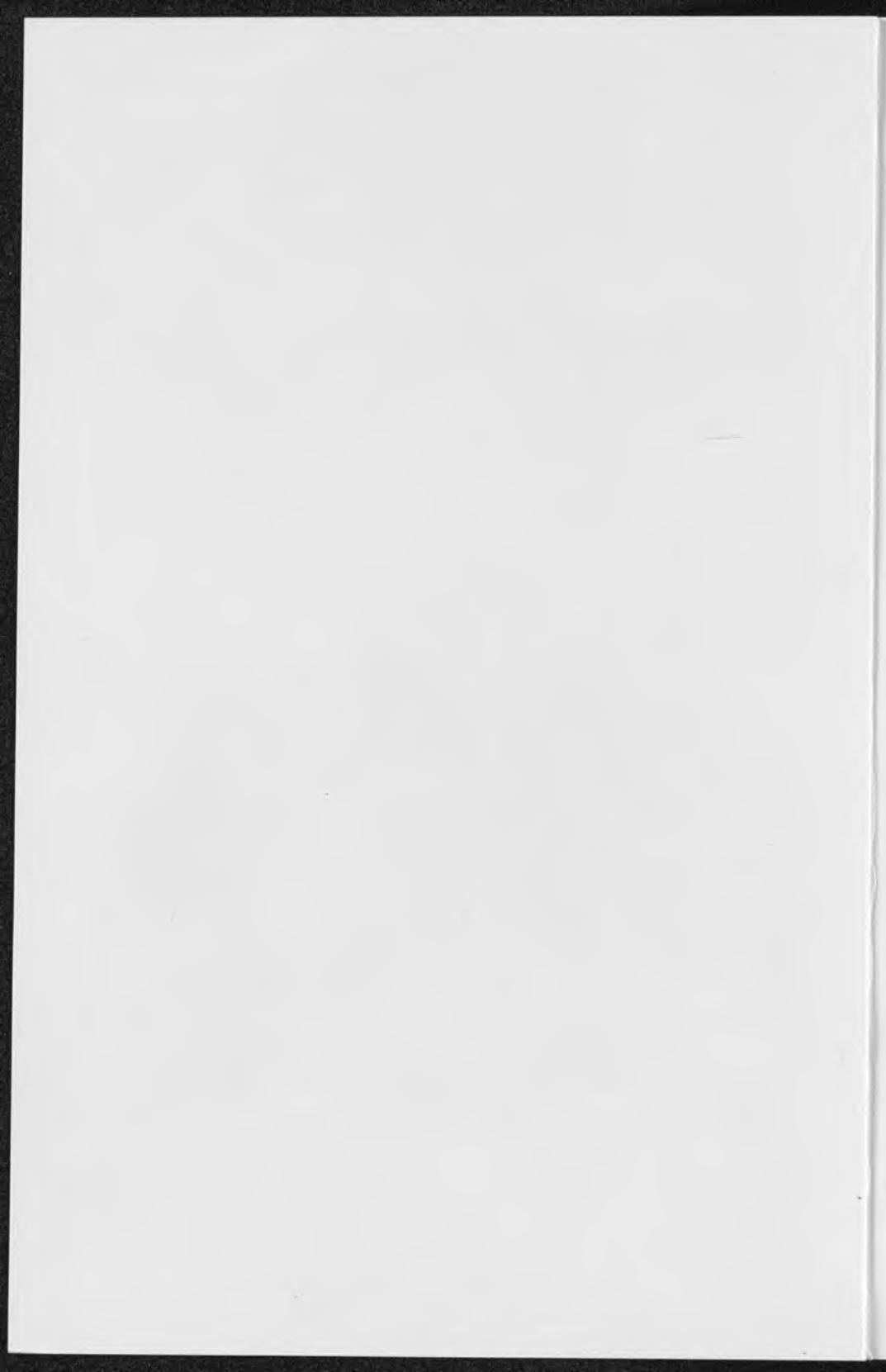


# APOGEE



THE LITERARY JOURNAL OF HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY  
SPRING 2005



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THE LITERARY JOURNAL OF HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

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FACULTY EDITOR  
Dr. Marion Hodge

COVER PHOTOGRAPH  
Shining Plant  
Paula Hartness

SPECIAL THANKS TO  
Dr. Cheryl Harrison

STUDENT ASSISTANT  
Meredith Hendrix

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REBECCA M. FLEMING

Walter Blythe, 1915

*FIRST PLACE, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

You see me through sister-love, overlooking  
The faults I have, painting me a hero;  
I want to become the hero you believe me to be,  
But to do that, I've got to face  
That which I fear most.  
I'm not afraid of death,  
It is dying, the thought of a painful, ugly  
Death, that kept me civilian so long.  
What you overheard is true:  
I leave soon.  
I've shirked my civil duty long enough.  
I'm healthy and strong—they need me more  
In Europe than I am needed here.  
But it's more than that.  
I'm going for myself, in my deepest heart I can admit  
That. I want to show *me*  
That I am not a coward.  
Someone sent me a white feather last week—  
Don't be angry—they think I am afraid to go to war,  
And who knows but that I am.

I cannot live like this anymore,  
Even if it means I die.  
I must confront my fears.  
I must conquer them to live.

GENA SMITH

The Bridge

*FIRST PLACE, High Point University  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

It was a thirty-minute walk to a place she'd never been to before. But in her mind she'd been there over and over again. His words had lingered in her thoughts for two years now. "We'll cross that bridge when we get there." She heard them at least once every day. When she saw a crucifix on a wall or the word "bridge" anywhere, immediately the thought would come to mind. This was the place she had desired to come to every day, and today her thought-life became real life.

He had left her a note on a napkin: "2 pm Sat The Bridge." Even though she'd never been there before, she knew exactly what he was talking about. When they were younger, and life seemed simpler, he had professed his dream of seeing the bridge and maybe even crossing it with her. He never knew, but his dream became hers and through her thoughts, she kept his memory alive.

She didn't question how he returned to their town without anyone recognizing him. Sure, his hair was longer and his clothes less preppy than they used to be, but he was still him, and it seemed to her that only she realized it. Maybe it was because she wouldn't let herself forget him, and everyone else in town would. He was just another story of the past to the rest of them; not to her.

She sat down at the front of the bridge and stared intently at the wooden beams that seemed tattered by the effects of Mother Nature. She never looked down, only straight across to the other side. After about five minutes, she smelled a light breeze of his cologne—if it wasn't a figment of her imagination.

He snuck up behind her; his hands covered her eyes, then he bent his head and gently kissed her forehead. She smiled, and with her eyes still closed, whacked him on his right arm. He fell down on the pile of orange leaves, wrapping his left hand around his right bicep, pretending her blow was too harsh for him to handle.



He spurted a laugh—she sat Indian-style smirking at his childlike humor.

But she was concerned, and spoke seriously.

“What took you so long?”

“I had to wait for the right timing.”

He smiled, closed his eyes, then re-opened them.

“How do you know it’s the right time?”

“When you know, you know.”

“I knew a long time ago, and have been waiting ever since.”

“I know. But you had to wait.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know yet.”

He didn’t like things getting too serious, so he began to tickle her, listening to his favorite sound in the world. Memories of her laughter had kept her with him. It almost plagued him in his dreams, and it was what brought him back to her. He had to hear that laughter again, and again, until forever vanished. It took him a while, two years, to realize this, and things in his past kept him from returning sooner.

“I was afraid we might never get here,” she said. “I’m I just dreaming?”

“Of course not,” he said. “You can pinch me if you want. No, wait—I don’t know if I can survive your pinching.” She had pinched him, too, in the past, and always made her out to be harsher on him than she ever really was. He was obviously stronger than she was, but she figured as long as he kept playing this game, she would, too.

He got up and strolled to the edge of the bridge.

“So what now?” she asked. “It seems it’s taken us forever to get here, and now I don’t know what we should do.”

She stood up and found her favorite spot, right next to him.

He seemed mesmerized by the length of the bridge. She never knew, but he had come there often simply to dream of her, maybe even in hopes of seeing her there. He never crossed it.

He said, “We made it. We’re here.”

Those were the only words that he spoke, although so many thoughts and streams of emotions stayed in. He looked down at her hand, and with his right, intertwined her fingers, only after he joked, “Aww, my arm still hurts. Have you been lifting weights?”

Side by side they walked across the bridge, never looking

down, never looking at each other, simply looking straight ahead. They remained smiling, maybe because they felt such comfort in each other's presence. Maybe because of the future they were walking into. Maybe because of the sweetest bliss they were experiencing because they had waited so long.

They had made it.

ERIN PELLARIN

Tibet

*FIRST PLACE, High School Poetry,  
Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

When I was young,  
my father left me to travel  
to the Himalayas,  
or, as he called them, “the mystic mountains.”  
There, with his head shaven he walked among the monks  
with rocks wedged between his toes  
to remind him of God’s discipline.  
He spun towering prayer-wheels on the highest summits  
and listened to their melancholy strains  
while trying to memorize every note  
and store them in the recesses of his shadowed brain.  
He watched candles’ whispering smoke  
write stories on his yurt’s red walls. . . .  
and all the while, he forgot about my picture—  
creased in the bottom of his denim jeans.  
When he finally came home,  
I tried to love him and ignore the soft look in his eyes,  
but he criticized the pink Barbie car  
that I drove on highways of kitchen tile,  
and he would retreat to his room in the middle of spaghetti dinners  
to sort through the contents of his red box  
which housed the memories of his journey.  
Still, we always thought that eventually  
he would “come around”  
and even take me driving in my own car, on real highways—  
but the soft look in his eyes faded  
into vacancy and his hands began to flutter at his sides,  
while the only thing I could do was watch,  
and hope that his case was individual—  
that not everybody had a “Tibet,”  
and sometimes I would pull out

his red box of treasures,  
and smelling the freedom of his old life  
in cedar and foreign spices,  
I would wonder why he came home. . . .  
if he ever really did.

JON MICHAEL ALDRIDGE

Modern Mona Lisa

*FIRST PLACE, High School Fiction,  
Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Ben walked out of the sweaty, smoky small-town venue with a blissful smile, and eyes wide with excitement. His ears were roaring, an echo of the fuzzy guitars, and the pulsing drums he had heard inside. He pulled his dark hair out of his eyes, straightened his thick-framed glasses, and took a refreshing inhale of the cool, crisp mountain air. He dug for his car keys, plunging his hands into his paint-stained corduroys and past a couple sticks of gum, a ballpoint pen, and chewed-up straw. Victoriously he grabbed his shiny plunder and danced energetically towards his woody. He thought the night was beautiful. Lit on fire by the silver moon, the leaves burned red, orange, yellow. With bright stars, and a light fog sailing in, the night was almost as gorgeous as. . . .

That girl.

He gazed dreamily, but a lump tightened in his throat, and he gasped for air.

Two cars down, the girl fiddled clumsily through her purse, her smooth brown hair splashing over her shoulders, and faded blue jeans tightly hugging her gentle figure. Her face looked soft. It wasn't hidden by layers of cheap make-up. Instead, it glimmered with innocence. Ben tried to keep his balance as he gazed, tried to avoid eye contact—but it was too late. The girl was staring curiously back at him.

His mind fumbled for words and he managed to squeeze out, "Wow, that was a great show, huh?"

"You betcha! I was just blown away by that last band!" she replied, grinning. Her voice was sweet, with the subtle warmth of a faint country accent that made Ben's insides melt and his heartbeat flicker.

"Yeah! They had some crazy-good talent!" he said, ruffling his hair nervously.

"Indeed!" she nodded, her lips pressing into a crescent smile.

By now Ben's mind was doing chaotic back-flips and spasmodic dances, searching for the right words. However, before he would let a slip of the tongue fail him, he decided to bid his angelic acquaintance a reluctant farewell.

"Well, I guess I'll be seeing you around. But have a spectacular night!"

"Hey, thanks—you, too!" she said, and that was that. The thud of car doors echoed throughout the parking lot, and the growl of car engines rumbled through the mountain valley.

The fog was thick now, and the air stifling. Driving around a winding road, Ben tightly gripped the steering wheel and he peered through the haze, concentrating on two yellow lines. Trumpet trills and saxophone squeals sputtered out of the speakers. This kept his mind occupied, for a while at least.

However, flinging open the door to his apartment, he felt the weighty fog replaced with a heavy weariness, but he knew sleep was far off. This wasn't the first time this had happened, he thought, as he tossed his keys bitterly down on the dresser. They landed with a metallic thud beside a picture frame of shattered glass, the same one he had broken to bits last time in a quick burst of fury. No, dodging out of conversation was something he had developed quite a talent for. Now he felt frustration swelling again, like so many times before.

With a slow steady eye Ben perused the mess of his room, the mess of life. He scanned the scribbling on his black wall, frowned at the paint stains on his oriental rug, and then trudged across his bedroom floor, kicking aside clothes, paint buckets, brushes, newspaper clippings, CDs, and paintings. He lay down on his bed, and clutched a blank canvas in his hands, its bleakness glaring back at him. However, he was looking more or less *through* the canvas, his tired eyes blurred, and his brain creaking and grinding, searching. . . .

