

the MEADOW



the MEADOW
2008

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 the literary arts, graphic design, and creative writing are encouraged to participate on the Editorial Board. Visit 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 or through the English department at (775) 673-7092.

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Congratulations to our award winners:

Meadow Art Award: 1st place Stephanie Hogen, 2nd place J.V. Tabbada, 3rd place Gerad Davis

Meadow Poetry Award: 1st place Chelsie Kern, 2nd place Arian Katsimbras, 3rd place Allyson Stronach

Meadow Non-Fiction Award: 1st place Caren Franklin, 2nd place Madison Jackson, 3rd place Cathy Clopitts

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VEGAS

Daniel Berkner

He once went crazy, raving full-
speed through walls, his own
construction. He rarely found

a road despite driving miles.
Rubble in his wake, bitter
taste, he heard empty
desert ease him down. Maybe

a bitter woman will give him a compass,
mired by ancient magnets.
Maybe a kind woman will kick him

in the face by accident
a Saturday in rain when his car
rolls alone down a hill

to kiss hard metal. Maybe he'll stop
throwing empty bottles
from the tops of tall
buildings to the asphalt abyss.

He once made a snowman of gravel
and sliced it down
with nothing but fists.

He wore his scars like medals,
married at the mission and lost
at craps, slots and blackjack—

gone: the beauty of the cheap
buffet, miles of liquor

on the house. His only gain,
a new start, a life undone
and done. Around the next bend:
miles of highway lines, dawn

lifting Joshua trees from sand—a million
silhouettes—cholla blossoms small
as dimes, sweetness on the wind.

AFTER FILING THE PAPERWORK FOR DIVORCE

Todd Imus

West by motorcycle two heatstroke days
from Denver, gone for the *Loneliest
Highway in America*, dropping fast
from snowmelt's summer flicker into rust
buttes, hours of thrum, land drafted
in mileposts and time.

Utah's blistered earth blossoms
unwilling green scrub, and I stop to thumb
a camera's shutter – a daze, distant in roadside
smokes. Tinnitus from the bike's drone,
shunts penitence into silence
before moving away from morning.

I've been lost for miles past
sundered small towns grain-bust, silos
cinder. The road leads somewhere
but I find I'm wanting more than distance,ww
a time when distance was all I had,
and miles were enough.

CONFESSION, ST. TIMOTHY'S, AGE 13

Todd Imus

Back when I believed in man –
mouth of God, giver of grace,
and forgiveness – I drew stricken
into the stifle of that wooden booth.

Gridded before me, the panel breached,
I began a litany that ran to puddle
beneath my bench, curdled,
stinking hot from my deliberate sin.

Finished, I let silence fill
what I'd left out
or lied about. He knew.
How dare you?
And on,
an honest parlance of bile,
ringing the room,
a spattered staccato.
I waited for escape.
Still he hissed

until his old voice gave
a final pop or sputter,
the last spit of a candle
snuffed.

RUNNING

Todd Imus

Life is better run from.

— Richard Hugo

One-ten and the bike's thrum sends a judder
through my helmet where I press
to the tank for fear of wind, wind
that rips past, now one-fifteen. Five days

of clothes fit behind me, enough
to start a new life somewhere
phones don't ring, where no one asks *why*
you don't sleep unless deep in whiskey,

an abrading mind made quiet by the lull
of promised speed later, now
one-twenty and swerving, gentle
in the forced movement of this moment,

that pack strapped, firmed
to the seat's curve, where a woman might
ride, but not now or here, where
I'm one-twenty-five and climbing, still

not sure how I want to die. The road
and motor's whine beneath me spin,
the throttle's pinned and I want
no more now or ever.

COMPANIONSHIP (ONE CUMBERSOME HITCHHIKER AT A TIME)

Chelsie Kern

1st Place Poetry Award

Damn this nineteen-seventy-one Chevy Nova,
rusted mosaic hood leaking smoke thick
and sulfurous. Forced ten thousand miles too
far, refusing to crawl another inch
in honor of my Sodom and Gomorrah melodramas.
Exacerbated mechanisms groan complaints
three decades in the making, speak
of two-lane highways, gluttonous truck stops
where lard-lined cobras gush regular unleaded
and classic rock radio stations that regurgitate
Hendrix guitar rifts after every commercial
advertising personal injury attorneys.
And you, you aren't helping anything.
Menial chit-chat spewing from those chapped
lips like vomit. Murmured words,
*My cuzzin Larry's a mechanic I betcha
he could fix this right up,*
stifling the already barren
Mojave desert air. If only your thumb
hadn't been so enticing, outlined by the burnt
umber blacktop of this forlorn interstate.
Levis worn in all the right places, white
v-neck, cut sleeves framing those farmer boy
biceps, pulling me and my car into
the emergency lane. Too bad you had to open your
mouth, Momma said *Las Vegas was fer sinners*
swallowing all traces of prospective romance.
Our sweat laden bodies will never exchange
fluids in this backseat, as I am the sinner
your *momma* so often references. I am the sacrilegious,
Nevada's disgraced gypsy woman.
All I ever wanted was my John Wayne western.
Calloused hands, scripted love, whiskey induced
lust and country expanse to cleanse
these adulteress limbs of my tainted history.
Instead I got you, the prodigal son.
You don't even inhale those Marlboro reds,
hardly old enough to be soiled by precious nicotine.

THE WOMAN WHO LOVED MAPS

Lyn Lifshin

Not for accuracy, she is tired of facts and distance,
longitude, unless it's carved out in aquamarine
and violet. She doesn't want carefully engineered, exact
miles, doesn't want to leave the draped rooms the old

parchment and linens are spread out in, throws out her
AAA map, her Frommer's, her Michelin, doesn't want the
careful blotches, the interstates, but loves those old
picture maps where flying monsters with lavender wings
inhabit islands mysterious as Rorschachs or hieroglyphs
almost too devastating to read, wants what shimmers and
intoxicates like velvets and old Persian rugs. It's too
exhausting to pack and unpack, she doesn't want to find her

self stranded in Istanbul or Tangiers in the rain and
no taxi. It's easier, she tells herself, to love maps than
men who'll roll away from the pillow, whispering "for her
own good," or: "it wasn't you, it was me." She wants to run

her fingers over their pale tourmaline and rusts, old as
teapots from Persia, the oldest Venetian glass. She doesn't
want exact latitudes, but what is mysterious as a room behind
drawn lace, lips she won't have to do laundry for. She aches for a

country in the shape of a fly-blue fish washed with lemon,
something she can date with one glance, something from
the fifteenth century. Not what folds up, can split along
the crease, wants what she can lie smooth in a locked flat drawer

or roll up to have there in the dark just for her

MY AFTERNOONS WITH DYLAN THOMAS

Lyn Lifskin

It was just a blur, like you might think,
stumbling from the White Horse Tavern,
the maples already tinged with blood.
He wasn't booming and loud, he wasn't
his voice, wasn't that poet booming
on records, all Swansea and raging.
There was no wild dying of the light.
We stopped for egg creams. He loved

them better than the cream of a woman's
thighs many say he collapsed in, took
the long-legged bait and shipwrecked,
but it was the cove of skin, the warmth,
everything unlike the dark coal mines or
the grey mist of Rhemny. I won't forget
the softness of his curls. He wasn't my
type, too fair and he didn't work out,

his body soft as his lips. He was more
like a pet, a kitten I could let cuddle
against me. Was I a virgin? What does
that matter. Or whether he was a good
lover. When he held my cat, who
always hissed at new people, she let
him press her into his skin, as if, like
when he held me, her fur could keep

fear from spilling and staining the
rest of Wednesday.

SUNSET

Michael Parish

Dad hands them to me but it's too hazy for the binoculars to be any good. That doesn't matter. I'm not interested in the scenic overlook. What I'm interested in is off to my left, not twenty feet behind me, though I'm really not looking at all. I don't need to be. I can hear fine.

"Whew, look at that valley dip down. Carpet of treetops. Wish I could walk across that. Don't you wish you could walk across that, son?" I'm not sure he was listening. "Hey, William, are you seeing this? Get over here. Come check this out with me and your brother."

"Hold on, Dad, I'm still pissing," William said. William's pee pitter-pattered the concrete.

"Well hurry up, sun's going down. There'll be plenty of time for pissing later. You may not get to see it set like this again."

"It'll take me two seconds. Chill out over there."

"Oh, we'll chill out over here, alright," Dad said. "We'll be standing in the Ice Age, that's how chilled out we're gonna get. Ain't that right, Ryan?" I turned around for William, who was already laughing and zip-ping up his jeans.

"What?" I said.

William came up between the two of us and slapped Dad on the back. "Good one, Dad. That's a good one."

Dad smiled. "You guys like that one, huh? Because it's really cold in..."

"Yeah, we get it Dad, jeez," William said, shaking his head at me.

"Yeah, Dad. We're missing the sunset," I said.

"You're right," Dad said. "Doesn't look anything like this where we live, does it? Can you believe that, guys? Grandpa and I used to stop here all the time."

The sun wasn't in that much of a hurry and neither were we. This was probably the last stop on our trip, the last time for us to regroup and relieve ourselves, maybe do a little reflection on the past couple of days. I was surprised we were talking.

"Yeah, yeah. Seen 'em once, seen 'em all. I'm going back to the car. Hey Ry-guy, guess what?"

"What?" I said.

"Shotgun. Ha, ha. You're turn to deal with drooling beauty back there." William walked away.

"Hey, William. Come on. Come back here. I want to show you this," Dad said.

"You just did," William said. "What're you gay? I want to get home."

"William," Dad said. "Chill out. Take some time to look at this."

"I saw it. You don't have to cry about it."

I stood there with Dad wondering when I could go, too. Any time would have been ok, I guess. After William left, Dad grabbed the binoculars from

me. He kept staring off the rock ledge, not saying anything else.

*

I gazed out the rear window, the small one in the shape of a triangle, which pushed out but could not be rolled down, at the shimmering guardrail and the landscape unfolding before me. The trees had started to lose color and their leaves took on new hues. Dad clicked on the headlights as daylight faded into night. Look at the horizon, Mom whispered to him from behind. Isn't it magnificent? We never really get to see anything like this at home. This, he responded, is the most dangerous time to be driving.

The family car headed south through the Adirondacks. Dad was barreling down the beaten stretch of highway, leading his excursion back from wilderness, Mom navigating. They didn't make the best team; Mom became flustered in the driver's seat. Dad was left at the helm the entire trip, refusing any help from William, who had recently acquired his driver's license. You couldn't blame Dad. William's lamination was barely scuffed.

"Are you going to let me drive, now?"

"No," Dad said.

"You told me maybe."

"I told you maybe while it was still light out."

"It is still light out," William said.

"You ain't driving my car at night," Dad said. "And we're approaching the city soon. Think I'd let you drive over the bridges, son?"

"What?"

"In the dark?"

"Why not?" William said. "I told you that dyke down at the DMV only took points off since she said I 'nudged the curb.' What does that even mean? I didn't feel nothing."

"Enough, William."

"Rhonda or Raquel or whatever her name was, that horse machine was a bitch to me."

"I said enough."

"Aren't you tired?"

"No, I'm not," Dad said.

"Just let me drive."

"No."

"Why?"

"Want to know why, William? Because even your mother's never driven over the bridges." William looked back at Mom and scoffed.

"What's so funny about that?" Mom said.

"How many years you been driving, Mom?"

"Driving on the highway is a lot different than driving at home," she said.

Anyone who's ever done any traveling knows the one and only rule of the road: stay in the right lane, venturing into the left only to pass. Mom, through some instinctual female cliché, developed out of hardwiring or fulfilling a dream she had seen on some screen, handled the map dili-

gently, content every now and then to simply have her moment as navigator. She settled into her role well.

“And someone has to read the map, William.”

“Bullshit. Dad’s been taking this route his entire life.”

“Don’t you talk to your mother like that.”

“I deserve a little more respect than that.”

“Maybe a little,” William said. Mom sank into the back seat.

Still somewhere upstate, I felt in limbo, caught in that awkward section of a trip when it feels like you’ll be home in no time. But as the mile markers appear and reappear, things seem longer and longer. Next exit, twenty-two miles? For any traveler, I suppose this is what it’s all about. The destination is of course important, but in getting there is where the change lies. It determines what there will be like.

Next to me, my older sister Alister was dozing. She’d always been a narcoleptic; the hum of the road set her fast asleep. And even though the oldest, Dad never let Ali drive either. She was slipping toward me, like a tree falling in slow motion. I would not mind her crushing me. The contact felt nice.

Back outside, white trailers dotted the interstate. The smell of burning garbage blew into the vents and throughout the car. I could hear Mom sifting through some brochures she saved of caverns and cheese, museums and microbreweries. I tried turning my head and saw them in a mess on her lap. Around Alister, Mom held up the last brochure for the Monte Munitions Microbrewery. I squinted, reading the print in the dark and she smiled.

*

There, amongst war memorabilia dating back to around the time of the Revolution, Dad abetted underage drinking. He followed me around whispering the whole time. During the presentation, while the tour guide decked out in minuteman garb spoke, a shusher shushed us and Dad would not shut up. How could you expect to get the full experience simply walking through? No way are you offending such an important part of our country’s heritage! But Dad, I said, this isn’t a place for kids.

Out front, his arm around me tight, the whole place was meant to look like an old, colonial fort. The cylindrical tanks housing the hops, white and enormous and off to the side, stood behind some ramparts. Overhead, a banner hung between wooden turrets: ‘Men have fought and died for this, this pride that is our privilege, the freedom to homebrew!’ And Dad said, You see, son. Now. Wouldn’t you want a drink with your dear, ol’ Dad?

Mom and Alister giggled as they emerged from the entrance. William came out after, looking at the ground and mumbling as he passed us. Let’s get out of here, he said.

“William, come over here and take a picture with the boys,” Mom said, checking her fanny pack for film. He kept walking. Some other people came out followed by the minuteman. He rested his rifle on the turret, pulled out a lighter, and started sucking on fire.

“Yeah, come on Willy,” Alister said, as he passed her.

William spun around, hands in his pockets. “Hey Ali, Ali... chill the fuck out.” Dad’s hand tightened on my shoulder.

“William, come on, it’s just a picture,” Mom said. “What’s the problem?”

“Whoa, ‘Mr. Just Turned Eighteen’ had his first buzz and got a big boy mouth now, too.”

“I’ve always had a fucking big boy mouth, you bitch.” Faces turned and Alister laughed.

Dad’s weight shifted. He was about to charge, but something held him back. The minuteman watched with his knee socks, polluted the air with his sound.

We stood glued together. I desperately wanted Dad to let go, like we were magnets but his poles suddenly switched. But I knew if Dad did, this was the wrong place for William to stage a rebellion.

There wasn’t any security at Monte Munitions. They weren’t really worried about anyone getting out of hand, I guess. And it wasn’t that Dad had gotten out of hand. I don’t think you could call it that. You could say it all started with a picture, but that’s not accurate either.

“Let’s take a picture for your mother.”

On a fifty-cent piece of poster board inevitably shoved into some corner of the crawlspace, is the place this memory resides. Mom made collages of all the family trips, out of brochures, post cards, tickets stubs, themed restaurant napkins, all the artifacts of another MacNutt family vacation. Mom’s ritual was sad. It made me feel like dying.

They came out decrepit with all that stuff hanging off, stapled in different directions, with magic marker writing scrawled across the top. The photographs were the worst part. How could she present a project, with so many crooked smiles and disconcerted looks, with such truth like that?

*

William reached over from the front passenger seat to honk at a tractor-trailer we steadily approached. Alister shook awake. Dad said nothing, but in one sudden action, struck William’s arm down and latched onto his shoulder.

“What’s the matter with you?”

“Get off me, asshole!” William dug into Dad with his right hand.

Mom was yelling: “Stop!”

And Alister was screeching: “We’re going to crash!”

I sat thinking the entire time. This is insane. The car surges forward and swerves off the road. Darting into the shoulder, nearly clipping the back of the trailer, the ridges in the pavement reverberate the tires. The air in the car is jarring. Hit a patch of gravel squealing and speeding off, thumping through tall grass. Dad releases William, unable to regain control. The car careens, William lurches, everything bracing for impact.

And then a whip lashing. Stutter to a stop.

A crunching sound you wouldn’t want any machine to make. Dad yanked the parking break. He’s had plenty of practice from years of pulling the lawnmower’s ripcord.

Everyone is quiet. Light sobbing comes from next to me; I don’t look

over and no one else seems to notice. The car has stalled. Dad does not bother to take the keys out of the ignition. The mechanized droning, alerting Dad of this condition, frames the interlopers in silence.

“Don’t ever do that again,” Dad says. “What makes you think you have the right to do something like that? You could have killed us!”

“Good,” William said. “I wish I had. I hate you. I hate all of you.”

Dad smashes William with a newfound intensity. He absorbs the blow rocking. He struggles to contain his pain by breathing deeply. He unclips his seat belt and darts out the door.

