus, another game to play  
Put on the smile you last day wore  
For keeping sane, the night is for.





*THE MANATEE*



**SUNSET TRAFFIC-ELIZABETH DiVENERE**

## A RUN IN HIS SHOES

MELISSA HURLEY

The instrumental of Eminem's song "Beautiful" played as my little brother rapped:

*Ah! Hurley, you just missed making all-state  
how does it feel?*

*I hold it in to keep it real*

*but in my mind it is a big deal.*

*No one could put more pressure on myself than  
me*

*and it just feels wrong.*

David and his best friend Tim stood on the stage at their cross country camp talent show. It was a funny idea, the two of them rapping—two very white runners who spent their entire lives in the small town of Ashaway, Rhode Island. Dave had been voted "Most Athletic" by his senior class; Tim was "Best All-Around." But there they were, Tim on the keyboard and Dave at the mic. David had spent the entire summer preparing this song. It would be his last time

attending camp before starting his career as a college runner.

I sat on my couch watching a recording taken from the performance. As his rap words hit me, my eyes filled with tears and my face trembled. He was sharing a part of himself only my family knew: his relationship with running.

\*\*\*\*\*

I witnessed the pressure starting to build when Dave ran in middle school. Unlike the other runners who were just there as a social activity, David worked to be the best—and he did just that. So on the rare occasion when he was challenged and was unable to win, the kids at school were ready to tear him apart. When the intercom broadcasted he had come in second or third, the criticism began.

“Hurley, what happened to you out there?”

“Come on, Dave, couldn’t get first for us?”

“Only second place? Sounds like you’re slacking.”

“Way to let our school down.”

Naturally, these comments came from kids who wouldn’t run if they were offered money, but their words still had the same effect. Dave would dread going to school

for days after a race.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Do you know where Dave is?” I asked Coach Hab, the high school boys’ coach.

“He’s out running still.”

“Still? It looked like all of the guys were back.”

“Yeah, he came back from the run and asked if he could add on a few miles. He shouldn’t be too much longer.”

“Okay, well if you see him let him know that I’m waiting for him so we can go.” I walked away, rolling my eyes. Dave never stopped running, and I just wanted to go home. But he had to train the hardest if he was going to be the fastest.

\*\*\*\*\*

*I was never the kid who crumbled*

*under pressure or fell apart.*

*Every race from finish to start,*

*I ran with guts, I ran with heart.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Dave's first high school state meet was my first as well. There was no pressure for me. Everyone was just proud I had been the only girl on my team to qualify considering it was my first year running. But David was expected to be all-state and qualify for the New England race as a freshman. By now I had learned the truth to running. It is a constant struggle with oneself from beginning to end. Sure, it is a team sport, and that helps with the overall scoring, but when you're out on the course, it's all you. You need to have the mental and physical strength to keep pushing when your body wants to collapse. Through my own running I'd learned to connect with my brother's pressure. It was brutal. My stomach sank as I waited for Dave's race to start. Then the gun went off.

Dave can remember the specifics of *that* race even years after. At the second mile he noticed kids pass him that he usually beat. He finished at 17.35, just one second behind Joe Siravo, who Dave knew he was faster than. He finished in twenty-sixth place. The top twenty-five qualified for New England. The top twenty-one were All-State. It was over.

All I can remember is crying as I counted the boys running past me, yearning to see the forest green of David's

jersey, knowing he was going to be disappointed.

When I made it back to the team tent after the race, I found most of the guys sitting under the tent changing shoes, catching their breaths, and joking around. A few feet off to the side, my brother sat alone with his sneakers and a water bottle. I took my time talking to the other boys, and then made my way over to Dave, placing a hand on his shoulder.

“Nice job,” I said.

He shrugged my hand away. “No it wasn’t.”

“Hey, everyone has an off day.” I left him to sulk.

Eventually Coach Hab approached David to give him a pep talk. “It’s okay. We’ll get through this. Just take some time off and we’ll bring you back up for track.”

