

Ms. Koomson's Writing Class

Sofia Aguais

Samanta English

Taj Herrera

Alija Hogans

Lisa Imas

Ja Lisa Outcalt

Seamus Palm-Baker

Dorie Schwartz

Laurens Spethmann

Dan Koosed (Teaching Assistant)

Ms. Koomson

Annoying
By: Sofia Aguais

HE: I can't believe you said that.

SHE: Well you said it first!

HE: I'm going to tell mom!

SHE: No I'm going to tell her first.

HE If you tell mom I'm going to hit you.

SHE- If you don't tell mom I'll give you a dollar.

HE: Ok then I won't tell mom and give me that dollar!

SHE: But first you have to pinky promise me you won't tell.

HE: Ok I promise.

SHE: Ok here's your dollar.

HE: Thank you.

SHE: You're welcome.

HE: Mom she said a bad word!

SHE: Arrr! Arrr! Arrr!

The Doll
By Samanta English

It is a rainy day. All you can see is fog. "I hate dolls." Jenny says as she throws her doll across her room. "I've got so many hand-me-downs, why can't I just be a normal girl and get new dolls." So Jenny goes to her mother and says "Mom I want new dolls." "No, sweetie, money doesn't grow on trees." "I hate you" Jenny says as she runs into her room. She opens her closet, closes it, and sits in the dark. The next day Jenny wakes up and realizes she slept in the closet. She goes to the kitchen to see what her mother made. As she steps in the kitchen she sees no one. There's no one in her parent's room. No one in the bathroom. No one in the basement. No one in the attic. Panicking, she runs outside and goes to the neighbor's house. She knocks on the doors, no answer. She knocks on all of her neighbors' doors, no answers. She screams "Somebody help me." She hears a voice say "why." She turns and sees her doll staring at her, but not with a cute smile and cute eyes, with a smirk and evil eyes. She almost faints. The doll says "why should we help you when you hate us?" Jenny begins to run. As she runs she thinks of how, when she was 7, she threw her toys around, and now as a full grown 11 year old she still does that and now her dolls want to kill her. Since it is foggy she can't tell where she is running. So she runs into a grave yard in which she sees open graves. She looks in them and sees everyone from the neighborhood including her parents. She screams, tries to run, but falls in a grave and sees "Jenny Johnson" engraved in the tombstone. Suddenly dolls jump in and start to cut her with knives. She feels the pain and jumps up and starts to kick the dolls away. She jumps out and runs, but she trips over a big old fan. She finds her balance and begins to throw the dolls into the fan. Ripping them to shreds they die and Jenny lies down. She wakes up and sees her mom and dad. She then realizes it was all or dream. Or was it? She looks around and sees pieces of dolls. Then she looks down and sees her doll. Then she sees it give her a big evil smile.

God's Dark Night

By Taj Herrera

Mountains close to thunder contemplate

thunder like a heart beat.

Waterfalls become dark

wanting to kill something.

Trees come down

blocking roads and forest ways.

Skylight dark and thundery.

Day turns to night night turns to death.

Ask me what I think it is.

God is furious because he feels the Pain of someone who is hurt.

MONOLOGUE (based on the Oresteia)

By Alija Hogans

AEGISTHUS

Me, Aegisthus the lover of Clytaemnestra wishes death upon Agamemnom. I have waited for this moment to come and show its face like man who committed a crime. Now I and Clytaemnestra shall put our plan to use, no, great use because now the man is here.

(As Agamemnom walks slowly to his death like a man eagerly walking into a brick wall, he is filled with joy to see his lovely wife, but when he gets in she fills him with nothing but a knife.)

He should have known, he was gone for too long and she would soon want company. Everyone soon longs for a companion. She did love him, I'll give him that. But she loves me now, Agamemnon, and there's nothing you can do, considering the fact that you are dead.

(later, after Orestes has killed Clytaemnestra & Aegisthus)

Your disgusting child came with a vengeance and slaughtered me and his own mother. I know how it feels to be guilty, but Orestes has a lot to deal with, especially with the furies after him. I hope their rage turns his body into corpse.

A Tale In Which a Couple Agree to Marry and Other Heroic Knights Have Failed

By Lisa Imas

I had received news of the princess's dramatic capture! That horrible Baba Yaga! How could she teal our wondrous—albeit slightly on the slow side—fair-haired beauty from us! The king shall rely upon *us*—the heroic, muscular Day Knights!

