

THE PHOENIX



AGES AGAIN WITH VIBRANT
COLORS

2004

The Phoenix

*Literary Journal of
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Table of Contents

Poetry and Prose:

Muraya Muraguri	
Untitled	1
Grete Riggs	
Untitled	2
M. Howerton	
A Prayer from <i>Esther's Song</i>	2
JAI	
Tellmarch's Prayer	3
Rachel Cunningham	
Response	4
Olivia Jean Kerkoff	
Far From Shore	5
Grete Riggs	
Untitled	5
Stephanie Terranova	
Pencil Sketch	6
Acey Smith	
My Place	8
Hannah Bader	
the beachland	8
Brenda Turner	
The Shepherd	9
Amber Saferight	
Salem Church Road	10
Tony Llama	
Belltower Buffalo	11
James Whyllie	
Ferrell	11
Irena Loloci	
Sky	12
Hannah Bader	
---	12
Rachel Cunningham	
Failure	13
Claire Miller	
Red Tape	14
Caitlin Mackenzie Smith	
Untitled	16
Roseanne	
Do You?	17
Amber Saferight	
A Simple Life	18
Stephanie Lyons	
Autumn Chore	19
Chadwick Parker	
Untitled	19
Carrie L. Mayes Baker	
You Never Really Get Anywhere (Part II)	20
Jaime McConnell	
Maze of Complacency	20

Eric England	
Untitled	22
Irena Loloci	
Last Night	22
Monica Sharpe	
One Man, One Soul	23
Julie Grimm	
Misunderstood Miracle	24
Michele Dietz	
doll	26
Irena Loloci	
(no title)	27
Stephanie Terranova	
My Life	28
Dimitri Nicoli Jansen	
She'll Always Be...a Cowgirl to Me	29
Hannah Bader	
stones in my pathway	30
Irena Loloci	
(no title)	31
Robin Holtman	
Flower in the Rain	31
Rachel Cunningham	
Privilege	34
Amy Cutshall	
My Father's Hands	35
Carrie L. Mayes Baker	
Circle	36
anonymous	
from British Man (Part II)	37
Stephanie Lyons	
Winter's Seduction	37
Grete Riggs	
Untitled	38

Photography and Drawings:

Eveleigh Hatfield.....	3
Jara Henderson.....	4
Lauren Anderson.....	7
Chadwick Parker.....	9
Bethany Hamilton.....	10
Sarah Dowell.....	13
Jennifer Kraicinski.....	15
Hannah Bader.....	16
Emily Hand.....	17
Lauren Anderson.....	18
Stephanie Terranova.....	19
Jamie Osborne.....	21
Eric England.....	22
Hannah Bader.....	27
Nick Barnes.....	30
Jara Henderson.....	35
Tina LeJeune.....	36
Sara Clark.....	37
Robin Holtman.....	38

Untitled

Tears roll down my cheek
That you may never know,
You tear me to shreds
It may never show.
What gift is this?
The key to my heart
The key to my soul

What curse is this?
Bottled emotion
Explosive anger
Obsessive devotion.
It may never show,
But you still walk away.
A traveler across my life
Crossing my state lines.
You hurt, you crush.
I heal, I build
Yet you hear only your voice as I speak.
You do as you please, triggered by what you think
What you think I may do, have do of possibly may do.

So blind yet so visionary, a teasing of the
heart.....a beat.
I cried and cried and inside I died.
I arose a Lazarus.....A new,.....A man and I grew.
But I am okay, maybe you'll stay.....

Stay

A memory in my mind
A person in my life, not a distant enemy

The tears fell down my face
I wiped them all away;
I arose a phoenix, reborn out of fire, your ashes.
See me fly.
Thru every tear I slowly and surely heal.
Crimson red
Pitch black

~Muraya Muraguri

Untitled

Stunned by the substance of death,
Wondering where stability lies
And where my hope has fled,
I unwrap my eyes
To see my hope standing upon
Skin and bone and mirages,
All torn away in the tick of a clock.
I stare at my unfaithful watch
Wondering what has become
Of my small world,
And where I will place the hope
So carelessly tossed
Into the palms of my shaking hands.

~Grete Riggs

A Prayer from Esther's Song

Oh dry-bone heart that lends no tears,
As echoing dreams condemn the years
Of pride's unwavering arrow, that slits
The snake eye, commands the Pharaoh

To bind God's people to sun-beaten clay,
Barbed wire, pale winter day after day,
To flaunt peacock feathers, and still hire
An oarsman to take him into the hereafter!

Dawn peaks yet at the dark of my eyes,
Glinting when contours of self evanesce,
Drawing my soul toward the image of God,
Breaking my pride and the night both at once,

Laying me down in a Celtic-Cross courtyard,
As Scarlet to Tara, I pull toward the Earth,
Seeking God's breath beneath ivy flowers,
Which amid entanglement have somehow been birthed.

~M. Howerton

Tellmarch's Prayer:

*Written as if written and told by Tellmarch: Peasant in
Victor Hugo's Ninety-Three*

The frozen hands of time withhold
their icy swollen grip from her
hands. The Mother, The Caretaker.
Oh God! They are so Cold.

Fill my cup with the liquid fuel,
That lukewarm ridicule that is
not even worth a spill. Why? Why?
Oh God! They are so Cold.

Fifty-One and Forty-Two are
Numbers that speak to the graves of
Countless children, already gone.
Oh God! They are so Cold.

Vile Men with cages, ready
To pounce on any determined
And useful being that feels truth.
"If I had only known."