Dave nodded, his eyes locked on the ground. But even he could tell the normally talkative and bubbly coach was struggling for words. He was in the same shock as everyone else.

When the lecture was over, David went on a cool down run by himself, leaving the team behind.

THE MANATEE

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The pressure Dave put on himself affected everyone after a poor race. He would be too ashamed to speak to people, even his teammates. As the self pity would continue for days, my parents would eventually step in.

“You need to get over it,” my dad would yell as David sat at the kitchen table, avoiding eye contact. “I don’t care how bad you think you did, you need to be more of a team player when the race is over.”

This was a frequent argument heard in our house. I learned to shut my bedroom door to muffle the sound.

\*\*\*\*\*

*What I realized is that running's about the community.*

*Finally I'm feeling free of this pressure  
which makes it hard to leave..*

\*\*\*\*\*

“So what’s the deal with the apple?” my mom asked Dave.

“It’s awesome.”

“There’s no inside joke or something I’m missing?”

“Nope, it’s just an apple.”

Everyone in the basement laughed as my mom left the room. It was early in the summer and rain had moved Dave’s graduation party inside. Luckily, the storm hadn’t started until it was already dark and only Dave’s close friends remained. The adults all gathered upstairs while the kids collected in the basement. There were a few of Dave’s friends from Chariho, our high school, but the majority of the guests were friends Dave had made through running.

Dave sat in a chair with a giant decorative apple by one foot and a gnome next to the other. They were gifts he had received. The gnome was given to him by Nick and Mark, from East Greenwich. The apple came from a large group of North Kingstown boys, all of whom were at least two years older than Dave, having befriended him when he first entered high school. Running, which is usually regarded as an individual activity, brought this whole group together. Of all the friends Dave made in high school, these were the only ones he would bother to keep in touch with when everyone spread out to different colleges. The apple and the gnome were strangely perfect symbols of the



friendship. It was something only the runners in the room understood.

\*\*\*\*\*

With a tissue I wiped my eyes after Dave's rap singing recording was over. You can't see it on the tape, but I was told that Dave and Tim were met with a standing ovation. Coach Tetreault, who ran the camp, told me all of the coaches were moved to tears. I could understand why. In five minutes Dave had shown everyone his progression as a runner, and boy did he finish strong.



## **APOSTROPHE**

**LAURELYN ESTES**

Who are you? Tell me your name!  
Show me your face, you coward!  
Night after night you test me with dreams,  
Horrors I can't be imagining alone.

I wake, crying, soaked in sweat,  
Shaking, sick to my stomach.  
A distorted face hovers over my bed,  
Bulging eyes, potatoed head,  
Sagging mouth on a lopsided face.  
A scabbed body shows beneath thin hair,  
Hunched and humped like some sort of buffalo.  
I close my eyes to dream again.  
Hear a silent whisper and sink back in.

*THE MANATEE*

I know your game now, demon.  
You burn my friends, peel my skin;  
Fear isn't enough to feed you.  
My elbow snaps the wrong way,  
My hair stretched, scalp ripped,  
Achilles tendon cut, I fall, crawling.  
All around me, water dripping,  
People burning, gasping, choking,  
Bleeding out and I can't save them.  
You think I don't know?

It's a dream! As real as real life,  
As long, days long, and I remember it all.  
But I know it's a dream, demon.  
Whatever your game, you're failing.  
You can torture me; kill the people I love,  
Slaughter my pets, destroy my hopes,  
But I know it's a dream and you can't keep me.

I'm strong, I fight, and the dream slips like sand in the waves.

I jerk awake again; an emaciated hand dents the blankets on my leg.

I turn, eyes bleary, heart tripping through my chest,  
See eyes that are a dark, diamond cutout of raw skin.

No mouth, just the same strange marking  
Hovering at the edge of my mattress, inches away.

I lay back down to dream again.

Hear your silent whisper and sink back in.