All three of us were called into His Majesty's quarters—only the most heroic of the heroic may enter—to retrieve his daughter. Each of us had a time of day at which we were strongest, and dangit all, it was early morning, when the Morning Knight was strongest. Figuring the same, His Majesty, excuse me, BOB—only the most heroic of the heroic may call him Bob—sent the Morning Knight out to rescue the princess, Diane. I prayed and prayed that he would fail, and indeed he did. His armor was rusty and broken. His horse had only three legs.

“Afternoon Knight, go rescue my daughter,” he proclaimed. Grinning, I set off for the woods and within five minutes of riding, I had found the old rundown cottage of Baba Yaga. I slowly entered and found Diane looking hopeless and tied to the chair. But she would soon cheer up because me and my friends—Left Fist and Right Fist—were there to help.

I strode in quietly. Good, it was 2:30, when I was at my peak. I puffed out my chest to let Diane know I was here.

“Ew,” she said. I was shocked because she was the damsel in distress, and I—oh, yeah, check out the beefy muscle!—was the hero.

But Baba Yaga found me carrying her out and went so far as to steal my horse! So I had to walk back to the castle and when I got there, I just showed myself to Bob. If it wasn't a victory, it wasn't worth bragging about.

So he sends out the Evening Knight at around 7 p.m. As it neared 9:30, I grinned to myself. There were all sorts of evil night creatures in the forest! We'd all be of equal status and the most heroic of the heroic!

And dangit all, he comes back not only with Diane, but is going to marry her for good measure!

DAMN.

(A monologue)

By: Ja Lisa D. Outcalt

CLYTAEMNESTRA

When my husband was away in Troy, in a 10-year siege, I fell in love! His name is Aegisthus. He's such a charmer. Almost like Agamemnon, except he promised he wouldn't leave me for 10 years, like Agamemnon did. I met him in a bar, two years after Agamemnon left. Strangely, the tables were very etiquette-like. The tables were clean, the floors were clean, the cups were clean, even the people were clean, that's where I find all of my men. He looked at me, I looked at him, and he looked at me again. We began to contest. Each time I looked into his golden, brown eyes, I fell deeply in love. From that day we have dedicated our lives to each other with our affection. Yes you might think I'm wrong, but hey! I'm filthy rich! Plus I'm beautiful, and can have any man I want. And I wanted Aegisthus. 7 ½ years later, Aegisthus and I planned to kill my husband, Agamemnon. Now he's coming back from Troy. Excuse me I have to go kill him now...

(Agamemnon walks in stage right, as he is doing so, Clytemnestra pulls out a knife out from her back pocket, and stabs Agamemnon repeat in his chest.)

Sorry about that, that was an important issue I had to take care of. Now that Agamemnon is dead, I can live my life happily and freely with my two children that I love so very much. Wait! What are my children's names again? Oreos, and Reflecta, yeah that's it. Well I still love them. Here comes Oreos now. Wait! He has a knife! NO!! Aegisthus!! Oreos killed my lover, Aegisthus, I yelled for him. O well as long as he doesn't kill me. I see Reflecta now, yes come here darli-stop stabbing me! No-o-o-o-o-o!

NARRATOR

Sadly Clytemnestra dies by ELEKTRA stabbing her in random places. Yes her name is ELEKTRA.

UNTITLED

By Seamus Palm-Baker

There is a certain silence every time she talks
As if there is something she needed to but didn't say

There is no tic toc on her clock
Only the silent beat of the hand

There is always a smile every time she frowns
Maybe there's something funnier than clowns

There is never a weakness in her voice
Only a strength that doesn't involve muscles

There is never a false reason in her choice
Kind of like a ghost that actually has a voice

Yes it's true, my mom has cancer
But it's made her mentally more balletic than a dancer

The Demon
By Dorie Schwartz

The night sky was a dark shade of indigo. Stars dotted the sky like lint on an old sweater, just taken from a cardboard box in a dusty attic. The night was quiet, occasionally a bird chirped, an owl hooted, or a fox howled. But there were other sounds that could be heard- heavy breathing, the crackling of footsteps over stalks through the corn field and the *pit-pat-pit-pat* of large paws pounding the ground. Erica ran as if a boulder was chasing after her- but instead, it was a demon, or at least that's what it looked like.

How the hell did I get into this mess? Erica thought, even though she perfectly well knew the answer.

