



the ram's tale | 2006

The Ram's Tale
2006

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Cover photograph *A Little Siesta* by Vivienne Henry



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All art requires courage.
Anne Tucker

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Foreword

We hope you find within these pages something that invokes wonder and that inspires you. In both the written and in the visual arts represented here, there can be found the quiet strength of student artists. Some pieces embrace the hope of the human spirit, some take a watchful look at its desperation. There is edginess, humor, fear, sadness and desire spread out on the page, raw and unflinching—all measuring sticks to be held up next to our own reflections on the life in which we stand. Above all, there is promise here—strong and fearless—of which each artist represented knows exists through their own experiences, their own gut feelings. Each has come out the other side, each has moved through the things of which they write and imagine. Each piece represents a clear, unabashed voice that tells us: *Listen and look; there are still those of us who tell the true stories of the human condition. There are still those who will not be quieted. Find comfort in this. We speak for you.*

As editors of *The Ram's Tale*, we hope that you find solace in these pages; we hope you will celebrate the student artists who are represented here and also celebrate your own inner strength as observer and as participant in the world you move through daily. In her poem “Escalando Hacia Las Estrellas,” student poet Tannya Villalvazo calls each one of us to join her in her quest to accomplish her own dreams of working toward a more loving world: “. . . I hope that the ladder is sufficiently long to reach the stars./If it isn't, I will build my own steps with all of my strength,/And I will accomplish my dream of being face to face with those beauties.”

May each one of us find the strength to accomplish the same for ourselves.

Managing Editors,
Zay Logan and Margaret Hiebert

Poetry

*Ink runs from the corners of my mouth;
there is no happiness like mine.
I have been eating poetry.*

Mark Strand

And

Mongoly Naly Xiong
First Prize Poetry

And the clouds move on
as the sheep cries wolf
blood on her coat, fashioned
by buttons of stones.
And he stalks his prize.
Around and around he goes,
his snarls turn into grins
as her eyes begin to flicker and fade.
Tired, she is.
Tired, she is.

And he steals her body,
still warm and firm,
sweetened by the blood that flows
from her mouth to his.
And where she was slain,
a virgin bed of roses lay.
In the rolling grasslands,
the blades still blowing to and fro.
Cold, she is.
Cold, she is.

And to the thick-thorned cave
he drags her limp, cotton body,
caught in between the pearl-knit razors
that sink deep, sink skin.
And he paws at her flesh.
And he tears at her flesh.
And he looks up to the skies,
but there's nothing there at all.
Damned, he is.
Damned, he is.

And “forgiveness,” he pleads
after he devours her soul and body.
And from a hole in the foliage roof
a light shines on his prize.
And his eyes turn red
and turn away dilated and empty,
vast and vengeful. Serenity.
Here, the gnarly trees mark her grave.
Named, she is.
Named, she is.

And his pleasure, there comes none
now that his guilt has made his tear
and seeps from his teeth
and sits in his stomach full.
And as the leaves fold and dry,
the currents move on lame.
As the sun beats her rot,
buds roll and flowers bloom high.
Bones, she is.
Bones, she is.

And the shepherd wipes the night
from his eyes, the morning from his lips.
And next to his lover of marriage,
tried and strayed, he finds a straw home.
And only the virgin pastures
harvest the words to say.
And beyond the mortality of embrace,
he tastes the breath of nature.
Sweet, it is.
Sweet, it is.

Fall

Victor A. Perez

Second Prize Poetry

The soy and Tiger's Milk will not save you here
it is time for you to start thinking about what you left
beyond the bones and blood
and your reflection on your most recent past
your evasion of reality
your money
your stop signs

I will not deny my complete failure that brought us together
my bike
my jousting with herds of steel buffaloes
my presence I commanded on the sidewalk
my full speed vulnerability
my full speed break in the chain

But if you decide to fall
turn your body into the fall
do not try to out do the inevitable
that you will be on your back staring into the sun
Let this be

Like the inevitable phone call
let this be a reminder that there are so many things to do still
like lose your job and convince your love
that you have lost your anger
that you have lost your absence

The Hour I Return

Allison Joy Faulkner

Third Prize Poetry

The hour I return
A squeaking door lets me home
I enter that warming darkness
Take muffled steps to my door
I breathe such shallow breaths
At the hour of two
Wish to squirm into bed
Ignore my teeth and my face
Want to go unconscious for a bit
Be so quiet, be so delicate
With every movement and thought
It's all in the hips
And putting your heel down first
Before you take a step
I change, throw my smoky clothes on the floor
Feel the chill in the air
Slide my dresser drawer open so carefully
So slowly and grab a shirt
What would I care
If you could awake and hear that I still breathe
I still make noise in the hour of two
You are both nestled so close
As if you were one
I am the hour of two
Split down the center and strewn all across town
Laughing in a park, blurry stars
And smoking at the bar
Out and around with my midnight boys
My flashes of memory
Clogs the traffic of my mind
Night after night
Here is the hour I return

Through Titi's (Small Boy) Eyes

Kalena Rettner

We live in a mudd howz
just a stone's throw
from the water.

Miss Kalena say
It's the Karibeen.

We use the water
to wash clothes
and bathe
Miss Kalena
shows me a showvur.

The mother goat
hangs herself.
Miss Kalena cries
a lot
I think she is fu.
Fu is crazy.

She say *Goats are animals.*
I say goats are food.
She cries for the baby goats.
I feel nothing.
She say *In America,*
they have baby goats
in their houses.

We are hungry.
We eat kreyonz.
Miss Kalena
say Do not.

We are still hungry.
We eat at school,
then we make pictures
with kreyonz.

I want to go to this America.
I like math books very much.
Miss Kalena say
someday I may.

The Old Trees in Our Yard

Francine Morrow Keehnel

The trees
whisper at night,
bending low,
or stretching their necks
on tiptoes.
Ancient sentinels,
their gnarled limbs
creak with arthritic snaps.

A venerable patriarch,
his mossy beard well kept,
his wrinkled skin
seasoned and weathered,
leans to murmur something
softly,
to his Lady Fair.

She's stood beside him
all these years,
her hair adorned
with robins' nests.
She stoops to listen,
shivers with delight,
and whispers back.

You Were Looking for Glass

Kathryn Giberson

My father read aloud a poem about you,
How you looked for broken glass along dirt roads.

You kept them in a jar inside your closet,
Each glossy face that scratches and corrodes.

Your coffin, it was blue, or maybe white,
And it sat as you would, if you were still here.

Your quietness was louder than in death
And we sang your grace in hopes that you might hear.

My brother, that does not cry, began to cry
And I hung my head to hide your sad lament.

As my mother held my father in her arms,
we understood what his glass poem meant.

He remembered you the way you always were—
Collecting glass along those old dirt roads

Admiring the edges, rough and smooth,
The way the precious mineral corrodes.

Ambitious Donuts

Sandi Howard

Dirty, little country girl
waiting for someone
who will throw the pearls
out to the pigs,
and to the kids they own
(the ones left over
once the water's thrown),
trying to cover
all her black and white dreams,
painting them in neon red
with 20 buck schemes.
A Technicolor voodoo bread.
She flips the switch as the moon's just right.
Donuts aren't the only thing hot and ready tonight.

Blue Jeans

Desiree Gilbreth

I feel like an old pair of jeans,
All worn in.
Threads are breaking at the seams,
And the fabric is starting to thin.

My color has faded,
But the comfort has improved.
Even though the edges are now jaded,
To you I feel brand new.

I try to feel strong,
My intentions are still there.
But the days are so long,
I'm afraid I might leave you bare.

I fit in all the right places,
And still leave you enough room.
I please some adoring faces,
But others frown with doom.

If I can still feel needed,
Without a price tag to wear.
Then those new fancy styles are being conceited,
Because you wear me with tender care.

Rain-Drenched

Titus Williams

The cumulus are gathering
and I shall dance to the rumble,
embraced in a cold comfort
that ignites my flesh.
Its searing heart calls me,
beckons me, strips away my façade
as the rain beats upon my glistening skin.
I have loved long before the downpour,
long before the ticking of time,
more than each numbered raindrop.
I entwine with nature's supple caress
kissing heavenly teardrops of man's
last belief.

Light

(Parts I, II, III)

Linda Corrales

I. This World I Exist In

is very dark and lonely. It is a black and white grayish void; I stand here alone. It seems I am always positioned this way. Many times people knock, but I cannot let anybody in. No one is ever allowed entrance. I did not make up this rule. It just is. There is this one light that creeps in from time to time. This merciful force is what keeps me alive—an overwhelming light, too powerful to push away. It wraps itself around me; it will not let me go. Sometimes this light is rainbow colored. It is beautiful. Most times I am happy to be in my misery, but sometimes I need this mysterious light.

II. The Light

is beginning to brighten my world, but I am not sure if I want it to. When it is rainbow-colored, it comes in the form of a whirlwind. It will not speak to me. It will only let me observe its beauty at a distance. So I stand there gazing in awe. The day I first spoke to it, I was in the greatest pain of my life. I asked it something. It did not talk back to me. It responded by letting me see the most beautiful place in the loveliest colors. This light is beginning to grow on me. I think about it night and day. It is my only companion. I have my own set of friends. But nobody knows.

III. If I Could Speak to the Light

and it would be willing to respond, I would ask Why won't you leave me alone; why don't you speak to me? Sometimes I think the silence is a way of drawing me out. The light won't leave me alone, but it is not that much of a bother anymore. Maybe it is a friend. Perhaps it too needs me. Could it be my very misery and darkness draw it to me as if to say Don't fret; I am here. I exist out here in this hemisphere as well; my so-called life is similar to your? Sometimes I think this light might need me as well. So, show yourself, call yourself, I will tell it one day. But in the meantime, the mystery remains.

Bliss

Tamara Smith

Bliss is a honey-glazed liquid fire
Derived from the sun
Bliss is a child laughing in a parallel universe
With a necklace of dreams
That has yet to unravel
Yet to come undone . . .

Bliss is the resurrection of love
After being crucified
And the face of desire unveiled
Wavering along the corners of a porcelain sky . . .

Interchange

Francine Morrow Keehnel

My hike begins along that blacktop trail
by the reservoir,
where throngs of noisy geese chatter
like guests at a cocktail party.

Hiding in the rushes near the grand opening
at the meadow's edge
allows a spectacular view
of two star bucks rutting for a doe.

A little further on I observe a woodpecker
as it jackhammers above me,
preparing to hide an acorn,
berry or insect.

Picking up a perfect acorn,
I pause to observe a caterpillar spin its cocoon,
thinking of that day, I too will fly away.

The crumbling façade of a log in decay
reminds me that my clay shell is also temporary.

Forest rangers are tagging
trees,
some for demolition, some for preservation.

As my journey intersects
with my original path,
I note in the clearing near the car park
a group of girl scouts are planting seedlings
for renewal.

Satisfied,

ready to head
for the high rise
I call home,
I leave the glade
to take my place
in the parade
of autos going down
the hill like an army
of busy ants,
purposefully toting my load
of treasures
back to the nest.

It's time to rest.

In Whitman's Diary (Afterglow)

Francine Morrow Keehnel

I transcend
even myself
by lowering light,
as evening drops
into
the deepening hues
of night.
The constellation's
Sirius star
rises doggedly,
and punctuates
the dappled
evenscape
to drape
my canopy.
I meditate
upon
the sky,
and wonder
Why?
Inhaling deeply
of the wispy
ether rising
from the fire
within
the leaves
of grass;
yellowed,
mellowed,
tightly rolled
and stuffed
in paper thin.
I am the grass.
I burn within.

Ode to Pollution

Mongoly Naly Xiong

Peach skin, patches of salmon,
blazing orange, golden hue of lava.
And if my eyes weren't blind
and my mind blown,
I'd be able to paint you a picture.
Surrounded by gray layers of lint,
the sun's make-shift rays
pour colors of the departing rain
pass the burning leaves.
Pass the silvering concrete.
Pass the dying fountain way.

Red faces all stare at the ground
as wet feet trace familiar footprints.
An engine revs in the distance
and the sky begins to glow.
In every crook and crevice,
a life is born in the turn of chaos.
Curious embers spark
into lightning. Strike fierce!
Sucking on the charred tailpipe
as the bumping bass pulls away,
I dance in the auburn sunshine.

The evenings set so soon.
How I wish to stay right here.
The air is sweeter and more crisp
but the night's not as wild
as that hour before
when the smoke is all I can breathe.
My lungs collapse with waste,
but my spirit captures
a scene so engulfing
that my stomach screams, "More!"
But more, I will deny it tonight.

Against the watchtower,
the bells toll thunder to you.
The rainbow beneath my feet
splashes smiles and skid marks
that trail toward the horizon.
In that second of broken concentration
I wished for your eyes to see.
And later you said we share
the same sky, just miles away.
Still, I would've wanted you here.
See? Pollution's not so bad.

Home

—*a sestina*

Allison Faulkner

Today I will ask no more of you
The wind and leaves and gritty streets
Have pushed me back inside my home
It is where I guess I belong
Inside a shoebox, with a view
Of pretty, bouncing light

Late afternoon sun pours on my bed; I absorb its light
And words flow through me, inspired by a simple view
And I used to not believe that here is where I belong
So what defines a home?
Never mind the names of all the streets
Is it gathered and bundled around you?

I have wondered for so long what it is that connects me to you
As I sit, drenched in flowering light
Within four walls with a little, square view
And to believe that I am just where I belong
In such a place I thought I could ignore was my home
Yet here I am, finally realizing familiar streets

As I ponder less restless, more relaxed streets
I forget for a second about you
It's hard to do, especially with poetry in my face (this light)
Even with blinds and curtains obstructing my view
I can see in this universe, my place, a space where I belong
And you are out there past the trees creating your own home

In people, in places, in hearts, in faces, a home
To go to, to flee to, down many different streets
I don't feel safe to say that you
Will find a true light
A beacon to follow when the days grow hollow and the view
That you gaze upon is not at all where you belong

I'll spend some time in this room and know I belong
And you would too, if you could visualize the roots of home
Not just feel them, but see them as you see the streets
But sitting alone here I can't escape thoughts of you
And think of you beside me, bathed in golden light
It makes all this beautiful; it's such a lovely view

And so you and home I find connected
Like veins, like roots, like streets, to belong
To something more than fickle light and a pretty view

Foot-Printed Pillow

Victor A. Perez

Somnambulant drifters
caressing thoughts in my sleep
with tightly whittled fingers
crashing through this snow globe in time

Somnambulant drifters
tickling splinters
scratching codes on my skin
paving roads to my death? to my destiny?

My festered toes
typing pages in my dreams
a story of lament and drinking
with sonorous skeletons

My fossil body, lifeless
under a sky of marching satellites
with pink Technicolor eyes

Freckles

Renee Drandell

One foot in front
of the sinking other
those three nights
stars twinkled
and disappeared—
twinkled and disappeared
just as my yearning
for home
disappeared
that third night walking
in the rain
huddled in rain slickers
and still
soaked to the skin,
not one inch of skin left
dry
wiping heavy raindrop tears
from my eyes
as I watched the heads
bob up and down
bob and bow
protecting their eyes
from the drops—
there were no stars that night,
only the ones in my
eyes
from nights before
leading me to the days after
of budding new life
not wanting to return to the old
but knowing eventually I would
but still trying to hold on

a little longer
longing to hold onto my bags
in the bus
focusing my eyes
on the road, the green, the life--
the hope
trying to filter my gazes
to hide my feelings of this
Native son
this
Native land
so free, so beautiful
as I sat at the waterfall
counting the seconds
until I was completely dry
from the cool water
counting the closing hours
until the return
counting the freckles
on my skin, your skin, his skin, their skin—
counting anything
counting everything
to simply be alive
before saying good-bye
with tears flooding from my eyes
I yearn.

