



*the* MEADOW  
2007

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TRUCKEE MEADOWS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Reno, Nevada*

THE MEADOW is the annual literary arts journal published every spring by Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. Students interested in literary arts, graphic design, and the arts are encouraged to participate on the Editorial Board. Visit [www.tmcc.edu/meadow](http://www.tmcc.edu/meadow) for information and submission guidelines. Look for notices around campus, in The Echo student newspaper, or contact the Editor-in-Chief at [meadow@tmcc.edu](mailto:meadow@tmcc.edu) or through the English Department at (775) 673-7092.

We accept submissions of poetry, short stories, essays, creative nonfiction, screenplay and novel excerpts, interviews, one-act plays, artwork and photography. Our aim is to publish original, significant pieces. We encourage students and beginning writers to publish alongside experienced writers and artists. Contributor work and contest winners are chosen by a vote of the editorial staff through a blind submission process. We only read from Labor Day to Valentine's Day. Anything received after Valentine's Day will be returned unread.

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# IDAHO

*Ben Gotschall*

For the promise of two-fifty a week  
I ride horses and doctor calves  
while back home in Nebraska the grass is tall  
as a horseback man's knee  
and growing, rain needed for years  
falling, Holt Creek's banks overflowing,  
cattle ripening on hillsides.

Unable to calm the black mare, yet miles  
from her tiring, I ride in circles  
as another calf, scoured,  
skeletal, insides parched,  
drops to his knees  
and with a swollen tongue  
laps at the dust.

Searching for the withered vein,  
my fingers tremble as I jab his neck yet again  
with the needle, each bloodless thrust  
an empty promise  
until one thick drop beads purple.  
I raise the plastic fluid bag  
to start the drip.

The black mare watches me,  
wide-eyed, untrusting  
after what someone else did to her sometime,  
and I don't want to swing into that borrowed saddle.  
It doesn't fit either one of us  
and my ass is sore, but for walking  
these boots aren't much good.

I look to the east. The sun climbs above  
the Treasure Valley, where it seems nothing  
not watered by the hand of man grows.  
Last summer's drought,  
yearling brother to this newborn season,  
feels like yesterday, and Nebraska waits,  
only Wyoming away.

# SELLING THE SADDLE

*Taylor Graham*

You almost tripped over a stirrup  
you forgot to hook over the horn, and  
the girth left dragging, as you climbed  
out of the cellar and out the door,  
to heave breathless in the back  
of the truck—serviceable transport  
of our later days.

How we saddle-soaped and scrubbed  
old leather that still smells  
of a lanky sorrel gelding who carried  
you to elevation, years before  
I knew you. Post Corral, 10,000 ft  
that summer on Kings River District  
high Sierra.

My own old saddle's next; memories  
of a big black mare, cantering fields  
of childhood. But that goes  
tomorrow. For now, I watch  
your taillights blink out beyond  
the curve that's tricky as  
a saddle on stairs.

# PHOTOSYNTHESIS

*Taylor Graham*

Yesterday we laid the old dog in the ground  
beside a young toyon. Tough scrub,  
evergreen with promise of red berries,  
toyon's not common here; some bird  
must have dropped its seed in passing.

This morning our young bitch came,  
sniffing for news. She paused at the fresh-  
dug mound; stopped short at the toyon.

What might plants absorb of our used-up  
breath, our scent, and hold it close,  
then let it out again, cleansed?

The young dog thrust her muzzle deep  
into sleek green foliage;  
inhaled. Leaf by leaf, so slowly, as if  
an image passed across her eyes, she breathed  
in what the leaves gave back.

# THE COMFORT OF DARK SPACES

*Jo L. Gerrard*

When I was very young, I used to “hide” in the storage cupboard beneath the stairs in our condominium. It was a great space for little kids in general—when you opened the door a six foot tall Cat in the Hat greeted you, walking stick, striped hat and all; at the short end Dad had painted One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, and Blue Fish; Horton sat on his tree at the tall end, and I have forgotten what adorned the wall with the door. Some homage to another children’s book character. Mom had moved two old mattresses onto the floor, making the tiny, airless room with its sloped ceiling somewhat safer for my sister and me to play in.

Although this space was mostly used as a shared playhouse, I could also go there and be alone, away from other people. I could slip into the room with a book and a flashlight and read, losing myself down the rabbit hole with Alice. I used to take the Illustrated Children’s Bible Mom had given me and look at the pictures, pretending I was Jonah, lost in the belly of the whale, or out walking in the desert for days and nights and days. These weren’t unhappy fantasies, though; just ones that played to my need to be utterly by myself.

Because my parents considered me a gifted child, they often told me to come out of my room and read to whatever grownup was visiting, or to play whatever piano piece I was working on. And there was school, and dance lessons. I enjoyed all of these things, but always came home exhausted from being around people. I can remember my parents teasing me about how lost I could get in a book—Mom would complain that she could call me three or four times and get no response—but that was often the only escape I had.

When I was a preadolescent—probably nine or ten or so—I slept on a type of bed called a “Captain’s Bed,” so called because it replicated the bed a captain of a tall ship might have slept upon, with three drawers in the middle and shelves to either side. If the bed was pulled out from the wall, there was just enough room to wriggle down into the space behind the drawers and shelves and beneath the mattress: a den of sorts. It was a good place to hide books I wasn’t supposed to be reading, snack foods I wasn’t supposed to be eating, or me when I needed to not see people for a while. For many years, Thanksgiving celebrations at our house included my Grandmother and Grandfather, my uncle, and my Aunt and her children. I have many fond memories of playing with my cousins, but that didn’t change the fact that their

presence completely changed the dynamic in the house. Mom, Dad, my sister, and I tend to be very soft spoken people. It's not unusual for my father to go the better part of a day without saying more than about twenty words. My cousin's family were all quite loud—"shouting" relatives—and I was always exhausted by the end of one of these three to four day visits. If I hadn't had the space under my bed to retreat to, they probably would have been much less enjoyable.

Unfortunately, the space under the bed wasn't a very good hiding place. It didn't take my parents long to start looking for me under the bed. I think the headphone cord snaking along the wall was probably another giveaway. Still, whenever I needed to hide I could squeeze between the bed and the wall and curl up under great grandma's afghan with a book I could lose myself in for hours. Or, I could pretend I was a stowaway in the hold of a ship, or deep in a cool cavern discovering pirate treasure, or whatever other solitary fantasy came to me that day. The "den" always managed to be just the right temperature; cool in the summer, warm in the winter, and my bed was close enough to the window that during daytime I rarely needed the yellow and black flashlight I had swiped from my father's tool kit to read by.

To this day, I have very little expectation of privacy in my parents' home. My sister and I did not have to share a bedroom, but the cave beneath my bed was the closest thing I had to a room of my own. We had to knock on my parents' door when it was closed, but the opposite was not also true and my parents frequently entered my room with no warning at all.

Eventually, I outgrew the Captain's Bed, though the cave beneath had ceased to be a source of comfort long before the bed itself was discarded. I don't remember why the space ceased to be a sanctuary, though there must have been a reason.

Anytime, when I need that sort of isolationist solitude I have a place to go that I have built in my mind. When I close my eyes, I can go to the deep forest, a place where it always seems to be nighttime. The mental construct has details from years of experience out in the real world; memories of forests like the great redwoods in Yosemite or the San Geronio mountains inform my imagination. The air sings with the rasping chirp of crickets rubbing their legs like violins and the cree-cree-cree of frogs; although the creek where they make their home is not far away. I only know of its presence from the gurgling created where stones part the water. With each breath I smell cooling sun heated earth, dusty sweet sugar pine bark, tangy redwood needles.

Sometimes, there is a fire in the small clearing adding snaps and pops of pitch and the spice of burning wood to the scene. Dirt and dead needles crunch and prickle warm beneath my feet, though if I dig my toes in I can get to cooler, moist earth.

Sometimes, when it has been an easy day in the real world, I like to just sit in this clearing, my back pressed up against the rough bark of one of the many trees, and look up at the stars. I almost feel, looking up the trunk, like I can track the rotation of the Earth through the motion of the stars. Other times, I will stare into the depths of the fire, seeking the answer to life, the universe, and everything and for the clear area between wood and orange yellow flame; looking for the place where fire is born. Or, I sit before the fire with a piece of shed sugar pine bark and revel in the warmth while I gently break apart the puzzle piece scales and try to put them back together again.

Opposite the slender path allowing entry into this clearing is a low hillock with a shale overhang; beneath the overhang is the entrance to a literal den. When I am really in need of solace, when I have been exhausted by other people, I will curl myself into this den. The entry is only just large enough for me to squeeze through. The den opens out into a dirt cave just large enough for me to lay on my side with my knees drawn up slightly. There is another source of air, because I can feel the circulation; there is almost enough light to see by, once my eyes adjust. Usually, I am solitary in this space, able to feel the energy of the world flow over my skin along with the air. I lay still in the quiet, breathing in and out and becoming thoughtless in the mystery.

There are times, though, when my psyche feels I need company. At these times, I find myself sharing my den with another creature. There is nothing hostile in this interaction, no bared teeth, no growling. No fear. I slip inside the entry and find an inevitably young female coyote already there; she shifts aside so we may share the close space and the warmth our bodies create. Sometimes she is gravid, though most often not. I may lay my hand on her side to feel the coarseness of her fur, match my breathing to hers; she may lay her head on my leg or my hip or my shoulder. But she is not a dog and so I do not insult her by petting her, cooing at her, or even by trying to name her. Instead, we lay quietly together, listening to the soft sounds outside our refuge, until I am either ready to resurface and deal with the world again or I drift into sleep, where this place ceases to exist.

# PORTLAND STORIES

*Lowell Andrew Warbington*

I was tired, but wet heat and sweaty clothes conspired against me. I felt like I never had known what it was to be dry. Oregon was no Nevada, and Portland had a breath, a sticky cloying breath somewhere between mold and the smell of wasting, like the old-folks-home my sister used to work at. Rot, like the inside of an enormous stomach, and we were living bacterial lives. Northeast Killingsworth or an intestinal tract, who could tell the difference? The fact I had no toiletries made the situation worse, but I had moved on five hundred dollars, rent had been two hundred, and there were priorities to consider. Like 40s of Pabst—that was one advantage that this moist festering boil of antagonizing humidity had over the Silver State. They were two dollars, across the street at the Mini-Mart where on certain days, if the boss wasn't working, the confused counter guy would sell me bags of Drum tobacco for the price of Tops, which were also two dollars, but you could roll fifty beautiful cigarettes out of one pouch.

There were bridges in Portland. Everywhere. Made me feel like I was on a circuitry board or in a spider's web, bridges spanning and connecting this dirty city which reminded me of home, minus casinos, and with the addition of the sizzling saucepan effect, made it hard to inhale. The air had weight, and as I wandered around while pretending to look for work, I sipped on the cider Metal Matt had made and given me, fruity red ambrosia hidden in an inconspicuous V8 bottle. I was drunk and a little bit in love with myself and my growing prowess as a man (albeit a tiny man) and I wove up and down those lanes with the expectation that some great adventure lay just around the next corner, or maybe up a block or two where some cute punk girls lounged outside that coffee shop with the sad wicker chairs and smoked.

On a half-sunken ship jutting out like a monstrous fang from the edge of the heavily polluted Willamette River, we watched the lights of the city, and talked about love. You were a staunch believer, and I was jealous. You kept talking about Ben from Econochrist, whom you had dated, while I was trying to get you to notice me, but my maybe not so clever witticisms were of no avail. And when I fell off the ship and dared you to drink the water, you took off, leaving me with two warm tall cans and wet, chemically contaminated pants.

That last night in Portland, I drank myself numb for the final time in the Treason house, while people kept coming by looking for one of my roommates, whose home-based tattoo business was a resounding

failure. He had used the wrong kind of ink for the black parts, and it had bled out completely from several pieces. I had to laugh at them all, their weird scabs in place of delicate line work. Felt kind of like the expectations I had moved to Portland with—we were all hoping for art, and leaving with scars.

# PUNK-ROCK JESUS

*Galen Gorelangton*

Jesus was  
most definitely  
a punk-rocker.

I can see him now—  
roaming the lands of Zion  
with his drunk-punk crew of  
miscreants, whores, and thieves

knocking over collection tables and  
starting shit with Pharisees—  
oh yes—  
Jesus was  
most definitely  
a punk-rocker.

# THE SAGE AND THE SMOG

*Garrett Frey*

## Part I: High Desert Autumn Sunset

The hidden wealth of mountains, azure, crimson, indigo,  
Concealed by cheat grass, camouflage,  
Vibrant secrets unlocked solely by the falling sun.  
And in this dying light the quartz reflects,  
Attempts at imitations of a star.  
The light that filters down warns menacingly,  
Guileful gales boast new threats with every gust.  
Saffron quaking aspen leaves still tremble on the limb  
The last of those still quivering there, unyielding to the eddy.  
Lonely steadfast pinions huddle resolutely in the wind,  
Bowing heads and standing firm, folding arms into the cold.

## Part II: Where Dreams Go To Die

The glare of neon bulbs buzz brighter than the stars.  
Sounds of shattering glass serenade tall cans dancing down the gutter.  
Illuminated by the sickly pallor of the ethereal wraithlike city.  
Here, there are no real reasons only justifications made.  
Here, there is no prudence merely insolvency.  
Here, only are troubles and the frantic attempt to escape.  
The abject horror of wretched men,  
The shameful desperation of exploited flesh,  
The realization of abortive aspirations.

# IT IS DONE WITH THEM

*Jim Lanoreux*

Looking eastward from the summit of Pacheco Pass one shining morning, a landscape was displayed that after all my wanderings still appears as the most beautiful I have ever beheld.

