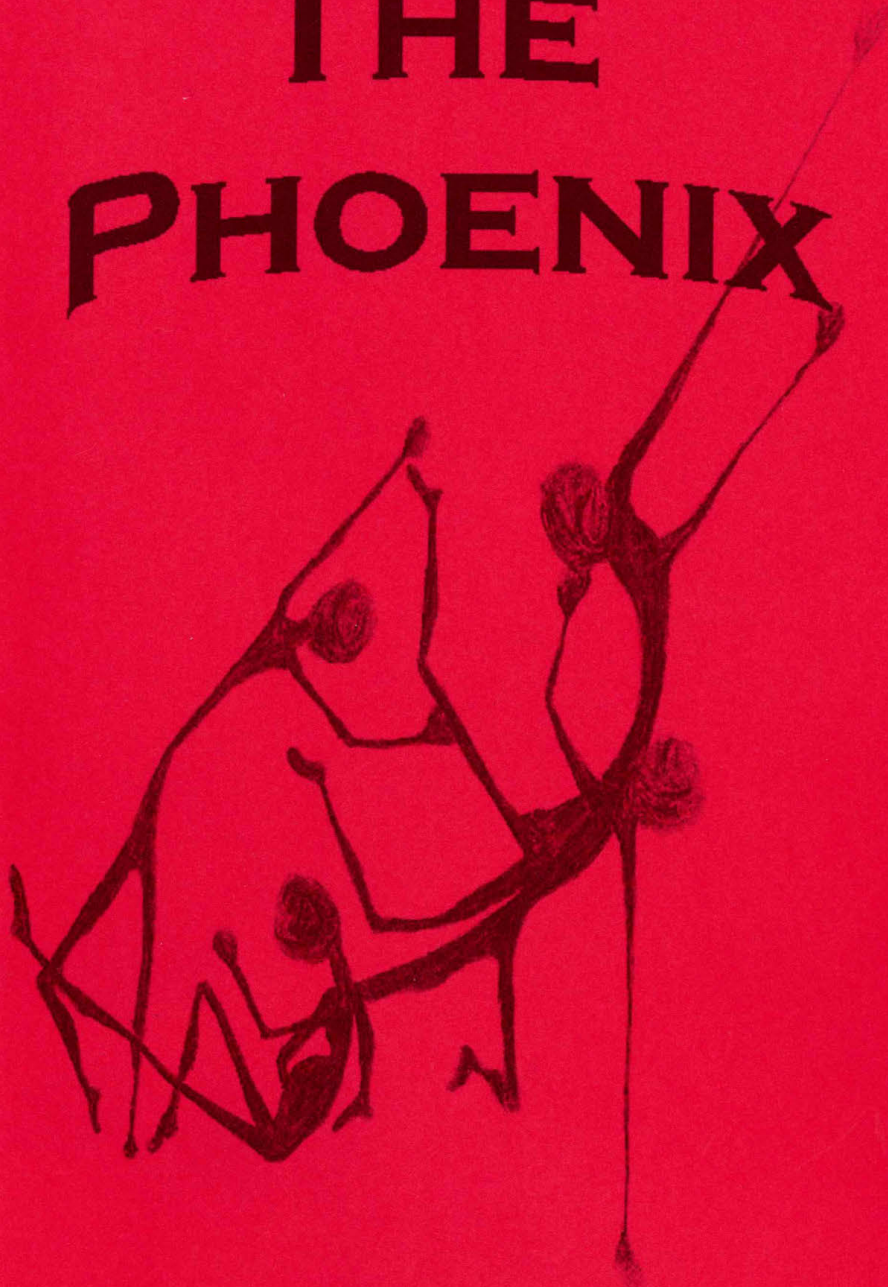


# THE PHOENIX



# THE PHOENIX

2008



THE MILLIGAN COLLEGE  
ANNUAL LITERARY JOURNAL



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## Foregone

there was a dark twinkling in the air and a dark glittering  
a twilight room  
the figure of a bosom friend shirked in shadow  
smiles and twinkling eyes  
gossamer stars fawn'd darkly  
what dimly seeping into dwellings rises  
we smoke disheartened ashes sweet  
no surprise in what starkworn realizations  
shadow warns that souls should'st meet  
a heaviness is weakly nearing  
infringing fastly 'mong our whisps  
voices softly flit up'st shadow moorings  
humble sunken rows the mist  
each buttress upheld sinew trembling  
limbs uncertain, breath visible  
bearing smok'ly 'crost my palms  
in the stead of myriad beaming  
the taste of iron-water drips't  
light footfalls make the sweetest alms  
i twinkled through a phrase of sorrow  
i glittered what i presumed gone  
getting more gone shadows deepen  
flooding organ haunts our haunt of late  
sipping from the sagging wallfount  
tides untangling tugging further  
darkness speak thy own fell fervor  
(haunt me now with thy wan fever)  
descending midnight allemandes  
hearts forever moistened fallow  
when'st hearts forego instead of hands  
feeling softly through the shadow

by Aaron Jones

## Seeger Chapel

I sit and call out to you  
Do you hear me?  
I cry and sob for you  
Do you feel me?  
I shout and yell at you  
Do you understand me?

I pray for guidance  
Where am I going?  
I cry for a purpose  
What am I doing?  
I shout for patience  
Where did it go?

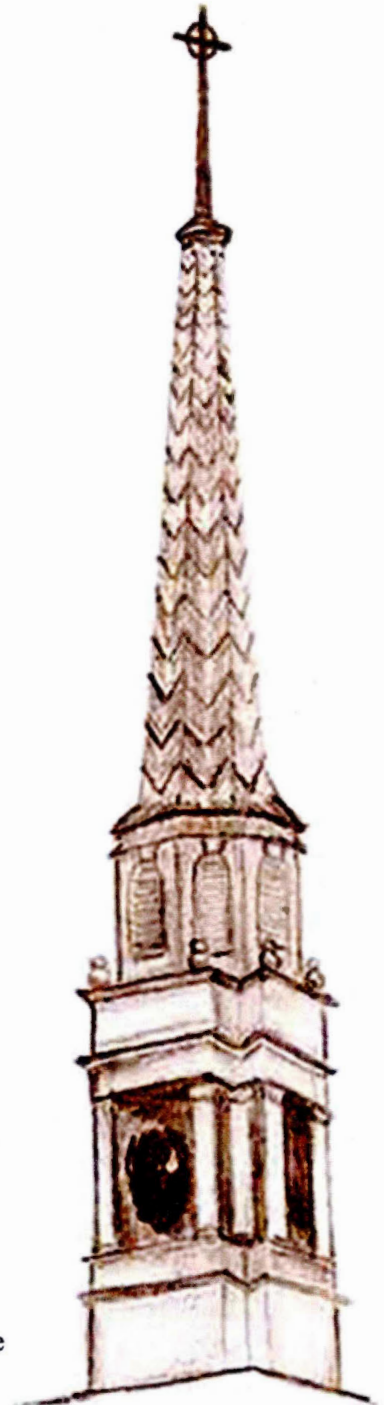
I sit and wait for you  
Are you coming?