Escalando Hacia Las Estrellas

Tannya Villalvazo

Cuando yo era pequena sonaba con tantas cosas
Que sentia tocar las estrellas.
Ahora que los anos pasan, la vida me da mas sueños por alcanzar.
Unos grandes, otros chicos, y unos imposibles de tocar.
Son tan bellos que me siento comprometida a volar.
Pero soy tan debil que me canso de caminar.
No persigo mi camino y me siento a descansar.
Mi mente se pierde entre tanta hermosura por encontrar.

Mi corazon sigue vivo, gracias a una luz que ilumino mi camino al
tartar
de escapar de la realidad.
Encontre la luz en mi vida pero todavia no se que camino tomar.
Soy tan ciega que no veo a mi angel guardian.
Soy tan sorda que no escucho las voces que me quieren salvar.
Cual es mi destino? Y cual de todos mis sueños se hara realidad?
Es lo que yo me pregunto y no me se contestar.
Quizá con el tiempo, mi respuesta llegara.

Espero hacer algo que nadie a logrado;
Traer un cambio a nuestro mundo que sea bien apreciado.
Asi, como el gran Don Quijote De La Mancha, un gran caballero,
Lucho almenos en sueños por extender la mano al mas miserable y
desvalido.
Asi yo tomare su ejemplo y le tendere la mano a los mas necesitados.
Brindare mi amor a los mas desgraciados,
Impondre la igualdad entre el ser humano,
Dare honor al ser mas deshonorado

Despertare la ilusion en aquellos desilusionados
Luchare con mi esperanza para desintoxicar un planeta envenenado
por el ser humano
Deslumbrare el amor que dios me a dado
Y despejare del aire el odio que nos esta apagando.

Quisiera darle uso a las habilidades que Dios me a regalado.
Habilidades que muchos tienen y no han apreciado.
Quizá porque le temen al fracaso.

Pero yo les pregunto a ustedes que piensan que es mejor, vivir la vida
Que sigue adelante y aprender de nuestros fracasos y derrotas
O quedarse sentado esperando a que por arte de magia lleguen las
cosas que quizás nunca llegaran?
Que es mejor para ti?
Siguiendo con mi tema, yo quisiera decirles que si estan vivos o
muertos, todos tienen un
destino.

Todos nosotros tenemos la capacidad de cambiar lo malo por lo bueno
Y no lo bueno por lo malo.
Por mi parte soy una persona con una esperanza que abarca todo el
cielo.
Con ideas radicales, posiblemente un poco irreales.
Pero eso no importa,
Lo importante es tener un sueño y luchar por ello.
El ser caballero no es lo mas fantasioso, al contrario,
Lo mas inalcanzable es lo mas probable.

En fin, espero que la escalera sea lo suficientemente larga para
alcanzar las estrellas.
Si no lo es, armare mis propios escalones con toda mi fe y fuerza,
Y llegare a cumplir mi sueño de estar frente a frente con aquellas
bellezas.

Reaching for the Stars

(English Translation)

When I was a young I dreamt with many things
That I felt as if I were touching the stars.
Now that the years pass, life gives me more dreams; more stars to
reach for.

They are so beautiful that I feel compromised to fly.
But I'm so weak that I get tired of going on.
I don't follow my path; instead, I sit down
To rest while time passes me by.
My mind gets lost between all the beauty that is left to find.

My heart is still alive thanks to a light that shined into my life
As I tried to escape from reality in the nick of time.
I found the light in my life, but I yet wonder which road will be mine.
I am so blind that I ignore my guardian angel.
I am so deaf that I do not hear the voices that are willing to save my
life.
What is my destiny? And which of all of my dreams will come alive?
That is what I ask myself, but the answers I cannot find.
Perhaps with time my answers will arrive.

I hope to do something that no one yet has accomplished—
Bring a change to our world that is well-valued
Just like the great Don Quixote De La Mancha, a grand knight,
Fighting at least in dreams and extending his hand to the unhappy.
In that way, I will follow his example and extend my hand to the
people who are dying
of hunger and to the ones who die for nothing.
I will offer my love to the less valued,
I will impose equality within the human race,
I will honor those who have been dishonored.

I will awaken illusions in those disenchanted.
I will fight with my hope to purify a planet that has been poisoned and
darkened
by the human being.
I will reflect the love that God has given me,
And I will cleanse the air from all of the hatred that is not letting us
live.

I would like to give use to the abilities that God has given to me—
Abilities that many have but haven't yet valued,
Perhaps because they are afraid of failure.

I would like to ask you what you think is better—
Live life that goes on and learn from your failures and losses,
Or remain seated hoping that with magic things will arrive when most
probably
they will never happen?
What is better for you?
Continuing with my theme, I would like to tell you all
That if dead or alive, we all have a destiny; we all have dreams.

We all have the capacity to change what is evil for what is righteous
And not what is righteous for what is evil.
For my part, I am a person with a desire that covers the whole sky—
With radical ideas, possibly a bit unreal.
But that doesn't matter,
It is more important to have a dream, something to fight for.
Being a knight is not the most bizarre thing; on the contrary,
The unreachable is the most probable.

In short, I hope that the ladder is sufficiently long to reach the stars.
If it isn't, I will build my own steps with all of my strength,
And I will accomplish my dream of being face to face with those
beauties.

Touring Baghdad

James H. Preucil

Two young men walk into the void of the night,
their senses heightened, their muscles taut with fear.
The man from the West, warily moves toward the East,
as the Eastern man curiously casts his eyes to the West.

Stepping lightly over shadows of ancient buildings,
painstakingly built with pride by civilizations past,
shortsighted armies of the present, destroy the past,
waging war to achieve peace, for an uncertain future.

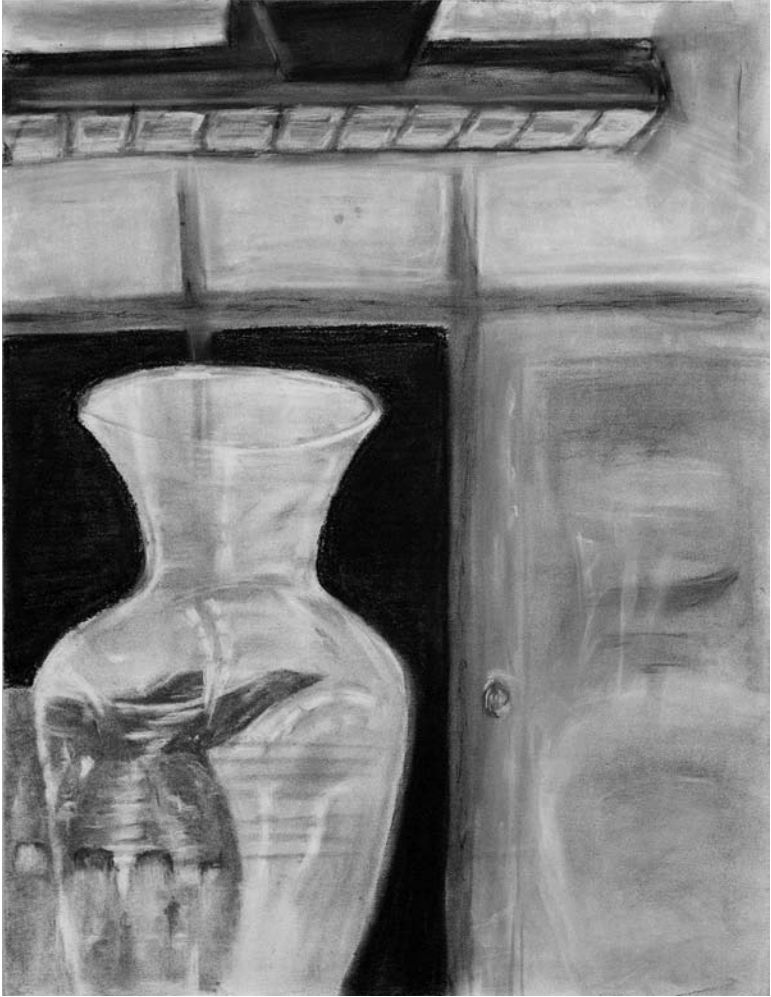
The two men approach from opposite ends of the street.
Sharing common goals, each more alike than not,
both wishing for a world without war and strife,
a world of hope and prosperity for their children.

Face to face, the men from the East and the West meet.
Each man will see the muzzle flash of the other's rifle.
Both men will feel the burning sting of the other's bullet.
Sadly, neither man will ever know freedom from war.

Two-Dimensional Art

*Life beats down and crushes the soul
and art reminds you that you have one.*

Stella Adler



Dented Aluminum Jug

Maya Primavera Flores

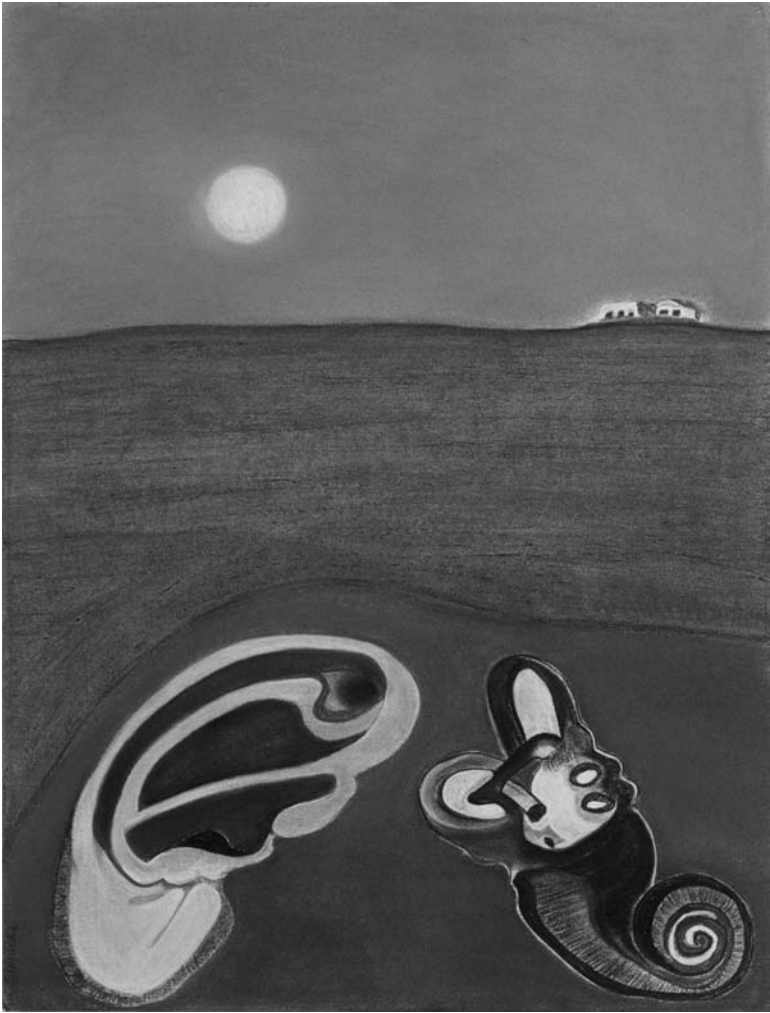
First Prize 2-D Art



Untitled

Dante Bellotta

Second Prize 2-D Art



Ojai Blues

Joaquin Castro

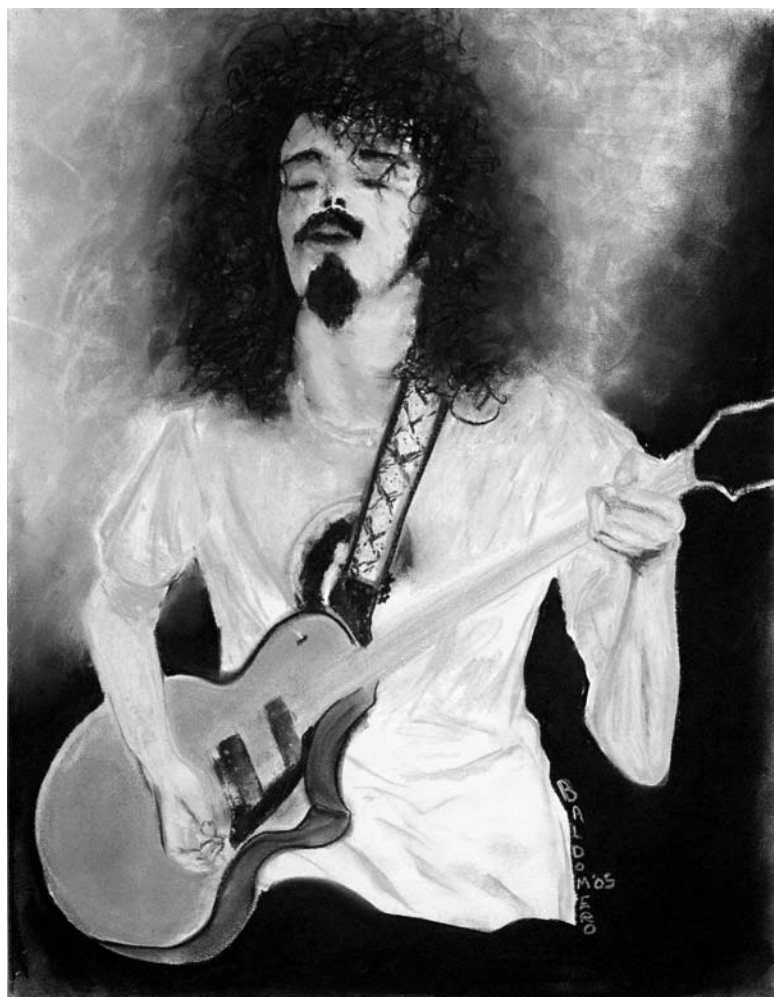
Third Prize 2-D Art



Rage

Dante Bellotta

Honorable Mention



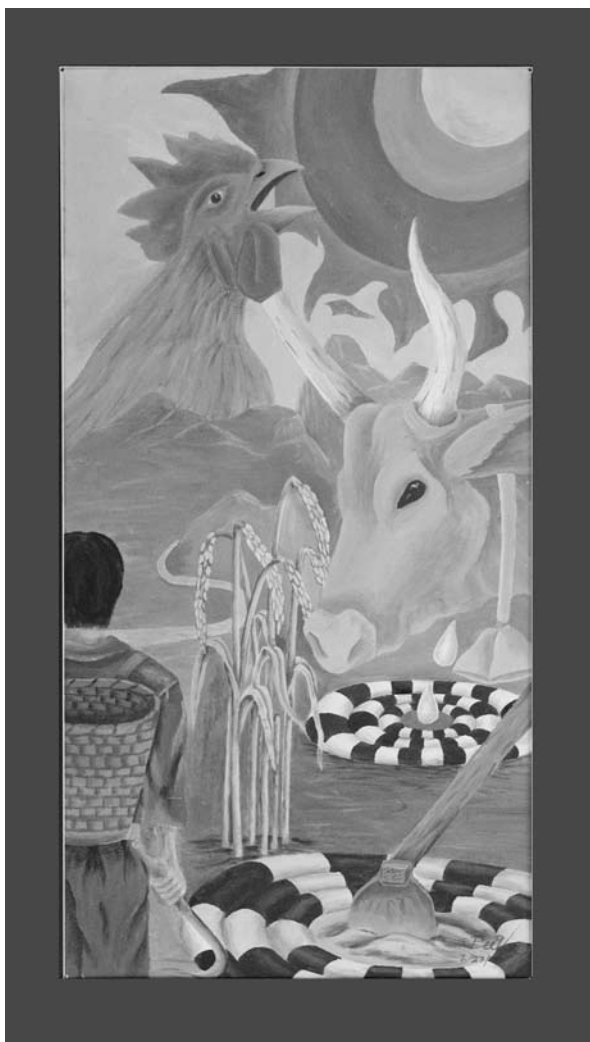
Soul Sacrifice

Baldomero Galindo



Tennis Shoes

Renee Johnson



Untitled

Bee Vue

Fiction

*Storytelling reveals meaning
without committing the error of defining it.*

Hannah Arendt

Madness

Emilio Gutierrez

First Prize Fiction

Madness had always arrived to me in the strangest of ways. My first bout with madness involved an argument with my nose, which would not stop pulsing for a moment. It would pull air from the room at a whim and push me into light-headedness, or refuse to draw air altogether and, with utter command over my mouth, would prevent any inhaling of air whatsoever. I was not able to stand the sudden rush of air; nor could I tolerate the sudden deprivation of air. Suffice it to say, the nose could have easily disposed of me; the autopsy would have never revealed my true cause of death: Asphyxiation, brought forth by nose rebellion. It would have been discounted as a peculiar suicide, and the criminal nose, along with any evidence it might have left behind, would have been buried with me in a shroud of mystery and six feet of fine mulch and dirt.