—from John Muir, "The Mountains of California"

Decades after  
Emigrants died at Donner Lake  
The wind moves like a dancing calf  
In a field in Verdi.  
It kicks and prances in the dust  
That could have been a wagon trail  
Under gathering clouds.

The Snowy Range  
Must have looked formidable to them, these people  
Who had followed the Humboldt  
To this bitter place.

The wind  
In the field in Verdi  
Could have blown on the canvas of their wagons  
It could have tousled the hair of the women and children  
It could have made scarves dance around  
The necks of the men  
As they looked up the mouth  
Of that winding pass  
Wondering if the wagons could make it.

They would have heard  
The muted grunt  
Of oxen only  
And the constant knock of wheels  
On rocks and dirt.

The crest of these mountains  
That they faced  
Runs along the eastern edge of the range.  
Rivers spilling west drain into the Pacific.  
Rivers tumbling east

Are caught in the Great Basin and go nowhere.

They had no idea  
That winter would witch them  
Into such a world of ice and horror.  
They followed the Truckee  
Into a gathering storm  
The clouds high  
And cold,

And over half died there.

What did they see  
Preserved beyond that frozen place?  
What vision still beckoned, what idea  
Haunted them by the sputtering fires,  
Huddled under the trees at Donner Lake?  
What did their tired red eyes imagine  
In the cold waters of Alder Creek?

As winter  
Brushed the life from them  
And necessity moved their flesh  
From bone to pot,  
Did the clouds part and snow  
Drift down glittering in the light one day  
And was that vision still there  
Like a rag tattered with grease and blood?

Once past those peaks  
The land takes a brisk descent  
And spills towards the Pacific.  
Could they smell the ocean  
Or hear sea birds  
Under their poor canopies  
Groaning with the weight of snow?

What did they see  
The moment they put human flesh to teeth  
As winter choked the pass  
And their mouths filled with  
The bitter taste

Of utter failure?

In a field  
Where their wagons must have turned  
To challenge the merciless Sierra Nevada  
The wind  
Like a cavorting calf  
Sweeps the Emigrant path clear once more  
As if Nature is saying,

It is done with them.

# BAKING BREAD WITH EMILY DICKINSON

*M. L. Brown*

After Susan

Emily had won second prize (75¢) for her rye and Indian bread in the Cattle Show for 1856.

—from *Richard B. Sewall, The Life of Emily Dickinson*

Emily Dickinson kneads the dough  
while I stand in the scullery greasing pans,  
emerge only to stoke the fire in her stove  
with a dash of wood.

Emily shapes the loaves, lets them rise to exclamation—  
wins second prize at the Amherst Cattle Show.  
I scrape the bread board clean, scrub  
the meditation from the bowls.

She sees the breath between the crumb,  
the rhythm of the rising form,  
becomes the judge of Indian bread and rye.

I listen for her step upon the stairs.  
She descends to the kitchen, tests  
the water on her wrist, proofs the yeast.  
I watch from the shadows as she stirs

flour and water with clockwise certainty,  
works a hymn into the dough, courts  
the madness of an art that grows to twice its size.

# BIRD IN THE WAY

*Sara Kaplan*

It was already dead—  
I didn't kill the bird  
broken on the pavement,  
centimeters from the country  
cemetery. Its gray feathers  
spread feet from its head and body—  
life didn't end quietly.  
Did it scream with terror  
as I did when the gray pickup  
leapt over the hill,  
blind to me walking, nearly  
smashing into me?  
It didn't know I'd be there  
on the road leading  
to a farmhouse and the cemetery.  
Something, maybe a vulture, screams above,  
like a pick through ice.  
Wheat fields roll  
into a mountain still capped with snow.  
Bird's eye. That's what looked up at me  
from the pavement.

# YOUR FAVORITE PURPLE DAY

*C. C. Russell*

“I’m sorry,” you used to say when there was nothing else to say. It was something of a mantra for you those years, something to keep saying to keep the hands away. And the voices. If you said it seven times quick, it was magic. If you needed to say it more times than that, it was already far too late for magic to be of any help.

You dream in the colors of another world. Everything is too vivid to be real. You live in a house in the country with a man who has a very ordinary name that you can never quite remember when you wake. The two of you have a dog—a German shepherd who loves to jump onto the bed too early in the morning to wake you both up. After the man puts the dog out to run in the large yard, he wants to make love to you. You are always unsure of his advances, but you begin to give in anyway. As he takes off your nightshirt, you wake up. This is where you always return to the dull colors of your apartment.

People are always so surprised at how well you function. Once they become close enough to you, they will mention that they had always noticed the scars, but “That’s just not something you ask somebody about, you know?” They will ask you about them now. Just to be coy, you will not really explain them. Though you no longer feel the need to cut yourself, you feel the need to keep this as mysterious as it once was, to feel a hint of the power that it once gave you.

The man on the blind date will surprise you by asking. You will say it was an accident. You have already decided that he will not be seeing the rest of them. You watch him pick at his salad. You know that he only ordered the salad to impress you. He seems uncertain of exactly how to eat it, like someone has placed a plate in front of him and told him that they had cooked up his best friend especially for this dinner. It is obvious that the man wanted to order the deep fat fried appetizer platter instead. It is obvious that the man is interested more in the food coming than in your stories of work.

You no longer allow yourself to say “I’m sorry,” even when you are. Just the three syllables of this slipping off of your tongue and you are back there, calling on magic that never seems to work. There is skin underneath your fingernails from struggling. There is the horrible weight of this.

Once they are your friends, they will ask you about your childhood. When you don’t tell them much, they will press. Eventually, you will tell them and refuse to say more. They will look at you sadly and you will want to hit them hard across the face. It always goes away, but

the first thing you will always want is to hit them.

Instead, you will tell them about your last day with your mother, how she had taken you to the county fair. There was a Ferris wheel, cotton candy, voices, the smell of fry bread and animals pressed too closely together. You will tell them how the world rose and fell at your command on the Ferris wheel, your mother beside you pretending not to cry as she looked the other way, watching her own horizon bounce. You will tell them about winning the goldfish that would die the next day, winning the teddy bear that was too large to really be cute. You will tell them about the purple balloons that your mother bought you in a giant bunch, how on the way home, with the balloons filling the backseat beside you, the world glowed purple and seemed so close. You will tell them how your mother kept calling into the backseat to make sure you were alive since she couldn't see you through all of the balloons. They will smile at your story. They all will have one of their own to tell after you are done with yours. You will find it hard to listen.

In the dreams, there seems to be no road to get to your house, just an empty horizon no matter which way you look. No one comes to visit. No one stays too long. No one asks any questions. Even the man, for the most part, leaves you alone.

# DROWNING

*Kerryn Ferneyhough*

Your face.  
Your lies.  
They are nothing  
But a memory to me  
Anymore.

Hang on to your memories,  
For when the water fills your lungs,  
They will be all that you have left.

Looking  
Into your coffin,  
Sarah,  
Is like looking  
Through glass.  
But this time  
You are the one  
Who can breathe  
And all I taste  
Is chlorine.

# REQUIEM IN RADIANT TIME

*Andrea L. Watson*

for Bernard

Your soul-of-doves flew from Chama toward heart  
of Antonito, over the 1911 Jewelry Factory, half-past 2  
drug dealers marking time in front of the Palace Hotel,  
nesting finally at the hilltop near your 80-lb mother.

You had a good time. The time  
your 3rd grade teacher kept you after study-school  
to give you watercolors from the Narrow Gauge Gift Shop;

the time you painted your step-brother's barn  
Buddhist gold, adding a colors-of-the-rainbow flag;

midnight, by mountain central time, when  
you boarded the airplane for New York City with 24  
other guys, sassy rally ribbon on your right shoulder.

Remember, you sewed on 11 ripe rhinestones?

I kiss the time you nicked my neck with thinning shears;  
pale beer was your antiseptic: I was not afraid.

Today, the hospice is cold. Your bed is a coffin,  
white-muslin lined, waiting; you do not recognize me.  
The illness snips at your brain like a comb and scissors set.

In your strands of dreams, your mother is not drunk,  
and you are not alone, at age 7, watching  
for her to come back; you are sure she is dead  
but you are dead; rain on her window fades to 0.

# PART OF NIGHT

*Leonard Cirino*

The parts of night I believe in  
are the stars and moon, just before  
dawn when the sun's not apparent  
in the eastern sky. There's a small glow,  
a little fright. It denies the sure, slow  
evening, the shadows from the moon,  
with gray shades of the blessed night  
when a match is struck and the small spark  
seems so bright it darkens the light.

# GRANDFATHERS

*Leonard Cirino*

Solemn cedar, today you went crazy  
with the calls of traveling wings in your limbs.  
Caught in your nest, that sibling, the moon,  
saunters slowly as an icy turtle  
behind the clouds. New quarter, forlorn  
in the dark heavens, you still question  
that mind of six days, the worn old man  
who brings enormous death to the world  
of leafless maples and ripe persimmons.  
Old cedar, you look down from your tower,  
and squirrels inhale the spines' fragrance.  
Grandfather fir, rough in your last years, hard  
on the wind and the land, you laugh while they  
exchange your essence into ash and dust.

# HIBISCUS

*Pam Woolway*

I never gave you a second glance,  
scrappy, gangly hedge.  
We met in California,  
where the air is cracker-dry.  
You were all bony hips and elbows,  
interrupted by green leaf  
and only an occasional bloom.  
How wrong I was,  
Senorita Hibiscus,  
parachutes of color prostitute  
themselves to bees and butterflies.  
The buttery length of your  
stamen, aptly approves  
of bee legs and bee bottoms  
to nudge, lift and probe  
the long column of throat  
that leads down to microscopic ova.  
Your flowers are clownishly huge  
and you wear your leaves.  
You wear them like a flotilla  
or the ruffled skirt of an Orisha;  
all fabric layers and brown legs  
with a face that dares the sun.  
The wind tugs at your  
soft petals, big ears of a beloved child.  
And, oh, what a nose!  
You are not a shy flower.  
Two hours ago  
the hot pink of your playera,  
tight as a Cuban cigar,  
uncoiled.  
But, tomorrow,  
the seduction is over;  
a flaccid wet ribbon,  
spent and gray,  
stares glumly at the grass.

# BARTER

*Mary Nork*

3RD PLACE FICTION PRIZE

My feet crunched against the sand and even my breath was too loud. I held it, ducked below the cottage windows and headed for the deck, careful not to rustle the clumps of grass. One of the driftwood chairs was out in the open. It would be an easy thing, I thought, to turn it on its back, ride it down the hill like a toboggan, then drag it home. My fingers were actually reaching for it when a hairy guy lumbered out of the screen door.

“What are you doing here?” He wiped his hands against his undershirt. “What do you want?”

“I was just looking around. I’m Davy Martin. We used to live here. At least in the summer.”

He stepped closer, positioning his bulk between me and the chair. “I already told your father he’s not getting them back. I bought them. They’re mine. They’re not for sale. I don’t want to see either one of you around here. Stay away.”

I ran for about a half mile, down the hill to the far end of the road, stopping until I got to the place we were staying that summer.

My dad’s family had owned that cottage from the time he was a kid, and every summer since I could remember, we would drive from Buffalo, New York, me, my mom and dad, my brother Freddy and my little sister, Cissy, to stay there with my grandmother.

The cottage was forty seven wooden steps up a hill, and overlooked the white sand of Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon, Michigan. It had two levels. The top one had a wide porch where you could sit at night and watch lightning flash over Lake Michigan. That was my grandmother’s half.

We stayed in the bottom half. It had three bedrooms carved into the hill, a deck, a side door that opened into the kitchen, and sand pitted windows that stretched across the living room. We had our own furniture, our own toys. And every summer since I’d learned to worry, I wondered if the sand would give way and send us shooting down the hill, across the beach and into the lake.

Worrying was something I did a lot of. I worried about going to hell, about going to high school, about taking care of my little brother and sister if my mom and dad got divorced.

The last worry was new. And real. My parent’s ordinary arguments had gotten bad the winter before when my grandmother wrote that she’d sold her summer cottage and everything in it.

Every day or two, my mom would look at my dad and say, “That

furniture belonged to me.” She wouldn’t say anything else. But just when nobody expected it, her voice shook, and she added, “You let her sell it without even asking me.”

“What the hell are you complaining about?” Dad would bark. She sent you a hundred bucks. A lot more than that junk was worth.”

“My father made those things. It was all I had to remember him by.”

“Not my fault. If your lazy brothers hadn’t sold everything they could get their hands on, you would have had a hell of a lot more.” Then my dad would swear some more, and slam his fist down on the table, or the chair, or whatever was close by. They repeated the scene regularly. Now and then, the words changed some, but the idea was the same. I hated it.

During that winter, I got to be an expert on rescuing. Like an Indian scout, I could measure the weight of footsteps, calibrate the tension of voices. I could get Freddy and Cissy into their snow suits and onto their sleds before words started flying. We lived a block away from the library; that was our foul weather outpost. In spring, I took them to the schoolyard to play on the swings.

Peace treaties, negotiated out of sight and sound left us in a brief calm. Then I’d pop popcorn, listen to the radio and laugh at my dad’s jokes—always alert for the next explosion.

So, in the summer of 1947, again at the lake, but in a rented cottage, I germinated the seed of a thought—a smudge, on the edge of fantasy, about how I would recapture the driftwood chairs and establish peace on our home front.