## **LOST MEMORIES**

**SUZANNE WRATNI**

faded pictures in black and white  
stored in a shoe box  
on my grandmother's closet shelf  
taken down by small hands  
to search for familiar faces  
there are no dates  
no names scrawled across the back  
just an old woman's memory  
that has faded with the pictures  
years ago she knew each one  
exactly when and where it was taken  
the age of each blonde child  
confusion has settled in her mind  
her grandchildren will never know  
the name of an aunt or uncle that has passed

a far flung cousin they have never met  
the family history contained  
in a shoe box, on my grandmother's closet shelf  
labeled only – women, white keds, size 8



## NEW HAMPSHIRE

JEDIDIAH KRICHNER

New  
England  
Winter  
Half-asleep  
Alarm clock rings  
More snow today  
“Perfect,” I mutter  
Stumble downstairs  
Headlong into the cold  
Icy resentment thickens  
Remembering past winters  
Everything cold and dead





**MOUNTAIN-KILEY MURPHY**



## BEAUTY PERPETUAL

STEPHANIE MILLIGAN

*"As we grow old...the beauty steals inward."*

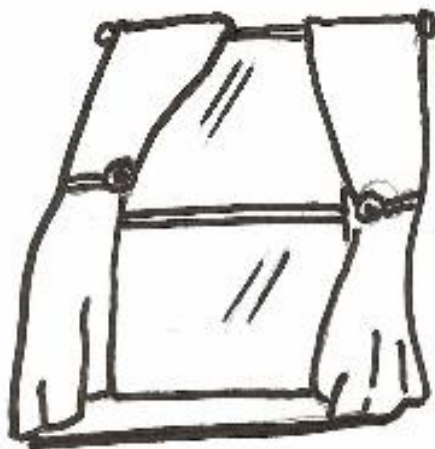
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Her weathered reflection blends with the grey  
of the splintered hand-hewn beams. The antique  
window, kissed with dust from the Nor'wester  
airstream, contorts the last of grace that waits  
to leave like a selfish lover, writing  
a new narrative of intangible

love, worship not of thin thighs, wrinkle free  
eyes, but belief in hips that curve to house  
creations rivaling Van Gogh's strokes. Time  
has applauded the mother's frame, improved  
the visage with knowledge and strength, erased

insecurities, scraped away old paint.

Exposing the translucent panes, interest  
is piqued when the cacophony of youth  
is traded for the softly whispered words  
of poetry, doors that open sincere  
truths. Eyes reveal maturity,  
prejudice surrenders to age.



## **A DISTANT WORLD**

**LEAH KOSTICK**

**I** had asked to go to the most desolate place he could find. I wanted to escape in more than just my imagination. I wanted to ask him to blindfold me to make it even more exciting but didn't know how he would react to something like that.

Glancing at Miles, the thought made me blush. I imagine that he might have been startled by that suggestion. It seemed I could talk to Miles about anything, but could only ever guess at his feelings concerning me. This was where his thoughts became all silence.

I had met Miles six months after I married Nick. Miles and I had talked and laughed a lot together over the years. If I was being honest, I'd say that he was simply my best friend, though I think I was a little afraid to say that. I think I was afraid he'd disappear. Maybe he would marry someone, or I'd remarry. Maybe I was afraid because he was so important to me and yet our connection felt so fragile. Perhaps it felt that way because the most important things in my life had always shattered.

Miles had always watched out for me though, and especially since my divorce from Nick. Living on my own was something I had to get used to, but when problems came up with my car or something around the house, Miles was always there to help me.

Miles had an easy time talking to women—to anyone really, but especially women. Still, I knew he was unsettled. He didn't discuss his relationships with me much. After years, it had simply become our habit not to discuss emotional matters.

Miles had never married and tended to spend lots of time on his research and writing—physics, working on something to do with the “Many-Worlds Interpretation”—a theory that states that each possible outcome of an event is realized in its own individual universe. Miles discussed his work with great enthusiasm.