Madness is an unspoken, unseen, frequently denied, and unaddressed member of the family. It has occupied kith and kin since the day our name was born, and was so subtle a visitor, like an estranged neighbor bearing summer fruit, that it was eventually accepted and treated as a member of the family. Madness had struck my father. Madness had struck his father. And their madness, unlike mine, was more or less an advocacy of every unholy thing that is man, the absolute denial of Christ and God, the Church and the established ideas of marriage. My mother's madness followed quite closely to my father's; they both denied their Creator. But her insanity was such a sad and unmotherly kind that it could never be construed as anything beyond undesirable. In truth, her madness amounted to a voracious appetite for her husband's sex,

and an absolute denial of her child. It would seem, then, that my immediate family's madness was nothing more or less but degradation into the ways and mores of whores, liars, fools and bastards. And to all who knew us, who hadn't known them beyond the routine of hellos and goodbyes—that was exactly what we were: a collection of whores, liars, fools and bastards.

Why they had died was always in conflict—my grandmother was absolutely sure that their madness was responsible for their sudden death. They had taken the El Camino for a final spin one rainy winter day, and slid straight off the road into the San Joaquin River. Investigators had expected foul play or suicide. And they had arrived at some odd conclusions, that it was an honorable suicide, because he had found them clutching one another in some sort of final embrace. Their deaths seemed intended, planned and well-executed. My grandmother, if to do nothing but save face at all, blamed the evils of alcohol and my father's horrible coordination for their deaths. They did not want to die, she said. They loved life. And so read their obituaries. They were young, bearing children like they were rebuilding after the flood. They were happy, and life, ah, wondrous life, was cut short, ripped away from them.

I spent the extra time their death had brought to me in front of the bathroom mirror, pondering how I would gracefully, or quite ungracefully, bring my life to an end. The children of those who commit suicide are apt to commit suicide themselves, or so it is thought (but all too true (who else might commit the suicide for them?)). I had thought about electrocution, of *The Bell Jar*, and I had thought of Pascin and nylon rope. Hemingway came to mind--Hemingway and a thirty-eight special, but the suddenness of his going, the messiness, did not appeal to me at all.

Death was glorified as madness was accepted.

All who died in the family were seen as heroes of sorts,

perhaps the foundation which my grandmother had built her lies upon. They died gloriously, or they did not die at all. My grandmother's fixation with such ideals, with her swearing that we were the offshoot of mad love affairs between peasants and revolutionaries, romanticized our existence, and brought tragedy to us like the plague, like locusts.

"Why," she once said, "your great, great, great uncle knew the man who swore one day that he would kill that traitor, Benedict Arnold, with his own hands. And your great, great, aunt! That poor old lady once gave biscuits to starving Union soldiers. Biscuits, child! And the Union won that war, didn't they? Why?"

"Biscuits?"

"Biscuits and bullets, child!"

"I thought it was my great, great, great uncle Charley who gave the biscuits to the Union soldiers?"

"He gave his biscuits to Lincoln. And don't interrupt child! Your great grandfather lived to be a hundred and thirty--he fought in every American war, and stormed Pusan with the Marines in Korea! And I, dear child, I am a renown civil servant, holding the record for the most notorious criminals ever imprisoned by an eighty year old woman!"

I wasn't too sure about that one. In truth, my great grandfather, her father, would never leave the house, fearing fruit flies and barkless trees. His godson nearly hospitalized him one Easter morning when he had brought him a tiny rocking horse he had whittled from an old piece of firewood. My great grandfather shot that poor rocking horse dead, with an old thirty-eight special, no less.

"How many, grandma?"

"One for each year on my life, child! Ted Bundy met his match when he met your old grandma! And you, my child, you are destined for greatness, like all who carry our blood have been since we came to this great country."

I wasn't too sure about that last one, either--but that was

why her son dying the way he did shattered something inside of her. It was such a paltry, dull way to go, a suicide in embrace with his only lover. It was unheroic, and it was unoriginal, for nothing, as she said. Every other death in the world was seen as subservient and trifling to the death of her spawn, the children of peasantry and revolution, who seemed to have always died for some great reason.

The mirror would not birth any ideas whatsoever; my death was as vague and distant as any other man's thoughts of death. It did not seem like it would arrive at all, and, at best, was an illusion of some immaterial, an ethereal, blessing that I was not so anxious to accept. Instead, the mirror became a conversation piece, if anything at all. I would bring it up with some kind of obsession with my closest friend, Charles. We would discuss it at length--its implications, its subliminal nature, and the utter fascination with my left becoming my right, my right becoming my left, and the unbreakable stare that my reflection and I would indulge in.

Charles and his family were also plagued, perhaps gifted, with madness. He was unspeakably ingenious, an erudite speaker and reader of all things, and could not stand one moment of intellectual atrophy. He didn't have any family that died in any famous wars, either. Nobody in his family gave biscuits to anybody, nor did they make biscuits. His family made tortillas. His left was my right, so to speak. Despite that, or because of that, we were inseparable since birth. I would visit him often, as often as I could since I had first met him some time before. I did not notice him till I walked into the bathroom during a family reunion; we crossed paths. I said "Hello" and he responded, and that was that. We were reflections of the other, his bravery to my cowardice, his vigor to my lackadaisicalness.

It seemed like it all had stemmed from his madness. He would go from chaotic spurts of knowledge, to quiet, introspective meditations in moments; and when he was done,

would become such a focused power that he could create anything, give it a name, and were he a materialist, sell it for millions. But he could not, would not do so, because of a sort of love for his creations. We had discussed it in front of the mirror one morning:

“You can be such a successful young man,” I said. “Why aren’t you?”

“And why would I want to be successful?” he replied. “Am I measured by my successes? Was it ever my intention to be measured by such a relative and paltry thing?”

Do you, dear friend, measure me by my successes?”

And I could not reply, not intelligently, anyway, because he had hit on such a humanistic point that I could not help but feel swooned and impassioned.

He was quite the humanist, by the way, a murderer of my cynicisms and misanthropy.

“I tell you, dear friend,” he said. “Find something that defies success, and you shall be free. You gain freedom by defying such things, by defying this insane demand that you cannot progress any further than that which has been limited to you. Be a Renaissance man, be knowledgeable. Feed the birds in the park with the only breadcrumbs you have to spare, that you spared out of guilt and pity for such starving creatures.”

“And if I am starving myself?”

“Then you dine with them, and do not feel at a loss of heart because you could not afford the wine.”

I had laughed quietly to myself; he was such a humorist, such a humanistic nut-job that I could not deny the lightness of heart that he would inspire. And such a lovely human being, such a naïve and empathic young man.

“Charles!” my grandmother had called out. “Come to dinner, child, before it goes frigid on you.”

“Yes, Nana,” I replied, and quietly shut the bathroom door behind me.

Wonderful Machine

Benjamin Rae

Second Prize Fiction

The Fool came up with the idea in the middle of the night and wasn't in the habit of waiting until morning to tell me. He doesn't need sleep and doesn't much tolerate the habit. He called me at home, sounding completely unmindful of the sun's absence outside. I can also live just fine without sleep, but I enjoy doing it. I like dreaming.

"Find me a cult," Fool said cheerfully.

"What?" I answered. I had never known the Fool to have any interest in acquiring followers nor have any interest in imparting knowledge on a group of people.

"You don't have to start it yourself," the Fool said, apparently thinking that I was already as familiar with his new idea as he was. "An existing one will work better, in fact. They need to be secretive, but people can know that they exist . . . just not what they do."

"Like Mormons?" I can be snippy in the wee hours. Also, I've never trusted Mormons.

There was a pause. "Eh? No, not . . . well, perhaps. I've got a machine that I want kept secret, and I think that Mormons may be too public. Find me something obscure."

"A machine?" I asked. "What size?"

"I don't know yet," he said, as if it were the most trivial of details. "I'm going to have it built. The cult is the important part. Once we have that, it can be properly prepared for the machine."

"The machine that hasn't been built yet."

"Yes." Another pause. "Well, get to it."

"Do you want me to go out and physically find this cult, or can I just tell you about ones that I research?"

“For now, just research,” the Fool said graciously. “But make sure that you get a good idea of their size and location. And beliefs,” he added as an afterthought.

“I’ll get right on it,” I said. “I’ll compile a list of prospects for when you figure out the machine.”

I got out of bed and surfed the Web. There are a surprising number of small religious sects in Los Angeles, and a lot of them have their own websites. Even the infamous Heaven’s Gate cult had one. Frightening thought, isn’t it?

Another frightening thought was the fact that it was only fifteen minutes from the time of the Fool’s phone call until the time I had a list of prospective cults. Most of them were splinter groups of established religions, some were voodoo, and there was even a chapter of the Church of Satan. The one that ended up at the top of my list was known as the Well Wishers.

The name alone was worth it. I thought at first that it was a group that wished for love, or peace, so on. The truth was stranger.

The central altar for these freaks (I don’t apologize for the term) was an actual well, which was in the center of their church. The church itself was a shack, out in the middle of nowhere. Although by now you can guess, these freaks believed that throwing coins into their altar could make their wishes come true. Their website had a wealth of information about their beliefs, including a success rate, by percentage, of the wishes. I knew that the Fool would love the freaks as much as I had grown to.

In retrospect, I should have gone back to sleep and called the Fool in the morning. Instead, I called him right away on my infernal cell phone. I call it infernal because it was made in Hell, not because it irritates me.

“Our Lady of the Horrible Tumor,” Fool answered.

“I found our baby,” I announced.

I could tell that the Fool was head-over-heels in love with the Well Wishers. They seemed to exceed his every expectation.

“I knew you’d make a fantastic lackey,” Fool told me. “All that in less than a half hour! As long as you’re on a roll, go see the Engineer.”

Oh crap.

“Who is that and where are they?” I asked, when I should have been asking “Why should I?”

“Some White Zombie fan you are,” Fool said accusingly. “The Creature of the Wheel, the Master of the Infernal Engines. The Engineer. Just go to the Kawasaki dealer near you. I need the Wonderful Machine, and I need it to fit in that well the wishers have.”

“How will I know the Engineer?” I asked it without thinking.

“Look for the demon,” the Fool said flatly, then hung up.

Even if I hadn’t asked, I doubt if anyone would be at the dealership at one in the morning. I put some clothes on and drove the two miles to the dealership. Sure enough, the parking lot was empty. I wondered briefly how to get inside, before a demon emerged from the front doors.

She was hot. Other than my sort-of girlfriend Alice, I’ve never been more attracted to anyone. The Engineer was six feet tall, with marigold yellow skin, ruby red eyes, and long, delicate horns that added another foot to her height. She folded her arms and regarded me with a cool expression.

I wondered if the Fool had called ahead. I presumed that he must have.

“I came on a Fool’s errand,” I announced, proud of my wit.

There was a slight movement of the Engineer’s lips, but whether it was a smile or a sneer I couldn’t tell.

“Come inside,” she said, holding the door open.

I went inside. There were motorcycles everywhere.

“Do you build these?” I asked her.

“I build special ones,” the Engineer replied. She closed and locked the doors behind us, then looked at me. “The Fool must trust you very much to tell you about me,” she said.

“That’s why they call him Fool,” I replied, and this time there was no mistaking a faint smile on the Engineer’s face.

“You and he share the same sense of humor,” she commented. “I wonder if the both of you have the same sense of morality.”

“I’m not sure,” I answered. I really wasn’t sure; the Fool and I are friends, in a way, but I can’t say for sure what his beliefs are. I don’t think he really knows mine, for that matter; part of the reason the Fool likes people so much is because they surprise him.

The Engineer waited a second, probably for my punchline. When she saw that I wasn’t saying anything further, she motioned for me to follow and opened up a hole in the floor. She descended the stairs that it contained.

Almost immediately after starting down the stairs, I heard heavy metal echoing up to me. I was starting to think that the whole ‘devil music’ rumors weren’t exaggerated. Maybe demons just appreciate the rare praise they get.

At the bottom of the stairs was a real mad scientist’s lab. Weird compounds were laying out, with no kind of containers to hold them, chemicals fizzed, and electronic components beeped at each other. The only normal piece of equipment was the boom box in the corner, which was the source of music.

“This is where it all happens?” I asked.

The Engineer looked at me. I don’t think she was too familiar with slang.

I cleared my throat. “What’s this Wonderful Machine that my boss wants?”

“A wishing machine,” the Engineer replied. She went to a

collection of electronic components and started connecting pieces with her bare hands. It was pretty cool; she was like a living welding torch.

I watched her work. I'm not sure why, but I found it sexy. "What demonic affiliation are you?" I asked.

By the way she looked at me, I was guessing I'd just asked the demonic equivalent of "What's your sign?" She went back to work.

"Not Gluttony," I said aloud. I hadn't met any demons other than the Fool, and a rather dumb one named Craig. I wanted to learn what I could from the Engineer.

"Not Wrath," I continued. I watched the Engineer's face as I spoke. "Not Sloth, or Lust. Envy!"

Those ruby eyes went my way sharply. I knew I was right.

"That's why you're helping the Fool," I said. "This plan promotes both Pride and Envy."

The Engineer continued to regard me impassively. I decided to stare back at her and wait for her to respond.

