

SPRING 2006

Apogee



The Literary Journal of
HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY



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THE LITERARY JOURNAL OF HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

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"Funshi"

FIRST PLACE

High Point University Poetry

Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Off to work with a plastic bag as your briefcase
Gripped by your blackened fingernails, it's time to go.
The sun shines heavy, but it always does that here,
Shanghai—city of trade and money and garbage.

Tattered black pants and a soiled cream shirt
The perfect outfit for your grocery store—
As you reach in, your hands become your eyes,
Focused on finding anything solid.

Your old eyes disregard the lives of passersby;
A woman in stilettos barely looks at you.
You take no notice of her clinging shoes, nor of
The frumpy woman in ankle-high pantyhose.

Your hand returns out of the shadows
Like a submarine that's finished its work.
Next, the corner of Mao Ming and Funshi
A new, four-foot food store—lunch might be there.

"In This House"
FIRST PLACE
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Dying men often speak messages from the dead.

I hear voices in the fall.
Rasping leaves whisper dark
and sliding secrets that lie
only under bed sheets of my past
lovers in their slumber.

Their forms have curled
fingers like eagle talons
that clutch the ground fiercely
against October winds, leaving
fingernails rooted in the ground.

Trick-or-treaters do not come
to this witching house anymore.
Here the forest always watches,
and something shivers the tree-tops
when you are quite sure that you are alone.

Wide glassy eyes stare back at me from frosted windows.

"Quiche"
FIRST PLACE
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

It all started because of boredom on a hot day. I just sat in the chair for hours, watching the fly dance on the wall and counting the ticks of the grandfather clock. I lost count. I would have gotten up, but the hot leather stuck to my skin and pulled me in. They thought I was crazy.

That's how I came to be here, I tell him. And I ask him what happened to the "milk does the body good" commercials. And why every TV show has the same stereotypes, but they never get old. And I ask him, if I were a TV character, who would I be? But he doesn't answer. So I tell him he would be Bob Newhart from the Bob Newhart Show, not the one with the hotel but the one with the psychologist, because that's what he is. And I wonder what ever happened to the Golden Girls, and why no one wanted to listen to Rose. I liked her stories.

And I have a craving for quiche, but he doesn't do anything about it. I wonder if people make quiche, besides the caterers. I should make some quiche. I don't think my psychologist wants any though. Is quiche a delicacy? Is a delicacy a delicate dish, or is there another meaning for delicate? Is delicate even the root word of delicacy? Isn't the root word of root beer ironic, like that song from Alanis Morrisette?

What's your favorite song, I ask him? And I hear a little humming of "Are You Going to San Francisco" by The Mamas and The Papas. But I tell him I am ignoring him because I never understood The Mamas and The Papas. Why didn't they ask if I was going to Wisconsin? That is a more appealing vacation destination. They have cheese. And cheese hats, I say. I have always wanted a cheese hat.

But it would be engulfed by the clutter in my room. And I may get mice; I heard they like cheese, but the mouse could be Jerry and that would be cool, unless Tom followed. But Tom always follows Jerry, or there would be no point to the show. It's like the roadrunner and the coyote. Is there really an animal called a roadrunner? Or did a rainstorm of anvils make them extinct? I look at my shrink. His eyes are watering. I ask him if he is crying or laughing. He looks sad. I wonder if he had a love affair with the roadrunner. They say that show is violent, but I don't think it

matters, I say. I think if you are strong and dedicated enough to lug an anvil to the top of a cliff, you have the right to drop it on animated character. It should be a law.

And I think I want Berry Berry Kix with my quiche. He makes a face. I ask him if he likes the plain Kix. The kind that is "kid tested, mother approved." I used to eat the berry berry ones before kindergarten, when I had to go at 11:00. But I never slept in. I never sleep. I watched Rugrats, when it was still quality TV. And I wonder who had the idea to desecrate my childhood memories and have Tommy Pickles grow hair. The new episodes were bad enough, but now my favorite babies use 21st-century slang that I don't even know. I cease to watch Rugrats All Grown Up.

The walls are closing in on me I tell him. I didn't know I was claustrophobic. I start to hyperventilate and ask my shrink if I can use the phone. It's an emergency, I plead.

I call Miss Cleo and ask her if I will break a nail on January 27, 2009. She says that it's up to me. I control the destiny of my nails. It sounds like a cop-out. But then she knows about the burns on my wrist and my cravings for pickles and cream cheese so I become a believer. I will sing her praises and spread her word like wildfire on January 28, depending on if I break that nail. Cleo asks about the music in the background. She says I seem too young to listen to The Mamas and The Papas.

I ignore Miss Cleo. I ask the questions. I ask her if I am a lunatic. She said I was one of the most normal people she talked to. I told her I was crazy, that I needed a shrink, in fact, that's where I am now. That's the humming I tell her. My psychologist likes The Mamas and The Papas. I told her about the bunny slippers and how they have races on my feet. I tell her how the left one bit the right one because it always wins. Then I explain the scar on my ankle. She thinks I am kidding. I hate Miss Cleo.

My mindless babble has tolled on my psychologist and his hum of The Mamas and The Papas has been replaced with snores. I sneak a peak at what he has been writing. My TV persona is Kimi from Full House. Quiche sounds yummy. I deserve a cheese hat. And he thinks it was time for Rugrats to grow up. So I do too.

"The Sister"

SECOND PLACE

High Point University Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Harried, in a mire of grief she stands
Her fingers scratching tears she dare not check
The cacophony of pain resounding in cracked ears—
A mother's moans, a father's wringing hands
Woeful, the congregation turns its head
A box, a child, a dozen roses strewn
Atop the shoulders of dejected men
The glance a weak remembrance of the dead
Following the freight, a sentimental wave
And sister, too, though she was in life, now not
Reaffirms she cannot love what is no more
As she gazes down the deep, unsmiling grave
Weepings discharged and hollow oaths reread
"God's newest angel" now sinks inch by inch
Souls turn away, resuming selfish lives
Clinging to falsehoods forged from what was said
And placated at last by return of dust
A thousand infant roots take back their hold
Sheathing the small disturbance in the earth
Hardly remembered by the new-formed crust

"The Old Man and His House"
SECOND PLACE
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

I wake to spot you and I
-worn through time, and golden years
to mark our skins with weary eyes
-and my wooden prickled brush
I line our bond, of eighty years
in strokes, of only two so far
and net so many days
-in lonely aging tone
-as dawns, of purple dusk

I seek to paint your crooked shutters
-into my wrinkled brow
and melt your broken windows
within the laughter of my own
to fill the grass with maiden
rose, sugarcane, and poppy seeds
sprinkle sage into the earth
and let their prisoned petals free

I wish to feel the infant toes
still dancing on your crackled steps
and wait again to hear the words
in magic timber dust
of sunbathed oak, still dated
forty years ago,
and to craft my tired eyes
-and wooden prickled brush
to take me back again

- back again....

"Tunnel Vision"
SECOND PLACE
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

The doors slid open and Miranda rushed out of the chilly fall weather and onto the Blue-line train toward downtown Chicago, slipping her way through the bunch of folks crowded in the aisle. She did this while trying her best to keep from having to grab the greasy hand rails that the other passengers were clinging to. When she reached a lone seat in the corner she brushed off the cushion carefully and plopped herself down. As the train began to slowly grind into motion she pulled her bright and richly red-hued jacket more tightly about her shoulders and squeezed her purse safely against her hip, while casting inquiring glances at the other individuals now sharing the subway car with her.

Miranda noticed a man seated in the middle of the car nodding off, his face covered by a worn baseball cap, his white tee tattered, and a plaid blanket wrapped around him, serving as his substitute for a coat. She didn't feel sorry for him. Her mind swelled, a hot-air balloon, heated by fiery thoughts of loathing. She critiqued his filthy attire, the soil behind his ears, and mumbled to herself something about laziness and finding a job. Her gaze then wandered along the walls and ceiling, shot out the window at a bright autumn scene, the sun beaming down atop warehouse rooftops and crashing onto side-streets, and then her eyes whirled back into the subway quarters.

Now, Miranda's judging eyes fell onto a black teenage girl who stood right near the door staring down among a pile of rags in the seat of a baby stroller. Nestled in this heap of blankets a young child slept peacefully to the soothing lullaby of the rattling railway cars rocking back and forth. Miranda suffered a quick pang of sympathy that was soon drowned in a cascading stream of thoughts that flung blame and responsibility into the arms of this young woman. Miranda felt extremely insecure in these conditions. These people were interlopers in her perfect world. The presence of the business man a couple seats in front of her brought a slight air of comfort, with his sharp pinstripe suit, powder-blue shirt, and hair combed neatly to the side. However, the way his lips curled into such a brilliantly confident grin made her stomach churn.

Suddenly the cloudless, crystal blue October sky disappeared as the train plunged underground into the darkness of the subway tunnel. Now, for the first time, Miranda noticed the figure to her right and again felt her insides squirm with distaste. Her eyes locked on the figure's tidy blonde hair which was pulled back into a tight bun, and then focused in on the lustrous chain around her neck which at its vertex held a sizeable diamond stone. Miranda jerked her hand up over her mouth as if to keep herself from gagging and saw more jewel-encrusted finery on the figure's silky smooth fingers and wrists. Miranda leaned in closer and saw that she hated most of all the girl's dark chocolate eyes that glimmered softly with concern and kindness, and that twinkled with delicate rays of a past sense of respect. But these traces of natural beauty were swallowed underneath heavy eyeliner and pushed aside by thick makeup and rosy cheeks. The kind eyes were only a minute feature beside a pair of ritzy, silver, hoop earrings and a flamboyant red jacket that screamed for attention.

Miranda tore away from her reflection in disgust. "How could I be like this?" she thought to herself. The subway car shook from side to side and squealing along the tracks, the train came to a halt. Miranda inhaled deeply, gathered herself, and sprang from her seat in the corner of the car. She made her way to the door, and kindly apologized to a fellow passenger as she brushed into him. Before exiting she smiled sweetly at the young teenager who stood gripping her stroller firmly, her face painted with seriousness. With a last reflective glance Miranda grabbed onto the handrail and swung herself out onto the platform.