~JAI



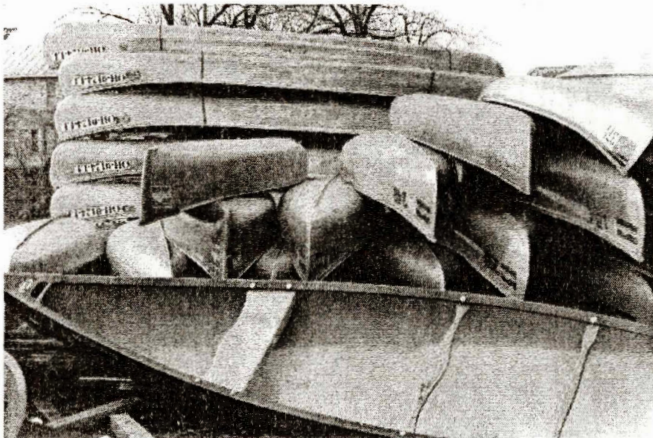
by Eveleigh Hatfield

Response:

Deep calls to shallow
The alluring voice gently romances my soul
Pulling my center like the tide...
A greater power than the moon carries me out
Though waves of insecurity and doubt
Fight back to shore's complacency.

Today I discovered that the time is arrived
To plunge headfirst into
The soothing waters of unfaltering hope
To surrender my fatal attempts
At swimming against the call
To abandon my purposeless rafts
Of self-sufficiency and rationality
Now I strip myself
Of any raiment that hinders
Slip defenselessly into the substance
That comprises this corporeal frame
Join the force magnificently greater than me
Feel the pulse and rhythm of beauty
Sinking to the pit of Unknown.

~Rachel Cunningham



by Jara Henderson

Far From Shore

When I woke the next morning,
I realized I was far from the shore.
And although I knew in my heart it was there,
I could not see it.

I could go in any direction
And come to the shore eventually
But perpetually searching I would be
if I chose the wrong direction.

Alone, I felt.
Hopeless I was.
I needed evidence of a shoreline,
Evidence of true life.

I trusted that the shore was there,
And though I was terribly weak,
I tried to reach that shore
Because hope was on the horizon.

~Olivia Jean Kerkoff

Untitled

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." —Romans 12:15

Can I caress with utter joy
The texture of the leaves
That dancing, flit across my path
Fulfilling countless dreams,
When your frail world has crumpled, crashed
Upon your weary frame
That tumbles down upon the leaves
Of dreams that never came?

~Grete Riggs

Pencil Sketch

I've always found it interesting that when you are faced with a fresh, blank piece of paper and you find yourself holding a newly-sharpened pencil, the possibilities seem endless. Ideas and creative thinking start to flow through your brain, like strings of lightning in a heavy storm, leaping from one cloud to another. A sense of pure excitement causes you to hold your breath and your fingertips to tingle.

Gently, yet deliberately, you lower the tip of the pencil to the vast, milky whiteness, a surge of energy flowing through your veins. Slowly at first, the crisp tip is propelled across the surface of the paper. Faster and faster, it picks up speed, moving, dipping, and gliding like a colorful kite in a cloudless blue sky. As a track runner gains momentum in order to clear the top of the hurdle in a single, graceful bound, so does the pencil lead move across the surface, gaining momentum as the picture solidifies in your, the creator's, imagination.

What is this image that the pencil lead moves, shades, outlines and defines? From the flat, two-dimensional world emerges life. Eyes, shaded to hold a look of longing, peer into your soul. A mouth turned downwards in such a way so that you can almost hear a sigh escape from between the two full lips. You see the nose, the ears, the jaw line and the throat. Who is this mysterious stranger who is gazing back at you with more intensity than you realized you were capable of giving it? It could be a loved one or an enemy, the quiet one who sits in the back of the class or the one who confidently walks down the hall. Or could it be the face of your long lost imaginary childhood friend? Who knows?

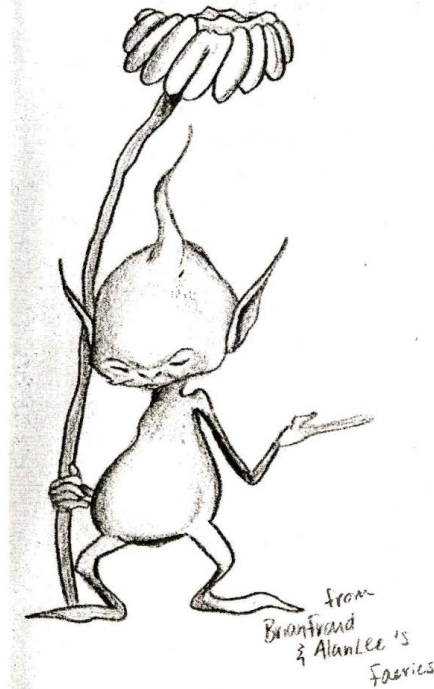
But I do know this, as that image, seemingly by magic, is transformed from an idea to a reality a sense of accomplishment overcomes you. A delighted light fills your eyes as you continue to gaze at the work of art your hands have made.

Then, slowly, not daring yourself to breathe, you lower the tip of the pencil once more to mark forever whose work this is. Your signature stares out at you, as if it were on fire.

With trembling hands, you lift the tip from the page for the last time. The point of the pencil, now dull from use, is put to rest. The tip, no longer crisp and sharp, seems to glow with the knowledge that it has completed its task.

This face, this image, this pencil sketch, it is your work of art. However insignificant to others it may seem, it holds a part of you in its long lasting grip. The feelings and emotions that you felt at that moment are forever captured, available for all who wish to see, in this one simple pencil sketch. This one face, though it is unable to render a sound, conveys something from the deepest part of you. If one single sheet of paper and a newly-sharpened pencil hold so much potential, how much more is there in each one of us?

~Stephanie Terranova



from
Brown & Alan Lee '15
Fabrics
by Lauren Anderson

My Place

Welcome, pardon the mess. I didn't know you were on
the way by.
How could I forget? You come when I need it the most.

