



HELICON  
'95



render mine  
release me free  
loose the grip that holds me

finger flip  
and fly the lure  
cut the soiled mem'ry line

slowly now and render mine

sand the edges  
smooth and plane  
the plank in your eye  
is causing me pain

slowly now and render mine  
a sordid task; to draw the line  
come slowly now,  
and render mine

—Hohna Cass  
*First Prize Poem*



First Prize Photo by Jeff Lyons

## *Rock-a-Bye*

Tick-toc, Tick-toc  
the pulsing rhythm mourns in time  
beating faster—fervently  
death for his crime

A cry for life  
that pierces the dark  
only to be silenced  
society's indelible mark

Sunshine and laughter  
dreams swept away  
a sterile cruelty  
her 'mistake' — he must pay

Doctor, lawyer  
who really knows  
just turn your head,  
or resist the ebb and flow?

Tick-toc, tick-toc  
poor baby's gone to sleep  
eternally, forever  
and God begins to weep

—Heather Armstrong

## *Rather*

I'd rather be revolting  
And your friend  
Than what today I feel I am  
A pretty girl  
Christmas delight  
A hand to hold  
A whim  
I'd rather be deformed  
I'd rather be retarded  
I'd rather be emaciated  
Than attractive  
And your friend.

—Sparks



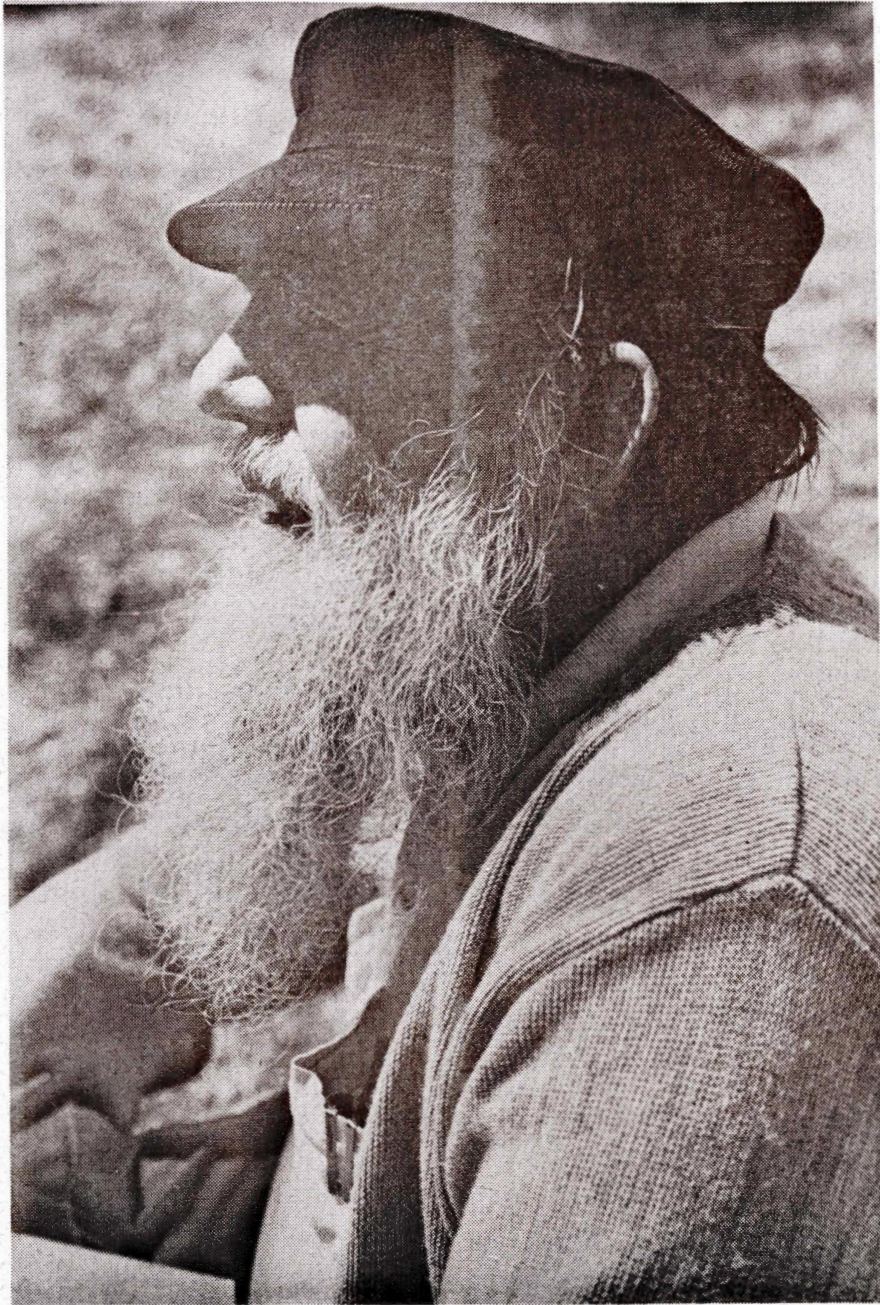


Photo by Miwako Kato

### *Sunset*

Atop a gilded mountain  
small and insecure  
Captured in a moment  
Love—sincere and pure.

Painted in the colors  
scattered through the sky.  
A voice says, "Don't you worry,"  
before you ask him why.

Behold all this I give you  
bind up all your fears,  
they too, melt in darkness  
as the moment disappears

Black night yields its silence  
shattered by the breeze  
That small, still, answering whisper  
brings you from your knees

Slowly returning . . .  
the original hue  
Till the painter unfurls  
when the morn dawns anew.

—Heather Armstrong



## The Tourist

Through the doorway the tourists could see a city perched atop a hill, and between it and them a desert rippled with the late afternoon heat. The ten of them crowded together to catch a glimpse of the city they had each paid a fortune to visit. Behind them, the tour guide spoke.

"There it is, ladies and gentlemen. Jerusalem, 26 A.D. Remember to speak only Aramaic once you pass through this gate, even to one another. Do nothing to draw the attention of the natives of the period. This week is one of our most popular tours, so you may notice tourists who embarked from the past or the future. Please do not speak to these people. Remember your cultural training and remain with the group at all times. And now, you may pass through the gate."

One by one, the tourists filed through the door and into the sand. "Why does the desert have to be so hot?" asked Rupert Hardcastle in Aramaic, a little louder than he had intended. He had been on two other time tours and considered himself a leader of the group. Only Michael did not laugh at the comment. He prayed to any deity that might be listening that this tour might be more solemn than an ordinary vacation.