The dim light of his room quivered, and he jumped up abruptly, slinging the canvas down on his easel. He sent his hand diving into a bucket of black paint, and then hurled a handful at his painting. This energetic and frenzied trance continued as he reached for more paint and brushes, and began to furiously swipe and throw paint onto the canvas. Soon hues of black filled every corner of the artwork, and then with careful, sweeping brush movements he wove flashes of pink and white over the darkness.

Overcome with exhaustion, he exhaled a heavy, but relaxed sigh. He stumbled slowly back to his bed, but before placing his glasses on the night stand, and before finally cutting the lights out, and putting the day to rest, he stole one more glance at his painting. A smile flickered on his face for a short moment, as he looked at the girl's sweet face grinning shyly up at him from within an empty black void.

GENA SMITH

Drought

*SECOND PLACE, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

The grassless valley of prickles and pain  
Grows the cactuses of anger and doubt  
Drought creeps steadily into his being:  
The constant demise of youthful passion.

The salty taste of a helpless hunger  
Chokes desire from his insipid grasp.  
Instead of true love, he hungers for meat—  
Reduced from human to mere animal.

Hallucinating for any water—  
Its taste, its substance, its texture, its smell.  
Rather than purpose, he seeks survival.  
Past memories briefly drown his lost stare.

With a stone pillow under a mid-night:  
He dreams—Better. Bigger. Further. Farther.  
Something other than this sorry excuse.  
His eyes align and he dimly seeks hope.

His fears fumble and his feeling returns  
If only for a moment—unconscious  
As he wakes, he reluctantly drags on,  
Determined the desert, the drought, will not,  
Cannot be his death.



JUSTIN SPINKS

Stay or Leave

*SECOND PLACE, High Point University  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

The apartment looked so massive, so empty now that no one was in it anymore; no one except Jimmy anyway. He sat on the sofa, staring at the blank television screen and pouring another shot of cheap vodka in his little shot glass that rested in front of him on the coffee table alongside a bottle of generic Tylenol. He was listening to a short Dave Matthews acoustic album with some of his favorite, but most depressing songs. Jimmy ran his hands through his shaggy dark hair and sighed. His narrow face was getting flushed, changing his pale, grim complexion. He could tell he was starting to get very drunk.

Jimmy reached for the shot glass and held it to his lips, hesitating to throw it back and feel the burn and experience the nasty taste, but he went ahead anyway. It was too much to bear, he had to stop thinking; he had to stop everything. She always said she never trusted him because he kissed another girl in the first month of their relationship, but that was before he loved her, before he saw her heart and soul. She never forgave him, not after two years together. That lack of trust was destroying them. Then finally it was just too much. Maybe it was the intensity of finally moving in together. They had only lived in their new apartment three days and then she just left, saying she was going for a drive, but she never returned. The semester had not even started yet at Washington and Lee. She went back to her parents' house in Richmond. He couldn't believe she left him. She promised she never would.

"Stay or Leave" came on. In Jimmy's mind the lyrics fit together perfectly. It was as if Dave were singing to him. He didn't take a shot this time but instead tipped the bottle back and gulped. He coughed and then held his breath. He listened to Dave sing, "Stay or leave. I want you not to go, but you should. It was good as good goes." A tear began to roll down Jimmy's cheek and he

sipped the vodka again. "Say or leave. I want you not to go, but you did." She really did, Jimmy thought, and he looked down at the acetaminophen that sat in the little white bottle on the table. He knew that if he took the whole bottle of pills after finishing his fifth of vodka, he would die, ending his pain, and proving his love.

Jimmy picked up the pill bottle and thought about what she would think when she found out. But his mind wandered back to the song. "Wake up naked drinking coffee, making plans to change the world, while the world was changing us. It was good, good love." Jimmy thought about how he and Sarah would talk about everything he loved, like philosophy and politics and music and how they were going to make the world such a better place. She was so intelligent, that's why he loved her so much. He could never talk to another woman like that about those things, and he believed he never would, or even wanted to. He wanted Sarah. The song went on. "The way I used to laugh with you was loud and hard." Just like us, he thought.

Jimmy opened the pill bottle and poured some into the palm of his hand. He looked at the fifth and saw he had finished only half of it. He figured he'd use the rest to wash down the pills. He was so drunk, some were falling onto the floor. I'll love you until I die, Sarah, he thought. Before he took the pills he listened to the song again. "Remember when we used to dance and everyone wanted to be you and me? I want to be, too. What day is this, besides the day you left me?" He thought back to a formal dance the school had and when they held each other so close, he could again smell her strawberry blonde hair pressed into his face. She looked so beautiful. He could hear the song they were dancing to. Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl." Jimmy remembered her big brown eyes and began to cry. The pills dropped onto the floor as he turned up his hands and put them to his face. He couldn't do it. If he killed himself he couldn't remember. He had to remember. He wanted to hold at least part of that feeling with him as long as he could. The Dave Matthews album ended and Jimmy sat there in silence weeping, singing softly to himself, "Do you remember when we used to sing? Sha lala la lalala la la lala te da. . . ."

LAURA DEMARIA

Dirt, Sand and Wind

*SECOND PLACE, High School Poetry  
Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Many years ago, I was living under pressure.  
I was part of a bigger rock then,  
thrust from the earth  
to carry out my life in a riverbed.

I remember everything.  
I scraped and moved across my brothers,  
feeling water gushing and creatures slipping,  
forever trapped in the depths below me.

On the surface I heard algae growing.  
I knew the seasons when they came,  
could feel water smoothing my edges  
and the sun baking me dry.

One day I was moved,  
flung into a pile  
where I broke again.  
They covered up my river.

I've lived in this heap ever since.  
I am old, and sleep a lot.  
I dream of dirt, sand and wind  
and what lives in the center of the earth.

COURTNEY J. BAKER

My Name is Claudia and I Am Graceful

*SECOND PLACE, High School Fiction,  
Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

I've always wanted to be graceful, like Mr. Kline's daughter. I would often watch her out of the window; she would dance in the grass barefooted wearing a neatly pressed cream dress, wind tickling her face. Papa told me being graceful was something I could just never be. "Graceful girls," he would say, "are beautiful dancers, elegant speakers. Graceful girls gets money."

*Grace is knowing when to keep quiet.* I'd continue dreaming of becoming one of those "graceful girls" with the money and the ballerina legs and the elegant dialect. When I wasn't doing my chores, I was parading around our two-bedroom, one-bath house in Mama's only pair of soot-black, high-heeled shoes. The Bible would lie flat on my head, balanced, perfect. *Grace is perfection.* I wanted to appear like I was walking on air—swaying my hips to a hymn only I could hear. I would sway right, then left—extending each foot outward, one at a time, about half-an-inch in front of my limber body. *Grace is exactness.*

"Mama?" I would say, "Papa says I'll never be graceful 'cause we poor, 'cause I aint no beautiful dancer and I can't talk elegantly."

"Baby," she would reply, "your daddy don't know nothin' 'bout bein' graceful. You graceful. Now go on and do ya chores."

Our house was not only small for both my parents and my three siblings, but it was also old and plain. We didn't go to school—there was no time. I started working the fields when I was eight, about the same time I started my quest for grace. Papa worked hard long hours at a steel mill a few miles down the dirt road. My two brothers, my sister, and I would work all day around the house, outside in the garden, or on a nearby farm.

After she had me, Mama had fallen ill, bed-ridden. She was lame and weak. She depended on us children to do what needed to be done. Besides Papa's low wage, the only other source of

income was when my brothers went in search of work around our small town. I did the same when I got older.

"Claudia," my sister said one day, "why you always wastin' time wit books on ya head and stuff? You only ten—aint no ten-year-olds walk around in high heels wit books on they head."

"I'm practicin' to be graceful," I would respond. She would roll her eyes and my mean brother would laugh at me alongside her. I would ignore them like I did daddy, and continue in my business. *Grace is politeness.*

I remember getting pushed around a lot. I did all of my chores along with some others that belonged to my unkind brother and sister. I didn't mind so much, though. *Grace is willingness.* My eldest brother, however, did mind. James was my ally, my guardian. He would stick up for me and watch out for me. I always offered to do his chores, so he could go work for money—he never accepted my offer. Instead, he took on all those responsibilities: watching out for me, keeping my other brother and my sister in their rightful place, looking for work, and pulling his own weight around the house. *Grace is graciousness.*

Though I never learned to read, I would pretend to read the book off of my head. *Grace is intelligence.* I will never forget one afternoon Papa sent me down to Mr. Kline's manor. Mr. Kline was a real wealthy white man. He had told my papa to send one of his children down to his house to assist his servants in nursing his mistress back to health from a nasty cold. Papa decided to let me go. I was twelve and old enough to take on a real job such as that.

I walked the distance and finally turned up the pebbled walk when I met Mr. Kline himself.

"Afternoon, sir," I said, closing the Bible I had been pretending to read.

"What the heavens you doing with that book? I know you is illiterate as a nail."

*Grace is truthfulness.* "I aint really readin' it, sir."

"Why on earth would you play like you reading? No one gonna think your smart. You must be one of them Slander children. What's your name and what are you doin' with that big book?"

"My name is Claudia and I practicin' bein' graceful."

"Graceful?" He laughed. "Graceful aint black." Chuckling, he took one last look at me, then turned and walked off.

*Graceful aint black.* I looked at my arm, at my whole body.

*Grace isn't black.*

Later that week, I was tucking Mama into bed.

"Claudia," she said, "why haven't I heard the clonkin' of them heels lately?"

"It no use, Mama. I just put 'em away."

"Why it aint no use, child? Why would you say that?"

"'Cause I black, Mama. 'Cause black aint graceful."

Her face turned sad and hard.

"Claudia, don't you eva say that again, 'cause it not true. You graceful."

"But Mr. Kline. . . . He said. . . . I can't be graceful 'cause graceful aint black."

"You listen to me, child. I don't care what no Mr. Kline say. Grace is all colors."

I hugged her and she told me to go on and let her sleep. She was extra tired that last week. And when she died, I missed her so much for such a long time. It hurt to think about being graceful. It wasn't until about a year later that I even remembered those last words she had spoken to me. It was like the last piece to a puzzle I had been trying to find for my entire childhood finally fit. I later told James what she had said to me, and he agreed.

*Grace is all colors.*

## A. BERRY CRAWFORD

### Why Climb Mountains?

Legendary mountaineer George Mallory failed to return from his second climb up Mount Everest. His body was eventually found at 27,000 feet on the north face, face down on a steep chute of talus. His clothes were shredded by nearly seventy-five years of wind and frost, but the extreme cold had preserved a muscular body beneath skin that had been bleached a bright white.

What draws human beings to Everest, to mountains, to wild dangerous places? I want to address this question, and to acknowledge at the outset that it has personal significance. I have hiked and backpacked since I was a young boy some five or six decades ago, but it is only within the last ten years that I have taken up the challenge of multi-day and sometimes multi-week climbs in glaciated, high-altitude mountains. I occasionally give talks to book clubs and other organizations about my climbing experiences and the most persistent question is why a responsible and relatively sane person engages in such activity.

This is my answer in summary form: to experience intensely the beautiful and the sublime, to test myself, to discover the wonders of "deep time," and to be humbled—to be reminded that humans are not the measure of all things and that nature is much more than culture.

In 1757 Edmund Burke characterized the sublime as an emotion produced by what he called "terrible objects," objects whose magnitude or power is so great that they evoke awe and a peculiar kind of fearful delight. Provided that the terrible "does not press too close"—is not too threatening, too imminent, too dangerous—the encounter produces "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling." This powerful and strangely pleasing emotion—the sublime—is not sheer terror because it is accompanied by the realization that one is a spectator, not a victim, of the terrible. Once Burke and others had deciphered this emotion and introduced it to the intellectual public, it quickly became the rage of Romantic Age adventurers, poets, nature writers, and landscape artists. In 1785 Jean-Jacques Rousseau said,

"I must have torrents, rocks, pines, dead forest, mountains, rugged paths to go up and down, precipices beside me to frighten me." Ruskin, Keats, and Shelley expressed similar sentiments in England, as did Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir in America. When Keats first beheld the Alps in 1816, he was overwhelmed: "I never knew—I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder, not unallied to madness."

Many still attest to the powerful emotion evoked by being at sea thrown by a storm, or gazing down a three-thousand-foot precipice from the summit of a high peak. In one of his most remarkable passages, John Muir describes a fierce spring storm in the High Sierras. With the wind howling, he chose a sturdy Douglas fir, climbed to the top, lashed himself to its trunk, and reveled as he and the tree swung to and fro in the gale. Muir describes how this intense experience of the sublime was followed by a beautiful and peaceful calm. "When the storm began to abate, I dismounted and sauntered down through the calming woods. The storm-tones died away, and, turning toward the east, I beheld the countless hosts of the forests hushed and tranquil, towering one above another on the slopes of the hills like a devout audience. The setting sun filled them with amber light, and seemed to say, while they listened, 'My peace I give unto you.'"