I had been trying to imagine the reality of the many worlds and to understand what that would mean. If the theory is correct and every outcome of an event is realized in its own world, it was a matter of reaching the world with the outcome I desired. I longed to attain that world.

Our escape meant a long journey north. We had driven from Edmonton, and then Miles had taken a side road—all washboard—to Tathlina Lake rather than following the road to Yellowknife; he had a thing for desolate places, too.

The topographic map showed Great Slave Lake and some of the other lakes in the immediate area. And there were tiny airports dotting the map that were used primarily for fly-in fishing. On this portion of the map, there was an airport marked “Condition Unknown” and the one closest to Tathlina Lake read “Abandoned.” It seemed odd and spooky.

We had driven high up onto a bluff. Miles stopped

and we got out. I walked a short distance and just stood, looking. It was everything I had wished for; wild and barren. In this place, I felt how small I was... and how brief.

I turned and looked back to see Miles approaching with his pack. Oddly, I felt happy to share my longed-for isolation with him. He understood the longing; he felt it, too. We didn't speak, we just walked, taking it in—the mountains and ice and snow appearing endless in every direction. The sight was like nourishment to a starving body. It was nothingness, yet everything that's worth taking in, in one view or one breath that can change your world. I breathed it deeply.

In the distance we saw what looked like an Inukshuk. I had never heard of them before, but Miles told me about them and had stopped to show me some on our way up here. They are stone markers that resemble human figures. They are Inuit in origin and used primarily as directional markers usually indicating trails. The thought is that, in this desolate world without landmarks, it is easy to lose your way. The Inukshuk are guides in this world.

We were drawn by curiosity to what this one might indicate. It took us to a ridge that was covered in snow. It pointed in its eerie silence, giving direction into that nothingness. I knelt to look closely at the Inukshuk, the stone man who seemed to indicate the abyss in front of us. At that moment I felt the snow shift and then drop out from under me.

Then I felt myself waking, as if from a dream and

realized I was lying in the snow. I opened my eyes to see Miles looking down at me.

“Are you okay?” he asked, leaning over me.

“I...think...so,” I said, flexing each body part in turn to see if that was, in fact, the case.

I sat up very slowly. I wasn’t actually hurt, probably just bruised. I looked up to the place we had been standing. It was high above us now, the Inukshuk, pointing, as if directing us forward still. The scene from where I sat mesmerized. We had been quite high up and now, from below, I could see the mighty rock wall closely. In the other direction, as far as I could see, were mountains and snow and the darkening sky.

“You know, I landed on my feet,” Miles said, smiling.

I’d seen that talent on hikes we had taken. He could take short cuts down steep slopes between trails like a snowboarder without the snowboard.

Miles took a walk to see how we might get back up to the truck. He came back shaking his head.

“There’s no way we’re getting up that way without ropes,” he said “Wait here. I want to look around a bit more.” He walked along the wall in the other direction.

I stood up to stretch. Walking along the sheer rock wall made me think how fortunate we were that we hadn’t been seriously hurt or killed in the fall. The wind was

picking up and it began to snow. I could see the white of the snow blowing sideways across the dark rocks.

“Vivian!” called Miles, running up, out of breath.  
“There’s a cave. I think that’s what the Inukshuk was indicating.”

We walked a short distance and there in the rock wall was an opening smaller than a doorway and about half the height. Miles said that he had only explored the first part, but that it was a good shelter. We found a corner and though it was far from warm, it offered protection from the wind and snow. Miles had his pack, so we had water and a bit of food. Though we couldn’t feel the wind, we could hear its force increasing with nightfall.

“We’ll work on getting out of here tomorrow” said Miles. He was resolved, not afraid. He watched me closely with concern.

I knew he didn’t want me to be afraid either. And I wasn’t exactly frightened, but simply thought that we might die here. I thought it just to explore the thought and how that possibility made me feel. Then I thought of home and how we were dying there. Home might as well have been an arctic wasteland. But here, in this desolate place, we had guides. The Inukshuk had guided us to new possibilities. I thought of the many-worlds and how, in our world Miles had never seemed a possible outcome for me. I felt that here and now, in this distant world, he was.