For the first couple of weeks at the shore I did what I did every year: Coated with vinegar and olive oil, I pitted sand castles against the strike of the waves. I harvested shells, carved angels into the sand and jumped waves in the cool lake water until freckles blotched my shoulders. There were probably other guys at the beach that summer. Maybe we tossed a football around or fed sand toads to snakes that maybe we found back in the hills. I don’t remember. I was caught up in this new rescue mission. It filled my brain like a tumor.

Two days after my encounter with the hairy guy, I saw myself huffing up the forty seven steps the way people see themselves in near death experiences. Shaking, but armed with a cause, I knocked on the screen door. This time a lady came out with a kid hanging onto her skirt.

“See, my grandfather made that stuff and he’s dead now,” I told her. The woman listened.

“If I could have even one of the pieces, my mom would be happy.”

The inspiration of purpose pulsed through my veins. "I could make you another one exactly like it. My mom just wants it because of her dad and everything."

Mom's family had lived at the lake right near the green cottage. She used to tell me how on mornings after a storm, she and her father would scuff along the shore salvaging chunks of driftwood that had washed up during the night. They would bundle them in a knotted fishing net, drag them along the beach and across the road to their porch, leaving a trail of gouges in the sand. Then, Mom, her two brothers, and her mom would sort the wood night after night on the kitchen table while her dad crafted first one chair, then another, and finally squat stools out of the gnarled shapes. They'd sing and tell stories, she said, like those families on Christmas cards. I never learned the songs and I never heard the stories. But I remember the furniture. It wobbled when you sat on it, and had my parents fighting all winter and spring.

The woman glanced down at my hands.

"You might think I can't do it, but I'm twelve, and I'm good at building stuff," I lied. "You wouldn't believe how strong I am. I make stuff for my mom all the time."

She was wavering, I knew.

I wouldn't even have to take it. I could measure it and draw a picture. Then we'd trade after mine was finished. You wouldn't be able to tell the difference, believe me.

When I got home, I hid my sketch under a drawer lining in the room that Freddy and I shared, along with a list of the driftwood pieces I needed, how many, how big. "You can't touch this, Freddy. It's important. It's something I'm making for mom." Freddy was seven, and didn't talk much, but he nodded and I knew he would guard it with his life.

That Friday night, gray clouds pressed against the horizon like a pod of whales. We watched them while we ate dinner on the open porch.

"Big storm coming in," my dad told us. "No fishing tomorrow, Davy."

Fishing is one of the things I remember about the summers. My dad traveled during the week for a tire company, but on Saturday mornings we'd carry a pail of minnows down to the channel that connected the lake to the harbor. If the perch were running, we could catch dozens for dinner by hardly even trying. One time we talked about it all year a huge school hugged the safety of the pier and funneled through the narrows. Fishermen two deep lined up along the

concrete walls, snagging fish from the roiling water: by fins, by tails, by gills, without even threading bait on hooks. But that wasn't real fishing, my dad told me. That was like using a net, with no timing, no skill involved. Just taking advantage of the stupid fish.

If the perch weren't running, and my dad was in a good mood, we'd talk for an hour or so then go home for pancakes and eggs. My dad was different on those mornings. Calm, relaxed, he'd slouch over his pole and say, "You know, Davy." Then he'd tell me about how it was when he was growing up. No Christmas card family for him. His mother was one of the French immigrants who moved in from Canada to work in the logging camps. He learned English from his father's family, somber, blue eyed whiskey drinkers.

I was disappointed about the fishing. I'd been planning to ask about his visit to the old cottage. When did he go? Did he tell my mom? Why did my grandmother sell the stuff in the first place?

The storm came in around two that morning. It was a big one. I woke up to the foghorn bellowing from the pier. Lightning streaked over the water, striking, then leaping back into the sky in a terrifying show of uncontrolled power. Wind shrieked; sand scratched against the shuttered windows; rain pelted the roof like machine gun bullets. Even from the house we could hear the white capped waves crashing against each other. It sounded as if our whole world was being invaded by some alien army with weapons too horrible to imagine.

Cissy had a bad dream, so she and my mom rocked in the living room while my dad stuffed crumpled newspaper under the doorjamb.

"Taddy got blown away," Cissy whimpered.

"No, kitty is home in Buffalo chasing mice at the fire station. You'll see him when we get back," my mom said.

"This is a lake storm," Dad told her. "They don't have storms like that at home. Your cat is fine."

Morning broke like all was forgiven and the world was scrubbed clean. After Dad and I unhooked the shutters, pushed a couple of slats in place and swept off the porch, I said I was going down to the beach to see if there was any driftwood.

"We don't need more junk around here," he said. But to my surprise, he went with me anyhow.

The water was flat, barely breathing. Strands of brown, ropy weeds stretched along the sand, and flies clustered on dead fish. We brought back armfuls of wood, soggy and slick. "Put it over in the grass," Dad told me. "I don't want to attract more mice. Too many as it is."

After breakfast, I heard him talking to Mom. "Too damn many mice around here. I'm going to talk to old man Ferguson. For what we're

paying him to rent this place, we aren't putting up with mice."

"We didn't have them in the other place," she answered.

I hadn't seen any, but I figured that my dad had a sense of those things the same as he did for storms and fish. I was still learning about the world, still stacking information in my brain to balance the heft of things I didn't know and thought I'd never understand. So, I guessed there were mice, and I spread the wood in the grass away from the porch. Then I checked each piece against my list and went back to the shore for more.

A week later we had a cat.

"Ferguson's too lazy to set traps." Dad told my mother. "We have to settle for a cat." It was a gray kitten and didn't look like it had an appetite for anything that wasn't served in a bowl. Cissy took it from the box, stroking it tentatively at first, then deliberately, like a blind child, around the jaw, over the back, down the ribs.

"Cissy, you'll have to take care of it. Food and stuff is on the porch. It goes back to Ferguson when we leave." Dad said.

Mom watched her. "Your kitty in Buffalo would feel bad if we brought home another one," she told her.

Freddy and I didn't start on the stool right away. For days we scoured weedy spots between the dunes, up and down, all the way to the pier, looking for a log to use for the base. Finally, we found one half buried in the sand. We dug it up with our hands and took turns rolling it home. It was the perfect size. We planned to fit smaller pieces around it like a skirt, then attach the back.

I felt light and happy the whole next week, as if I'd stumbled into love. We sawed, we nailed, we admired. Freddy smoothed the rough edges with sand and every few minutes, we compared the stool to my sketch. Even better, we decided. When we weren't working on it, we covered it with a stringy quilt and played at something else.

We told time by our stomachs, jealously counted the calluses that shaped our palms, and sat for haircuts only when our bleached hair dipped over our eyebrows. We lived in Tom Sawyer times. Safe as pages in a book.

Mom was strangely quiet, though. Sometimes she'd put on sandals, braid her long blond hair, and walk down to the beach with us. But mostly, she stayed inside while Cissy napped, cutting scraps of cloth from old dresses for the quilt she was working on. She talked to Dad in a voice we couldn't hear about things we couldn't know. His answers, on the other hand, were too loud, as if he were reciting lines in a play.

Dad was "on the road" during the week and one Friday when he

came home, I heard whispers in the kitchen. No big hellos, no funny stories. Not even the usual arguments.

"How's my little girl?" he asked Cissy, softly like people talk in church. He picked her up, sat her on his lap, and smoothed a wet cloth over her forehead. I sat next to them on the couch. When he patted her cheek and ran his hand down her face, she pulled away. I saw the tiny lumps that thickened both sides of her neck.

I was stricken. All at once, I saw Cissy through Mom and Dad's eyes. The four year old who'd been tearing around the house two weeks earlier with a kitten swiping at her heels, was hollow eyed and dulled. While Freddy and I were glorying in our new world, she had turned into this shell of a little girl. And someone had stolen our scrappy parents, leaving these strangers gentled with fear.

No fishing the next morning. Silently, we piled into Dad's Packard, rode into town and waited stiffly in Doc Sullivan's living room while he finished mopping his toast in his eggs. Then, Freddy and I waited, and my mom and dad brought Cissy into the adjoining office. They were in there a long time. When Doc finally opened the door a few inches, I saw my dad holding Cissy. He and Mom looked stunned.

"She's too little. She's just a little kid," my dad was saying, as if he were trying to get Doc to change his mind.

"Look," Doc interrupted, "It could be just cat fever. See, she's got scratches on her arm. It's common. It could be just that. Probably is. If that's the case, she'll be fine in three or four weeks. But I have to be honest, like I told you. Her swelling, weakness, color—they're not good."

"What's the worst we could be looking at?" Mom closed the door again.

I moved closer to listen.

"The worst is a cancer that kids get. Leukemia. I've only read about it. We'll know in about a month. Remember, only a quarter of an aspirin. And lots of rest."

"Doc," my dad said, "If it's the bad one, what happens then? What do we do?"

Doc lowered his voice, but I could still hear him. "There's not a lot we can do. We don't know much about it. But let's not worry right now. We have to wait and see."

I jumped back in my chair when they opened the door again. The doctor still had specks of egg on his mustache, and smiled at me and Freddy. But not with his eyes.

That afternoon Cissy was sleeping, and an eerie silence drifted through the cottage. We could hear each other breathe. Finally, my

dad said, "Davy, how about you and me teach Freddy how to fish?"

"Right now?"

"Sure. Let's go."

My dad was the first person to tell you that fish don't bite after eleven in the morning, at least no fish that we knew about. But these were strange times. So the three of us carried minnows and poles out to the end of the pier. While my dad stared at the waves, smoked and chewed his lip, I helped Freddy thread hooks through the spines and up through the bellies until minnows squirmed on all our poles. Then we cast out, rehearsed the quick snap of the pole, the smooth reeling in until Freddy pulled up a couple of five inchers. We walked back to the cottage, my dad still silent, but Freddy smiling.

"How are things going?" Dad asked Mom.

"Fine. Everything's fine." Her eyes were red and puffy. "Cissy's still sleeping." She used her fake cheerful voice. "Did you catch anything?"

"Freddy caught a couple, but...they were too little...we had to toss them back." Dad swallowed the last words.

"Oh, God," Mom whispered.

I'd never seen grownups cry before. It wasn't like kids, done and then over. It was smothering, complete, never ending bone sorrow—like the tragedies of the world had sucked out their last strength. I grabbed Freddy and ran out of the house. Then he started to cry as though he and his fish had caused this awful scene. We sat in the grass, Freddy sniffing and me watching the clouds. I wondered at the way life and people change, not knowing that the wondering itself was part of that change.

"You know, Freddy," I said, "Maybe it's a good time to show Mom the stool."

Freddy wiped his arm across his arm.

Hoping for magic, we took it from under the quilt and carried it into the cottage. In the harsh light of our day, it was rough and crude. The pieces were uneven, marked with gouges. They smelled like seaweed.

A calmer quiet had replaced the anguish that we'd left, but my dad still had his arm around my mom. Freddy handed her the stool.

"It's like the one your father made," I said. "We did it ourselves. Dad helped me get the wood. The lady in the other cottage will trade it for the real one as soon as we finish the back."

Mom rubbed the piece the same way that Cissy had stroked her new kitten. She felt the shape of it, the weight of it. And I knew that the lady would never see it.

Dad hugged Freddy and me. "Everything's going to be OK," he told us gently.

During the last weeks of that summer, Freddy and I helped Dad make a chair from the leftover driftwood. It wobbled like the old one, but Mom liked it a lot and sat in it to teach Cissy those old family songs. Cissy's swelling went down like Doc said, and by the time we returned to Buffalo, she was beginning, just beginning to look round and rosy again.

We never got to be a Christmas card family like I wanted. They still argued. Dad still came home angry and tired some weeks. But a lot of times, we sat and talked about that summer when Freddy caught his first fish, Cissy got sick, the storm blew in the driftwood, and we made the furniture for Mom. That was *everything* enough for me.

# LEAVING NORA

*Terry Sanville*

Chet bows deeply and exits stage left. The footlights dim and the house lights come up. Thick felt curtains slide out from the wings, pulley ropes groaning, and swing together at center stage. One of the crew plants a wooden stool behind the lone microphone stand. My knees shake.

Out front the audience quiets as the emcee for Cal Poly College's Spring Concert, 1967 makes the introduction, butchering my last name. I try to get comfortable on the stool and lower the microphone to the right height. Applause splits the silence. The curtains glide open.

I push long stray hairs from my eyes and fingerpick the battered Martin. It sounds out of tune. Maybe it's my traumatized brain, flattening the notes, eager for it to be over. I suck in a deep breath and sing near the top of my range:

*Let me tell you a story about a soldier named Dan.  
Went out to fight the good fight in South Vietnam.*

My voice holds. I finish the last verse of Donovan's "The War Drags On." The final notes echo in the cavernous auditorium. A quiet rustle of applause sweeps the room, like dry leaves skittering across concrete.

I tune the bass string back up to E-pitch and sing Dylan's "Girl of the North Country"—my paean to Nora.

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I met her at the Frog in downtown San Luis Obispo, seven months before. Nora had come in with her girlfriends. They'd crowded around a rickety table and tried looking attentive as performers climbed onto a tiny corner stage and sang folk songs or recited poetry.

That night Loretta, the coffeehouse owner, paid a duo \$10 to play. Those guys were really good, much better than the Frog's normal cadre. After they finished, Chet, myself, a girl who sang Buffy Sainte-Marie songs, a beat poet, a hippie poet, a political satirist, and an older woman reading haiku took the stage. I sang Bob Dylan's "Ballad of a Thin Man" with its weird chords and even weirder lyrics.

By midnight, the joint was empty except for performers strung out on bitter coffee. We shared stories and demonstrated how difficult guitar chords should be played. The poets scribbled in their journals. I slumped against a wall and took it all in. Nora came over and

introduced herself. Her girlfriends had vanished.