She stood there a brief moment and stretching behind her head, let her blonde hair splash down across her shoulders. She then wrestled off the bright red coat and cast it casually onto a nearby bench. She twisted at the rings around her fingers and tugged hard on her necklace and stuffed these purposefully into her purse. Finally, staring down at her boots, Miranda took one confident stride, and then waited a second, as if she had found something curiously pleasing about the way her feet had landed on the ground. The cool underground air felt refreshing on her skin, which was now bare around a sleeveless black dress. She walked away gently, her feet falling softly one after another down a flight of stairs and through the tunnels of the Chicago subway.

"One More Page"
HONORABLE MENTION
High Point University Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

A little girl coming of age
While winter winds blow coldly dark;
A little voice says, "Just one more page."

Viewing Life through a puzzled haze:
Friends, enemies, rivals. Deciding is hard.
A little girl coming of age.

Clouds gather. Tears of hurt and rage.
The leaves of fall. Death has left its mark—
A husky voice asks, "Just one more page?"

Making a desperate attempt to escape
By words and ideas—to reach "smart."
A little girl coming of age.

The sun shines on a mid-spring day
And happy smiles. The scholarship note: a carte
Blanc to laughingly say, "Just one more page!"

In the solar-spotlight of her personal stage
Buffeted by winds that freeze the heart
A little girl comes of age.
My own voice. Just one more page.

"Birds Understand"
HONORABLE MENTION
High Point University Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

What gives me the right to think I know what's best?
What makes me think I should be comfortable in this life?
I was shocked
That this small black bird
Was there, unmoving, untouched
By my movements, another thing's
Attempt to sway him
From this being state.
And this is a bird!
How can he understand
The silence, the complete madness.
We picked him up,
The black small bird,
And stroked him.
What do I know of the healing of love?
When creatures are placed in our lives.

No one's choices should have to be Duke or Edwards.
Let's erase that. I feel like I cursed.
And that's how it is back home.

"The Orchestration"
HONORABLE MENTION
High Point University Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

So you say there is no Great Composer
 You attest to the absence of the Master Conductor
 But I beg to differ
 For who tells the thunders to boom like the bass
 Or the sea shores to crash like the cymbals?

Who bids the birds to sound like the flute?
 And the leaves to flutter like the timbrels
 Maybe it's all a coincidence
 Even though it's well orchestrated
 Could it possibly be one big accident?
 Even though it's well amalgamated

Who commands the streams to stream like the viola?
 And the winds to flow like the violins
 What prompts the quakes to rumble like the trombone?
 Or changes the rain to snow which rings like the mandolin

Notice how the sun and moon move up & down like a person's hands
 Like both ends of a scepter in the hand of the leader of a marching band?
 The pianist who plays every note, every key at precise timing
 The same instructs the whale and the minutest of bugs
 To be the right place, do the right thing, with the right ensuing

Maybe this all happens by chance
 The way the butterflies and school of fishes seem to dance
 To the sound that is produced from this great composition.
 A different season, a different symphony
 Who renders this rendition of meticulous timing and coordination?

"Guest Observers"

Mary Allyson Cline never forgot. Taking the night train from Scarboro, North Carolina, to Atlanta, Georgia, that second week in August, 1949, was, in itself, a real treat for the nine year old and her mother. They caught the eight o'clock special, snuggled down in their berth prepared by one of the colored porters, and fell asleep to the sound of the train wheels' clackity-clack.

A war widow since 1944, Bonnie had worked steadily as a public health nurse, provided for her only child, and gently accepted her fate. Mary Allyson made good grades and won awards for her accelerated reading ability. The Clines' modest four-room bungalow in Scarboro was surrounded by Dacotah Cotton Mill, United Furniture Factory, Michael's Neighborhood Grocery Store, and various locally-owned shops. Bonnie made clothes for herself and Mary Allyson from material she purchased at Rayless Department Store. During the summer, Mary Allyson swam in City Pool, and each winter, took piano lessons. These activities were about the only diversity in her routine. The music lessons were free because the Cline house was beside Robbins Elementary School, and during assigned school hours, the town's one music teacher instructed the wealthier school children on the piano in the Cline living room. It was a profitable trade-off for both.

A really special outing sometimes consisted of a trip to Bea and Ruth's for a new perm. Mary Allyson would climb the twenty-eight wooden steps, walk past the thick bubbly glass door of Dr. Beam's dental office, and go straight to the end of the long hallway where the beauty salon covered at least a fourth of the end space.

As part of their customary routine, the two ate supper at a white enamel table, seated on wooden chairs that had endured many, many coats of white paint. Their menu consisted of beef, beans, and potatoes. Or chicken, rice, and peas. The drank their sweetened tea from rainbow-colored aluminum tumblers which made Mary Allyson's teeth ache. Afterward, Bonnie would heat their dish-washing water in a big pot on the gas range, and wash and rinse their plates and tumblers in a single enamel sink. After supper they often took their books outside

beneath the big maple tree and read until dark. Mary Allyson's favorite was Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Although it would be stretching it to suggest they had the novel memorized, mother and daughter would entertain themselves by enacting, with amazing perfection, a few of the more dramatic scenes. And all this without having seen the movie. Bonnie was extremely frugal. She considered paper towels and aluminum foil frills, not necessities. Both were laid out on the counter top for reuse. When an old garment finally became a dust rag, Bonnie salvaged buttons for future shirts and blouses. She hoarded pieces of twine and string in a green glass jug. The resulting savings went into their vacation jar. Finally, enough was collected for their trip to Atlanta.

When Bonnie Sue and Mary Allyson awoke after their night's sleep on the train, they quickly dressed in the small bathroom. They did not eat in the dining car, but could smell the expensive coffee and country ham being prepared for those who could afford such luxuries. Soon, they were at the Atlanta station, being met by Costella, Mary Allyson's aunt. The Atlanta relative lived in Buckhead, but in the late 40's, Buckhead meant country lanes and five-room bungalows with spacious yards and dog lots—not the high-end real estate that Mary Allyson would, years later, read of in Tom Wolfe's or Anne Rivers Siddons' novels.

Costella was, perhaps, half a step above the Clines in lifestyle, but she had a friend named Harry who was genuinely rich. Harry dressed like a fashion model, drove a big, new shiny Pontiac, wore a flat gold pinkie ring, and lived in a lovely high-rise apartment building. He also belonged to Atlanta's Piedmont Driving Club.

Harry invited Bonnie Sue, Mary Allyson, and Costella to lunch with him at his Club, and they eagerly accepted. Dressed in their finest summer frocks, the three nervously waited until he picked them up. Harry was a talker and extremely proud of his Club membership, his money, and his historical knowledge. As they passed greenhouses and Atlanta's Botanical Garden, Harry would wave one arm slightly away from the steering wheel and proclaim, "This was originally a polo field" or "Over there . . . look closely and you'll see outlines of the old rack track." His guests would turn to the right and back to the left and look for the almost-hidden tracks. Mary Allyson wondered where Margaret Mitchell lived and if they would get to see her house.

"That's how the Club started in 1880," Harry told them. "After Atlanta had recovered from the Civil War, a man named Joseph Kingsbery

formed a Gentleman's Driving Club of one-hundred members. Each man put up a hundred dollars to join. In return he received a safe park for his wife and children to ride in fine horse-drawn buggies. At that time the Clubhouse was still the old Samuel Walker farmhouse."

Costella had probably heard Harry's historical babbles a dozen or more times, so she nodded occasionally, smiled, and puffed on her Chesterf. Bonnie kept glancing out the window intently, connecting his words to what she saw. Although Harry was addressing his remarks to the two grown women, Mary Allyson clung tightly to every word.

Once the car was parked and they were on the walkway to the Club, Costella took her Kodak from her purse and motioned for the rest of them to pose. "No, no, let me do the honors," Harry insisted. He snapped twice—once for Bonnie and Mary Allyson, and once for Costella, he said. Then he told them to stand still and smile, and he snapped again. "I will need one, too," he explained, handing the camera back to Costella.

The moment Mary Allyson stepped inside that grand place, an elegant club with white-gloved waiters and starched tablecloths, she knew that the wood paneling, sterling flatware, and whispers of the Piedmont Driving Club symbolized the wealthy, prestigious, gracious South. She realized this was something her nine-year-old soul craved. In the marrow of her bones had nestled a yearning for refinement, charm, and quiet dignity. Here it was in all its glory—so unlike her normal environment.

While Harry prattled on about the 1920 fire that destroyed the old New York building, the group was shown to an elegant table. "Ah, our new ballroom turned out to be a Palladian beauty," Harry intoned with pride. Here he paused, turned to Mary Allyson, and inquired if the child what "Palladian" meant.

"No, sir, I don't believe I do," Mary Allyson responded truthfully. "We've not had that word in our Weekly Reader vocabulary list."

Harry seemed amused by that comment, but quickly turned his attention to other diners in the Club. He waved to friends and nodded to acquaintances as Costella and Bonnie whispered discreetly about prestigious architecture, polished wood paneling, and fresh flowers. They, too, gave obligatory nods and smiles to passersby.

Then one of Harry's male friends came over to the table and told them about Margaret Mitchell's accident.

"Excuse me for interrupting, Harry," the stocky man at Harry's shoulder implored, "but—"

"Charlie!" Harry stood, tall beside the shorter man.

"Charlie Augusta, meet my guests. Costella Cline; her sister from North Carolina, Bonnie Cline; and Bonnie's daughter, Miss Mary Allyson Cline. Good to see you, 'ol buddy." Costella and Bonnie rose to shake Mr. Augusta's hand. Mary Allyson smiled in greeting. "Pull up a chair, Charlie. Join us," Harry continued.

"No, no thanks. I hate to be the bearer of bad news. . . ." Mr. Augusta's face was serious, his eyebrows knitted with dismay. . . . "but I assumed you didn't know . . . wondered if you'd heard—"

"Heard what, Charlie?" Harry turned to face Mr. Augusta.

"About Peggy Marsh's accident last night."

Charlie Augusta went on to relate the details, and all the while Harry muttered, "oh no's" and "I'm so sorry's." It did not take Mary Allyson long to realize that Peggy Marsh was Gone with the Wind's author Margaret Mitchell. She listened to every detail—not those sketchy reports that often make their rounds after accidents—but facts that seemed to make the event even more horrible.