Have a seat; just throw that over there. No, don't worry;
I have it all under
control.

Please, just sit and relax. It's been such a long day. I've
been waitin', oh, how I've
been waitin'.

No, I don't have much to offer you. As you can tell, my
place is a mess. I'll deal
with it, later. But you came here, to my place. Willing to
accept me, here, at my
place.

You don't care about the mess, but only to clean it up.

Thanks, I'll put that right here. You see, if you're willing,
I'll let you stay.

Really? Here? You *like* it? Here, at my place? Then, of
course ~ you can stay.

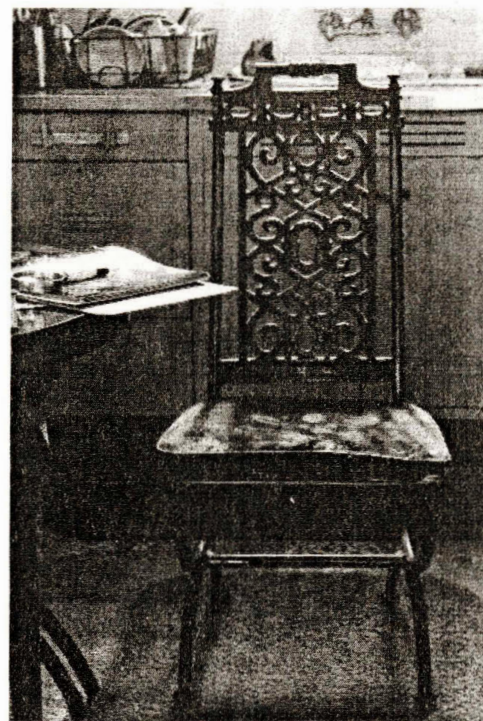
Stay. Here. At my place.

~ Acey Smith

the beachland

whirls of scars
on this ballroom
floor
make me wonder
what brutal shoes
have walked
these boards
before

~Hannah Bader



by Chadwick Parker

The Shepherd

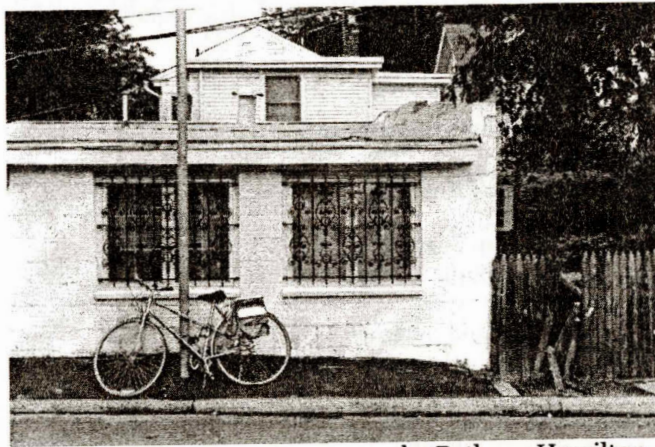
A shepherd who watches over us
His lambs,
Comforting us in His arms,
Holding us close,
Protecting us from harm,
He carries us through
Our most difficult trials
And strengthens and heals us
By His divine grace, love and power.
His spirit welcomes us
Into open and loving arms.
He is the ultimate shepherd,
He is Christ.

~Brenda Turner

Salem Church Road

When I was little, this road
Was my rollercoaster.
It was how we got groceries,
How we picked up my sister from school.
Curvy, hilly, with trees everywhere.
When I started driving,
It was one of three roads to use
To take me almost anywhere I needed to be.
My rollercoaster was interesting to drive,
Narrow, curvy, with my surrounding forest.
I come back for Thanksgiving break,
With trees cut down,
Orange cones on the side,
A plan to straighten and widen
My rollercoaster.
Maybe I'm too nostalgic,
Maybe I hate too much change,
But bulldozers in my forest
Scare me to tears.

~Amber Saferight



by Bethany Hamilton

Belltower Buffalo

Thursday I woke to an amazing sight
Obviously someone was busy last night
There were gathered a great many people
All of them looking up at the steeple
How it got up there, we may never know
But we now have a bell tower buffalo

Our fiber-glass mascot is standing tall
He watches the campus and he sees all
Giving strength to the students when they have tests
And protects them from danger while they rest
Under its gaze I feel safer and so
Never come down, Bell Tower Buffalo

Alas it happened, he's finally down
The campus's bright smile is now a frown
Our fiber-glass guardian, out of sight.
Disappeared as he came, while at night.
Why did you vanish? Oh why did you go?
We will miss you, Bell Tower Buffalo

~Tony Llama

Ferrell.

It's often a struggle to get out of my car, walk into his house, and say "hi." Sometimes it's the fear that stops me, and sometimes it's the words I use to insulate myself from the odd reality of this broken world, words like 'developmentally disabled,' or 'retarded,' sometimes even 'special.' I slam the door shut, curse my pubescent padding and "by golly" I'll shake my prejudices, and "blast it" if I do not love him as I should—as I should—I should. The door opens, I step in, and this dirty-blond rocking chair rocks into life those open arms, this sometimes tender face. It's always the same, and every time it floors me. I walk into his arms, and my hello is his wet, sloppy kiss on my cheek, and all my "I should's" take the bus home as my soul starts to pound away...It's taking me a while, but I think I'm getting the hang of it.

~James Whylic

Sky

Gazing at the sky and its greatness.
The clouds are silent like little children
sleeping on their mother's arm.
The mind wonders and gets lost in the azure world
that holds more than just air.
It is the testimony of a great hand.
The most talented painter
painted its face with love and care.
It is more than just blue sky.
It is the hat of a planet that we dare to call our own,
The masterpiece of a great artist,
the catcher of a thousand dreams
that pass unheard like thieves in the middle of the night.
The rich, the poor, the widow, the orphan,
the child-they all call it sky.
What a privilege! We don't have to ask for permission
to look up at this sleeping giant
No one can buy it or sell it.
No one can call it his. It belongs to everyone.
We hold a treasure that is not buried underground.
We are so rich! Yes, we are so rich
and we don't even know it!