It took them about half an hour to reach the gates of Jerusalem. Michael turned for a moment from the chattering tourists to look back on the desert. Cresting a distant hill was another small band of travelers on foot. *That must be him*, thought Michael. *I wonder what he'll be like*. He turned and followed the others into the city. According to the brochure, they would have an hour for shopping before Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

"A customary way to welcome an honored guest is to strew the way in front of him with palm fronds," the guidebook had said. So Michael chose several large fronds from a low-hanging tree moments before Jesus was scheduled to enter. The crowd seemed to grow thicker by the moment, but when a man on a donkey appeared at the gate with his band of followers, the crowds parted to make way for him as if on cue. A shout came from the crowd and Michael's tour group joined in immediately, welcoming the man they had come so far to see like a rock star coming onstage.

Jesus' disciples didn't know what to make of their welcome. Some laughed nervously; others stared at the crowd in utter confusion. All moved a little closer to their master. The donkey shied and rolled its eyes. Only the object of this adoration did not react. When Jesus finally came within view, Michael was shocked by how ordinary he appeared. Was this shabby man on a scared donkey really the leader of a major religion? Then Michael noticed his eyes, and could not tear his gaze away. The eyes were deep enough to drown in, so infinitely sad that

Michael thought his heart would break. Then he could no longer see those eyes, merely the back of a worn brown robe, then the twitching tail of the donkey, and then he was gone and the crowd rushed to fill the vacuum he left behind him.

The tourists spent the night in a Jerusalem inn. After a nauseating meal of greasy goat, they lingered at the low table.

"Did you see how they welcomed him? You might have thought they knew what an important figure he will one day be."

"To be honest, I was a little disappointed," said a middle-aged woman. "I mean, he didn't look all that majestic on that poor little mule, did he?"

"And those disciples!" chimed another tourist. "Not at all what I expected. They looked like a bunch of scared rabbits! Who would believe that sorry troop would start an important religion?"

"I wonder which one was Judas?"

Rupert cleared his throat majestically. "That poor young man. Imagine, right now he is a simple, unknown country preacher. A man with some admirable ideas. I wonder what he would say if he knew that by this time next week he would be dead, and next month they would declare he was a god?"

"His eyes—" said Michael, so softly that Rupert had to strain his ears to hear. "I could almost believe he does know."

Rupert's booming laughter was infectious, and soon most of the tourists were chuckling along. "Not going to convert on us, are you, boy?"

"No, of course not. I just thought there was something strange about him, that's all."

The next several days were spent in sightseeing. Michael wandered the streets of Jerusalem with the others. Occasionally, he caught a glimpse of his tour guide looking younger, or older, accompanying another group. On these occasions, both the younger and older tour guides studied the ground, or an interesting bit of architecture—anything to avoid looking at one another. Several times, an overheard phrase would reveal a passerby as another tourist. Michael never spoke to them.

Finally, Friday arrived. The tourists were getting a little short-tempered, as people do toward the end of a vacation. They were tired of sleeping on straw pallets and eating kosher. They were all glad that this would be the last night of their vacation. They went together that evening to see Jesus' trial.

Four hours later, they were standing outside a different building. The desert night had turned bitterly cold, and their feet ached. For hours they had moved from one court to another, stood waiting for any



news. "My feet hurt," whispered the middle-aged woman. The crowd was getting restless as well. Finally, a man appeared on a balcony. A soldier followed, but whether to restrain Jesus or hold him up was difficult to say. Blood was caked black down his face.

Pilate began to speak, and the crowd hushed. Pilate's mouth moved. Michael thought he heard the ruler's nervous voice, but he couldn't make out the words. Pilate spoke to Jesus, and Jesus answered both voices nearly audible. The crowd began to mutter. "I can't believe I'm missing one of the most important events in history for want of a P.A. system," said Rupert.

"Why don't they get on with what we came here for?" That voice came not from the tour group but behind, and Michael turned to see who it was. The crowd's grumbling rose in volume. Pilate still spoke, but no one listened. Michael identified the man who had spoken. Something in his bearing said that he too was a tourist. He stood a little too tall, his face was a little too pale. . . . Michael scanned the crowd with growing horror. The grumbles crescendoed.

Michael grabbed Rupert's arm. Rupert spoke a little above the grumbling, but not to Michael. "Why don't they crucify him already?" His voice carried to the people nearby.

"No, Rupert, listen to me, the crowd. . . ." Those who heard Rupert's question repeated it to one another, a little louder.

"Look at them! Don't you see?" Not far away, a man picked up the traveling words and shouted them to Pilate.

"Crucify him!"

"Rupert, they're all tourists!"

"Crucify him!" more people joined in.

"The Jews didn't do it! We did it!"

"Crucify him!" It was a roar now. A terrified, dusky-skinned woman grabbed a tourist's arm, begged him to stop. He shook her off, eager to see what he had come to witness.

"Don't you see? They're all tourists!" On the balcony, Pilate washed his hands in a silver dish. The soldier drew Jesus back into the building. Sickened and horrified, Michael ran. He tried to ignore the shouts behind him and the sad eyes that bored into his soul. He ran back through the city as fast as he could. When he could run no further, he ducked into a stable and curled under the hay in the farthest corner, sobbing with guilt and despair.

He came to himself three days later and stumbled into the dawn. He knew that his tour group had by now abandoned him, but his soul felt too cold to care.

As he stood blinking in the early morning light, he was nearly knocked over by a single woman running blindly into the city from the hills.

—Heather Murphy

## FOREHEAD REDUCTION

The branches grow cripple-crooked outside the window here.

Inside the house, where the sick children stay, they bite their own wrists and bruise their heads against their prison chairs—trapped in deformity.

On the walls— so many cheerful colors, mesmerizing sights...  
Lavender bubbles incessantly rising..  
But what do sick children see?

Possibly more than me.

One comes crawling to me,  
bearing a triangular skull three times too heavy,  
a Frankenstein forehead.  
But this is real—  
far from entertaining.

She grasps my shoulders,  
and with her hard yellow head pressed to mine  
she repeats "to run, to run..."

Thickly grow the green thorns in me and around me.  
Pricking me in the heart, poking into my tearless eyes,  
puncturing my soles—  
prodding me through and to a wasteland.

Vines spiral around me tightly  
until airless and listless,  
my soul prays God—

reduce me until I become small enough to escape the thicket  
and run to the kingdom.

—Jess Kiefer



## Rapunzel

A maiden, between work and play,  
In disappointments large and small  
And petty joys, may pine and pray  
For magic to escape it all.

So makes herself a maiden fair  
And thence, perchance, an elven queen,  
Lets down her fancies and her hair  
(But only, always while unseen).

She, growing, leaves a glowing trail  
From silly stories to high Romance,  
Her songs beat out a bardic tale  
to which (for now) her feet can dance.