She couldn't see a thing, she just ran, then turned a corner, and stopped. She held a corn stalk for support. She stood bent over, with her hands on her knees. The paw steps slowed and suddenly the demon turned the corner. The sight that she saw made her stare in horror. A dog-like creature, six feet tall while standing on all fours, stared at her. Its red eyes burned and maroonish color foam dripped out of between its bright white teeth. It growled deeply, she sensed the hunger that it felt. For the couple of seconds that she stayed like that, thoughts scurried through the clouds in her mind.

She remembered yelling at her father- screaming at him for not attending any of her school events- tennis tournaments, plays that she was in and swim meets. Yet he always went to everyone of her brother's events. Her father said that girls shouldn't be doing those kinds of things, causing her to be ever angrier. She shouted at him for taking away her mother- the one thing she needed. And then she darted out of the house. At first it was a sprint, and then she slowed as she got to the cornfield. The stalks towered over her five foot seven figure. The growl was something she would never forget. Just hearing it and turning around slightly seeing the fangs dripping blood and foam scared her enough to run.

Now she remembered what was happening, she slowly, step by step, moved backwards, sensing that the beast saw her movements. Without a hesitation, she quickly turning around and sprinted, not looking back to see how close it was. The foul, pungent

smell that leaked from its fur stayed in her nose, causing her to run even faster. Feeling as if she barely touched the ground, she continued to pace herself, surprisingly faster than the three hundred pound, drooling, ferocious demon that was chasing after her. Its hot, reeking breath reached her nostrils, even as she kept changing the different rows that she was in. Suddenly, without notice, something tugged at her long brown hair that was up in a pony tail.

No, this can't be happening, Erica thought- her heart racing. *It hasn't gotten to me, no I'm still ok.* Jerking her head around, she saw that some hair had gotten tangled up in a stalk. Tugging as hard as she could, gripping her pony tail, she got it free right as she felt the closeness of the large demon.

Dashing forward, she saw something. It was a light, an extremely bright one that burned her eyes. A memory of her friend Tristan telling her in third grade that before you die, you see a light in the distance, which showed that G-d was welcoming you, or something like that. It pained her to think about it, since Tristan had been seriously hurt in a mysterious skiing accident and paralyzed both her legs.

Have I died? That couldn't be, it's still far away! Possible explanations filled her mind. But as she got within fifty yards from the light, she saw that it was a cabin, with a light attached to the front, close to the roof. She smiled to herself. A quick one, but that didn't last long. For suddenly something sharp pushed her to the ground, and then darkness collapsed over everything.

The allergic wolf
By Laurens Spethmann

Once upon a time wait wrong story.

Once I, a wolf lived in a street called Fake Fairytale ave.. Next door lived three crazy pigs that seemed to be scared of me, but I didn't know why. So one day I walked over to the first little piggy to say hello. This first little pig had built his house of hay, which I was allergic to, so I huffed and puffed and sneezed the house away. I meant to apologize to the little pig but it ran over to the second pig's house so quickly, I couldn't say a word. The second little pig had built his house of sticks, which I was allergic to as well. So I huffed and puffed and sneezed the house away. The two little pigs were shivering so badly I almost had to cry. I went over to apologize but they ran away in fright and hid in the house of the third little pig ,who had build his house of solid bricks. Now just so you know one of my worst allergies were bricks so I huffed and puffed and sneezed ..., but the house didn't blow away. I sneezed three more times but the house withstood every blow. Thank goodness I thought. I went over to the door to knock, but there was no response. So I decided to climb down the chimney. I heard a crack under my foot and slid down the chimney. The little pigs must've had a fire going because something burnt me in the butt. The next morning I woke up with five degree burns in the hospital.