"I liked the way you sang," she said. "It's like you... understand."

"I'm not sure about that. But it feels good to sing Dylan songs."

She had playful green eyes and blond hair and bangs like Mary Travers of Peter, Paul and Mary.

"So what did you think of the duo that started everything off?" I asked.

"They were really smooth. But I kinda liked everybody else's rough edges."

"No shortage of rough edges here. So do you play an instrument? My guess is piano."

"Worse than that—accordion. I can play a really mean 'Lady of Spain'."

"I'm sure it's adorable," I cracked and she laughed, showing even white teeth between full pink lips.

Loretta finally tired of pouring free coffee and kicked everyone out. Nora and I adjourned to my Renault Dauphine's front seat. It was late September and the California nights were still warm. My talking skills had never been good, but Nora made it easy, asked questions and added enough about herself to move the conversation. I was amazed anyone as good looking as her would be interested in my theories on religion, music, architecture, or more mundane topics like college and final exams.

"I live with my parents and brother and go to JC," Nora said. "I came here tonight on a dare from a girlfriend."

"We're really not that scary, are we?"

"Lucy told me about all the weirdoes. But they weren't that way at all."

"We like to think we're freaks sometimes," I said.

Nora shook her head, a smirk tugged at the corners of her mouth.

We'd have talked until the air went out of the Renault's tires.

But the sky lightened and for the first time in hours, I looked at my wristwatch.

"Christ, it's six o'clock," I croaked.

"My mother's gonna kill me."

"What about your father?"

"Don't worry, he hasn't fired his shotgun in years."

We tore through deserted downtown streets, running red lights, and streaked westward through the Los Osos Valley toward the coastal village of Baywood Park, buried in Pacific fog. The little car's engine screamed as I steered it down the center of the two lane road, flat out, with cultivated fields flying past. In ten minutes I slid the Renault to a

stop in front of her house. Nora jumped out, turned and handed me a scrap of paper with a telephone number on it.

“Call me—we can go out.” She dashed for her front door.

I had just started my sophomore year and that had been my first college date. Fuck calculus homework, I thought, it was worth it. I daydreamed my way back to San Luis Obispo, savoring Nora’s looks and the way she knew how to listen and make me feel like somebody.

The following week I got stuck designing architectural projects and struggling with physics homework. The quantitative stuff always stumped me. But by Friday, I got up the nerve to phone Nora.

“So ya wanna, ya know, go out and do somethin’?”

“What took you so long to call?” she complained. “You want to go out with me or not?”

“Sure I do. How about Sunday afternoon? We can go to Hazard Canyon and, ya know, hang out.”

“That’d be great. Come by around two. You remember where I live?”

“Oh yeah.”

On Sunday I arrived at Nora’s house at the appointed time. Actually, I was a half hour early and drove around Baywood, rehearsing what to say to her parents. But her younger brother answered the door and her parents weren’t home. I breathed easier.

“What were you expecting, the Spanish Inquisition?” Nora joked.

“I figured I had some explaining to do about last Sunday.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll get your chance.”

We drove west along Los Osos Road then south through sage covered sand dunes and tall groves of eucalyptus. At a skinny turnout near the head of Hazard Canyon, I edged the car off the road and parked. A stream flowed down a deep cut gorge to the Pacific. We followed a worn path to the rocky cove bordered by white sand beach. The wind blew cold, and I gave Nora my Army field jacket to wear. She’d worn a skirt and sweater, her bare, shapely legs textured with goose bumps.

We scrambled to the top of the bluffs above the beach and sat gazing at surfers taking their chances with eight foot waves. Bullet headed sea lions watched from nearby kelp beds. A thick fog rolled in, and I put my arm around Nora and drew her to me.

“I should have known to wear something warmer,” Nora said. “I’ve been out here plenty of times.”

“I’m not complaining.” I gave her a squeeze.

She leaned into me and shuddered, her head rested on my shoulder. Long strands of blonde hair blended perfectly with the sand.

"I should've brought my guitar," I said. "I know some Donovan songs perfect for the seashore."

"No, not today. I just wanna be with you, maybe even let you hold my hand." She smiled and laced her soft fingers through my rough and calloused ones.

We began talking—as if the previous Sunday's conversation had never ended. The sun dipped to within an inch of the horizon. The surfers lit a driftwood bonfire and turned on a transistor radio. The wind carried the noise and I grimaced.

"We'd better get back to my place," Nora said. "My Mom won't like it if we're late for dinner."

"Dinner? What's this all..."

"Don't worry. I told my parents all about you. I've had boyfriends over before, ya know." Nora grinned. My stomach churned.

Her parents turned out to be cool: the father had been a guitarist in some Midwest swing band in the '40s. Nora's mother worked as a school crossing guard and was the suspicious one. But she came around when I showed I knew how to hold a fork correctly and didn't put my elbows on the table. I was invited to dinner the next Sunday.

After that, I spent every weekend and half the weeknights with Nora. Our first kiss came in the Foster Freeze parking lot on a rainy October night. Her lips were so soft and sweet, I almost cried. We discovered a sheltered cut in the bluffs at Hazard Canyon and spent entire afternoons making out and caressing.

"I want more than this," Nora said breathlessly during one make out session.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you really going to make me ask?" she said, smirking.

"Oh, er, no, of course not. Jeez, what was I thinking?"

I drove Nora to my tiny one room apartment with its Murphy bed that folded out of the wall. We slowly undressed and spent the afternoon passionately exploring each other's bodies. Nora was the inventive one, making me feel inept at yet one more thing. When we made love, she got crazier than me, as if it turned her into another person, or some other kind of animal.

But loving a pretty girl shoved my schoolwork even farther into the dumper. By December and the end of fall term, I'd failed a couple of classes because I hadn't completed the work. We didn't talk about my flunking school until one February night outside Nora's house.

"I'm only going to Junior College to stay out of my mom's hair," she said. "I figured I'd either have to learn a profession or become a housewife. And school doesn't interest me. So... do architects make a

lot of money?" Nora asked coyly, and I laughed.

"At the rate I'm flunking classes, I'll be lucky to get a job unloading the cement truck." She didn't see the humor in my answer.

"Well, maybe you could study something you like and are good at." She stared into my eyes.

As if it was that simple, I thought.

"Well, I like music. How would you feel about being with a flunky traveling musician?" I listened carefully for her answer.

"I don't know..." Nora said, and shifted the conversation to her girlfriends and the latest tunes from San Francisco—"White Rabbit" and "Do You Want Somebody to Love" by the Jefferson Airplane.

After that, the heat seemed to dissipate. It was like removing a hand from a woolen mitten on a cold morning and feeling the warmth drain away. Nora made excuses for not going out with me: too much schoolwork, movies with the girlfriends, female problems like cramps and headaches. Her mother stopped inviting me to dinner.

My schoolwork got worse. I guess my head was already drifting off somewhere. At the beginning of March, I received a letter from the Dean that said if my grades didn't improve I'd be expelled, becoming easy pickings for the Selective Service. The nightly TV news showed clean shaven boys pushing their way through the tangled jungles of South Vietnam. I'd be drafted and join them if something didn't change.

The week before Easter, Nora agreed to go with me to the Frog to support Chet as the featured performer. We drank coffee and made small talk until he'd finished playing. She asked to leave. I drove her back to Baywood through the pitch black countryside, not talking. We pulled up to her house, and she jumped out.

"Wait here a minute," she said.

I killed the engine and listened to it tick in the damp night air. Shades were pulled down over the house's front windows but pumpkin colored light filtered through and spilled across the front lawn. Nora's shy younger brother peeked out, then quickly withdrew.

In a couple of minutes Nora climbed back into the front seat. She carried the Army field jacket I'd given her and a stack of songbooks from my extensive collection.

"Here, you'd better take these," she said, not looking at me. It began drizzling. I didn't know what to say, and Nora didn't help—didn't ask the questions to get us started.

"I thought we might... have a chance at a future," I finally said. "We could figure something out—maybe I could hang on in school, or something."

“No. It wouldn’t help,” she said. “You’re really sweet, but I need something... more.”

“More?” I asked. My chest ached like somebody had stomped on it.

Nora didn’t answer, stared straight ahead into the dripping darkness.

“WHAT MORE?” I yelled. My voice bounced off the Renault’s metal roof. Nora jerked, then turned toward me. Tears rolled down her reddened cheeks from clear blue eyes.

“I need somebody I can depend on—ya know, someone that’s gonna be ... successful. Or I need somebody that’s wild and crazy and takes me out of this.” She waved her arms in exasperation at the countrified suburbia around us. “Either one. But you’re... neither.”

I knew if I tried speaking, it wouldn’t come out right. I stared at Nora’s bowed shaking head. The thought of returning to my dingy apartment, alone, and never seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling, hearing Nora again numbed my brain. I drew in deep slow breaths to buy time.

“Well, it ain’t me babe,” I finally muttered. There’s a line in a Dylan song perfect for any occasion.

Nora jumped out of the car and ran for the house. She pushed inside and turned off the porch light. It started to pour. I listened to its drum roll beat on the roof. I gave the ignition key a good twist, wanting to get away fast and let my anger overpower the heartache. But there was a loud clicking sound, then nothing. I turned the key a few more times. A window shade moved and the younger brother stared out with round dark eyes.

I wasn’t about to bang on Nora’s door and ask for help. I climbed out and buttoned up the Army field jacket. It was a twelve mile walk back to San Luis along a dark two lane country road. A strong onshore wind pushed the rain. It soaked my head and bellbottom jeans. I squished along in sodden tennis shoes, fixed my eyes on the far spaced lights of farm buildings and reran what Nora had said, over and over in my brain. More? More what? More crazy? More sex? More money? More attention? More excitement? More adventure? More variety? More quality? More freedom? The hours dragged by as I slogged toward town. I muttered comebacks to myself. But they sounded stupid, pathetic, made me angrier than Nora’s parting words.

When the rare car approached, I got off the road to avoid getting caught in its spray. My shoes became caked with slippery clay, and I went down a couple times. About a mile outside of town, I passed a farmhouse. An old guy sat on the front porch, smoking a pipe and watching the storm. He called out to me as I passed.

"You okay son? Ya wanna come in for some coffee?"

"No thanks, mister. I'm not good company right now."

Walking into San Luis Obispo, the red traffic lights bled across wet streets into the gutters. I wished my own bitterness would so easily flow away. Stumbling into my apartment at 2 am, I dried off and collapsed in bed. I had classes at eight that morning but slept through the alarm. For two days, I ate cold breakfast cereal and watched TV soap operas. I convinced myself the head cold I'd caught was a good excuse for cutting class. But I just didn't want to see anybody who might ask questions, make me explain.

A few days later, I phoned College Towing Service. They retrieved my Renault from in front of Nora's house and charged its battery. I stayed in San Luis, not yet ready to go anywhere near the Coast.

About a month later, I ran into Nora's mother in Safeway.

"So John, how are you doing in school?" she asked.

"Fine... just fine." I slowly nodded.

"That's good. Fred and I were worried about you after..."

"Yeah, well, I'm cool. So I'll see ya around." I turned to go.

"You know Nora left home a couple of weeks back," her mom blurted. "She's living somewhere in San Francisco, near Haight Street."

I nodded and said nothing.

She stared at me. Her lips trembled. "If you ever go north and happen to see my daughter, tell her we miss her."

Turning abruptly, she fled the grocery store, moving fast through the parking lot, clutching a brown paper bag and brushing at her face.

\*\*\*

*So if you're travelin' in the North Country fair,*

*Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline,*

*Remember me to the one who lives there.*

*She once was a true love of mine.*

I let the guitar strings resonate, tilt my head back and stare at the audience. The crack of applause brings me back. By the time I stand and bow it has almost died, but picks up again as I walk offstage. Chet is back there with his girlfriend, Veronica.

"Man, you were really on," he says. "I about cried at that last song."

Veronica stares at me and shakes her head.

"Yeah, these rainy nights get me down," I say. "Sorry, didn't mean

the blues to be catching.”

Quietly exiting through a side stage door, we pile into my car and drive north along the coast highway. Veronica offers to buy beer. We pick up a quart of Falstaff at a liquor store in Morro Bay. Chet and I pass the bottle back and forth in the front seat. The beer helps. But my mind gets fuzzy and I can't quite calculate how long it will take us to reach San Francisco.

# INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN HOPKINS OF THE ASH CANYON POETS



Ellen Hopkins, author of *Crank*

**MEADOW 2007:** How and when did the Ash Canyon Poets begin? Who were some of the original members? How did they know each other? What was the original reason to begin ACP?

**Ellen Hopkins:** Ash Canyon Poets will be 20 years old this spring. The group evolved from a WNCC poetry class taught by John Garmon. When the class ended, several members decided they wanted to keep meeting and critiquing each others' work. Bill Cowee and Tom Whitehead were founding members, along with Charlie Crump, Jeff Wilkes and Pat Magnusen. None of these are still active, although

some active members have been with the group for almost that long. (Michael Seltzer, who teaches at UNR, joined a year later.)

ACP membership ebbs and swells, but the core group is around fifteen members. We meet every Friday evening, at seven p.m. (barring blizzard or holiday), and are now at the St. Peter's Episcopal Church Preschool Center, 300 N. Division (corner of N. Division and W. Telegraph) in Carson City. Drop-ins are welcome. We usually bring around ten copies of a poem to be read and critiqued around the table. On any given evening, you may find raw beginners or Governor's Arts Award winners, and often everything in between.