And in mountains one can experience that many-faceted aesthetic emotion, beauty. Nothing quite matches a sunrise or sunset from a mountain top, or the view of canyons, forests, rivers, and valleys. The beauty of mountains is not competitive, but contemplative and revelatory. Mountains present grand panoramas and offer new perspectives, enabling one to witness an infinite variety of forms, colors, textures, and shades of light.

The plurality and incorrigibility of light probably attract more comment than any other dimension of mountain beauty. When sunshine is punctuated by falling snowflakes, mountain light flickers and dazzles. During a thunderstorm it flashes with ostentatious splendor, and then may radiate off snow and ice fields with such magnesium intensity on clear days that one cannot look directly without risking snow blindness. When it shines from behind rock ridges and spires, it creates magnificent architectural effects. When it shines through stands of aspen or pine, it has a



glimmering, impressionist quality. It takes on a tranquil matte-like quality at dusk, unifying the whole landscape with a single texture. Then there is Midas light, the rich yellow that spills lengthways across the terrain, turning everything it touches to gold.

One goes to mountain heights to test aspirations. The goal may be a challenging summit that requires meticulous preparation and weeks of intense effort, or it may be an overnight camp at a mountain lake. While one does not always accomplish the goal, one always learns valuable lessons as diverse as the circumstances. If other people are involved and success depends on teamwork, the lesson might be about interpersonal relationships—about one's own role in shaping relations and outcomes, cooperative or uncooperative, productive or counter-productive. If one is alone, the lesson might be one of self-reliance—whether one's preparation, resources, wits, and resolve are up to the task. Away from the conveniences of modern life, familiar surroundings, and routine patterns of behavior, one may find circumstances where success or failure—even life itself—depend on one's strengths and weaknesses, physical and psychological. I have learned about myself on mountains. On occasions when my poor performance was exposed, and was impossible to deny, I have been forced to address the deficiencies.

As Robert MacFarlane said, "what simpler allegory of success could there be than the ascent of a mountain? The summit provides the visible goal, the slopes leading up to it the challenge. When we walk or climb up a mountain we traverse not only the actual terrain, but also the metaphysical territories of struggle and achievement. To reach a summit is very palpably to have triumphed over adversity."

I do not regard myself a "peak bagger," but I confess that I derive great satisfaction when I reach the summit of a challenging mountain. This orientation is not to be belittled unless it becomes an obsession that blinds one to the objective risks, the beauty and sublimity of the mountain, and the knowledge that the journey toward the summit can provide.

Mountains reignite childlike wonder. Mountains make us look outward and see things we have not seen before, or have not *really* seen. Witnessing the ridges and scoring in rock where a glacier has ground, feeling the pelts of moss on the lee side of boulders and trees, watching the swirls of water beneath a plate of ice,

observing the unique architecture and ephemeral fragility of a snowflake, watching the rapid build-up of nearby storm clouds, hearing a hillside come alive with moving water after a rain shower, catching a glimpse of a mountain goat high on a cliff, watching and being watched by a mother bird protecting her eggs, marveling at the industry of a beaver building a dam—none of these are trivial experiences. They are the kinds of experiences that inspired Muir, Thoreau, and many other great nature writers, and it is their detailed and, at the same time, rapturous accounts that have evoked wonder and rapture in their readers.

Mountains also ignite wonder about events that unfold in deep time: the immensity of time that it took for glaciers to form and carve valleys, for mineral deposits laid down in ocean beds to be transported to mountain tops, or for a maverick plant or animal to acquire the ability to survive in a perpetually frozen, oxygen-deprived environment. I took a course in geology as a sophomore in college, but there was little in that course that held any real interest for me until the study of mountains kindled a sense of deep time and wonder about the unfolding of events in deep time. Contemplative wonder of this kind leads to perspectives that transcend narrowly constructed anthropocentric accounts of the relation of humans to the broader natural order.

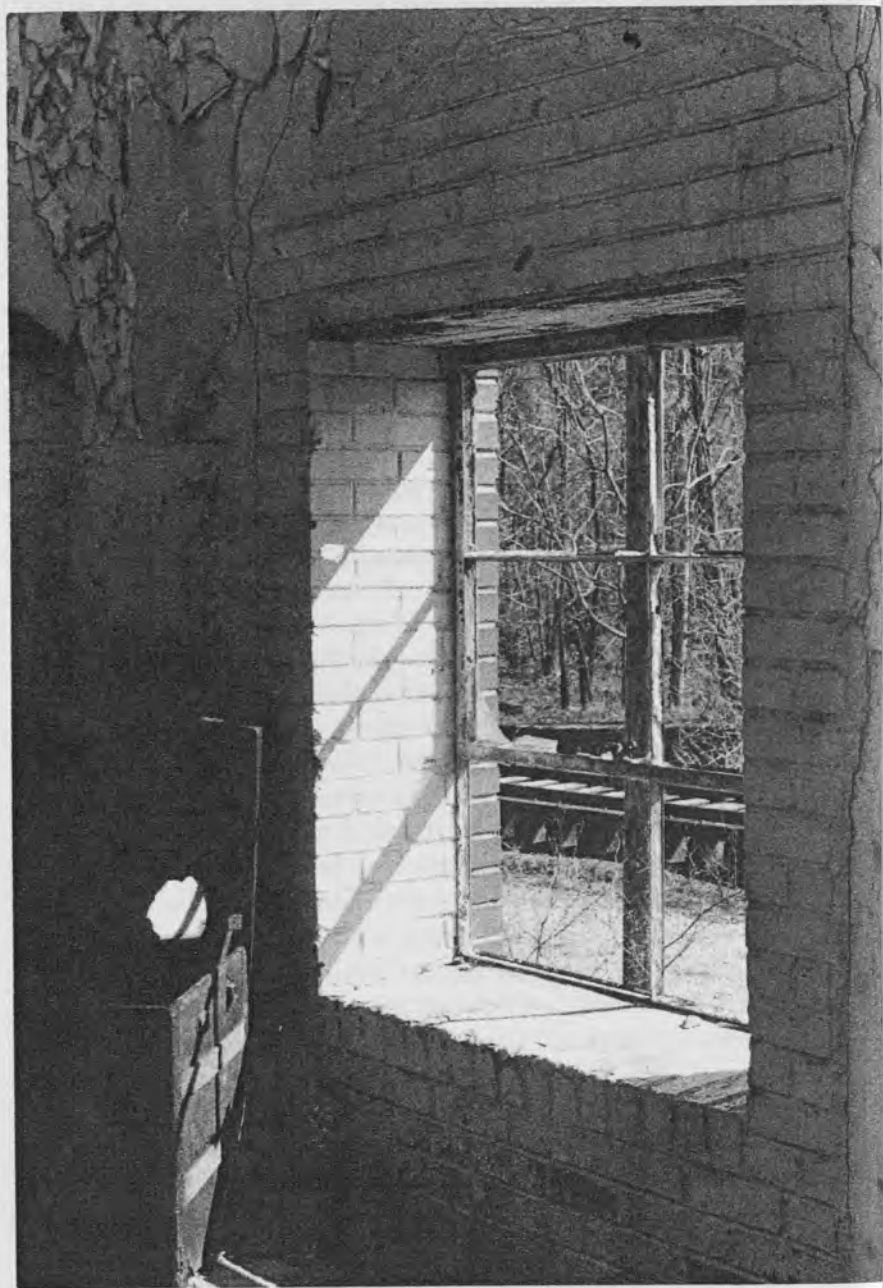
The good of nature is widely viewed as the good it provides for us human beings: food, water, energy, land for structures, raw materials for production, resources for recreation, and the like. This attitude has become so ingrained and the alteration and transformation of the land so extensive that nature is seen in our post-modern world as an extension of culture. The natural world has become what we want and make it to be.

Conceptions of nature are, indeed, culturally conditioned, but nature is more than culture, and it is spiritually impoverishing and dangerously arrogant to think otherwise. This is perhaps the most important lesson that time in the mountains teaches. When one encounters nature face-to-face, ideas of self-importance, superiority, and control quickly evaporate. Encounters with the wild may be delightful or terrifying, but underlying the immediate emotional response is the awareness that one is in the presence of forces orders of magnitude greater than one's own ego and presence. Such experiences are immediately attitude-adjusting; humility replaces prideful ego. Robert MacFarlane, once again,

states it well: "Mountains seem to answer an increasing imaginative need in the West. More and more people are discovering a desire for them, and a powerful solace in them. At bottom, mountains, like all wildernesses, challenge our complacent conviction—so easy to lapse into—that the world has been made for humans by humans. . . . One forgets that there are environments which do not respond to the flick of a switch or the twist of a dial, and which have their own rhythms and orders of existence. Mountains correct this amnesia."

While human intellectual constructs define the human significance of the non-human, and while the planet's landscapes and ecosystems have been radically altered by human technology, ultimately the greater natural order determines and will continue to determine the adequacy of human cultural creations. A person truly immersed in the wild nature of mountains intuitively grasps this elemental truth. On a high icy summit, or hanging on a sheer rock-face, one does not exaggerate one's own significance in relation to the greater reality in which one participates, and one touches conditions and forces on which all life, human as well as non-human, depends.

JENNY SHERMAN



MEREDITH HENDRIX

October, Moon-Dance

1. october

october gives way to flight:  
silent, we groundlings gape as  
hawks soar low with white-tipped wings  
gliding, riding the wind and sunlight;  
and ladybugs—the males red-lipped and shiny,  
the females more bronze than light—  
swarm in clusters, trying to seep inside  
and sleep, upside-down, on our ceilings.

2. moon-dance

shy clouds caress either side of the moon;  
entwining tendrils brush away any  
unwanted shadows, blemishes, leaving  
a pale moon face: full, unabashed, naked.  
night dissolves all lingering wisps of cloud,  
and so the moon-dance begins: stars appear  
blinking on off on off to the rhythm,  
to the movements of planet earth turning,  
and the moon holds steady, reveling in  
this primal dance of timeless ecstasy.

Rosbach: A Battle Narrative

Frederick the Great spent the summer of 1757 brooding in Saxony. The year began well enough with the invasion of Bohemia and the siege of Prague. Two pyrrhic victories later, the soldier-king was forced to raise the siege and withdraw into Germany. The Prussian monarch's problems were compounded when France joined his enemies and sent two armies across the Rhine. One marched on Hanover, the personal possession of George II of England, Frederick's only ally. The English monarch withdrew from the conflict to avoid losing his lands. The second army under the Prince de Soubise, a favorite of Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, joined forces with a German Imperial army led by the Austrian general Hilburghausen.

By October 1757, the French and Imperial armies advanced into the Saxon Duchies, within close proximity to the Prussian king. Frederick benefited from their poor cooperation. According to the French military agreement, Soubise was to act as an auxiliary to Hilburghausen's army. The Prince chafed at this arrangement. The lack of coordination convinced Frederick to strike at the closest target. He moved west toward Soubise and Hilburghausen.

Poor Prussian operational intelligence believed that Frederick's twenty-two thousand men were considerably outnumbered. It estimated that the enemy had sixty-thousand men, but these numbers did not tell the whole story. Hilburghausen detached regiments to garrison cities and towns along his march route, and both he and Soubise were afflicted with terrible desertion. They also suffered from morale problems. Both generals made inadequate logistical preparation for the campaign, and their soldiers were hungry, and upset because they had not been paid. Under these circumstances, Soubise preferred only to maneuver, avoiding battle.

The disagreement between Soubise and Hilburghausen offered Frederick greater opportunity to catch one of the wings of the French or Imperial army. As the Prussians crossed the Saale River,

Soubise and Hilburghausen, whose armies had temporarily separated, rejoined to find safety in numbers. By the evening of 4 November the Prussian army camped near the town of Rossbach, not far from the enemy's position. Intelligence, more accurate now, informed Frederick that the enemy was low on supplies, and that it actually possessed no more than forty-one thousand men.

Hilburghausen and Soubise decided that morning to attack, considering the advantage in numbers. Instead of advancing head-on, they would screen their camp and move their columns around the Prussian left flank, catching Frederick unawares. This was a sound plan, uncharacteristically bold. But it took most of the morning to organize themselves into three march columns.

Although Prussian reconnaissance indicated several French battalions screening the enemy camp, they could not elaborate on the activity there. Frederick spent the morning idle. There was still no indication of enemy movement by noon when the king sat down to lunch. His meal was interrupted abruptly by a captain reporting movement of enemy columns to the Prussian left. Frederick dismissed this report, but other similar ones soon came.

Now seeing that his position was already compromised, Frederick ordered his cavalry commander General von Seydlitz to head off the enemy advance. This immediate redeployment of forces exhibited the critical importance of decisive leadership in battle, and the benefit of a well-disciplined, professional army.

As the cavalry rode to blunt the enemy attack, the Prussian infantry began to march. In this, Frederick benefited from the local geography. To his immediate rear, and oblique to the enemy columns, was Janus Hill. Frederick ordered his heavy guns to the crest, and proceeded to bombard the French, more than a mile off. His battalions wheeled left with meticulous skill and marched to their new position on the heights.