It seemed that Peggy and her semi-invalid husband John Marsh had made a late Thursday evening decision to attend Peachtree Arts Theater for the English film, *Canterbury Tales*. Peggy drove, parked on the west side of Peachtree, got out of the car, and went to John's side to assist him. The two waited until they thought Peachtree was free of traffic. Then they started across. Supporting John's elbow, Peggy guided him. After she saw the car speeding down the middle of the street, she screamed, panicked, and pivoted, leaving John standing there while she ran back towards the curb and her car.

The driver of the speeding vehicle made a last-second swerve when he saw the man in the middle of the street. He skidded towards Peggy, hit her, and dragged her seven feet.

"Will she be okay, Charlie?" Harry asked the question for everyone

at the table.

"She has a skull fracture, concussion, internal injuries, and a fractured pelvis, I hear," Charlie Augusta said. "But, of course, we're hoping for the best."

All nodded in agreement, but did not speak. They waited to see if Charlie Augusta would say more.

Finally he spoke again. "She's in good hands at Grady Hospital. The intern on ambulance duty last night was Dr. Edwin Lockridge, Lethea Turman Lockridge's son. Peggy's known him and liked him since he was a boy."

Then there was that oozing silence that often comes when there is nothing left to say, that quietness that seeps in like a muted sunset.

"Didn't mean to disturb you folks," Mr. Augusta said, his eyes droopy and sad. "Didn't want to bother you, but felt you'd want to know, Harry."

Harry reached out and again offered his hand. "Thank you, Charlie. I did . . . do . . . want to know. Stay in touch."

When Margaret Mitchell died of complications the next day, Wednesday, August 16, 1949, Bonnie and Mary Allyson were already back home in North Carolina. They read in the newspaper of her demise, and they grieved privately. Mother and daughter spoke little of the events of that day at the Piedmont Driving Club because they did not feel privileged to discuss what had happened. After all, Margaret Mitchell had belonged to Harry and Charlie Augusta and Atlanta. Bonnie and Mary Allyson had been mere guest observers, and they knew that. Respecting their positions, they bore with dignified silence their sadness.

As the years passed, shadowy memories of that luncheon hour continued to dim like faded gauze. Mary Allyson attempted to recreate in her head that August 1949 day. Even pouring over an inter-library loan of *The First One Hundred Years of the Piedmont Driving Club* and studying photographs from the late 40's, some of the puzzle pieces were still missing. Sometimes Mary Allyson thought her precocious nine-year-old mind had invented the entire wonderful day. When she doubted even her own soul, she removed from the tattered album a black-and-white photograph, turned it over, and read in Costella's bunched scroll, "Bonnie, Mary Allyson, and me—August 12, 1949—Piedmont Driving Club."

"Inside the Yellow Tape"

Once this stream carried
The aunt who ached to shelter him
The father who stole his gold chains
The teacher who saw him leave school one day
And instead of turning her back, waved goodbye.
It also bore his cousin Rajah
With whom he laughed at TV cartoons
Through wreathes of ganja smoke
The guns he stroked
Rasheda with the 69 tattoo
Who gave him twin girls.
Blood stains on concrete only look the same,
Browning, blackening, paling to gray
Marking in this case
Where heroin-running K-zar
Was relieved of his stash, shot, and slain.
His pit bull puppy drools in these atoms
While his grandma listens to gospel music
And fries Sunday chicken.
K-zar wakes at noon to the splatters,
Presses the dog to his bones. The dog remembers.
Soon the weather will do its work,
Scattering dog, boy, and wings,
Leaving K-zar to die again and again
In the ends of Grandma, Rasheda, and friends
Like the multitudes in our veins:
Blood is people.

"Almost Home"

She was almost home before she realized that she was dead. With the realization that the last two hours of her life were a figment of her imagination, or a dream, or perhaps the result of her mind moving forward at a rate hundreds of times faster than reality, she struggled to accept that, finally, things for her were finished. She had been driving home from college for fall break, her final midterm—which she had stayed up the whole night before to cram for—finally completed. Weighted with ten days' worth of provisions for resuming life at home, her small Honda hummed beneath her as she took exit after exit—I-85 Business to I-85 to Route 29—bored with the drive that she had made for the past three years.

For more than two hours after her wreck, images passed before her as if on a movie screen, her pink knuckles curving over the wheel in front of her, featureless cars passing by, her view of the orange and red autumn trees fragmented by the frame of the car separating one window pane from another. She was rounding the top of the last hill in the two-mile-long driveway, finally able to fully appreciate a panoramic view of her grandparents' two-story farmhouse—with its white siding and green shutters—before she was jerked back to a disembodied reality.

She now viewed herself instead from about thirty feet above as the paramedics finally were able to free her mangled body from the twisted metal that had once been her car. She watched as a nearby trucker frantically waved his hands toward her body and car, tears sliding down his red face as he explained to an officer exactly how he had come to hit her car. She could not hear him, but his motions jogged her memory, his left fist slamming into his right palm as he reenacted their accident, and suddenly the sight below her was wrinkled by shivers as she remembered falling asleep—falling asleep and drifting only a few inches into the other lane. Her front fender had overlapped only slightly with the trucker's when they collided, but it was enough to send her car spiraling outward, quickly enough that its rear end curved back under his trailer, his back wheels smashing into and then rolling over her car.

She looked back to her car and watched as a middle-aged paramedic cradled her as if she were his own child, her body limp in his muscled arms, her waist-long auburn hair sweeping the ground, a tangle of blood and glass. She glanced down at her face, but was taken aback by the jagged openings that split her once-flawless skin. Shivers again wrinkled her vision, folding this horrific reality upon itself as she slipped back into her car, once again at the top of the last hill of the driveway.

She looked back down at the house, wiping at a few tears that had formed, and noticed, for the first time, her grandparents sitting on the front porch swing, a blanket spread over their laps. They watched as her brother played basketball at the hoop her grandfather had erected in the front yard, his black and white border collie puppy jumping up for every rebound. The puppy wormed its way between her brother's legs, tripping him. He lay motionless until the puppy came to lick his face, then he grabbed it up, wrestling with it on the ground. She smiled down on the scene, the crunch of her tires on the gravel causing her grandparents to look up for the first time. Her grandmother lifted trembling fingers to her mouth and then cast off the blanket as she ran out to meet her granddaughter at the end of the drive. A pothole in the driveway jolted her back to her bird's eye view of her accident.

For a moment, she frantically searched below her for her body, catching a final glimpse of it as they slipped her down into a black body bag, the zipper closing her out from the rest of the world. The paramedic that had been holding her body doubled over, his hands on his knees as his body shook with sobs. The other men and women on the scene looked at him sympathetically, a few patted his back, but no one could fathom the emptiness he had seen looking down into her glassy blue-green eyes. As lines of cars were allowed to pass, policemen waving them through the right lane, it suddenly becoming 29 north and south, she watched the people craning their necks to see her flattened car—a few even so bold as to roll down the window to get a better view. Most ducked back into their cars disappointed that they had not gotten to see a body, oblivious that someone was missing a daughter now, a sister was jerked from the world, a girlfriend would never again grace her boyfriend's lips with her kisses.

All of the world around her became saturated by her tears. She struggled to blink them back, but failing, began instead to wipe at her eyes in desperation. Finally, she closed them and, pressing her fists into her eyelids, was transported back by prism like light to her

grandparent's farmhouse. She slowly drove the last two-hundred yards, taking her time, allowing the horror and joy of her situation to intermingle, to fight one another until, slowly, one emotion could rise to the top. Finally she parked and set the handbrake, running her fingers over the smooth leather seats one last time. As she opened the door, her grandparents and brother stood shoulder to shoulder to receive her, their faces both welcoming and simultaneously pained.

"I wasn't expecting you so soon," her grandmother said, a tear tracing the wrinkles in her face.

"I thought I'd never get here," came her almost whispered response. All three reached forward and folded her into an encompassing hug. "I missed you, Beetle," she said, turning toward her brother.

"Yeah," he replied, his eyes on the gravel in front of his feet, "I missed you pretty bad, too."

"Is this a dream?" she finally asked. "I've dreamed of you all so many times before."

Finally, her grandfather spoke up and it was the quiet, assured voice she had longed to hear for the past ten years. "No, honey," his brown, soothing eyes caught her gaze as he said, "this time you're really dead."

She smiled, not at all surprised by his answer. "Good. That's what I thought."

"This Sea of Darkness"

Can you hear it!
The vast sea of loneliness is calling!
Help me
Help me to erase it from my ears

I see your light, so warm
Warmer than this sea of darkness
I long for the tide of affection within your harbor
This tide that flows from within the light of your heart
This is the light that will light the way from this sea of
darkness

So light the lights of your heart
So that I may see in this sea of darkness
Light up the harbor of your love
Drowned me in your tide
Take me from this darkness
This sea of darkness
This sea of darkness

"Chocolat Blanc"

Like some treasure
From far away
It smells priceless
Tastes priceless.

I long for it
The taste, the aroma
As I bite it
As saliva pumps forth.

The first time I saw the words
Speaking to my heart
I walked away...fearing to get fat
Fearing breakouts.

But I'm careless.
Chocolat Blanc tastes so good
I want another bite—now—
Another bar, another box.

Chocolat Blanc
My priceless exotic
Tempter—
Chocolat Blanc.