~Irena Loloci

standing between earth and sky

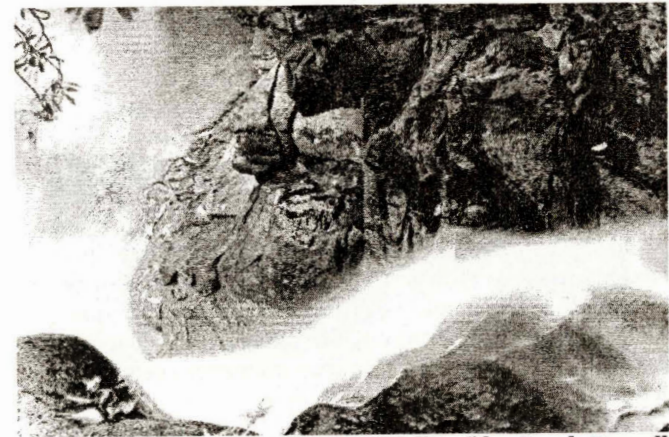
light slithers through
heavy blinds
bouncing
warming
coloring
cold
cinderblock walls
white with
boredom.

~Hannah Bader

Failure:

Clenching tightly to what I
Claim as mine
Putting all faith in my own
Infallible weakness
Sinking into the abyss
Ignoring the outstretched arm
Belief in my own strength
Drags me down
Recognizing my nothingness and
Consequent reliance on Another
Allows me to float
Lightly on the crisp surface of the
Lake of Fulfillment
Acknowledging my ugly humanity
The incompleteness that I am
Carries me on the path of transcendence
Guided by the beacon of a
Greater Strength

~Rachel Cunningham



"falling" by Sarah Dowell

Red Tape

A young man squinted at his computer screen, trying desperately to tame the words that held him captive. They were his tormentors, squeezing life from him but at the same time demanding less than he wanted to give. He knew what he wanted to write, but he also knew the power of the thing that held him back. If he refused to write what they wanted him to write, the consequences were obvious.

They used electrical tape that was the color of his own blood—a deep red, like a beacon of danger warning the world of his words. One of them would hold the roll of tape and the other would cut small pieces of it that were just large enough to cover his mouth and keep his voice from escaping with any level of comprehensibility. Every time they left it on just a little bit longer, making the pain worse when they finally decided to pull the tape off.

Last time they had disliked one sentence in his article, and that had been enough to inspire one of these tape treatments. He knew what they wanted and he tried to give it to them in his work, but something inside of him yearned to write about other things. All day long he dreamed about the stories he would write if he could—stories that exposed the bad side of the pieces they forced him to write.

Today a fire started within his chest, burning out of him in the form of helplessly passionate words, erupting like Mt. Vesuvius. Instead of keeping his writing within the playpen of guidelines he was trapped in, he grasped every strand of thought they had ever told him was wicked and poured it out onto the paper. Before long he knew that he had stirred something monumental within himself. The words flowed out onto the screen—words he'd always dreamed of writing but had never seen appear.

His wild rebellion lasted only a few minutes. As he was finishing his first paragraph he felt a tap on his shoulder. Slowly he turned his head around, only to see a small square piece of red tape finding its way to his

lips. He took his hands away from the keyboard, trying to keep any more tape from finding its way to his mouth. His cubicle seemed to close in on him and his mind centered on the tape that would become his best friend. Fear grasped his soul—fear of further punishment, and fear of more pain. He let his hands drop to his sides and surrendered to his punishment. Within minutes he was taped at the mouth, unable to speak, but with hands unfettered so that they could continue to write the lies he was commissioned to create.

Three weeks later they came to take the tape off. The punishment had worked, and it had crushed his desire for expression. Although he could voice his opinions again, he no longer wanted to. The same fear that had seized him on the day that his mouth had been covered now controlled his life, and he could think only of writing things that would keep him from having to endure the tape all over again.

Slowly but surely he picked up the piece of tape that had been on his mouth for so long. He ran his fingers along its sticky back and stared at it. After a moment he knew what he wanted to do: he placed the tape on his lips and pressed down. Piece after piece of tape went back on his lips, until they were all back in their original places. He breathed a sigh of relief and began to type.

~Claire Miller

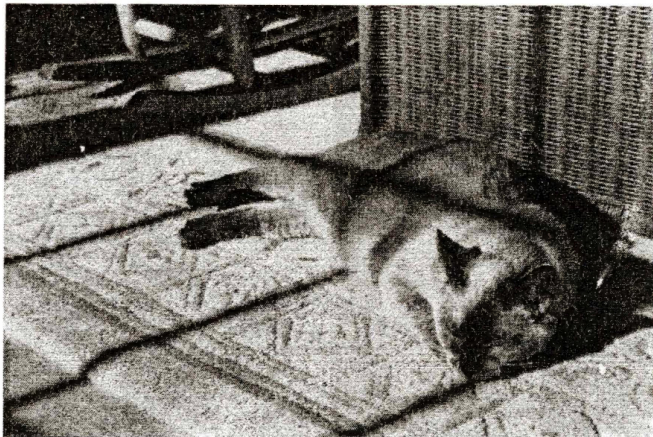


by Jennifer Kraicinski

A Simple Life

Grandma and Jim
Talking about two presents
At Christmas.
Poor, but they had
Nights catching fireflies,
Bare feet in the fields,
Not much to ask for.
Today kids barely know
How to interact with others,
How to play,
How to survive without stuff.
Our lives, complicated,
With waste all around,
A country with too much too much.
Too much everything
But love.