"You're perceptive," she said eventually. "How did you know I wasn't Greed or another demon of Pride?"

"When I asked you if you built the bikes upstairs," I explained, "you said you built 'special ones,' which means you aren't trying to inspire Greed. Greed comes from wanting more of a thing than you need, not wanting something that's unique, unless it's for a huge collection of similar items."

The Engineer nodded.

"And for Pride, I just knew that the Fool wouldn't ever work with another demon of Pride. He likes to think of himself as the number one in his field, next to Lucifer."

She looked impressed. "I can see why the Fool put you in his service," she said.

I had to smile. "So, what makes you the top of your field?" I asked her, "since my boss obviously only works with the best."

The Engineer turned back to her work, but kept talking. “I get my title because I engineered the industrial revolution,” she said. “I and a group of colleagues arranged for the Great Depression. That makes me the top of my field.”

Those were some credentials. I decided to keep quiet and watch the Engineer do her thing. She worked for hours, and I wished I’d just stayed at home instead of coming in and sitting there like furniture. I entertained the idea of trying to read the Engineer’s notes, but she wrote in coded ancient Sumerian, which somehow I neglected to learn. I really should brush up.

When it was done, the Wonderful Machine was the size of an engine block. It was silent, which was more ominous than if it had been beeping and whirring. The Engineer picked it up and handed it to me.

And I collapsed.

Since selling my soul, I’ve gotten much physically stronger than I was during life. I’m as strong as a guy twice my size, and I can carry two hundred and fifty pounds with some difficulty. The Wonderful Machine was somewhere around three-fifty, four hundred pounds. I was painfully trapped beneath it, listening to my ribs crack.

The Engineer put her slender hands on her hips and looked down at me, like she was waiting for me to stop kidding around. After watching me gasp and flail for a while, she reached out one long, slight arm, and plucked the Wonderful Machine off of me.

I knew before that size isn’t a reliable indicator of strength when it comes to demons, but the Engineer’s ratio of size to strength still caught me off guard. I would have said so, but I was busy hemorrhaging and crying.

“You can’t carry it?” The Engineer was either genuinely surprised or really sadistic.

“No!” I gasped from the ground. “I’m a human!”

The Engineer set the machine back on the bench it had come from, then put her hands on her hips again and looked at me. I think she was annoyed.

“You people,” she said.

I wobbled back to my feet. “What people?” I asked her.

“People,” she replied. With a sigh, she added “I suppose I’ll have to teach you the Carrying Trick.”

I was going to suggest using a trolley, but I liked her way better. I already knew how to do the Fire Trick, where I spit a fireball into my hand and keep it burning, and I couldn’t convince the Fool to teach me any new ones. That the Engineer was just going to show me how to do another one was really cool.

It took all of ten minutes to learn the Carrying Trick. It doesn’t so much seem to make what you’re carrying lighter, as it seems to make you keep from dropping it. My whole body ached as I carried the Wonderful Machine up the stairs, and my Honda sank back on its tires when I loaded the trunk.

The sun was just coming up. It was roughly five o’clock in the morning, and I considered dropping the Wonderful Machine off at the Fool’s house. He would have just told me to take it to the Well Wishers church, though, so I decided to skip the middleman.

The shack was even more run down than the pictures I’d seen on the internet. I subjected my aching body to another Carrying Trick, and climbed into the well inside the shack.

The Wonderful Machine fit neatly at the bottom, in a puddle of water. There were all kinds of coins down there. I took the quarters, in case I had to do laundry later.

Climbing out of a well is a lot harder than climbing in, especially when you got your feet wet at the bottom. I started up, and slid back down. I did that a couple of times before I started to worry.

I managed to get out. If I hadn’t, I’m sure the Fool would

have let me stay down there for the rest of eternity, or I could have convinced one of the Well Wishing freaks to wish me out of the well.

By the time I'd climbed out, I saw cars pulling up. My Honda was parked out front, so I had no chance to hide. If it hadn't taken me an hour to climb back out of the well, I would have been fine.

I decided to try and act natural. As much as I could while wearing soaked trousers.

The people that entered the shack looked exactly like I expected Well Wishers to look like: old and crazy. You know those hippies from the 1960s? The ones that never gave up the lifestyle became Well Wishers. The first three people I saw, two women and one man, were at least in their fifties. The man had a long, scraggly beard with clothes that didn't fit him properly, and John Lennon glasses. Both the women wore headbands with floral patterns, and bifocals. These were not my kind of people.

"Whoah," the old man said, reminding me of Tommy Chong. "What did you do, man? Did you fall in?"

"I climbed down in it," I replied honestly.

"Why would you do that?" one of the women asked.

More cars were pulling up outside. I resigned myself to staying for the ceremonies.

"I saw your website," I said. "I wanted to see if there was anything special about your well."

In a way, that was true.

"Oh, you saw the site, man?" Tommy Chong's clone asked. "You know, Nancy here did the work for that."

"It was very informative," I told Nancy. She thanked me.

"Is it all right if I watch your ceremonies?" I asked, as more of the freaks filtered in.

"Sure, man," Chong told me. I sat in a corner and tried not to talk to anyone.

The actual ceremonies, once they started, resembled more of a group therapy activity than any kind of religion. All the hippies sat in a big circle and talked about feelings and what was going on in their lives. The youngest people there were a trio of sixteen year olds, who held the sacred responsibility of recording past wishes that came true. Other than them, pretty much everyone were in their fifties.

They kept inviting me to join in. I wanted to complain that every time I meet a sexy demon, she crushes me with an engine block, but knowing these people they would have turned it into something impure. I declined.

The ceremonies closed with the actual wishing. Tommy Chong stood up and asked if anyone wanted to make a request of the Well Spirit. There were only two that did; I don't mind saying that I was disappointed.

The first person up was a big fatso. Hippie Santa Claus, I decided. He wished to lose weight, and hearing that made me giddy. I couldn't wait to see the results.

The other wisher was a woman, who wished for the safe recovery of her husband in the hospital. I can't fault that one.

That was that. Tommy Chong tried to catch me in a conversation, but I managed to get to my car. I called Fool on my drive home, and told him the situation. He, too, was eager to see what happened with the weight loss wish.

When I returned to the shack the next day, Santa Claus was at least fifty pounds lighter. He couldn't talk enough about how good he felt. The other wisher's husband had made a full recovery the day of the wish. I listened with interest.

There were eight people that wanted to make wishes that day: Four wished for money, two for world peace, one for his car to run like new, and one for his ex-wife to come back to him. I didn't have much stock in the world peace wishes, but I thought the other ones would be good to see. I started making my own list, similar to the one the teenagers kept.

The day after, Santa was looking lean and mean. Not only was the fat disappearing, but muscle was showing. The four people who had wished for money had each won a hundred dollars on a call-in radio show. The gearhead's car ran like new, and lonely boy's ex-wife came back to him. She was remarried, but she didn't care.

I was the only one that appreciated the irony.

No word on that world peace deal. I wasn't surprised.

That day, a dozen people made wishes. The four people who had wished for money before wished for more money today. So did the two who had wished for world peace, go figure. Three new people wished for money. One guy wished that he'd get the rest of the week off, a woman wished that the screenplay she was writing would get made into a movie, and one of the sixteen year olds made a wish without speaking. The clone of Tommy Chong admonished him.

"Hey, man, if you don't feel comfortable to tell others your wish, okay, maybe you should question if it's a wish you want to make," Tommy said.

It ignited a pretty heated argument. I could tell that seeing wishes actually granted was changing these people. Changing them into something worth watching, as far as I was concerned.

The majority were on the side of Tommy Chong, in feeling that any wish worth making was something worth sharing. The minority, I thought it was interesting, had all three young people in it. They felt that a wish was your own, and that you didn't need to share it. The arguments started off civil, and didn't take long to descend into name calling.

"I wish you were dead!"

I don't know who shouted it, but I could tell that the point of no return had been reached. The room went silent, with all the freaks looking fearfully at one another. I wasn't sure what the appropriate response from me might have been, but I

decided that if I sat quietly and tried not to laugh maniacally, I could go unnoticed.

I did.

Nothing more was said as the freaks filtered out. They continued to stare at each other as they left, until it was only me by myself with the well. Only then did I laugh.

I got the feeling that the Well Wishers would probably be forming alliances in secret, after what had happened that day. It was a thought that gave me a warm feeling through the night.

I showed up an hour early to the ceremony, without my car. I was just in time to see the teens drive up.

The three that had already been in the group were there, but so were two more. The new ones had the same kind of hippie look, but I think they also had a more dangerous edge to them. Flower children with knives, or something.

They talked excitedly about the wishes coming true and talked about wishes they could make. The teen that hadn't told anyone about his wish yesterday couldn't talk enough about it today; he'd scored with that cheerleader he'd been dreaming about. The guy was bragging, but the low popularity of everyone he was bragging to made it seem only natural. Even the female teens were . . . well, they were basically the same as the guys. They were all just thinking about the person they wanted to score with.

They all made scoring wishes, giving specific names. I'm guessing that they were all popular kids at school, but they might well have been pop stars; I'm bad when it comes to recognizing teen idols these days.

The kids didn't wait around for the ceremony: they left as soon as they'd made their wishes. The usual crowd started showing up afterward; Santa Claus was looking almost sickly by now, he was so skinny. Lonely Boy had bullet holes in the doors of his car, and it made me wonder how he and his ex

were doing.

The mood was tense. Everyone noticed that the teenagers were absent, and even though no accusations were made aloud, a lot of suspicious looks went back and forth. The wishes were hit and miss: everyone who'd made a wish already, got nothing. The three new wishers that had asked for money inherited from long lost relatives, each more than ten thousand dollars. The screenplay writer was talking to Jerry Bruckheimer in her off hours, and the guy who'd wished for the rest of the week off had gotten fired. That one made me smile.

Instead of the usual support group style sharing, this meeting started off with arguments. Whether wishing was a good idea, and why had some wishes had good results while others had bad, the people who'd wasted their wishes for world peace just felt shafted all around. They hadn't even gotten the hundred dollars that their greedier counterparts had gotten.

It was hard to believe that these were the same freaks that I'd seen on the first day I'd carried in the Wonderful Machine. These were more like Hell's Angels than hippies. Shouting matches turned into pushing and shoving, shoves gave way to punches. Then, somebody threw a penny.

Not everyone noticed. I saw it because I was far outside of the emotional conflict that the Well Wishers were having. As soon as the woman who'd written the screenplay dropped dead, though, everybody realized what was happening.

Coins flew. People were dropping like flies amidst the sound of jingling change, and about half the congregation was dead by the time Tommy Chong pointed at me and shouted, "It's him that's doing it! I just wished he were dead, and he's still alive!"

I don't think the real Chong would ever have said that.

When the villagers tried to kill Frankenstein's monster, they didn't have half the fury of the aging hippies that chased

after me. Even though they were old, delusional hippie freaks, they chased me for miles through the wilderness of Los Angeles county. Some of them had wished for weapons, I think, because a lot of them had axes that they hadn't had before. Of course, I got away. I'm young, they're old, and I had coward speed on my side.

That was pretty much the end of my involvement with the Wonderful Machine. Weeks later, I did check back on the Well Wishers church; the congregation that meets there these days has a very different look than it used to. They meet in secret, at midnight, and always leave someone behind to shoot trespassers.

A lot of the cars I had last seen outside are still there, rusting. A lot of dirt mounds have sprung up around them, though. Tommy Chong looks a little more like Charles Manson and sounds a lot more like a fire-and-brimstone southern Baptist than a hippie.

Be careful what you wish for. Or at least, check the bottom of the damned well first.

Anhedonia

Peter Jones

Third Prize Fiction

“A More real city might not have suited me so well . . . but [this city] was in its death phase; it lay still and let me look at it, and think about it, and look again. In a living city, I could never have noticed so much. Living cities don’t hold still.”

— John Irving, *The World According to Garp*

Jana looked down at the giant four on her chest and found little comfort in the giant fours on the chests of her entire tour group. They religiously followed the guide, who got to carry a likewise-branded paddle-sign, signaling which tour group she was giving the tour to. Jana had signed up for the tour to see Arvo Part at the opera house and should have expected to see the legendary composer on stage for a few moments and then the back of conductor Paul Hiller’s head during the rest of that evening’s performance. She reminded herself to inquire if her mother had a similar experience on her own pilgrimage to see Astor Piazzolla in the early 80s. After the musical reflection, she turned her ear back to the guide who was offering tidbits about the arbitrarily placed clock along the roadside outside the national museum.

Burton felt disappointment upon entering the museum that was to be his safe refuge from the rain. The museum, assuming he interpreted *ajaloomuuseum* correctly, had only two galleries which could all too easily be mistaken for one gallery. The first gallery held a permanent exhibit on the Estonian Kroon, and with each passing display case, Burton found it harder to see any resemblance between the artifacts on display and the coins filling the bottom of his pockets. After skimming the second brief display of the Estonian History, Burton headed back into the circular labyrinth of cobblestone

streets heading towards the center of old town Tallinn.

The square was filled with tagged tourists following their shepherd-guides along the cobblestone streets. Jana imagined the vision that would greet someone from the café up in the yellow building at the far edge of the square. She looked down to see the group had moved down the road and was now in front of a restaurant named after Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini. Jana made her way to the group just in time to see that the group had voted in favor of dining there. She felt glad and spent the lunch hoping someone would inquire about the restaurant's namesake so she could integrate with the group more and show off that she had actually seen 8 ½.

From the café in the top of the yellow building, Fellini's looked like a green island on the other side of a swirling lake of mixing tour groups, each group resembling a hoard of ants carrying food back to the nest. Burton looked down and buried his nose back in the worn paperback he had carried just about everywhere since leaving Frankfurt airport two weeks ago.

A couple from one of the cruise ships was eating at the next table. The woman, who was dressed more appropriately for her native Florida than the Baltic region, asked "What are you reading?" then explained her intrusion by adding, "I'm always looking for books."

Burton replied, "It's the screenplay for My Dinner with Andre."

"Andre?" she asked.

Burton would have answered, but she quickly returned with, "OH! Like the seal! Did you ever see that movie? There was a seal, and a little girl, and the seal's name was Andre." The last few words sped out her mouth sounding like "andthesealsnamewasAndre!"

"The Andre refers to Andre Gregory, a famous theater director," Burton corrected.

The woman, whom despite the appearance of taking many

art classes to pad her GPA back in college, looked at Burton with puzzlement. The waitress arrived presenting Burton's lunch on a brown corkboard of a tray. It wasn't the quiche or the atmosphere but the attempt at human conversation that could have been better.

Nobody inquired about the identity of Fellini. In fact the waitress' short, mandatory questions was the only conversation Jana received during lunch. Upon departure, they were allowed to wander the various merchant carts in the square with instructions to meet back in front of Fellini's in half an hour. Jana headed to the far corner of the square and entered the furthest shop she saw. Her spirit sagged when she found a run-of-the-mill souvenir shop inside filled with mediocre goods, and tourists buying them. A discussion had started around one of the display tables discussing the pros and cons of the various guides. A large woman from the states held sway over the impromptu proceedings, swearing on her God's holy book that her guide, nine as indicated by her badge, was flirting with each and every woman taking the tour. Her cohorts—an early retiree from tour seven, a middle-aged homemaker or business professional dressed as a homemaker from tour twelve, and a teenager who didn't have a badge covering her orange t-shirt with words "Cheap Cleavage" scribbled across it—nodded in agreement. The could-be homemaker thought the women who flirted back were the guiltier lot. Despite knowing better, Jana quipped "Well that's all cheap cleavage will get ya."