"To My Grandmother"

One night you were at your granddaughter's bridal shower,
Being sucked up to by long absent family members,
Reapplying too-red lipstick after finger foods and cake—
Did your hand shake, your speech slur, was there any warning at all?
We got the call Sunday morning. Seizure. Emergency room. Come quick.
For 2.5 weeks we wept over you like you were already dead—
In so many ways, you were.
And yet, they'll be married two years in May,
And here you are—body aged ten years, mind that fluctuates
Between not-too-good and worse,
Too-red lipstick still applied anytime Aunt Wanda comes by.
We tell you how pretty you look;
We compliment your robes and oversized gowns.
Sometimes, I catch myself talking about you like you're already dead
And in so many ways, you are.
And yet, I can visit you in room 302—
Comb your hair, give you water,
Watch you eat pureed meals,
Hope I'll be audience to one of your famed moments of clarity;
I never am.
Sometimes, I catch myself thinking about you like you're already dead—
In so many ways, you are.
And as I look into your almost blind eyes today—
Searching for the woman that I thought was so beautiful,
For the grandmother that I was admittedly afraid of,
For the person that took us to movies and the dollar store,
Yelled at me if she even though I made Wyatt cry,
Combed my hair, gave me water,
Watched me grow up to be the person that I am—
It's one of those moments when I'm looking at you like you're already dead.
And it took all of this—
Stroke after stroke after stroke,
Late nights clinging to your sweaty hands,
Being kicked in the face during your deliriums,
Watching you struggle to breathe,
Seeing hate and love and hell in the lines of your face—
All this for me to finally realize:
You're not dead, but it still seems too late
To say I love you..
And know you know I finally mean it.

"Jambabooba's Smile"

Once upon a time in a little village in Africa there lived a girl named Jambabooba, who never, ever smiled. She cried all the time. She cried when she was playing, which is most uncommon, because playtime is supposed to mean fun and games. She cried when she was eating, which troubled her father, mother, grandmother, sisters, and brothers, for they thought mother's cooking was great. She cried when she was sleeping. She cried when she was at school. The teacher would write home all the time: "Jambabooba is a good student, yet she cries all the time. Why?"

No one knew why.

Jambabooba even cried when she was sitting and taking in all of God's beautiful creations.

One day Grandmother thought it was high time to have a talk with her.

"Oh, grandchild of mine, what seems to be the matter? Why do you cry all the time?"

"My eyes and mind make me cry. It's a part of me," Jambabooba replied.

"Aren't you happy?" asked Grandmother.

"Well, yes," said Jambabooba.

"Don't you like to play with the others?"

"Well, yes."

"Don't you love your mother's cooking?"

"Well, yes."

"Don't you have good and happy dreams? Isn't it fun to learn at school? Don't you have a happy, wonderful family?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, grandmother," cried Jambabooba.

"Now, Jambabooba, you have answered yes to all of my questions. Therefore, I forbid you to cry again! Think of the happy times in life, and your heart will near burst with joy!"

Jambabooba grew angrier and angrier with every breath.

"Now, Grandmother, this is who I am. I cannot change. If you don't like it, then I shall have to run away!"

"Then go. This crying is too much for all of us. We all love you, Jambabooba, but if you say that you must go, then GO!" Of course, Grandmother did not think that she would go far.

Jambabooba set off across the hot plains and deep into the jungle. She was so angry that she didn't realize just how far she had gone. Then, in the thick of the jungle she came across a baby elephant—who was quite big for a baby anything.

Although she wasn't aware of it, Jambabooba had stopped crying. For the first time in a long, long time, her eyes dried up. No more tears!

"You are a long way from home, little girl," said the baby elephant. "What brings you here?"

"My family doesn't want me anymore, so I have run away."

"Are you sure they don't want you?"

"Yes, my grandmother and I had a big argument, and so I had to go. They don't want to see me crying anymore."

"Crying?"

"Yes. I cry all the time. When I'm playing. When I'm eating mother's good cooking. When I'm at school. I cry all the time."

"Well, let me show you something. Now come."

The baby elephant took Jambabooba deeper into the jungle until they came to a clearing where there was a large watering hole. He told Jambabooba to look into the water.

When she looked, she saw someone she had never seen before—a most beautiful girl, with a face aglow. The girl had big beautiful black eyes and the prettiest smile with the whitest teeth she'd ever seen.

Jambabooba looked at the baby elephant and asked, "Who is she? Where is she?"

"Oh, little girl, it is you! It is you!"

With amazement, Jambabooba looked at herself again in the water. There was not a tear in her eye.

The baby elephant exclaimed, "It is you—and you've stopped crying!"

Then Jambabooba realized how wonderful she felt inside. "Like her heart would near burst with joy"—she heard her grandmother's words in her head. "Grandmother was right," said Jambabooba. "Oh, thank you, baby elephant! But it's getting late, and I must return to the village. Maybe I'll come back again to visit one day."

"Godspeed, Jambabooba, Godspeed!" said the baby elephant.

When Jambabooba arrived at the village, everyone was astir, wondering where she had gone. Now everyone came running to her. She was smiling. Her face was ever so bright, so bright it lit up the whole village.

"Grandmother, Mother, Father, I'm back!" she said, overjoyed.

Grandmother looked at her. "Jambabooba, is that really you? Oh, my grandchild, I'm so happy to see you. Where have you been? Oh, my Jambabooba, you're smiling! You really do have cheeks and teeth!"

The whole village was now gathered around this amazing sight: Jambabooba smiling, smiling a most beautiful and happy smile.

Then she noticed tears in everyone's eyes. They were crying.

"Why are you crying?" she asked.

"Tears of joy, Jambabooba, tears of joy!" they said.

Everyone cheered and laughed and danced, for Jambabooba was back. What's more important, Jambabooba was smiling!

"Knock, Knock"

The rural landscape whizzed past in a blur, as the Dodge Caravan made its way up Interstate 90. I gazed out the window, dreamily recounting the perfect three days that were too quickly coming to an end. Weekends with Dad consisted of no bed-time and no chores. We enjoyed R-rated movies, and hanging out until the sun went down, without a care in the world. At thirteen, I was in love for the first time. Dad turned up the radio as the sweet acoustic sound of "More Than Words," by Extreme, filled the car. All I could think about was the look in Zack's eyes as he wrote down his phone number the day before. Never before had a boy looked in my eyes like that, as if we shared a deep secret, even though we just met. His southern drawl sounded unusual for upstate New York, which made it all the more enticing. He had just moved here from Missouri, and lived a few towns over from Dad. My eleven-year-old sister, Michelle, and I took our daily walk to the Kwik Fill, one of the only stores in the small town called Walworth. Stocking up on brownies and Slim Jims, we discussed which movie to watch first that night. Michelle liked the silly antics of *The Naked Gun*, while I wanted to watch *Dirty Dancing* for the hundredth time. We giggled and acted silly, when I glanced behind us to make sure no cars drove dangerously close behind us. Being older, the responsibility for things like that fell to me. That's when I spotted two teenage boys walking a ways behind us. Absorbed in their own conversation about who-knows-what, when they saw us, one nudged the other and gave a little wave. I smiled and nervously threw my hand up, and they started to speed up. Michelle, ever ironically braver than I, stopped in her tracks, with a grin, and turned around, yelling, "Hey Baby!"

Although self-conscious, I knew that I couldn't make myself disappear at that moment, so I waited for the boys to get a little closer (which didn't take long, as they increased their speed significantly after that brazen cat-call!). The cute one wore a varsity football jacket and chewed tobacco. Normally this would have disgusted me, but I couldn't help noticing the way the golden late-summer sky made his eyes light up. His nervous sideways smile put me at ease.

We talked nervously for a few minutes and he gave me his phone number. Michelle and I headed back towards Dad's house and waited for him to go to bed before talking to each other about what had happened.

"So, are you gonna call him?" she asked me.

"Oh, I dunno. What do you think?" I drew the words out slowly, so they hung in the air above us. I teased her. I had every intention of calling him; I knew that my destiny depended on it!

"You'd better. He's really cute," she said with a mischievous look in her eyes, perfectly matching my tone.

I dug in my pocket for the phone number, and carefully dialed the digits. He answered on the second ring, and we ended up talking for three hours. We talked about everything from recent movies, to school, and everything in between. He planned to come to Walworth again the following day and wanted the four of us to meet at Scott's Hill, an empty field not too far from Dad's house.

We all spent the next afternoon making big plans in a small town, the boys trying to impress us, and Michelle and I whispering to each other conspiratorially. Before we knew it, the time had come for us to go home. Dad had to drive us back to our mom's house, in Buffalo, in a couple hours, and we had to pack up our things. Michelle and Shawn walked up ahead of us, and after a few awkward minutes of silence, Zack took my face in his hands and kissed me, his lips warm. After he pulled away he leaned his cheek against mine. It surprised me to feel a tiny bit of stubble scratching at my cheek. I said goodbye and grabbed Michelle's hand as we ran into the house.

For the next couple of hours I walked on air. I'd never felt like this before! I finally knew how women felt in the movies, like when Baby from Dirty Dancing fell in love with Patrick Swayze. A whole new world had been opened to me.

A sign reading "Buffalo, 10 miles" rudely jolted me out of my daydreaming. Michelle looked over at me and the usual tears welled up in our eyes. The worst part of the weekend had come, leaving Dad. All the pain from the divorce, always just beneath the surface, rose up as the reality of our situation became undeniable. You would think we had to say goodbye for the last time, the way we both carried on each Sunday evening. Two years had passed, and our mother had gotten remarried a few months before, to Jeff, the complete opposite of Dad. My father, a real Renaissance man and good at everything he did, extremely contrasted with Jeff, basically a big dork in our eyes. A New York State Health Inspector, he tended to get carried away with authority. Mom didn't help matters, by handing

complete control over to him. We had a large Microsoft Excel spreadsheet on our refrigerator door, with a list of twenty daily chores. If we talked on the phone or watched TV before we finished, we faced excessive punishment.

As Dad pulled into the driveway, he told us to dry our eyes and that he'd see us in a couple of weeks. Always Daddy's little girls, we stiffened our upper lips and unfastened our seatbelts. Michelle bent over to pick up her copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* that she had been reading for school. I hid Zack's phone number in the side pocket of my duffel bag, knowing Jeff would find a way to ruin it for me. In the past, if a boy at school called the house or rode by on his bike, Jeff would scold us for "giving these boys the wrong impression" or "not concentrating on school". He would never find out about Zack! Not a chance.

At around ten o'clock that night, safe in the bedroom that we shared, Michelle and I couldn't help whispering about the weekend's events. We giggled and commiserated about the boys, when Jeff pounded on the door.

"Hey, it's time for bed! You girls better quiet down in there," came the deep voice, like nails on a chalkboard.

Something had gotten into Michelle, and she yelled back, "What are you gonna do, ground us for talking?"