~Amber Saferight

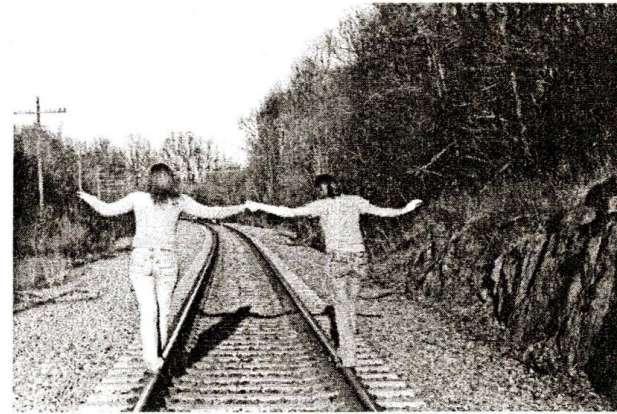


by Lauren Anderson

Autumn Chore

Of raking leaves I see no end
A gust of wind—
Must start again.
Neat piles of leaves do much to tempt
Young jumpers
To make piles unkempt.
At first perturbed, my anger curbed
And like the rest, the leaves I messed
As I jumped in with them.

~Stephanie Lyons



by Stephanie Terranova

Untitled

A tightened jaw and an aching head is all I can
concentrate on. I want to feel peace and not to be rushed
You drive me to dry tears that are stuck in my head.
They try to climb out but are choosing to stay
Tucked neatly away, I hope they never stay.
I need to cry and I believe I would feel relieved.
My eyes come so close yet my emotions seem to fall
away. The instant relief that falls down my face
Tells a story of freedom once I let go of everything I
embrace.

~Chadwick Parker

A Simple Life

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Talking about two presents
At Christmas.
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Bare feet in the fields,
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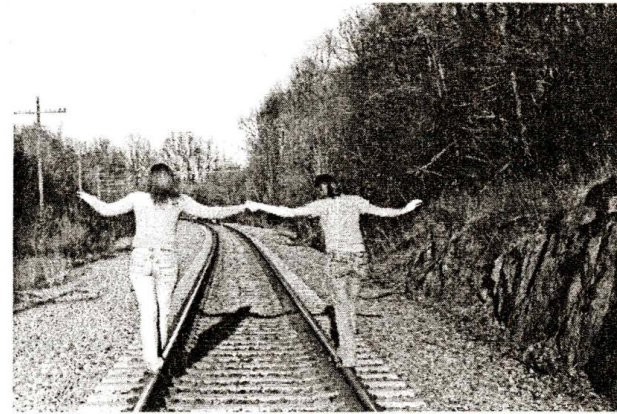


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away. The instant relief that falls down my face
Tells a story of freedom once I let go of everything I
embrace.

~Chadwick Parker

You Never Really Get Anywhere (Part II)

I try to find You.
I know You are ever-constant—
You never leave Your Place.
I must seek You, but I
Need to get half-way There first.
But where is half-way to You?
Where is the middle point to infinity?
The middle of that?
And that?

First, to get to You, I must
Get half-way, and half of
That, and that again.
Does this mean that since
I can't get there
I'll never see You
Or you aren't There,
(Wherever "There" is)?

I don't even know
Where to begin.
I guess this means that
If I want
To meet You,
I must
Believe You can
Transcend Xenon's Paradox

~Carrie L. Mayes Baker

Maze of Complacency

I'm trapped in a maze of complacency
Trying to get out on my own
With every turn is a dead end
So I give up tired and alone
Knowing I can't save myself
I try to anyway
I don't know how long I'll survive
Can I make it another day?

All alone. No one to turn to
Dead end after dead end
It kills you
Who do I turn to?
Who do I call?
In this maze of complacency
What if I fall?

It's a maze of deception
A game of deceit
Lies and confusion
Just stay on your feet
At any point I can turn
To the help that I need
But I continue on
Afraid to believe

All alone. No one to turn to
Dead end after dead end
It kills you
Who do I turn to?
Who do I call?
In this maze of complacency
What if I fall?

~Jaime McConnell



by Jamie Osborne

Untitled

Lord, you are my security blanket. When I am scared, You are there to protect me. When I am lonely, You are there to comfort me. When I need rest, You are there to make it better. I pray that when someone tries to take you away from me, I do anything and everything to have You returned. Never let me forget that no matter how old I am, I can always run back to You and feel safe, warm, and protected. I will never long for another. Amen.

~Eric England



by Eric England

Last Night.

I don't remember falling asleep last night,
but I remember your arms around me.
My worries melting like snow upon the sun beaten
ground.
My world being molded in a better shape than yesterday.
I am a beggar, but richer than kings and queens.
Homeless in this world, but having a mansion in your

kingdom.

While the world is loud and drunk with her own wine,
I fall asleep under the silence of heavenly lights.
Your arms around me, that's all I remember from last
night.

~Irena Loloci

One Man, One Soul

One man, one soul
A life of service to God
A father, a husband, brother and uncle

One day is all that it would take
"Come home my son, my good and faithful servant"

In a heartbeat, one final breath,
One last blink of the eyes.
His spirit soars,
Above the clouds, away from this earth
To the place where he will eternally rest.

New body, new life
Eternity in service with God
A grandfather, a great grandfather, a beloved friend.

~Psalm 55:6-8:

I said "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!"
I would fly away and be at rest—
I would flee far away
And stay in the desert;
I would hurry to my place of shelter,
Far from the tempest and storm.

~ Monica Sharpe

In loving memory of Sidney Howard Sharpe
(July 22, 1930- February 15, 2004)

Misunderstood Miracle

It was the fall time. The brilliance of the air created by the fog was luminous as I went to play on my front porch. My front porch was my playground. It was where all of my dreaming occurred. One day I could be an astronaut landing on the moon or a princess trapped in a tower. Another day I could simply be a mom waiting for my kids to come home. On this particular day, however, I had a different idea in mind.