I cry and sob for you  
Is it soon?  
I listen and watch for you  
When are you coming?

I see you in my friends' hugs.  
I hear you in my roommate's prayers.  
I touch you in helping others  
Why are you so good to me?

I feel you in Seeger, alone  
Thank you, for hearing me  
I understand you in the silence  
You are always there  
I cry, because of the love you have for me  
Carrying me to where I am meant to go.

ME



Buffalo in the Belfry



Composed below Derthick Hall, October 12, 2006

The deep-tinged gold of thy fair fur  
The sable of thy tails  
The ivory yet above your head entails  
Gifts worth more than myrrh

Thou being of fair majestic hall  
Crawled up onto my knee  
Whence I took a chance to shelter in the lee  
And while I sat I heard the call

Of Nature's sonic spheres  
I raised my head and saw another  
Of our multifariously tailored brothers  
A vision of thy glorious future, never more dear

by B.J. Krug

### Faith

Terror creeps into  
the void of unsleep and  
the what-if bird  
croaks just beyond  
the windowpane  
*sure* and *certain* seem  
shaky propositions,  
until a distant howl  
suggests a moon,  
and if moon, then yes.

by Heather M. Hoover



"Antiquity"

by Kara Crotts

### Questions for my Quest

How bad must I want this?  
A land where people practice what is preached.  
A land where peace and harmony is reached.  
How much will this cost me?  
It seems that all those who have most understood  
Your commands to bring heaven here to earth  
Have been forced to their eternal destination  
By those who love their broken systems  
And feel threatened by those who place  
The power to love above the love of power.  
Can I really reach this place?  
The way that leads to life seems too narrow for my feet to trod.  
The cup of suffering seems too large for my appetite and  
You know I've had my fill of filth.  
Where is this righteousness that my soul longs for?  
The song that paints Your pictures that I love so much  
Is not playing in my head today.  
Is this tune of "Amazing Grace" all that You really want to give me?

by Richard Riddle



by Bailey Carter



## Keeping Up With Nate

by Jeremy Walker

Take a hike with Nate. Adventure waits in a deep, treacherous valley, a cascading waterfall, or maybe an unmarked trail. Nate finds them all. When Nate asks someone to go on a hike with him they have one chance, and one chance only, to go. If the chosen refuses, then he will never ask again. Luckily, I was a close friend with Nate and had trodden many a trail with him. However, I was usually panting behind his unstoppably swift pace. Nate was one of those guys that looked like the outdoors. Greens, grays, browns, and a dingy tint defined his style. Most would remember him as the guy who never closed his window in the winter; the window was always open to view the places he had yet to explore. Somehow, he always found the hidden places that other hikers in the East Tennessee area do not visit often. This made his hiking knowledge special. He was a man of natural discovery. Many folks coveted a hike with Nate, and it was always a journey with hearty leftovers in story form.

It was a hot day in late September. The leaves were just beginning to change but had yet to burst forth with vibrant autumn colors. One tree was subtly setting the pace for the rest of the forest by changing into a bright red. It was evident the other varieties were soon to follow with bright yellows and brilliant orange. The fading summer heat still hung in the air, and it was a perfect Saturday in the Tennessee mountains. Nate, my roommate at the time, stuck his head out of the bedroom door and looked at me with excitement. I glanced up at him expecting anything to come out of his mouth. It's nearly impossible to predict what Nate might say. He may want to share that most of the women he knows are dumb but he likes some of them anyway. Or it could be that rich people or conservative evangelical Christians were really getting under his skin that day. Who knows? However, he was almost giddy when he asked me a question that revealed the core of his charge. "Do you want to go hiking to Lost Cove?" he asked. I reacted with a quick "yes" because I knew this was a hike he had been talking about but never explored. I could not turn down a hike that Nate had not already mastered. This would be close to shutting your eyes and refusing to watch the moon suddenly explode. So we

laced up our boots, packed our gear, grabbed a pack of cigarettes, and drove toward Erwin, Tennessee.

The windows were down, bluegrass music blaring through the worn-out speakers, and we smoked our first cigarette of the day. It's moments like those that make you feel voracious for breath; the body feels an insatiable desire for adventure. The heart beats a little quicker, the spirit feels more alive, and the mind is released from its own captivity. We did not speak much but listened to the road droning, the air blowing through the car, and the simple lyrics of old-time music. Nate is one of the most unpatriotic people I know, but moments like these make him more American than JFK.

Suddenly, we hit some curves and I quickly learned that Nate apparently hates slowing down. Reducing speed did not seem to be a subject of any importance or concern as we swung around the curves like a SUV in one of those stylish commercials. We approached the Nolichucky River campground and Nate slammed on the brakes. He pulled to the left side of the road in front of a small opening into the nearby woods. Since I was about to vomit all that I had eaten for the last three days, I figured he had made himself sick from his own driving. He jumped out of the car and opened the trunk. I sat there blinking. He grabbed his water bottle and his backpack. I stared at the dashboard. He stuck his head into his window and asked if I was coming. I opened my car door and struggled to make the woods stop moving. My inner ear must have finally grasped the fact that gravity had returned to its normal state, and I began to gather my stuff together.

How did he know that there was trail here? There were no signs, no markers. I looked around and no one would ever have known that a small trail led into the woods, except for a passing fox or raccoon or Nate. The trail was about a foot wide and was mostly muddy rocks. The woods sat silent with sunlight trickling in the gaps of overhanging limbs and waving oak and maple leaves. The nearby Nolichucky could be heard rushing along the river valley and snaking its way near our trail. I felt like we were knocking on the front door of the forest, and the river called from the other room, "Come on in, it's open!"



**ELLY**  
**IS GOOD AT DANCING**  
**(a children's story)**  
by Joy Veenstra

Elly liked doing lots of things. But she wanted to be good at something.

Elly's mother was good at making meals for her family.

Elly's father was good at looking important and going to work.

Elly's brother was good at playing lots of sports and he won lots of awards.

Elly wanted to be really good at something, so she began to try.

Elly tried singing, but she couldn't remember all the words and she kept hitting the wrong notes. She wasn't very good at singing.

Elly tried sports, but she couldn't throw or catch or hit or pass. She definitely wasn't good at sports.