My jaw dropped and my eyes widened. I couldn't believe she'd said that! Jeff walked away from the door, obviously to complain to Mom about Michelle's sassiness. I couldn't overhear their conversation, but I like to imagine that Mom told him to forget about it, while looking away to conceal her smirk from him. After all, Michelle did get her nerve from her! But sadly, that's probably not what transpired. . Mom's sense of humor tended to lie dormant with Jeff around.

Thinking that Jeff had walked away, Michelle started making funny faces. My favorite is her imitation of an owl, where she puffs out her cheeks, flares her nostrils, crosses her eyes, and stands up on the bed, flapping her arms wildly like a deranged owl. I tried to suppress my giggles, but they just gained momentum, the longer she did it. Unable to hold it in, I burst out laughing uncontrollably, snorting air through my nose. This made her laugh just as loud, and before you could say "punishment", our boisterousness took on a life of its own.

We heard swift heavy footsteps coming down the long wood-floored hallway, and our door burst open.

"You guys are both grounded for a month!" boomed the nails on a chalkboard, angry and at the same time indignant, as if he "really showed us".said that! Jeff walked away from the door, obviously to complain to Mom about Michelle's sassiness. I couldn't overhear their conversation, but I like to imagine that Mom told him to forget about it, while looking away to conceal her smirk from him. After all, Michelle did get her nerve from her! But sadly, that's probably not what transpired. Mom's sense of humor tended to lie dormant with Jeff around.

Our little party came to an abrupt end. My chest tightened as if a bucket of cement weighed it down. I couldn't breathe. A prisoner in my own home, I had no way out. After a few seconds I managed to get some air, and I cried like I had never cried before. I cried for my Dad. I cried for Michelle. I cried for my family that had been torn apart by things I couldn't understand. I cried for any child that my mother may conceive with this man. I cried for the past. I cried for the future. I cried for people I didn't know, facing things I'd never heard of.

After what seemed like forever, with no tears left, I looked over at my little sister. Awake, listening to me the whole time, she had patiently waited for me to calm down.

"Jenn", she whispered to me, raising her eyebrows like Groucho Marx, "Knock knock." I couldn't believe that her disposition had remained silly and unscathed.

In disbelief, I laughed, and replied, "Who's there?"

"Boo," she said.

"Boo who?" I sighed with a smile, knowing where she was going with this.

"Boo Radley!" she hooted.

We both cracked up. In spite of my stuffy nose and puffy eyes, I had to laugh at her incongruent reference to the character from her book, at the same thrilled that she enjoyed reading.

No one heard us this time. Mom and Jeff slept soundly by now. We had the last laugh.

Three years later, at sixteen, after stuffing my clothes and radio into my duffle bag, I went over to Michelle's bed and kissed her on the forehead. She knew I had planned to leave, and although we both cried because we would no longer share a bedroom, we also knew that this day would head. She knew I had planned to leave, and although we both cried because we would no longer share a bedroom, we also knew that this day would come. We'd repeatedly consoled each other over the years, with the knowledge that at sixteen we would have the legal right to escape this sick situation.

"Michelle," I whispered, "knock knock."

She looked at me quizzically, obviously wondering why I would tell her a knock-knock joke at a time like this.

"Who's there?" she played along, furrowing her eyebrows together as if humoring a small child.

"Boo"

"Boo who?"

We both smirked at one another and in unison said, "Boo Radley!"

Now, almost fifteen years later, when one of us cries, we can always depend on the other to bring our laughter out of hiding with that silly joke about *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

"Family Values"

For many years, my family has gathered at my Grandma Sophie's farm for a traditional Thanksgiving Day feast. The lustrous gardenias and bushy wax myrtles that border the farm's dirt driveway emit a sweet odor, giving my nose relief from the smog-filled city located miles away. Many years ago, the farm's open fields featured a wide array of animals and provided entertainment for the family's children.

At eight years old, I suppose I should have been interested in the chickens, cows, horses, and other creatures that resided on the farm; but unlike my cousins, I could not have cared less about them. While many of my cousins ran to the makeshift petting zoo, I scampered up the graveled path to the gray, two-story, country-style house.

Grandma Sophie, donned in her red and white checkerboard apron with her silver hair pulled back in a bun, always greeted me on the front porch. "Is my little baker ready to make his blueberry pie?" she would ask. Hand in hand, she led me through the chatter filled rooms of the house and into the kitchen. My mouth salivated from the aromas of turkey, stuffing, candied yams, and every other kind of Thanksgiving Day cuisine imaginable. Steam billowed from the pots and pans on top of the stove. My grandmother's finest dishware, used only on special occasions, decorated the mahogany kitchen table.

My grandmother hoisted me up to the marble countertop where she had already divied up the ingredients for the pie, setting them aside so her eight-year-old culinary assistant could combine them. Upon my mixing of the contents, Grandma Sophie poured hot, thick syrup – prepared from the juices of several ripe blueberries – over the concoction in the bowl. "Ten stirs of love and a dash of care is all you need," she would say while adding a pinch of cinnamon. I lacked the skills required in the art of cookery at eight years old; however, my grandmother convinced me that the simple step of stirring the ingredients together constituted the most important part of the pie-making procedure.

Sometimes I would ask her, "Nanna? Why don't Michael and Lauralyn help you make dessert?"

Grandma Sophie would reply, "Your cousins help Nanna take care of the animals on the farm." This simple explanation prevented any further questioning from a curious eight-year-old child.

My father and his siblings inherited the farm when Grandma Sophie passed away several years ago. My entire family maintains the upkeep of my grandmother's country-style house. Once vibrant with animal life, thick vegetation overruns the farm's fields. While some of us continue to reunite every Thanksgiving Day, the number of family members who visit has diminished. My cousins and I have reached adulthood and have since gone our separate ways. I attend the special feast every November, but have not seen Michael or Lauralyn in fifteen years.

I believe the time I spent with Grandma Sophie instilled in me a deep sense of family comradery. After stuffing my belly with all of the delicious Thanksgiving Day foods, I sit on my late grandmother's porch and think, "Did it hurt my grandmother's feelings when my cousins stopped visiting during their teenage years?" They would probably attend more family functions if they had spent time bonding with family members instead of farm animals.

I make that special blueberry pie in my grandmother's kitchen every Thanksgiving Day. I eagerly wait for one of my family's new generation of children to ask if they can help. With ten stirs of love and a dash of care, I hope to teach them the same kind of family values that my Grandma Sophie taught me.

"White Roses"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

(The Thoughts of the Woman in Renoir's "La Loge")

Darling,
I love the way you always stop to buy me roses
on our way to the theatre.
You press a fresh penny
into the girl's waiting hand,
and slip two blossoms behind my ear.
"My alabaster beauty,"
you always say,
as you wrap your fingers around mine
to ward them against the cold.

Always.

But tonight,
as I sit in my new muslin in our balcony seat,
I see that you have your gold binoculars focused on
anything but me.
"They've changed the curtain," you say,
and
"They've brought one of those troupes in from Paris."
It all feels like a habit,
as I remember how your fingers gripped mine
too tightly,
and how your voice had lost its charm when you whispered
the old words.

Darling,
I want to yank those flowers out from behind my ear.
I want to toss them to the velvet rug,
grind them into alabaster dust –
just to see you react.

But instead,
I feel the lights go down,
and I stare at the empty stage.

"The Poet"

HONORABLE MENTION

High School Poetry

Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

[A Villanelle]

I saw the man who wrote the villanelles,
The man who sold his work all through the day -
I walked past at the ringing of the bells.

Reading each line, I wonder what it tells;
The metaphors hide what he wants to say.
I saw the man who wrote the villanelles.

Some wonder why it's poems that's all he sells;
I know it's how he deals; it's just his way.
I walked past at the ringing of the bells.

"Two pence a line!" "Two pence a line!" he yells;
Yet, but for me, he finds few who will pay.
I saw the man who wrote the villanelles.

He writes of secret lakes and sheltered dells,
Of blooming gardens in the month of May.
I walked past at the ringing of the bells.

He writes of ocean waves and scattered shells,
Yet has he seen these sights? I answer, "Nay."
I saw the man who wrote the villanelles;
I walked past at the ringing of the bells.

"Tales from the Pole"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Why wouldn't you wanna be me?
5'10" model fit
Caramel complexion
My outfits Fendi Guchi
My jewelry shine so bright I see my reflection
Guys complement me
Say I look like Tyra Banks even Halle Berry
Past friends done abandoned me
Think I how I make my money kinda scary
Mom doesn't know, Dad doesn't care
How else you supposed to pay for tuition on welfare?
Tired of working at fast food, living check to check
Lottery tickets a joke
And Bills keep breathing down my neck
I go through the same routine
Go to class, study, two hours of sleep; then, to work
Same preparation Von Dutch tanktop, Catholic schoolgirl skirt
I work this pole so good it should be a sin
"Candlelights", is where I have gained my best friends
A bunch of barely legal girls
Going through the same problems
Dancing for overweight men and lying husbands
Is how we solve em