The women, especially the teenager, looked at the intruder with mild disdain. Jana, having reinforced the knowledge that the words on a person's t-shirt was not the way to enter a conversation, grabbed the first item she felt on the table and walked to the register hoping never to see them or their respective tour groups again.

Exiting the café, Burton instinctively turned right and followed the streets as they sloped downwards, keeping at a

speed equal with the water flowing down the gutter. As he walked, the streets grew more crowded and the buildings became more modern. The ground leveled out and Burton could see an automobile covered street a half kilometer or so off. Before he hit the street he turned into a local bookstore with a bright blue sign reminiscent of the Daily Planet in early Superman comics. He wiped his feet off on the mat and then quickly located the section “English Language Books” nestled in amongst those in the native tongues.

He liked the feel of these books; the rougher cover and tight binding made for a fresh contrast with the sleek looseness of the American product. Beyond the section near a magazine rack, he saw stairs leading up to more sections and the required coffee shop. No fan of coffee, he shifted focus back to the shelf. Among the brightly colored contemporary British authors and the big fat Russian classics carrying the Penguin Classics symbol of approval, Burton saw a thin blue book. Picking it up he found that it was *The Little Prince*. He had never been drawn to it as a child nor as a nostalgia-minded adult. He thought back to his poker-buddy and occasional co-worker who swore on this book, and he decided to buy it. Taking it, he wrapped it up in the bag and then walked back into the steady drizzle.

Jana nervously opened her bag. She had no clue as to her purchase and was glad just to be rid of the stares of the tour women. She was disappointed in herself—the item nearest her had been a bright orange neon colored t-shirt with the familiar “Welcome to Estonia” logo that identifies merchandise sanctioned by the national tourism board. She didn’t mind getting a shirt. If it didn’t fit she could always pass it along to an unsuspecting friend or sister—gifts from foreign countries are automatically considered special. What disappointed Jana was that she had gone into the most cliché spot in the whole square and inadvertently purchased the one thing in the whole shop every tourist was sure to get. A quick, visual skim

of the area revealed no fewer than five people who had bought the shirt and another four who had bought it and were now wearing it. She glanced at her watch and then at the clock above the café in the big yellow building. She decided she had enough time to walk further away from the designated meeting spot. Jana turned and followed the flow of people, heading down towards the rim of the old town district.

After a few blocks, Jana turned into a large alleyway and found a small line of merchants specializing in beautiful wool sweaters. A step above caves carved into the building side of the open-air market stretched in front of her. One of the people minding the stand, an elderly woman, watched her. Jana, finally free of the number-system umbilical cord—if only for a half hour—had yet to get used to the way locals distanced themselves from people. The lack of the automatic ‘hey, how are you’ routine found in big retail chains made shopping a lonely activity—even if it was less annoying. Jana eventually picked a dark brown sweater with dirty white weaved in. It would be an ugly sweater anywhere else – but here it appealed to her. Jana bought the sweater, and ditched the shirt at a bench outside one of the inevitable McDonalds.

The girl in the pink dress caught Burton’s eye and did nothing with it. She was happy with her issue of *Total Film* and content to leave Burton with nothing to show for daring to enter the coffeehouse as escape from the current downpour; with one hand she turned the pages as one turns a car during a leisurely drive, while her other hand held an overpriced drink that she sipped from a straw. Burton thirsted for conversation and quickly thought of five conversation starters he could get off the cover. In the end he decided on the opener: “It’s nose, I know—but I have to know what you’re reading.”

The girl in the pink dress took an extra-long sip and held the magazine up so he could read it for himself. Still feeling Burton’s presence, she looked up at him, moving only her eyes. “*Total Film*,” was her first response. She then followed it

with, "Some article on Truffaut."

She rolled her eyes back to the article. Burton seized the moment and quickly professed his love for Shoot the Piano Player. The girl in pink raised the stakes by using the proper title, "Oh, you mean Tirez sur le Pianiste."

"Sorry, but I don't speak Estonian."

"Neither do I; that was French." Then she left.

Burton turned his attention from the exiting girl to the waitress who asked, "What'd you like to drink?"

"Nothing, thanks."

"Don't mind her. She never walks out of here with anybody, never walks in with anybody either. If you saw her entering and leaving the store alone as often as she does, you'd think she worked here."

Burton listened patiently, hoping his lack of comment would instruct the waitress to inquire as to the thirst of other patrons. But this waitress was good at her job. "You look like a smart man," the waitress said. "I bet you'd answer the trivia question right."

Burton spoke, "Trivia question?"

The waitress smiled at having won his interest and explained. "Every time someone comes in here alone, we offer the chance for them to earn a free drink—all they have to do is answer the question up on the blackboard there."

The waitress nodded across the room at a blackboard with a nicely chalked question in-between a window and some form of modern art. Burton read the question to himself: What was the original title for the film Annie Hall?

"You're right," Burton said, "I can answer the question. The answer is Anhedonia."

The waitress smiled. "You're the first person all week to get it right."

"If you want a quick replacement question ask them what it means."

"I assume you know that as well?"

“It’s the inability to enjoy yourself.”

“Looks like I owe you two coffees.”

“You drink it. I’m going to brave the rain.”

As the drizzle had turned back into downpour, Jana ducked into a archway halfway back to her tour’s designated spot. She looked down at her black top and wished she had worn something else. She looked at her watch and was disappointed by herself when it took a few moments too long to realize she had no time to make it back to the tour. She decided to double check and asked a dancing child in a Pippi Longstocking-style outfit for the time. Miss Longstocking looked at her bright green watch and proudly announced that “The big hand is on the two and the little hand is on the three.” Jana thanked Miss Longstocking and then quickened her pace to make up for her tardiness.

Burton left the coffeehouse knowing that starting now, anybody willing to talk to him would invariably know they where his second choice. Downpour or not, he headed back into Old Town. He curved into a covered path and dropped a kroon in the hat of a violist who played partly recognizable hymns while his daughter danced in an outfit straight from Astird Lindgrin’s children’s novels about the redhead.

Jana made all the right turns in the wrong order and ended up not back in front of Fellini’s but in front of a large medieval-themed restaurant staffed with disproportioned women and overweight men. She surrendered to the city and went to a pay phone. The booth was cut into a building’s side with a small wooden door to keep amateur eavesdroppers away. She slid her phone card into the slot and dialed home, to her mother.

“Hello mom.”

“Jana! You’ve finally called. How’s the pilgrimage.”

“It’s a cruise, mother.”

“If Jesus had a travel agent you bet he’d have traded his forty nights in the desert for a cruise. Look Jana, before I

forget, your father and I are brushing up on our American lexicon. We're traveling there next month and I'm worried about communicating with the locals."

"What is it you want to know, Mother?"

"Well, we were wondering if there is a feminine equivalent to Son of a Bitch."

"I don't think so, Mother."

"Well how do you insult a woman's parentage?"

"I don't know, Mother. It seems to take care of itself."

"Oh. Well, have fun anyway. Do you want to speak to your father?"

Jana heard her father yell from the other room, "Never mind dear; he just sends his best. Good-bye, dear—don't forget to sit at the higher class table in the dining room."

Jana hung up first and stayed in the phone booth, looking out the window.

The covered path abruptly stopped and Burton found himself on another downhill slope and moved down it. This path headed deeper into Old Town, and Burton tried to recall it in his mind. His brain ached from the mental Google on a dial-up wired brain. He flung his bag around and took out the train schedule. The rain finished the paper off quickly, and then died down to nothing as if to mock Burton's timing. He threw the paper away and avoided a bum asking him for his country of origin. Burton walked further down and immediately knew where he was.

He glanced up at the sign reading Old Hansa, one of the most popular restaurants in all of Old Town. He then made his way to the phone booth; he waited for the occupant to leave and then got in, leaving the door open.

Jana let the next customer into the booth and stepped outside. She leaned against the wall weighing her options. She could call the cruise company and have them hail the ship or she could accept the loss of her parent's outfits and take her chances alone. "No, Jana" she thought, "think logically."

Jana tried to recall the usual departure time from the rest. The most logical time seemed too right, and too wrong. Jana glance at her watch, about an hour till five. She'd never find the cruise ships in time. She hadn't even found the square.

Bored, she took to eavesdropping on the phone's current patron. "Chuck, it's me. My train schedule got ruined. Do you have one handy? . . . that's right, rain."

Jana tried to imagine who Chuck was. Best friend? Brother? Wife's former lover? His former lover? Jana chuckled and looked down the street. An average-sized marquee caught her eye. The sign advertised a Jaques Tati Film Festival the coming Saturday. "I could stay for that" she thought. "I've loved Tati's film ever since I first saw Mr. Hulot's Holiday." She stiffened, worried. "How could I have forgotten?" she said aloud, following with "I need to get to the ship" even louder.

But how? The trains! She looked to the booth and waited for Chuck's friend or wife's lover to finish and rushed towards him when he exited.

The woman carrying the wool sweater assaulted him, while knocking into him sending him backwards. Burton had enough time to flip through all of his worst fears regarding homicidal tourists before he fell on the sidewalk. The woman apologized and he got up, seeing she meant no intentional harm.

"Sorry," she said. "I couldn't help overhearing. Did your friend have the train schedule? Are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

"I heard you talking about the train schedule. Did you find out?"

"My schedule was ruined by the rain. My friend didn't know."

The apologetic-turned-worried woman frowned. "Do you know where the train depot is? I need to get back to the cruise ships."

"I know where the depot is, but even better, I know where

the ships are. You want to get on one or something?”

“I’m already on one—I just got really separated.”

Burton pointed at her chest, “Where’s your badge? I thought they branded you guys.”

“I think I threw it away. I’m Jana.”

Burton introduced himself then offered: “I guess I could take you down there.”

“I’d appreciate that, thank you.”

Jana thought of what her mother would think in regards to her current activity: walking down the foreign Estonian streets with a strange man. No better remedy to that predicament than to make him less of a stranger. She started in, “I overheard your call.”

“I remember you saying that.”

“Oh. I probably did. Are you in town visiting a friend?”

“Chuck? Yeah, I guess I’m visiting Chuck.”

“You guess?”

“I’m planning to go into the smaller villages tomorrow.”

“Then you have friends down there.”

Burton looked up thinking about—or stalling—Jana couldn’t tell. “I do, but they’re not really the reason I’m traveling down there.”

Realizing she would be asked the same, Jana asked, “Then what does bring you to Estonia?”

“I came to find out how to build one of the swings.”

“The swings?”

“You haven’t seen them?”

His last inquiry validated Jana’s feelings that she had wasted much of her trip with the tourist crowd. She followed by saying, “These swings must be some sort of cultural experience the cruise liners miss.”

Burton was enjoying the conversation and found something to like in her having not seen one of the many things commonly known as “Estonian swings.” He found her ignorance made for good practice for when he would have to

explain it back home to those who would assist him in the building of one on his property.

He explained that they were triangular in appearance and made entirely of wood; the two sides of the swing had ledges on them and you stood on one side with a friend on the opposite side. To begin the swinging motion, the riders alternated, getting into what is best described as a squatting position. Burton made sure to emphasize that when the side you were on was higher than the other, you should be squatting; otherwise you were in danger of being flung from the swing.

Burton saw Jana smile as he finished explaining.

“Sounds dangerous,” Jana said.

“It could be.”

Jana stopped, distracted by a large building she hadn’t noticed coming in. It was an eclectic mix of medieval themes and modern times. She was mostly intrigued by the young man outside dressed as a minstrel playing a much more modern instrument singing a song. She caught a few of the lyrics: I think I know what’s making me sad it’s a yearning for my own backyard . . .

“What is that place?” she asked.

“That is the Peppersack Restaurant,” Burton replied, “I’m working on a theory that suggests no person can walk around Old Town Tallinn without passing it.”

They stopped and looked at it. Jana noticed Burton mouthing a few of the words along with the modern minstrel and quickly asked, “Do you know that song?”

“It’s a favorite of mine, actually.”

They continued walking, albeit slower in hopes of catching more of the song. “What is it? I can remember hearing it back home, but I can not recall the title.”

Burton chuckled, “I’ve won a free coffee earlier with a trivia question—didn’t think I’d find myself asking one.”

Jana pleaded, “Do not make this hard.”

“I won’t. Did you ever see or hear of the film *Walkabout*?”

The look on her face suggested she had and the tone of her voice confirmed it, “Do you mean that overtly erotic film about the outback with Jenny Agutta?”

“It suffers that reputation,” Burton said before explaining it, “It is Gasoline Alley by Rod Stewart. It’s on the soundtrack shortly before the dad tries to kill them.”

“Sounds like the feel good movie that year.”

“It was. So, why are you here?”

Jana grimaced “I told you. I’m here on a cruise.”

“You never told me why you were on the cruise. You certainly never told me why you were on a cruise through the Baltics.”

Jana continued her grimace.

Burton filled the quiet, “I told you.”

Jana broke, “I’m on the cruise to please my mother.”

“And the Baltic?”

“I chose to see Arvo Part at the opera house last night. That’s the only reason I chose to visit here.”

“Now you’re off with no reason to continue the journey.”

Jana muttered an agreement.

Burton looked up and saw they had hit a dead end.

Jana worriedly smirked, “I thought you knew it here.”

“I do, we forgot to turn.”

They turned around and headed back towards the Peppersack.

Burton was frustrated. It was a moderately well-off conversation after all the run-ins he’d had today, and he topped it all off by getting lost. He turned the attention back to Jana: “So, pleasing your mother, uh?”

“She thought it would be good for me to get out of the house.”

“I agree. Everybody should get out of the house.”

They walked in silence for a moment.

“You know,” Burton said, “you’re the first tourist I’ve met today that’s not half bad. You have a worthwhile reason for

coming, a desire to see the city on your own and the only pain you've caused me was accidental."

Jana's face shined with recognition. "You had trouble meeting non-idiot tourists today too?" Burton nodded yes.

Jana continued, "I wouldn't have gone back but . . . This is going to sound stupid." Burton egged her on and she continued, "Well, I had a copy of a Jacques Tati film in my room and didn't want to lose it."

"You're wrong - that doesn't sound stupid. Jacques Tati films are worth keeping."

Jana stopped as they neared the restaurant, "Is this where we made the wrong turn?"

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure of it now."

They walked down the other path leading from the Peppersack. A while down the path they saw the shipyard. "You recognize any of those?" Burton asked.

"The big white one with the flags." Jana's chuckle was quickly suppressed when she looked down from the ship and saw the group coming up the path. They were from a cruise ship—Jana's cruise ship. Burton saw the group and inquired, "You recognize them too, uh?"

"Yeah."

Jana's face cringed with recognition as she saw the group leader see her and wave. The leader shouted, "YEAHNA! Oh Yeahna! I'm so glad I found you!"

Jana weakly waved. The group leader had stepped up her speed and was now up close to them. "That's okay, I found my way back."