Elly tried dancing, but her feet kept getting mixed up. She wasn't good at dancing.

Elly tried to be an artist, but her paintings and drawings didn't turn out like she wanted them to. Elly decided she wasn't good at art.

Elly tried to cook, but she didn't know how to use any of the strange objects in the kitchen, and she only made a big mess. She wasn't good at cooking either.

"What are you doing, Elly?" her mother asked.

"I'm trying to find what I'm good at," she replied. "So far, I'm not good at anything. I've tried singing, sports, dancing, art, and cooking, but I can't do any of them."

"Oh, silly Elly," her mother said as she gave Elly a big hug. "You can't expect to be good at something right away. You have to pick one thing you like, and work at it. Then you will become good at it."

"Oh," Elly said as she thought about all the activities she had tried. "I really liked dancing, mommy! Can I try to get good at dancing?"

"That sounds like a great idea," Elly's mother replied.

The next day, Elly and her mother went to a dance studio. They signed Elly up for a ballet class.

In the class, Elly learned how to bend and stretch, point and glide, jump and spin.

Elly worked very hard at everything she learned.

One day, Elly's teacher told the class that they were going to get to perform and show off what they had learned in a big show called a recital.

Elly and her classmates were very excited and they practiced extra hard for the recital.

The day of the recital, Elly was nervous and excited, and she did the best she could. She bent and stretched, pointed and glided, jumped and spun. At the end, she took a big bow.

Everyone there clapped and cheered.

Elly's teacher looked at her and said, "That was wonderful, Elly. You are a good dancer."

"Did you hear that, Mommy?" Elly said excitedly as she ran to her mother. "I'm good at dancing!"

"Yes, Elly, you are good at dancing."



it feels now as though  
i am in the place where two worlds collide  
as one machine stops another's sound is heard trailing after its own speed  
yet in both ears, as equally, bird language stills the place where silence has  
yet to breathe.

what contains! only to release in flesh, wood and iron  
what mess of particles swirling into  
infinity have somehow in  
divine timing not contained by beats, by minutes  
opened to our two eyes interceding through  
ears that see beyond sight

only to speak of infinity  
of things that only hearts know to be true

what drifting chime?  
what oxygen cloud of misplaced words and  
battered affection  
has set me here

with birds and plastic so polarized

it feels as though i am in the very place  
where time became irrelevant and rationally  
explained.  
where hearts stop and start and continue on...

a road divides me  
one solitary line tracing off without end  
folding back upon itself

as i having been found in the exact point  
of its bend  
open to destruction to create.

by Megan Bowser

## Haikus

The leaves of Autumn  
Fall like our new sweet spring rain  
brothers/enemies

moving thoughts, born life  
washed away with plate licked clean  
Gone are feelings deep

by B.J. Krug



by Ryan Harris

## Incoming Storm

The waves gently roll on the water's edge.  
They sound like laughter.  
This is the only place laughter rings  
Through the breeze  
Which whispers its sweet thoughts back  
Before it giggles like an innocent little school girl.  
But then the tide comes in,  
And the angry waves push the little ones away  
As they foam at the mouth  
And roar obscenities.  
And the wind screams back  
And wails on.

by Kalee Nagel





"No Coincidence"

by Kara Crotts

## Belmont Street, 1998

by Tim Wasem

The tawny glow of midwestern twilight splashed through the rickety, elevated train tracks on Chicago's north side. The workday was ending and steel turnstiles spun constantly as coins were inserted and cards swiped by impatient men and women who had places to go.

Jack Cordell was planted on an iron bench outside of the Belmont Street train station. The spot was ample shelter from the decapitating winds, which rushed off Lake Michigan's choppy shores. His skin was dark and ashy, with weeks of car exhaust forming a gritty film on his skinny arms. He sat in the center of the bench, his arms stretched out along the backrest, his filthy forearms and blackened fingernails protruding from his ill-fitting Cubs jacket. The reds and blues were faded and merging into a mucky shade of purple. The old man's head dangled sleepily forward, his triangular, grisly chin resting on his chest. Wiry remnants of a once respectable head of hair stuck out beneath his toboggan like chalky needles in a pincushion. A weathered cardboard cup sat beside his leg.

Most people passed by, pulling their phones out ten steps before Jack's bench so not to be disturbed by charity's call. Their long wool coats, shimmering black shoes, and trendy hiking gear were offended by the vagrant's potluck of secondhand clothing. Occasionally, there would be a double take -- an attack of conscience. Those who figured that large amounts would simply buy him more time in the liquor store submitted their daily penance of a few coins. Each piece of copper and nickel splashed in the pool of melted ice cubes and stale cola in the cup. The liquid darkened with each addition, stripping years of human contact and abuse from their shiny surfaces. Eventually, the coins rose above the aqueous threshold and landed flush, with a clink and a clank.

Trains rattled by every four to six minutes. At five o'clock, this stop was tumultuous with rail traffic, each passing load of pedestrians shaking



the hundred-year-old structure that had been erected for the World's Fair. Flecks of red paint fluttered down from the platform onto Jack's coat and onto the tops of his outstretched feet. Two columns straddled the bench, protecting his upper body from the gusts as each piece of chipped paint on the top of his dilapidated, oversized Reeboks was snatched away and sent into the dry, gray street to be pummeled by sundry cars rushing from place to place in search of something or someone, if they were lucky.

The chips also fell onto his knees, but went unnoticed. His pants were patched and paint-splattered from an odd job he had taken years before on the city's west side, in what used to be one of the most dangerous gang lands in the country. The job only paid in sustenance, but that was exactly what he had needed.

A man approached Jack's bench. He was a chubby man with a scratchy face and an abrasive voice. He towered over Jack like a nuclear steam tower ravaging a quaint seaside village, casting a shadow on the top of his friend's head and blocking the feeble winter sunset with his foggy exhalations.

"Jack, my man. Boy, you're doin' good tonight. I can't stand this cold. It's bone chillin', damn near sub zero and shit. What's a guy gotta do for a dollar? Know what I'm sayin'? These people struttin' home to their pretties and pies. All they done is work and I bet they complainin' about it. Shit, I'll trade em! That's all I need. I bet they sittin' at work just fantasizin' about how they gonna spend this Friday night. That's all they care 'bout. Workin' for free time. They ain't gotta worry 'bout nothing else, no sir."

The man popped the collar of his aged, perforated pea coat and tightened the slipknot of his burgundy scarf. His eyes were on the road.

"I'll tell you somethin' else, boy. I bet they's gettin' lovin' tonight. They a huggin' and a kissin' and I ain't seen nothing like that in a long, long time. It's hard to love weekends when you ain't got nobody. Am I right, my man?"

He glared over at Jack briefly.