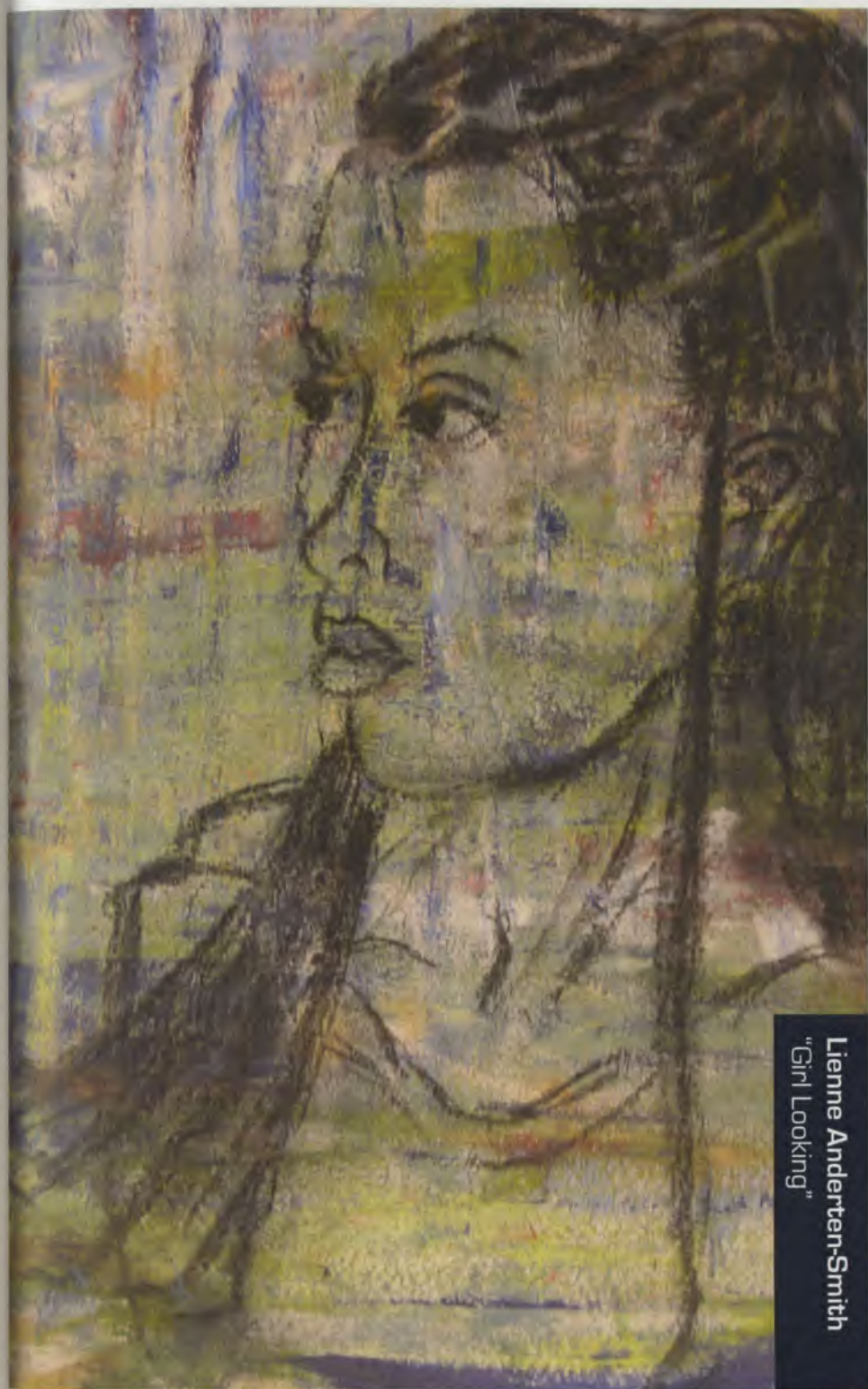


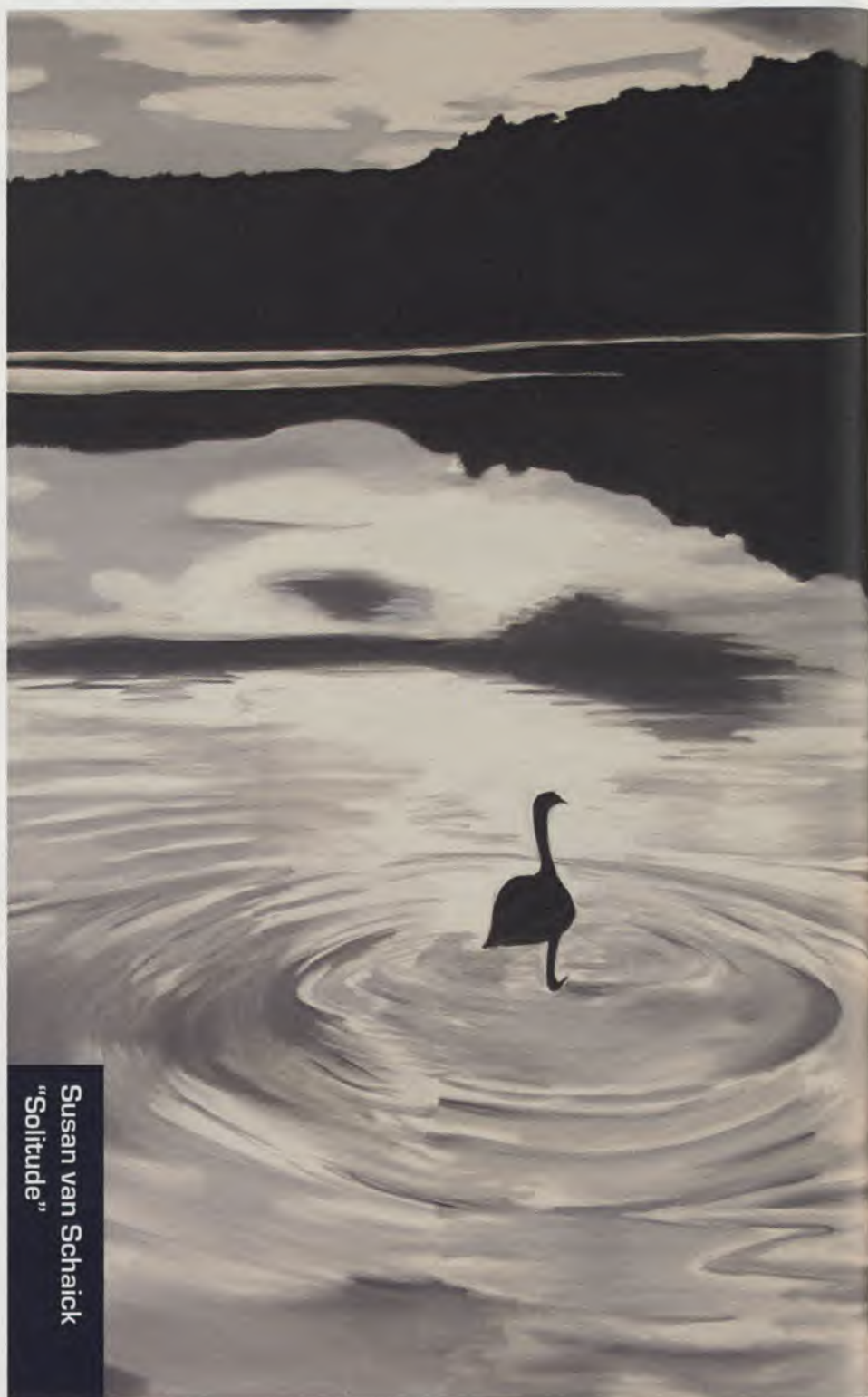
Jennifer Sherman
"Capture"



Paula Hartness
"Fisher Park"

Lienne Anderten-Smith
"Girl Looking"





Susan van Schaick
"Solitude"



Lienne Anderten-Smith
"American Hands"



Jennifer Sherman
"Raptor"

"The Recluse"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

[A Pantoum]

With gray smoke leaking from his lips,
 he sits alone.
 Reading the eloquent words of an unknown author,
 his restless, brown eyes move across the aged pages.

He sits alone,
 as he fingers the rim of his wine glass.
 His restless, brown eyes move across the aged pages,
 as he taps the ashes off his brown cigarette.

As he fingers the rim of his wine glass,
 I stare at him with tender curiosity.
 As he taps the ashes off of his brown cigarette,
 his deep brown hair hangs clumsily over his eyes.

I stare at him with tender curiosity.
 I am intrigued by the man.
 His deep brown hair hangs clumsily over his eyes,
 as he writes down carefully chosen words.

I am intrigued by the man
 reading the eloquent words of an unknown author,
 as he writes down carefully chosen words,
 with gray smoke leaking from his lips.

"Dancing in Magnolia Trees"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

There's nothing quite as Southern
As the great limbs of a magnolia tree
Its elbows outstretched through
Time, place, generations
Of little girls in floral dresses
And boys itching their stark ties
While dancing in an eternity of laughter and evanescence.
Perhaps this is the fried chickened, apple-pied
Epitome of Sunday school picnics
The rich taste of pride and heritage
Coated in every grain of sugar
Every candied apple
Every layer of the double-decked
Chocolate layer cake
That Mrs. Lanston cooked
Solely for the enjoyment of Miss Jane Meadows
But undoubtedly to win
The respect of the fathers
And the envy of the mothers
Who doubted her capability in the kitchen
"A true Southern woman will always know how to cook,"
my grandmother used to say;
"That and balance the whole world
on the tip of her finger."
My Southern origins are inherent in these two principles
But more than these
I will always remember
Twirling in the rain in late June
And picking strawberries in early May
And little girls in floral dresses
Flirting with the sunshine
And dancing in the magnolia trees

"Papito Who"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

(Inspired by Sandra Cisneros, author of *Abuelito Who*)

Papito who is too much
 Chocolate and wine
 Is dancing all the time
 Is winking at young women
 And laughing for little girls
 Who is there to hold
 Your ribboned hand
 While you skip and twirl
 Papito who is
 Telling dirty jokes in creole
 Murmurs softly in french
 Is yelling loudly in spanish
 And giggles like a t in english
 Who is little am radios
 And cheap tinsel rings
 Who is too proud to complain
 About the simple things
 Asking who pulled your ear?
 Your ear? Your Ear!
 Waiting for the answer
 Ay, Papito
 you're the only one near
 Papito who is page boy caps
 And peppermint tabs
 Is icecream truck money
 And Sunday smiles
 Papito

Who is sitting on
 Our dining room shelf
 In a little gold box
 All by himself
 My little brother visits him
 Sometimes
 At night
 Hands pressed, whispering
 You're the only one near
 Hands pressed, whispering
 You're the only one near

Lena Eckert-
Erdheim

"Twice Dinner"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Eating soup for
new years
mild tomato-filled paper cups
sitting between our arms
you said
even if I had boundaries...
and I laughed because
we were two of the most
hardshelled people out there
but somehow the space between
our fingers lessened anyway.
Eating later
food stuffed with garlic, pepper, onion
flavors that do not let the mouth forget
you said
a kiss tasted like dinner
and I laughed
at the thought of me
on your tongue,
a girl and a sandwich.