Less than an hour and a half passed between Frederick's lunch and the redeployment of the entire army. Prussian artillery opened up at 3:15, and the cavalry emerged from around Janus Hill shortly thereafter. Ahead was the enemy cavalry still in column. Seydlitz unleashed his thirty-eight squadrons. Caught by surprise, only some of the enemy was able to form out to meet the charge. The fighting was sharp, but the Prussians eventually succeeded in putting the enemy to flight, Seydlitz recalled his squadrons, which was no easy task. As Frederick's army was now moving down the

slope toward the French army, Seydlitz reformed his regiments and sent them on their own wide flanking march to the French right beyond the towns of Posendorf and Tagewerden.

After the Prussian battalions achieved their new line at the crest of Janus Hill, Frederick sent them forward in echelon against the French columns. The lay of the land was such that once they debauched from Janus Hill, the French were unable to observe their progress due to a dip in the ground between their position and the Prussian army. The first sight of Prussian infantry was to their front. The center and right of Frederick's army appeared not long afterward. No more than seven French battalions were able to deploy at the head of the columns before the Prussian army attacked. Disciplined volleys poured onto the head of the Soubise's battalions. The French began to crack.

Timing is everything. As the infantry attack developed, Seydlitz's cavalry emerged on the French right. The charge of Prussian heavy squadrons unglued the already shaken army. Whatever control Soubise had or was trying to effect on his army disappeared in moments. Hilburghausen was more fortunate as his German troops were in the rear. He had more time to bring his battalions into line, and he resigned himself to covering the French rout. Prussian infantry-fire and artillery salvos tore holes in the serried German ranks. Battalions from Hesse-Darmstadt stood under withering fire while covering their comrades' retreat. Seydlitz ordered his cavalry to charge once more, completely unnerving the enemy that remained. By five o'clock the field was cleared of Frenchmen, and Hilburghausen moved off with the remnants of his now small force.

Frederick had not only won the day, but the victory altered the strategic situation that had depressed the Prussian king through the summer. When news of the battle reached London, George II determined to return to the war, ignoring the convention he made in September.

The battle cost Frederick five-hundred men. For the French and Imperials, it was much more expensive: five-thousand killed and wounded, and another five-thousand captured. Instead of moving into winter quarters, Frederick decided to move against the Austrians in Silesia. A month later he shattered their army at Leuthen. King Frederick could now consider 1757 a good year.



MODU L. KAMARA

Unbreakable Walls

Bangs and booms—  
and I crawl behind the remains of my home,  
crying and praying for the spear  
of two eyes, to see the world,  
a spot of light and hope.  
The stillness of human ruins. . . .  
Yesterday, they could sing, laugh, and eat,  
but now they are as stiff as lead,  
all six of them.  
Behind, soldiers, rebels, jailers loot and kill.

Now I am scared of the wall that protects me  
from the shooting and blasting.

Why hasn't the international community listened?  
What's the UN responsible for?  
They love pictures CNN presents  
of amputations of three-month-olds,  
the burning of an entire family in their house,  
the killing of a woman for no crime but giving birth.

Waiting for the walls to fall. . . .  
buried alive twelve days  
with the bodies of my friend and her family,  
the soul vanishes with them  
before four hands rescue,  
hands that I have felt before.

ELIZABETH RATHVON

Son of War

He wrote every day of the hardships  
He had been away at war  
They said it would last about a year  
It had been two-and-a-half years  
Since their 20-year-old son said goodbye  
He had left with a smile on his face  
He told them he would only be gone a while  
He said he would come back a hero  
He wrote of the horror he saw  
The friends shot down beside him  
The faces of the men as they were shot  
The pain in their eyes  
He told of the regrets he had  
As he held his fellow soldiers in his arms  
Comforting them as they died  
Then one day the letters stopped  
A month passed and no news of their son  
Then one day they came  
Two men in uniforms  
They handed them his things  
The family photo he took, and his uniform  
With deep regret they said  
Your son died, but not without a fight  
Then the soldiers handed his parents  
His purple heart

LAUREN CROUGHAN

Let It Ride

*HONORABLE MENTION, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

The city lights blacken out  
The tears of the sky  
And lady luck is wearing red tonight  
This is why nobody wishes in Vegas  
Too many reasons to let it ride

Dealer playing a game all his own  
Giving chance the good get around  
The pros play with confident ways  
The tourists all spend wisely  
While the addict lets it ride

Thinking of you in this world down here  
You are up stuck in the city nights  
I play Red 13 in remembrance of you  
Eye to eye, I watch it spin  
Something said to let it ride

The spirit of Vegas engulfs those  
With risks to take  
And money to make  
Hoping and praying not to lose  
For the thrill to let it ride

REBECCA M. FLEMING

the leonids

*HONORABLE MENTION, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

november midnight, cold –  
your breath a fuzzy cloud  
floating, slowly, up and away; your toes  
and fingers tingling, then numb;  
the frosted ground absorbing  
the living warmth of your body,  
despite being snuggled between thick squishy quilts.  
lying in november midnight, looking  
up, getting lost somewhere between awake and asleep;  
the stars in the brilliance of darkness shiver, and merge  
into and out-of-focus haze. slipping towards sleep, until  
a silvery star streaks  
across the sky leaving  
a faint sparkling trail  
on the star-freckled darkness.  
snapping awake, forgetting the cold,  
watching the stars fall.

TREVOR McDONALD

The Traveller

*HONORABLE MENTION, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

A noble knight, lost in the night, met an old wise man one day.  
“Greetings,” the sage spoke at end,  
And then said with a grin,  
“You look as though you’ve lost your way.”

Knight suddenly, face pale to see, as though he had lost all will,  
“I was just on battlefield,  
And believe my fate sealed,  
Where am I?” he said with a chill.

The old man smiled, the knight beguiled, “My knight, you’ve  
nothing to fear,  
You see, many men you’ve killed,  
And much blood you have spilled,  
Good sir, you’ve very welcome here.”

“What is this place?” as eyes gave chase, to shadows that danced  
around,  
“I had fought with holy wrath,  
Now I march on this path,  
There is no life, no light, no sound.”

The old man grinned, death in the wind, “You’ve given me the  
wrong task,  
Not ‘where,’ not ‘how,’ and not ‘when,’  
But it is ‘why,’ my friend,  
That your heart wishes you to ask.”

And then he sees, drops to his knees, “No wrong have I ever done!  
I’ve always honestly prayed!  
And all the peace I’ve made!

I've killed no innocent, not one!"

"Death," the sage said, and shook his head, "is not a man, but a storm,

I see no evil or good,  
Though you may think I should,  
And you're just a man in my form.

"Try as your might, my noble knight, the good you've done matters not,

I am reaper of souls,  
A collector of tolls,  
All men must pay, all things must rot."

DEREK SHEALEY

A Jazz Band Night

*HONORABLE MENTION, High Point University  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Jazz band playing  
On a cool, quiet night  
Music's life entertaining  
Against crystal city lights.  
Mist ruptured by horns  
The streets twinkle with chimes  
The moon drifts by saxophone  
Stars glisten for a piano.  
Men in white play  
And the room is alive  
A concert for the evening  
They're racing with the sun.  
The beat, the night  
It all sunk down in me  
The beat, the night  
And it was harmony.

EMILY MILES

Love

*HONORABLE MENTION, High Point University  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

She decided on a day for her wedding three months before she got the ring – her father always said that you weren't engaged until you had a ring and a date and so she was completely prepared that August when he bent his knee to propose. It happened at the foot of a mountain trail one Sunday morning when they should have been in church. The rain had curbed his plans to lead her to some beautiful waterfall; he was forced instead to present the ring to her during a break in showers less than ten feet from where they had parked the car. But it was okay, really. After all, she already had the date, the ring was the only thing missing and now she had that as well.

She had met him before her freshman year of college, certain that he was the one for her and so they dated for the better part of three years and were engaged for ten months. Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, they would wed in her parents' front yard. In her mind, the wedding had to be at the new house, there was no other place for it. She told her sister one day that she wanted that house to be the home place for the future generations of their family and so she would force this significance upon it if she had to. Her dress was the first one that she tried on, whimsical and beautifully white; its train dragged the ground for almost three feet behind her. The underside would be stained with grass and mud by the wedding's end, but she would only need to wear it once and so it didn't really matter.

The day of the wedding came and she had everything that she had dreamed of at last: the ring, the groom, the dress, the three-tiered wedding cake – perhaps love was lacking, but that would be made up for by the atmosphere of joy that surrounded everything. It had rained the whole week and would rain the next day as well, but for her momentous occasion, the skies had cleared and the hot sun beat down on them instead. The yard was soggy and



everyone's heels sank in a little, staining their shoes with red Virginia clay and her lovely white ones the worst. But it was beautiful nonetheless. Everything had fallen into place; it was as if her dreams had come alive for this moment.

They ate their wedding cake, danced to their song, waved goodbye to all and drove off on their honeymoon. The fighting resumed within the first hour of their five-hour drive. But still, those who had seen the wedding would recall its beauty for weeks, parents would hold their evident love up as a model for their children, the house would indeed become the home place for their children and their children's children. They had always fought like this; she was strong-willed, he was usually submissive, picking his battles at random – telling her what a bitch she was only when she really deserved it. At times, she would wonder if there was someone out there for her that was better than him, if love were really the abstract idea that she was taught to hail as a child or as concrete as the few slaps she had laid across his cheek when he had cursed her.

Was this really all there was? She supposed she would never have any way of knowing. She would not cheat on him, she would never consider divorce, she would always have his supper ready on time, and one day she would give birth to his children. When their one-year anniversary came, she would defrost the top layer of their cake – just like you're supposed to – and cut two pieces, being sure to pick the gnats out of the icing. And by God they would be happy, recalling memories of the day that they had wed.

COURTNEY J. BAKER

In Paris

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

I'll meet you in Paris,  
Where I'll spot you in a crowd . . .  
Your features will call out to me.

You'll feel me watching you  
And wonder why I'm interested in a man such as yourself;  
But, you'll be flattered by my consistent glance.

We'll meet at a café downtown,  
There, we will discuss business and ethics –  
We'll find each other interesting.

I'll intently watch you drink your overflowing mug, shoulders  
hunched,  
Your eyes trying to avoid staring at me in order to prevent them  
from  
Revealing what your heart doesn't yet know.

You'll watch my lips as they move, composed with words,  
Wondering how I got them that glossy color . . .  
The color of peace, the texture of tranquility – smooth and soft.

We'll fall in love in a matter of months,  
We'll get married that next fall in a neighboring city;  
Our friends and family will join us in celebration.

I'll meet you in Paris,  
On a cold, yet beautiful day . . .  
Hopefully.

LOUIS HERMAN

Yash Palace

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

In the town, in the country,  
on the roof I sit.  
Pals line the table  
from end to end.

Waiters stand rigid, bewildered.  
One attempts to translate  
our sharp English tones  
to guttural Gujarat.

Rum, beer, wine are cheap;  
water could kill, so stick to the drink.

Smoggy starlight filters down;  
muzak of Jackson crackles on.  
The breeze is tricky –  
blowing out the matches we need;  
to light our beadys.

Tandor, nan, tikki, rum.  
Food is scant, cold,  
delicious.

Ashok, rickshaw driver arrives to see  
that we will be returning, eventually.  
To our room, airy but warm.

In the desert,  
where the grazers roam.

BARRIE HUMPHRIES

Into Beauty

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

He comes to me when he aches;  
It is then we do our best work.  
I know not where he goes when the light spills,  
only my hollow shell  
that even the flooding sun will not warm.  
It is he alone who makes me move inside.  
I yearn for him  
to come to me,  
to create in me a work of divinity.  
He always does.  
With his confident hands  
and fingers that spread like wings –  
They are soft and flat,  
smooth, thanks to me.  
When he hurts,  
he sits with me, across from me.  
I sense his nearness and smile,  
“Here it comes, I’m ready.  
Make me beautiful, make me  
anything but still.”  
Then he rests his hands on my keys  
and plays me into beauty.

ERIN PELLARIN

Dishes

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Coming down into the kitchen, to get a cold drink of water –  
with polyatomic ions behind me,  
and decades of Medieval times ahead –  
I saw you drying the hand-washed dishes,  
your hands turning and rubbing  
a cloth across earthen stoneware.  
On countless other nights, I have seen this image;  
But, for some reason this time it captivated me.

Standing there watching you dry those dishes,  
the motion of your hands and the blue of the towel merging,  
I wonder – do you actually like blue –  
or do you just use those towels because they match our wallpaper?  
I contemplate if the sound of our Sears refrigerator –  
rumbling and burping and churning –  
sounds to you, as it does to me,  
like the deep-bellied laugh of Buddha.  
Then, watching you stack the dishes,  
in neat piles, in all the right places,  
I want desperately to know  
if you notice the cracks in the plates;  
small-veined ones from days when I do the dishes,  
and am not as careful as you when putting them back;  
explosive spiders crawling their way down white china,  
formed in prohibited trips to the microwave;  
chips missing, revealing jagged edges,  
from animated dinner arguments.  
If you notice these cracks,  
I want to know if you see yourself in them –  
If somehow you think your life compares  
To old terry dishcloths, and a

Never-ending stack of cracked, wet dishes.

And there is so much I want to say to you,  
but when I open my mouth to speak,  
(like the sound of a clogged disposal)  
my words gurgle and subside.