"Well, I'm gonna go over to the convenience store on Halsted, see if I can scrounge up enough change for a cup of coffee or something. You can come

along if you'd like. You've sure got the funds..."

The scratchy-faced man paused expectantly, watching the artificial light from the platforms above flicker by as a train sparked to a halt. Disappointed, he staggered away and disappeared into the masses.

Jack's cup continued to fill, nearly brimming over. He was lucky to have landed such an enterprising spot before anyone else. Some street dwellers were known to camp at spots such as his for days, guarding their cash cow. The Belmont Street station's traffic was a generally profitable one, and when the masses came the weight of bounty swelled for the beggars.

A young woman brashly and clumsily stepped out of the station, knocking over Jack's ancient camping pack and nearly spilling the collection cup to the pavement like a busted gumball machine.

"Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry..." she sighed.

Her eyes were large and hazel with fatigue strewn beneath her lids like coffee stains at the bottom of a cheap cup. The beauty of her character flared through her demeanor. Each movement was pleasantly conscious, yet not uptight, not suffocating. She repeatedly pushed her thin, wavy hair back behind her sharp ears.

She placed the bag back against the pillar and reached for her purse. She pushed through the vague artifacts of a stressful lifestyle: prescription migraine medication, balled up tissue paper, reams of note cards encrypted with her sloppy and wiry script, yellowing paperback novels, a bottle of mace, a half pack of Marlboro Lights, and her last five dollar bill.

She placed the crisp bill at the top of the swelling, coin-filled cup. His jacket flapped in the wind. She noticed his necklace lying perfectly still on his chest, like an antique decoration adorning an historical building. He didn't retrieve the offering immediately, so the young woman backed away pensively, once again pushing her hair to its perch above her wind-burned ears and breathing evenly. She opened her mouth to speak but quickly closed it and headed east toward the thrashing sounds of the lake.

The five dollars lay idle in the cup next to Jack's narrow, arthritic knee. The sun had finished its descent, returning to its eternal struggle as



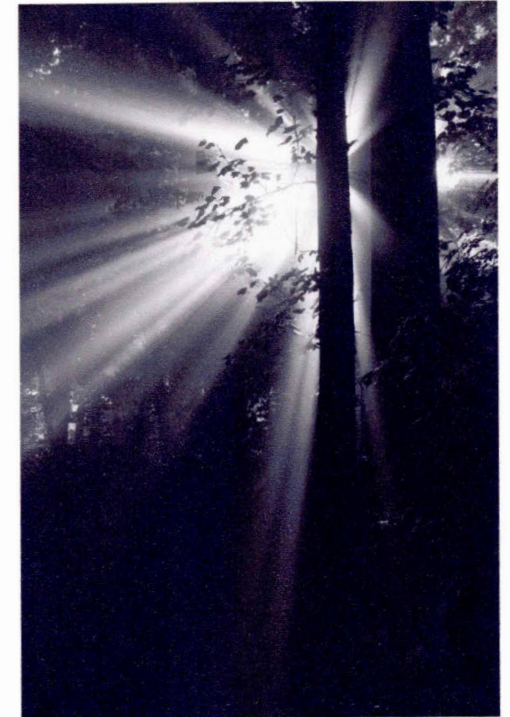
the people on the trains were given at least the illusion of freedom and comfort at their homes. They had never known anything different.

A hazy, blue streetlamp flickered to life behind Jack, flinging his outstretched, sickly shadow to the cracked ground. The harbor recoiled from countless explosions of dirty water, and the wind boomeranged off the water, around the old man's barriers, and sent the five-dollar bill flailing across the intersection. It came to a stop against a steel case full of free newspapers.

A middle-aged man stepped out of a taxi across from Jack's bench. He handed his money to the driver, leaving minimal gratuity. Turning around to face his posh apartment complex, he spotted the stray currency plastered against the sordid newspaper dispenser. Careful not to damage his suit, he hiked up his camel fur coat and rolled up his pants, revealing argyle socks. He was clueless to the origin of this treasure, this reimbursement of his cab ride, and felt foolish to question it.

The canopy above the building's door flapped frantically in the wind. A chill shot down the man's spine. He clasped the bill in his hand, stuffed it into the inner pocket of his jacket, and scurried through the misty bursts of breath from those passing by and went inside, greeting the doorman with a smile.

Jack Cordell had not felt the gnashing of winter for hours; his crucifix lay ice cold on his stiff breast.



"Sunbeams and Branches" by Ryan Harris

Sometimes I let my dishes  
pile up in the sink  
to remind me I'm human.  
I pluck leaves from branches  
because I know  
everyone is going to die.

"We take care of each other  
to remember people can love,"  
is what he told me,  
but I think sometimes  
it's just like lines on paper.  
They show you which way to go.

And maybe sometimes we miss the paths,  
or get lost in Brooklyn,  
like he and I did.  
Yet we somehow found the same place.

Maybe love is just an idea.  
But even when  
I can't feel his chest  
I still know he is breathing.

by Sarah Shah

### Suppose

You were a field mouse  
with only so many  
allotted heart beats

would you breathe deeper  
move slower  
or would you forge ahead  
gather straw for winter's chill.

by Heather M. Hoover



by Ryan Harris

### The Haiku of Explanation

I came late to class  
I ate lunch at home then left  
I love you - B.J.

by B.J. Krug

### "World in White..."

White trees, white paths,  
White hills; white all around,  
Performs the winter;  
It's work majestic.  
Direct your gaze on snowflakes  
Falling fast,  
And watch the wonder of the  
World in white.

And as time seems frozen,  
So the trees of snow.  
Amazing simple pleasures  
They have become.  
What once was plain,  
Is now as fine as silk,  
Like fancy ladies  
Draped in robes of white.

by Abigail Carter



by Bailey Carter



## On Silence

by Ben Foote

Some people say he is everywhere. Well, I haven't been everywhere. I know for sure he is in the mountains. At least during the morning when the smoky mist is cradling the peaks and the sun is bouncing through their tiny beads of water, ricocheting warmth into the valleys. I know he is in my father. The man is getting older, but with each gray hair that surfaces, another step towards wisdom is reached. I know that he is in music - Aaron Copland, to be precise. I am also pretty sure that he is in puppies. Regardless, I think it's terrifying that he might be everywhere.

I am young, but I have heard whispers from him. It is a strange experience. You don't realize you've heard him until he is already gone, but it hurts your ears anyway. He smells like burning leaves, which is a good thing. The first time I heard him, I had locked myself in the laundry room. I was huddled in the corner, trying to listen for him. I crouched there mumbling on and on to him, but I might have been talking to myself - I'm not sure. Eventually though, the brick in my stomach dissolved, the fear and trembling disappeared, and I was able to stand up. That's when I knew I must have heard him.