“Okay,” I said, choosing his resolve and easing both our minds.

We did our best with one sleeping bag. It was so cold, but I was warm with Miles holding me close. I heard the raging wind, the echoes in the cave and my own relentless thoughts.

*All possible futures are real.*

And then I heard Miles whispering my name.

*All outcomes are attained.*

One finger touched my cheek very gently, tracing a line to my lips. And then he kissed me. My lips first, then my face. His lips were on my neck, soft unhurried kisses.

*Every possible outcome of every event exists in its own world.*

His hands were pushing my top down, baring my shoulders. The total darkness was a vacuum around us in which a touch was impossible to predict and so the sensation intensified.

*Infinite worlds of endless possibilities.*

Touching him, I sensed something thunderous that was...revelation...or inundation of desire...or an avalanche.



## **UNCLE**

**COLLEEN DECOURCY**

I remember you called me honey  
Lying broken on a hospital bed.  
Why did I tag along?  
Walking past the reception desk  
Empty faces greet and direct us  
Voices straining with excess cheeriness,  
The kind they've been using all day and now, into the night.

Hidden away in a corner room  
I remember thinking I was prepared to see you.  
A Schwarzenegger feature  
Playing on the screen above the bed  
Yes and he'll be back  
But I know you won't.

Your latest adventure with misplaced dreams,  
The fanatic ones you chased after landed you in a stretcher.  
Meanwhile my child eyes are drawn to the heroics  
Of a man more buff then and now than you ever will be.

Not being prepared was torture  
I cried out uncle, uncle!  
But you didn't let me go.  
Can't we call a truce?  
'Cause I don't want to remember anymore.  
Your broken teeth and bruised eyes.

I remember your lies, such conviction  
Did you even know they were lies?  
If I believed your story about white molasses,  
Would you have reconsidered me?  
You were only in my life when you needed something.  
I guess I was never what you needed.

*THE MANATEE*

And I remember staring at you

And searching for my uncle under that mess of hospital  
getup

Peering out from under wires and the steady humming of  
machines.

But I could never recognize a face

That wouldn't always tell truth.

Most of all I can still see

The tempting light from the hallway and

Watching the plastic clock's deliberate motion

Bringing visiting hours closer to an end.

Have I grown to be like you then, uncle?

Always waiting to escape for something

Never taking in now, only later.

But I will never forget this night visit

And that you called me honey

And probably meant it.

## SHADOW SONNET

LAURELYN ESTES

The Reaper comes, though I feel I'll never tire.  
I'm here with you for now but someday, suddenly  
he'll catch me and drag me to drown into the mire  
of the underworld, forever! And there I'll exist patiently,

until, one time, I'll think I feel a strange wind blowing,  
see an unusual light bleed through the Styx's black tide.  
The Dead around me shift and wake, unknowing,  
and shake. I know then that you've finally died.

And I'll see you, a remembered and welcome dream,  
Glide, strong as ever, through the metaphysical host,  
Silently assess, start, and fill, and gleam  
Most individual and unyielding ghost!

You turn, shoulders back and raise your proud head  
A Guardian among the primordial Dead.

## **SILVER EMBERS**

**KYLE HOAK**

Alone, I lay weeping amidst the shadows of fear, where  
demons taunt, torment, and tease...

I feel nothing... only the icy breath of loneliness and  
sorrow....

I hear nothing... only the maniacal laughter of demons with  
wicked hearts...

Suddenly, I see a light prying through the impending  
darkness...

Silver embers are burning bright upon the bewitching hour  
of the blackest night...

I feel the warmth of hope creeping up my spine like a spider  
spinning its web for its victim, the fly...

The world truly does have a silver light....