**M07:** When did you begin with ACP?

**Hopkins:** I've been with the group since 2001.

**M07:** What was your own initial reason for joining?

**Hopkins:** I met Bill Cowee, then the group's unofficial "leader," at a meeting. I mentioned I was writing some poetry and he invited me to stop by. I brought what I thought was a pretty good poem, but after listening to the critiques made by the group, I saw it could be much

improved. I came back with another poem. Ditto. Having a real desire to write better poetry, I've been coming ever since. My poetry has definitely grown.

**M07:** How has Ash Canyon Poets changed over the years as you've seen it?

**Hopkins:** Early on, the group was bigger and there were (perhaps) a few bigger egos at the table. Over the years, a dedicated core group has evolved. Everyone at the table now is willing to not only give their best critiques, but also to listen to the opinions of others. We don't always change our poems accordingly, but we do take those opinions seriously, and consider what is being said without hurt feelings. We've learned to trust each other.

The poets themselves have grown, too. Several have won, or been finalists in the annual NAC Fellowship awards. Most are publishing, with one being chosen for inclusion in Best American Poetry 2006. Still, all are willing to help beginning poets get better.

**M07:** How many members are there?

**Hopkins:** Our total roster is 38 members, but most evenings there are 10 or 12 around the table. Some members live out of town, but do drop in whenever they're visiting the area.

**M07:** Tell us how a usual ACP workshop works.

**Hopkins:** Everyone brings copies of their poems and hands them out around the table. We usually start with the eldest member (meaning age, not how long a member) and take turns reading our poems out loud. The others make notes and comments. Generally, we walk away with stronger work.

**M07:** How did the *Ash Canyon Review* begin? Does ACP still put out the *Ash Canyon Review*?

**Hopkins:** *ACR* was the brainchild of Bill Cowee, who enlisted the aid of several members to read and choose poems for inclusion. Unfortunately, with his failing health, the decision was made to discontinue publication.

**M07:** I noticed a real attention to place and nature in many of the poems submitted to the *MeadoW* from ACP contributors. Is this a common thread among the group? Is that simply because of the poets

who submitted, or is that a true reflection of most of the group itself?

**Hopkins:** I think it is a fairly common thread among the group, fed mostly by this stunning place where we live. How can nature not affect you here? But some of the poets write more personal narrative type poetry. A few throw in political observations and humor. I'd say the typical evening around the table is fairly diverse, in fact.

**M07:** What genre did you begin writing at first? Currently you're known for your novels-in-verse like *Crank*. That is quite an unusual genre. Did you begin writing poems and then turned to the novel-in-verse for a bigger canvas with more narrative detail?

**Hopkins:** I've been writing poetry since I was young, and studied journalism in college. After a detour of several years to raise a family and run my own business, I returned to my journalistic roots. Poetry, as always, was a matter of the heart and something I continued to write (yes, along with short stories, mostly horror). My first novel, *Crank*, was a book I had to write. It is loosely based on my daughter's story of meth addiction. I chose verse because it is an internal form of writing. It is how the poet views the world. And I wanted to write the book immersed in her point of view. Poetry seemed the perfect venue. That I have continued to write verse novels is a testament to how readers responded to the first. While the stories are compelling, the verse format pulls them through. It is visually appealing, and every word counts. [I have become a rather impatient reader myself. If a book is too dense, I put it down.]

**M07:** I'm curious about your statement, "*Crank* was a book I had to write." The poet Ted Hughes has argued that most writing stems from a wound that breeds some sort of inner compulsion within the writer to express themselves. Some critics call this sublimation, but without getting too far down in the abyss do you agree with Hughes' statement? Would his statement apply to *Crank*?

**Hopkins:** I do, to a large degree, agree with Hughes' statement. As I look at the reasons I choose certain topics for my books, I find either a personal wound or a wound to someone I care about. *Crank* is loosely based on my daughter's story of meth addiction. I needed to explore not only my own part in the decisions she made, but also wanted some

sort of an understanding about her own reasoning process. That's why I wrote the book first person from "her" point of view.

**M07:** I'm still very curious about your choice to express yourself through novels-in-verse. Many great poetry collections deal with a single subject but without being laid out as novels-in-verse. The poems almost serve as chapters while forming a greater narrative arch. Do you think a novel-in-verse is more accessible as a form than a collection of poems that stand alone but also work as a group?

**Hopkins:** Verse novels, I believe, tell a more cohesive story than themed poetry collections. They seem much more accessible to readers who are not fans of poetry per se. I know, from the many, many emails I receive every day, that I have opened thousands of eyes to the beauty of the poetic form. Many of my readers will go on to enjoy more traditional poetry, something that gives me great pleasure.

**M07:** At this point in your writing life, where do you see yourself heading? Are you going to keep writing the novel-in-verse? I know you still write stand-alone poems. Is there a book-length manuscript in the works?

**Hopkins:** I will continue writing novels-in-verse for the foreseeable future. However, I also see myself writing prose novels and yes, a book-length manuscript of poetry is a goal, along with a possible collaborative work between myself and some of the great young poets I've discovered along the way. Encouraging the next generation of writers is extremely important to me.

# THE WEIGHT OF THIRST

*Ellen Hopkins*

for Bill

The playa is still, emptied  
of even the thinnest  
sounds—the murmur  
of creeping sand; pillowed  
spin of tumbleweed; susurrus  
of feathers trapped in thermal lift.

The well is dry, drained  
to weary echo above  
desiccated silt.  
Thirst swells, bloats  
every cell until the body arcs  
beneath its weight.

The page is blank, scrubbed  
of metaphor, flawless  
turn of phrase. Parched  
within the silence, hungered  
in a desert without words,  
I am stranded in your absence.

# RAIN,

*Ellen Hopkins*

rain, silence  
your song, your pewter

dirge against my windows.  
My patience for puddles

has long since gone,  
melted into the ether

of childhood, like contrails  
into a bite of blue.

My desert holds no place  
for you, your incessant

chiseling away  
at impressionable sand,

evening breath thick  
with spirits of sage.

Lift your gray skirts,  
reveal your star-embroidered

slip, a flash of platinum  
moon in velveteen

sky. Silence your song.  
Whisper a wet goodbye.

# MUSE

*Susan Botick*

Across the empty page,  
slanted light stretches,  
curls, folds to shadow.  
Dusk sways the curtains,  
whispers their edges,  
slips through,  
strokes the near wall.  
What did you say?  
I have been wondering  
when we might mingle  
with twilight, dawn  
or the shades between.  
Must we fade against the wall first?  
Must we slant against the sill?  
Hand, open, brushes the milky sheet,  
wanders meadows of white.  
What did you say?  
This hollow holds a lake.  
Infuse the water, cause waves  
to lap to its edges.  
Beneath the surface...  
characters of varied colors,  
consonant designs. Silent,  
they silk their way  
into hand, breast, breath.  
Kiss this open vowel  
and let the creatures  
swim in you.

# THE FIRST YEAR

*Krista Benjamin*

## I. Rite of Passage

The boys' school where I taught  
my first year. Twelve  
to a class, by housing unit.  
They wore pressed pants,  
shirts and matching ties,  
their hair cut above the ears.

They were rapists, car thieves,  
drug dealers, ages 14-18.  
Most had a mother,  
a grandmother, an aunt,

a woman, somewhere.  
Many had babies, few, fathers.  
They had the given names  
of poets and professionals and saints:

Virgil, Michael, and Jose.  
"Graves," "McCormick," "Lebron."  
Full names they wrote in gang  
calligraphy I was not supposed to allow.

## II. "Are you a virgin?"

This was the worst it got, that first day,  
when I gave each boy a strip  
of paper and said to write me a question,  
fold it up, and put it in the hat.  
No names.

*How old are you?*  
*Do you go to parties?*  
*What car do you drive?*  
*You ever been locked up?*  
I promised to answer six

questions. When I unfolded  
*Are you a virgin?* I read,  
“What’s your favorite ice cream?”  
and answered, “Cherry.”

### III. Easley

I never knew who was in for what,  
but I learned where they were from:  
East L.A., Fresno, San Jose.

Easley was from Oakland. A tall  
black kid, one who needed  
one-on-one for remedial reading.

We sat side by side bent over Laubach  
books, and we talked between paragraphs  
when I could see he needed a break  
from sounding out words.

*The only thing wrong back home, he said,  
is too many guns.*

He’d been shot at,  
but I was the one who killed  
the spider that crawled across his book  
one day. He wouldn’t sit  
back down until it was dead.

# UPSIDE DOWN

*Krista Benjamin*

When she left, the door's slam  
shook walls, and my father  
set the newspaper aside. After

his heavy footsteps on the stairs,  
I climb onto the couch to do a headstand,  
bend my knees over the back cushion, feel  
my pulse wash memories away.

Gazing at the ceiling, I see  
ramrod straight chains balance glass globes, the chandelier  
a blossom of upright crystal petals.

The gravelly white floor is sprinkled  
with glitter. I step  
over doorjambs, careful  
not to leave footprints, tempted  
to duck the rocking chair, fire  
irons aiming down, heavy furniture  
suspended from the carpeted ceiling.

I might slip into a skylight, smash  
its glass blister, plummet  
with glinting shards toward the sky.

# THE ALMOST LIVING

*Suzanne Roberts*

Uncle Eb kept embryos in jars.  
Each life preserved  
in its own formaldehyde sea.  
The order on the shelf  
determined by stage  
of development—  
the smooth hairless skulls,  
the curled bodies, archless  
feet, each one closer  
to the almost living.

We remember the unformed  
eyes, terrified, yet longed  
for them to open.  
The twisted umbilical cords,  
still attached to hard,  
round bellies. We clutched  
onto each other, couldn't  
help staring, but knew  
enough to back away.

Now we stare into the sun  
without moving—the same  
rooms, the same men. Uncle  
is dead. His embryos still  
shelved in the lab—  
some suck thumbs.  
No one is going anywhere,  
no one calls, *Outside*,  
*Outside, Outside*.

# BACKYARD

*Shome Dasgupta*

Bryan jumped four times on the trampoline, and after the fourth jump, he landed on the moon, where Isabelle was standing with a petal-less stem in her hand. She wasn't smiling, and her blue gown was wavering in the airless air, making her look like some kind of sexy astral ghost. She was barefoot and her hair, unlike her gown, remained motionless. The stem was green and naked.

The last time the two had met was eleven years ago, at the well, where they would throw their vegetables down the waterless chute. Cauliflower, celery, lettuce, all the greens that they were supposed to eat for dinner could be found there. It had become a place of feasting for others; it had become some kind of banquet hall, where flies and frogs would meet every night, and discuss politics over broccoli. Eleven years ago, Bryan had given Isabelle a rose to say goodbye to her. She was to move the next day with her parents, despite not wanting to go. She wanted him to tell her not to move; she wanted him to tell her that he loved her and that they should run off to the ocean and love each other until the ocean would dry out, but he gave her a rose instead. Bryan wasn't good with words, and Isabelle knew that, so she left it at that.

That was eleven years ago, when they were fourteen, and much had taken place since then: Isabelle had breasts; she had a belly button and ankles. She had biology. She had panther curves, and a mind full of kinetic energy. She had eyes that looked for more than just seeing what was real. She had the world placed in her veins and arteries, going to and from her heart, leading her to become what gentility and strength embodied.

Bryan had not changed as much though: he mumbled and kept his hands in his pocket. He still threw vegetables down the well. He still looked down when he walked; he still thought about the ocean, and he still loved Isabelle.

So there they were, on the moon, facing each other after eleven years. He looked at her for only a few light years and then he stared down into a crater, with his hands in his pocket.

"I see you're still using your trampoline," she said.

"Shshfy," he mumbled, still staring into the crater.

Isabelle smiled and laughed quietly. He looked up and glanced at her lips, and then at her ankles. He turned around and looked at the earth.

"I still have your rose," Isabelle said, holding the stem up to the stars.

He turned back around and looked into her eyes, which were reflecting the universe.

"Let's go to the ocean," he said.