William tripped almost immediately and tumbled to the ground in the twilight, letting out the wild yelp of a hurt animal. His jeans and t-shirt stain with dirt where he hit the ground. Gasping for air, the dying, yellow grass consumed him, covering his body as he twisted along the earth.

Huddled against Mom, Alister sat sobbing in her sleeves, which were pulled up over her hands. Dad got out of the car slowly and walked up the shoulder of the tree-lined highway. Hands in Docker pant pockets, the shine of headlights revealed his progress every time a vehicle passed. The slowing of engines could be heard, as truckers and travelers surveyed glowing red brake lights. None of them stopped.

After the final murmur faded, the last lights illuminated Dad, his face pointed toward the sky in a cross-armed stance, before he disappeared completely. William lay now on his stomach, arms under him, face planted in the ground. The one tone, ringing drone continued. From the back-seat, I observed the man that was my father through the bug-speckled windshield, sandwiched between rungs of a crying family, I sitting utterly stoic, the smell of burnt orange and yellow leaves swirling.

DOLCE

Cathy Colpitts

3rd Place Non-Fiction Award

I am my father's daughter. Perfectionist, stubborn, and can't handle my liquor. My redeeming qualities also passed down from my father are an appreciation for the simpler things in life. Most notably wine. It is not about just drinking wine but the experience. The color, aroma, spices, it's about tasting a wine from a region of the world where the soil, climate, and process of manufacture all come together making a unique mixture and palate. From a young age I acquired a taste for expensive wines.

One of these expensive wines is Dolce Far Niente, which means 'sweet doing nothing' in Italian. It is my sweetest indulgence. Dolce is a dessert wine, a combination of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes, which are white grapes. Dolce has the same characteristics as a Sauterne, a famous sweet wine which is grown in regions of southern France. In contrast Dolce comes from the eastern aspect of Napa Valley at the foot of the Vaca Mountains in California.

I don't remember the first time I tasted Dolce. It was sometime in high school, but it has become engrained in my family's traditions. For worthy occasions such as Christmas, birthdays, or rejoicing in the fact that your youngest brother is finally going to college following a three year hiatus after high school we celebrate with a bottle of Dolce. You are supposed to drink dessert wine from miniature dainty stemware that is no bigger than a shot glass. While this is classically correct, my family sits around our dining room table sipping from exceedingly large water glasses which are not fragile and no refills are necessary.

Dolce is a brilliant color of golden sunshine filtering through a window. It is thick and rolls off your tongue. It tastes of honey, apricots, citrus and wood. Like Sauternes it is a Noble Rot wine. Noble Rot refers to the process of maturation on the vine which requires a fungus, *Botrytis cinerea* to infect the grapes. The exterior of the grapes develop a gray fuzz but in the process the sugars within become concentrated. It is a late harvest wine, grapes are hand picked off the vine around November, by then the grapes have become shriveled, and moldy, both increasing the sugar content. And this is considered a delicacy.

Desert wine is my favorite part of dinner. It is sweet, but it also comes at the end of dinner when your stomachs are satisfied and the conversations begin. It is during this time that I have come to know and love my family. My youngest brother tells dirty jokes and has a raunchy sense of humor, but he is passionate and kind. My oldest brother hovers on the edge of politically incorrect at times, but has an intricate sense of values. My mom is strong and rarely thinks of herself, but sipping a glass of Dolce and listening to her family she gets the giggles. My dad relishes in sarcasm, strives for perfectionism and loves to stir the pot. While we sit around our dining room table telling embarrassing memories, making

bad impressions, and laughing at ourselves and each other we are not just sharing a bottle of Dolce, but sharing our lives.

From my father I have learned the simple pleasure of wine: red, white, sweet, the history, agricultural practices, and regions of the world and cultures that produce unique wines. But what I most enjoy about wine is sharing a bottle and conversation with family, friends, and strangers who I may one day call a friend.

THE HOUR BETWEEN

M.L. Brown

Linger as if you remember why
you've walked into the room.
Some clue will come to tip you off—
perhaps you hold an empty glass.

You've walked into the room,
grateful no one else is there.
Perhaps you hold an empty glass—
you hope the why will come.

Grateful no one else is there—
your face breaks in the evening shadows.
You hope the why will come,
the parts collect in the window panes.

Your face breaks in the evening shadows.
Suddenly lost in a childhood loop
the parts collect in the window panes.
You're learning to paddle the Old Town canoe.

Suddenly lost in a childhood loop—
your mother's voice calls from the bow.
You're learning to paddle the Old Town canoe,
startle a heron from out of the reeds.

Your mother's voice calls from the bow—
some clue will come to tip you off.
You startle a heron from out of the reeds,
linger as if you remember why.

PRAIRIE REQUIEM

Joe Wilkins

The grass in the east pasture is thin.
Willow Creek has dried. Reeds crack
beneath my boots like bones.
Wind burns my face, the tender
skin of my neck. Grandmother's eyes
go dark. She sits and does not
rise. I cannot dream your stories.
Tell me again of old horse thief Benson,
of winters in Dutton when you shot
rabbits for stew. Whatever happened
to Wilbur Poole, the crazy one
who heard angels in the spring?
Do Indians still watch us, squatting
on their hills where no one sees?
What hills do you see now? Does grass
grow thick there? Does your new creek
sing with water and reeds? Dust rises
in this wind. Your old wife turns
her head in the darkness and says
you'll be home soon. The land
is a breath of sun and sky and silence.
Grandfather, I am tired of this place
without you. I want to hear you say *angels*,
say *Indians*. I want to hear mountain lions
scream at the stars. Show me again
their piles of golden bones.

RESPIRE

Joe Wilkins

Before bed, by light of the oil lamp,
as he told me one last story,
my grandfather's face was not flesh
but earth shot through with roots
and two hunks of flame
blue rock for eyes.

In the morning half-light, my mother
came in from the lambing shed, her hands
wet with blood and afterbirth,
and she smiled at me
as steam rose from the iron sink
and kissed her ragged face.

Drowsy hours after lunch,
on my back in the alfalfa field,
watching cottonwoods swing
and scratch at the wide, impossible sky—
a wind moved over my face, over the whole
length of me, and I slept.

WHAT WOULD SNOOPY DO NOW, SPARKY?

Brandon Gagne

That sad year when mother had died
in her bed, you left her, knowing
that your fear had found its flesh and
that she'd gone ahead without you...
poor boy, left to ride alone.

Was your broken heart a mirror
of the black-and-white mask painted
in the humor you fed to the
masses, empty white space between
lines of that poor boy's bald head?

Did you ever find the lost piece
scattered on your Coffee Grounds, or
have it handed to you by your
children, as they reveled in the
youth you never felt you had?

Why weren't Lucy, or Miss Patty,
able, with the hands they gave you,
and the years they spent on building,
to pick you up when the Little
Red Haired Girl had knocked you down?

Why was it then, in those last years,
that you saw the cruel joke at last,
you'd never allowed yourself to
kick the ball, and until you left the
doghouse you could not have felt
Good Grief?

PAVLOS (FOR FATHER'S DAY)

Arian Katsimbras **2nd Place Poetry Award**

Before my family decided to pull
the lucent vacuum tubes
and serpent-like electrical wires
from his ill and fading body,
discussing options for donation
with the doctor who was to provide our family
with possibilities for potential recipients,

I sat in room 431 shivering its bitter vacancy,
watching intently from behind the soundless
checkered frame of glass that illuminated you
as you applied your many faces of sorrow and anguish,
pushing the corners of your lips and glazed eyes
toward the floor, carefully preparing the disheveled
and disconnected stare that made them clap
and made you infamous, slipping on
the yellow slickers to safely wade and tread
through the ever-deepening pools
of manufactured tears that gather
on the shaky set of the hospital stage,
tears that should have washed that Band-Aid
from your ego, stinging and exposing
the man behind the layers of fleshed makeup
allowing the pale color of your leathered
skin to be seen as it never has been by your audience,
and after you swing open the steel curtain door
to press forward and hush the whispering crowd
with another solemn and somber performance,

my family closes their eyes and reluctantly pulls
the life-sustaining foreign wires, tubes, and vacuums
hissing and coughing in their last struggle
to muster the strength to sustain my brother's youth,
being lulled and drowned out by the last deafening
drone of a machine's failed endeavor,
but not before you again throw efforts to receive acclaim
by stripping the last of the light from your newly
dead son, crying *your* pain to any who'd listen,
proving what I had come to believe previously
when I had watched you in that divided glass,
that you have always been a better actor than
a father.

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE

Arian Katsimbras

The sidewalk cracks under the weight of the cold. Steps will slow tonight, echoing faintly. The wind tears past, bracing between brick buildings, breathing through the maze of this alley. Step quietly over the other box-car wanderers that rest their newspaper blanketed bodies under boxed-in U-haul walled shanties and lean-tos and you will find him; the shifted shape of his shelter swaying, trying to collapse. The racing wind touching his sickness. His anonymity, sleepless. His walls are anorexic and tired. A skeletoned attempt at a cardboard city sitting nervously under the alien glow of neon-flitted Chicago lights. Fluttering. A luminous, filthy flood, filling the wintered street gutters with frozen light. His body shivers wildly beneath his muddied coat, worn rags scarcely covering his exposed skin, the bleak light of a dimly lit fire smoldering silently providing little light and even less warmth under the cover of the torn blue tarp that substitutes for a sheltering roof.

If you look closely, just beyond his shaking body you can see steady gloveless hands, dirty, gripping an old Bic pen, scrawling his Nevada childhood into the bleached parchment. The blue lines of his page hang like the steel rungs of the fire escape he rests beneath, his pen travels down with a sweeping calm, down from the bitter, biting winter air into the wilderness of seventeen, walking through sprawls of aspen and alders, poplars and pines splayed, reaching toward a free and forgiving azure sky. If you watch a little closer you can see him escape the rigid construction of the outside world, climbing down those steel-blue ladder rungs, past the malnourished walls of a starving community, confined, freezing, solitary. Past the air's cold disease that thins the shape of his neighbors, a sick winter holding its breath and coughing its cold illness deep within their lungs to suffocate their voice. Past the black Bic pen and snow-white Papermate, beyond the withering death of the ice-cold city streets, walking barefoot, numb and bleeding on fractured and parted concrete, into the teenage summers of the warm west, seventeen again.

LETTER TO THE SPONSOR

Doug Schmierer

Dear David,

Do you remember
Drinking from little plastic cups
Until their wet bottoms
Teetered with boyish grins
In the fluorescent air?

That woman would laugh and say,

“You’ll drown yourselves like that”

A silly gesture
As she tipped flushed pink
Cups to the tap
For more city water

And as the saying goes,

When the cup gets bigger

So does the fill
But we kept those mugs
Bottomed up
Dripping fermentation of ages
Spent apart

But man,

You should know by now

I don’t care
If you’re not around to smile or
If you won’t be clearing my tab
I’ll still slam cups for two
Like it’s their last day on the job

Because that’s what little brothers are for

THROUGH YOUR EYES

Doug Schmierer

Sunrise is a moment
that will never see respect. A fleece
of fuzzy grays and cold whites mixed together,
like your favorite childhood friend's watercolor canvas,

keeping the sun somewhere between a world of glaring divinity and
perpetual twilight.

And it should be blue. It should be gray. It should be a star-map
made upside down, like Uncle Michelangelo
came over for breakfast so he could fix that light on your ceiling.

Because there's uncertainty
of rain and a possibility for
something more. Something that would make you
want to be alive, make you
leap outside and forget
an entire vocabulary of temperature, or bothersome
words like malaria.

Just so you might have a reason
to wear boots again, remember
moments like this are one
and the same from when you cried,
"Man, days like this only exist in photographs."

Until you redefine
goose bumps and teardrops.
Until you realize, moments like this
are ephemeral, and they
only live a few minutes of every day.
Until you know, this is one day
of every day in your life, and they've always been
just like this.

901 TFC

Caren Franklin

Nearly one in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime.

— *Lucille Roybal-Allard, Congresswoman.*

901 TFC.

901 TFC.

Those numbers and letters were the most important thing burned on my brain. My heart was pounding in my ears as we jay-walked across Plumas St., busy with evening traffic from downtown Reno. The blue-grey shadows of dusk hugged the large elm trees across the way at a park where children were laughing. Families and golden retrievers were playing catch across the dewy green carpet of grass. My anger seemed depressingly real. I gripped my phone tightly while playing the license plate like a constant reel in the back of my mind.

901 TFC.

901 TFC.

I followed my best friend up the sidewalk. I followed her down the alley. I followed her straight to the old Plymouth. The white paint was a faded disgusting bone color, and its sides were carved with rust filled dents.

No one sat in the seat anymore.

No one was being hurt anymore.

I glanced up at the apartments, the screens were peeling off the windows. Lightly printed bed sheets flapped through the windows and waved in the breeze as if on a clothes line. In the distance I could hear the sounds of loud television and foreign conversation. The alley was filled with the smell of cooking beef and ramen.

“That’s it, that’s the one,” Hilary said with a menacing surprise. I focused down on the Plymouth again and read the license plate aloud.

901 TFC.

If you give me any problem in America, I can trace it down to domestic violence. It is the cradle of most problems, economic, psychological, educational.

— *Salma Hayek, spokeswoman on Domestic Violence.*

When I first saw the Plymouth speed down our one-way street, barreling the wrong direction, my stomach turned.

Hilary and I were relaxing in the last dimming rays of a September sunset, she was on the phone at my side while I enjoyed a beer after work. The white Plymouth pulled down the street in front of our house, swerving inches from the parked vehicles on the road. My eyes fixed on the car as it came to a dead stop in front of our neighbor’s house on the

right, the tires chirped and sprayed loose gravel off the pavement. The driver had a dark mustache and tan skin, and his body was tensed and rigid. The man began to reach over in the passenger seat, furiously looking for something. I set my beer down and rose out of my chair as I realized he wasn't alone. He started pulling the small female's wrists next to him. Her back was towards us as she pressed against the window, faceless and fearful. She was either a petite woman or a teenager; her dark pony tail flopped with her attempts to get out of his clutches.

"Hilary." I stammered. She noticed I was perched high, staring in the distance like a setter. She popped up out of her chair and studied the car. The man grasped the girl struggling to get free, the tail lights glaring blood red when his foot hit the brake between each burst of energy.

"I'll call you back," Hilary ordered as she threw her phone in the chair. In one swift movement she started towards the car. I followed.

The man was hitting now, the small frail arms began to sink in the seat. I could no longer see the dark ponytail. His hands were in fists and they pounded in hammer swings into the seat.

"Oh God. Hilary....."

"What's happening? What the fuck? Hey! Hey! Hhhhhhheeeeyyyyy!!!!" Hilary yelled as she sprinted towards them.

Startled, the man stopped, and hit the gas instead of the girl. His dark eyes flashed in the rear view mirror at us. He pulled away swerving down the street. He blew past the wrong way sign at the end of the block and turned right, tires squealing. We watched the car disappear, and turned to each other in disbelief. My thoughts backed into each other, like a tractor-trailer pile up, and the world tunneled. I paused in a surreal echo trying to catch up with what had just occurred. My brain surrendered to the growing sensation in my gut.

I instantly turned towards the house where my fiancée's brother, Jake, was inside playing XBOX. I ran up the steps in long strides with Hilary closely behind. She cursed and swore angrily with every raspy breath, coughing from bronchitis.

"Jake" I yelled. He swiveled wide eyed from the TV.

"We watched a guy beat a girl just now," my words fell out of my mouth like heavy marbles.

"A guy just beat a girl right in front of us" Hilary stammered loudly, "A guy just beat a girl right in front of us!" Her voice pitched the second time as she looked at me in realization. She drew breath quickly and continued, "In a car. We watched the whole thing. Bastard." Her voice gave in anger as she struggled to catch her breath.

"Really?" Jake said astonished and confused, our comments hitting him like relentless after-shocks.

I grabbed my phone instinctively. My mind resorted to calling the police right away, but I felt doubtful with out a license plate number. The number would be a strong lead to a paper trail, a path of bread crumbs to a home of hate. I couldn't believe I didn't get the number. I felt like pulling my hair and punching a wall at the same time, my skin crawled.

Hilary was pissed as well. The expression of disgust and anger con-

torted her face.

“I want to go find him,” Hilary said. She turned to me and glared. My eyes quivered from the strength of her focus.

I hesitated. I knew it was the right thing to do, but couldn't help but feel a little hopeless. The possibilities of his location were endless. What were the chances of finding him? How could two young women stand up against a grown man who knows no boundaries? What kind of difference could we make? I was unsure of the answers to my racing thoughts, but I was confident that we had just let a girl in danger slip through our fingers. Guilt and the picture of the girl slumped over in her seat began to feel like a shot to the chest.

Why didn't I get the license plate number?

I agreed to go. I steadied myself and placed all my faith in Hilary.

I wasn't alone. It would be okay.