The second time I heard him, I was on a hiking trip with my father. We decided to stop on a bald and enjoy the view of the sweeping Blue Ridge range. I wrote in my journal and listened to a blue bird in a nearby tree as it chirped away. The mountains looked like a freeze frame of the ocean in the middle of a raging storm. The rolling hills careened and tilted sporadically, eventually vaporizing into my vanishing point. Any minute I thought the frame was going to jump back into motion and with a deafening roar, the mountains were going to roll over me on that tiny bald, and I was going to drown in all that soil and leaf and green. Then it did.

And that's when I knew I must have heard him again.

It has been almost two years since I last heard his voice. It feels longer. People say that silence is necessary during a conversation, so maybe he and I are just having a very long discussion.

Sometimes I lie awake in bed until four or five in the morning. I invent people and situations in my mind. I give them a setting and I make them happy. Then I give them a conflict and I make them confused. Then I fall asleep and by the time I wake up, I have forgotten their conflict, therefore I don't invent any solutions. I wonder if they are still out there looking for resolve. Sometimes I wonder if he invented me and then fell asleep. Is there a trick to waking him up? I can be a quiet person. I like being alone every now and then, but who struts around not talking to their friends for years at a time?

My life right now is very different from how I imagined it when I was in high school. I imagined traveling the states, living in a barely operable fifteen-passenger van with my buddies, self-booking shows and playing songs I've written for two or three people a night. In slow motion, I could see the venue's stagnant cloud of cigarette smoke mystically billowing away from the microphone with each syllable I released. Instead, my life turned out better. I fell in love. Even greater, that same person fell in love with me. I guess that has to be proof he is still speaking.

However, it still seems a bit ludicrous. Two years of silence? I guess he is trying to teach me something. Maybe silence, in a round-about way, is supposed to equal affirmation. Even though I don't hear him, I believe there *is something* being silent. I guess the only reason I am upset about this is because I truly believe he is real. If he was just another one of my late-night characters, I could simply invent a resolution and move on. But I can't. And that is enough to hold on to until the sound comes back again.



## Let the Little Children Come to Me

by Emily Krug

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."*

—Matthew 19:14

One:

The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother. He was five years old and hadn't seen her in a year. He missed her. The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled. He was forty-seven and afraid. The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled. He was afraid he let the terrorists on the plane. The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled, "Get back NOW!" The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled at him. The boy cried. The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled and made the boy afraid. The boy did not hug his grandmother. He was five years old and hadn't seen her in a year. He missed her, but he did not hug her. The boy ran forward to meet his grandmother, and the security guard yelled.

Two:

The security guard yelled. The boy ran back frightened. The boy was five years old. He did not remember the attack. He was three when it happened. His grandmother was coming to visit today. Last year, his parents took him to visit her on the other side of the country. She had a cat, and the boy liked to rub it backwards. She also had lots of cookies; he liked that. He missed her because he liked the way she smelled and the way she tickled him when they hugged.

Today he did not hug her. The security guard yelled when he ran forward to meet her. The boy did not like it when big people were angry, and the security guard was angry. The boy cried and was afraid.

Three:

The boy ran forward. The security guard yelled because that's what he was supposed to do. If people try to get past the line, yell at them to stop. If that doesn't work, chase them. The security guard was afraid that someone would get through. He was forty-seven and couldn't run very fast. He was afraid that he let the terrorists through two years ago. He had heard that even children were terrorists, with bombs strapped to their stomachs. He was afraid, and the fear kept him going. The boy ran forward. The security guard yelled, "Get back NOW!" The boy started crying.



"Phipps Bend Tunnel"

by Sharon Pridemore



## My Sisterhood

My story folds out before me  
A story of pain  
My life as a girl confused by the world  
My life as a woman confusing the world  
A life different than what I thought I lived

I thought I was different  
I thought differently  
I thought as a child, a child of ease  
A man like the son of fathers  
But, like all the others, I was wrong

I walk on the paths of the dead  
The paths of the simple  
The paths of the complex  
The paths of the joyous  
The paths of life  
I walk into a desolation—  
The desert, the destruction of a ravished soul  
A tomb  
My tomb  
And I read my name  
My forgotten name  
My Unknown name  
And I see my beauty  
The beauty of the revealed ignorance,  
The beauty of my own humanity  
Humanity I hadn't sought, but won't relinquish

And as the muse fades into the distance,  
Bright whiteness flowing away,  
I feel the growth of the life around me  
I find the love  
I sense my sisterhood  
And I weep  
For I have failed myself.

by B.J. Krug

## Girls

by Erin Hernandez  
*Inspired by Rick Moody's "Boys"*

Girls enter the house. Girls enter the house after the confusing sensory experience of birth, having their nose and mouth sucked dry, having their foot stamped multiple times in black ink so that their older sister can wear a pin that says, "I'm a sister!" Girls enter the house swaddled in pink from head to toe (even their diapers have cute pink bows) with no consideration for whether they prefer the color pink or not. Girls enter the house as the new babies, cooed over as their sister sits in the corner painfully alone wondering why her parents had to bring home round balls of blubber that cry all night ruining her dreams of becoming a fairy tale princess. Before long, girls enter the house walking, precariously balancing on feet shod with those awkward fashion trends called shoes and in oh-so-cute pink frilly dresses that no one bothered to ask if the girls wanted to wear or not. A few more years and girls enter the house followed by school friends who come over for milk and cookies, sleepovers, and to play with Barbies. There was that one time the girls tried to enter the house with a toy dump truck that the boy next door let them play with, but Mom adamantly refused to allow them to play with what she deemed a "boy toy." The girls occasionally enter the house with their sister, but this is only on rare days when she can't find any other friends to play with; after all, she isn't one of those losers who hang out with their siblings. The one person the girls never enter the house with is their father, whose heart gave out on him two weeks before the girls entered the house for the first time. Their mother loved when her girls entered the house, even if they had only been at school, because she could see her husband's eyes in theirs, but her joy upon seeing their bright faces eager to tell what they had learned masked the agony of remembering her beloved husband. Perhaps this was why their sister was so envious of her sisters; she noticed, although no one else did, that her mother adored the twins upon entering the house because they looked like their father while she looked more like their mother. This