ALEX BARBATO

Sam and Brock

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Brock Jenkins locked his keys in his car  
At the Corner Pocket Parking lot  
And called the Pop-a-Lock company  
Samuel Hall was hired at the Pop-a-Lock  
The other day  
Showed up in the Corner Pocket Parking lot  
Saw the jacket, the letter  
The jock  
Samuel got the tools from his old rusty car  
To save the Jock, and his Benz  
He popped the lock  
And Brock Jenkins refused to pay  
Samuel yelled  
Brock pushed  
Samuel Hall had enough of Brock Jenkins  
And all the jocks for that matter  
He decided to pop a jock  
Samuel Hall walked across the gravel  
Of the Corner Pocket Parking lot  
To his old rusty car  
And got the Glock  
From the glove box  
Pop Pop Pop  
Brock Jenkins hit the rocks  
Of the Corner Pocket Parking lot  
He took the shot  
For every "fag," "nigger," and "nerd"  
Who was ever bullied  
By Brock  
Or any jock

MARISA SWAIM





Only Child

I feel like an only child, now. My brother was careless—I knew what was coming. Our parents thought that his new wealth came from his part-time sales job. I always knew better. I had been his confidant since he could talk. We do not talk to each other, now.

That night I drove home from track practice alone. For some reason, James had not come to practice.

As I approached the house, I could see that all the lights were off, except the backdoor light which turned on automatically at dusk, which was normal for a Tuesday night, since family members rarely got home until after dark.

However, something was odd. All the cars, even James's Nova Rally Sport, were parked in the driveway. That meant someone was in hot water. That meant my father was angry.

I remembered the last time I was on the receiving end of my father's anger. When I was sixteen, my father saw me holding hands with a boy. To my father, that was unacceptable, so he sent me to an all-girls school in Kansas for tenth and eleventh grades. Only after my mother begged my father to let me come home did he relent. That was the only time I remember my mother ever asking him for something.

My father loved me—that's what the guidance counselor in Kansas told me, but I feared my father. A hot fire burned in his eyes when he was angry.

He had been a Marine in Vietnam, and had brought military discipline into his family. I could not understand it, except that it was his way of life. As his family, we had no choice but to make it our way of life, too. That did not mean that I had to love him. I just had to obey him.

I entered the house as quietly as I could.

Then I heard my mother say, "Why would you do this?"

"I needed the money," James said nonchalantly. I knew his strategy. He acted as though he doesn't care, then hopes to break my father's concentration. If the strategy works, my father's face will turn fluorescent red and he will yell for ten minutes, turning

on all the lights and expending himself into a near heart attack. James sees this as a way to speed up the process, get it over with.

"We've always given you money when you've asked," my mother said, her voice wavering. I knew she had tears in her eyes.

"It was just a little pot, mom. It's no big deal."

She stood up.

"It *is* a big deal, James. You're a dealer! Do you really want to go to prison?"

Her voice got shriller as she said this, then broke up into sobs.

"At least I wouldn't have to live here anymore!"

I stiffened. James was being foolish. Mother was his only defense against Father's punishments. Now, he was alone.

Father told me to take Mother for a drive. We drove around for maybe twenty minutes. We did not speak.

There was an ironic calm in the silence, and I dared not ask about James. This was a family hardened to emotions. My father's stint in the Vietnam War may have had something to do with it, though I do not like to admit such a weakness in myself. My mother sat silently, knowing she had showed too much emotion earlier. She had to make up for it now.

When we returned, my father's truck was gone. When we went inside, we realized that James was gone, too. Most of his clothes were gone. His guitar lay bashed on the floor of his room.

My mother picked it up, cradled it in her arms as though it were James himself, and cried. I went to my room, emotionally spent, and fell asleep to my mother's sobs.

My father returned sometime that night while I was sleeping. He returned without James.

The next morning, my parents said nothing about James. Mother was just as unreadable as she had always been, and Father showed no signs of his explosion. There was a strange simplicity in our family, now. It made me nauseous.

When friends ask about James, my father simply says that he decided to join the Marines. I have never been sure about the truth of that, but a Marine's daughter does not question her father. I have seen one letter from James since that night, but it was addressed to my mother. It was an apology for what he had said.

To this day, I have not seen him. I miss him, but it is my duty to stifle that emotion to the best of my ability.

ALI STANDISH

Loneliness is Like Incandescence

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

The lonely stars  
Shed teardrops dressed in candlelight  
Which fall upon the sea  
To paint their solitude on the water.

Dusty shattered moonlight  
Like broken glass  
Turns cobalt waves copper  
In the quietly quivering sea.

Golden shafts of luminescence  
Drift smoothly across  
The pools of wayward water  
Under the sky-blue stars  
And ocean-blue sky.

Until dawn, rusty ribbons of light  
Cross paths among the tides  
Of a lazy blue suede sea  
Lying stretched out on its back.

And the loneliness  
That lies beneath my eyes  
Looks sorrowfully out  
At the shards of moon  
Like mirrors upon the dark water.

ALLISON CUMMINGS

Burrito Lovin'

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

If love were a burrito,  
I'd eat it.  
Even if I got gas from the  
Refried baked beans,  
Or heartburn from the  
Spices the meat was sautéed in;  
I'd eat it!  
Because I like burritos,  
(Even if I don't like all  
Of that other stuff.)

And if faith was like money,  
The poor wouldn't have it:  
The rich would have too much of it –  
And everyone would want it!  
But faith doesn't exactly  
Work that way.  
So I guess faith isn't like money,  
But I'd still eat love if it were a burrito.

NICOLE HEFFNER

Shelling Peas

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

she sat there in her rocking chair  
shelling peas to cook  
crack, pop, ping  
crack, pop, ping  
making all kinds of noise  
brushing shells from her apron  
slowly getting up  
bones cracking  
swiping well-made sweat  
from her wrinkled forehead  
“arvie, go get me my cane, baby  
while calling me a phantom name  
the day has passed  
and once again  
we’ll see the old sun tomorrow

KIERSTEN S. KING

My Computer Spy

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

I just found out that I bought a car!  
I didn't think I had the money, at least not so far.  
Why isn't it sitting in my driveway?  
If I bought the car, I want it today!

It also now seems that I have a credit card.  
Without a job, isn't getting one of those pretty hard?  
I'm getting mail from unfamiliar people and places.  
Why am I being charged for tickets to the horse races?

Who has my information; who has my name?  
Someone has my identity and they're not playing games!  
I know how this happened and I know why!  
Inside of my computer there lives a little spy!

What She Saw

She was struggling to remember the last thing she saw. The deer three feet ahead of her car in the road had caused her to squeeze her eyes instinctively shut, flinging a prayer up to God as she stomped down on the brake. She did not open them again until the car had stopped, her hood folded against a tree. It was Dave, sitting there next to her, that made her open eyes at all, his husky voice high with panic. "Sheila! Sheila!" His screams penetrated her foggy mind. She wanted to let go, slip away into the world that was beckoning to her, become one with the fuzzy pink peace that was filling her mind. But his urgency held her there, somehow making it seem unfair for her to just let go.

She blinked twice and opened her eyes, struggling to push back from the dashboard on which her head now lay. She tried to wipe at the blood that was trickling from her scalp into her eyes, but her arm would not respond. She closed her eyes again, but they snapped open with Dave's increasingly high-pitched shouts. "Sheila! You have to stay awake, you have to stay awake." What did he know? She didn't want to be a part of reality anymore, to think about her cute little Mustang with a tree inside of it, about her silky blonde hair matted with blood. "Sheila!" his voice came again, closer and louder, like he was yelling into her ear. She could barely see him now, though she could feel his hot breath on her cheek, his calloused fingers wiping at the blood that was marring her ivory face. As she struggled to speak, her voice came out as a series of shallow coughs, blood gurgling in the back of her throat, and she was suddenly distinctly aware of the steering wheel pushed so hard into her chest that she imagined she could feel the emblem of the horse through her shirt. The airbag hadn't opened. "That's too bad," she thought as she began to close her eyes again. "I doubt I'll be around to benefit from a lawsuit."

"Open your eyes!" Dave's voice came again and so she did, reluctantly. His face was surrounded by a black halo, his usually piercing blue-green eyes no more distinct than two shadows set deep in his face. If she put enough energy into thinking about it,

she could see him exactly as he really was—strikingly handsome, his jet black hair always slightly disheveled. Even at twenty-seven, he still looked like a little boy, a little boy with eyes that could see her soul. She imagined how his good looks must now be contorted by desperation, his beautiful eyes made a deeper blue with tears.

Sheila blinked and that image was replaced by the milky blob with its shadow eyes and black halo. “I don’t want him to be the last thing I see—not like this.” She was shocked by the unabashed truth in the thought. Struggling to turn her head, she was disgusted by the copper-iron taste that filled her mouth. She parted her lips just slightly, feeling the blood rush out of her, its warmth spreading from her chin to her neck. She wanted to laugh, just laugh so hard that the blood would all leave her and she could fade into the pinkness that lurked behind her closed eyelids and be free. But it wasn’t going to be that easy, so she searched instead for one final image to set her mind on. Gazing towards the tree and her crumpled hood, she saw a set of eyes, warm and chocolaty brown—frightened eyes. She blinked twice but they remained, her vision clearing enough that she could plainly make out death as it began to overcome the deer that she had hit.

She coughed a little, the gurgling blood surging up from deep inside, its warmth taking over her body as she locked eyes with the doe. “And so we die together,” she thought, suddenly made light as she imagined the two of them being collected simultaneously by their fellow captor. Finally, she was able to release a muffled laugh as she closed her eyes and was surrounded by the soft pink light—“I love you, David” on her lips, the words never coming to fruition.



AMANDA TURNER

The Dance of the Dryad

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

They soar around on their petite feet,  
And stir mischief up throughout the night.  
Moonlight passes through their translucent  
Wings as they dart through the still coppice.  
They do not violate the silence,  
The worlds still stays in its dreamless sleep.

Their gazes fall on a secluded  
Tropical isle athwart the sea.  
That is where their yearly ritual  
Is held. The Gathering of the Dryads.  
Fairies, gnomes, and leprechauns alike  
All congregate around a glowing fire.

Boisterous sprites dance joyously round  
A roaring gold fire, basking in  
The warmth of life. They merrily kick  
Up their heels and violently swing their  
Inebriated bodies about.  
Mischievous laughter floods the land.

Soon the glorious dawn appears. Her  
Fingertips spread, covering the earth  
With her dewdrops and shining light rays.  
The revelry is over, the group  
Disbands. For as the light swells, the world  
Stirs and they must resume their mischief.

Prom Date

Cameron turned the key in the lock and burst through the back door to his house. Neglecting his ritual of eating lunch right after school, he dashed up the newly carpeted stairs and into the bathroom. He could hardly contain his excitement. Tonight was prom and he had a date with the girl of his dreams, and for once he was determined that everything was going to go his way. Cameron flicked on the light and began running water in the sink; he reached for his medicated soap and began to gently rub his charred, scarred skin. The three times a day that his dermatologist instructed him to wash his face were the worst. The once in the morning, once in the afternoon, and the once at night before he went to bed were all permanent and crippling reminders of the way he looked. In fact, it wasn't even necessary that Cameron close his eyes to wash his face because the soap was so gentle that it wouldn't irritate his eyes. He simply closed his eyes to escape the mirror that would reflect his pain and suffering.

He jerked open his eyes when the phone rang. He quickly rinsed his face, turned off the water, raced into his bedroom, and dived on his stomach across the bed to reach the phone. He cleared his throat and, using his most soothing and charming voice, he answered, "Hello," hoping to hear her sweet voice.

"Hey, man, what's up?" It was only his best friend Brian.

"Oh, Brian, it's you. Hey, what's up?"

Cameron loosened his grip on the phone, rolled over on his back and sat up on the edge of the bed rubbing his grumbling stomach. He wished that he had at least gone down at the end of lunchtime and grabbed something from the Hot Line. He headed downstairs to reheat last night's dinner. He hadn't been to lunch at school since the first day of the sixth grade, and the fact that he was now in the twelfth grade made no difference to him. Rather than suffer the ridicule, cold stares, soft giggles, and pointing fingers, he found it best to get a library pass and eat when he got home. At least it made the day go by faster anyway.

"Listen, lover boy," Brian teased, "I didn't expect a love note in my locker, or a hug before you left or anything, but I would have appreciated a little notice that you weren't gonna to able to give me a ride home."

"Aw, man, Brian, I'm sorry. I guess I was just in a rush to get home and start getting ready. Besides, I didn't know you needed one. I guess I just gathered that you'd rather ride home with your 'little crew.'"

"My little crew? I wasn't aware I had one outside of your good graces. And I didn't gather that I'd rather anything, Dr. Seuss."

"Whatever, man," Cameron said, rolling his eyes.

"Man, Cameron, that girl is starting to fry your brains. I told you I needed a ride fourth period."

"She's not frying my brains," Cameron said with a deep sigh. "It's just that I can't believe that she said yes."