*Rapunzel, oh, let down your hair!  
Nor fear to show yourself too much;  
Give and receive, take time to care,  
For God is love—and love is touch.*

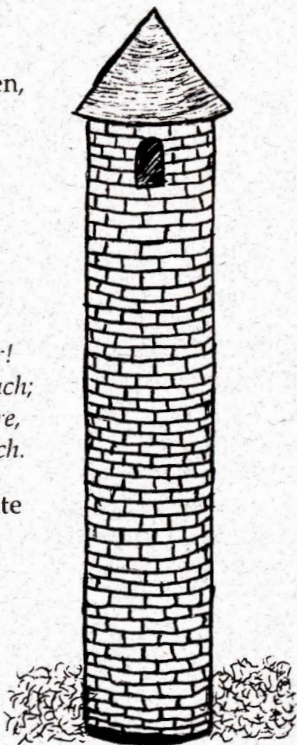
Though a small child may seem a sprite  
A woman cannot help but see  
That all of life belies the light  
Of what she'd always longed to be.

Yet she cannot forsake her tower;  
It is too high, too far a fall.  
Aloof, she flings the world a flower,  
Receives from it a distant call.

Imagination hems her in,  
A jail where prison-bars are dreams:  
Weary, knowing she cannot win  
Against such well-constructed beams.

*Rapunzel, oh, let down your hair!  
Nor fear to show yourself too much;  
Give and receive, take time to care,  
For God is love—and love is touch.*

She spies a man in chains, chainmail  
Hanging like fetters from his back,  
A rigid shell, no room to fail,  
His armor brittle, prone to crack.



A knightly, lonely form afar,  
Amphibious—not of this earth—  
Walking the clay, chasing a star:  
Marked off, like her, from birth.

She watches, but she does not step down,  
Still viewing all things from above,  
And hears a long-forgotten sound:  
Not dreams, but faith and hope and love.

The meeting these two dreamers had  
Ripped off each trite, deceptive mask.  
“Why art so bitter? Why so sad?”  
She said, as one who knows may ask.

“The weight of oh, so many dreams  
Must take its toilsome toll,” said he.  
She paused, then whispered, “Yes, it seems  
Nothing hurts worse than fantasy.”

She helped him take his armor off  
Though each discarded piece was dear,  
Ideals and principles to doff  
(Worn not from honor but for fear).

*Rapunzel, oh, let down your hair!  
Nor fear to show yourself too much;  
Give and receive, take time to care,  
For God is love—and love is touch.*

Without the armor, he is frail,  
No longer hemmed about, enclosed:  
His skin from lack of sun made pale,  
Vulnerable and exposed.

She, for her part, might stoop to heal  
And play the guardian angel's role;  
Yet still flees when she starts to feel  
Each disappointment prick her soul.

So they draw close, but not too near:  
Love can be shared, but dreams cannot;  
When dreamers see too much, too clear,  
They find on every jewel a blot.



Then every dance murmurs, "Not quite";  
He feels each wasted day and hour.  
They quarrel a while, then they fight;  
She cuts her hair, climbs to her tower.

So, held at bay, he cries at last:  
"If you'll not follow where I roam,  
Unbar your doors, I must come past,  
Climb up, and make your heart my home.

*Rapunzel, Oh, let down your hair!  
Nor fear to show yourself too much;  
Give and receive; take time to care,  
For God is love:  
and love is touch."*

—Paladin

### *Seasons*

The summer days seem warmer when  
In thoughts of you I revel  
The sunlight seems to blind my mind  
When thoughts of you bedevil

And autumn days of inner peace  
In dreams of you reveal  
The falling leaves and twisting trees  
Your mysteries to conceal

Through winter days and snowblind haze  
The fire of life is still  
And love which warms the winter daze  
The chilling winds can kill

Spring never comes. . . .

—Kevin Cox

### *Say something*

You smile  
I see  
You laugh  
and  
I hear  
But you never  
say hello  
and  
oh  
do I ever fear  
Why?  
Why do you look and only  
Smile ?  
Just once say something

Say Hi  
Say Goodbye  
For goodness sake  
Speak  
Tell me your thoughts  
Don't let me think I'm a  
Freak  
I know I am  
But should I be  
to you?

Do I do the same ?  
Do I cause you such  
pain ?  
Do I smile  
and  
You see?  
Do I laugh  
and  
You hear?  
Just say something

Let it be that you care

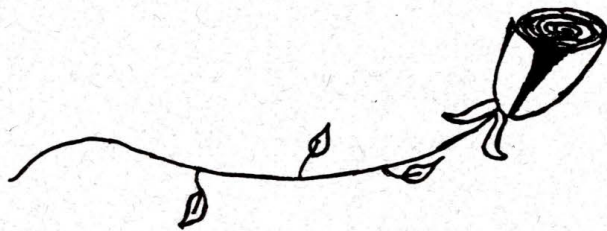
—cat



## *the rose*

I sneaked into the garden early one morning. There were no signs posted or anything like that, but somehow I still felt I just wasn't worthy; how could I come into the presence of anything so beautiful. I remember the rising sun shining through the mist casting eerie shadows on the garden. As I wandered through the mist, I saw flowers of all kinds—daffodils, crocuses, marigolds. But then as I pushed my way through the branches of a clump of pine trees, I saw it—the most beautiful rose ever created. I came and I knelt and I stared in wonder. It was a red rose—a blood red rose. As I knelt in silence, I began to feel the troubles and cares of the world outside of the garden being lifted from me. From that time on, I was never separated from the rose. Oh sure, sometimes I would leave for a while—an hour, a day, a week, even a month, but always in the early morning, in the mist, I would return. Sometimes it was by crawling through the thorns at the back of the garden, and then, scratched and bleeding, I would cry in front of it. Other times, I would enter through the front gate and sit and laugh with my rose. But then one morning (I hadn't been to the garden for a few weeks) it was gone—it had been cut and taken. I cried. I thought my life was over. The loss of a single rose left me with no reason to continue. But still I tried to return. And one day, as I sat in the garden, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned and saw a man, a rough man, a man who I knew was the gardener. He took my hand in his calloused, scarred hand, a hand that could be hard as stone or as gentle as sheep's wool. He led me through the garden to a path where I had not been before (I thought I knew all of the paths of the garden). As we continued, I saw a house, a house that wasn't large but was perfect. He took me inside and gestures for me to sit at his table. I sat at the feast and as I glanced over the table, I saw a rose, my rose, in the center. He looked at me and all he said was, "I brought it here where we both can love it."

—Devon Fisher



## *The Rowan*

The tree,  
Rises up,  
Branches out;  
Rooted deep:  
spreading out and down.