**AMERICA'S BULLDAWG-SUZANNE WRATNI**

## **ONLY SOUND**

**COLLEEN DECOURCY**

Your voice is a jolt  
Through me  
Incredible high  
Incredible suffering.  
Your voice so unique  
Takes hold.  
Your voice drifting up the stairwell  
So different  
From your laugh over the phone,  
A low, distant sound  
That tickles my guard  
Until I unfold.  
Tell you everything you want to know.  
And I am lost.

A daydreamer with my soul in my eyes.

What choice do I have?

So foolish.

But so in love.



## **BROKEN SPIRIT**

**SUZANNE WRATNI**

I watch the children play in the rain  
Remembering what you said  
As you walked out the door into the sun

A shower never cleansed me of the tears  
Freshly washed clothes felt like rags  
Are you wearing that business suit I bought you?

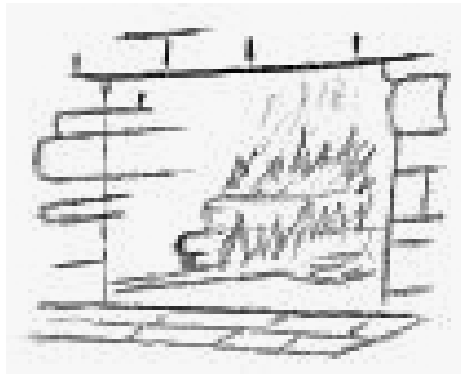
How much of me did you intend to take?  
For it appears you took it all  
Leaving a shell and the scent of your cologne

When I pass you on the street who will you see?  
The young independent woman you fell for

Or the weak, gullible muse I became to you?

When winter comes, remember me  
Staring into the fire, looking out at the blanket of snow  
How can fire and ice maintain the beauty we lost?

I cannot sleep knowing I am resting in a bed of lies  
Damn your blue eyes and crooked smile  
They knew exactly who I was... it is someone I despise.



## **A SNHU HAIKU... OR TWO**

**SUSAN GRANT**

Be quick, don't tarry  
Photoshop, Illustrator,  
keep up with Harry.

Passion for filming,  
a natural born teacher,  
kudos, Millios!

Fitz-Guill leads us true  
pen in hand, words on paper,  
compositions born.

Compound interest  
Stats and Probabilities  
Professor Toy rocks!

## CONTRIBUTORS

**KYLE HOAK** is a senior at SNHU, who spends his time writing, chatting and hanging out with friends, as well as reading comic strips and Manga, along with watching Anime and movies, particularly anything along the lines of horror, mystery and science fiction, with a gothic twist.

**ELIZABETH DiVENERE** is a freshman English Education major. She started taking pictures in the eighth grade and never stopped. She owns a Nikon D-40 and used it to take the pictures she submitted.

**ALLISON RACICOT** is a sophomore majoring in creative writing, and when she's not at college, she works at a comic book store. She just turned 20 and doesn't really know what kind of benefits come with being that age. She has a soft spot for canceled TV shows and movies directed by Wes Anderson and the Coen brothers. Even though she's from Massachusetts, she doesn't have an accent. She's also left-handed.

**BENJAMIN GENTRY** is currently attending Southern New Hampshire University as a Junior. He was born and raised in a suburb of Montreal, Quebec, Canada and has always loved to tell stories. He has completed a short young-adult novel entitled *Hunting the Seven* that he hopes to get published sometime in the near future. He also is an enormous film and video game buff and enjoys wildlife and wildlife photography.

**MARIA MATOS** was born from a Lebanese-Cuban mother in the tropical island of Puerto Rico. Ever since she could remember she has loved books and writing. Sadly this will be her last time at SNHU since she will be moving down to the University of Georgia to pursue a career in Veterinary Medicine, but writing will always be a part of her life. Maria is determined to get published while saving animals at the same time.

**MEGAN KIDDER:** Originally from Sanford, Maine, she is a sophomore in the creative writing program here at SNHU. Aside from writing, her interests are in art, music and any activity where creativity can be expressed.