He glanced around the room where he had strategically placed the pictures Tara had sent him over the last three months. Everywhere Cameron's eyes fell, they landed on a picture of her. There were pictures of her playing the piano, sitting at the kitchen table, and sitting on her mom's garden swing. In every picture her green eyes looked out at him from behind the mountains of curly brown hair which made the dimples in her cheeks nearly invisible. There were also pictures of her and her mom on the sofa having what his mom used to call "chummy times."

Tonight was going to be one of those times. Cameron could feel it. When he walked into the room with her, heads will turn and eyes will gawk. Every guy will be wishing he was Cameron Michael Becton, instead of the little punks they all were. Cameron sighed again.

"Just think, man, it's prom night and our chariots await! I'm gonna be the man!"

"Yeah, yeah, Mister big stuff, just don't forget to pick the girl up, okay, and I'll see you both later."

Yeah, you'll see *us* later, Cameron thought.

He looked at his watch—it was already three-thirty, and he was supposed to meet Tara at five.

This was almost more excitement than he could stand. He never thought he would be going to the prom with anyone, let alone a girl he just happened to meet on line by accident. One conversation turned into emails, emails turned into phone calls,

and now prom. The best thing was that Tara already knew what he looked like. She knew that his mother had died trying to save him from the basement of their old house that Cameron had accidentally set on fire while playing with matches. They had made a promise to be honest, and so he had kept his promise. He was wary of sending her his real picture and telling her what caused him so much pain every moment of every day. She didn't care that his face was charred with deep cuts from being handed to his father through a broken window. She didn't care. She said she loved the fact that Cameron was smart, funny, and motivated.

Cameron smiled as he whistled his way back into the bathroom, thinking about how perfect Tara was, and the fact that she still liked him. She was perfect and now he had less than two hours till he met her. No more laughing, no more stares, no more taunting songs: "Look, look, the burned-up freak. Killed his mother while burning his cheeks!" Finally, no more hurt.

He turned onto her street right on time. She had said that she would be out on the porch so he wouldn't miss her house.

He slowed down to look at the address, than at the porch. His face turned cold when he saw that Tara sat in a wheel chair.

"No! What would they all say? *The Freak and the Cripple.*"

He pressed on the gas and sped away down the street.

Tara's grandmother came to the screen door. "Is he here yet?"

"No, ma'am. I thought that was him just now, but the car kept going," Tara said.

"Well, you let me know when he gets here. I have to meet the boy that's stolen my granddaughter's heart."

Tara smiled and sighed. "I will, Grandma."

She paused, and shifted in her uncomfortable seat.

"You know, Grandma, you should get rid of Grandpa's old wheelchair since he has the new electric one. Then you could put a small swing up. That way I could sit out here and take pictures in the summer."

She got up to follow her grandmother into the house.

BRANDI VANHOY

Chess

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Enduring puffs of smoke  
    the pieces stand  
My uncle's voice commands  
    and his thick fingers slide a pawn  
Ashes drop upon the checkered board

His voice again,  
I slide my own pawn forward

This volley continues until he stops me—  
    raises an eyebrow and points  
at my knight with his cigarette

The horse goes back to its stable  
    and the bishop out of his church  
The Queen bares a grimace  
But then she is dreary, her lover gone

"Checkmate!"  
The game is over and I have lost,  
Lost, but still I cling to this memory.

WHITNEY SHEPPARD

Just Wood

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

I spread my long golden curls on the sill  
Below the balcony a young suitor recites bad poetry  
Behind me my younger sister is sprawled on the floor  
having a fit of laughter.

“Whitney!”

My mother has found me:

“Clean up that pile of wood.”

I know stand in a fort in my back yard,

My curls now a frizzy pile of brunette.

“It’s a castle,” I say to myself.

EMILY MIKKELSEN

October

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

The smile,  
like a dancer,  
lingers on plush  
foreign lips.

Happy orange  
eyes, yet able  
to darken  
in an instant like a noon  
shadow.

Baggy pants  
covering a petite  
body, along with  
a shirt two  
sizes too large.

Boyish hands  
long fingers  
with short gnawed-  
off nails (not unlike  
her twin November)

Excitable and jumpy  
like the transition  
of summer to  
autumn  
October  
naïve with chill.

Precious baby autumn.

RENEE OXENDINE

Sister

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Poetry, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

She cries every morning  
I put my feet on the hardwood floor.  
I get rushed with a breeze,  
She jumps from the crib into my embrace.  
We go lie in the quiet of my room  
She lays her head on my chest  
And rests once more.

She awakes and runs for our  
Mother's bathroom door.  
Scent of shampoo and make-up.  
She runs in and wraps her  
Arms around our mother's legs.  
Water running into the octagon tub.  
Takes off the gown, ready to be  
Almost submerged in the pool.  
She gets bathed.  
"Dry her hair," a whisper.  
She does as I'm told.  
She climbs into the chair and grabs the hair dryer,  
Handing it to me.  
She feels the water evaporate and jumps up,  
Waves for me to follow.

We go and baby food and muffins  
Are sitting on the dining room table.  
She screams, "No more!"  
She takes my hand  
To go pick out the wardrobe.

"Time to go!"



BAILEY FUNDERDUNK

Family Portrait

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

Inhale. Exhale. Close your eyes. It's okay that the way she fixed your hair is horrendous. It's okay that she put you and the toddler in matching outfits. It's okay, just focus on breathing. Now smile and say cheese. Amuse them.

It's just a photo, a simple family portrait. Yeah, a simple family portrait that she is sending out as Christmas cards to everyone she knows, and to hang in an eight-by-twelve on the hallway wall, forever. It's haunting, no not now! Don't start this, don't cry! You can't give them this power to reduce you to tears. No, you're better than this, you hate the way they are crushing your style. You are the style expert now made into the cheerleader-type dresser by this made woman, but you will put up with it. It's okay to be a black sheep. Just stay strong.

You live with your mother. Not this woman, or these children. Not with your daddy. Inhale. Exhale.

CARLY PACE

Bipolar

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

I find myself now in a state between two realities. One, in which I am happy, pleasant, outgoing. The other, a sadder world, consisting of depression, anxiety, and hate. Between these two parallel universes, you can find me. Stuck resting on the fine line between the two. I'm constantly being pulled this way and that, never crossing into one side for too long. Just long enough for me to notice the change in emotions. Always returning to the same spot. A common meeting place, resting precisely on this line. So fine, so small, that it's practically unrecognizable to others. But I can see it. I detect it, for I've been there all my life. For as long as I can remember, I've been stuck between happiness and despair, sunshine and clouds, love and hate. Two completely different emotions, arguing over which shall rule me.

I find myself often questioning this place, this world, in between. My results are usually unproductive. I find nothing useful in my research. Many ads offer me their artificial happiness. Spending hundreds of dollars on shrinks and pills, trying to make me normal, but my constant state of confusion makes me question the intent of my doctors, parents, and friends. Do they really want me to be happy? Or do they want to control me like a mindless robot, spinning rapidly doing their bidding?

Often I awake during the night, awoken by the slightest movement outside of my two-story window. A leaf rustling by the tiny footsteps of a squirrel. A bat whizzing past my window. Or the blaring laughter coming from the television in my parent's bedroom. I grab hold of one of my stuffed animals, this time a rabbit named Esther, and indulge myself in the false sense of security that I know too well. I feel a shunning glare burning a hole into me, the other animals disappointed in my choice of comfort. Their black marble eyes stare at me, and I stare back, silently challenging them to a duel. Their hollow eyes and solemn

expressions frighten me, so I roll over, facing the opposite direction. I stare at the flashing red figures on my clock radio. 3:22. Less than four hours until I'm forced to get out of my bed and submit myself into my daily routine. Get up, pee, go back to bed, awake five minutes later to the yelling of my mother telling me to get up, get dressed, and eat breakfast while checking my regularly empty email. This time, I get an email from a company trying to sell me weight loss patches. Lose ten pounds in less than two weeks! Already upset with my appearance, seeing a well-endowed woman in a yellow string bikini with washboard abs, only makes me sick to my stomach. I feel the Frosted Flakes coming back up my throat. I take a sip of orange juice and try to stop myself from getting sick on the computer. Success. When I finish looking through my junk mail, I wipe my hands on a napkin and get ready for another pointless, routine day, unsure of what world I'll end up in.

MARION HODGE

Seeking the Muse

Chickadees flee sweet bounties  
of captivity. The closer pressed  
over stonewall-falls, through chickweed,  
more distant flit streaked chickadees.

*Vivien lisps among those wings!  
smacks her hips among wingbeats!*

. . .

*Creek-held now, she refuses other arms  
until she's pleased to rise.  
She hides, scathing, in translucence,  
in the swiftness of the stream.  
The talon-darling hides from me!  
Then—she turns me. Her green lips curl.  
Grown from buried carrot,  
slender stalk, expanding branches,  
deep-cleft leaves with swelling veins,  
now a body, becoming woman  
chained to me and to our time,  
Vivien writhes in our twilight—  
throws back her lace-white hair,  
her backbone-long, lace-white hair.*

ERIN PELLARIN

To Go Down to the Docks

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

When I was young, I used to like to go down to the docks and watch the ships sail in. Clad in my red Mary Jane shoes and surrounded by “wharf rats” and the slimy scales of yesterday’s fish catch, I would stand silently with my back against the splintering moor. My mother always said that the dock wasn’t a place for young ladies, but the pungent smell of fish didn’t bother me. It was the ships I came to see, though: huge, crested birds with wings of white taut sails and glittering teeth extending out of the bow. From the water-covered bowels emerged exotic people and exotic goods. I would marvel at the women with skin the color of hot coffee and sniff at the incense sticks that sent my mind titling into imagining the places of which they smelled and wonder whose careful hands had packed them neatly into packages of twelve. To me, the docks were magical places of re-birth and recreation; here the pressures of growing up faded away, and my future was as limitless as the distance of the countries from which the travelers came.

There was one certain ship that I loved the most. It was smaller than the others, but far more elaborate. Waiting to see its prow break the horizon, I would scan the sea for this ship. I would look for its figurehead, a beautiful mermaid with flowing hair, and eyes wide and welcoming. I loved her eyes most for the feeling they gave me when I looked into them: the sensation of cartwheels in loose, flowing skirts. Of all the ships, I wanted this one to take me away. To clothe me in its crew’s apparel, and then pull up the anchor, so we could sail into the vastness, so I could shake my hair in the wrestling wind, find foreign treasures of my own, and be free. . . .

One night at dinner, between bites of spinach and roast beef, my father asked me, matter-of-factly,

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

"I want to be a sailor," I answered him. My father looked at me and laughed.

"A sailor, huh? Grow up, Anna, only no-good men are sailors." Then, he forgot all that he had said and went back to inspecting the gleam of his silverware. That night, the first storm of the year came to our city; I heard the wind twirl the trees to make them tarantella; I saw lightening explode in the sky. Huddled within my bed, I thought only of my ship rocking on the queasy sea.

In the morning, I woke with terror in my heart; pulling on my shoes, not even bothering to buckle them, I flew through my front door and out towards the dock. Arriving at the dock, I saw immediately what I knew I would, but what I had not wanted to: my ship splintered down the middle, it's "wings" hanging useless, unable to fly. Then, looking down in the water, I saw my mermaid. She was bobbing on her back, and her face was angled to look right at me. I looked into her eyes. This time, they were vacant and cold, the way the surface of the water must look to the drowning. I screamed. I turned and fled from my comforting dock, not even stopping to retrieve my beloved Mary Jane when it flew from my foot.

After that day, I stopped going to the docks. I never found my scuffed Mary Jane's, so I let my mother buy me my first pair of pumps – black and fancy, the kind of shoes in which you don't walk on docks. I stopped noticing what type of incense perforated the air; I no longer dreamed about hands – calloused and dirty, or smooth and gossamer. My mother and teachers all thought the "new" me was elegant and mature, and my new-found interest in Latin and the proper way to treat a guest impressed them. Nevertheless, I myself felt a little lost. The high-heels made me walk funny; grammatical Latin was tedious and slow; and none of my guests had skin the color of hot coffee. Still, I could always walk past the docks and breathe their smell, or while shopping, turn and crane my neck to catch sight of my "dream birds."

ALEX GOFORTH



HELEN SHAFFER

It's Not Summer Anymore

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

It's not summer anymore. Daddy will come home later than usual, not late because of the hour, but late because the sun will be disappearing behind the tall pine trees making the time when we hear the familiar rattle of his muffler down the street seem later. The wind outside will carry scents farther than usual, we will smell the wood fires burning from chimneys all around the neighborhood, disgruntled southerners gearing up for a long five months of wool coats and boots. The flowers beside the porch will stop growing, scarlet leaves replaced by naked black stems that shiver against the wind.

He'll come home drunker than usual, too. We'll smell sweet whiskey hot on his breath when we run to hug him in the doorway. It will burn our nostrils and sicken our stomachs, but we'll cling to his pant legs just the same. Mama will be harsher when we make a racket running through the house, but we'll get excited just the same.

One day we'll spend packing our sundresses and sandals into heavy oak trunks that Daddy will carry all by himself up the little ladder to the attic. He must be the strongest man in the world – if not the tallest and the most handsome. We'll sit watching him in the hallway, packing our summer away in a tiny upstairs closet, while we snap the ends off green beans, competing for who can break the least off while still doing the job.