The leader spotted Burton, "Who is this? A friendly local showed you the way didn't he? They are so friendly down here. I found this lovely little shop that sold the cutest bright orange neon t-shirts. Can you believe it?"

"Only a little" Jana replied, wanting it to end.

"We're heading up to the Peppersack restaurant up the hill for dinner. You should join us. Don't forget to tip your

friend.” The group leader continued her walk up to the restaurant.

Burton spoke first, “It’s a tradition here that in order to show respect you finish all the food given to you. It doesn’t extend to restaurants, but an Estonian chief always notices an un-empty plate.”

“I’ll show them up for you,” she said.

Afterwards, as he walked the streets along the bay of Tallinn, he passed a young tourist couple on their way to their ship. He heard the girl speaking, “I swear she just left this shirt on a bench. She was carrying some ugly sweater thing. UGH! Remember when we’re married I have a rule about souvenirs: An impractical souvenir lacks the location’s name printed on it.”

Burton shook his head and then continued on his way.

Jana’s dinner provided more conversation than her lunch did. Instead of being asked nothing, she was asked once to pass the rolls. She did listen to one of the men describing a café he was at earlier where they had a trivia question you could answer to get a free coffee. She missed the question but found out the question meant the inability to enjoy yourself. The man laughed, saying he had never heard of anything so stupid.

“I don’t know” Jana thought. “I mean it takes most of your day just to find someone worth talking to.”

Not Enough

Laura Ellen Cox

Honorable Mention

Clara stood in the middle of the kitchen, a knife in her right hand. She had been standing still in that spot of the kitchen for over five minutes and was starting to feel faint. Confused, she looked down at the knife she was holding and saw blood on its blade. There was a cutting board on the counter with a half-chopped onion on it, and Clara could make out a few red drops near the onion. She looked down at her empty hand hanging limp at her side. She saw a gash in her palm, large and seeping with the blood that now seemed to be everywhere.

“Jesus, what happened!?” Jonathan walked into the kitchen, yelling. Clara ignored him. “Clara, what happened? Come to the sink! Come here now!” She let him lead her to the sink by her elbow.

“Oh, I, um . . .” She wanted to tell him what was going on, not to panic. But that didn’t seem right so she closed her mouth.

“What?” Jonathan stopped and looked at her.

“Where were you?” He hadn’t come home until late that evening. Clara hadn’t intended to ask him that. She stood staring at him, her face pale and her slender frame shaking slightly from the loss of blood.

“I was working.” He avoided her eyes as he tried to clean her hand.

“You were really working? All night?”

“What do you mean? Of course I’m sure I was working. I know what I was doing.”

“You don’t need to be so defensive, I was just wondering because I talked to Phillip this afternoon, and he said Lynn

was at your office today. But I'm sure that was business. Right, Jonathan?" Lynn and Phillip were their friends from college. Clara and Jonathan had been married first, almost a month after graduation. Lynn and Phillip married about a year later. Lynn and Clara had been each other's maids of honor.

Clara bent her head to the left trying to make eye contact. Jonathan's eyes were fixed on her wound and Clara thought she saw sweat forming on his brow.

"I don't know why you're trying to talk to me about my work right now. You've really got a bad cut here and need to go to the hospital."

"Are you sure? We have gauze and tape in the bathroom. Won't that work?"

"It looks pretty bad. You need to get this looked at by a doctor. I'm going to change my clothes. I'll only be a minute. Do you want your tennis shoes?"

"Sure." She felt disappointed. This was not the reaction she had been looking for from him, if she had been looking for a reaction at all. She figured after so many incidents such as tonight's, it was becoming slightly routine for him.

"Ok, I'll just be a couple minutes. Hold pressure on this with the towel and sit in the living room until I'm ready." As he walked back to their bedroom, she sat on the recliner in the living room. His coat was laid on the arm of the chair and Clara saw the light from his cell phone flashing. She picked it up and looked at the screen which read 1 message received 12:47 am from Lynn M. Clara slipped the phone back into his coat pocket and wiped a tear from her face as Jonathan came back into the living room carrying a pair of white tennis shoes.

Clara slowly opened her eyes. She turned her head and saw Jonathan sleeping in a chair near her. Although she didn't want him there, it seemed appropriate. He was there each

time she woke up in a hospital bed, always trying to remember before he told her what had happened, like a game to see if she could be the first to say it.

Clara remembered getting out of bed around two in the morning, shivering in her nightgown. She pulled on one of Jonathan's coats and slipped on sandals so she wouldn't feel the cold floor. Going through each room of the house, she kept the lights off and stared in silence at the things they had accumulated over the last six years. She kept telling herself she was going to crawl back in bed and go to sleep. Instead, Clara walked around the house more, forcing herself to remember the happy memory of each object she stopped at.

Soon the feelings were flooding her head. She knew she should cry, but couldn't. The tears would not come and she so desperately wanted to feel them roll over her cheeks. She went to the kitchen and got out the cutting board, the knife and the onion. Carefully peeling the skin off and cutting it in half, she started to chop it. Soon, she felt the stinging and burning from the cut onion, her eyes finally watering and spilling over onto her nightgown.

But now it wasn't enough. She needed more, something more than tears. They were weak, just saline. She paused and brought the blade of the knife to her palm, feeling the cool metal and the resistance of her skin. She pressed harder and then pulled the knife away looking at the impression the tip of it had left. She brought the knife back up to her palm and turned her head to look away as she closed her hand around it, pressed down and pulled. She sighed as she felt a liquid sensation in the palm of her hand. She ignored the blood that dripped from her clenched fist as she cleared her mind through the pain, forgetting the good and bad memories. She forgot all of Jonathan's shortcomings, she forgot that she was unhappy, and most of all, she forgot that she had just cut herself.

As Clara lay in the hospital bed, she wished he had told her instead of her remembering. He would have told her that she had gotten a silly late night craving for something. He would have told her she had gone to the kitchen to fix a snack and because of that balance disorder-- you know how you are--she had accidentally cut herself. Clara would have liked that story better than the truth she knew.

She turned her head away when she heard him waking up. It was dark outside and Clara couldn't tell if it was morning darkness or evening darkness. All she knew was she wanted the black to reach forever and last forever.

"You awake Clara?"

"Yes, when can we leave?" She stared at a spot on the wall, right next to the door. Part of the stucco looked like tire, or maybe a donut, just something with a hole in it.

"The doctor wanted to speak with you before he would tell me that. Guy's kind of a jerk." Jonathan had picked up a newspaper and was shuffling through it.

"What makes him a jerk?"

"Nothing, he just asks a lot of questions."

"And we wouldn't want that, right?" She whispered this last comment but Jonathan looked up like he had heard her. The doctor walked in before Jonathan could say anything.

"Mrs. Haven, I'm Dr. Plessy." Dr. Plessy shook Clara's hand warmly as he introduced himself. "I treated you in the emergency room tonight. How are you feeling?" He smiled so constantly Clara had to avert her eyes; it hurt her jaw just to watch him.

"Much better. Thank you, Doctor." Clara looked over at Jonathan, waiting for him to take control of the situation.

"My wife and I would like to know when she can go home."

"Well, Mr. Haven, that's what I would like to discuss with you. I reviewed your medical record, Clara and this isn't the

first time we've seen you in the emergency room for a laceration. In fact, you've been here five times in the last year. I don't want to be presumptuous, but self mutilation is a very serious disorder. I am recommending a psychiatric evaluation before you go home." He stopped and looked at Clara. She tried to remain calm, but her heart was beating so fast it felt like it was going to come out of her chest and land on the floor right in front of Dr. Plessy's feet. She thought back to the last time this had happened.

Clara was a child then, barely twelve years old. She had been cutting herself for months before anyone noticed. Her mother had been angry and immediately taken her to a pediatrician. The doctor had recommended Clara see a therapist. Clara had been surprised when her mother actually did take her to see a psychiatrist. As she sat in the plush chair of his air conditioned office, he asked question after question. Only one stuck out in her memory now.

"Clara, what does it feel like when you make yourself bleed?" She had hesitated for a minute but remembered he had said everything they talked about in his office was private.

"You know when you're washing your hands in the sink?"

"Yes."

"When the water slides over your fingers and palms, when it's nice and cool, not cold? For just a minute you want to dive into an entire pool of cool water and feel that sensation all over your whole body. It's just an intense urge for a split second until you realize there's no pool of water anywhere near. So you hold your hands under the water a little longer and resist the feeling. That's what it feels like."

After the first visit, Clara decided to stop. She had said too much and never wanted to see that man again. She convinced her parents it had all been a misunderstanding, and they didn't make her go back to the doctor. She actually had tried

to stop hurting herself, but by then she felt a need for it and had to do something to relieve the pressure. In high school, she gradually stopped, thinking she had outgrown it. She shamefully hid the scars. When she met Jonathan, she hadn't even thought about the years she had cut herself.

Things had been strained between her and Jonathan for months, but she couldn't figure out what was happening. They had everything they could need to make them happy, but things were slipping so fast Clara didn't know what else to do. Jonathan had become sullen and wouldn't tell her why. On Christmas, they had dinner with Lynn and Phillip and that was when Clara realized what was going on. There was something between Lynn and Jonathan, something Clara couldn't pin down but recognized as an intimacy Clara hadn't known with Jonathan since the earlier years of their marriage.

She thought she should be enraged or try to investigate and get hard evidence they were sleeping together. What shocked her was that she didn't want to. That's when she had started again, trying to remember how she had gotten away with it so well as a child. Now that she was in the hospital again, facing the threat of another doctor probing and asking for answers she didn't have, she felt like jumping out the window just to escape. She looked around the room, trying to hide her panic. Finally, her eyes met Jonathan's. She was searching for sympathy, but all she saw on his face was disappointment. He looked away and cleared his throat.

"Dr. Plessy, I'm sorry for the confusion. Clara developed an inner ear infection while scuba diving on a trip to Florida and has had troubles with her balance ever since. This is not the result of a mental instability."

"I still think that your wife's injuries and history warrant a referral. Maybe to a specialist for inner ear disorders." Dr. Plessy was writing on his chart.

"Thank you, but Clara is already under the care of our

family doctor. I appreciate your concern but it's really not necessary." Clara looked at the doctor, praying he would believe Jonathan and leave.

"Can I at least give you the name one of our psychiatrists here at the hospital? Dr. Shares is excellent and I really think just talking to him could help. I'm going to include this in your wife's discharge papers."

"Thank you, Dr. Plessy." Clara spoke to the doctor directly, feeling the surge of fear subside.

After the doctor left, Clara didn't say a word. She turned away from Jonathan and closed her eyes. She didn't want to look at him and have to thank him for rescuing her.

It had been a few days since she was released from the hospital. She hadn't left the house since. When they had gotten home that night, Jonathan took all the papers the hospital had given him when they released Clara and threw them away, including the referral to Dr. Shares. She had looked up the doctor's number in the phone book and considered calling him, but just seeing the name on the page had made her hands shake.

By the third day Clara started to feel the pressure building again. She didn't call anyone, planning on leaving for a few hours without anyone knowing where she was. At the last minute she wrote a quick note to Jonathan. She had a few items in mind she had been wanting for a while but had never thought to buy for herself. As she shopped through the department stores, the bright, clean cases bothered her. She thought, He should be buying me jewelry and perfume. That's what husbands do. She went and had dinner by herself and went home after not buying any of the things she had shopped for.

Clara was surprised when she came home to find Jonathan drinking alone. He never did that, saying anyone who drank alone or before sunset was an alcoholic. But that had been

when he still tried to make her laugh. She was sure if she brought it up he wouldn't even remember saying it. She had walked into the house, stopping in the doorway of the kitchen. Jonathan had turned on a light in the kitchen, but the rest of the house was dark. The tips of her shoes were just outside the rectangle of light coming from the kitchen entrance.

"Hi." She stood staring at him, waiting.

"Hello."

"Did you get my note?"

"Yes. Didn't know you wanted to go out."

"I didn't know I needed your permission." She hadn't said this with anything intended. She really wasn't aware he expected to keep tabs on her.

"My permission? No, I don't care if you go out."

"Of course. It must have worried you. I apologize. Next time I'll be sure to call you." She said this as if she were letting him know what was for dinner. She had no concern for her time anymore. She never did anything useful with it if she were at home or out anyways. Clara turned to leave the kitchen, but he stopped her.

"Do you hate me that much?" His voice was steadier than hers, except for the slight slur of his words from the alcohol.

"You're drunk. Sleep it off on the couch and I'll talk to you tomorrow." She left him alone and went to wash her face. He let her go without protesting, so unlike he was in the early years of their marriage. She thought back to the night she had first met Jonathan. He had been so persistent. She was at one of the bars near the college; lots of students went there to avoid the books back in their dorm rooms. She was sitting in a booth with a couple friends, and Jonathan had walked over.

"Hi. I was just over there pointing out to my buddies that you are easily the most gorgeous girl in this place." He smiled at her. She blushed and looked down at her drink. She felt one of her friends softly kick her under the table. "I just had to

come over here and tell you that. You're beautiful."

"Stop it. You're embarrassing me!" Clara had said, smiling in spite of herself

"Come on. I bet a girl as cute as you gets guys falling over themselves just to talk to you." She looked up at him and saw how completely confident he was.

"Not really. What is it going to take for you to stop?" She felt another kick from under the table, harder this time but ignored it.

"Accept my compliment, that you really are gorgeous."

"Fine. Thank you for the compliment." She looked away from him, expecting him to leave.

"One more condition; give me your phone number." He leaned on the table, close enough to her so that she could smell his cologne.

"Then will you stop it?" she said laughing.

"Maybe." He smiled playfully as Clara wrote down her number. They had started dating shortly thereafter. The first time she had cut herself, he had cried and begged her to tell him why. She couldn't give him an answer. He should have already known. She thought about this as she washed her face and got ready for bed, and it made her smile.

Jonathan tossed the glass he had been using in the sink. It bounced off the polished metal without breaking. He steadied himself against the kitchen counter. He was tired of her and wanted to let her know it.

"I'm not drunk." Jonathan walked into the bedroom steady except for his lips that seemed to quiver slightly. "I'm not drunk," he repeated, "and you never answered my question." He remained in the doorway with one hand on the metal knob.

"What question was that?"

"You hate me, don't you? That's what this is all about. What it's always been about in all these years. You hate me.

Just say it.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” Clara put her hand up to her mouth quickly.

“Don’t flatter myself? I’m your husband!” He was shouting now and paused a moment, clenching his hands, trying to maintain control. In a quieter voice he said, “You think I don’t know who you are?”

“Who am I Jonathan?”

“Quit trying to be patronizing. You never could pull off superiority. Maybe the tortured soul bit. But I do know you. I know you had these problems way before I met you.” She knew that he felt sick, but couldn’t stop himself. She knew that he had wanted to say this for so long. Lynn had only been a temporary solution. He had to say these things to Clara.

“I really think you should stop.” Her voice stayed flat and she could tell he had started to get angry she wouldn’t even react.

“Or what? Oh no, don’t trouble sensitive Clara! How dare we simpletons disturb you? You never grew up from that neglected, little brat you were. You think the world revolves around you and if your husband, or your parents, can’t give you all their attention, by God you’ll make them sorry! Lynn told me how you would cut yourself when you were a kid. Just how self-indulgent are you Clara?” He looked as if he would laugh out loud.