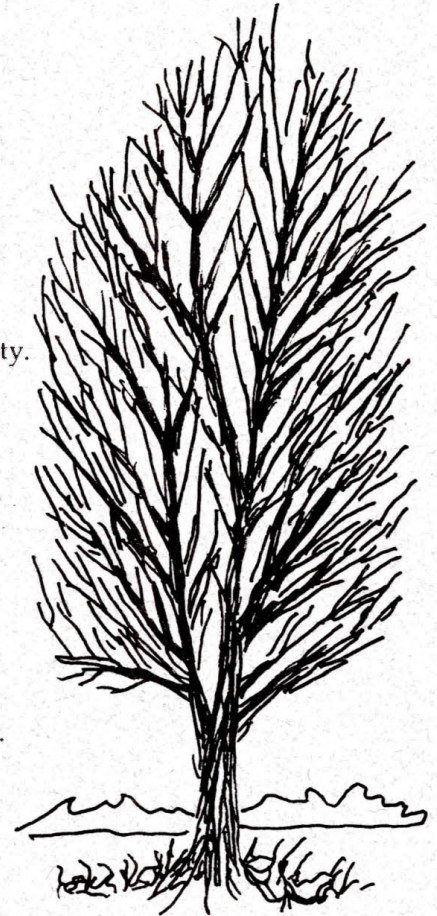
The branches,  
Gloriously outreaching,  
Beautifully purposeful;  
Startlingly eye-catching:  
deceiving and convincing.

The roots,  
Struggling downward,  
Barely breaking surface;  
Surviving despite:  
strong and frail obscured beauty.

The tree,  
Rises up,  
Branches out;  
Rooted deep:  
spreading out and down.

The heart of the Rowan,  
Mountain Ash,  
Burns bright;  
Shadows cast:  
reveal more and obscure less.

—Matt Good





Parasites in priestly shrouds  
Enveloped in pious clouds  
Reaching, reaching with their gnarled hands  
Taking the prosperity of neighbor lands

Who were laid waste for the dragons of the wilderness  
Under the pretense of being blessed  
With less time  
And peace of mind

And so the Holies reached an orgasm of evil  
The Scriptures their rival  
Their driving force proven to be  
A medicine that nurses all iniquity

But then, some came with truth  
Claiming his love for tooth  
And mercy for eye  
Like He, in wood they died

The heart reflects the man  
The Church held blackness in her hand  
God cried  
Lilies died

—*Michah Blythe*

My emotions have been on the scariest of roller coasters.  
I've felt the thrill of the top,  
and I've come crashing down to the bottom.  
The ride has been tough and filled with quick turns.  
I got off feeling sore & bruised.  
Now as I look back on the ride,  
I question how I made it...  
Surely I didn't do it on my own.  
How is it that I made it off alive?  
Surely someone was protecting me along the way.  
Yes, it was the Operator of that great coaster.  
He led me, guided me, and kept me alive,  
even through the ups, downs, and quick turns.  
He is the One who will heal my bruises  
and give me courage to ride again.

—*Jennifer Swartzentruber*



Photo by Kip Lines



## *After the Arc*

The Voice of Thunder  
Whispers Through the  
Sleeping Cambrian Clouds  
In Glory Somewhere an Angel  
Is Crying.

Sudden Illumination

Clouds are Awakened  
To Feel the Tears of  
Angels on Their Powdery Faces

Slowly  
It Starts  
Falling Faster and Faster  
In Chaotic Moans  
And a Deluge is Caught  
In the Eye of a Stranger  
Peering Through Glass.

Angry Now  
Clouds Gush With Grief  
A New Pain  
Ceaseless Rain

A Stranger Now  
Caught in His Own Deluge  
Of Fear  
And Prejudice  
And Hate.....Rain  
Yet Cleansed and Peering

Again through glass  
Reveals glowing  
Cambrian clouds  
Sleeping in the sun(son)  
And smiling angels.

—Jody Hartman

## *Last Goodbye*

To you I give my final hug  
My final words of my deepest love  
And with my heart I do not lie  
That I hate to say this last good-bye.

The leaves will turn  
The snow will fall  
But this fire still burns  
within us all.

The winds will blow  
The sun will shine  
This love will glow  
In this heart of mine.

Upon us is a time of change  
Upon us is a time of rage  
But as certain as the night is black  
Some bright day I will be back.

To you I give my final hug  
My final words of my deepest love  
And with my heart I do not lie  
That I hate to say this last good-bye.

—B. Watson

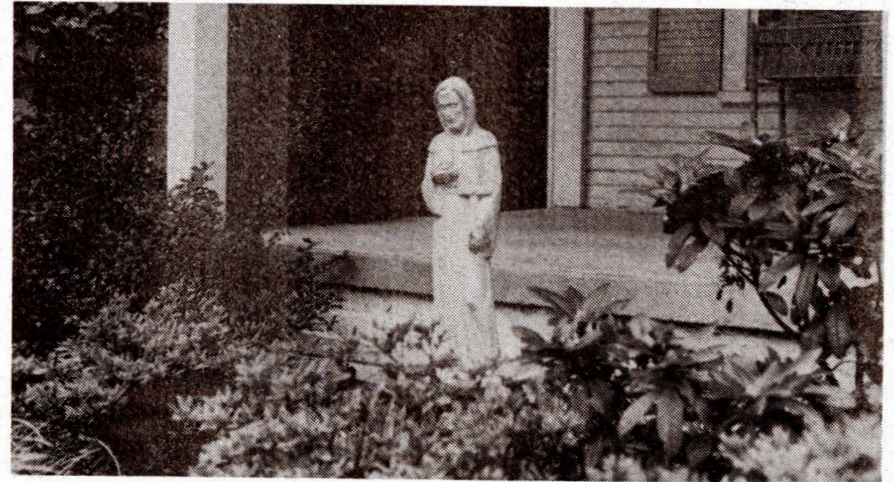


Photo by Jason Easter



## *Scenes From A South-East Tennessee Coffee Shop*

Am I beauty  
Or am I beast  
In this strange game we play?

Emotions are woven  
All into one  
Just like a cheap garment.

Are we creatures who hear,  
Taste, see, and feel?  
WE love and hurt just like you.

Who are you?  
Any less human  
Or a little misdirected?

I shudder and shake  
At the prospect  
Of rejection.

My tongue freezes in my mouth,  
Wanting to say something, anything,  
That does not embarrass me.

I long for intimacy.  
I also fear my heart being laid bare  
And treated as a tool.

Are you a mason,  
Building a house  
In which I am only a stone?

Or are we co-laborers,  
Constructing a temple  
Together?

Side by side we can work,  
Face to face we will lay.  
Or is that just a silly dream?

I thought I had to love you  
Even if I could not hold you.  
Maybe I misunderstood the command.

Can you be my lover,  
Guest, host, and friend?  
Even after these days come to an end?

I don't mean to be so silent.  
I just don't know what I need to say.

I could talk about the cold outside,  
Or how tomorrow's heat will drive it away.

I could talk about the cold,  
And the warmth, within.  
But would that interest you?

I guess I'll just sit here,  
Quietly sip my coffee,  
And feel awkward.

I'll come in tomorrow night  
And do it all again.