broken family of four girls left and entered the house once a year with a burden in their hearts, which lingered through the years. One girl entered the house in tears when her best friend called her a bad name behind her back. The other girl enters the house with a crimson face and crimson jeans after the onset of puberty. The girls enter the house, BFF (best friends forever), when the meanest girl in school makes fun of one sister's flamboyant fashion, after which the other sister smartly punches the bully in the mouth. Nothing can come between these girls as they enter the house, bound for life by the inextricable and inexplicable ties that only occur between identical twins. The girls enter the house confused and scared as they discuss their sister's thinness. They had always been a little jealous of their sister because she had a drive to succeed, which pleased her teachers and their mother, that they did not have. The girls enter the house still thinking about their sister, of whom they hadn't really noticed a loss of weight, but it's hard to tell when you see someone every day. When the girls enter the house, they are confronted with whispers of words they don't understand, such as "anorexia" and "eating disorder," and they acknowledge that these words are about their sister, but they don't really know what they are dealing with or what their sister is dealing with. The girls had always entered the house with the sense that they had a normal family despite the absence of their father, but this normalcy disappeared with their sister's visits to the family doctor and a psychiatrist. The girls realize that their sister needs their help, and they enter the house with a mission: they are going to make sure that their sister knows that they love her and look up to her as a role model. The undeniable ties of family hold together these three, who dare not look to the past and its pain, but look forward to the times when they will enter the house as sisters bound by their joy and suffering.

## WORD(S) OF LOVE

### A Theological Reflection

*"In the beginning was the Word...  
Through Him were all things made...  
In Him was life,  
and that life was the light of men."  
-John 1:1a, 3a, 4*

#### Creation

Laughter tamed the void when time  
Itself was but a child, and joy gave  
Form to chaos, weaving His  
Exquisite tapestry of Love...

#### Incarnation

Love...that one day sought His own,  
Invaded darkness, banished night with  
Glowing infant smile in straw –  
Heaven's Beacon – soon to shine  
Triumphant, bright as noonday sun!

by Kevin Harkey



by Ryan Harris



by Tyler Selby

“Don’t go any farther than that, Henry. You’re close enough.”

The small boy craned his neck around toward his father with a grimace and crept back away from the metal railing encircling the smooth, wooden edge. Henry ambled back toward his seat in the cockpit, trying to keep his balance as lulls in the ocean sent them bobbing up and down.

His father’s gaze returned toward the bow of their Westerly 33 cruising yacht. He had spent seven years patching gaping holes in the side deck, staining and waterproofing the mahogany bow, and desperately scouring the world over for a proper rudder to replace the rotting one he had inherited. He had emptied himself into the revival of this boat and had transformed the shabby hull into a gleaming work of elegance. Henry, on the other hand, cared little for the boat. To him, it was merely a big piece of wood that let them float over the vast, inky sea.

Henry slumped back into his seat on the left side of his father who sat manning the tiller. His rough hand grasped the wooden pole and tilted it back and forth as they slowly tacked right and left into the wind. Henry squirmed in his seat. He grasped the neck of his wool sweater, curled up the flap so it veiled his mouth and nose, and crossed his arms to let his father know he was pouting.

With a passing glance, Henry’s father looked at him and said, “Oh come now, Henry, stop that pouting. Look here, we’re tacking eastward again. Go and pull that mainsheet to shift the mainsail. No, not that. Look at where I am pointing, Henry, that rope right there. The mainsheet, yes, that’s it. Pull that over, there’s a good boy.” And with that, he took his eyes off of his son and sent them back toward the bow. Henry did not like sailing. He loathed their yacht because in the competition for his father’s attention, it usually won.

The yacht’s towering mast reached out toward the sun, keeping its clenched grip on the unfurled sail that stretched as if it were the bump of a pregnant belly. His father had furnished the cabin with supple leather

couches, the newest model stovetop, and sleeping quarters to house a family of seven. Not that they would ever use any of these luxuries though; their family consisted of Henry, his father, and his twenty-five year old stepmother, and their sailing excursions never lasted longer than a single afternoon.

Henry’s stepmother sat across from him, beside his father. She wore a salmon-colored cocktail dress, matching stilettos, and a wide-brimmed hat she had bought in Paris while on their honeymoon.

“Henry, would you like some caviar? I could spread some on a cracker for you. Would you like that?” she asked.

He simply shook his head while keeping his arms pinned to his chest and his legs flailing back and forth, kicking his seat. His stepmother looked anxiously from Henry to his father. She could not bear the silence or the tension.

“Oh, Charles, let him go look over the edge,” she pleaded to her husband. “It won’t do him any harm and there is the railing. He won’t fall in.”

His father furrowed his brow and grunted his assent. Giddy with excitement and relief, Henry clamored over the wall of the cockpit and bolted toward the starboard side of the yacht, his shoes squeaking over the fiberglass finish of the deck. He kneeled in front of the edge with his hands clinging to the cold steel railing and peered into the water. The boat’s slapping over the lulls in the water spit up sprays of mist into Henry’s face. The ocean billowed under them as if the bow of the yacht was cutting into a speeding factory belt.

Henry reclined on his side as his gaze slipped down into the abyss, his thoughts following his stare into the depths of the ocean. A world teeming with fish surfaced in his mind: all kinds of fish painted in vibrant shades of yellows and oranges and reds, speckled with large spots, and dressed in stripes that burst down their torsos and wrapped around their midsections. Henry dreamt he was a fish.

He felt gills poke up and flutter on the sides of his neck while his sweater and khaki pants melted into his skin and fiery crimson scales



shimmered across his body. White spots with black rings bubbled up on his belly and on what were now no longer his arms and legs, but fins. His body writhed and contorted on the fiberglass deck and his gills flared open for breath. The spray from the ocean beckoned him to come and explore. He peeked back to see if his father and stepmother were watching his transformation, but when he saw that they were staring off toward the horizon in silence, he flopped over the railing and into the ocean.

Henry gasped with pleasure as the salty water rushed into his gills and saturated his body through his vibrant scales. His rear fin whipped back and forth, propelling him deeper and deeper. It was not long until Henry arrived at the sandy floor of the sea. Cavernous boulders peppered the sand and feral-looking kelp forests swayed lazily in the currents. Henry darted in between the craters of the rocks and swirled and weaved through the forests, soaking in every detail of his paradise: the puffs of sand being blown up by every pump of his fin, the clammy sides of the kelp and the embrace of the water pressing against his sides.

Schools of other fish suddenly came streaming out of the holes in the rocks and from behind the forests of kelp. Henry was delighted when he saw that the other fish's spots and coloring paled in comparison with his. They performed magnificent loops and twirls at the sight of Henry, and he was just as excited to see them. Games of chase and hide-and-go-seek began with the fish taking refuge within the crevasses of the rock and burying themselves under a grainy bed of sand while Henry scampered after them.

He found a cloud of minnows that he dwarfed by his large size and swam right through them, scattering them into all different directions. Then, as quickly as they had dissolved, the minnows clumped back together into their bulbous mass. Henry raced through them again and just as before, they exploded into the water and magnetically jerked back together. The light shimmering in through the surface of the water bounced off the minnows and sent miniature beams of refracted light pirouetting across the ocean floor.