# DISSIDENCE

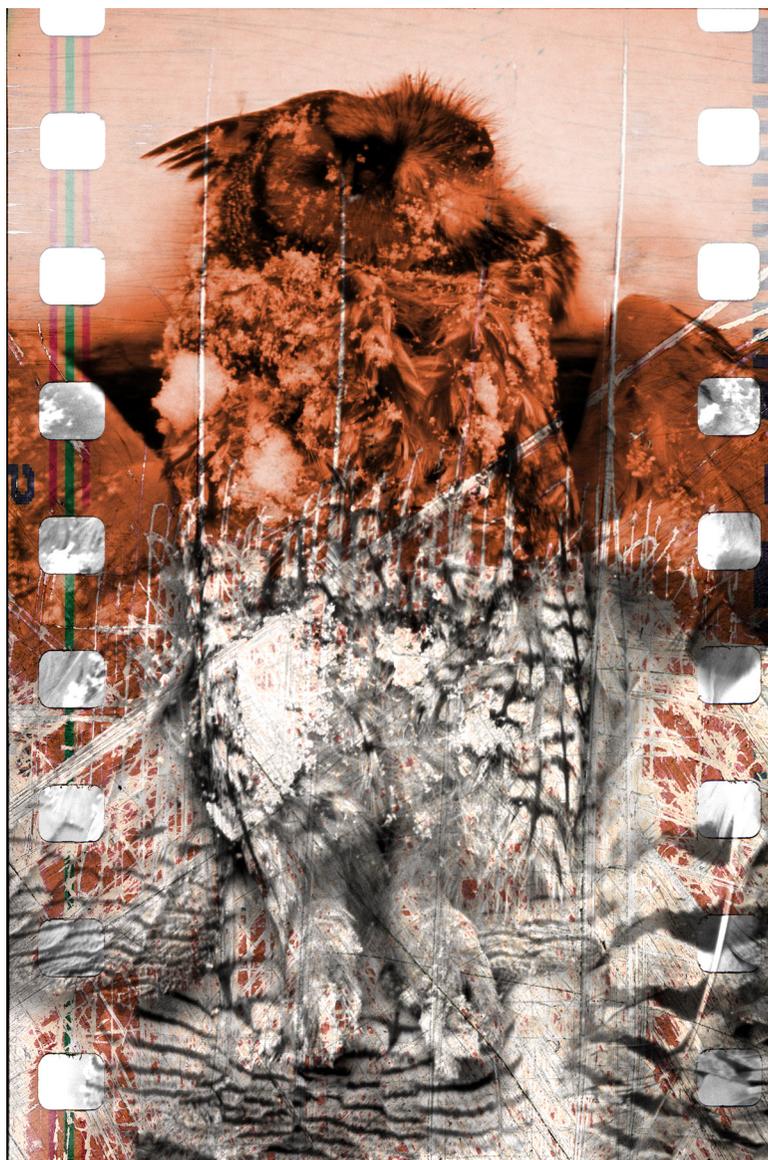
*J.V. Tabbada*

3RD PLACE ART PRIZE



# DISSOLUTION

*Tom Drakulich*



# RETROGRESSION

*Tom Drakulich*



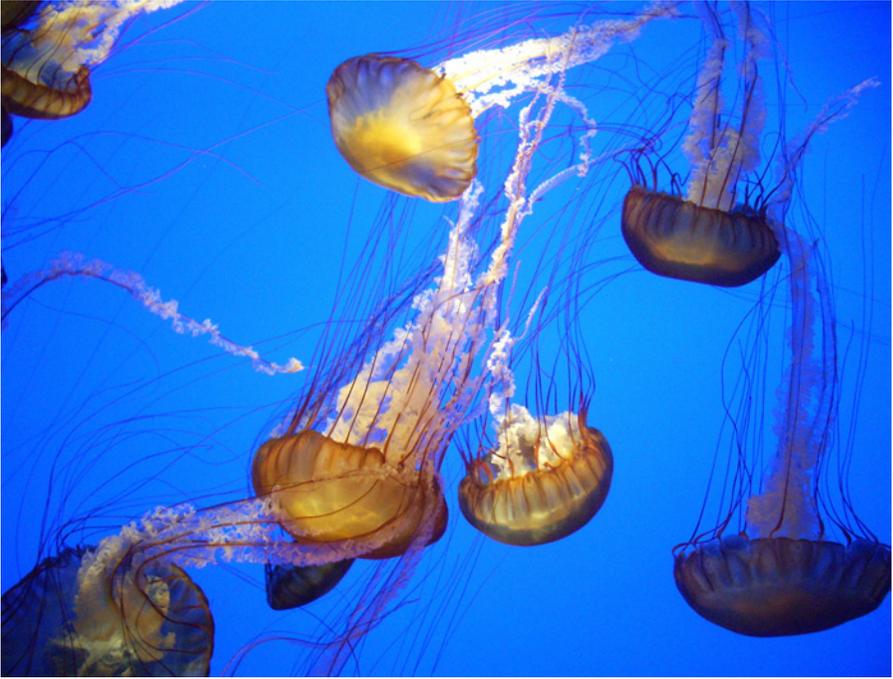
# ILLUSIONS

*Shania Western*



# MOONLIT JELLYFISH

*Lorraine Tornquist*



# STONE LIGHT

*LeRoy DeJolie*



# TREE PAINT WATER

*Jim Lamoreux*

2ND PLACE ART PRIZE



# COTTON GATHERING

*Abraham Abebe*



# MELAT

*Abraham Abebe*

1ST PLACE ART PRIZE



# WELL THEN, DOCTOR

*Dalia E. Gerdel*

Let's review your method of  
seduction:

Running large hands over me  
you begin to dissect me  
in your mind, reciting aloud each  
muscle, bone, and tendon  
that makes up my already  
self conscious anatomy.

I become lesson, a textbook,  
a cadaver spread on a  
cold table in a colder room as  
the professor asks which  
pressure points cause arousal  
and you bounce on the balls  
of your feet, eager to demonstrate.

And you wonder why I'm not in the mood.

# UNPACKING: ANOTHER SMALL DEATH

*Dalia E. Gerdel*

Sitting on the edge  
of my bed, curled in the  
fetal position, I close my eyes  
to the red suitcase,  
still closed and packed.

If I open it, the smell of sand,  
of cold mountain water,  
of him  
will leak out and  
leave only the memory—a shadow  
that somewhere along the line  
became not enough.

Almost a month gone and  
still at the foot of my bed it waits and  
I almost expect a skeletal finger  
to poke out of the gap in the zipper and  
open itself against all my protestations and  
still I can't bring myself to unpack  
the two nights spent in his arms  
clothing sacrificed  
to the bed sheets and the hotel floor and  
I can't wash those clothes and  
the What if? and  
the lost opportunity and  
the ache that nags me for clinging  
so hard to discipline and  
a false sense of morality and  
the fact that I'm so afraid that

I'll never have that moment again.

So I lie back on the denial  
arms crossed over my chest  
and close my eyes to  
the red regret,

still open and unpacked.

# THIS IS WHY I AM NO LONGER INVITED TO PARTIES

*Lowell Andrew Warbington*

In the background they droned  
on. Over exuberant voices buzzing  
like a diseased swarm of flies,  
these carrion feeders desperate  
to connect. Spreading, their,  
contagion. Through mouths  
vomiting, conversation, sucking  
dry, the carcass of, entanglement.  
Seeking sustenance, in the void,  
that exists. Between two bodies  
even when touching. Lips press  
to glass or bottle, dripping venom  
in seemingly innocuous banter.

# MELODRAMATIC WORKPLACE

*Jessica Troppmann*

3RD PLACE POETRY PRIZE

Wires, buttons, glass  
My computer is sexy  
I want to make love

New snack machine buzz  
What will the computers eat?  
Motherboards with no milk

The fish tanks loud drone  
All the coy are busy at work  
My network is down

Three hole sucka-punch  
Paper didn't see that coming  
Goodnight long lost tree

Sadness pours over  
Clouds cover the skylight  
How will I tan now?

# THE MAN WHO WHISTLES AT THE COPY MACHINE

*Nathan Graziano*

I see him like the naked eye sees comets,  
on rare occasions, and always at the copy machine.  
He teaches in a classroom eons from the English wing,  
in the black hole known as the industrial arts.  
Today he's pirating a how-to leaflet on dry wall,  
an inch-thick packet that read like Sanskrit to me.

I'm waiting, restless, a W.C. Williams poem  
dog-eared in a fat anthology, a piece  
that I forgot to photocopy before class.

The industrial arts teacher, an older man  
with a graying mustache, a jolly pot belly,  
and glasses with lenses that could fry ants,  
stands hunched with his hands in the pockets  
of his navy-blue Dickies, bouncing slow  
on his toes, smiling and whistling an archaic song  
I recognize from old Warner Brother cartoons.  
He whistles in perfect pitch, merrier  
than Wordsworth's daffodils ten pages ahead  
in the anthology growing heavy in my hands.

There's no reason for me to expect him  
to let me make a photocopy and get back  
to my students, who are probably dancing on desks  
or copulating on top of my own by this point.

I lean against the wall and listen to him  
whistle, enjoying a concert by a man  
whose students are far too smart to study poetry.

# LATE FOR WORK

*Jim Lamoreux*

2ND PLACE FICTION PRIZE

Morning came to Albert's window. The glass was obscured with filth and Morning just stood there looking in, unable to see anything inside. All around the city hummed, hissed and beeped. Outside Albert's apartment, the World walked about with heavy feet. It brushed its teeth. It combed its hair. The World sat down to the kitchen table and poured its coffee and got ready to begin the day. Albert watched the World from his bed, the sheets so unwashed they were like crepe. Albert had to get in gear or be late for work.

Albert looked hard at the windows of his bedroom. He saw the light fingering the window glass like brilliant butterflies. He blinked them away. Focusing beyond the glass through the dirt and dust, he vaguely saw the city reach out a steak knife, trying to carve up the minutes of the day for everyone, serving it to them like a smothering, overbearing Mother. Albert was still in bed. He raised himself from the sheets, stood up and strolled naked across the floor like a drunken surveyor, marking out the distance with shaky strides. It was a short few steps from the bed to the bathroom. Above him, as he sat on the toilet, a single bulb whined. A moment later last night's dinner spun down the pipes and out to sea. This was a good beginning.

He wiped, stood up from the toilet, and looked weakly into the glass of the mirror. His face was gang beaten by Time; what used to look like the familiar child in the family photo book now appeared swollen and abused like a roughed up Potato Head. The dark jaw erupted in stubble, as if his lower face had been swarmed by tiny black ants. It was painful to look at himself. The pain felt like a toothache that settled like a cat with long claws on the top of his brain, trapped in the dome of the skull's brain pan, purring and kneading the red tissue with long, pin sharp nails.

He stabbed at his teeth with a stiff toothbrush. Outside a dog urinated on the tires of his car. His garbage can sat in the driveway, erupting with TV dinners. The sun crawled weakly up the dome of the sky, shadows spreading like spilled ink on the park grass and sidewalks. Albert was going to be late for work.

He stopped brushing his teeth, looked down into the bowl of the bathroom sink, and saw a tooth. He thought at first that it might be popcorn. He fingered it curiously. It was a tooth. On the sink porcelain, the tooth was surrounded by a swirl of gray hair. It was just a skiff of hair, but it was enough to make him pause. He was balder in the mirror today. The angry bathroom light bulb reflected a hard white

shine on the dome of his head. He stood at the sink like a speaker at a lectern.

Something fell to the floor with a small thud.

It tumbled behind the toilet. The cold from the bathroom tile crawled up the muscles in his legs from the bottom of his feet. He noticed in the mirror that an ear was missing. He wiggled his toes and something snapped softly, and rolled away. It was getting late. He had to focus. No time to be chasing things on the floor. The sun straddled his apartment and made the tarred roofing waffle with heat. Cats left the rooftop for cooler napping places and birds huddled under leaves and awnings to shield their dusty feathers from the hot fingers of the sun. Damn! He had to find that ear. He crawled around until he found instead the toe that had come away and rolled behind the toilet. It crumbled in his hand. He was definitely late now. No time for this crap.

All over the World the workday was in full swing. In an office far away a water bottle in a lobby somewhere made an oily gulping sound as someone poured themselves a drink. The city water was too full of bugs to want to drink it. In his apartment though, Albert dealt handily with the bugs. Everything always smelled of Raid. Now his knee was numb. The bones ratcheted around in the socket when he turned to face the toilet again. How was he ever going to get to work like this?

He glared at the mirror of the medicine chest. He scratched his right breast crowned by a hard, berry colored nipple, and something popped softly, spun downward and made a plunking sound in the toilet. He pivoted on one foot to look, and felt the ankle powder under the skin collapse like a mound of stiff sand. He needed to go to the kitchen. His foot dragged along on the tile floor of the bathroom, dissolving into it as he reached for the knob of the door to steady himself. His boss was going to be pissed.

On the TV news in Albert's apartment, the broadcaster wondered out loud if Iraq would ever become a sovereign nation. Then a smiling man burst down a mountain road in an SUV while his vehicle changed shape and color all the way down, like a chameleon on crack. TV would help Albert concentrate on getting to work. He shuffled to the kitchen, but on the linoleum, halfway there, the joint in his hip made a soft popping sound and his leg shot to the left as he grabbed at it like a man fumbling for a dropped crutch. He let it go. Dammit he was late. He filled the coffee maker with grounds hopping around in the kitchen on one leg. Then he went to the sink to get water.

He felt the temperature of the flow from the tap with his finger for no reason, and looked out across the driveway to the street beyond.

People walked back and forth like cardboard targets. He thought briefly that perhaps he was looking at a personal shooting gallery; back and forth the cardboard caricatures of human beings ratcheted, and if he could hit one or two what would he win? Then again what would he hit them with, a dirty look? He glanced down and saw the water had dissolved his forefinger and carved a groove in the two fingers below it. He was holding the water receptacle around the bottom of the plastic handle with his pinky. He carefully placed it in the coffee maker, flipped it on with what was left of his finger and waited for the coffee to perk.

He sat down feeling the vinyl seat of his dining room chair on his bare ass. He absently kneaded his genitals waiting for the coffee. There had been a time that doing this would have evolved into several hours of enthusiastic, impromptu, happy masturbation. This time he sighed as his scrotum came away in his hand. He held it up for a few minutes feeling its weight. He thought of things that he had held before that weighed the same as his scrotum. He bounced it all in his hand a little, the penis slipping through his missing upper fingers and dropping to the floor to explode in a small cloud of dust. The coffee bubbled and croaked in the pot. He set his balls on the table carefully, whining a little as they rolled off onto the floor and under his TV chair.

He would be fired today for not showing up for work. What excuse could he give? Should he call in sick? Outside, in offices all over the World people moved back and forth between cubicles focused on the task for the day. On their desks were pictures of their families. Eighty percent of their time was spent in those cubicles. He saw them dissolving in each little space like snails hit with salt, hissing and bubbling, their work place noisily becoming a damp, empty shell. He sighed and tried to handle the sugar with missing fingers. Instead, he spilled it on the surface of the dining room table and floor. No sugar today.