The night before, my father had told my brother and me a story from the Bible. To be perfectly honest, I cannot recall which story he told or the manner in which he told it because my father was always doing this. To him, being brought up in a Christian household meant going to church and Sunday school, but being brought up in a preacher's household meant knowing my Bible left and right. No matter what the situation had been the night before, I woke up believing that God would perform any miracle that I asked for by prayer. So I thought and thought until at last it felt like I could think no more.

Finally, I knew what my miracle would be. I would ask for God to turn a few old rags that my mother had given me into food. And this would not just be any kind of food. This would be the best food known to mankind. I imagined turkey smoldered in honey, buttery mashed potatoes covered with brown gravy, plump green beans oozing with flavor, and round apple pies touched off with a touch of cool whip.

The more I thought about it, the more and more I wanted the food; thus I began praying. I squatted down with my tiny hands placed together and my knobby knees on the wood and I uttered the most elaborate prayer ever spoken aloud, or at least it seemed this way in my mind. Five whole minutes later I looked up to see if anything had happened. Of course nothing had, but I knew I just had to keep praying harder and louder. God would hear me, and He would create food out of those old rags. Then the whole neighborhood would hear of God and His glory and they would come running to Him begging for Him to save their souls. To be perfectly honest, I really thought that everyone would believe that

I had cooked the feast and then they would marvel at my abilities. Nevertheless, I didn't want to tell God this for fear that he might not grant my miracle. So, I just kept those thoughts tucked away in my mind and I continued to pray hour-by-hour. Yet by evening time, as I lay flat on my back looking up at the sun begging for God to create a miracle and exhausted in the process, I began to realize that nothing was going to happen.

The overwhelming disappointment filled my stomach and I began to wonder if God had even heard me. If he had, why didn't he do anything about it? Why didn't He answer my prayer and perform my miracle? Up until this point, I had never wondered who God is or why He does what He does. I had always believed that He was just up there waiting to answer my prayers and to save the world. It isn't until now, many years later, that I look back on memories such as this and I realize that God is a complex being who we strive to understand more about every day. As we grow older we either learn more about Him or we confine Him to a box that our society has created over the centuries.

With every new breath that I take, I understand that the place for God in the life we live is within the mindset of a child. Of course this doesn't mean that everyone needs to go out on his or her front porch and pray for God to create food so that they might be accredited in the end. Yet it does mean having enough faith to move mountains. Sometimes as I look back on this story, I wish I could still be the same little girl that I once was. I regret that time has withered away the innocence and naivety that I once knew. On the other hand, I know that a childlike spirit still dances in my heart and a front porch does exist where God does answer prayers.

~Julie Grimm

doll

In a corner on a shelf
That's where I've been far too long
The community play toy
None of you even really know me
I'm just brought out to show
You dress me up and take me out
As long as I keep quiet
I have no mind or opinions of my own
What you don't know or see
Is a beautiful life searching for her piece of harmony
I leave the shelf when you are gone
And find myself in a world
Where the worst thing to do is be yourself
Now I've found others like me
People not possessions
And I admire them for who they are
They are the strong ones
Breaking through all the barriers of the world
So I've decided I will join them
Forget the games!
I do not need *you* to make me feel good
Here I go, leaping
Off the shelf to join my friends
The people who care
They are the ones who tell all truth
Not your bag of lies
I'm leaving now and you all better be prepared
Say goodbye now
Because here goes your doll right out the door

~Michele Dietz



By Hannah Bader

(no title)

Neverending patterns/
images that mirror collapse in ignorance/
Full of misery- the indescribable/
Show me the meaning of the broken glass...
The falling of pain- window of misery/
Diagonal lines that cut the heart/
The silent sword that cuts the words/
Tears capitulate in an imperfect world.
Rain falls on heated pavements,
flame that burns and then silently dies.
Heart that drowns and then cries for life/
Show me the meaning of the broken glass....

~Irena Loloci

My Life

Amidst the broken and chipped teapots, the musty quilts and dusty dolls, it stood. Its story spanning back one hundred years, the small wooden trunk spoke of days gone by. The faded brass hinges and clasp, and the worn leather straps told of times of prosperity and poverty, shelter and abandonment. The trunk had the same aroma as the cedar tree at my grandparent's house. I knew that it had to be mine. Turning towards the antique store's owner, I asked how much it cost. My heart sank as the number eighty resounded in my head.

My friend turned to go, knowing that I could not afford to pay eighty dollars for a whim. She was almost to the door when she heard me say that I would take it. I did not have the cash so I slowly slid my credit card across the marble counter to the cashier. My heart pounded as he carefully wrapped the delicate trunk in bubble wrap and placed it in a box.

Since that fateful day when I, the responsible one, made a rash decision I have multiplied that hard earned eighty dollars into an untold fortune. The box sits in my living room in a place of honor on the hearth. To most observers it would appear to be the same as it was the day I bought it three years ago. But to me it has taken on the look of a treasure chest, formed out of pure gold and inlaid with precious gems. Indeed, it does hold a treasure inside.

Past the worn exterior, inside the chest, lie my heritage, my life, and my future. Carefully documented family trees, snapshots of my great grandparents at their home in Italy, age old recipes written in my grandmother's flowing script, my grandfather's favorite tobacco pipe, my father's favorite childhood book and my mother's first attempt at knitting a scarf. Love letters, poetry, leaves and dried flowers, photographs, movie stubs, artwork, pencil sketches, ornaments, Christmas cards, school reports and favorite essays.

All of these things and more are stored in this trunk, this treasure chest. It is a fortune that far surpasses the

eighty dollars I spent. It is what I can hand down to my children, for them to add to. It is my life.