Mama will begin to make us wear scarves and mittens while waiting for the school bus, the hot wool itches our faces and makes you break out into little red bumps all over your neck. Mama says this is the cost of being warm. I was warm, but I never got the bumps.

Daddy will get angry when you complain about needing a new scarf because the one you have is moth-eaten and uncomfortable. He'll talk about how he works hard out in the fields to put food on



our table and a roof over our heads and the least you can do is not complain when something doesn't fit your fancy. He'll say things like, "winter isn't pickin' season, winter isn't money season." He'll get red in the face and the smell of whiskey will assault our noses and burn our eyes. Mama will whisk you and me off to our room and shut the door while she tries to calm Daddy down. We'll open the door a crack, light from the hallway slicing the dark like a butcher knife, and watch his rage with wide eyes and fingers in our ears. We'll wince when he stands up too quickly and his chair batters the floor; we'll cry when he slams the back door loudly; and we'll stop listening when Mama starts to cry. You and I will kneel beneath the crucifix that hangs beside the curtains and whisper pleas while Jesus absorbs our prayers with tears in his eyes. You'll turn to me and hold my hand the way only a sister could, and say, "Julia, it's not summer anymore."

The Volunteer

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival 2004*

As soon as they entered the home, the children were overcome with the smell. Nursing homes always smell like death. They stood cagily around the entrance, with varying degrees of coyness. Some groaned to one another about having to come to such a wretched place for community service week at school. How uncool. The residents sat restlessly, anticipating their visit with such wonderful children.

One freckled little girl with braids stepped forward. Her nose was a little too big for her face, and she was a little too skinny to look healthy. No one noticed when she left the tight knot of students. Nevertheless she walked boldly to a woman sitting in a green armchair.

“Hi! My name is Becca. What’s yours?”

The woman blinked.

“That one has Down’s Syndrome. She can’t communicate well. She just sits in that chair all day, not sayin’ anything,” said a passing nurse.

Paying no notice, the girl asked, “What’s your name?”

The woman blinked.

“Are you just too pretty to have a name?”

She blinked again. And then something in her unmoving eyes changed. She smiled and suddenly laughed aloud an awful-sounding whoop.

“I’m Sally,” she said slowly.

“What a pretty name.”

Sally wanted to show Becca her room. Her pictures of her Uncle Ken and Aunt Joan. Her teddy bear collection. She wanted to tell Becca all about her visit to the beach. Sally, it was apparent, was perfectly capable of communicating. She just did it differently was all.

At two o'clock Sally turned on the little TV in her room. She leaned towards the screen and blinked. She was waiting for something.

"What are you watching, Sally?" asked Becca.

"Bab."

"What?"

"Bab."

"Oh."

Becca waited patiently to see what Sally meant. And she laughed when she saw Bob Barker come walking on stage. Sally laughed too.

"It's Bab! Bab! I love Bab!" she laughed.

Becca and Sally watched "The Price is Right" every day together. Becca learned to understand Sally's slurred words. And Sally learned to love Becca. They played Bingo together, and Sally was jealous when Becca helped out other resident with their cards. Becca helped Sally eat lunch in the cafeteria. Sally waited every morning for Becca to arrive, and cried every afternoon when she left.

"No one has ever made Sally happy like you do," said a nurse to Becca one afternoon.

"No one has ever understood Sally before," said Becca.

A week is only so long, however, and the day came for Becca to leave for good. She told herself that she would come back. Maybe she even believed it. But volunteers tend to make empty promises, and no one likes to be surrounded by death if they don't have to be. Even the residents know that no one comes back.

At four o'clock on Friday, Becca turned to Sally.

"Sally, it's time for me to go now. But I'm not coming back tomorrow this time. I'll come back and visit you sometime though. OK?"

Sally did not answer.

"Goodbye, Sally. Do you know what goodbye means?"

Sally closed her eyes. When she opened them, Becca had gone.

A nurse came to tuck Sally in at eight o'clock, her usual bedtime. As she was tucking Sally into bed, Sally muttered something under her breath.

"What's that, Sally?" asked the nurse.

"I said, I know what goodbye means," Sally slurred.

"That's nice, Sally. It's time for bed now though, OK? Go to sleep now."

The next morning, Sally waked slowly to her green armchair, which had been unoccupied now for days. She sat down, and did not get up until a nurse came to help her to bed.

MICHAEL GASPENY

Old School

On a good day my mind moves like Saturday morning  
Above Buffalo Creek:  
Jumpshooter springs from the heaving pack,  
Angles between snaking arms into a sliver of light,  
Banks, scores, shouts, "How did he do it?"  
Three harnessed dogs saunter by, trailed by their master;  
The point boy, dust yellow with three legs, looks over, smiles.  
Squawk! A Great Blue Heron bursts from mimosas  
Along the creek-bank, preens in the grass, takes off,  
Splitting the air with its wing-lash.  
The sun clearing the mist  
Under the Elam Avenue Bridge  
Could disclose Tina Turner  
With a stiletto heel broken.

On a bad day my mind has a flat on a sand-blown road  
Near the Little Peedee River.  
It flaps into the puddled lot of a lost game room, Short Boy's,  
Two dollars ahead of extinction, among stooped pines,  
The stubbled proprietor comatose at video poker.  
Smelling scorching coffee, stale hot-dog grease,  
I play the Lemming Family Fun machine:  
My starved thoughts are pinballs worrying the same ruts  
Past flabby bumpers and squinting lights,  
Rolling between flubbed flippers,  
Dropping down the hole—  
Clunk! Clunk! Clunk! Clunk-Clunk!  
No free games.

EMILY MILES

Life is Only Life

Empty-handed, the farmer stands gazing,  
Depressed as the furrows spread wide at his feet.  
For the borrowed plow and plowshares and leather harness  
That ripped bleeding canyons into his back and rubbed his calluses  
to a shine,  
And the love of family and land that he invested in perfecting each  
plowsole to receive each seed  
Cannot procure the seed itself that he would plant so carefully  
were it in his hand  
That he would cover and pat down with love,  
That he would freely give them, were the means freely given him,  
And though he can imagine the seeds lying in his open palm  
And that he can spread them up and down each row,  
And tell his wife that the harvest will be good this year,  
And promise his children a pumpkin to carve in the fall and more  
pies than they could eat—  
The seeds are as weightless as his dreams for a better life  
And as unsustaining as the smells of neighbors' foods that would  
torment their empty stomachs  
When their own shelves stood barren as their fields.  
Would they know as hunger drove them mad and their abdomens  
formed a hollow bowl  
That he would ransom them from Death by paying any price  
demanded, even by giving his own life?  
That he would die a million deaths to save them from their own?  
That despite his love, he would give them up if even that sacrifice  
would spare them?  
He cannot help but realize that in plowing the fields  
He has only softened them for the digging of his children's  
shallow graves,  
And too soon, each of them will return to the earth which could  
not sustain them.  
As he returns to those he loves, shaking the spring sunlight from  
his hair—

For it has no place in his impending revelation—  
He kisses his wife atop her brown-grey head and kneels humbly  
before each child,  
Professing in the gesture the words he suddenly feels he is not  
worthy to say.  
And standing before them all, longing more than anything to  
gather them to his breast,  
Holding out his empty hands, he tells them that the seeds of their  
fate have been sown,  
And as a tear slides down his wrinkled face, they know with  
certainty that this means death.  
But they see love also sliding there, even through his despair,  
And they realize that what life they have left will be rich,  
And to them now Death is only Death.  
And his hands are not empty after all, for he has sown in them the  
seeds of love,  
And they don't care that love does not mean life, for they realize  
that Life is only Life—  
And they would not trade this beaten, weary man for all the seeds  
in the world.

New York Hair Cut

“You look very different!” I knew everyone would say this, surprised to see my hair so short. Today I said goodbye to my long-long hair—and I was reborn.

I got my hair cut in New York.

How strange that a hairstyle can change a personality—just like that! Now my heart is as light as my hair. When I cut my hair, I cleaned the fuss out of my mind.

I won't regret cutting my hair short. Why should I? I feel fine now. Of course, I liked having beautiful long black hair, but you know, it looked so heavy. Actually, it was heavy. It was a little hard to wash it. Long hair always needs attention, and so it was one of things that made me look somber, I guess.

I just wanted to be released from everything, especially my boyfriend—all those painful memories. He loved to touch my hair. I loved him to dry my hair. I liked the hairstyle that he told me he liked, and I always wore the clothes that suited me. I wanted to erase him from my life because he made me sad, miserable.

They say many girls get their hair cut when they are broken-hearted. It is true. I am one of them. Now, I can understand what they felt and how brave they were.

The long-distance relationship across the Pacific Ocean lasted for three years. Maybe it's amazing we lasted for three years, more amazing that I didn't realize he was cheating on me. I might have been the most stupid person in the world to believe him when he said every day that he loved me. His sweet words “I love you” made me happy, and they encouraged me to carry on with my life in America far away from home. He had cast a spell on me. I really loved him, but I can't forgive him.

I went back home secretly and was waiting for him in front of his apartment. He came back late with his new girlfriend. Of course, he was surprised to see me. I slapped his surprise face very hard. That was my last “thank you” and “goodbye” for him. No excuse was acceptable.

I spoke to myself. “Just forget about a man like that.”



My favorite beauty salon's scent welcomed me.

"What can I do for you today?" said the hairdresser.

"I want to cut my hair."

"This way—follow me." She led me to the sink.

Lying in the chair getting my hair shampooed was like getting my heart washed, too.

When the hairdresser asked me how much I wanted to cut, I said, "All off."

She said, "Are you sure? Your hair is healthy and beautiful."

I said, "I just want to change my hairstyle."

"All right," she said.

I closed my eyes and waited. When I heard the scissors cutting, I cried. Tears rolled down my cheeks.

The hairdresser was concerned.

"I'm sorry," I said, "but don't worry. I'm all right." And I told her about my ex-boyfriend.

"Don't worry," she said, "I can make you a prettier girl."

That cheered me up.

And she did make me look different, prettier.

When I left the salon, I was reborn. I'm feeling fine without all that heavy hair. Back in my American hometown, I walk with a light step, moving on.

## ANDREA GRIFFITH

### The Mine

They fought that morning. Daddy was certain she was having an affair with Manny, one of the construction guys working on the Rodriguez house next door.

"You are always so paranoid!" Mama screamed at him as she stirred the grits for breakfast. "I'm so sick of it. Do you want me to stay inside all the time? Can I talk to no one?"

I coughed before I walked downstairs so they would hear me coming. I hated walking in on them fighting. There were terrible actors as they fumbled to pretend that they were talking about the weather or plans for dinner.

"Hey, kiddo." Daddy lifted me up and twirled me in my pink flannel nightgown. When he kissed my cheek, his gray beard scratched me. He walked to the kitchen island, grabbed a banana muffin, and picked up his hooded jacket. Then we heard Fred laying on his horn.

"Fred's waiting. I'll see you gals tonight."

Mama kept her back turned to us as she peeled apples at the sink. Daddy put his arm around her and ran his fingers through her dark brown hair. She didn't seem to notice.

By seven o'clock he hadn't returned from work.

I overheard Mama talking to Fred's wife Bess on the phone.

"We had a fight this morning. He probably went out for drinks with some guys from work. Fred isn't home either? They must be together somewhere."

They were together.

Crushed beneath tons of coal.

When the mine foreman stood at the front door and told Mama, she fell to her knees in her terrycloth robe.

I always remember her, fallen, when my husband and I have fought and I feel like keeping my back turned to him.

## MELISSA CAUDILL

### Claddagh

A claddagh is a traditional Irish ring. The face shows a crown over a heart. The band consists of two connected hands. The heart stands for love, the crown stands for loyalty, and the hands stand for friendship.

To you and me, it stands for friendship. You've worn it for two years, but not on your ring finger—it isn't an engagement ring—but on the middle finger, in the center of your hand, balancing it.

Over time our friendship has grown deeper. Seeds planted when the ring was placed on your finger have sprouted into the most meaningful and loving friendship you've ever had.

The ring stands for loyalty. Wearing it, you know he'll always be there. You know you can share thoughts, feelings, and secrets. He knows and accepts every negative aspect of your life.

The ring stands for love. If you wear it facing yourself, that means your heart is taken. Single people wear it facing away from themselves so potential suitors know they're available.

This love has grown over time. It's based on trust and friendship, security. It's not an engagement ring, but it signifies everything you'd want from one.

MICHAEL GASPENY

Anniversary

Maybe on a Friday in hell,  
Lacking access to a calendar,  
All tender recollections seared from my brain,  
Or as a stroke-addled volunteer  
Drying towels at the homeless shelter,  
I'll close the door on a week,  
Shuffle down an empty corridor past the wet floor sign  
And not think of you as you were then  
When we were alone on the sixth floor—  
Golden, gracious, and lingering on—  
In my lost state, the only reason to return;  
But not now and never in my right mind,  
Lovely Friend.

Bar Life

According to Matt, Uno's was a place to go and relax, drink beer, watch games on the wide screens placed throughout the bar, and chat with his friends. The bar was designed to have everyone gather around the fountains of beer in a horseshoe shape. The individual bar stools sat high enough for people to reach the drink or food placed in front of them, but low enough to keep drunks from helping themselves to the seemingly endless amounts of liquors and beers.