"Changing Trees"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Lord, how the trees grow and change
 Merging together at times, to become indefinite
 twisted beasts
 Silhouettes pressed against a setting sun
 Looking on green vines with impish fingers
 Draped over grey oak skeletons

Lord, how the sky changed colors so fast
 From fragile and smooth as silk worms' silk
 To charcoal smears
 Spidering out from an unknown power
 Like a drop of blood on a Sunday dress

Clouds roll in like the greyest of horses
 Clapping great hands to release a tornadic gust
 Turning the ripple in the depths of the sea
 And little diamond waves
 Into hungry tidal waves
 Towering over cityscapes
 To darken reflections in eyes turned skyward
 Looking for a sign,
 Before deciding to raise an umbrella

Allison
Cummings

"Youth"

HONORABLE MENTION

High School Poetry

Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Only their paper
is ready for re-consumption.
Most thoughts are re-assembled
into the misguided ideas
That will pass off for truth,
But don't try thinking a lie
Can wait for wrinkles.
Lies are loud lines that think too.
They are to own an idea
Conclusion can lie on.

"The Beginnings"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

The morning dew spreads upon the grass.
A reflection of a calm pond shows on the bottle glass.
Streaming through the water, the frog grows.
A light, crisp apple hangs from a tree above.
Sailing through the wind, the hummingbird ages.
Sharing the beauty of a memory, the sun smiles
For no rain should fall for a while.
Stretching for one last yawn,
The morning seems to move on.
Separating shadows from its places
And running through the danger it faces,
A small chirp heard from the ground.
The baby bird lies from its fall down.
Searching for its lost home
To find it was never alone.

"One Day"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

One day:

I went to this store on
Second Street. This dad was
in the beer isle yelling
something called censorship
and this daughter was crying
this wail of conformity. This
cashier was ignoring for the
sake of the sake of apathy
and I was staring for a reason
of the same. This man outside
was guzzling up gas of
ignorance for the high price
of a future involving freedom
and this woman was parking
within boundaries. This
highschooler was singing
notes of rebellion in the
context of silence and this
baby sister was beading eyes
of admiration. This stray
black cat was meowing
hunger and humanity was
continuing to chant about this
religion known as gluttony. I
thought about going to First
Street next week but
reckoned it was too far a drive.

This Space is Hope

This Space is Invalid

"Untitled"

HONORABLE MENTION

High School Poetry

Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

The crow flies over the desolate courtyard
As the sun comes creeping in
To highlight the emerald green
Crawling through the bricks.

Here you stand alone; closed in
Scarring the terrain.

I could watch you from the other side
My guardian angel, who
Shrouded in red stone
Cannot fly

The moss will grow around you
Over the pained glass as well
Until we are lost in the captured sun
Reflecting off dark comers

Whisper to the trees, my soft wind.

"Fable"

HONORABLE MENTION

High School Poetry

Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

History is this, young one
The days we've counted, the wars we've won
The years we've struggled, New ages begun
So we of course have none.

I've done it all, I've seen my time
Though life is not over it seems that I'm
Both aged and changed
But still the outside knows me as less than a speck.

So who am I to teach you the past
The ages of man, the first the last
The history of who died and how fast
The hallelujahs before a bomb

I know you and you know me
But we know only the days we've seen
These tablets, these books, they mean nothing to me
But a reminder of early insanity
Of breaking people
Of stealing light
Destroying our earth
But not overnight,
It takes a few days
And when it happens we'll find
We're homeless.

History is this, young one
The days we've counted, the wars we've won
The years we've struggled, New ages begun
A storybook. A fable.

"A Letter"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

You're beautiful,

Like *New Yorker* satire, pipe smoke and tartan.

A kind of beautiful that comes with bagpipes playing in the
graveyard.

Music settling with fog. . .

Let me tell you a funny story:

A boy used to ride in horse drawn carriages, feigning tourism,

(more rakish imp than teenaged child)

tall black socks,

a camera,

drawl dropping for a nasal twang, but now the horses are dead
and the carriages are broken.

Comer jazz sweetmusic made him angry. *Why do they get the
alleyways when they deserve the radio?*

It's unfair; it's unjust

It's unfair; it's unjust.

I wanted you to know this.

"Amber Stone"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Smooth and glossy amber,
rounded at my edges
so that I'm almost a circle
-Almost a cat's eye,
staring into a fire
and reflecting the dancing flames;
-With golden words spilled
across my surface:
"The best
antiques are
old friends."

I've spent all my life
in this gift shop, where
I'm admired by dozens
but bought by none.
Then, a young girl lifts me gingerly
from the silver tray and runs
a finger across my glassy flesh,
pushing away the years of dust.
She yearns to take me away
but like the ones before, she doesn't.

Not long after,
her friend returns
with a middle-aged woman.
The girl picks me up,
and begs the woman to
buy me for her sister,
and so she does.

And I never knew that I,
an aging amber stone,
could make someone so happy.

Jonathan
Simpson

"Stuff of Legend"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Poetry
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

The one who will transcend all time
The story told of the day
The year the hour the era

Hero of a people
Or of a kingdom
The one against odds
The one against the evil or the good

Joan of Arc, Achilles, Aeneas

Because we need the account
Because we need the hope
Because of time, we need something without

"The Box"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

The sleigh bells on the door jingled as a customer entered. Alycia Nicaladivich raised her head to greet him. The tall, dark figure stood clothed against the unusually vicious wintry weather that had taken over the small Russian town of Kinel. Snow covered his hat and the shoulders of his black overcoat. She could not see his face, for his hat was pulled down over his eyes.

"May I help you?" she asked kindly. The man withdrew a box from his coat and sat it on the counter in front of her. It was small and had tiny holes punched in the top. Its sides were sealed with duct tape. "Um, sir, what is this? We don't have a return policy," Alycia said. The shop in which she worked was a pet shop. It sold cats, dogs, fish and so on. It even sold scorpions, but absolutely no return.

The man turned on heel and strode out. The bells clanged as the door slammed. Alycia frowned. Her brow furrowed in frustration. She stared at the box before her, trying to decide what to make of it. The box remained still and silent. The manager was on vacation and wouldn't get back until tomorrow.

She went to move the box, but decided against it; the box unnerved her. A shiver crept its way up her spine, tickling the nape of her neck. She went on about her business, cleaning and feeding the animals. She occasionally glanced over her shoulder at the box. It tempted, yet repelled her. Its silent, ominous aura of evil hovered over the box's lid. She sighed and continued to clean the rabbit cage. The shop was quiet for the most part. Most of the animals were asleep. Alycia scrubbed the bottom of the rabbit cage, but couldn't stop thinking about the box sitting on the counter. She looked over to a bunny peering at her through the bars of its own cage. "It's a box, just a box right? Why should I worry?" she asked the bunny. The bunny stared.

Alycia ran a worried hand through her brown hair. She tossed down the cleaner and rag and gave up trying to complete her duties. Her amber eyes were fixed on the box. "I should wait until the manager gets here in the morning before I open it. There is no telling what's in there," she thought aloud. Well, I could take a little peek. It wouldn't hurt. It might be something bad, like a bomb or something." She took a step towards the counter, and then hesitated. "What if it's just a spider? Maybe a bomb...yeah, a bomb," she confirmed in her head, although it was very unlikely a bomb was in the box. It was her way of reassuring herself that she could take a look without the manager's supervision.

Alycia walked slowly to the counter. She grabbed some scissors and went for the box. She meticulously cut the tape on the edges, being careful not to mar its white sides. After the tape was off, she took a deep breath and removed the lid. She flinched slightly, expecting something to leap out with tentacles and fangs ready to suck her blood. Nothing did. She laughed at her pointless trepidation. Tipping the box on one of its corners, she examined its contents. Inside, she found a ladybug. "Hm, that's an awfully stupid reason for such a fuss," she admitted to herself. Raising her eyebrow she took a closer look. The ladybug was certainly unusual. Instead of the typical red with black spots, this one was blond with blue spots. Its spots almost had a shining tint like that of a sapphire.

Alycia's jaw went slack. The ladybug was beautiful. Its jewel-like spots captured her soul, intriguing her deepest desires. All of her senses failed. She felt as though she were caught in an undertow of aimless serenity. Suddenly, there was nothing else, no more, than just Alycia and the ladybug. Nothing else existed; nothing else mattered, not anymore. Something had stolen her being right from beneath her feet. It was only the shimmering coat of the ladybug that mattered. Only the bedazzling blue jewels of the insect brought meaning. There was nothing else left, nothing other than the desire to be in the ladybug's presence forever.

The sleigh bells on the shop door jingled. The night shift was over. Ivan Leernovick entered his shop, along with two other workers.

"Alycia must've left early," he stated to an employee. "Why didn't she lock the door?" "Sir," an employee said, "look at this box." It was small and held together by duct tape. "Put it in the back. We'll open it later. Now we have to prepare for customers," Ivan ordered. The employees nodded and began their morning routine.

The bells on the door sounded once more. A man, dressed in a black overcoat and a hat pulled down over his eyes, strode up to Ivan. "I left a box here the other night. Have you seen it?" he asked. The employee, with it in his hand, turned. "Here, sir. Is this it?" The man beckoned for the worker to hand it to him. He bowed slightly and walked out of the shop. The bells bid their piece once more. Ivan's eyes followed the man as he walked down the sidewalk and out of sight. "Sir?" the employee implored. Ivan turned to him. The employee gestured to a chair behind the register. "Alycia must've left her jacket in a rush or something. Shall I call to see if she's alright?" he asked. Ivan leaned over the counter. He saw the chair with Alycia's coat. Something caught his eye. Her purse lay on the floor next to the chair.

As the tall dark figure meandered along the snow covered streets of Kinel, he took out his pocket knife and slid it through the tape. He lifted the lid and examined the contents. The man looked closely at the ladybug. Its round amber spots and its brown back glistened in the sun. Instead of a contemplative, peaceful state, it fluttered about the box in a puzzled indecision.

"Nerves Smoke Short"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

His face was pale, approaching the slate-gray hue of the sidewalk beneath his feet, and of the renovated offices to his left. He was dressed in what was obviously the nicest suit he could afford; polyester fabric, faded to smoky coal from once-black, hung loosely from his thin frame. He had shaven, and cut himself across his cheek with shaking, nervous hands.

They stood beside a street lamp, waiting. One man, dressed in black corduroys and a dark down jacket, was leaning on one of the newspaper machines by the light smoking a cigarette. The other man, several inches shorter and dressed in a dark blue jumpsuit and trench coat, stood watching the lightly falling snow.