—Monty Hobbs

## *Warriors*

The open boat was cold I wrote  
and the hunger I feel is deep  
and I pray this beast will stay afloat  
or the angel of death may creep

And the breath of the waves blow thoughts before me  
and my life passes by my eyes  
and the creature of old that is called the sea  
grows angered as the clouds darken in the skies

The voyages to come may be filled with treasure  
beyond your wildest imagination  
and the clash of steel may still not stir  
hearts that are filled with temptation

So this mission's of conquest of what we don't know  
and at heart we don't despair  
for we live for the battle and where that is we go  
and for most men that's only a dare!

—John Sells



*A golden-red ball of fire  
lazily sinks  
making the sky dance with color  
billowy clouds  
are caught by  
illuminating rays  
and are dressed  
in shades of pink and lavender  
a golden road stretches out  
across the gentle waves  
from the bright orb  
to the place where my own feet  
are covered  
by the water's caress  
time passes  
and those vibrant colors  
become a crystal blue sky  
first lit by a shiny moon  
and then by millions of stars  
blinking against  
a midnight background  
reaching out and reflecting  
upon the froth in the now gray ocean  
the wind softly blows  
cool against my cheek  
until warm arms come  
and take me safely home.*

—Joy Hannah

## *No Alibi*

A blanket of propriety  
Wrapped up in their anxiety  
    A futile race to get ahead  
    A futile race—the living dead  
A cut-throat society

The "comfort" of normality  
A fatal technicality  
    A game of life that ends in death  
    A game of strife with every breath  
Ignoring their mortality

Strangled in the middle  
Entangled in a riddle  
    There's still one door you haven't tried  
    There's still the truth you've tried to hide  
No alibi to acquittal

Don't suffocate who you could be  
Inflating who you would be  
    A Xeroxed face, just one more clone  
    Erase that face and draw your own  
Explore the being you should be

Hear his words and heed you  
Oh Emerson, sir, we need you  
    If "imitation is suicide"  
    Then who's to blame for this genocide?  
Who's leading the ones who lead you?

Governed by hypocrisy  
No justice in democracy  
    Liberty threatened in freedom's name  
    To cure the blind we've made them lame  
Where are you, Mr. Socrates?

—Julie Coffin



## Gabe

She was the sunshine in our cloudy lives  
A light from God shone from her eyes,  
And all those she touched will never forget . . .  
Her love.

*And she's dancing with the angels now  
Looking into the eyes of God  
And I wish she could have stayed and danced with us  
For a little while  
But she's dancing with the angels now.*

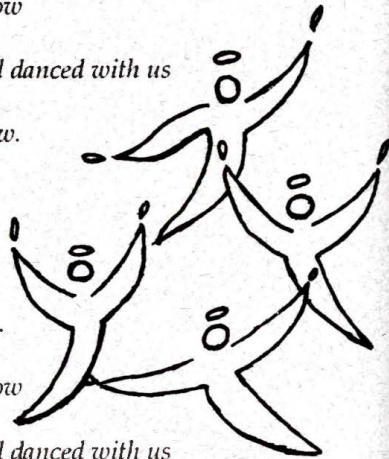
She was the sunshine in our cloudy lives  
Her light reflected kissed by God,  
And I know she's looking down on us  
And she's telling us that it's all right  
'Cause she's dancing with the angels now.

*And she's dancing with the angels now  
Looking into the eyes of God  
And I wish she could have stayed and danced with us  
For a little while  
But she's dancing with the angels now.*

She was the sunshine in our cloudy lives  
A light from God shone from her eyes  
And all those she touched will never forget . . .  
Her light . . . his light . . . her light

*But she's dancing with the angels now  
Looking into the eyes of God  
And I know she's looking down on us and  
Telling us not to cry  
'Cause she's dancing with the angels now.*

—Jody Hartman  
Words and Music



## Jeremy

Just a few short months ago, we were  
eating together on another continent,  
Roman sky shining at us through the window, just  
eating and chatting and laughing.  
Mouthing 'later,' you told me half a story.  
You can whisper the ending to God.

—Heather Murphy

10/17

All alone  
On my own  
I feel crucified by indecision  
While facing the scythe's harvest.  
Blood drips  
Keeping time like a metronome.  
Sumoned by this unrelenting rhythm  
The music begins to play again  
Filling this two-door tomb  
And releasing me from the restraints  
That saved me  
And bound me to my wreckage.  
Soaring above the death of my naiveté  
I drown in the depths of despair.  
A better man?  
A lesser man?  
Maybe another man  
Changed by what could not have happened.  
I can't see.  
So I listen to the blood  
And the music.  
"Life's the length of this play."  
I hear the sirens  
And the music fades away  
As life fades with it. . . .

—Kevin Cox



## *Walking On Glass*

There is something wrong with my window in life.  
I no longer look through clear glass, but instead closed blinds.  
One may think that this would hamper my vision,  
Not enabling me to see God's wondrous works outside.  
It could be true, but it I don't realize.  
The gift of sight I no longer know.  
I begin to wonder if I ever did see.  
That is why, my friend, I knock at your door,  
The sound inside so precious to my ears.  
Sensing you there, I reach out with a blind hand.  
You take it gently and lead me forth through my darkness.  
With you guiding my steps, I avoid the pitfalls.  
Soon, the radiating sun starts to warm my cold face.  
Melting ice joins the rain falling on the birth.  
My tears wet your hand moistened with sweat.  
All your thankless help has led me to joy.  
A hug not sufficient, mere silence answers  
In the still quiet all my love abounds.  
A first step is taken, although not alone.  
A quick look back, tells me you're there.  
Now on my own, I progress onward, always forward  
Finally, I am able to reach that dark window.  
Hoping for a look outside, I part the blinds.  
As light cascades in, so do memories of you.  
The brightness seems a right companion for my friend.  
Together, they shine through my life.  
An unforgettable moment, treasured forever.

—C.R. Peaks

## *Thought*

I ponder my  
relationship to coffee,  
As I met it so  
often in dark lonely  
places,  
at strange hours of the  
day.  
I drink, not to pass the  
time,  
or keep me warm,  
but to keep me  
company.  
I like to think  
that we have much  
in common,  
we're warm  
with so much flavor  
that some take us  
with cream and sugar.  
The truth, however, is  
that our common ground  
is in our darkness,  
our horrible taste if cold,  
and our silence.

—R. J. Siebe



## *Progress*

Asphalt streams wind through these broken hills  
as power lines bar the sky from touching me  
I am a prisoner of progress.  
Look both ways before wading across the river  
And don't expect any visitors today  
... solitary confinement ...  
The TV manacles me to the wall.