We marched out the door and down to the street corner where we saw the Plymouth disappear; our steps falling heavily on the cracked and uprooted sidewalk. A sliver of doubt latched to the back of my mind. He was in a car. We were on foot. I shook my head and trusted my faith. Jake watched as we left from the safety of the front porch to the corner of the street and out of sight.

We searched the parked cars along the road and in the driveways, scanning for only white vehicles. The sun was beginning to set and the light was turning an electric shade of blue. I raised my eyes to the sky as we walked briskly in silence. Across the dimming horizon a single red balloon hovered over head above the tree tops. I stared puzzled as it toyed in the breeze like an innocent child. It seemed the balloon was choreographed for this moment, this day. It escaped the buzzing grid of power lines and out of sight.

Until we all start to take responsibility, until we do all we can to improve the character of our communities, we'll never break the cycle of violence and indifference.

— Carrie P. Meek, Congresswoman.

It occurred to me that it was the most serious walk I had ever been on around my block. I felt like my insides were numb and I stared blankly at the people we past. There were happy people every where; Walking through the neighborhood, unloading groceries into their homes, and families enjoying the last rays of sun in their yards. I wondered if these people knew a girl was beaten, here in our neighborhood. I was ready to judge them. These people seemed like ignorant wax people in imagined bubbles of perfect. I paused, grounding myself. I wondered how many times something violent had happened near by while I was absorbed in the illusion of safety. A feeling of shame came over me in realization of my own ignorance. Violence and hate seemed to lurk in every shadow and corner.

My view of the world forever changed.

With no sign of the white car, we circled back to the house in a brisk ten minutes and edged slowly into our chairs on the front porch. We silently stared at traffic, Hilary lit a cigarette.

"I keep thinking we will see him drive by," Hilary studied every white vehicle.

"Me too," I hoped.

I thought about the license number again. I mentioned it to Hilary and how I regretted not remembering it, writing it down, taking a picture. Something.

"Well, it happened too fast," she dismissed the thought waving her Marlboro Red in the air, leaving a curl of smoke. Un-comforted, I pondered how we had no way to help the girl who was probably unconscious and bleeding. I prayed for another chance, but reason tore away at my hopes.

"That guy wouldn't be stupid enough to drive by again, would he?" I half heartedly asked Hilary.

"He's a piece of shit-dumbass," she huffed. She began to cough again.

We sat motionless. I tried to recall every detail, grasping for my fresh memories greedily. I couldn't help but replay the scene through my head. I had so many questions and fears. I stared into traffic and wondered how many women got beat by their husbands or boyfriends, fathers or brothers. I wished for the chance to help stop the violence. My heart hurt for that small girl, probably miles away curled and crying in silence. A part of me sensed that the girl suffered worse at home behind closed doors. The man's anger spewed from his arms. I couldn't imagine the kind of hate the man was capable of with out the confines of a vehicle. Deep in thought, I stared blankly at my feet.

"Is that the car?" Hilary questioned loudly, pointing at the street.

I quickly focused on a white car slowing in traffic to turn left onto the road opposite from our house. I squinted and my heart fluttered. The man had the same mustache, the same color of skin, and a look of cautiousness as he glanced down our street.

It was the Plymouth. The girl was up now, hunched against her window.

This was our second chance.

The Plymouth crept up the road and made an immediate left from our view. It hobbled heavily into the back alley of apartments across the street. The plate read:

901 TFC.

We grabbed each others arms in surprise. Hilary dropped her cigarette, exhaling her last puff of smoke. She pressed it on the concrete with her heel, like a bug, and turned to me. Our eyes met. Our minds focused. Together we began across the street, dodging evening traffic.

Domestic violence does not only happen to adults. Forty percent of girls age 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend and approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

— Diane Feinstein, Senator.

My fingers began to tingle and grow numb as I tried to steady my phone in my shaking hands, struggling to find the picture button. We approached the back alley and spotted the Plymouth. The apartments were more run-down than my neighbor hood, and the sense of heaviness swept over me. A rush of memories flooded my senses, all of the hardships that my brother and I struggled with as children visiting our sick mother. Old apartments were the background of our childhood, the background of bad memories. Glimpses of her messy apartment, rotten food, and tobacco stained walls flashed in my thoughts. My soul felt chained to cinder blocks watching her waste away out of my life. She left us permanently, by choice.

Unable to spare emotion for dusty memories, I forced my past down like a bad lunch and marched forward with Hilary.

We walked past the empty Plymouth down the alley, trying our best to act like we were on a stroll. I noticed that my heart was thumping and I was out of breath, the dizzying high of adrenaline overcoming my body.

A door slam echoed from the apartment complex. The girl ran down the cement slab steps and towards the car, her hair was down and across her tear-stained cheeks. I tried to see her face and struggled to see if she was okay. My pupils wavered. I held my breath and watched.

901 TFC.

She opened the door and grabbed something in the seat. We slowly moved behind a dumpster, staring. She spun on her heel and left as quickly as she had come, dutifully locking the door before she closed it. My breath released from my chest for what felt like several minutes as we moved back towards the car. I readied my phone and steadied myself. I stopped briefly and snapped a shot, feeling like my body was going to float away.

901 TFC.

I stored it. We walked briskly out of the alley, I was confident of never losing those numbers again.

Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return. It is estimated that approximately 3 million incidents of domestic violence are reported each year in the United States.
— Dianne Feinstein, Senator.

I was relieved but wondered what to do next, knowing that the girl still had an uphill battle. Back on the front porch, Hilary grabbed her phone and began to search her numbers. Working as an intern for the Reno Police Department, she had several knowledgeable contacts. Hilary called her mentor in the Domestic Violence Unit, she advised calling the non-emergency number and reporting all the information.

So that is what we did.

After the shock and triumph of the moment dwindled, we called the man in, and the Plymouth, and the plate “901 TFC.” I chimed all my information into Hilary’s free ear for her to repeat as she spoke into the

receiver. The woman operator took Hilary's information and thanked Hilary for the tip. She assured that it would be looked into and that she was dispatching a unit there right away.

Hilary hung up relieved, and we smiled at each other briefly.

"I hope that they get him," I said peeking through the blinds of our living room window. Hilary nodded. The night had settled, and the lights of the street lamps glowed florescent orange. The neighborhood was still and dark. The once busy and inviting park was empty and vacant, enveloped in darkness. Cars scurried quickly between our house and the girl's apartment across the way.

"They can only do something if the girl admits it happened," she said sternly. The reality of the situation settled over us.

I hoped for the best.

Like the small red balloon in the vacant sky, I hoped for the best.

We did our best.

We did our best.

Every woman who thinks she is the only victim of violence has to know that there are many more.

— *Salma Hayek, spokeswoman on Domestic Violence.*

I THINK

Shome Dasgupta

Tiffany. Fuckin' Tiffany, man. I don't know. I was maybe six or seven at the time. My parents took me to Munich for the summer. The stay is still kind of a blur.

I remember getting punched by a boy named Matthaesus, because I beat him in a one-on-one leg race.

I remember seeing naked men for the first time in the men's locker room at the local swimming pool. I went swimming once, and that was it. I wasn't ready for other men's penises.

I remember the lady who leased her flat to us – his son wore a black leather jacket just like the guy on the poster in his room, telling us to keep the faith.

I remember the number six was pronounced “sex” in German, and I was embarrassed to say it, but I didn't know why. I never liked that number anyway.

I remember after I broke one of the windows of our flat with a soccer ball, all I heard the landlady say was “kaput,” over and over again.

I remember when I would watch cartoons around three in the afternoon, and then after the children's programs, came a music video program. This is where Tiffany comes in. Fuckin' Tiffany, man. Her eyes. They were looking right at me. I saw lips differently for the first time. I saw lips that I wanted to touch my cheeks. I saw lips that I wanted to touch my own hands, as she sang about us being alone.

Every day, for two weeks, I met Tiffany at five o'clock in the living room. I was a true spectator. My dad would come home around the same time, every day, with a new pack of soccer cards for me, and I would tell him that I would look at them later. He would be surprised. I would be in a trance. I was alone with Tiffany; I was alone with her red hair; I was alone with her number-six-in-German voice, and I can remember my eyes widening in raw awe of her being.

After those two weeks, I never saw Tiffany again. I went back to trading cards with Mattheus and going to the park to feed the birds and play on the zipline.

I didn't have that same feeling I had for Tiffany until something like eight years later, when a girl named Jasmine walked into Room 8 and made every guy in our class shift in their seats. And that was the last of Tiffany, for twenty years, until I heard the original song being played by Tommy James last week on the AM, while I was driving to the park. Tommy had a nice voice. His original sounded really good, but it wasn't his anymore. I'll give him “Crimson And Clover,” but the other song belongs to Tiffany. The other song belongs to me and her and those two weeks in Munich. Everything before that, and everything after that, was kaput.

ROAD TO LUST

T.A. Henderson

I sneak the key out from inside the nightstand table's drawer
as I lay in our bed waiting for you to enter the passenger seat.

I screech out of the driveway
as I watch you put on grey sweatpants with a hole in the crotch.

I turn left toward a dark-haired beauty hitchhiking on Page 19.
A marine biology major from Santa Cruz who sports perky
B-cup breasts.

Slippery Road Ahead.

The engine revs up.

I take a sharp turn down Page 22 and speed toward a hot redhead.

A chef in Tucson whose sand-colored splatters map out
the way to her milky inner thigh.

Caution.

The engine starts to sputter.

A cold spell threatens the safety on Ms. Arizona's roads
as you climb into the backseat.

Sharp Turn.

I hold my breath as I ease around the familiar country road,
of the small of your back,
caressing your soft waist,
inching through the valley between your twin canyons.

No Entry.

I try another route.

Dead End.

I slow down, pull a U-Turn toward Page 36,
bump along the shoulder of the road
until the engine gives out.

LOVES THAC0 THE D6+4 ASSAULT ON MY HEART

Drew Pearson

Her level 19 Elf Ranger/Cleric could never convey
the way in which her furried pen chewing and mad hair a-twirling
during that most particularly strenuous dungeon crawl
churns my innards like a cauldron of nerd gazpacho

Her graceful fingers sing serenity
releasing a multicolored fistful
of polygonal probability
and while d20 and d4 waltz
amidst pen and pad
it's the soft glimmer
her chap stick broadcasts
that causes my heart to beat
like some primal goblin war drum

No dungeon
No chest
No monsters burgeoning innards could house
such a fine treasure as the one set across from me

Oh Roll to my Mega Man
Oh Zelda to my Link

Is it the way you can undress me
Of all my self respect
With precise orchestration
Of SNES clicks and clacks
A well timed Hadouken
 Down, Right, Fierce
And my characters resignation of
 Ugh, Ugh, ugh

Oh Jean to my Logan
Oh Lois to my Clark
Is it the way
without the slightest hesitation
we sojourn on hour long escapades
in debate over which is finer
Fatal Attraction or Executioners Song
but nevertheless ending on a unanimous
anything Jim Lee

My lost princess
I desire to be you savior
to ride my barded warhorse
to the steel walls of some infernal tower
and call your name out ever so gallantly

No Beholder
No Dragon

No Mind Flayer or Arch Liche shall ever stand in the way of your victory
while my character remains by your side

But in games of love
as it is in games of war
rolling a 1 for courage
is always a critical fail

EXPONENTIALLY

Kim Iverson

Blond comes with expectations.
Like I'm supposed to smile all the time?
 Well I can't,
Not when the orange juice tells me to concentrate.
It's hard enough concentrating in math class
When my teacher won't stop talking about pie,
 Like, doesn't she know I'm on a calzone diet?

And boys? Don't even get me started.
My eyes don't radiate a green light,
 Well, not all the time.
Sometimes they sparkle yellow
 Just to tease.

And like, why to people talk to me in s-l-o-w m-o-t-i-o-n,
Pronouncing every letter in words
 With more than two syllables?

I started thinking, was it because I was blond
That people treated me this way?
I wanted to find out what I was missing,
 If anything
You know, "living the life of a brunette."

It only took three boxes
And I ended up with
 A pretty sweet tan
Along with a short brown bob.
I wore collared shirts
And librarian reading glasses
And said things like "exponentially."
I went to bed on time
And even ate healthier.

Man it was boring,
 Exponentially boring!
I dyed my hair back to its "natural color"
But, it turned orange.
My friends knew I was back.

ACTIVITIES DURING MEETINGS

Richard Lighthouse

if i eyeball the end of my pen,
just right,
it sits on the nose of the
vice president.
stirring my coffee counter
clockwise creates australia
in a cup.

clockwise, a giraffe.
when i yawn and stretch
my ears unplug
and sounds go high er.
the balding man's head
has hair tentacles
like an octopus battling his scalp.
my chair only
squeaks when i lean right.

is it time for lunch?

THESE OTHER SIDES OF ME

Madison Jackson

2nd Place Non-Fiction Award

I was a goose.
I was a king.
I was an insane hobo.
I was a psycho.
I was all these things, and more.

Personality One

Nervous. I was so very, very nervous.

For what felt like an eternity, but what only could've been a few minutes, I stood in the darkness. Eagerly, I awaited the moment when I would stride towards the table and take my place atop it, sitting among other foodstuffs and strangers.

I took a deep breath and swept my hair out of my face, attempting to soothe my erratic nerves. My heart felt like a frantic bird in my chest, fluttering with a combination of anxiety and trepidation.

The moment came. Whether it came too soon or too late, I couldn't be sure.

Fixing my features into a look of determination — quite the comical expression on the face of an eight year old — I waddled towards the table. I set my wings firmly at my sides and my stuffed, feathered body swayed awkwardly with each step.

At the table, I settled between the Christmas plums and the platter of vegetables, and they scooted over to accommodate my large goose butt. Making myself as comfortable as possible, I took another deep breath and waited.

The setting was lovely. The large table that I sat upon was beautifully decorated with food and porcelain plates. A glimmering, emerald Christmas tree was erected in the corner, embellished with silvery lights and colorful ornaments. Indeed, the atmosphere was one of serenity.

Soon enough, the conversation began. Items of food talked with one another, and with the little human girl that sat at our table, taking shelter from the cold. The ambience was pleasant and warm, and the company was equally as light-hearted. Being the goose that I was, I spoke with loud arrogance and a certain haughtiness that annoyed the other foodstuffs.

No matter. As the goose, I was superior. The little girl liked me the best, because I was certainly the most delicious foodstuff.

"Oh, let's sing a Christmas carol!" one of the foods excitedly suggested.

The little girl only watched us with an expression of faint curiosity. She hadn't attempted to eat any of us, as she seemed to desire company more

than a full stomach. Eyes beaming, the foods and I turned forward, pausing for a beat before we started to sing.

“Deck the halls with boughs of holly...” everybody began.

“Fa la la la la, la la la QUACK!” I sang, hearing laughter erupt around me. “Tis the season to be jolly...”

“Fa la la la la, la la la QUACK!”

I was having fun! My face was flushed with exuberance, and the grin on my lips must’ve taken up at least half my face. I forgot why I had been so nervous, and I flapped my wings and proudly quacked.

“That’s not how you sing it!” declared the dried plums after we stopped singing.

“That’s how *I* sing it, and I like my version quite a bit better,” I indignantly huffed, sticking my beak into the air. Despite myself, I couldn’t repress a smile when more cheery laughter erupted in the room.

I felt no trace of my previous apprehension. I was in a good mood, and besides...

I really liked being a goose.

Personality Two

“You’re fired!” I cried.

My servant rolled her eyes, looking exasperated. She had heard that line so many times, and yet she had never disappeared from the castle. I must’ve told all my servants that they were fired, but they insisted on returning!

I glowered at the servant as she walked away, holding a bucket of soapy water under her arm. Honestly, the sheer rudeness! She hadn’t even acknowledged my command.

I would have to fire her.

After so many years of being king, one eventually buckled underneath the pressure. At some point, my grasp on reality had begun to weaken, and my servants mistook my orders to be the ramblings of an elderly, senile man. Most of them granted me the favor of humoring me and playing along with my antics, but a few of them no longer bothered to put on the façade of loyalty.

Perhaps it didn’t truly matter. I still had my wife, my magnificent daughter... and my shiny, jewel-encrusted crown.

Oh yes, I was rather proud of my crown. Crafted from gold and lavished with glimmering diamonds, it was surely the envy of the entire kingdom.

As I strode towards my throne, I carefully adjusted the crown atop my head, and it glinted in the light of the chandelier above. Smiling, I dramatically swept my blue, velvet cape around my shoulders and plopped down into the cushioned, grandiose seat that was my throne. Relaxing, I all but melted into the upholstery, murmuring in contentment.

“Don’t forget, our daughter is being blessed today,” the queen — my wife — reminded me, sitting in the throne beside mine (her throne being far less glorious, I might add).

“Yes, yes, I remember!” I grunted, which was a lie, but regardless. The

queen merely shook her head in affectionate exasperation, her young face framed by a mane of crimson hair.