"Hey guys, how's it g-going?" the man said, approaching the other two figures. His voice shook like the hands he held stuffed in his pockets. He was very nervous.

"We're fine. You seem nervous, friend," the smoker replied. His voice carried a tone that betrayed a past spent in places of numbers on every back and silver bracelets on every wrist.

"I am, hah. Is it that obvious? I...I've never had to do something like this before-go to the bank like this for money, you know. I mean, I was poor growing up, but I made it through," Nerves replied to the tall man. He looked to the shorter man.

"I want to thank you-b-both of you-for doing this with me today, it sure makes it easier."

"Think nothing of it, my friend. Just think-in fifteen minutes everything will be easy again, no more money worries," the shorter man replied evenly.

"Just give me a few minutes, you gotta get ready for this sort of thing, ha," asked Nerves, sighing deeply.

"Yeah man, go ahead," Smoke replied.

Nerves walked a few paces from the other men, his hands deep in his pockets, his mind deep in thought. A long spell of living hand-to-mouth and day-to-day had led him here. He had kicked around the idea of going to the bank for money for the past few months. He had even looked in the phone book and visited half a dozen good-sized banks in the area looking for the right one, as he had no account anywhere and no experience with banks to speak of. Finally, he had given in after four days of living off of stolen junk food and metallic tap water.

Deciding there was no use putting it off, dwelling on all the things that could go wrong for him, he rejoined his compatriots.

"All right guys, let's do this. I'm as ready as I'm gonna be."

"You sure man? We don't have to do this if you got a bad feeling or something," stated Short.

"No, no, I drug you guys out here today, let's do this," riposted Nerves.

"All right, buddy," nodded Smoke.

The three men drew two pistols each and entered the bank.

"Blood and Sand"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

People signed up for the army to pay for college, or to support their families. We didn't expect to fight, but if we did we were prepared to defend our country. Instead, we found ourselves on the other side of the world.

There was a sudden explosion in what had only moments ago been a peaceful Iraqi desert. A soldier, Private James Gibson, stumbled through the sand clutching his rifle to his chest. His ears were overwhelmed by the yelling of officers, the rapid bursts from machine guns, and the screaming of fellow comrades. It was utter chaos as Gibson jumped over fallen bodies and around smoke and flames. There was another burst of gunfire, closer this time, and Gibson dropped to the ground crawling a little bit further into a small foxhole. He found himself lying on his back next to another soldier, William Miller. He briefly wondered if the other soldier is dead, but the man moaned.

"Are you injured, soldier?" he asked. He realized it was a dumb question.

Miller groaned again, "My leg. I think it got my leg."

Gibson lifted up his head up to view Miller's lower body. It did not look good. His legs were blown off from the knees down and they ended in bloody stubs. The red liquid was quickly soaking into the dry sand. Gibson shook off his revulsion and lay back down beside the other soldier.

"You're pretty beat up." He tried to say it casually. "I'll get you some help." Gibson lifted his head up and called for a medic. The American forces were moving away.

"Shit! They're moving south." Lying in the sand made him feel increasingly uncomfortable. Restlessly he looked over the edge of the foxhole.

"Are you going?" Gibson tried to break the silence, but he was interrupted.

"Please..." Miller murmured. "Don't leave me here."

Gibson was distressed, but he complied with the soldier's request. He tried to offer reassurance to the wounded soldier, but he realized his attempts were somewhat shallow and unnecessary. Miller was deep in thought before he let out a painful chuckle.

"They told me I wouldn't fight."

"What?" Gibson asked, confused.

The soldier continued, "I signed up for training, for experience...bragging rights. Hell, the salary didn't hurt either, and they told me I wouldn't fight. I could work on computers or run some drills. I wouldn't end up on the front lines."

Gibson repeated the line he had always told himself, "You knew it was the army."

"So? If I had to fight I would serve my country. I would do my duty for America. Just think of how many Americans we saved today! We're not in America, we're in the damn desert!" Miller began to cough.

"It's so dry in the damn desert," the wounded man rasped. Gibson uncapped his canteen and poured some water into Miller's mouth. The liquid dribbled down his cheeks mixing with dust and sweat.

"Where are you from?" Gibson asked trying to stay occupied.

"North Carolina," he answered. "Fort Bragg. It's like a damn rainforest compared to here." He coughed again and there was more silence. Gibson checked over the edge of the foxhole and lay back down. He turned Miller again and tears were rolling down his face.

"I'm not going to make it. I'm...I'm not getting out of the desert," the soldier spoke the words in disbelief. Suddenly, panic crossed his face and he grabbed for Gibson.

"You've got to tell someone. Tell them my story; tell my mom. I don't want to be forgotten. I don't want to-" He was interrupted by a stream of coughing. His face was now deathly pale.

Gibson tried to reassure him and clutched his hand, "It's okay. I will. It'll be alright."

Miller's face became calmer. His eyes closed and his breathing

became slow and deliberate. After a long pause, he began to whisper, "et lumine solis extremo dilaps in caelo inter alias te incipio requirere stellas."

The words were barely audible and Gibson leaned forward, "What?"

"Latin," Miller murmured.

Gibson nodded, "It's beautiful." A slight smile crossed the soldier's face before his eyes slowly closed and his hand became limp in Gibson's.

"Soldier! Are you okay?" the medic yelled over gunfire and shouting. The Miller woke up abruptly to see the medic in front of him.

"I'm okay...Wait. My friend?" he twisted in the foxhole trying to get a look at Gibson. The medic turned and saw Gibson, as if for the first time, lying face down beside Miller. Carefully he rolled Gibson onto his back revealing dark blood stains on the golden sand and gun wounds across Gibson's chest.

Miller was stunned. He remained silent as the medic finished caring for his wounds and as the battle moved further away. The medic warned him that he was going to have to drag him away from the hole, but Miller did not react. The medic grabbed him beneath the armpits and pulled him away from the hole leaving a trail of blood. Miller only noticed Gibson's body as it grew smaller.

"Chili Day"
HONORABLE MENTION
High School Fiction
Phoenix Literary Festival 2005

Have you ever heard of a story that seemed to have absolutely no point, but in fact turned out to have one of the most important messages of life in it? Now, I'm not saying that this is one of those stories, but you can be the judge...

It all started on a Sunday night, one of those annoying dragging nights that make you think of school the next day. I was moping up the stairs when I noticed a naked mannequin in the upstairs hallway, smack dab in the middle of it. I don't know why I found it so unusual. I mean, my mom brings tons of those things home all the time. But this one was. .. just there, in the dead center of the hallway.

That next day in school I fell asleep in first period. Drooling all over my worksheets gave everyone else an excuse to stop what they were doing and laugh their stupid heads off. Anyways, that part of the day wasn't important. So I was going to lunch and when I got to the cafeteria, there was a sign on the door. A sign that made me do a double take. Yea, it is what you think. On it were the words missing and under the words... a picture of a naked mannequin. Well now, you don't think that I was going to accuse my sweet little mother of stealing, do you? I was simply going to figure out what was going on.

Lunch was...ew. I don't know why they serve fake chicken to us poor kids, and charge an extra two dollars for real chicken. What a rip off! I wonder what they put in that chicken anyway to make it fake. I don't know, maybe they have a secret laboratory in the kitchen where they hatch fake chickens. They probably wouldn't even look like birds, probably balls of chunky yellow fat with beaks.

I went home on the bus. The end. No! Not the end of the story, just the bus ride, which I don't want to talk about. When I got home my mom was cooking chili. Yes! I loved chili day. . . it was basically the only thing that she knew how to cook. I went upstairs. The mannequin was... still there. Freaky? Very. I didn't want to talk to my mom about it just yet. The thought made me nervous for some reason. I went back downstairs to the kitchen. Mom smiled and served me up some of that chili goodness. The chili, being so scrumptious, gave me the courage to start up a conversation. "So mom how was work?"

"I quit my job," she answered somberly.

"Why? What happened?" I asked surprised. She made no reply. Okaaay, maybe I'll just jump right to the point. "Mom, umm... why did you put a mannequin in the middle of the hallway?"

"Have some more chili," she said, ignoring the question. So I ate more, more, and more, she just kept on feeding me. Was I some goose that she was stuffing? I didn't complain, I couldn't. Something churned in my stomach. Was it nerves? No. Something was literally churning in my stomach! I excused myself and ran upstairs, to the bathroom.

Oh my god! What did she put in that chili! "Wait honey! You haven't finished your chili! Come downstairs now and finish your chili!!" Oh my god, what was her problem?! Then I ran to my room and pretended to do my homework with the do not disturb sign on my door. Isn't it ironic how everyone decides to come in your room when you actually have that sign up? What happened next was horrifying.

My mom barged in my room with my bowl of chili in one hand and the mannequin in the other. "This is why I quit my job! You make me sick, you ungrateful little brat!" Then she pushed the mannequin on the ground and started to feed it chili! She threw big globs of that beefy goodness onto its closed plastered mouth. What a waste. The look on her face disturbed me. She was smiling with a very angry, hysterical looking grin. She screamed and cursed frantically, and turned my nice tan carpeting a color of dirty brown. Now don't think that my mom has always been like this. We have absolutely no history of any mental illnesses in our family. My mom just happened to be the first one to start the chain. What did I do, you ask? Well first of all, I ran as fast as I could out of there! The next thing I did was go downstairs, take out another bowl and start eating the chili. After a couple of minutes my mom came downstairs calmly. She looked at me eating chili and smiled, then went back to stirring the pot.

This is the end of my story. Now does that seem pointless to you? I think not. How did I know how to act after my mom had a sudden mental breakdown? I don't know. Did she really steal that mannequin from school? I don't know. Was she trying to poison me, her only child? Well, I'm here today writing this aren't I? All that I can really state as true fact is that this really happened. To believe or not to believe, that is the question. You have the choice. Now why I think this story has a point is because it's so random and awkward. Isn't this what happens in life? Isn't this how life goes? Yes, in fact all of life is random and awkward and how we deal with it makes up the plot of the story. So is the great meaning to life in this story? The answer is yes. This story is life; no action or drama movie can portray it better.

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