~Stephanie Terranova

She'll Always Be...a Cowgirl to Me

The first time that I saw her, in that black cowgirl hat.
I heard her say she was leavin' town
But I couldn't tell her then,
That I wished she would stay.... And that she didn't have to go.
But I can't stop her leaving, 'cause she's headin' out that door.

And you can leave for the city, but you cannot stop the reign.
You're takin' off those old working boots...but you can't take off the pain.
And even though we may never be.....
And I cannot make you see.....
You'll always be, a Cowgirl to me,
Yeah you'll always be a Cowgirl to me

Now you've given up, that old horse you ride and that sweet cowgirl smile.
You're covering over your ole 'wild side' to be a lady for awhile.
But you'll come back, one day I know,
...cause in your heart you won't feel free
And you'll always be a cowgirl to me.
Yeah, you'll always be a cowgirl to me.....

And you can leave for the city, but you cannot stop the reign.
You're takin' off those old working boots...but you can't take off the pain.
And even though we may never be.....
And I cannot make you see.....
You'll always be, a Cowgirl to me,
Yeah you'll always be a Cowgirl to me
Yeah....she'll always be.....a cowgirl....to me.....

~Dimitri Nicoli Jansen

today
i ran out
of
words

trillions of words
in
thousands
of languages

and today

i
couldnt find
one

~Hannah Bader



by Nick Barnes

(no title)

Words! Words! Words!
I must say he was right!
For the portrait is molding-
The paint is falling from the pitiful screen.
Colors are deceiving-
The rumor is spread on a discolored ceiling.
The white is covered with unconscious cuts
Helpless sight stretches arms,
But dies mourning on the blade.
Words! Words! Words!
I must say he was right!

~Irena Loloci

Flower in the Rain

As we enter the room, my heart sinks. It's not at all what I expected. The air stinks of sanitation and seems thick and stale compared to the crisp winter breeze that ushered us through the sliding glass doors. Flowers, cards, and stuffed animals occupy every available surface. I lower my eyes, regretting my selection of a single rose in a bud vase, the petals already wilting though it couldn't have been half an hour since I bought it. I had thought at the time that even that would be too much, a little overdramatic considering the circumstances. The lights are dim. In fact, the only light in the room shines down as if from heaven on the uncharacteristically expressionless face of Erica, lying motionless in the hospital bed.

"How's she doing?" Carly asks hesitantly.

Though the green jagged line on the screen assures us of her brain activity, her physical appearance leaves some doubts. She looks nothing like the Erica we know. With her eyes gently closed, she rests her head peacefully against the neck brace, though the position must be uncomfortable. Rather than her trademark poof, her usually bleach blonde hair lies crumpled in a rosy mass on her head. For a brief moment I wonder when she

decided to dye her hair red and why she chose to go out in public in the middle of the process. When the truth hits me I feel foolish, and a little more anxious. The three of us step closer to her, an instinctive attempt to form a protective barrier from whatever might bring her further harm.

“She’ll be okay.”

How could this be the same Erica that moved in around the corner and into our lives just last year? Looking back, it’s hard to believe my initial intimidation. I’ve never been good with new people, but it wasn’t long before we’d established deep roots. She became a constant presence, bouncing in at all hours to see who was up for a Sonic run, borrowing or lending clothes, and never hesitating to share what was going on in her life or show concern or interest in ours. Such good friends never need to knock, and she’d enter with and energetic “Hey Rob” that could always make me smile, if not laugh. She calls us all by the first syllable of our names, whether they make actual names or not: Rob, Car, Sus. I can’t think of anyone else who wouldn’t bother me with something like that. But she’s consumed by the fullness of life, and it rubs off when she’s around me.

I hold back tears as I take in the contrasting image of Erica, lying there seeming nearly lifeless. I have to hold them back. I’ve seen the tears well in Susan’s eyes and heard the quiver in Carly’s voice. I’m the strong one. If I can’t keep it together, none of us will. I distract myself by watching the steady rise and fall of her chest under the paper-thin linen gown until, out of the corner of my eye, I notice another machine marking a rhythm too quick to be her own heartbeat. The image plants a seed of hope in my own heart.

“The baby...?” I ask tentatively.

“It’s a miracle he’s okay.”

I don’t know Nathan very well. I’ve only met him a few times, but those few times were enough to make me

confident that Erica and the baby are his whole life, and I hurt for him. We listen in amazement as he whispers the story, careful not to wake Erica or break the pensive mood that fills the room. Keeping his voice steady, he tells of the blackout and her ejection from the window. I see the pain in his eyes as he recites a list of injuries—the broken pelvis and sacrum, the gash in her head, the concussion—that occurred in a matter of moments as her car pinned her against a telephone pole. Now, strangely, the pain nearly disappears, replaced by something else...I can’t tell what: amazement? gratitude? hope? I begin to understand as he explains. She shouldn’t be alive. The baby shouldn’t be alive. I know that my eyes must now be shining like his. Not with the tears that I feared, but with the joy of the realization that the rest of Erica’s life is a gift, not just to her and Nathan and the baby, but to me as well.

Glancing back at Erica, I find it hard to retain my hopes. Any other Tuesday, we’d be having girls’ night: a little devotion and a big gab session. Erica’s the chatty one, but she lies there motionless, like a doll.

As we prepare to leave, I want to believe that everything will be okay, but I’m haunted by the silent stillness of her figure. We whisper our good-byes, promising to return tomorrow, and offer reassurances that we don’t feel. Seeking signs of life outside the coldness of the machines, I brush my fingers against her withered, seemingly lifeless hand. In response, she raises her head and opens her eyes. She smiles and a glimmer of recognition crosses her face.

“My hair is pink,” she says with a groggy smile, before she fades back into unconsciousness.