My daughter had taken after both her mother and I. Her hair was brunette like mine, but her eyes were the same startling cobalt as her mother's. She was still a mere baby, with a nanny that was a bit more attentive than her royal parents.

"The blessing is about to begin, sir," announced the messenger, peering into the room. I frowned at the man, wrinkling my brow. I was so positive that I had fired him...

"Come on," said my wife, rising to her feet and gesturing to me. With a groan of protest, I rose out of my throne and followed my wife across the immaculate floor.

I adjusted my crown again as we walked, squaring my shoulders and pursing my lips, trying to look as serious as I could. Being a king and a father entailed a lot of responsibility, and I had to make sure that my daughter was properly blessed.

If she wasn't, I could just fire the women that had done the blessing. I was the king, after all.

Personality Three

Breathing raggedly, I shambled down the dirty, vacant street, searching my garbage cans.

My long, black hair fell in length to my waist, twisted into knots and decorated with streaks of grime. My clothes had seen better days, as they were now torn, frayed, and stained with patches of dirt. I was filthy, but my appearance hardly mattered in the face of my hunger.

I heaved a trash bag over my shoulders. It was filled to the brim with assorted objects and pieces of food, which had all been obtained from *my* trashcans. I owned this street, after all.

As I wandered past an alleyway, I heard the metallic clang of somebody pounding on a garbage can lid.

"What was *that*?" I roared to nobody in particular, whirling towards the sound with a ferocious gleam in my maddened eyes. "Is there a little kitty on *my* street, stealing from *my* garbage cans?"

I lumbered down the alleyway, thinking demented thoughts of breaking the spine of the animal trying to steal *my* food. Cackling with sadistic glee, I lurched towards one of the garbage cans and peered behind it.

Little persons! Little persons on *my* street stealing *my* garbage! One of them was even holding an apple in their hand! *My* apple!

"That food is MINE!" I screeched, staring down at the two little children, the cowering little girls. I advanced towards the younger one, the one who held *my* apple, and reached my arms forward, my gnarled fingers closing around her delicate wrist...

"Wait!" cried the older sibling, bravely pushing herself in front of her little sister. "Leave her alone!"

"What did you say?" I howled, seething with sheer fury. *My* apple, the little person still had *my* apple!

The older sister thrust a brown bag forward, her eyes as wide as saucers and her face contorted with fear. "I... I have a whole year's worth of food in this," she stammered, trembling.

"Give me that!" I bellowed, snatching the bag from her and peering into it. The aroma of fresh — not rotten — food drifted into my nostrils, and I nearly swooned with pleasure. There were fresh sandwiches and apples inside, and I could hardly remember the last time I had eaten something so delectable.

"Now I can go to sleep with a full stomach," I cooed, hugging the bag to my chest and grinning malevolently. The children were still cowering before me, but I had forgotten that they were there, too concerned with the meal in my hands.

"Oh yes, I'll have a good meal, indeed!" I cried, turning away from the little girls and beaming. "I'll go to sleep with a full stomach!"

After I had lost my home in an unfortunate, unspeakable accident, food had been hard to come by. My body had grown thin and gaunt, and it had been decades since I had last fallen asleep without a woeful vacancy in my stomach.

I still had my garbage cans, of course, and nobody dared to steal from the street that I owned. People had no idea how much food they carelessly tossed away, but the food in the garbage cans was hardly comparable to what the little girl had given me.

Whistling beneath my breath, I strode into the street, smiling, smiling, smiling.

It seemed I didn't have to break any spines tonight.

Personality Four

It had been a rather arduous task to escape from the mental hospital, but I had made it out of there with my assistant, Dr. Einstein, and with my body intact.

Perhaps my sanity wasn't completely intact, but that was beside the point.

I had a place to go, in any case. My dotting, friendly aunts would still be living in the same house... and they had the perfect basement with which to hide bodies.

With a malicious smile, I stood before their house, gazing upon it for a moment before I invited myself inside. The old house looked the same as usual with its pleasant décor, neat furniture and the portrait of grandpa in a dress hanging above the staircase.

"Joanna!" gasped a nearby voice.

Shaking myself out of my reverie, I turned towards the sound, and my two elderly aunts stood behind me. They didn't look quite as pleased to see me as they should've, but

I hardly cared, and I reveled in the looks of fear amidst their faces.

"My lovely aunts, how long has it been?" I cooed in a voice thick with eerie cheerfulness. I crossed towards them, and I draped my arms around their shoulders, feeling them flinch under my touch.

“Have you been in an accident?” My aunt Martha inquired, gesturing to the sickly complexion of my face and the long scar that whorled down my cheek, barely hidden by my black hair.

My eyes darkened with fury, and my pleasant smile tightened.

“Just some surgery,” I hissed through gritted teeth. “How’s Mortimer?”

Mortimer, my dear brother... how I *despised* him! He had always been the good nephew, the *favoured* son, while I had been cast aside like a broken toy and forgotten. My resentment for him knew no boundaries, and I had made a silent oath to eliminate Mortimer once I had escaped that blasted asylum.

“You always were a terror, Joanna,” was one of the first things he had said to me when he saw me. “But did you have to look like one, too?”

I could’ve killed him right then and there, but I made sure to keep my composure in front of my naïve aunts. I adjusted my black trench coat and stared at him with a smile on my lips and unbridled rage in my eyes.

Mortimer knew better than to trust me. Smart man, but not nearly smart enough.

Dr. Einstein, God bless him, helped me with my little project. While the aunts tucked themselves away in bed, my tall, German assistant distracted Mortimer by asking him about his occupation. My brother was a play critic, and I knew for a fact that he could ramble for hours about the distasteful theatre that he had to sit through every night.

While he sat there, ignorantly running his mouth, I crept up behind him and trussed a rope around his body. In an instant, I had his body bound to the chair and his arms tied forcibly behind him.

“What are you doing?! Stop! *HELP! HE-*” Mortimer began to scream, but his pleas of terror were cut abruptly short when I jammed a gag into his mouth, muffling him.

“Get the instruments, doctor,” I purred, clasping my hands together and rubbing them, my eyes alight with morbid anticipation.

Looking reluctant, Dr. Einstein placed a medical bag on the table, and I delicately opened it, humming to myself as Mortimer struggled against his bonds.

“I’ve been looking forward to this night for a long time, brother,” I hissed, removing a cleaver from the medical bag and stroking a finger down the glimmering steel.

Mortimer screamed, and I laughed uproariously. Together, we formed a discordant symphony of terror and delight.

I held my arm upwards, prepared to sweep the cleaver down into my brother’s body and cut him, make him *bleed*...

However, a police officer ran into the living room before I harmed dear Mortimer.

The idiotic cop believed my spiel about Mortimer wishing to reenact a scene that he had seen in a play. Even as my brother sat there, writhing and howling, the police officer only seemed entertained by his ‘acting.’ The man sat down and casually folded his arms across the table, and he began to talk, and talk, and talk...

I regret not slaughtering the cop now. I had fallen asleep while he

spoke, and when I awakened, more police officers had flooded into the room. Mortimer had been untied, and he frantically told the story of how I had attempted to slaughter him.

In desperation, I launched myself at one of the officers, prepared to tackle them to the ground and fight for my freedom.

Instead, I ended up with a pair of handcuffs clasped around my wrists. "This isn't over yet!" I declared as the police dragged me out of the house, staring at my aunts and my brother. "This isn't over! *I'll be back for you, Mortimer!*"

I seethed and struggled the entire way to the cop car, and once I was finally inside, only then did I begin to calm down. Despite my horrid situation, a smile twitched at the corners of my lips, transforming into a Cheshire cat grin.

I had escaped from a mental hospital once, and I could certainly do it again.

Personality Five

"All right and... curtain!"

I am not a delusional psychopath with multiple personalities.

However, I am an actress, so perhaps that's close enough.

Believe me when I say that there is no possible way to describe the ecstasy I feel when the audience laughs or audibly reacts to my lines. There are no words to describe the euphoria when the audience applauds at the end of the show, the sheer high that I climb to as their cheering grows louder.

The actor's orgasm, my friend once crudely called it.

It has become a natural, but always thrilling experience to meld into a personality that is not my own. Under the glaring stage lights, I can forget about myself, about the rapt audience in the seats and I can become a part of a new world. I have worn many masks, and my face has grown to fit them.

So, I don't let them go. The characters I play don't fade, they lay dormant within me. I take the aspects of their personalities and adopt them as my own, so they are never truly forgotten or pushed aside.

I am still me in the end. I just walk away from every show with another addition to who I am, with another side of me.

FROM SHANNON: A POEM

Campbell McGrath

(for Sam)

After jerking the meat killed yesterday and preparing the elk skins for a tow-rope we set out, leaving Shannon and Drouillard to hunt for the horses lost last night. Directed them to follow us, keeping on the high lands.

— William Clark, Captain, Corps of Discovery, August 26, 1804

This morning the morning star much larger than common. Drouillard came up and informed that he could neither find Shannon or the horses. He had walked all night. We sent Shields and J. Fields back to look for Shannon & the horses, with directions to keep on the hills to the Grand Calumet above the Niobrara River.

— William Clark, Captain, Corps of Discovery, August 27, 1804

6.

This morning climbed a large round hillock
Set back some half-mile or so
From the river bluffs, wishing to rise above
& scout the country
For sign of the Expedition ahead
& possibly to recognize once & for all
The location of these Great Rocky Mountains
Long promised. Some days ago
At the Village of the Maha we made shift
Along with Capt. Lewis to climb
Another such hill, atop which the burial mound
Of their great chieftain, Blackbird
Interred upright upon his horse.
There we did tie our flag
As tribute & sign of friendship to that nation.
They are much reduced by the small pox
The Maha, & set upon
In said weakness by their fellows.
Worse luck that Capt. Lewis did intend
To inoculate these Indians against it
Only to find the vaccine spoiled in transit—
Pres. Jefferson is much concerned
With the pox & would vanquish it.
Nonetheless the Capts. did honor
To their chieftains & big men with such articles
As breech clouts, tobacco, flags, &c.
Being somewhat short in trade goods
Certain certificates from Pres. Jefferson
Recognizing their friendship with the United States
Made little impression upon them.
One chief of the Otos by name Big Horse
Turned back his certificate as useless
Angering the Capts. This Big Horse
Arriving buck naked to the parlay
To demonstrate his poverty, no wonder
He might wish some more useful article
Yet he did set us howling.
It were the small pox killed Blackbird
Along with many others.
No more than three hundred of their people
Remain. From Blackbird's mound we could see
Nothing but plains across vast distances
& grass & sky
& the river shining silver.

Same silver, same river my distraction

From hunger & hundreds of brown martins
Flitting in the sunshine after insects—
This mound attracts them as flies to a magnet.
Many grasshoppers much fiercer
Armored than back east, it is said the Indians
Eat them & I might yet.
Only with berries in the bottom lands
Plentiful hereabouts have I purchased
Peace with my stomach.
As raspberries, damson berries, serviceberries
blue currants, goose berries
huckleberries & whortle berries
Plus which the small plums or pawpaws
Sweet & fine if ripe.

More like a truce than a proper peace.
Temporary suspension
Of hostile acts.

High, craggy bluffs, betimes I detour
Along the very edge of them
Eager for their vista, despite the river twists
& turns so. Where
O where
Have the Capts. got to?
Must be driving the keel boat steady under sail
To make such time, plus which the pirogues.
Alone with the black horse now I cover
Good distance daily, they cannot
Keep ahead of me forever it would seem.

Git on, horse.

Sun something fierce, garrulous birds
& buzz of the grasshoppers
& buffalo come to drink twining & filing
Well-worn trails to the water's edge
The river wending among uncounted sand bars
With what one might call ease
Or seeming accident
Though I have been taken to wonder these days
Whether it might be some absolute purpose
Hidden there?

Why would God create a thing
That wanders aimlessly?
He would seem to prefer
Straight-thinking

If I may presume, so as to simplify
The task. Why would He
Create such an animal as these buffalo?
To feed men, which purpose they no doubt admirably
Fulfill for the Indians at any rate?

So many buffalo aggregated together, small herds
& large, a single vantage comprising many thousands
& here some lumbering up the bank like oxen
Others on a hill always south lowing & mooning
Some ponderous bulls in rut charging & roaring
The ground shaking as with thunder
When one group rushes suddenly past my vantage
Only to merge into the larger band on the other side
Like river waters backing & swirling
Sheaves of fur & hair caught up in nettles
The dust of hooves & those rolling & lying in it
& their heaps of turds steaming everywhere
& those dried out the Indians use for kindling
& some calves sporting or frisking like lambs
Many bones in the long grass, horns & bleached skulls
Skittish packs of prairie wolves keeping watch
Various antelope, deer & elk in company
& the black-tailed mule deer abundant now.
It is a sight of no small magnificence.
These grasses, their equal abundance in the wind
Betimes I find myself floating among them
Flowing with the clouds across
The hills & herds
& within the grasses, from the hawk's height
To the dust-valley at the ant's eye
Their great Missouri a stream I might piss out
If not so damned parched.
Must make shift to the river
To fill my skins
Before nightfall. These grasses
Are like a skin
To the earth, or a quilt or blanket— no
It could only be God that had knitted such a thing
& he don't need it to keep off the chill
& such is not considered
Man's work. Being a man
I might imagine God would need a woman
For quilting, mending & plenty
Besides.

I do believe
I have tread unintended

Into the fields of blasphemy.

Who then has put such thoughts into my head
If not God Himself? Surely
Not the Devil.
I do not believe that rascal entwined
In this billowing tapestry
With nothing for him to grasp upon
But clouds & wind
Or hide behind & rear up from
Not even the yucca gloriosa
A difficult plant but not evil-intended.
Is this also blasphemous?
I believe Parson Macready would say so
But he is often off the beam
& a poor judge
Of workmen & cheap besides.

If my thoughts arise
Direct from this landscape
How other than God-ordained
Could they be?
For it is all of a piece.
Who made the grass
Made also

wind

dust

thorn
the grasshoppers

shadow & light

a dove

I wish
Would set upon that stump
To wring its neck
& eat it raw my hunger grows
Powerful.

This much for certain—if God
Did create the buffalo
He made one great, strange, daft animal.

7.

Startled awake stiff & dreaming
Upon the breasts of Constance Ebson.
Fine as they are, it disturbs me
To be tracked into this wilderness by such desires.
O what can a man do about that?
Soldier on, George my boy, soldier on.

Foraging for fruit to breakfast upon
I caught the scent of skunk—
Indeed it were a family of pole-cats there
Of which the largest raised-up its tail
At sight of me hastily withdrawing
From that thicket only to find myself
Pursued by mother pole-cat
Several hundred yards before eluding her
Unanticipated speed & determination
By leaping a small creek
And circling back to my camp
With no injury but to my pride.

Cool wind sprung up this morning
Like fall in Pennsylvania, is it
Come September yet?
Still blowing brisk & grey with rain promised
Vast flocks of birds upon the river
Set down to keep clear of the storm
Ducks, geese, certain swans, &c.
No scrap of deer meat left this afternoon
I stalked within some dozen yards
Of a swan near to shore seemingly unaware
But when I sprung the bottom proved
Abrupt & I fell into the water.
Wet through now
To spare the rain that trouble.
On several islands here again the pelicans
Whose food I might attempt to steal
Or nests to rob
But the current is fleet.
It were a poor idea & a peril to drown.

One time my brother Thomas killed a swan.
Swifts gathered up from the fallow
Hayfield downhill like idle chatter.
In the woods my brother shot the swan—
Why did it go in there, among such a darkness
Of trees? Soon as he shot

The branches lifted up & scattered
Across the sky. It was a great flock of pigeons
Roosted there, branches heavy
With them in the dawn just coming.
Such hunters we were
Never to notice them huddled
Dark as apples for the taking. & then
The white feathers of that bird to contend with
In those woods, plumage of blood
All over that brilliant swan
& the pigeons chattering overhead
All morning in their passage.

Failing at the river I have determined
To fashion a bullet
From such as might come to hand
There being stones of every size & description
Fit to answer, & so fill my pouch with candidates.
I make shift to travel some mile or more south
Upon the prairie, thinking which animal
Best to make my attempt upon
When I observe myself come into a most
Remarkable situation. All about me
Upon the slope of a low rise
Small animals contrive to poke their heads
From an array of holes & tunnels
Dug thereon. Like to ground squirrels
They are, somewhat longer of body
& they do give voice
To barks or yips
Unlike any squirrel in Ohio.
Thinking this might be fair game
I loaded my rifle with the roundest river stone
In my collection, tamped & shot—
Which blast of smoke failed even to dislodge
It from the barrel, as I had feared.
A stone is not a bullet
But a stone
However you might wish it.
Next I did determine to set upon
These barking squirrels by hand, so many
There were, & so many sundry dens for them
To manifest from, nor was I
Quick enough, or patient.
One hole from which
A fellow continuously clambered in & out
I staked myself to watch, lying hidden
Just by the brow of the hill—

In all that time
He never did appear, not once.
As sentinels they were contriving to signal my presence
Like any ordinary predator to those others unseen
& I was not equipped to dig them out
& time pressed upon me, imagining each hour
The Expedition to be drawing further ahead.