—Kevin Cox



## gods

My god is myself.  
To deny, I can't;  
Yet strive I to the One True Light.  
Oh, anguish me! I seek ye first my  
Kingdom. And I serve others for my  
glory. But where's the fulfillment? It's  
not there. Yes, meaningless! meaningless! everything  
is meaningless. How true. But how do I allow  
what means to be God?  
My god is him.  
I strive to turn away. Nay, he is all I  
want. Right? But he lets me down. he  
does not know me, does not understand me,  
has not died for me. Why worship him? he  
too, alone, is meaningless. And so, the  
conclusion: what is meaning? is it  
me, my desires? is it him, my foundation (which  
is not solid). Nay only  
One. One who said,  
"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have  
washed your feet, you also should wash one  
another's feet. I have set you an example  
that you should do as I have done—for you.  
I have laid down my life for you,  
I have humbled myself, been hurt and despised.  
I have been the Light to open your eyes. As I have done,  
you also. Lay your life down. Be humbled,  
hurt and despised (not my will, but Thine). Give the Light  
to blinded eyes. Meaningless! meaningless! everything  
is meaningless . . . but this: Fear God and keep His  
commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

—Quoheleth

## Surrender

Lord, how can I neglect  
To surrender to your glory,  
When You're my only Hope and Strength,  
The Author of my story?

My only source of Power  
I faithlessly cast aside,  
To focus on this life of mine  
Of selfish, idle pride.

Lord, I know that I'm worth nothing  
If I throw down the cross  
To carry fears in my own hands  
And forget the precious cost.

So teach me trust, *whole-hearted* trust  
When worry clouds my view.  
May I not crouch in fear of weakness,  
But hide myself in You.

—Julie Coffin

with the sound of a gun  
runners enter the chase;  
straining under the sun—  
for the hunt has begun.  
the crowds cheer.

running the race,  
caught like a deer.  
can't keep the pace,  
hiding my face.  
there's no place to run.

like a fish in a weir  
with the battle unwon,  
there is nothing but fear  
and I hear the crowds jeer.  
then the sound of piercing grace

josé stauffenheimer





## Succubi

... outside the garden of satisfied dreams, he had assented  
to the company of the shape which could not be except by his will and  
was imperceptibly to possess his will.

—Charles Williams, *Descent into Hell*

So curse the spiders with their bitter stings;  
Beware the gleaming eye, the horned head.  
Watch! Where the ground is littered with dead wings,  
And lifeless husks remain, turn back in dread.

Plead not for pity, caught in their embrace,  
Nor wait till taut strands dig into your flesh,  
But flee the soft inviting of a face  
Whose pincer-lovely limbs grope, seize, enmesh.

Ignore the wooing cry, ignore the tears—  
Though some sincerely sorrow to be bait—  
Ignore the sweet enticement of their fears,  
The sense of strength their weakness can create.

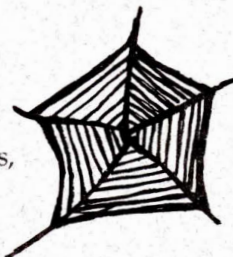
Desire withheld becomes their source of power,  
Promised fulfillment always just in sight  
Arousing hunger in those they devour;  
Two victims, craving each the other's bite.

Evade their webs of passion-woven thread  
Whose sticky shrouds enwrap you while they feed—  
And, when the meal is finished, slow your tread  
Lest you in turn should hunt them in your greed.

Run, hide, escape! Nor spare a backward wave  
(Like Lot's wife) for destruction which you flee.  
Released, do not still linger to enslave:  
Who seek dominion never can be free.

Fool! Helpless victim, you are guilty still,  
Lured only by the void you seek to fill,  
Your foes are but the cravings of your will.

—φίλος



## Arachnia III

I went my way along the path amid the darkened wood.  
I saw before me suddenly a sheen across the sky.  
A weaver's play of silk and light glittered o'er the road.  
I unawares yet marveling, a wisp caressed my cheek.  
I saw it there before me, yet not until I'd passed.

it shimmers there beneath the stars for the sun to see  
sparkling in the moonlight, wet with dawn's first dew  
the stuff of earth and heaven mesh as thread and light entwine  
a net is cast, 'tis nature's craft, what's loose is never free.

a multiplicity of fibers spun into a single thread  
a tapestry of divers yarn woven to one end.  
a silken strand on its own is a pretty thing indeed,  
but several sewn together, ah, this mimics majesty.

I straight my way down the path, conquered by the loom.  
I see before me quietly a cord of purest gold.  
A Weaver's will has guided me and placed me in a cord.  
I now awares yet marveling, whisper a song of praise.  
I see it there before me, and now I know I've passed.

(I am twice blessed)

—jose stauffenheimer

## Angst

The call to glory is out front  
In view of all I have  
Temptation's been much too strong  
My will is really bad  
Strike up the match and light the band  
Cut the ropes that hold  
The only way to kill my fears  
Is to know that I am bold  
Is it true that I died  
Many years ago  
Is it true here's my last chance  
With no more left to go

—Scott Rice







## *The Altar*

Now you lay me down  
On the spotted altar  
It doesn't make sense does it?

A pure sacrifice was I  
But I loved you  
Sweet honey, sour milk  
You had no cross to bear

But you cradled me  
Like a father spanking his little girl  
You said, "I love you."  
But, I bled  
Heaven was to come later

I missed heaven  
Did you?  
Sweet honey, sour milk  
I had to bear my cross

Now I lay my spotted self down  
On the holy altar  
I wish it didn't make sense

—Sparks



## *what I see in my blindness*

the unjust and justified  
walk side by side in the dark  
with pains and groaning  
of the heart.  
I live to walk  
and love when I might  
and die inside  
so I can see.  
together we stand  
alone and walk  
away ashamed  
never look up  
too painful to see  
what has healed us.  
live to be blind  
die to see.

—Calluna

Beyond pain  
and past reason  
the anchor is dropped—  
into majestic depths  
vast and cool  
full of wonders unknown  
and of dangers unheard.  
On soft sand it rests  
heavy and still  
amid ever-moving darkness.

It waits  
not seeing journey  
of sun  
or moon,  
it is still  
despite changing tide  
or hungry creatures.  
Still  
until the hands come  
to draw it in  
plunging it again  
into another sea  
or resting it on the deck  
for a journey  
of many suns  
and moons.

—Joy Hannah





## *Prayer Room*

Never a place more fascinating than this,  
Just one room that can't be missed.  
It is not very large.  
And the carpet is deep red,  
Rather like the blood of my Savior.  
My soul is at ease.

There's a skylight on top,  
And staring I can't stop.  
A cross can be seen up in the air,  
It is here the Prince of Peace died,  
Just for you and for me.  
My soul is at ease.

I kneel down to see,  
The Book there and read,  
The stories of people and their hardships.  
As I look up I see another cross,  
This one illuminated to guide my path.  
My soul is at ease.

In this little room,  
Where people are present soon,  
My friends and I gather.  
We pray for the lesson we will teach,  
The lesson we teach is of love.  
My soul is at ease.