“What are you talking to Lynn about any of this for?”

“Just because you live in this layer of denial doesn’t mean I have to play by the rules. And Lynn and I are friends too. I can talk about whatever I want with her. You should have been the one to tell me anyways.” That was the trick. She knew he could see her cheeks flush and her fists clench.

“So you’ll discuss the intimate details of your marriage with everyone else but your wife! I knew it, Jonathan, I knew

it the whole time. You can't hide things from me, especially something like this!" Her voice was raised.

"I have no idea what you're even talking about. Did you take something?" He looked suddenly dizzy, like the room had started to move around him, but he kept going. H

She knew he wanted to see how far he could push.

"I know what's going on Jonathan! I'm not an idiot. Remember who wrote your damn English essays in your senior year? Now you tell me just what's going on between you two right now."

"What do you want to hear? That I've been having an affair? That way you could really feel sorry for yourself. Would that make you happy? Cause God knows I've given you everything else! Maybe all you wanted was someone to help you be as much a victim as possible, that way you can stab yourself until you bleed dry!" He screamed at her. Now he had lost control. He rushed out of the house, slamming the door behind him and getting in his car.

Jonathan idled his car at the end of their street, his fingers jumping on the steering wheel, his feet tapping the ground. He stared straight ahead, his mind racing. He felt triumphant, but that feeling was becoming harder to pin down by the minute. Seeing a car coming up behind him, he punched the gas and drove. He didn't know where to go, but he wanted to sustain his victory as long as possible. He drove around the business district, thinking he might go to his office but he couldn't figure out what he would do once he was in his office. He pulled into the parking lot of the Circle K on Bryant and reached in his pocket for his cell phone.

"Dammit. I left it in my briefcase!" He looked around the car for two quarters, but all he found was a peppermint and a nickle. He walked into the convenience store.

"Do you have an ATM?" he asked the clerk behind the counter.

“Yes, over there by the lottery display.” The clerk was a big guy with a buzz cut and a look that said he didn’t really give a damn. Jonathan’s took out twenty dollars from his separate checking account, accepting the \$2.75 transaction fee and walked back to the counter.

“Can you break this?”

“You have to purchase something for me to open the register.” The clerk hadn’t even looked up from his magazine.

“Fine.” Jonathan grabbed a pack of gum off the rack next to the register and tossed it on the counter in front of the clerk. “I’ll take this, and could I get a dollar in quarters too?” Jonathan waited while the clerk shuffled the change.

“There you go sir. Have a nice day.” The clerk mumbled the sentence together. Jonathan walked out the door without saying anything and went to the pay phone against the side of the building. He dropped two quarters into the machine and dialed.

“Hello?” The voice he heard on the other side of the line was so unlike Clara’s.

“Lynn.” Jonathan gripped the phone.

“Jon? Glad you called, I needed to ask if I should keep the reservations we have at Cheryl’s for lunch on Tuesday or if...”

“Lynn, I’m coming over, is Phillip there? I really need to see you.” There was a pause from her side of the line.

“No, he’s not here.”

“Ok, I’ll be there shortly.”

He drove through town towards Lynn and Phillip’s house, his mind a mix of anger and disgust. Husbands weren’t supposed to cheat on their wives, good husbands wouldn’t even think of doing that. But Lynn had been so perfect. And he had used her, telling her what she wanted to hear. After they had slept together the first time, he thought he would never do that again. The whole next day he felt like jumping in front of a truck. But the next week Lynn had come by his

office. He tried to hide it from Clara, but he knew she had already figured it out. He couldn't stop. Even now, as Clara was sitting at home most likely pressing a razor to her wrist he felt he couldn't help her.

He parked his car far enough from her house so he wouldn't be seen. He noticed the front porch light was on as well as the light from the living room. When he saw Lynn's shadow pass in front of the living room window behind the curtains, his hands began to shake and he felt like his whole body was perspiring. This wasn't lust. He had felt that for Lynn, it was loathing. Loathing of himself, of Clara, of Lynn, of the apathetic clerk in the Circle K. Now as he sat parked outside Lynn's house, his stomach felt ill. If only Lynn hadn't agreed, or if Clara wasn't so emotional . . . Jonathan thought. But he knew that wasn't true. Jonathan turned the ignition and drove away, his tires squealing.

As he rushed home, the images of each time Clara had cut herself ran through his mind. He knew that he could have helped her, done more for her but had not wanted to. He needed to reassure Clara, tell her they could work on anything as long as they were together. By the time he got home he almost believed it himself. He rushed in the house from the garage, leaving his keys in the car.

"Clara! Clara, are you home? Clara, I need to tell you . . ."

His words trailed off as he walked through the kitchen. Every knife, razor and pair of scissors in the house was laid out on the counters.

"Clara?" As he walked in the bedroom and saw her packing, his voice lowered to almost a whimper.

"I'm leaving." She didn't even look up at him.

"Clara, Clara, listen, we can . . . make this work. Forget the past." He moved towards her and stopped.

"Maybe, but I have to go first. I need something. Time maybe. But alone. Do you understand?" She looked up at

him.

“No.” He whispered.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry for me!” He couldn’t believe what was happening. “Just think about this for a minute! Do you really think you can be by yourself? You need me.”

“Follow me.” She took Jonathan by the hand and led him back to the kitchen where all the sharp blades were. She let go of his hand and picked one of the knives up.

“If I stay with you here, I will kill myself. I know you don’t understand now, and maybe you never will, but I’m trying to save myself. I thought I did this because I hated other people, but it’s worse than that and I need to figure it out.” Jonathan looked at her holding the knife. He wondered why he had never thought of locking them up.

“Will you come back?”

“I don’t know.” She looked at him and Jonathan saw kindness on her face.

“Can I call you?”

“No, it’s important you don’t.” She walked up to him and brushed the hair out of his eyes. He leaned his face against her hand, feeling its warmth. He kissed the inside of her palm before she brought her hand back down and left.

Come Sail Away

Natasha Lopez

Honorable Mention

Rose imagined that the colorful brochure must have been tossed away with the rest of the junk mail Adobe Nursing Home had received. Whereas the rest of the mail dutifully went into the wastebasket, a brief gust of wind from an open door must have caught the brochure and sent it scuttling down the faded linoleum hall. As if by prior arrangement, a cross breeze would have sucked it under her door before anyone noticed it. She saw it drawn by the cool air coming from her open window, skating across the dusty linoleum and stopping only when it had collided with her favorite orange slippers.

Rose looked down at her feet and stared blankly at the brochure that was wedged under a toe, fluttering in the breeze. She gently set down the small glass ship she had been holding, giving it a gentle pat before leaning over and picking up the ad. She straightened up with a deep sigh and shifted to a less uncomfortable spot on the unyielding bed. She moved the paper away from her face, then close up, then away again before groping the top of her head for her glasses and settling them on her nose. “All The Fun You Can Handle” the brochure practically screamed. The picture was of a man and a woman playing chess. His arm was around her, and they were both laughing. Rose studied the brochure at first disdainfully, then more closely. She looked at the glass ship, then at the brochure again, and she smiled. “Oh yes. This is just what the doctor ordered.”

Later that evening her eldest son, Arnold, came to the nursing home to visit her. He sat heavily on the vinyl couch and ran a thick hand through his thinning hair before dron-

ing on about his work. Rose listened patiently to his stories, nodding and asking the right questions but waiting to get a word in edgewise. Once Arnold took a breath, looking as if he would go on about shuffling papers from one office to another, she said, "I'd like to take a trip."

Arnold blinked his hound-dog eyes, his lower lip poked out a bit, and he blinked again. "What?"

"I want to take a trip," Rose said again, slowly. She pulled the folded brochure out of her robe pocket, smoothed it carefully with her gnarled hands, and handed it to him.

Arnold took the brochure, fumbled for his glasses in his breast pocket, set them on his nose, and held the brochure at the end of his arms, frowning mightily at the gaudy display before him. He opened the tri-fold, his eyebrows twitching up at words like "fun," "adventure," and "exotic." He sighed and tucked the brochure carelessly in one of his coat pockets. "I think I better talk this over with Gail and Sharon," he said as he pecked her on her cheek to signify the visit was over.

Rose knew they would all be back that weekend. They always visited her between lunch and dinner on Saturday. So she carefully made sure she knew what to say, what their arguments might be and was ready and waiting for them when they appeared Saturday afternoon. After the normal greetings, a bit of small talk, and what seemed to Rose too long of a time, she brought up the trip.

"You mean to the mall?" Gail asked as she tucked a stray strand of hair back into her bun and smoothed down her plain brown dress. Rose sometimes went with her to the mall for a few hours to do a little shopping and have a bite to eat.

"No," said Rose, but before she could go on, Sharon broke in with a sniff.

"You mean to the beach?" Sometimes the children rented a couple of hotel rooms on the beach in the summer and invited Rose to join them for a long weekend. Sharon's hand came up, as if to ward off an invisible breeze from her perfectly

done hair, her pinched expression declaring that going to the beach wasn't what she wanted to do.

"No," said Rose. "I want to go on a cruise."

They looked at each other and then back at her. "A cruise?" Gail and Sharon asked together.

Rose nodded and told of the brochure that she had given Arnold. He pulled the very crumpled brochure out of his pocket and presented it to his sisters. They looked over it and looked at each other, then back at Rose. "No," all three said in unison.

"What do you mean, no?" Rose asked in surprise.

"It would be too dangerous," Arnold said.

"You would be happier here," Sharon added.

"Don't you like us visiting you?" Gail asked.

"Of . . . of course I like you visiting me," Rose began. "But dangerous? It's just as dangerous walking down the hall here. I could fall and break my hip."

"All the more reason," Arnold interjected, "to stay here. We could not get to you as fast if you were on a cruise."

Rose gaped at her son, but plodded on, "And happier here? Would you be happy stuck with a bunch of old people, drooling and peeing on themselves all day? I mean, unless we are talking about the Price is Right, they don't have anything to say."

Sharon smiled condescendingly, "But mother, you are just as old as they are," she pointed out.

"Damn how old I am girl!" Rose raised her voice. "You are missing the point. The point is I may be as old as these folk, but I'm not old here," she thumped herself on her chest. "Or here," she pointed to the side of her head. "I don't like the food they serve here. I haven't had a steak in two years, and I have my own teeth, so don't give me no flack about not being able to chew it. And a body gets tired of mush and applesauce every day."

"Mother, please," Gail pleaded, "you are getting all worked

up.”

“Worked up? It’s about time. All I do is sit here and wait for these visits so I have a live body to talk to and not one of them corpses they call a patient. And I want to take one little cruise, one week out of my life with my own money, and you three have the gall to tell me no? Me? Your mother! Is this the way I raised you?”

“Mother, you are making a scene,” Sharon scolded as she gave a faint smile to the nurse who appeared in the doorway, concern written on her face.

“I’ll give you a scene, young lady. Ever since you married that man, you’ve put on airs. That’s not the way I raised you. I taught you the down to earth old fashioned way, and you aren’t too big to take a switch to!”

Arnold sighed, gathered up his coat and the brochure. “We are sorry, mother, but we are upsetting you and the others here. We should leave.”

“Yes, go on and leave me here. A body wants a small vacation, one week, who knows how long I’ll be here.” Rose continued to holler as her children walked down the avocado-colored hallway and out of the nursing home.

Rose was so worked up she couldn’t sleep that night. It seemed every commercial on television for the next week was about getting away or traveling, and this just added to her unhappiness. The following Saturday the children came to visit, but they kept it brief and no one mentioned the cruise. That didn’t mean Rose wasn’t thinking about it, however. After they left, she found a phonebook and looked up the number to a travel agency that specialized in cruises. She then went to her room that she shared with one other patient, and dialed the number.

“Adventure Cruises, this is Sally, how can I help you?”

Rose explained she wanted to go on a weeklong cruise, but didn’t know how to go about setting it up. Sally was very helpful and suggested she come to the office. Rose explained

she was unable to currently and would like the information over the phone. Sally was happy to oblige and after an hour, Rose had found a cruise she thought sounded perfect and was within her budget. She told Sally she would get a money order to her as soon as possible. As she hung up the phone Rose thought how easy this would be to do.

“No children are going to tell me I can’t do as I please.” She nodded firmly to herself.

Monday morning, after breakfast, Rose carefully dressed in one of the few sets of clothing she had. She carefully did her hair, put on her orange lipstick--the one Sharon hated--and topped it off with her favorite lavender hat. Making sure the nurses were busy doing their rounds, she managed to get out the front door without anyone the wiser and she congratulated herself on that fact. The bank was about three miles away from her nursing home, but Rose had all day. She usually didn’t eat lunch, so they wouldn’t miss her then, and it was such a pretty spring day, she set off down the sidewalk, head held up, a smile on her lips.

Rose had to stop a few times to rest her weary legs, but by lunchtime she had made it to the bank. The line wasn’t long and she soon found herself before a cool young man, his eyebrows arched politely but impersonally over his green eyes. “Yes, how may I help you?” he spoke slowly and loudly.

Rose thought about scolding him. She wasn’t deaf or stupid, but then she smiled. After all, she was here to get her money out of the bank and take a cruise! “I’d like to get a money order,” she said brightly. She pushed her identification, her paper bankcard, and a small piece of paper she had written the amount on and whom to make it out to, through the small slot at the bottom of the window.

The young man nodded briefly and punched things into his computer. He paused and looked from the computer to Rose and back again. “Mrs. . . .”

“Call me Rose,” she said brightly.

He smiled wanly, "Rose, do you happen to have either Gail or Arnold here with you today?"

Rose blinked and her smile slipped. "Why would I have one of my children with me?"

The young man cleared his throat, "Well, it appears that your account is under their approval. For me to give you this money order, they have to sign for it."

Rose's smile fell all the way, and her brows knitted. "Oh dear... I forgot about that.... But it's my money. Can't I take it out if I want?"

The young man held up his hands and tried to put on a reassuring smile that only made Rose's hopes completely die. "I'm sorry, but the account must have one of their signatures."

Rose nodded and took back the papers. She thanked the young man who had already turned away to help the next customer. She walked slowly home. It seemed her dreams of going on a cruise had faded beyond her grasp. How could she have forgotten the children had power of attorney over her estate? Ever since she had fallen sick, her children had treated her like a child. She couldn't fault them; the doctors weren't sure Rose would ever recover, but she did. The children refused to let her return to her apartment and had left her in the nursing home, thinking it was better for her there than by herself again. She felt old, and heavy, and kept looking up at the stores she passed, wondering when she would make it back.

Rose was subdued for some time afterwards. Her husband had been a sailor and had talked about the beauty of the sea. There was a part of her that wanted to experience this, to feel close to him again, and do this one thing before she became too old to enjoy it. She sat one night, holding the ship tenderly in her hands, when a streetlight from outside caught the glimmer of a ring on her finger. She turned her hand over and looked at it, then smiled. Perhaps all was not lost.

Rose remembered passing a pawnshop on the way to the

bank. Although she had managed to sneak out the front door the first time, she was aggravated to find it locked. Checking the time, she made her way to the cafeteria. Although there was much noise from the kitchen, no one was in sight and she was able to get out the delivery door. Spring was giving way slowly. The trees that had earlier been full of flowers had shed most of them in favor of bright green leaves. It made for a pleasant, shady walk as Rose found the shop.