I proceeded on, until full dark
Then set rummaging among the river thickets
Again for some handfuls of grapes
& those delicious blue currants or damson-berries.
No plums to be found though I searched
Even by moonlight.
Nothing to be done for it.
Wind northwest & calming after nightfall
& the rain subsiding.
My spirits somewhat subdued.
Fain to admit but I did
Despair & weep
Some while this evening.
Between my brothers & family
& now the U.S. Army for companions
I have hardly known solitude
Like this in all my eighteen years.
Night is the hardest part
& I hesitate to trust it fully.
Like walking the ice
At the edge of a pond testing
If it will bear my weight.

At the heart of my worry
Is my uncertainty—
Stated plainly, having chased the Expedition
All week unencumbered
I wonder whether per some mischance
I may have passed them by
Altogether, hidden by steep bluffs
Or river-mists
Or they delayed by some unforeseen cause
The keel-boat sunk, the Sioux, &c?
Several days now I have been troubled
By the absence of signs— that is
Sure notice of the Expedition in its passage ahead.
One place along the shore were tracks
But I believe them to be Indian.
Another showed trace but had been well-trampled
By buffalo crossing there, hard to say

My skills not being precise as Drouillard & some.
Generally I believe the Capts.
In these Dakota lands may be making camp
On larger islands mid-stream for safety
Or lighting upon the far shore
By chance or preference
Nor am I able to swim over & make certain.
As I keep ambling to & from the river
It is my luck not to have hit upon
Mark of them is all—the Missouri runs
But one direction & even what skills I've got
Are fit to follow a trail this size.
If I knew I had gone wrong I would set off
Downstream this instant
To meet them, yet what if that same
Mischance were then to occur
Leaving myself going backwards and they
Forwards across the continent?
O I would be lost more completely
Than I risk to contemplate
& my hopes with nothing to seize upon
But clouds & grass, & it is my hopes
That sustain me, the idea in mind
Of that reunion more even than the fellowship.

The die is cast.

I dare not reverse my tracks,
& to sit idle
Awaiting them feels
False to my nature & to our grand purpose
Here, that being to keep moving
To forge if even blindly
Onward.

8.

Coming to the river to breakfast upon grapes & water
I spy a drowned buffalo caught up on a snag
Near shore—alas, it has gone to rot
No meat but is putrid
& unfit for a man. It was but a calf, scrawny
& well-gnawed by wolves.

In the sandy shallows all around
Schools of silverfish familiar to me as bait
From the Ohio River

But no means to net them, my shirt comes to rags
& they flee before its shadow.
I never was the fisherman to equal
My brother John, & I rue it.

My need for food assuming urgency
I set up with my collection of likely stones
To seek my rifle's determination
Once & for all
Aiming at the sandy bank from which I might
Recover any such bullet as proved feasible.
Many failed likewise to discharge
& some few flew clear
But wild & random, hither & yon
Not being fit to the barrel
Or true of shape. This practice
Leaves me
Richer in wisdom
But much reduced in powder
& the great Missouri depleted by several fistfuls
Of river-gravel.

Shining so, in the autumn sun, the river
Is like my Mother's silver necklace
Slipping across my fingers
Moving, jaunting, sparkling, restless
Coursing & entwining the many streams as one.

What if, beyond these mighty plains are plains
Even more magnificent
As this Dakota Country exceeds Ohio
In that regard, even
As heaven overshadows earth?
Just as the Ohio flows into the Mississippi
Is there beyond these plains & hills
Some consequentially greater confluence or flood
Connecting all waters, every
Least rivulet, this to that
& these to those?
Merely thinking of it I suppose it
To be true.
Or, the truth of it compels
Its image to light
Not as dream or revery
But as though the river simply existed, plain as fact
Beyond the hills of my mind, below
That horizon—as when
Another living creature near to hand

Makes its presence known in the darkness
Not by breath or motion or moonlight
But insensibly. Lest you have done it
Perhaps you cannot grasp my meaning.
But assuredly one knows he is there
Not even certain it be a foolish deer
Or my brother Thomas
Returning from his ordinary night duty.

From the Ohio River to the Missouri
I know now to be
One continuous body of water
Having traveled its course from these buffalo lands
To the great Mississippi at St. Louis
& even along the shores of the Illinois Country
& the Indiana Territory & even past
The falls of the Ohio at Louisville, Kentucky
Past the mouths of the Wabash, Kanawha, Muskingum
& even to the forks of three rivers at Fort Pitt
& the Monongahela & the Allegheny
& even into the Chartiers River in Washington County
& even into the creek behind the cabin
Nearby Claysville, Pennsylvania, where I was born.
It flows even into the Western Ocean
The Capts. will no doubt
Discover passage to—if not this river that other river
Beyond the mountains
It is the same as & one with, entire.

Settled down for the night along a grassy draw
With good berries & forage
At the foot of several rounded knolls
When smoke came clear upon the evening breeze.
At first I imagined it might signal
The cook fire of my messmates
But climbing the hill I perceived the grasses to burn
Widely on the far side of the river
Some distance removed & was much alarmed
Such fires being common practice
Among the Sioux.
Fearing myself too visible
Should any such arrive upon the opposite shore
I abandoned my chosen camp
& moved onto the prairie
& huddled there unsheltered as best I might
Feeling somewhat put-upon & vagrant.

I wish I were supplied as Capt. Lewis
With notebook paper & as gifted
Alike with Capt. Clark
Though he the less well-lettered of the two.
Capt. Lewis is a fine writer
Whose education exceeds my own
But he knows I might proceed to keep a journal
In his place if need be.
Thoughts & reflections flow through me here
Alone in these lands I may consider myself
The first American to have walked
Surely, & observations of the land generally
& such animals as I have observed.
I am no naturalist, as Pres. Jefferson would like
But I am proud to be so trusted
As a penman by the Capts.
Even if they misdoubt me somewhat
As a tracker. At any rate
Those horses they set me to find
Are lost no more.
Though I am
Curse it.
Plus which the brown horse
Become wolf-carrion.
Still it was not Drouillard
Who recovered them but me.
O sorrowful horses, where might I be
Had they not strayed?

THIS (TRANSACTION) REALLY HAPPENED

Jeff P. Jones

(It's too much to ask you to see the)
Indian woman waving at the white man,
saying, Navajo Taco, five bucks, as the coins
droop in his pocket and she mashes dough

(that you shouldn't have to picture)
her dropping into hot grease. Slicing
lettuce, grating cheese, paying no mind
to the anthem that locks his gaze

(on what you needn't imagine were)
her thick brown fingers banner
tomatoes and onions across the bread,
before he bows, takes from her palm

(its taste spoiled by raw irony)
that first warm bite and trading it for five
golden Sacagaweas, their bodies drumming
like tiny cymbal clashes into the cash box.

BIGFOOT

Jeff P. Jones

There are no second chances
like lightning and lottery this luck
comes only once then majors
in getting lost

Onto gray folds of memory
this escaping moment
must be seared with the primitive
mind's unshuttered fire

And if you forgot the camera
or can't find the on button
or failed to load the film then all the
better

What happens in the space
between your next two breaths will fix
your place at holiday
dinners for ages to come

You'll be the storyteller
no longer the sad carbuncular
uncle from whom relations
shoo their children

But maybe like him it's better
to be still and not speak
of the heart's pounding or the woods
already closing

Solitude allows him to harbor
the frailest monster ego
like an incubating egg in his
warm hands

While another biped's
brain pancakes down and you watch with
two eyes facing forward
the sun shift identity

Into leaf dappled shadow
where you picture myth truth and legend
weaving a new primate who
hides in plain sight

THE OLD WAYS

Alan Tracey

The door opened, and for a long time no one entered. Sitting on a padded bench with an embroidered silk apron wrapped around his waist, Phil didn't bother getting up. From across the preparation room, he peered into the shadows beyond the doorway, waiting for someone to appear. When no one did, Phil whispered, "Well hell."

He clapped his bare chest with an open hand. The fat of his breasts and a little perspiration on his palm combined to make a strikingly loud sound. After seven months of Sumo training, Phil wasn't yet used to his body, so he did things like this. He slapped himself or he jumped up and down to feel the floor vibrate. Sometimes he'd stand an inch from a mirror and then count the number of steps backward he needed to fit within the mirror's borders. Phil weighed three-hundred-seventy pounds and his stable-master, Yuko-san, told him that he still needed another forty or sixty, but Jesus, Phil thought, reaching up and grabbing a meaty handful of one of his breasts.

I mean, Jesus.

When Phil looked again he saw the grand champion in the doorway. He wasn't wearing the traditional Japanese cotton robe and wooden sandals that custom required of the top sumo wrestlers. The grand champion wore black slacks, a black sweater. He was wide enough that he needed to step sideways through the doorway. A white New York Yankees baseball cap sat atop the older man's black hair, impossibly high on his head, and Phil realized that the grand champion's "top knot" was nestled beneath the hat. Phil nearly laughed at the site of it, but then Phil remembered Yuko-san saying only children and women laughed in Japan. So Phil simply motioned the grand champion to an empty chair across from him.

A second man entered and introduced himself as the translator. The grand champion spoke in Japanese, his words low and powerful, and when he finished, the translator spoke on his behalf.

"You are fighting well," the grand champion said. "Your record is nine wins to five losses. So you will advance for certain. Whereas my record coming into our match today is seven and seven."

"Yes, I saw your match yesterday." Phil said. "Very strong."

Phil paid little attention to the translator, a slight man with a light pink dress shirt, a blue suit, glasses tinged in blue. Instead, Phil inspected the face of the grand champion, his high brow furrowed, his cheeks and the skin around his eyes emphasized by marks of age and fatigue.

"You were born in Hawaii," the grand champion said through the translator.

Phil nodded.

"And lived your whole life there?"

“Hai, hai,” Phil said, which was about as much Japanese as he’d mastered. As a high-school graduation gift his mother had given him a Berlitz course on Japanese which claimed you could learn the language in four months. Phil had been here seven, but then Mr. Berlitz wasn’t eating a two hour lunch of fish and meat chankonabe every day, washed down by six beers, ten thousand calories in all, followed by a two hour nap to build fat.

“My grandfather, he spent time in Hawaii,” said the grand champion.

As the translator spoke for the grand champion, he sat perfectly erect, his brown eyes peering straight ahead. The translator reminded Phil of one of the nerd kids from high school, like when Phil would position himself behind a kid and then lean forward to blow in his ear or pull the hairs out from the back of his neck, and the kid wouldn’t do a thing, just stare straight ahead. The translator perched in his chair, unmoving, just like that.

“In fact, my grandfather died very near to Hawaii,” said the grand champion.

“Really,” Phil said.

“He fought in the war.”

Phil nearly asked, “On which side?” when the grand champion said, “He was killed in a kamikaze flotilla,” and Phil decided well that answered that.

“In Japan, every old man will tell you they were a kamikaze pilot or in the flotilla, but in truth, there were less than five hundred in the flotilla. My grandfather was one of them.”

“And what did he do?” Phil asked.

“In Japan the flotillas were all men who operated human torpedoes. They were metal cylinders attached to the tops of submarines. When the submarine was close to an allied boat the men would go into the torpedoes. They had warheads in front and the men would steer them with their hands.”

“And how did he die?” Phil asked.

“He drowned.”

“He didn’t blow himself up?”

The grand champion shook his head. “The commander of the submarine ordered the men to submerge too early and so they ran out of fuel before detonating. Some of the men realized this and pointed themselves to the surface. The torpedoes were visible then, and shot by planes. Some who attempted to surrender were shot by the men on the boats who didn’t want to take prisoners of kamikazes. The guns on battleships have a diameter as large as a watermelon. They are made to slice open other ships, and that is what they used to greet the surrender of my grandfather.”

“It was a long time ago,” Phil said, mostly because that’s what people in Hawaii said about the war.

The grand champion waved one of his huge hands dismissively. They sat for a while, saying nothing. The silence grew uncomfortably long to Phil. He fought the urge to touch his bare stomach or handle a breast.

The older man wanted him to feel uncomfortable, Phil knew. Squeezing a thigh in each hand, Phil pitched his head back. Located on the upper floor of a convention center in Tokyo, the preparation room was nice in the way that things were often nice in Japan: austere, with natural pine floor and matching lockers, light floating down from a glass roof bordered in more natural pine. In the quiet, the roar from the crowd below filled the room as one of the rikishi had triumphed over another.

“And what of your family?” the grand champion asked.

“My grandparents are dead. My father, he’s an electrician in Hawaii. He works for the university there.” Phil didn’t add that his father worked twenty-eight weeks a year due to seniority and that he only worked until one o’clock on Fridays because he pretended he had a back injury. He also didn’t tell him that his father told similar stories about the war, except in those stories, it was the Japanese who were killing the surrendering Americans.

“I have my grandfather’s name,” the grand champion said. “Because I am a warrior like him. We share the same heart.”

“The same heart?” Phil asked. “You mean the heart shot up by all of those watermelon sized rounds?”

Phil looked at the grand champion as he said it. Phil guessed he was about his father’s age. Absent all the weight, the grand champion would even look a bit like his father. The two men held the same flat nose, the same expressive brown eyes, a look like that of a high-school principle or a piano player or some other profession that required a sad face.

“We share the same spirit,” the grand champion said. “You see, there are things you are born knowing. For me, it is the connection I have with my grandfather, or with my son. With my son, it didn’t happen right away. He was perhaps three. I looked at him, doing nothing the way children do, and I knew everything I had done in my life had brought me to that point. That it was inescapable. And when I step into the ring, I know that it is what I was born for, what God intended for me. You young men, when you gather the gods to you, slapping your chests, I see the smile in your eyes. I see you all laughing at the old ways.”

Phil thought of how Yuko-san had instructed him to slap his chest before he hurled himself at the other sumo wrestler, to hug the open air, because it was a ritual and the Japanese ate all that ritual shit up. In the same way the wrestlers threw salt into the dohyo to purify the ring, you could barely take a squirt in Japan without chanting to some God somewhere.

“A thousand years ago, the samurai wrestlers fought until death,” the grand champion said. “I am one of those men. We all are. For as long as there have been people we have been at war. It is in our nature. It’s why my stable master and all the fighters in Osaka wrestle first in front of the crowd with the kami spirit. It is because we don’t fight each other. We are not opponents. We are on the same side, like strangers in war who become brothers. When I fight, I know generations of dead samurai judge me, not the gyoji. It is the ghosts of my grandfather, of your grandfather, that look down at us. It is their presence that makes us feel larger than

ourselves.”

Phil found himself smiling, nodding along with the translator’s words, and he had to tell himself to stop. He was good, this one. The grand champion was, well, grand.

“When we cleanse our mouths with power water and when we gather in a circle to first meet, these are all actions which mean nothing to you, eh?”

What was the proper answer, Phil wondered. He gazed at the door, hoping his stable-master, Yuko-san might appear.

“They don’t mean much,” Phil said.

“But they will. You’ll see. When enough men believe in something, it is.”

The way the grand champion breathed so heavily when he spoke reminded Phil of his father. His father gave Phil a wad of money before leaving for Japan, along with a collection of pornographic comic books where women had breasts as large as their head and the men had johnsons drooping to their knees. Did his own father look at him and think that this was what he was meant to do?

Phil didn’t think so.

And yet, he remembered his father’s tears as the recruiter came to cart him off to Japan. It was his father who had first contacted the recruiter during Phil’s senior year of high-school football. Phil had been debating which scholarship to take, when the recruiter came knocking. His father helped him pack, handed him the suitcase and he’d wept so bitterly it struck Phil, as if he’d betrayed his father somehow. Driving away, Phil watched his father wave from the edge of the apartment parking lot. Phil received a letter from the old man once a week. It was short, containing nothing really, a few lines about his mom, his little sister. He remembered after his first victory in the dohyo, searching the audience for his father’s face. It took a moment to realize he wasn’t there, and Phil felt himself deflate the slightest bit, as if he were much younger, when a victory didn’t mean anything unless his father was there to witness it. Is this what it meant to gather the spirits, to honor the sumaria?

“So it’s settled,” the grand champion said. “You’ll let me win the match today.”

It came at Phil so quickly, so directly, he couldn’t keep the surprise from his face.

“We Japanese, we speak in cryptic sentences,” said the grand champion. “When I was married, I didn’t say a word through the ceremony and by the end of it I was a husband. And yet, we can be direct. When I arrange to bed one of the prostitutes in Tokyo, for example, I direct her how to lay, on her stomach or on her back, and how long I will take. So there is no miscommunication, when it matters. When a grand champion begins to lose, custom dictates he retire. So after this match today, I will retire. I am seven and seven. If I win today, I will see to it that you will be the first American to join the rikishi ranks.”