"All right, Henry, that's long enough. Come back away from the edge." His father's voice rang out like some overhead speaker, shattering his dream. Drudgingly, Henry pulled himself up and plodded back toward the cockpit.

"What were you doing over there, Henry?" his stepmother asked as he slumped down into his seat.

"I dreamt I was a fish," he muttered. His father grunted at Henry's nonsense.

She stared back confused. "Like a game?" she asked. "I'm afraid I don't understand. But it does sound fun. How do I play? Will you teach me to play?" she coaxed.

Henry looked out toward the horizon. The sun sagged down toward the line of the ocean, sending a warming glow that echoed across the sky. He sighed. "Maybe later."



by Megan Bowser



### Waiting for the Mail

Thoreau was wrong  
about the post office  
because among the bills  
and catalogs is your  
much-like-mine handwriting.  
and even before I read  
the insides, I see  
you—choosing the paper,  
the words, the mottled  
sunspace of the front room,  
choosing me, making a gift  
of that moment.

by Heather M. Hoover



"Moment in Salzburg"

by Jane-Anne Thomas

### the return

i fold upon myself  
and empty what  
that is

i hold in my hands  
and empty the  
pain of that  
that is learnt

I am my motions  
but they are  
not my own

dear brethren  
respond not to the form of my body  
the shape  
however so slight  
of my words

i am the canyon-eyed one with  
pools of  
eternity

dear brother,  
pray do not  
float along these waters

i am with and of  
a thing so  
small

oh sister, i  
am small,  
see it  
i, responding to all  
that is large  
all that is the  
great and  
greatness of  
that  
that is

of who  
whom is.

by Megan Bowser



## The Old White House Remembers

by Jeremy Walker

*This story was inspired by a white farm house that stood on the hill where Sam's Club now sits in Johnson City.*

The old white house remembers. Rough cut planks of wood, freshly splintered from the saw mill, were stacked high on the hill's summit. Surrounding forests gave their offering to this new creation waiting to be formed by the hands of men. Simple tools paired with strong backs gathered around the wood pile. Mr. Hart, his two young sons, and his two brothers began to systematically distribute the pieces of wood. All was in place. The men opened nail boxes, sifting through the various sizes to begin connecting board to board, tissue to tissue, bone to bone. Hammers fell with strength and precision; the newborn house came into the world through bare hands and sweat-soaked shirt collars. These builders knew their trade, and every square inch of the foundation revealed their meticulous care. Mr. Hart learned from his father – the boys watched their own father move with strength and confidence. Calloused hands smoothed across all parts of the structure and frame. Once completed, the form would be called house, eventually called home. The Hart family knew every square inch, and the fresh white paint glimmered in the late afternoon sun. The white house waited for the boys to run down its halls, for Mrs. Hart to quietly hum while mending clothes, and for Mr. Hart to utter the word "home" when he stepped through the front doorway.

The year was 1902. The white house stood with utmost dignity atop the green Tennessee hill, while the Hart family dug deeply into the surrounding land. Soil would produce a bounty of life-giving fuel for their fragile frames. Mr. Hart and his two boys would labor all day in the precious dirt waiting for the produce to emerge. When it was time, large rows of green leafy plants stretched toward the sun. All the family members joined in to gather and store the earth's contribution to their survival. Corn, tomatoes, wheat, cucumbers, and potatoes were some of

the family favorites. Mouth-watering smells from Mrs. Hart's kitchen soon began to drift across the house's interior, and the white house was pleased and honored to have this family shuffling about its deepest parts.

Growing taller every year, the Hart boys played among the animals and weeds in their youth. Sleds glided down the steep hillside in winter. Mrs. Hart comforted them and healed their scraped exteriors. She sung softly when darkness filled the rooms and the moon stared down in admiration upon them all. She woke early to gather wood for her cooking fires, to prepare animals for the day's meals, and to knead dough into bread for her hungry family. All had an equal job to keep this family going, and all worked together. Through the windows, the boys would appear in the distance at full speed, joyously escaping their day of formal education to learn from their father at home. Mr. Hart kept the farm in order; he spent much time on the hillside tending to the crops. He was a man of compassion. He loved the land, realizing it was a gift to be treasured and not exploited. His hands were accustomed to holding the ruddy brown soil, the ultimate source of life for himself and his family. He made sure the Hart boys would learn to revere all of the earth's good gifts.

The white house watched years pass. One Hart family after another carried on the legacy, burying its rich past in the nearby field. The house remained strong, holding fast through many storms of various magnitudes. Winters came and went. Spring never failed to surprise the ones who forgot the beauty of prior years. The outlying farmland and distant mountains would burst into life when the extended days of March arrived. Year after year, the aging white house declared itself a servant to the land and to those who formed its being.

The year was 2006. Paint was chipping, roof leaking, windows hazed over, but the house still stood with reflective majesty. However, emptiness pervaded the place on the hill. The final Hart family, desperate to make ends meet in the new century, passed the farm over to strangers. The white house's place in the world quietly and gently spoke through the remaining traces of sweat embedded within the aged wood's grain. The rooms remembered the heavy steps of those who once called it home.



Sudden bursts of deafening explosions shook the foundation of the worn white house. Constant rumbling filled the depths of the earth as dynamite cleared the surrounding land with violent force. Soil burst into the air. Clouds of red dust blew across the hilltop, settling on the lonesome front porch of the house. Pieces of the once life-giving earth plummeted down the hillside, and construction bombs continued without ceasing. Numerous men walked around the site with bright orange hats protecting them from disturbed rock and earth. Destructive machinery roared across the landscape, leaving torn tracks in its wake. Gasoline spilled. Dark black smoke poured from the machines, filling the surrounding air with noxious fumes that no one seemed to notice. Teeth tore into the earth, picked up the life-producing dirt, and dumped it all wherever the men desired.

The unnatural and distinct chemical aroma of asphalt began to lay heavy in the white house's atmosphere. The black sticky substance was quickly spread near and far. All the earth was covered. The house tried to remember the tall elegant grasses, the quick-moving bees, and the child-attracting mud that appeared after a gentle rain. Any water that fell from above now flooded the black cement, swirling in greasy rainbows and flowing swiftly into concrete grates.

Magnificence of a deep black night sky was forgotten as blinding white and orange street lights polluted the darkness. White lines were painted across the place where Mrs. Hart planted her flower garden. Signs which read "Parking" were placed in rows, the same rows which once produced rich grains and vegetables for a family's stomachs.