The man inside was about the age of her children, wearing a button shirt and nice slacks. The shop itself was clean and not at all what Rose expected. The young man smiled when he saw her, and when she said she was here to sell a few things, offered her a chair to rest on. She carefully pulled out a small plastic bag and emptied out all her jewelry. The man looked carefully at some, weighed others, and looked up a few things in a book.

“Well, Rose,” he smiled, “these are all very nice pieces. You have kept them in good condition. I could offer you a thousand dollars for the lot.”

A thousand wasn't quite enough to get Rose the trip she wanted but put her a lot closer than she had been earlier. “I'll take it.”

The man shifted on his chair a moment, peering at the jewelry before him. “May I ask why it is you wish to sell your things, Rose? Pieces like this often get passed down to other family members.”

Rose thought to take offence then realized he was genuinely concerned. She peered around herself, then confided that she wanted to take a cruise and that she wanted to save her money for her children's inheritance. She said these pieces meant little to her sentimentally, and her children were not interested in them. The young man smiled and relaxed. “As long as you feel that way, I will take them.” As he handed her the agreement stating that she was willing to sell her jewelry, he spotted the ring on her hand. “May I see that?”

Rose reluctantly drew it off and handed it to him. That ring was her wedding ring, one of the most precious pieces to her.

“This ring is one of the most beautiful things I’ve seen in my years working here. I would be willing to give you another thousand for it.”

Rose paled. Two thousand dollars was enough to get her that cruise with some left over for gifts and tips. But it was her wedding ring. Her husband had given that to her. She had never lost it in the fifty years they had been married.

“Rose,” the young man said gently. “I’m sorry. I can see this means a lot to you.” He started to hand the ring back, when Rose held up a hand to stop him.

“I’ll take it,” she whispered.

The sun was still shining and the birds singing as she left the shop. The young man had kindly said he would give Rose thirty days to change her mind about the ring, but she knew she would not change her mind. Once back inside the nursing home, she sat on her bed, held the picture of her husband to her chest, and wept softly.

Rose managed to get the money to Sally at the travel agency, and Sally worked out for Rose to be picked up by a taxi, taken to the train station and take the train to the coast, then picked up at the coast depot and taken to the ship. The only problem now was when she wanted to go. Rose said she would call back.

The family visits had gotten more eased since Rose stopped talking about her cruise, at least for her family if not for Rose. Spring moved into summer, and the air conditioning, which only seemed to work in the nursing home in the winter, broke and the heater took over.

“We are going to have to wish you a happy Fourth of July now, mother,” Gail was saying brightly.

“You won’t be back?” Rose asked, her excitement trying not to show.

“We are all going to Uncle Joe’s house for a family get together. We’ll bring you lots of pictures, though.”

Rose didn’t hear the rest of the visit. As soon as her daughter was out of sight, she phoned Sally and Sally was happy to discover there was an opening on a ship leaving that day. Rose could get there in plenty of time for the ship didn’t set sail until sunset. Rose packed quickly, laid a letter on her pillow she had written addressed to her children and managed to leave the nursing home without anyone the wiser.

Unbeknownst to Rose, Gail had dropped her sunglasses. After a fruitless search through her purse, car, and house, she returned to the nursing home, sure the glasses were there. They were but Rose wasn’t. Gail read the note and her exclamations were loud enough to alert the nurses. Gail called Arnold and soon the family was racing their way toward the docks to “save” Rose.

Rose made a pleasant, if uneventful, trip to the docks. She was a little worried the taxi drivers or the train conductor would ask her for fare, but they kindly let her know it had all been taken care of. As the taxi approached the docks, she set her lavender hat at a jaunty angle and smiled to herself in her compact. All the waiting, all the planning, all saving, and she was finally going to sea!

In the meantime her family, breaking all speed laws, soon exited the freeway and impatiently followed the signs to the port. Yellow lights were ignored, lanes made out of bikeways, and the horn laid on liberally. Everyone was talking at once, pointing different directions, yelling to “watch out!” Miraculously, they made it to the docks and parked in the passenger loading and unloading zone, spilling out onto the sidewalk.

Inside, Rose had already gone through the line, checked in her bag, and picked up her tickets. She happily tottered the way the woman motioned, stopping only to use the restroom. “This is almost too good to be true,” she said to herself.

Her family had spent those precious minutes arguing about

who should stay with the car so they wouldn't get a ticket. They finally decided the ticket didn't matter and they converged on the ship, fanning out all over, ignoring the strange looks people were giving them as they tried to locate Rose. After a fruitless thirty-minute search they finally met on the main deck.

"I can't find her anywhere!" Gail cried.

"Where can she be?" Sharon asked impatiently.

"Did you check the bathrooms, the restaurant, and the gift shop?" Arnold asked.

Realizing they had neglected the dock area they flooded back to shore to search.

During that time Rose had given herself a start, thinking that a form ahead of her was vaguely similar to Arnold's or that hair was the color of Sharon's. Berating herself for groundless worries, she stopped in the gift store for a few things, popped into the restaurant for a quick bite to eat, and then happily sailed to the ship and her tiny cabin, which appeared palatial to her. Before she knew it the ship's horn sounded and the public address system announced that all non-passengers should go to shore. Rose decided to go on deck and watch the ship set off.

Her family, now panicking, heard the horns and converged back to the dock. They frantically begged for the ship to be held, but the employees didn't share their concern. The family looked on helplessly as the ship began pulling away.

Rose, atop deck, looked out over the sea of faces. She had done it! She was going on her cruise. And . . . yes it was. That was Arnold frantically gesturing at one of the employees on the dock. And right next to him was Gail and Sharon. Rose took off her lavender hat, raising it above her head, grinning wide enough to be seen even at that distance.

"And now for my steak," she said to no one in particular.

Photography

*While there is perhaps a province in which the photograph
can tell us nothing more than what we see with our own eyes,
there is another in which it proves to us
how little our eyes permit us to see.*

Dorothea Lange



Pose for Picture

Misty Jones

First Prize Photography



Tree

Renee Johnson

Second Prize Photography



In the Word

Misty Jones

Third Prize Photography



A Little Siesta

Vivienne Henry



Dutch Tower

Holly Jo Patrick



Charity's View

Vivienne Henry



Boy on Rock

Misty Jones



My Name Is Mike McGaffrey

Victor A. Perez



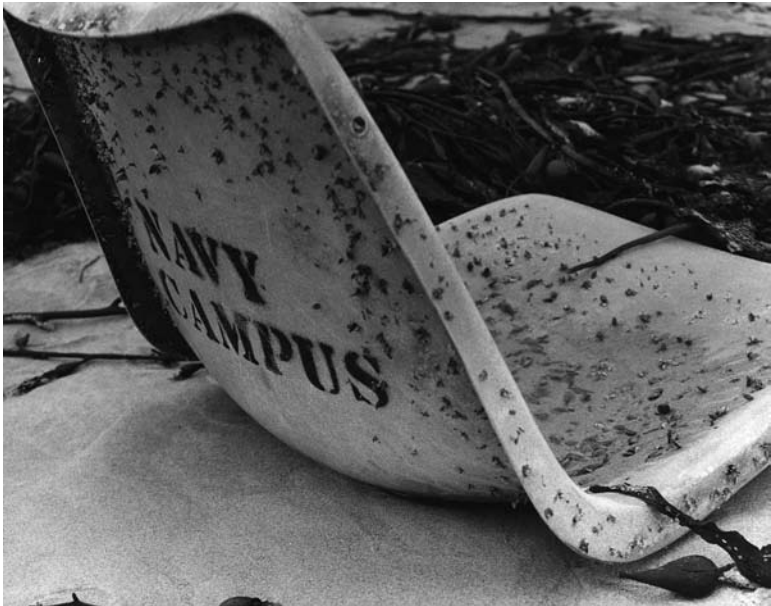
Untitled

Andrea Ortega



Cactus 2

Nathan A. Tyree



Navy

Renee Johnson

Non-Fiction

Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart.

William Wordsworth

Even from a Wheelchair

Joe Hemphill

First Prize Non-Fiction

As long as someone focuses his thoughts on the fact that he can't walk, he won't be able to discover what he really can do from a wheelchair. Some people, who can't walk, won't break away from the idea of how limited wheelchairs make them.

I have had cerebral palsy since birth and I have never walked. Like some in this situation, I tried to walk because of the belief that if you can walk you can be more like other people. I know one lady with cerebral palsy who spent years trying to walk and it caused her to develop emotional problems. I truly wanted to walk, but after giving it a good try, I accepted it wasn't going to happen. I began to explore pursuits and goals that I could do even if I was unable to walk.

It is better if someone discovers early in life that he won't ever walk because he can start to learn what things he can do. When I was young, I asked the boys in the neighborhood to let me be the batboy. As the batboy, I was taking part in being involved with the other kids in the neighborhood. This also helped me later in life because it taught me to find ways that I could be part of things that came my way and to enjoy them.

A person needs to discover that he can do meaningful things even though he is confined to a wheelchair. In my case, I learned that I could write. After high school, I was wondering what I was going to do with the rest of my life. Then a lady offered to help me pursue the writing that I had always felt drawn toward. This was when my life-long adventure began. Writing has brought me some challenges, but for the most part, writing has given me much satisfaction and pleasure. Writing doesn't require me to walk and I am becoming good at it.

An individual who can't walk can have a social life. Even though I'm in a wheelchair, I have a pretty active social life. Many evenings you can find me in the Tower District part of town having a soft drink. I have met several people there and when they see me we often have conversations about all kinds of things. It's very stimulating and enjoyable to communicate with others in this manner.

Someone who can't walk can go to college and obtain an education. Even if you don't earn a degree, you can become a more well-rounded person by attending college. At nearly sixty, I'm still going to school and meeting interesting people there.

Someone who can't walk can hold down a job. I worked as a newsletter editor for the disabled both at Long Beach State and at an independent living center in Southern California. I did very well in these occupations and learned the responsibilities of having a job. The fact that I couldn't walk had very little to do with my abilities to perform in the work place.

Once someone believes that he can learn to do many things, even though he can't walk, he will find numerous doors open to a happy and fulfilling life. Being the neighborhood batboy can teach you how to become involved with your surroundings even from a wheelchair. Learning that you can do something special, such as write, helps to give you a better self-image. Going out in public, even though you are different, will help you to realize that you do have a place in society. A handicapped person who attends school soon realizes he faces many of the same challenges as other students. The work place can be rewarding, even to someone who is unable to walk. Focus on what you can do rather than on what limitations you have. The world is yours, even from a wheelchair.

Bayonet

Adam Thompson

Second Prize Non-Fiction

I enlisted into the United States Army Reserve on March 30, 1998. At the time I was just barely seventeen years old. I was a high school drop out with only a G.E.D. to show I had any remnant of an education. I was not a criminal escaping the law; I was not a young father to be. There wasn't a war or an armed conflict to participate in; Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina were the responsibility of the National Guard. I was running away from the future I had been headed toward. Dropping out of high school so early destroyed my chances for a timely college education and thrust me into associations with people that most folks would consider less than desirable. This future would have certainly led to poverty and drugs. However, I also felt it was my duty to enlist. I joined the Army to honor those who came before me, those currently in service and the many who will follow me. Men and women fought and often died or were left permanently maimed or disfigured, all in an effort to protect the freedoms I enjoy as a citizen. I was also inspired by my father who served for twenty years in the United States Air Force. He, like me, served in no notable campaigns, but the idea is that we volunteered our lives for the greater idea of the United States.

Fort Jackson, South Carolina was hot and humid. I remember vividly that each day at 0430 hours we rose to the sound of a light switch. It seemed that even the light itself made an unmistakable thud. The whole floor of eighty men scrambled to a bathroom containing twelve sinks and all of us brushed our teeth and shaved in ten minutes in a quiet rhythmic cadence. By 0445 hours we formed outside our barracks. The air was crisp, the sandy, rocky ground wet with dew. We

recited our Soldier's Creed, our inspiration, in unison, and the drill sergeants led us in formation on a run. Afterwards we showered and dressed for the morning parade. After chow, we started Bayonet Training.

The bayonet doesn't appear menacing in the least, at least not in comparison to an M-16 or maybe a shoulder fired missile. It's simply a double edged knife with notches to make it attachable to our rifles. I didn't think much of using it; I joined the Army as a technician, not an infantryman. I just wanted to stay behind the scenes and fix tanks. What was I thinking?

I do not mean to imply that I was not aware that soldiers were trained to kill. I was taught how to shoot a person down with a rifle. There are more ways of killing people than I could ever possibly learn. However, the bayonet is a dramatically personal weapon. Using a bayonet puts a soldier face to face with an enemy and a decision. The decision is to kill or be killed, regardless of why the battle is being fought.

In a blur of time we were all spread out on a gigantic field. Drill Sergeant Ingram stood on a platform. He was a tall, slender African American man, and unlike our other drill sergeants, he seemed to be quite sophisticated. He was strong and fit, but once in a while, he'd let you see his tender side. I hadn't expected this from a man weathered by years of military service.

His voice boomed through a megaphone. He'd shout to us, "What makes the grass grow?!"

To which my fellow recruits and I would respond in unison, "Blood! Blood! Blood makes the grass grow, drill sergeant!"

Then he'd holler, "What makes the grass grow green?!"

In reply we'd shout, "Guts! Guts! Guts make the grass grow green, drill sergeant!"

The other drill sergeants walked amongst us, heckling us,

taunting us, as was their way. We were taught to twirl and slash, butt and stab, all sorts of horrific methods of killing and maiming with this bayonet. At some point I felt as though I was becoming a robot; we all seemed like robots. We were being programmed to kill without thought or hesitation. Nevertheless, I had not recognized the fact that one day my duty could require me to kill another person with this bayonet. My duty may put me face to face with another human being. I'd have to look that soldier in the eyes, and I would try to kill that person, to save my own life. It's much easier for a soldier to launch a missile or drop a bomb, since neither action brings one into intimate contact with death. Later, after lunch chow, we marched to a bayonet range. On the range we ran here and there, we stabbed, slashed, poked and butted our rifles and bayonets against dummies made up to look like Russian soldiers. The dummies were left over from a time when all American service members were taught to fight Communists. On that very range, I finally realized that my duty, my responsibility, my choice as a citizen, may lead me to take another life.

I understood that sometimes diplomacy doesn't work and that war is sometimes necessary. I had a responsibility now to my nation that I would bear arms and fight for our nation's chosen causes, even those causes that seem to serve no good purpose. It would be naïve of me to have thought that everything we fight for is good and just. Take Iraq for example. Did we fight there to oust a tyrant? Has anyone found the weapons of mass destruction? Maybe we are there to quench our thirst for oil. I understand that the purpose of war is sometimes blurry. However, in the performance of my duties I will always give my best effort to fulfill them.

I feel a great sense of pride about my decision to enter the military. There is a measure of honor given to those willing to fight and die for the right to our freedoms. This volunteer-

ism is deserving of the label “citizen.” No longer will I view a citizen simply as someone who can vote, own property, or pay taxes. A citizen treasures, defends, even yields to their nation, even when it means they might compromise their personal values. As a result of this training in the United States Army, I now feel that I’ve earned the right to the esteem of an American citizen.

Colophon

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