Phil slumped back, hurt for some reason, disappointed maybe, as the grand champion’s words washed over him. He told Phil that he was likely

to win. Phil had the fighting spirit, already with the number of wins required to advance. He could do this small favor for the grand champion. Couldn't he?

Phil said nothing, wishing desperately that Yuko-san would appear and tell him if this was all part of the ritual or if this was an actual bribe. Something instinctively told Phil that the grand champion had probably been cheating for years, telling each of his opponents that he was going to retire after just one more bout. Then again his father told him before leaving America to never trust his instincts; that they'd be entirely wrong until he turned about twenty-five.

"You think about it," said the grand champion. "If you decide in my favor, you give me a signal. When we face off, open your arms wide to the spirits, and then, rather than clapping your hands, place your right hand on your heart. You leave it there until the gyoji tells us to start."

"Like this," the grand champion said in English. He took his large right hand and cupped it over his heart. His face betrayed nothing, but his hand trembled with power and emotion. Looking at him, Phil feared that the grand champion would burst into tears, much like his father had nearly done when watching him leave.

When the fight came, Phil did not give the old man the sign. Phil beat the grand champion in less than twenty seconds. It wasn't unusual as far as sumo matches go. Most of them end within a minute. At the end of it, the two men bowed to each other as was custom. Phil met the grand champion's stare.

Later Phil told Yuko-san all about the meeting, and the way their eyes met at the end of the match. He told Yuko-san that he understood what the grand champion was saying with his stare, but in truth, he had no idea. The grand champion appeared neither sad nor angry.

For a week after the match Phil slept poorly. He woke in the middle of the night with his right arm tingling painfully. It was his weight, Yuko-san explained. He wasn't yet used to it. He was falling asleep on his stomach with his arm pressed beneath him. Sleep on your back, Yuko-san instructed. And yet, for the longest time Phil would wake in the middle of the night, the feel of the blood coursing through his arm powerfully enough to throb in pain. In the months that followed it affected his matches, this lack of sleep. Phil tried sleeping on his back and his side, but sooner or later he turned over onto his stomach. When he did, the weight of his whole body pressed down on his right arm, on his right hand, which each night was cupped firmly over his heart.

ERIK LAURITZEN — 1953-2007



TMCC Professor Emeritus Erik M. Lauritzen passed away Aug. 9, 2007. Erik established the photography department and taught photography and fine art at TMCC from 1991 to 2004. He advised the construction of the current photography lab in the Sierra Building and managed the galleries at the college from 1991 to 1998. Erik was a workshop assistant for Ansel Adams, Al Weber, Morley Baer, Oliver Gagliani and Pirkle Jones. He also printed "Portfolio One" for Ruth Bernard. He has exhibited in numerous regional, national and international exhibitions, received many grants and honors,

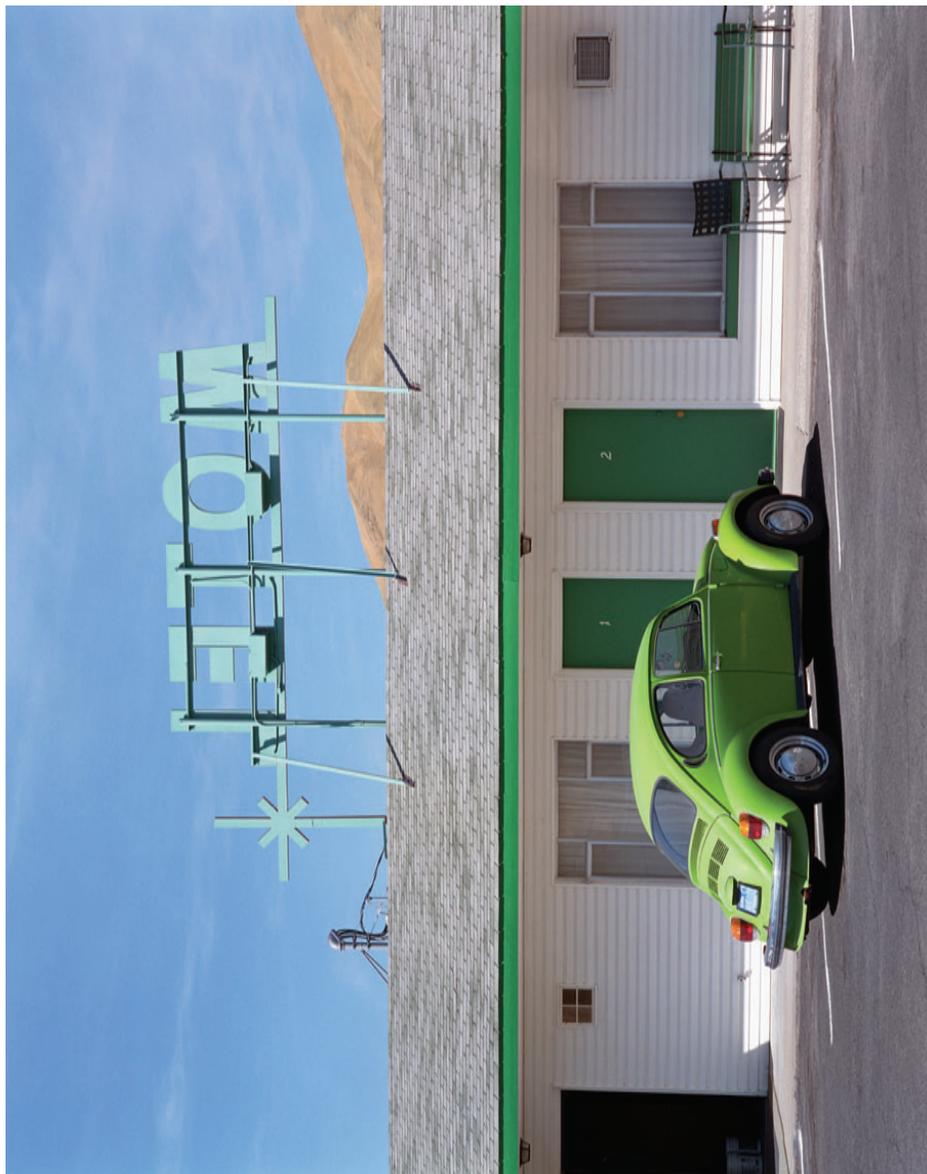
and taught workshops nationwide. Erik's photographs and writings are archived at UC Santa Cruz.

The Photo/Print gallery on the third floor in the Red Mountain building on the Dandini campus of Truckee Meadows Community College has been named after Erik M. Lauritzen.

For a more complete biography and gallery of his photographs please see: <http://library.ucsc.edu/oac/exhibits/ms23/bio/bio.html>.