The coffee had finally perked. He stood on one leg to pour it, and winced a little as the skin of his ass remained on the chair dissolving into a dust doughnut. He hopped to the counter, poured the coffee with his good hand and tried to sip it. He felt the steam dissolve his upper lip. Air blew across his exposed teeth and gums. Determined, he tried again, the coffee burning his inner mouth. He mumbled his anger at the staring sink that was erupting with unwashed dishes. He had to call in to the boss. He was sure he would be fired this time.

The workday wore on. The sun moved behind the tall office buildings. Clouds puffed and blew about windy skyscraper tops while birds drifted in the air around them. Inside, people mapped out

the minutes of their lives from job to job. Here and there a personal touch or two bled into the fabric of the workday. It was like a stain on someone's underwear. It was accidental humanity.

He stood on one leg in the middle of his apartment. The TV complained about high gas prices. Osama bin Ladin bitched again about how America misunderstood him. The World dragged itself into the afternoon like a struggling dung beetle pushing its own waste uphill. He tried to pick up the phone but his remaining fingers snapped off his palm from the pressure. They flopped onto the top of the phone table, one falling on the floor behind it. He would explain his lateness to his boss, as soon as he figured out how to dial the phone.

Then again, where was he going today really? He hopped to his recliner and sat down heavily. He pushed back to raise the foot rest and felt his arms pop from the elbows and roll into his lap. He cried. The fingers left on the phone table dissolved like sand. The leg on the floor disintegrated and blew around in a breeze from the kitchen window. Outside someone yelled obscenities at a cabdriver. People were closing their briefcases and shutting down their office computers all over the World. It was quitting time. The sun ducked shyly behind the trees of the city park. Homeless people stirred.

He sat in his chair feeling his chest dissolve into the slick vinyl fabric. He sobbed. His pelvis softened in the seat and collapsed into the wooden frame and metal springs of the chair. In the gathering darkness a little while later, his eyes stared sadly out of the ball of dust that had become his head, and then imploded and blew away with his skull.

It was "after work hour." The streets were haunted now with people trying to have a "kick ass Friday night." They migrated to the bars like angry moths. In the dark booths at the strip clubs men talked too loudly and women painted themselves too thickly with the colors of war-between-the-sexes. Urine misted off walls in alleys. Dumpsters echoed the stomach-churning growl of dry heaves. At restaurants, secretaries argued the drama of that week, snitching on each other as if it mattered to anyone but them.

A man somewhere tried to touch his Girl Friday's shoulder explaining that he couldn't divorce his wife of 15 years just yet. Be patient baby. She shrunk from his fingers. Days ago she threw herself at him with a kind of abandon she hadn't felt since high school. All that didn't matter now. She had become a thing, like the stapler or the letter opener. She didn't know what to do. She didn't know what to say. She stared at the gathering night sky and the bright, burning

stars blossoming on an inky blue atmospheric dome. Her eyes ached with a pain that gripped her lungs and made it hard to take a breath. It was lousy to be a thing.

The workplace was like a Petri dish, the relationships evolving like bacteria. It felt like slavery, and yet everyone had their own radio, CD players, widescreen TV's and SUV's. They had all become affluent slaves. But they still kept burning themselves on that bug light, the one that entices them to be scorched by their pain even though they should know better than to keep going there. The streets settled into the deepest part of the night bordering on the onset of morning. Time passed like the inner spindly intricacies of a spider building a web.

Somewhere someone was murdered and disposed of in a cold river. Somewhere else someone had fevered sex on cool, clean bed sheets. A baby cried in a crib. A dog whimpered in its dreams. Buses and trains moved to and fro across the great, pulsing network of life that feeds and nurtures every city. And yet what had to be the fate of human beings that tried to live in accordance with the rules of steel, concrete, Xerox and fax machines? What did exposure to all this finally make them become?

The TV announcer on Albert's Television said there was no relief in sight for the gas price disaster bringing this nation to its knees. Next door, the music of an all night party thumped and shouted against the adjoining walls to Albert's apartment. A woman whooped wildly somewhere, a live rock band played in a garage several blocks away, until police showed up. The World staggered on its own great feet into another relentless cycle of day and night around Albert's dry little apartment in the middle of Everything, Everywhere.

The wind blew softly through the screen of the kitchen window. In the early morning darkness the TV cast the living room in a blue glow. Cats moved along the wood fence outside, their shadows creeping across the wide face of the waning moon. They blocked the light that powdered the reclining chair in a hoary whiteness, their dark twins padding across the stuffed fabric in smoky duplication.

In the frame of that light a beating heart dissolved into the springs, wood and cushions of the powder blue recliner. In a few hours the clock radio would go on and the day would begin.

But Albert, he would be late for work.

# A STREET LIGHT NAMED DESIRE

*Michael Moberly*

2ND PLACE POETRY PRIZE

My symphonic sweet  
Illumination,  
You are  
Raining electric comfort  
Down from the sangria midnight.  
Your  
Neon fantastic  
Imprints.  
Your sky on my lips  
Like Kool-Aid smiles.  
And I would be so lucky to know  
The way you taste as you  
Veil the stars and  
Remind me of  
The city light dreams  
Expanding in every direction  
Like your sexy urban sprawl.

# SHE WANTS ME TO LOOK

*Lena Hirsch*

I sit quietly  
Barely noticed  
But I notice her  
And her and her  
She teases me with her  
Tight jeans  
She wants me to look  
Look longer than other men  
She knew what she would make me see  
With those  
Low cut  
Tops  
Breasts  
Mounding out  
And her  
She wanted me to look  
At her  
Calves  
Up to her  
Thighs  
She wanted me to look  
That's why she chose that tiny skirt  
She pretends not to notice  
I notice  
She makes me breathe heavy  
And  
Sweat  
Eyes darting  
Inadvertent glances  
She wants me to look  
To stare  
She plays coy  
She pretends to be uncomfortable  
She pretends to walk by faster  
She wants me to look  
They all just want me to notice

# CANADA

*Dillon Dunlop*

1ST PLACE FICTION PRIZE

At home packing and in a hurry, and any second the cops will knock on the front door and bust down the front door, and he'll fly out the back door and jump the back fence, into the neighbor's yard, and then into the neighbor's neighbor's yard, and this a few more times before trying to hide under someone's deck or under someone's house or in someone's bushes.

But he's done stuffing his duffel bag, and no one has knocked, and Jason already has his gym bag packed and is looking at him and says: "Do you think he's dead, Tony?"

"I don't know," Tony says. "Maybe," he says. Knows he's got no right to be mad at Jason, but he is. But yeah listen—it's not that Jason's rock hit the guy in the head, it's not that Jason went and got the first rock. Nah...nah, it isn't any of this—it's the way Jason's been looking at Tony that gets Tony mad. Jason's been looking at Tony like Jason's this little kid, like Tony's maybe Jason's father, something disgusting like that.

On the drive home, Tony had the idea of turning on the TV, to see if it'd be on the news yet, and he does now. He flips around the channels, looking for anything like news. He doesn't really think it'll be on yet since the news doesn't come on this late—but there it is. The blonde newscaster with the lips is saying two men are wanted for the attempted murder of a local man named David Segheri. David Segheri has suffered severe head trauma in the casino's parking lot shortly after two a.m., and David's Segheri skull is fractured, and David Segheri is at the hospital in stable but serious condition.

And then the security footage begins to roll.

It is gray and grainy and from far away, but you can still see it pretty good. There's the man named David Segheri and them raising their hands and yelling at each other. David Segheri is at the edge of the footage, next to the casino, and Jason and Tony are in the middle of the parking lot, almost to Tony's car. You can clearly make out Tony's car.

Then there's the man named David Segheri sprinting toward them and picking up fist sized rocks from the rock landscaping that runs in a strip through the center of the parking lot and throwing fist sized rocks and picking up more fist sized rocks, and there's Tony and Jason moving to the rock landscaping and their thrown rocks felling David Segheri and then them walking away. It all looks very plain and it all happens very fast. Much faster than it seemed it actually happened.

The way they walk away gives Tony a chill.

Your pulse doesn't speed up.

Your pulse slows down.

The newscaster gives their estimated heights and weights and ages, all pretty close, and then a different reporter, a guy with dark, gelled hair, gives the description of Tony's car: a '90 or '91 red Volkswagen Fox, and that's right on. Tony's got a red '91 Volkswagen Fox.

He digs a thumbnail deep into the underside of his forearm. He looks down, and a thin line of blood is rolling toward his wrist.

"I'm sorry," Jason says, and you can tell he might cry, and then what? Will Tony?

"Don't be sorry," Tony says. "Drink some water." Jason drank much more than Tony at the casino (no, not much more) and he drank a few Schlitz's before they left for the casino. He has the blank, child look on his face he gets when he's really drunk, and he won't meet Tony's eyes right.

Tony turns off the TV as the guy newscaster gives the number people should call if they have any information about them, and he tries to remember everything they'll need, but he's not really thinking about that. He's thinking about maybe turning themselves in and trying to explain everything. But that would do no good. How it looked on tape was pretty violent and if he were a jury he wouldn't let them go either, the way they just walked away and didn't even check to see if David Segheri had a pulse or if David Segheri was dead.

They drive to Tony's bank's ATM in Jason's Honda before leaving town, and Tony takes out the maximum the bank will let him at one time, which is \$300. Then they drive to Jason's bank. He only has a little over \$100. He takes it out. And then they're going north on 395, and 395 goes all the way to Canada, and neither of them have been to Canada. They listen to the radio, but there isn't any information about them, and so they turn it off and drive in silence.

Tony drives for hours, and then the sun is orange and rising huge in front of and to the side of them. The orange of the sun reminds Tony of the orange of the parking lot's lights, and the purple of the clouds in clusters around the sun remind him of the purple of David Segheri's blood under the orange lights, even though the cloud's purple is lighter and almost pink.

His vision blurs.

And then the sun's all the way up and he can't drive anymore. He's been slapping and pinching himself to stay awake, and he has the windows rolled completely down for noise, for wind in his face—but

he's got to sleep. He pulls off the freeway in Pilot Rock, Oregon, and they try to sleep in a Wal-Mart's parking lot. But Tony doesn't sleep. He keeps thinking they'll wake up surrounded by police.

They have to ditch Jason's car, or else steal some plates.

But they didn't pack any sleeping bags, and they'll need them soon, and they'll need lots of stuff, so first they go into the Wal-Mart. In the sporting section are some sleeping bags for \$50 which are rated to zero degrees Fahrenheit. They go into the cart. Into the cart goes a ten pound bag of rice and some cooking pans and skillets and some drinking water. Into the cart goes a two man dome tent and a tub of margarine and a cylinder of salt and lots of Power Bars. Into the cart go two pocketknives and a few rolls of duct tape and some rope and vitamins. It all costs a little over \$300 and they're leaving and Jason says, "I'm sorry."

It's the fourth or fifth time he's said it now, and Tony feels like hitting him.

"Don't be sorry," he says. "We both threw rocks. Just because yours is the one that hit him in the head doesn't mean anything."

Jason just nods and nods.

They'll need a map and Tony forgot to get one, so they stop at a convenience store on the way out of Pilot Rock and get one for \$5. The map says 395 continues all the way into Canada like Tony thought, so they don't really need the map yet, but now at least they'll have one to look at and maybe pick a spot to camp with. It's summer and it isn't too cold yet, so they can maybe go somewhere far away from everyone and everything, in the mountains.

"I don't know if we should stay in a hotel until we're in Canada," Tony says. "The cops might see our parked car or something."

"Okay," Jason says.

"It'll be all right if we pay with cash only in Canada," Tony says. "We should also maybe try and sell your car and try to buy another one, maybe in Richland or something."

"All right," Jason says.

Tony's sure Jason doesn't even know where the fuck Richland is. Tony wants Jason to want to look at the fucking map. Tony wants Jason to be excited.

"Are you okay?" he says.

"Mmhmm," Jason says.

Tony doesn't like the dealer. He can tell how bad they want to get rid of the Honda. He keeps looking back toward his office, where the

phone is.

Or maybe Tony only thinks this.

They drive the old Blazer to the apartment complex where they hide the tent and sleeping bags and the skillet and the rice and the butter and the salt and everything behind the dumpsters. The Mexican children watch as they step out of the truck. If anything is gone, Tony will feel sick. He will walk up and begin screaming in the children's faces. He will spin in circles and flip off the windows on all sides. He will walk up and throw anything he can find through every window. He will scream and flip off and break enough windows to not feel sick. But it is all there where they left it behind the dumpsters, and they pack it into the back of the Blazer, and the Mexican children are watching.

They leave the apartment complex and drive straight through Washington, to the Canadian border, and Jason says, "Tony."

"What?" Tony says.

They've spoken a combined thirteen words across the state of Washington.

Tony: Are you hungry?

Jason: No.

Tony: We have lots of Power Bars.

Jason: Oh, I know.

"I—I can't go," Jason says, and his blue eyes are meeting Tony's and not floating away for the first time since it happened.

"What are you talking about?"

Jason doesn't say anything at first. Then he says, "I'm, I'm not good at this like you."

What can you say to that?

Tony doesn't know.

"I can find a bus or a ride," Jason says. "I mean, you can keep the truck."

And Jason's crying. But barely.

"No," Tony says.

They don't say anything else, and they're pulled over on the side of the road, next to the green of Washington, the Canadian border at the tip of their vision.

Breathing in and letting air out slow, Tony squeezes the steering wheel. There is a buzz in his ears.

He says, "All right."

Giving Jason the keys, he opens the door and steps outside. As he goes around back and gathers everything he can carry and piles it in the grass on the side of the road, he tells himself not to look at

the back of Jason's head. He focuses on the black ants crawling over the white plastic grocery bags and bends down to slap them off. He catches one between his fingers and crushes it. When he comes back to the front seat for his water bottle, he thinks he and Jason should maybe hug, or at least shake hands, but they don't.