Many have come here and cried,  
And prayed for those who have died.  
Presently I stand before the cross,  
I ask the Father why my grandpa has to suffer.  
He answers simply, "Trust in me."  
My soul is at ease.

One can go in this place,  
And come out with a much brighter face.  
I enter in feeling down,  
And I begin to tell Him how it is.  
Then strangely enough I am calm.  
My soul is at ease.

In this room that wraps around me,  
I can clearly see.  
Many come to bow down,  
And others hand over their heavy burdens,  
But for me whenever I enter in, my soul is at ease.  
My soul is at ease.

—Anonymous

## *Chalice*

The rose bleeds  
and  
The heart loses color  
Time never ends  
and  
Eternity runs out  
Blood overflows my chalice  
and  
Wine drips from the cross  
Rose the heart that time and eternity forgot.  
Drink the blood red wine of the cross from the chalice  
of life.



—Matt Good

Step, Walk, Step, CRUSH  
Step, Step, Step, WATCH OUT  
Crunch, Crunch, 3, 4  
Leaves fall & dry  
They make the best noise  
when they're still crisp  
Sometimes I smash them  
all  
Sometimes I try my hardest  
not to touch a one  
Sometimes I step on dull,  
noiseless leaves  
Why do I only appreciate  
the dead cracklings?  
The green life is above me,  
Look up!!

—Beams of Light caught in an arch in the sky



## *The War*

The plans are laid -- the meeting is discussed  
I get in position. The war begins.

( Huff, huff, puff. PANTING....RUN)

As the light beats down from the sides, I glance up  
into the  
cold night air.

HERE IT COMES

Cascading through the still night desert air,  
One can almost hear it cutting through the blackness.

ZIP, ZIP, ZIP; its

gliding white underbelly goes slipping by.

BUT I HAVE NO TIME TO ADMIRE ITS COURSE

Bumping, jittering, buckling — I can hardly see.  
(Like a plane going down in distress, I have no time)  
"have lost visual sir.... wait, there's something"

THERE IT IS ! THERE IT IS !

NO TIME !

JUMP!

I outstretch my hands (soft hands)

BALL! BALL! BALL!

I feel the reassuring impact  
cuddle that

BALL. BALL. BALL.  
caress it in.

A pull the infant into my body.

Wrap it around.

I sacrifice my body for her.

My body slides across the wet meadow  
(still curled up)

while another gladiator comes crashing down  
on me. unmercifully.  
Adding injury to insult.

But only momentarily: I have the prize  
and hoist it up high  
as the judge signals YES  
to the silent, awestruck, now thunderous mob.

TOUCHDOWN!!!

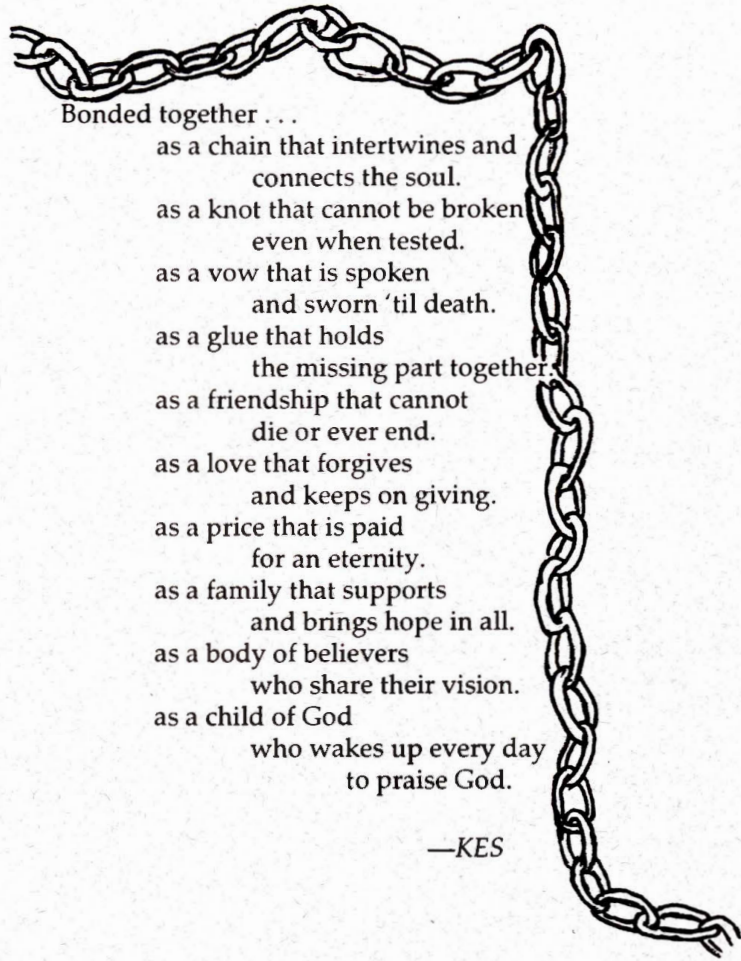
—Ladd Iseminger

## *My Rock*

I stand high upon my rock  
For my rock protects me from harm.  
It lifts me high above the sinking sand  
And high above the raging waters.  
My rock is my shield  
In whom I place all trust.  
But sometimes I yearn to venture out  
And my rock is no longer there to protect me.  
The raging waters sweep me away  
Letting me fight for my life  
but suddenly my rock appears  
Saving me from near eternal death.  
I cling close to my rock now  
Promising never to leave again  
And soon my faith is strong once more.  
But I soon begin to marvel at the beauty of the sand  
And I long to feel its silky massage beneath my feet.  
I step off my rock to feel the sand  
And as it begins to warm my body  
I feel myself slowly sinking.  
I panic and I begin to call out for my rock  
And it's nowhere to be seen.  
But I can feel its presence.  
I can feel it watching me sinking in the sand  
And I feel ashamed.  
But suddenly I feel someone pull me out of the sand.  
I look around but I see no one.  
All I see is my rock sitting in the distance  
And as I slowly begin to shamefully walk to it  
I begin to hear my rock cry out,  
"Father, forgive him; for he does not know what he is doing."

—Scott Bowers





Bonded together . . .

as a chain that intertwines and  
connects the soul.  
as a knot that cannot be broken  
even when tested.  
as a vow that is spoken  
and sworn 'til death.  
as a glue that holds  
the missing part together.  
as a friendship that cannot  
die or ever end.  
as a love that forgives  
and keeps on giving.  
as a price that is paid  
for an eternity.  
as a family that supports  
and brings hope in all.  
as a body of believers  
who share their vision.  
as a child of God  
who wakes up every day  
to praise God.