GREEN BUG

Erik Lauritzen — Photograph



ORGY ROOM, MUSTANG RANCH

Erik Lauritzen — Photograph



BATTLE MT. ALLEY

Erik Lauritzen — Photograph



HAVANA

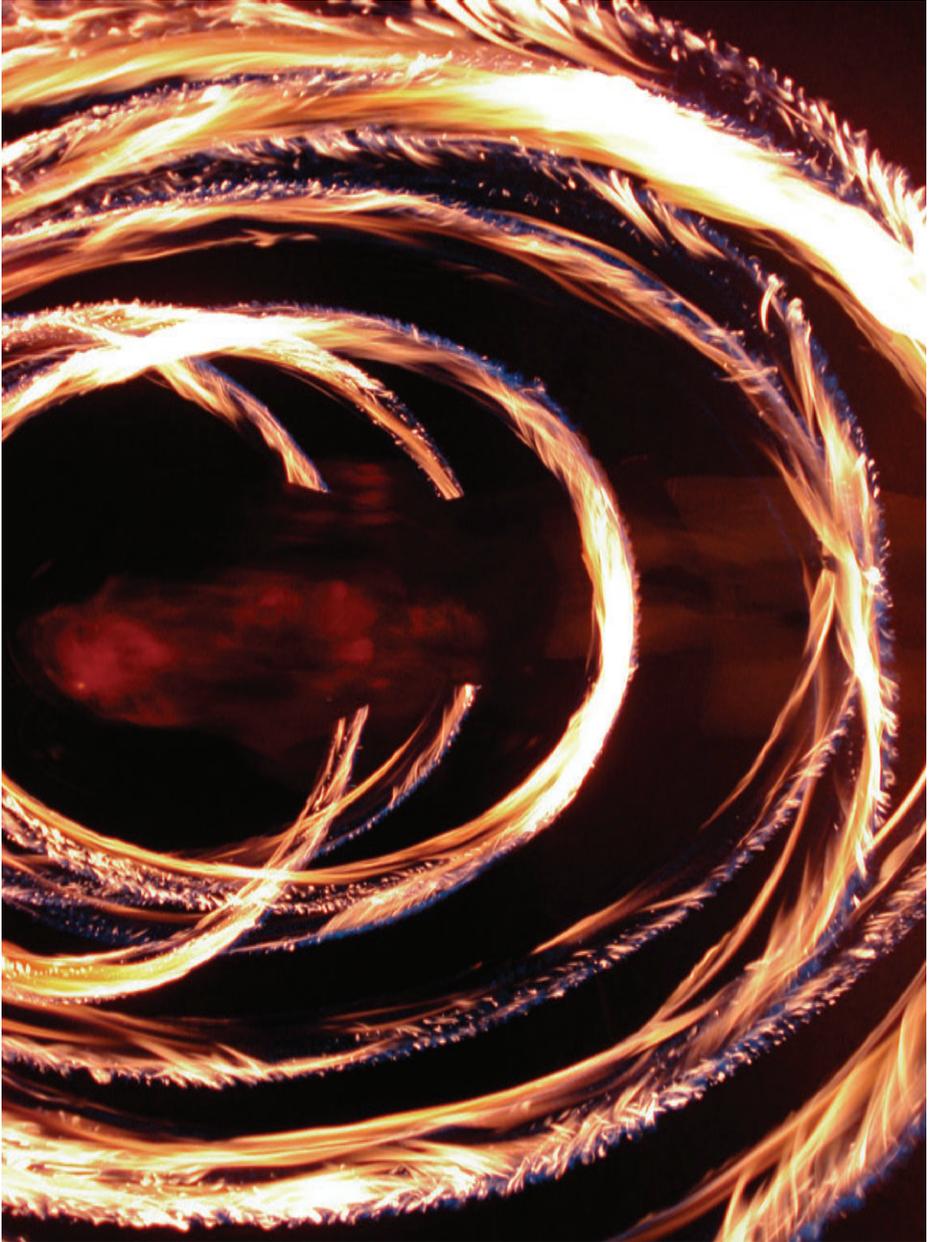
Brandon Lacow — Photograph



FIRE

Gerard Davis — Photograph

3rd Place Art Award



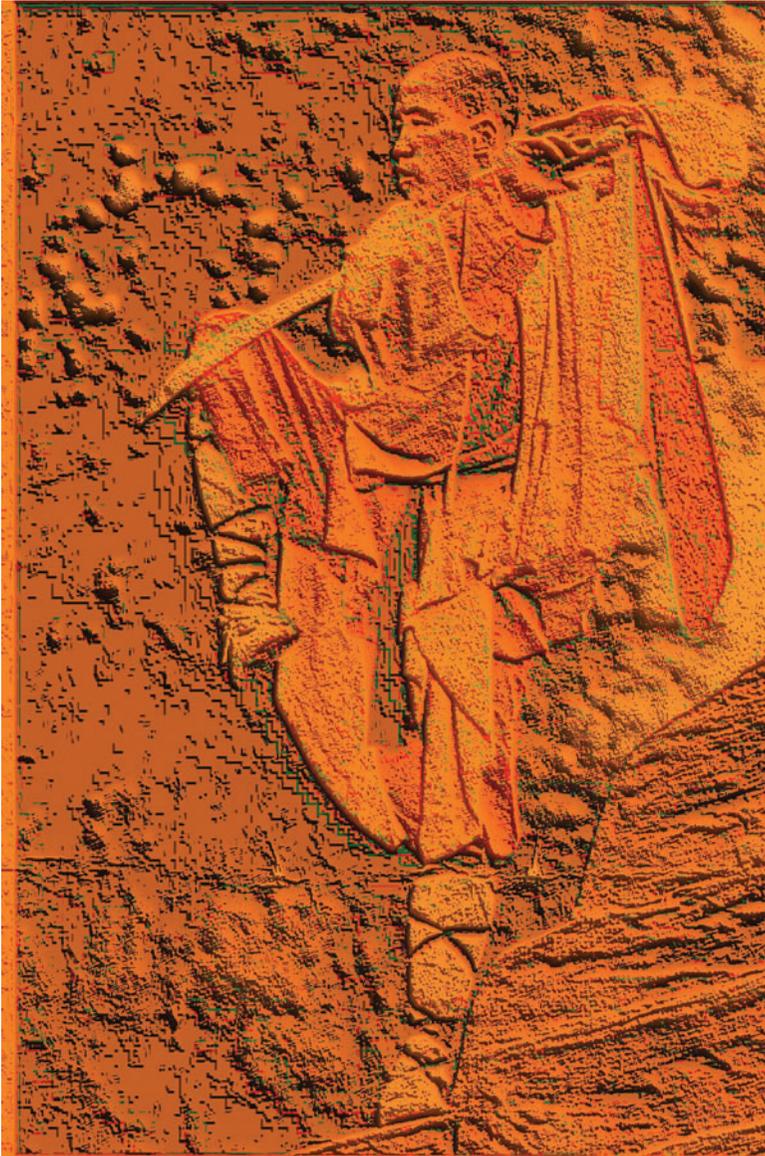
THE GRANDMOTHERS

Jim Lamoreux — Medium unreported



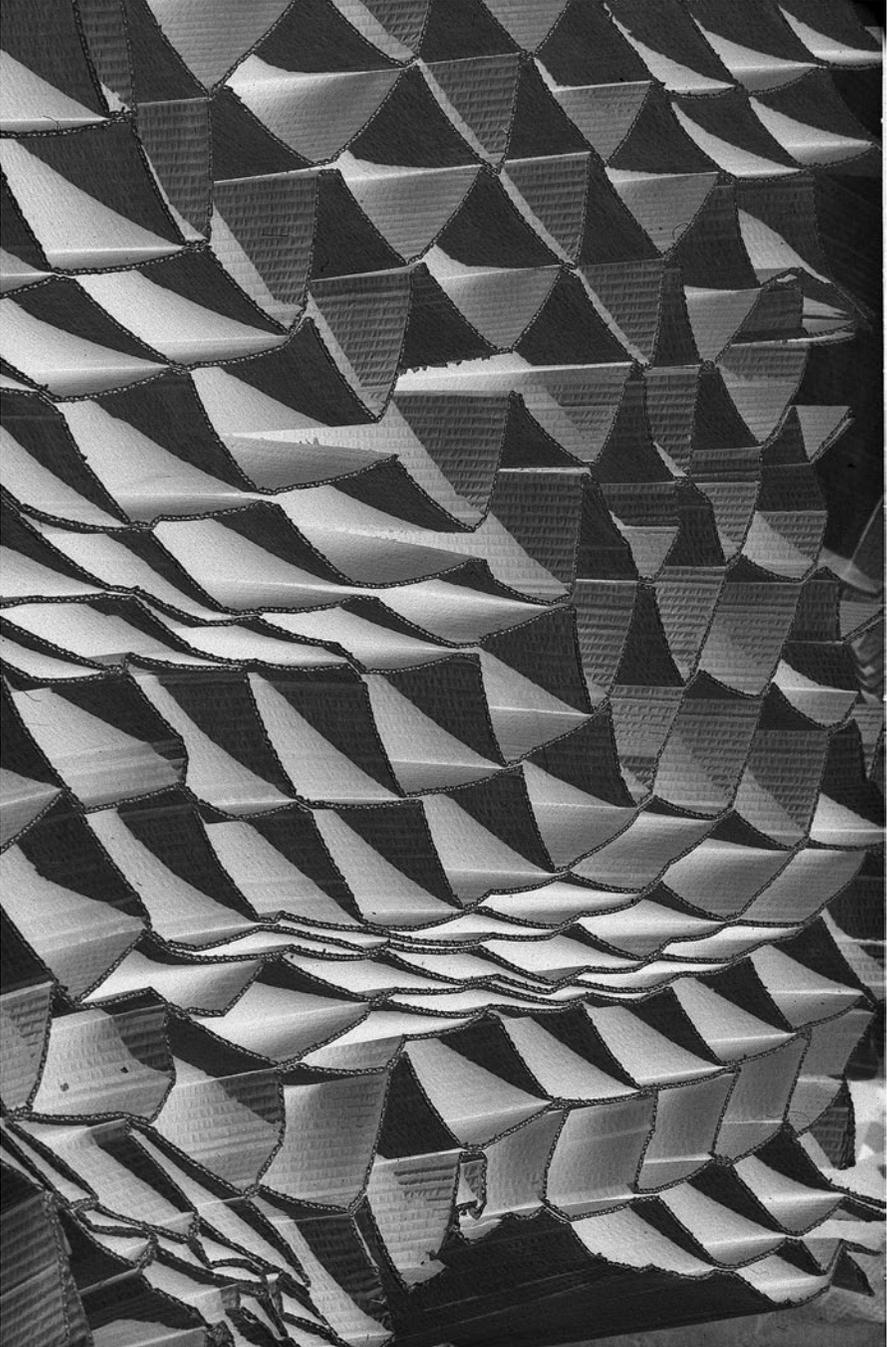
EPITAPH

Dylan Liebgott — Medium unreported



BOX

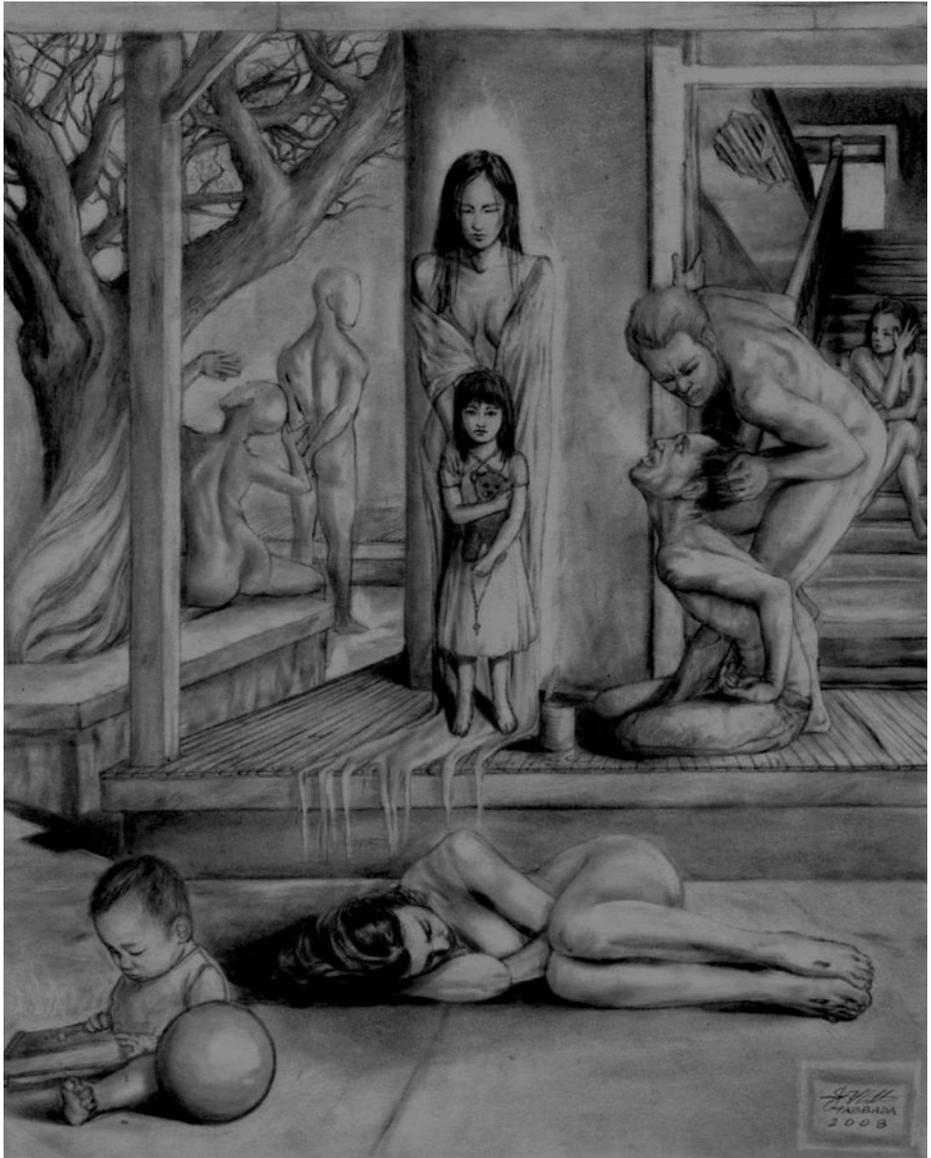
Diane D. Clarkson — Photograph



PURGATORYO

J.V. Tabbada — Drawing

2nd Place Art Award



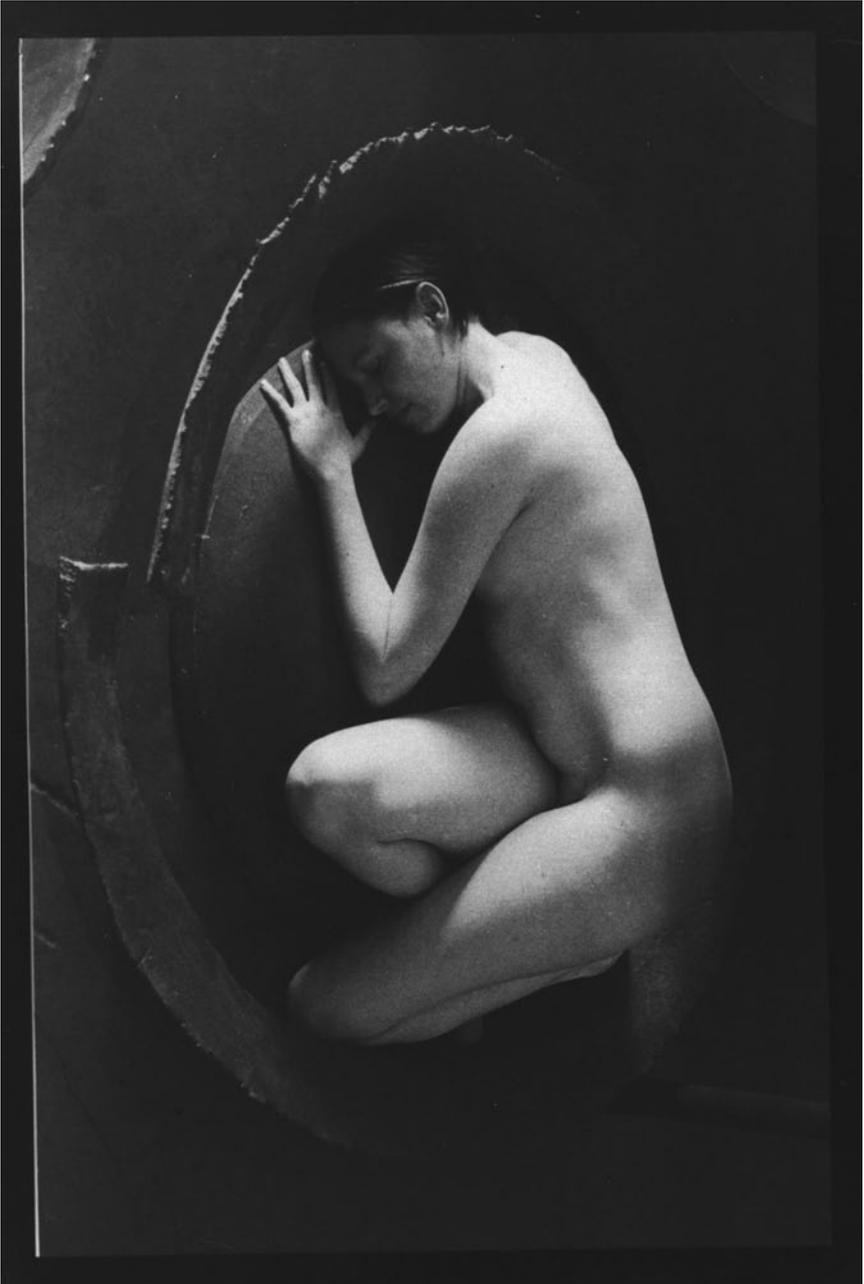
5 ISLANDS

Stephanie Hogen — Photograph



1 Z STUDIO

Stephanie Hogen — Photograph



2 Z STUDIO

Stephanie Hogen — Photograph

1st Place Art Award



3 Z STUDIO

Stephanie Hogen — Photograph



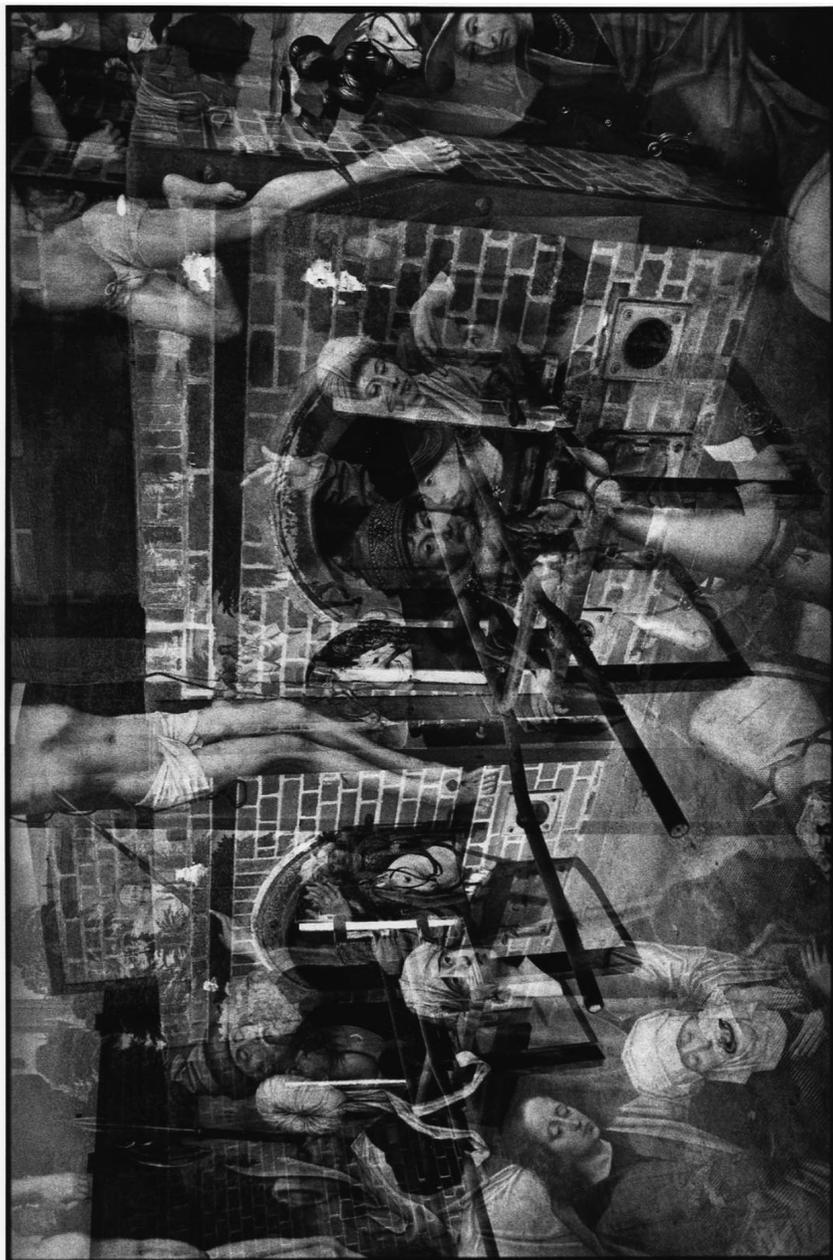
CATHEDRAL, NICARAGUA, 1985

Harry Wilson — Photograph



CREMATORY / PAINTING, DACHAU, 2002

Harry Wilson — Photograph



CHE, CUBA, 1988

Harry Wilson — Photograph



SMOKE IN MY EYES

Caren Franklin

1st Place Non-Fiction Award

I will never forget the feeling of fighting fire. My heart balanced on the cusp of bravery and insanity and dwindled between pain and pleasure in one fleeting beat. It was a feeling I got everyday working for the U.S. Forest Service on a twenty person hand crew. I labored my days away in the hardest job I have ever had. My crew mates, the late nights and blistered feet, and the forests and mountains that challenged me all helped shape my view of the world as I see it today. I met my fiancée fighting fire. He continues to hike the mountains, inhale the smoke, and sweat into the dark of night with out me.

I miss that life.

I now work in an office where excitement is gossiping at the water cooler and the most dangerous part of my day is a paper cut. I am surrounded by the city and crowded with the faces I don't recognize. Some times I catch a glimpse of nature, the changing color of the leaves on my street and the small view of the sky from my front door step. However, I will never forget my past. It's rooted deep in fragrant dirt and slender grasses of the Plumas National Forest. I am reminded of what I lost when Josh comes back from an assignment. With his colorful stories, he brings me little trinkets from the forest. I collect these things, saved from fire where my love has found them among shifting ashes and charred coals. These items are mementos of memories I tuck safe in the threads of my heart and remind me of a time in my life when I was a part of something bigger.

Last summer Josh brought me a young deer antler from the Modoc National Forest. The faded bone had points that were worn and chipped, exposing tender white beneath. Charred marks cover the outside where it lay on the ground and the fire kissed it. I remember how gentle and warm the fire can be in the early morning, when the forest is cold and still as a pond before sunrise. It thawed my aching bones and throbbing feet trapped in my heavy and ash laden boots. I huddled next to my small warming fire on assignment and remember watching a burning snag as it fell piece by piece. The limbs were gone and it loomed at a jaunty angle while sparks and embers floated out of the neck, the smoke twisting like angry snakes. By morning the snag was felled in the safety of daylight. It made a sickening and empty crash as it hit the ground, splitting in sections and rolling down the hill exposing its black vacant core.

Josh also brought me a pine cone from the Angora Fire in Tahoe. The cone is long and curved with perfectly spaced wings of prickly bark. I recall the hours of project work stacking downed tree limbs, and how I used sneak off to explore the forest alone. I remember how it felt amongst the trees. I loved to weave through their trunks and caress their rough bark with my bare palms, the large cones crunching beneath my feet. I remember how the inside of the trees smelled while cutting them down,

the tangy sweetness of sap, as woodchips spilled into my shirt and gloves. The small flecks of wood would stick to my sweat and itch. I would watch my smooth cut open wide as the trunk fell, twisting and whining to the ground. It hit with a spine-tingling thud and settled in a cloud of dust, forgotten branches falling after it.

Last month Josh brought me rocks from Montana. They are charcoal grey with veins of quartz running through them, their sides carved and pitted by water and time. I remember slipping across the rocks of Yosemite, my sinuses and eyes watering from the choking smoke from the old-growth forest below, the century old pines burning like giant candles. Fear of our height pulsed in my veins and my head pounded as we clamored across the titan granite formations single file, a line of yellow ants crawling on Yosemite's face. I felt lost and small, and the forest seemed angry and hurt, and tears ran from my eyes.

I had never cried so much as when I fought fire. I am surprised that my eyes weren't swollen shut. Choking smoke made my eyes water daily. At night though, alone in my room, my eyes would pour from my pain that I hid from the world everyday. Fighting fire had many negatives, their memory still lurks in the basement of my mind. Fighting fire was a privilege that I earned. It required demanding sacrifices that I wasn't always willing to make.

When I was first introduced to the crew I was black carded and judged right away. I was a young, white female. Obviously I had made a mistake.

At nineteen and had no idea what it took to fight wildfires and struggled with every assignment mentally and physically. Similar to the military, it is a profession that only the bravest or dumbest women dare to explore. I was a dumb teenager certain of her own bravery. The same ignorant tenacity served as my life preserve amongst the waves of turbulence my presence caused.

As a woman I had to prove my equality and work three times as hard as the worst male crew mate. While a small portion of men are open to the idea of a woman firefighter, a majority assume you are there for alternative reasons. My weak physical condition cemented their opinions. No matter the words, looks, and disapproval I was determined to follow my dream up the mountains that glow.

I was required to run five miles in the mornings and hike vertical trails miles long in the hot afternoons. I can still feel the sting of my lungs in the August heat as I gasped for breath everyday. I dreaded putting on my line gear, weighing fifty pounds, and hiking to fires on a daily basis. It was one of my hate rituals and felt like a punishment. I had never had so much disdain for an object before, my pack was my enemy while I panted and wavered on the mountains. When it came to one of our rare breaks, I would drop my pack immediately into the dirt. My body for a surreal moment felt like it would float off the earth and I could escape to the clouds above. It was one of the best feelings I experienced at work, dropping fifty pounds after several hours of laborious work. It felt like magic and on particularly hard days it made me want to cry. My pack was part

of the prison I lived everyday.

I couldn't shake the image of being weak and no matter the effort I gave everyday. I bottled my emotions and tucked them away from others. I couldn't afford to show them any weakness for they would ostracize it ten fold. I was despised for being there. Fighting fire was the one job where I was discouraged deliberately by my co-workers. Not only did I struggle with the torturous hikes and runs, when we were finished I was always put down for being one of the last, even when there were men slower than I. The punishment for being last is making every one else work twice as hard for your short comings. I made the crew run extra miles, turn about on hikes and trudge back up the mountain, and stay in push up position until elbows buckled and rocks embedded into irritated and red palms.