They kiss. Tony doesn't know why or how or who started it. But Jason's tongue is warm and he tastes like alcohol and his tears are already cold and his cheeks soft even though he hasn't shaved in over three days.

When Jason was eight he poured his three year old sister a glass of bleach and told her it was juice. Her stomach had to be pumped, and she spent over a week in the hospital. He has never told anyone about this, he doesn't know why he is telling Tony this, and this is the last thing Jason says before Tony takes his only possessions into the trees toward the Canadian border.

As the taste of Jason fades, and Tony is lost in the everywhere green, a wet panic washes through him. He turns around and cannot see the Blazer. He cannot see or hear the road. There is only the everywhere trees, the whirl of insects, his beating heart. The feeling swells, until he puts the bags down, closes his eyes. This is the closest he will ever come to experiencing birth. It is all over him.

# I REMEMBER HAIFA BEING LOVELY BUT

*Lyn Lifskin*

there were snakes in the tent. My mother was strong but she never slept, was afraid of dreaming. In Auschwitz there was a numbness, lull of just staying alive. Her two babies gassed before her, Dr. Mengele, you know who he is? She kept her young sister alive only to have her die in her arms the night of liberation. My mother is big boned, but she weighed under 70 lbs. It was hot, I thought the snakes lovely. No drugs in Israel, no food. I got pneumonia, my mother knocked the doctor to the floor when they refused, said I lost two in the camp and if this one dies I'll kill myself in front of you. I thought that once you became a mother, blue numbers appeared, mysteriously, tattooed on your arm.

# WHITE DOVES & KILLING KINGS

*Suzanne Shoemaker*

1ST PLACE POETRY PRIZE

Iron maiden of pink walls and china dolls,  
the white doves never fluffed her wings.  
Impaled, nailed,  
skewered and speared  
in a candy-coated castle of killing-kings.

Acid gorged holes in her stomach  
and through shattered glass she lingered.  
Trapped doors, black holes,  
choking hands and barbed tongues,  
a dirty-eyed princess they'd triggered.

A shadow she crept—a spider on the wall  
avoiding the shards of their tempers.  
Wrung out, wrung dry,  
raked out, run thin  
lollipops and ponies no longer the answer.

On a flower sprinkled pillow, she put her head to rest  
and heard as the white doves chanted her name,  
come Paracetamol, come Dramamine,  
down Acetaminophen and Lithium Ion Li,

With the white doves,  
she fluttered away.

# BREAKING THE MOON WITH BONES

*Sean Prentiss*

Bones sidles from our midnight canoe  
and, like October oaks, sheds her bikini  
to early-summer sands.

As the rounded moon reflects an aurora  
moonwake across the Delaware, Bones wades into the current,  
dangles from the rope swing,

and spins small halos. Her swan-white breasts  
and willowy hips break and sink into river, break and sink.  
Bones stops her water-rings.

I climb from the beached canoe, strip  
naked, plunge into the water's warm embrace,  
and rediscover her legs

rooted in the sandy riverbottom. I climb  
her ankles, her shins, her thighs until I, like this river, drink  
in all her marrow.

# GHOSTS

*Cindy Hollenbeck*

I believe in ghosts and not a god—  
sitting on an overstuffed chair,  
hurling death-dust down to earth  
and me, sneezing and stuffed up  
through the five stages of grief  
thanks to the dead who visit me in dreams:

One, on a ribbed bedspread,  
ceiling aglow with planets and stars,  
posters of rockers on the walls,  
the boy dipping into my opened mouth.

Another bites my neck  
while we dance to *Freebird* at the  
Eagles Lodge. He pulls me from  
a passionless marriage as if I were  
drowning, then shoves me back under.

And the last, who speaks  
so wisely of love and loss and the night  
he held a shotgun to his father's  
head before turning it on himself.

Gone—into a long history  
of grief, a limp I walk with, permanent  
as a fucked-up tattoo. Why do they visit?  
Is there a hole from where they wish  
to climb? Or are they stuck  
in the in-between? Once,  
when we were young, we believed  
we could heal each other.  
But now, the dust just scatters,  
whirls in the air, and stings our eyes.

# REVENGE

*Cindy Hollenbeck*

for Eric

In the basement my mother ran  
a beauty shop while I watched  
Skeletor—no lips, muscles,

or heart—take daily beatings  
from the buff, super hero,  
HeMan. She must have snapped

another wooden spoon over me  
that morning, her eyes as blue  
as antiseptic in the comb jar,

black hair braided into a whip.  
Or perhaps she sacked up my GI Joes,  
dropped them at Goodwill, or

the local church where I attended  
Sunday school, watched kids  
play with my old Mr. Peanut doll.

After my mother disappeared  
into her world of shampoo, shears,  
and hair dryers, I scuffed across

the floor into her frog's room,  
lit only by the yellow bulb above  
his glass house. There he sat,

peppered red and black, fingers  
slimy and webbed, eyes as gold  
as urine. I pressed my thumb

down on his head until I heard  
the crunch of bone, finger-printed  
him like Silly Putty into a bed

of candy red rock. Just then  
a dryer roared, Skeletor  
let out a cackle, and my mother,

denting a path down the hall,  
called out my name.

# CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

**Abraham Abebe** was born in Ethiopia and has lived in America the last three years. He is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College, and he took 1st place for the art award.

**Krista Benjamin** is a former schoolteacher now writing full-time. Her poems and stories have been published in *The Best American Poetry 2006*, *The Sun*, *Margie*, *Minnesota Review* and other journals. She is the recipient of a 2007 Artist Fellowship from the Nevada Arts Council.

**Susan M. Botich** is a freelance writer, a member of the national writers' organization, Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) and a member of Ash Canyon Poets Society located in Carson City, Nevada. She currently resides in Minden, Nevada, with her husband, David, and their son, Daniel.

**M. L. Brown** received her MFA from Antioch University-Los Angeles. Her poems have appeared in *Ekphrasis*, *Rattle*, *Into the Teeth of the Wind*, and *The Fourth River*.

**Leonard J. Cirino** (1943) is the author of fifteen chapbooks and twelve full-length collections of poems from numerous presses since 1987. He lives in Springfield, Oregon. He was a National Book Award nominee in 1998 for his book, *The Terrible Wilderness of Self. Ambiguities*, a Selected 2004-2005, was published by AA Press in early 2007. His manuscript, *Scattered Rhymes*, has been accepted as a chapbook by Cervena Barva Press in 2008. Forthcoming poems will appear in *America*, *Blue Collar Review*, *The American Dissident*, and online at [Barnwoodpress.org](http://Barnwoodpress.org). He can be reached at [cirino7715@comcast.net](mailto:cirino7715@comcast.net).

**Shome Dasgupta** is currently enrolled at Antioch University-Los Angeles, pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing. His work has appeared in *Magma Poetry*, *The Quiet Feather*, *The Chickasaw Plum*, and *Si Senior*, and forthcoming publications includes a poem in the anthology, *Poetic Voices Without Borders 2*.

**LeRoy DeJolie** of LeChee, Ariz., has had photographs included in *Southwest Art*, *Arizona Highways* and many other publications; for *Time-Life Books* and *The Washington Post*. He has appeared on NBC's "Today Show" and on PBS' "Images of Arizona." He has led photographic workshops for you at TMCC.

**Tom Drakulich** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Dillon Dunlop** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College. He lives with two dogs he likes very much. He has broken his right pinkie four times, and it is now very strong. He has never been to Canada. He took 1st place in this year's fiction contest.

**Jessica Ellis** writes in pursuit of self-quietude (to eliminate the existential quandaries—or at least be at peace with them) and existent beauty in the time of the assassins. She and Dalia E. Gerdel won the Cover Art Design award.

**Kerryn Ferneyhough** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Garret Frey** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Dalia E. Gerdel** is working towards her Arts transfer degree at Truckee Meadows Community College. A lover of nature and stuffy libraries, she hopes to one day see her name amongst the greats and be a well fed writer. She and Jessica Ellis won the Cover Art Design award.

**Jo L. Gerrard** has been published in online 'zines and the California Lutheran University journal *Morning Glory*.

**Galen Gorelangton** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Ben Gotschall** grew up on a ranch in the Sandhills southwest of Atkinson, Nebraska, and most of his writing focuses on his experiences with that landscape, its people, animals and stories. His poetry has been featured on NPR, and his first chapbook, *The Mark It Made*, is forthcoming from Sandhills Press.

**Taylor Graham** is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada, and also helps her husband (a retired wildlife biologist) with his field projects. Her latest book, *The Downstairs Dance Floor* (Texas Review Press, 2006), is winner of the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

**Nathan Graziano** used to live in Las Vegas and now lives in Manchester, New Hampshire with his wife and two children. His books of poetry and fiction include *Frostbite*, *Not So Profound* and *Honey, I'm*

*Home*. He teaches English at Pembroke Academy while working on his MFA in fiction writing at the University of New Hampshire.

**Cindy Hollenbeck** teaches at Washington State University, and her poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Fourth Genre*, *Pearl*, *The Ledge Poetry and Fiction Magazine*, *Talking River Review* and *Fugue*.

**Lena Hirsch** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Ellen Hopkins** has been writing poetry for many years. She is a *New York Times* best selling author, and her first novel, *Crank*, written in verse, met with critical acclaim. She lives with her husband and son in Carson City, Nevada.

**Sara Kaplan** has just defended her MFA thesis in poetry at the University of Idaho where she co-edits the literary journal *Fugue*.

**Jim Lamoreux** was born in Long Beach, California. He moved to Truckee, California, and then to Reno and has lived here for twenty years. Today he has a collection of illustrated self-published stories written and critiqued in Brad Summerhill's writing classes, and sold at major bookstores. He took 2nd place for both the art award and the fiction prize.

**Lyn Lifshin** has written more than 100 books and edited four anthologies of women writers. Her poems have appeared in most poetry and literary magazines in the U.S.A., and her work has been included in virtually every major anthology of recent writing by women. Winner of numerous awards including the Jack Kerouac Award for her book *Kiss The Skin Off*, Lyn is the subject of the documentary film *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass*. For interviews, more bio material, reviews, prose, samples of work and more, browse this website: [www.lynlifshin.com](http://www.lynlifshin.com).

**Michael Moberly** is the Pagemaster. He took 2nd place in this year's poetry contest.

**Mary Nork** attends Truckee Meadows Community College and took 3rd place in this year's fiction contest.

**Sean Prentiss** lives alongside the wheat fields and the gentle mountains of Moscow, Idaho where he writes and teaches at the

University of Idaho. He was awarded honorable mention in *The Atlantic Monthly's* Student Writers' Competition. His essays and poems have appeared in *River Styx*, *High Desert*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Harpur Palate*, *New Delta Review*, *ISLE*, and others. He can be contacted at seanprentiss@gmail.com.

**Suzanne Roberts** is the author of *Nothing to You* (Pecan Grove Press, 2007) and *Shameless* (forthcoming from Cherry Grove, 2008). Her work has also appeared in many literary journals such as *Smartish Pace*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Spillway*, *Eclipse*, *Gulf Stream* and elsewhere. She teaches English in South Lake Tahoe, California. More of her work can be found at [www.suzanneroberts.org](http://www.suzanneroberts.org).

**C.C. Russell** was born in Ohio, spent most of his life (so far) in Wyoming and is currently living in New York. He is being held captive in retail management after having worked as convenience store clerk, hotel desk clerk, and d.j. in a small bar among other occupations. His poetry and prose are in *The New York Quarterly*, *Grasslimb*, *Xconnect* and *Unwound*, among others.

**Terry Sanville** lives in San Luis Obispo, California with his artist-poet wife, Marguerite Costigan (his in-house editor), and two cats (his in-house critics). As an emerging author, Terry writes full time. Since 2000, his work has appeared in over 25 literary and popular journals and magazines. He is also an accomplished jazz and blues guitarist.

**Suzanne Shoemaker** was born and raised in Reno. She is an English major and this is her fourth year at TMCC. She plans to graduate from UNR and teach English at a community college. In her spare time she hangs out with her two children, travels, writes poetry and books that she plans to publish in the future. She took 1st place in this year's poetry contest.

**J.V. Tabbada** came to the United States in 2003 and is currently the President of the Filipino Club (PUSO) at Truckee Meadows Community College. For him, it is through art that we express our emotions and address certain issues. He won the 1st place art award in *the MeadoW 2005*.

**Lorraine Tornquist** currently attends UNR and Truckee Meadows Community College. Her major is journalism with a minor in Spanish. She currently does photography in her spare time. She finds it

relaxing, and she enjoys being able to freeze time in a photograph.

**Jessica Troppmann** is currently taking a creative writing course at Truckee Meadows Community College in which she wrote the poem appearing in this issue. She is also a dancer and will be appearing in the TMCC production of *Cabaret* coming up in March 2007. She took 3rd place for the poetry prize.

**Lowell Andrew Warbington** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Andrea L. Watson** is co-editor of *HeartLodge: Honoring the House of the Poet*. Her show, *Braided Lives: A Collaboration Between Artists and Poets*, was inaugurated in Taos, NM, in 2003, and has traveled to San Francisco, Denver, and Berkeley.

**Shania Western** is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

**Pam Woolway** is pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University in Los Angeles. She received second place in The League for Innovations Literary Contest 2005 for the poem "Feared Drunk." Her most recent honor was having a poem chosen by the Antioch faculty to compete in AWP's literary competition, The Intro Journals Project.