Finally, a building of such enormity was constructed that the white house appeared as a small shed in the shadows. Steel beams were lowered by a powerful crane. A man sat in the belly of the beast directing its every move with a simple flick of his wrist. The cold steel structure slowly took shape, demanding attention from all along the hillside. A banner was placed high above the electronic doorways reading "Grand Opening." Men and women would later be seen bounding across the black surface to quickly be chewed up and swallowed by the structure's constantly opening and closing mouths.



by Megan Bowser

The manufactured structure came into life; all slowly began to fade. Boards were methodically placed in front of every window on the old white house. The house's vision was chiseled away as each cover blocked the light from entering inside. In one last struggle to see out of the streaked glass, a moving creature was spotted in the distance. A nail gun brutally pierced one corner of the remaining window frame, enough to allow the house to see the mechanical beast approaching the summit. A man was sitting in the center of the distant rolling beast as it inevitably summoned the end. The machine cried out in a furious roar of exhaust to announce the way of the future. The last board went into place. All went black.



## Drunk Rabbits

by Devin Johnson

"State yer name, or I'll blow ye to hell!" an old woman hollered. She continued to sway in her rocker but leaned over and set her shotgun on her lap.

"Massey, mam. It's Massey," said a man in a vest and suit, trudging his way up the ridge toward the woman's cabin.

"Speak up or I'll blow ye to hell!"

"Massey," he quavered.

"Well, welcome back then. I's wonderin' when ye'd return. Sit yerself down now."

Despite her welcome, he took his time getting to her. He wasn't entirely sure she wouldn't have a change-in-heart. He looked up at her home: one room, with bark shingles shorn from a white oak tree, and boards of cedar for walls, all resting on river rock. A dead-fall stood ten yards from her cabin steps where she had dug six feet into the earth to trap bear. Massey glared into the dark repository and spotted a few blanched bones in a bed of black fur. He stopped at the porch so she could get a look at him. She kept rocking but laid the four shot to her right next to a newly skinned copperhead.

"Ye in the mood fer stew?" she asked him.

"No mam."

"Then I spose ye come fer sang?"

"What's that?"

"Want sang?" she hollered.

He stared at her politely and examined the fissures the sun had laid in her countenance. Her face had withered into a single illegible expression. A careful glance couldn't tell whether she was fooling him or confessing to him.

"I can if you'd like," he replied. His cheeks reddened at the flattery. He cleared his throat and made it through the first line of an old hymn before she hollered at him:

"No, no, no. Clean yer ears out. *Gin-sang!* Ye come for the *gin-sang*, haven't ye?"

"No, no mam. I've come for rabbit."

"Well then," she paused. "Are ye after the meat er the hide?"

"All the parts please, if it's no trouble."

She cursed softly and rose slowly from her rocker and walked inside. She ruffled through a few cages and wooden boxes, and then the man heard the crackle of sticks and the hushed flex of twine as she sat down on her bed to think. After a few seconds of silence, Massey got to his feet and braced himself for her return, staring at her shotgun.

"Hell," she shouted. "I'll learn ye rabbit huntin'."

She hurried out of the cabin and picked up her gun. Massey raised his head in attention and his eyes swelled like moonflowers at day's end.

There was one narrow path on her property, the same footpath Massey followed to the cabin. Its light brown hue was identical to the bottom of the old woman's feet, the same texture too. Her walking stick carved craters in the clay, lining the path's edges like a seed drill sowing a field. She knew exactly the distance of her route and could count down the paces until they arrived at the first blackberry blossom.

"Ye see them critters lyin' next to the bushes up yonder? Drunkern hell."

"What'd you say, mam?"

"Likkerfied. I knock down the berries and it turns 'em to likker. Them animals eat the berries up and lie down drunk and look at the sky."

Ahead lay the spectacle where rabbits, squirrels, and raccoons rested by the blossom, etherized and staring at the clouds through the forest ceiling.

"They's ripe fer the pickin'," she whispered.

Massey quickly gathered three or four rabbits by the ears like a child plucking wildflowers from a meadow.

"Hold on. Is ye plannin' to take 'em all?" She sighted the barrel of the four shot at his throat to keep the fire away from the rabbits. "Ye best leave some to sit and stay drunk."

He dropped them suddenly, and they all fell to the ground like sacks of flour. Massey raised his hands in fear.

"Ye calm down now," she assured him and lowered her gun.

Before he could put his arms at his side, she heard a thrashing behind her and spun around with unhuman torque. In the same motion she



pumped the shotgun and set it on a black bear tussling with a belly full of fermented berries further up the path. Massey's body fell limp and he lay flat in the path.

"Gets away from my berries. I'll strike ye dead, ye drunk beast."

With the shotgun resting on her shoulder, the old woman walked right up to the bear, who rose up on its back legs and offered her an intoxicated growl of warning. She kept her stride and slipped the length of the gun through her fingers until the stock hit the clay. The bear craned its skull toward her in curious anger, and the old woman grabbed hold of the end of the barrel and swung the four shot around her head twice before whacking the bear underneath its snout. Its head flung backward and the body followed. Like a great oak falling in a forest, the bear landed on its spine and its legs flopped outwards until it lay there spread-eagle in the center of the woman's path.

"I'd be damned if that beast sobered up just in time to eat my rabbits," she said. The old woman started cursing at the bear then turned to Massey to give him leave: "I'll allow ye two. Fetch me some twine er be on yer way."

### a blurry bird song

birds nests building and humming out of my mouth  
and i so still that my warm breath soothes the crackling eggs  
blue birds nestle into my cheek and laugh with trilling

'worms wriggle in my saliva that i may feed my mate  
worms gurgle in my throat as i feed my helpless young'

i breathe through these hushed wings as i whisper  
bringing blush to the feathered cheeks  
of a simple-songed bluebird  
i feel every twig in my inner places  
i feel every grain of millet  
i feel every psalm of rustling feathers  
settling into umber midnight  
settling as though tables were my teeth  
chimneys were my nose  
tablets were my tongue  
tablets for songs unsung

'worms struggle in my mind as i dream incessantly  
worms struggle far too many dreams for me to sing'

by Aaron Jones



by Ryan Harris



### Waiting 'Til Continuation

Sliding, slipping, falling,  
Calmly, then faster, steadying, constant.  
Air moving round,  
Dark surrounding, blanketing, holding.  
The comfort, cover, hidden.  
Dropping still, onward, downward.  
Time ticking by, unchanging, ever-tolling,  
Counting the passage,  
Numbers growing, always higher.  
Watch it pass, stream by, moving away.  
Floating, drifting, slower, softer,  
Slacking toward stopping.  
Ceasing, staying.  
Confused by stillness.  
Alert, waiting.

by Kalee Nagel