"You're only as strong as your weakest link" my captain bellowed from behind on hikes. Twenty people trudged behind me wishing that I would go faster and all I wanted to do was fade away and escape my hellish reality. When one would speak easily or insult me during a hike I would get so upset that my vision blurred. I forced my emotions into my bottle and never responded. I pushed harder fueled from the fire in my belly instead of lashing back.

My anger boiled when I was told I was the reason women got a bad name in the profession. I felt like my bottle would burst, shattering glass against my insides. One of the worst feelings I experienced was going to a dangerous fire and knowing that several people on my team could care less if I was hurt. My mind ran through morbid possibilities of my own death on fires, all ending with limp frame of my lifeless body in an awkward position. Face down in the ashes, bloodied or burned, arms broken or body smashed in the tracks of a dozer. I wonder now if the dark thoughts were a form of entertainment or simply the way I dealt with the negativity. I always felt like the self-inflicted nightmares were better than the present. My mind and heart always dripped with painful disgust because of something someone said or did to me. I dwelled on the negativity instead of living my days to the fullest in the coolest job I ever had.

I was fighting a war against my crew mates and with in myself. I wanted to quit and they wanted me to quit. Every morning I began to lose the confidence that I would be able to face my day and be tough. I would often ask myself how much longer I would be able to keep the charade of this female fire fighter going. I couldn't handle the complete mental and physical stress that it required. I wasn't strong enough and my spirit was broken. The worst part was I lost faith in myself.

I decided to walk away.

I decided to leave the Plumas.

I look back now and appreciate my decision to leave. I didn't fail myself but only deserted a teenagers dream. I learned what my limits were by being pushed to them unwillingly. I discovered the realities of the enormous world and of the people living in it. I am grateful for the lessons I learned no matter the pain the required. Fighting fire gave me the opportunity to meet the coolest person I know.

Me.

Fire is nature's way of rebirth and new beginnings. My experiences changed my view of the world and they are carved into my soul, embedded in the core of my being. I owe everything I am to fighting fire even though I no longer pursue it today. Fighting fire was my greatest adventure, my boot-camp, my love story, and my christening into the real world.

Fighting fire was my greatest failure.

THE CENTER

Gary Metras

The field and road awash
in October fog.

I drive as slow as the moon
bleached out of the grounded sky,

the headlights
small stars losing luminance.

Even in this still speed
a breeze swirls fog.

Suddenly, two
black nostrils, black eyes

and a gray mare standing there,
unmoving, unblinking.

I drive through the center
of deceit where a heart beats.

DARK THINGS

Kristin Stoner

I love you as certain dark things are loved, secretly, between the shadow and the soul.

— Neruda, Sonnet XVII

If the dimness of a dingy bar is shadow
and the heavy smell of beer under lime is soul,
I love you.

If the pull of a wilted dollar into a jukebox slot
is the pull of your hands to my breasts,
I want you.

If the opaque sound of shattering glass,
the second of silence when a song is ended, is emptiness,
I need you.

And it is a dark thing. We sway as dark things.
But deep within us, under limes and liquor,
is the light of flowers.

BELLY UP

Allyson Stronach

3rd Place Poetry Award

the still-borns are appropriating
the white walls of your bathroom tonight
their sterility

and an aborted phone call to an ex
so here i am
to piss out the snot of our clumsy consent
and i can smell it

a could-be phone call
of future long-afters and fraudulent questions
— answering machine questions
phrased like statements
“i have your book still”

your white walls are hard
the white floor is cold
you are out of toilet paper
and im warming the toilet seat
naked little dripping egg

the most fragile things are always the hardest to handle
there is yolk in the toilet that I didn't flush down
and much later on the phone
i will explain to you in concrete ways
how i have proof that i am not sterile
and when i tell you i am broke
i will be pissed
and you wont quite get it
or care

i know this
because i know what the walls and floor of your bathroom are made of
and why they remind me so much of a doctors office
that white things like this are made that way to appear more sterile
and unlike you
its my first time for this kind of thing
and tomorrow morning after i have gone
you can step right in to your sterile white bathroom
and smell it
and know

YOU'VE MOVED OUT

Brittany Sterling

I drew your shadow on the south wall of my apartment.
Staring as I sit in bed

pretending

it is you.

Just like you live

and laugh
and love

still.

But your skin is plaster
and not pleasant to kiss.

OF THE FLESH

Jonathan Barrett

The fire whimpered, hissed. A fall wind whipped through trees, cinders danced in a swirled haze. Our youth pastor called it stripping dross from silver, taking off our brazen

flesh, clothing ourselves anew with Christ, becoming moldable for the silversmith. Each took turns—long lists of sin sliced into tiny slips of paper to withhold

the specifics: beer bongs, bunked beds, drugs, sex on the missions trip last summer. And then you walked down the path, shrugged, and dropped a brown paper bag into the fire.

It burned. Glue melted. Binding flew apart. A guffawed gust of wind blew pages everywhere. Huge bronze breasts bubbled in the fire: the centerfold ablaze.

The *vulpine vulva*, as we later called it, from page forty floated past a group of home-schooled girls who shrieked and screamed. The glossy pudendum landed at our youth pastor's

feet. Flush flesh, forehead wrinkled and sweaty, he grabbed naked girls that floated around the fire like a child picking apples. You clutched crumpled pictures, crawled on wet

leaves and mud like you were looking for something lost. The incandescent pictures were singed by sin and burnt twigs, but still salvageable—her skin glittering and glazed, her face partly frayed: *Playboy* playmate

Cheryl Bachman. You stuffed her in your pocket secretly—the rest of us dancing around the campfire and through the woods trying to hide your secrets like some sort of ancient, pagan rite of passage.

WIND

Jim Lamoreux

It gathers somewhere
high above
in places we couldn't breathe
collecting in arid silence
or in a roar
like beasts
caught in a pit of atmosphere
howling to be released
into the mindless tree tops
or to pull and haul at eaves
on windows
warmly oblivious
to its rage,
provoking now and then
a "Listen to that" or
"This is going to be a bad one"
from behind a newspaper
or over the sounds from the T.V.,
or the slight crackle
of eggs frying in a pan.

It is far above
invisible and terrible
tearing at the fabric of clouds
like a dog tears at Kleenex
scattering the tissues of the sky
across the wild blue carpet
high above us.

And then
on some signal we don't hear
perhaps a shriek
or like dogs will tell one another
now is the time for the kill
it comes down, each facet knowing
how to trap and bluster and mangle,
the world scattering before it
like rabbits in a field
fleeing before the hawk.

First the wind chime
marks the gathering morning

innocent, like a child's toy
not betraying
the anger that comes behind it
like a bear, prying at the slats of a smoke house
and then
the howling, the assault, and trees
nodding away from the power
and the earth bundled and crumpled
and strewn
like angry love letters
trapped in barbed wire
waving frantically at a lake
pocked with white caps.

From high above the mountain ranges
it howls and rages
stirring the pine needles
in the tops of giant trees
like breath
through the tines of a comb

and like some monster
invisible to us,
leaps the tops of mountains in Washoe Valley
and makes the barbed wire dance, and the cattle
lumber together
in tight
bewildered knots
of hide and flesh.

FIRE SHELTER

Jerry Mathes II

To deploy your fire shelter, you must drop everything you're carrying, including your pack with your water, food, compass, headlamp, pain killers, ego, and any hope you'll see the pictures of your family or sweetheart stashed inside.

You then run. Run for the nearest safety-zone with your tool and if you planned ahead, a water bottle from your pack, but probably not because you've been trained to run and not stop running until you hit a space big enough for the fire to roar around as you lie in the aluminum colored pup tent with your head in the dirt and ass to the blast furnace bellowing down the canyon, knowing you can make it. Damn it's hot, but you can hold out as the cries of your crew build like a freight train breaking a steep summit and the wind blows and the air beats the shelter rumpling in the wind.

Outside you know the shelter's silver surface only reflects the flames and smoke and somewhere beyond the mountains, cracking and popping in a timbered orgy of fire, there are cows grazing in a field. Everything there is green and lush as you hunker on the mountainside, watching the sweat pool in the dirt below your face, waiting to shed the shimmering chrysalis in a smoking, charcoaled land.

GRETA

Jerry Mathes II

I want to be alone.

— Grand Hotel

I want to die.

— Sibyl of Cumae

She'd pull almost onto the bar's curb.
A '32 Packard with a license plate
Reading Greta. Her name wasn't
Greta. The smell of heat and smog,
Followed her into the interior fog
Of smoke, comforting as a lost
Cause. In the neon shadows
I'd serve her drinks until the dust
Fell off her voice and she'd stand
Again on the oak planked stage blaring
Lines in front of forgotten footlights.
Though her voice had hung in all the right keys
Then, Hollywood agents never showed—
No roses, or champagne toasts and a contract.
She knew they were in the seats
Right of pit every night. She always
Asked, *Pray tell boy, do you know
Garbo?* I'd laugh, I was as old as rust.
I'd heard Garbo speak her last lines before
World War II, while I drank a nickel soda
And wore short pants, and felt my adolescence
coming on. She'd crunch ice in her dentures
For another Whiskey Sour. *I completely modeled my
Acting after Garbo. She was seamless, sexual.*
I'd smile *Yeah* and set the bitter, cool
Drink in front of her and not say,
Greta's dead, babe, Greta's dead.

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Jonathan Barrett currently works in banking and lives in Kansas City, Missouri with his wife and three sons. His poems have appeared recently or are forthcoming in numerous literary journals including *The Literary Review*, *The Minnesota Review*, *North American Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Pavement Saw*, *Phoebe*, and *Subtropics*, among others.

Dan Berkner lives and teaches English in Moscow, ID, where he is currently a candidate for an M.F.A. degree in poetry and working to complete his first collection of poems. He spends his summers writing, reading, experimenting with visual art, traveling and working to maintain the city's several parks.

M. L. Brown lives in Santa Barbara, CA. Her poems have appeared in *The Meadow*, *Rattle*, *PoemMemoirStory*, and *The Comstock Review*. She was a finalist for the 2007 Ekphrasis Poetry Prize.

Diane D. Clarkson has been taking photography classes at Truckee Meadows Community College for about twenty years, and she has used many photographic processes.

Cathy Clopitts is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Shome Dasgupta is currently enrolled at Antioch University-Los Angeles, pursuing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *the Meadow*, *Verdad Magazine*, *Chicksaw Plum*, *Magma Poetry*, *Quiet Feather*, *Shelf Life Magazine*, *The Sylvan Echo*, *Gertrude Press* and *Si Senor*.

Gerad Davis is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Caren Franklin is a lost twenty-something who struggles to find herself amongst chaos. Writing, painting, and dancing serve as her outlet while striving to shed light on the gray areas of her life. She is in constant pursuit of the answers to put her back together again.

Brandon Gagne is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

T.A. Henderson, an English major, is a sophomore at Truckee Meadows Community College. She also works as a copy editor at the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

Stephanie Hogen is a photographer from Reno, Nevada.

Todd Imus recently received his M.F.A. in creative nonfiction at the University of Idaho. He continues to live and write in the west as he finishes a book-length memoir about his days in a touring punk rock band.

Kim Iverson is a brunette student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Madison Jackson is a full-time student at Truckee Meadows Community College. She is an English major with aspirations of one day becoming a novelist, or perhaps getting involved with the theatre. She is a strange creature rarely seen away from her computer and her life source, video games and the internet.

Jeff P. Jones teaches writing at the University of Idaho. His debut chapbook, *Stratus Opacus*, was released in 2008 by Main Street Rag Publishing. He has poems in *Fourth River*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, and elsewhere.

Arian Katsimbras was born and raised in Reno, Nevada. He is currently majoring in English Literature and Philosophy at the University of Nevada at Reno and following the completion of the program he will pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in Poetry.

Chelsie Kern writes to find solace. She believes in embracing the beauty of daily life, eccentricities and love wherever you can find it. One day she will teach in higher education, until then she'll be writing.

Brandon Lacow is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

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.

Dylan Liebgott needs more sleep.

Lyn Lifshin's most recent book is *The Licorice Daughter: My year with Ruffian*, Texas Review Press. She has published 120 books and edited 4 anthologies. Her website is www.lynlifshin.com. Her last two Black Sparrow books, *Cold Comfort* and *Before It's Light*, won *Paterson Review Awards*.

Eric Lauritzen was a long-time photography professor at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Richard Lighthouse is a contemporary writer and poet. He holds an M.S. from Stanford University. His work has been published in *the Penwood Review*, *West Hills Review*, *Mudfish*, and many others worldwide.

Jerry D. Mathes II is a writer and recipient of a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. Lewis-Clark Press will release his collection of poems, *The Journal West* in the future. In the summer he fights wildfire on a helicopter-rappel crew. He loves his wife and two daughters very much.

Campbell McGrath's seventh book of poems, *Seven Notebooks*, was published by Ecco/HarperCollins. His previous collections are *Capitalism*, *American Noise*, *Spring Comes to Chicago*, *Road Atlas*, *Florida Poems*, and *Pax Atomica*. His awards include the Kingsley Tufts Prize and fellowships from the Guggenheim and MacArthur Foundations. He teaches in the creative writing program at Florida International University in Miami.

Gary Metras lives in Easthampton, Massachusetts and when not teaching writing at Springfield College, or printing, I can usually be found wading and fly fishing one of the area's good trout streams.

Michael Parrish is a regular guy. He is a student at State University of New York at Binghamton. After graduation, he plans to intern on a farm in Upstate New York, read, read, read, and write, write, write. He likes talking to people about everything, so talk to him: michaeljparish@gmail.com.

Drew Pearson was forged deep within the crust of the moon many millennia ago. He was the culmination of synthetic material and human indulgence of the earth year 1985, which beckoned me from my ancient resting place. Upon arrival he copied the most immediate humanoid forms with only the slightest margin of error. He is r2ddrew.

Born in a smaller town in California, **Doug Schmierer** grew up in the valley, just beside the meadow of Truckee. As a journalist's grandson, Doug enjoyed the composure of words from a young age and attends Truckee Meadows Community College as an aspiring author and freshman.

Brittany Sterling is a student at Truckee Meadows Community College.

Kristen Stoner is an instructor of English at the college level and is currently working on her M.F.A. through Antioch University in LA. She has been reading and writing poetry for over fifteen years. Recent publications include *Natural Bridge* and *Briar Cliff Review*.

Allyson Stronach is a very part time student at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada and enjoys rock climbing and organic sweet corn, sleep, science, bandana-covered faces, and also enjoys school on most days.

JV Tabbada is in his last semester in Truckee Meadows Community College. Hailing from the Philippines, he is currently majoring in International Affairs. He enjoys traveling, exposing himself to different cultures, learning languages and truly, an avid fan and supporter of all aspiring artists and musicians. He dedicates his work to his family and as well as to all of his peers.

Alan Tracey has published short stories in such magazines as *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *Press*, *The Belletrist Review*, *Touchstone* and *Grasslands Review*. His recent short story, "In the Blood," was a contest winner in the *East of Eden* short story contest.

Joe Wilkins, though born and raised in eastern Montana on a stretch of high prairie everyone calls the Big Dry, now teaches writing at Waldorf College in Forest City, Iowa. His work has been recently published, or is forthcoming, in the *Georgia Review*, the *Missouri Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Boxcar Poetry Review*, among other literary magazines.

Harry Wilson is an unknown photographer from Bakersfield, California. His photographs have appeared in *Zzyzzva*, *Rolling Stone*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, among others. His photographs in this issue are part of an exhibit displayed at Truckee Meadows Community College in November 2007.

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Sponsored Cash Prizes

In past issues, the ASTM student government of TMCC has sponsored cash prizes for the winners of the Meadow literary, art and design contests. Through a blind submission process, the editorial board chooses finalists in four categories: fiction, poetry, nonfiction, art/photography and cover design. An independent committee selects the first-place winners from among the student body. Only TMCC students are eligible for prizes.

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We welcome submissions of poetry, fiction, screenplay, nonfiction, artwork, graphic design, comics and photography, preferably high-contrast artwork that will reproduce well in print. We only accept submissions as e-mail attachments (in .doc or .jpg format). **Exception:** cover design contest entrants please send a PDF.

All submissions in all categories must be accompanied by contact information (name, address, telephone, e-mail) and a brief (fewer than 35 words) biography. Do not include the author's or artist's name on the work itself. Put this information in the separate cover letter that includes the above contact information, which can be within your email text. All submission are considered blind without author's name.

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PAST CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Almond
Charles Baxter
Stephen Dobyns
Denise Duhamel
Stephen Dunn
Michael Martone
Campbell McGrath
W.S. Merwin
Sharon Olds
Jim Shepard
RT Smith
Virgil Suarez
Melanie Rae Thon
Natasha Trethewey
Anthony Varallo
Robert Wrigley
Dean Young

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