—KES

It was a lovely day. The birds were singing. The sky was blue. The soft, pulled apart cotton, clouds drifted lazily overhead. The grass swayed in the light caressing breeze. The flies and gnats played in the wind. I sat at the warm stone table to work and soak up the day. I politely chattered away with the person sitting on the wall. We talked about life, nature, God, all sorts of things. It was very nice. Then SHE stepped into view. I watched as she walked down the hill towards me. I sat and gazed at her, remembering her large eyes, her silken hair, all the little curves and nuances of her body and face. They were all fresh in her mind. The way she walked and her occasional glances towards me filled me with anticipation and longing. I had to remember to inhale. She came up the stairs and sat next to me at the stone table. I looked at her, she looked at me, ... and smiled. I smiled back in my sarcastic sort of way ... it was very nice ..... Then, her lips seemed to twist into a sneer.

Was I seeing this right? I slowly blinked... then opened my eyes to once again gaze into hers. I was suddenly disoriented. Her visage was blurred. I couldn't focus on her. Where were her large eyes, her breathtaking mouth? She had no features. What was going on! The light was muted. The birds were screeching. The sky was grey. The heavily-clumped clouds were gathering overhead. The parched ground was covered with wilted plants struggling to escape the earth. The flies and gnats buzzed loudly around me. I then noticed that I was chained to the stone table. The person on the wall was smiling at me, but something was wrong. He was wearing a mask. The incongruous blurred mass that was the girl stood up and turned around and started to walk away, but her shadow stood there, towering over me. Weird nondescript images flashed in and out of my peripheral vision. The shadow then raised its hand and extended its fingers. The fingers were about a foot long each. Then they shrunk to regular size, but were visibly sharp. The shadow slowly lowered its hand toward my chest, toward the soft spot just below the sternum. It then slowly started wriggling its fingers into my chest! Writhing like a snake, the fingers, then the whole hand penetrated my chest cavity. The pain was excruciating. I was nauseated and started to heave air.... Yet, I was oddly fascinated. Just watching the dark arm sink farther into my chest. How can I describe it? It was simply amazing. The shadow seemed to smile? It then closed its fingers around my heart and squeezed. Bombs went off in my head. I saw a blinding flash of light.... I don't know how long I was out but when I woke up I was feeling fine. It was a beautiful day. I got off the table and stood and basked in the light of the penumbra. I looked at all the animals in their funny little masks before going inside. I didn't feel like going up the stairs so instead decided to ride the elevator. I went to open the door....but for some reason, I kept missing the buttons.

—Jeremy High



The music starts  
it fills the air  
and in its grasp  
your soul is there  
it holds on tight  
you start to turn  
a brilliant fire  
begins to burn  
by your heart  
a story told  
you're dancing still  
it keeps its hold  
it draws you near  
and keeps you there  
so by your movements  
feelings share  
and when the music  
stops the dance  
and your heart is void  
of all romance  
you have a soul  
to lead you on  
you're dancing still  
the music gone.

—Joy Hannah

### *musings on a rainy day*

droplets waft in circuitous battalions  
ever downward, ever downward  
pummeling their spherical bodies emotionlessly  
'gainst tremulous flesh, and unyielding stone.

wet carcasses fuse together, forming tiny oceans  
sapping every hue from the unrelenting sky  
aching tearful breezes whisper me from their grey havens  
speaking me of: melancholy melancholy melancholy.

—richard w. cummings

### *A Song of My Heart*

Jesus, Jesus how I love You  
You are my God so pure and divine.  
You hold my life in Your palm so marvelous  
And call me Heavenward with beautiful song.

I will come dancing into Your courts my Lord,  
I will come singing of your saving grace.  
Your atoning sacrifice of Jesus saved me,  
I am free to praise Your name.

Jesus, Jesus how I love You.  
You are the riches that surpass worldly wealth .  
Simple and splendid Your message rings so clear,  
The Holy Spirit lifting up my face.

Look to the cross. Look to Heaven  
Where is my God so full of truth?  
Tempest toss me toward Your altar  
Let there be sacrifice of praise.

Is the aroma Lord of my soul so sweet?  
Does my life glorify Your name?  
Save me daily else I will slip away.  
Hold me close and cradle me.

Swing me high up in your arms,  
Throw me up then catch me too.  
Let me trust You my father victorious  
You've conquered nations and now my heart.

You have wooed me from my slumber.  
Calling me to Your bed of grace.  
There I rest, finding peace and love.  
Saved once again by Your Holy Grace.

—Rebecca Susan Lewis



I had to stay after and write a hundred times on the chalk board. I knew Daddy would be mad. I knew Mommy would cry. She always cries when he gets mad and she tries to pull him but he just hits hits hits her and then we go to his big room with the big brown chair. I'm scared in there. It smells like drunk. Daddy says that it is our secret and that if I tell anybody he'll hurt me real bad. He says that I make Mommy cry because I'm wicked and that I make him hurt me too. When he sleeps on the floor I have to get Vaseline and warm wet rags for Mommy. She says that everything will be okay and I'm an angel. I don't have any wings. Daddy says that God doesn't love me and I'm an accident. When I have an accident Daddy hits me again. Mommy comes to get my sheets and Daddy wants to take me to the big room and tell me to be quiet don't scream. Teachers look at me funny and ask me about my arms and my face. Mommy tells me to tell them that I was playing and had an accident. Philly told the teacher that I hit him with the ball on purpose but it was an accident but I had to stay and write a hundred times I will not hit. When it is dark and scary and Daddy is far away mommy sings songs to me but when Daddy comes mommy doesn't sing she just cries because Daddy is always mad. She says we must be quiet and not sturb him. I think Daddy is sad because I am an accident so he hits us. I love Daddy I wish he would smile and not hurt me.

Daddy was in an accident in his truck last night. Mommy says that he is never coming back because he is in Heaven. Maybe he will see real angels now.

—Missy Trotter



Photo by Stuart Tysinger



Photo by Amy Brooks



## *Big, Black Combat Boot*

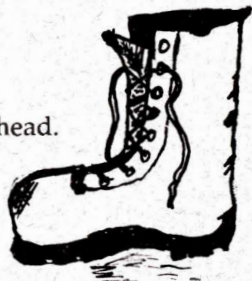
A small, frightened boy lies  
on the dusty road.

A big, black combat boot  
crushes his throat into  
the ground.  
There is a gun pointed at his head.

A large, frightened boy stands  
on the dusty road.

His big, black combat boot  
crushes a throat into  
the ground  
His gun is pointed at someone's head.

—Monty Hobbs



### *My Stone Table*

My Stone Table, anchored to the ground  
He seems so stable  
Like no friend I've found

I tell him my sorrow, my pain and my troubles  
I tell him about you  
my heart and its struggles

My Stone Table, anchored to the ground

He seems so stable  
I see him when no one's around

I take him my heart, and he squeezes it dry  
so I can absorb these tears that I cry

My Stone Table, anchored to the ground  
He seems so stable  
Like no friend I've found

—B. Watson

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This year's issue is dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;  
the God of Jeremy Duncan, Gabrielle Jones, and Wendy Walstrom.









HELICON  
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