Relief wells up like the tears in our eyes. We smile and finally let them fall as we walk out the door. Our Erica has emerged with new life before our eyes, like a wilting flower after a fresh spring rain.

~Robin Holtman

Privilege

Fearing what you will find
Underneath the perfect facade.
The unveiling pierces.
This part of me has been allowed to atrophy
As I create the lie
By which they are all charmed.

Why have I given you
The privilege to probe?
To sift through the layers
Some false
Some painfully true.
Be ready for the downward spiral.
At the end you reach my core.

Will you still be there?
Will you take that seed,
Plant it where two become one
And wait for the lush foliage
Of us?
Or will your perception ignore the potential,
Growing fatigued
As I require a reciprocal vulnerability?

The blessing is often forgotten:
That we do not traverse
These murky waters solo.
My Creator is also a Transformer
My entire revenue of strength
Is sapped in leaving my unraveling
To the Weaver of my tapestry.
Peace comes in this submission.
All I ask from you
Is the same mutability.

~Rachel Cunningham

My Father's Hands

All I can see are the tears in my eyes
The pain that I feel deep down inside
The loss of a friend, the things that must change
I look to the heavens, let God rearrange

When the skies get dark, look to the light
When tears come down, it'll be alright
Just take a deep breath and begin again
Leave it in the Father's hands

The pit in my stomach, the pound of my heart
It hurts so much, I don't know where to start
I look to the heavens and begin to pray
Words won't come out, there's nothing to say

Once again, Lord, I look to you
Asking, begging, please give me a clue
Give me your peace, comfort, and love
You are my Father above

~Amy Cutshall



by Jara Henderson

Circle

In the beginning it is so clear where the beginning is. The path it takes is so clear—so definite. What happens then? In the end, the beginning is no where. The path is still clear, but infinite. You make me search You all over—all around, and I feel that my beginning is my end while I'm on Your path. Though sometimes it seems that the situations change, the path is always the same. The comfort is that I know that though the journey is infinite, You are there through it all. I get confused by my ending because I find myself beginning again. That would be just like You—to have me begin again just when I think I've got it figured out. When I search for You, I think You're laughing all the time. You are so complex; you are more than infinity, but also simple—as simple as a circle.

~Carrie L. Mayes Baker

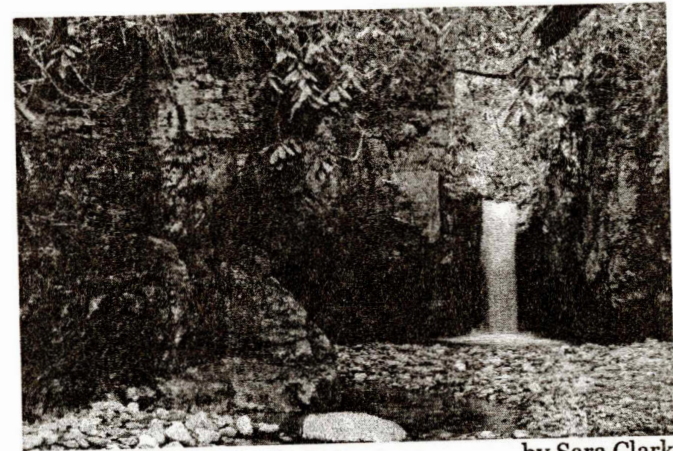


by Tina LeJeune

from **British Man (Part II)**

To me, a person is sexy if he is confident and unapologetic for who he is. He is passionate about life. He drinks it in like wine, swishing it around to have all the satisfaction that comes in this extra sensory experience. He is hyper-sensitive to his surroundings. He is always aware, filled with the life that is bountifully surrounding him. He is tolerant. He can cry, but he doesn't use it to make me pity him, as **some** do. He is intelligent. He has a famishing desire for classic literature, history, and art.

~anonymous



by Sara Clark

Winter's Seduction

The arboreal maiden disrobes
Awaiting Winter's embrace.

~Stephanie Lyons

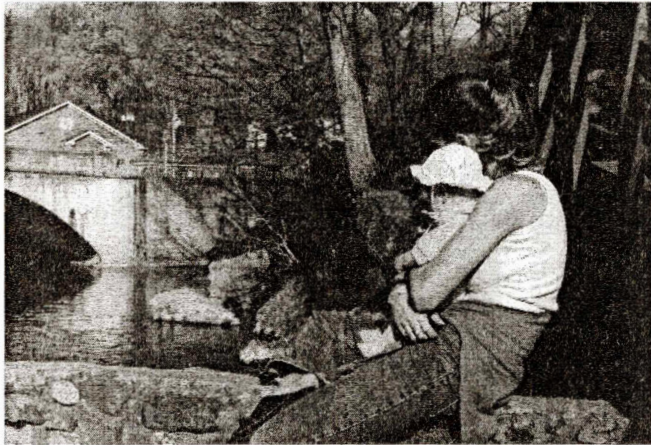
Untitled

"But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life..." —1 Thess 4:11

The call to
An ambition of quietness
Shouts loudly in my ear,
Taunting my need to speak,
My need to be heard,
To be understood.
Can I be secure in the silence
Of an open wound,
Standing with palms wide open,
Lips tightly shut,
Eyes fixed on the only One
Worthy to speak?

Can I turn away from my needs
And face Him,
Waiting with hope
In silent expectation?

~Grete Riggs



by Robin Holtman

Mythical
Balance over
sounds
I think
Glimpses
of
splendor
fill the air
Mystery, myth
Rays of knowledge
serendipity
words
comes me
handing
serendipity

THE PHOENIX



Guiding
I walk
Balance
Sounds
Minds
Words
of
splendor
fill the air
Mystery, myth
of knowledge
serenity
Rays
of
serenity

again
with
VIBRANT
Gold of

2004