"Another Bud Light, Mags," Matt said. Mags bartended every night except Thursday and Saturday, when Brooke took over. Happy hour lasted from four until nine. If he wasn't able to get to Uno's by nine, he could call Mags or Brooke and tell them to put him down for happy hour—then they would charge him only two dollars per beer, while the suckers paid four dollars. It was good to be considered a regular. Working as an intern with the DEA was stressful, so he needed a beer after a long day of work, and needed to spend time with a few friends—who, unlike Matt, didn't always avoid trouble and, at times, stood for everything that he worked against. He could live vicariously through his friends, whom he called his "crew."

Turner seemed always to be there. He often liked to stand up, stick his stomach out, roll his shirt up to his pecs, and rub his belly full of beer, while saying, "Yep, that's some purty good beer there, son. Might go catch me some trailer park girls later on." Turner loved to mock rednecks, and Matt enjoyed watching Turner make a fool of himself in front of the non-regulars. Matt often egged Turner on by screaming, "Yeah, Turner, keep it up. You're not drunk." The weird thing was that older women were attracted to Turner. He worked as an electrician, but often told women he was a camera man for "Girls Gone Wild." Amazingly, most women were interested, and believed him. They offered to be in the videos, and gave him their phone numbers.

Another friend, Abbot, was a twenty-five-year-old hairdresser who usually came in after seven, yelling, "Oh, my gosh, you guys

have to listen to what happened last night!" Then she plopped down and ordered a vodka and Collins. Her black-cat-eyed shaped glasses seemed tantalizing to men, as did her black-and-red spiked short hair. Her feet didn't reach the foot-bar, not even when she wore her three-inch heels. "Oh, by the way, get me that dish with the baked potato and chicken with broccoli," she'd say in her high-pitched, childlike voice. Then she'd told anyone who would listen about her night of drama with Chad, a musician who worked downtown. "We almost hooked up last night, but since he has, like, all those little bitches who are in high school tryin' to hook up, I'm not hookin' up." She stirred her drink with a coffee straw. Abbot told the same story every night, so Matt would look past her at the game on television, occasionally nodding his head as if he were listening to her. If she didn't talk about Chad, she finished her drink quickly so she could rush home to "smoke a bowl." Matt sometimes thought that if they weren't friends he would turn her in and get her busted.

Justin worked as a waiter at Uno's. Matt had known him since high school. Justin worked every day, so Uno's was like his second home. Half the time, he didn't even charge Matt for beer. He knew Matt would leave him a big tip no matter what, or buy him a few drinks after he got off. Justin was a lady's man. Every night he hooked up with a hot girl he met at the bar. Justin loved to join his friends at the bar for at least seven rounds of shots. His favorite line was, "It's on me, Mags! Shots all around! Yeah!" Justine had money because he lived at home with his dad. Nothing brought him down, not even getting a DUI. He claimed he wasn't drunk that night, but his friends at Uno's knew better. He had refused to take the breathalyzer test. His lawyer assured the judge that Justin would be okay, so he got a slap on the wrist. Matt sometimes thought that if they weren't friends, he would have turned Justin in for drunk driving.

Matt often compared his life to his friends'. He went to college and worked as an intern for the DEA during the week. On weekends he had another job. He lived alone like an adult in a house he owned. Sure, he may be ahead of his friends, and "on track" in society's eyes, but he wanted to be thought of as daring, a risk-taker. But was taking risks worth losing his job and future?

He looked around. In a way, his friends satisfied his desire to lose control. Here's to the crew, Matt thought. Cheers.

ADAM TROY

I Am You

Am I supposed to believe you see no difference  
That you see us as equals in a world of class  
I know the way your eyes see other people  
I know the hate that one man can have for another  
The fear that stinks up the world  
We cannot live together in peace as long as  
People want what others have  
I know how much hatred can infect one person  
I know how fear leads us to hate  
I know how stereotypes affect the level of fear we feel  
I know how you see that man  
I know how you look at that woman  
I know how you praise your own skin color  
I know what evil you harbor inside  
I know. . . because I am you

Soulful Keepsakes

*HONORABLE MENTION, High School  
Fiction, Phoenix Literary Festival, 2004*

Kindle stared out her bedroom window at the rain that was hammering against the glass. She could see her reflection at the window; her crystal blue eyes stared back at her. Her light brown hair fell gently down the side of her face. It was finally Saturday, the best day of the week. The one day she didn't have to worry about the other girls teasing her and laughing at her. She flopped down onto the bed and stared at the ceiling enjoying the boredom that only came on a Saturday.

There was a sharp rap at her door and Kindle jumped up and began making her bed. The knock came again.

"Yes?" she called as she tried to control herself from screaming.

"Kindle? Sweetie? Are you up yet?" came the falsely sweet voice of her mother. Hundreds of rude responses flashed through her head, each one more nasty than the first.

"Yes, mother, I'm up," she responded with a scowl.

"That's nice, sweetie. Now Rob and I are going out today, so if you could run off and play with your friends that would be splendid."

That hurt Kindle more than her mother knew. She hated the way her mother pretended that she had many friends. She hated even more that her mother was going out for the day with Rob. Kindle hated Rob with a passion. Rob was the reason she wasn't doing something fun with her dad right now. He was the reason she was living in Chicago instead of Indianapolis. If it weren't for Rob, Kindle's parents wouldn't have gotten divorced.

"Oh, darling." Her mother's voice penetrated her door and found its way into Kindle's head like serpents finding their victim. "Rob and I bought you a little gift last night. You'll really like them, and, my goodness, you sure do need them!" Kindle groaned.



She hated gifts from her mother, especially if they came from "Rob and I."

Kindle left her room to find the unwanted treasure, and maybe get some breakfast. She passed Rob in the hallway. He greeted her with a "Hello, sunshine," to which Kindle merely glared and kept walking. She entered the kitchen and smelled burnt pancakes.

"Oh, hello, cupcake!" coughed her mother. "I was just making some pancakes for Rob and me. Would you like some?"

"No, thanks, that's okay, Mom. I think I'll stick with cereal." Kindle clambered onto the counter and grabbed the Cheerios off the top shelf.

"Do you have any homework this weekend?" her mother said.

"No, Mom. Fifth graders aren't given weekend homework."

"Well, that's good. Oh, yes, your present is on the table. Go ahead and open it now."

Kindle grabbed the box and tore off the tissue paper. A shoebox fell onto the table. Kindle stared at it and then gave her mom a look that said, "This better not be what I think it is."

She slowly opened the box. There, lying inside more tissue paper, was a brand new pair of Kike shoes. They almost glowed, they were so white. They had gorgeous blue trimmings and on the middle of each side was the renowned Nike swish. Kindle looked up at her mother with a frown.

"Mom, I told you I don't want new shoes. I'm happy with the ones I have."

"But darling, your shoes are all beat up and filthy."

"Dad gave me those shoes and I don't want any new ones!"

Kindle dashed out of the room to her mother's cries of "Kindle, darling, be reasonable!"

In the entrance hallway, she extracted *her* shoes from the depths of the closet. They were navy blue except for the white stripes down the side. Her father had also given her the Care Bear laces to go with them. Fondly she slipped on the shoes and began to walk down the street.

The rain had stopped. Maybe some kids would be playing in the park.

## CONTRIBUTORS

JON MICHAEL ALDRIDGE attends Southeast Guilford High School. His writing teacher is Mr. John York.

COURTNEY J. BAKER attends Page High School. Her writing teacher is Mrs. Janet Trail.

ALEX BARBATO attends Durham School of the Arts. His writing teacher is Ms. Mulvey.

MELISSA CAUDILL, from Leesburg, Virginia, is a Senior at High Point University. She is Editor-in-Chief of the *Zenith Yearbook*. She is a member of the cross-country and track teams and a staff writer for the *Campus Chronicle*.

A. BERRY CRAWFORD is Professor of Philosophy at High Point University.

LAUREN CROUGHAN, from Kernersville, North Carolina, is a Freshman at High Point University. She is a member of the North Carolina Student Legislature, College Democrats, and the Writer's Club. She is a columnist for the *Campus Chronicle*.

ALLISON CUMMINGS attends Shelby High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. Jason Lineberger.

LAURA DEMARIA attends Southeast Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. John York.

KAREN DINGLE, from Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, is a Sophomore at High Point University. She is an ESL tutor and a member of Model UN, the German Club, and Phi Alpha Delta.

TESSA FIGUEROA attends Northwest Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Ms. Mary Jane Rizzuto.

REBECCA M. FLEMING, from Greensboro, North Carolina, is a Sophomore at High Point University majoring in English Literature. She is a Presidential Scholar.

BAILEY FUNDERDUNK attends Page High School. His writing teacher is Mrs. Janet Trail.

MICHAEL GASPENY is Assistant Professor of English at High Point University. He is Faculty Advisor to the *Campus Chronicle* and a recipient of the Slane Teaching and Service Award.

ALEX GOFORTH, from Shelby, North Carolina, majors in Art at High Point University.

ANDREA GRIFFITH, from Lewisburg, West Virginia, is a Senior at High Point University. She is a Presidential Fellow and member of Alpha Chi Honor Society. She is Editor-in-Chief of the *Campus Chronicle*, Editor of the *Honors Journal*, and a member of the Odyssey Club and the English Majors Council.

PAULA HARTNESS, from Greensboro, North Carolina, is a Junior majoring in Art History at High Point University. She is an Honors student.

NICOLE HEFFNER attends Shelby High School. Her writing teacher is Ms. Martha Moore.

MEREDITH HENDRIX, from High Point, North Carolina, is a Senior majoring in English Literature. She is a Presidential Scholar.

LOUIS HERMAN attends Page High School. His writing teacher is Mrs. Janet Trail.

MARION HODGE is Professor of English at High Point University.

CHRISHAUNA HORSLEY, from Lynchburg, Virginia, is a Senior at High Point University. She is a member of Genesis Gospel Choir and is President of Impact.

BARRIE HUMPHRIES attends Page High School. Her writing teacher is Mrs. Janet Trail.

MIKI IKEDA, a Junior at High Point University, is a member of the International Club. She majors in English Writing.

MODU L. KAMARA is a Junior at High Point University. She is Treasurer and SGA Representative of Phi Theta Kappa and a member of the Writer's Club.

KIERSTEN S. KING attends Northwest Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Ms. Mary Jane Rizzuto.

MANDY KUHN, a Senior at High Point University, served as 2003-2004 President of Alpha Gamma Delta

TREVOR MCDONALD, from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a Sophomore at High Point University.

EMILY MIKKELSEN attends Southeast Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. John York.

EMILY MILES, from Gladys, Virginia, is a Sophomore at High Point University majoring in English Literature. She is an ESL tutor and a member of the English Majors Council and Honors Club.

RENEE OXENDINE attends Southeast High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. John York.

CARLY PACE attends Northwest Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Ms. Mary Jane Rizzuto.

ERIN PELLARIN attends Page High School. Her writing teacher is Mrs. Janet Trail.

ELIZABETH RATHVON, from Cascade, Maryland, is a Senior at High Point University majoring in Sports Medicine. She is a member of Psi Chi, Psychology National Honor Society.

FREDERICK C. SCHNEID is Professor of History and Director of the Honors Program at High Point University.

HELEN SHAFFER attends Durham School of the Arts. Her writing teacher is Ms. Mulvey.

DEREK SHEALEY, from High Point, North Carolina, is a Senior at High Point University majoring in English. He writes for the *Campus Chronicle*.

WHITNEY SHEPPERD attends Southeast Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. John York.

JENNY SHERMAN, from Towson, Maryland, is a Junior at High Point University. She majors in Art.

GENA SMITH, from Harrisburg, North Carolina, is a Senior majoring in English Writing. She is a member of Campus Crusade and writes for the *Campus Chronicle*. Ms. Smith was awarded the 2004 Thomas Walters Award for Literary Excellence.

JUSTIN SPINKS, from Frankford, West Virginia, attends High Point University.

ALI STANDISH attends Greensboro Day School. Her writing teacher is Mr. Thomas Scott.

MARISA SWAIM is a Junior from Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

ADAM TROY, from Hillsville, North Carolina, is a Sophomore at High Point University. He is active in the Chapel Choir, University Singers, Spotlight Players, and the Toccata Tones.

AMANDA TURNER attends Northwest Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Ms. Mary Jane Rizzuto.

BRANDI VANHOY attends Southeast Guilford High School. Her writing teacher is Mr. John York.

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Caudill	Crawford	Croughan
Cummings	DeMaria	Dingle
Figuroa	Fleming	Funderdunk
Gaspeny	Goforth	Griffith
HartnesS	Heffner	HendriX
Herman	Hodge	Horsley
HumphrieS	Ikeda	Kamara
King	Kuhn	McDonald
Mikkelsen	MileS	Oxendine
Pace	Pellarin	Rathvon
Schneid	Shaffer	Shealey
Shepperd	Sherman	Smith
SpinkS	Standish	Swaim
Troy	Turner	Vanhoy

A P O G E E