**CASSANDRA LEVESQUE'S** majors are Creative Writing and English Language and Literature. She's currently a senior, and will be graduating a semester early. Her plans for the future include: graduating, owning her own house, traveling the world, and learning a few more languages, just before she takes over the universe.

**LAURLEYN ESTES** is a Warrior Writer. She transferred here and is a Creative Writing major. She should be a junior but because she's not very good at math...or science... is "technically" a sophomore. She usually walks around in her own world and crashes back into this one most commonly by stairs, chairs, or walls. She's completed two novels, pitched both to two different publishing houses, and will be published before she graduates.

**CHERYL NELSON-OBRIEN** is a junior, though only in the second term here at SNHU. Her major is Creative Writing & English, which she is taking on-line. She lives in Virginia.

**JENNIFER FRYAR** is a freshman and a Creative Writing major here at SNHU. She was born and raised in Boston, MA and has been writing almost as long as she has been reading, which is a long, long time.

**STEVE LOWTHER** is a 21 year old sophomore in the Creative Writing program here at SNHU. He's been writing ever since he's had the ability to. He often writes and enjoys reading "dark fiction." He can't rightly say why--perhaps for the same reason people like horror movies.

**JEDIDIAH KIRCHNER** is a creative writing major currently in his junior year. In addition to writing, he also likes guitar and dogs.

**LAUREN KNOTT** is a freshman here at SNHU. She's a creative writing major, which she thinks is totally awesome. She's from Ohio, and always wanted to go to school on the east coast, which is why she's here!

**STEPHANIE MILLIGAN** is currently a graduate student in SNHU's MFA Nonfiction program. She completed a BA in English Language and Literature in October of 2010 and is just starting her master's degree now. She works as a paraeducator in an elementary school and loves to write (and read) poetry.

**LEAH ANN KOSTICK** is majoring in English Language and Literature. She's a senior at SNHU and plans to graduate in September 2011. In addition to her interest in literature, she is intrigued by science, which often inspires her creative writing. Her latest work, "A Distant World," is a love story built on a theory of quantum mechanics.

**COLLEEN DECOURCY** is a freshman this year at SNHU majoring in Creative Writing.

**SUSAN GRANT** is a full time commuter freshman student here at SNHU. Graphic Design is her chosen major but she loves all things creative. She hasn't taken any writing classes but was inspired in a communication course she took. She is very much looking forward to the next three years here at SNHU and hopes to continue writing now that she has been bitten by the bug.

**SUZANNE WRATNI** is in the Creative Writing BA program here at SNHU and may continue on with a MFA. She is a native New Yorker, residing in Southwest Georgia for close to 4 years. She likes to travel and has also lived in Maine, California, Wyoming and Oregon. She is an avid reader, writer, gardener and photographer. The bounty of nature provides a strong basis for the majority of her work. She's enjoyed writing since she was a child (preferring poetry) and would like to put her mark on the literary world in some way. Currently, she's working on a children's book and has a "novel in waiting."

**CATHERINE SHANLEY** has been writing poetry for more than 6 years. She would like to say thank you to Jacky, Jackie, and H.B.

**KELSEY ESCOBAR** is 17 years old and soon to graduate from Sanborn Regional High School. Next year she will attend UNH in Durham, majoring in Medical Laboratory Science. She used her Kodak Easy Share Camera to take these photos. Her big sister Nicole is Chief Editor and forced Kelsey to submit photos to make *The Manatee* pretty.

*AND EVEN MORE*

**KILEY MURPHY** is a senior at SNHU in the English Language and Literature program. She is currently writing her thesis on Jane Austen, which she finds very frustrating.

**ALORA HEFFERNAN** is a junior in the Creative Writing program who is studying abroad in Brighton, England at the University of Brighton this semester. She hopes to write romance novels as well as children's books, under different pen names of course, in order to pay for her life so she never has to work a boring sit-down job.