The END

Dan Koosed

you think these walls are real
but me and my fist, we know better
because not all trap doors
are hidden
and those ones right there
well they hide ornaments and lights,
my mother's long since abandoned manuscripts
for a century and a half maybe
no one's climbed higher in this house
than where I stand now
the twin slants of this ceiling meeting
like the lips of my first kiss
but the room's broke in half by this white monolith
which carries the smoke from the wood burned beneath
to some place far above that I've still yet to reach
no, these walls may be solid but they shatter with ease
which means I can't place them in reality
because once that plaster broke
like I used to, so easy
but it's easier to think like this:
maybe my fist just wanted some christmas

Ms. Bolus's 7th & 8th Grade Morning Class

Llama in the Cab	by Joshua Bey
Death of the Trix Rabbit	by Sean Bemand
A 4-Leaf Clover	By Michelle Bowen
A Place of Paradise	by Tenley Godfrey
The Ocean	by Alex Pite
Baraka: The Night Sky	by Seetreeon Torres
Flamenco	by Veronica Urquijo
7 o'clock	Tiffany Zau
To The One and only Race	by Nile Lundgren, teaching assistant
Burning Temple	by Julia Bolus, teacher

The Llama in the Cab

By Joshua Bey

New York City is one of the busiest cities that I've ever been in. It's really hard to stand out. But I'll describe some things that if you lived in the city you wouldn't be surprised to see. For example there are many lights on buildings, hundreds of taxi cabs that are always moving, high sky scrapers for miles that will make you feel insignificant, movie theaters where you can see the best movies that are out at the time, and thousands of people in groups talking to other thousands of people in other groups. Sadly since there are all these things, do you think that anyone would ever notice a very long-necked llama sticking his head out of a taxi cab, wondering things that we will never know?

Inspired by a photograph by Inge Morath.

Death of the Trix Rabbit

By Sean Bemand

Two friends, Bill and Jane, from XY Town, were going to have a brunch picnic at the XY picnic site just north of XY town. The two were only 14, and they were going to feast on a fruity bowl of Trix cereal.

“This Trix sure looks good!” Bill said taking a bite.

“I concur.”

Now the Trix rabbit saw them and hopped out of the tree and surprised them.

“Whoa man! Either I’m seeing things or someone drugged my Trix!” Jane said putting the cereal down.

“Can I have some Trix? Rabbit need Trix to live!” The Trix rabbit yelled hopping around the red and white plaid blanket.

“STUPID RABBIT! TRIX ARE FOR KIDS!” Bill and Jane both yelled.

“Oh come on, I just got out of rehab, I need something to calm my nerves!” The rabbit continued to hop.

“Dude, Trix are for kids!” Jane said.

“You people are teenagers though!” The Trix rabbit said

“Darn, he got us there.” Bill said.

“Come on, rabbits!” The Trix rabbit yelled.

“Rabbits? We’re human, buddy.” Bill said.

“If Trix isn’t for rabbits, why do you eat it?” The Trix rabbit asked.

“Wow, this guy is stupid. We’re no rabbits! I’m Bill, a human!” Bill said

“Whoa look! Carmen Elektra!” The Trix rabbit lied.

“What?” Bill turned around and the rabbit grabbed the bowl.

“Oh that son of a—”

“Wait Bill, I’m calling the police!” Jane opened her Verizon Razor phone and called the cops.

“Officer, I’ve been robbed! The Trix Rabbit stole my bowl of Trix!” Jane complained.

“The rabbit struck again? That jerk, we’ll see him on trial!” The officer told her.

“But the rabbit got away!”

“Never mind, we’ll send Toucan Sam to do the job! Sam, get out here!” Toucan Sam flew in.

“What now? Is this still about the thing when Lucky the Leprechaun went missing for several days?”

“No Sam, the Trix Rabbit escaped Trix cereal rehab and jacked two bowls from a girl.”

“The Trix rabbit, eh? Alright, bring in the infantry!” Sam yelled. A group of army men came dashing out. They left the police office. Sam flew high in the air and surveyed the grassy area. “Rabbit sighted!”

The group ran over to the Trix Rabbit who was talking to a guy about dealing Trix.

“No way, \$250 for the whole load of Trix.”

“Hmm, two hundred.” Before the Trix dealer could decline, Toucan Sam came in.

“We found the losers!”

“Oh dang...”

“That’s right Trix Rabbit! Prepare to die!”

“Ha! He’s blue! Who ever heard of a freaking blue toucan, I mean is it a birth defect?” The dealer asked.

“Kill him!” The army shot him down. “You’re coming with me to court!” Sam brought him to the court.

“So, thought you could steal more Trix again, rabbit?” The lawyer asked.

“You’re Honor, I didn’t! You have no proof!” The rabbit said.

“Actually I do!” Tony the Frosted Flakes Tiger came up to the stage. “We saw you. If you would empty your pockets, we can prove you wrong.”

The rabbit sighed and emptied out his pockets; a loaded pistol, a switch blade, brass knuckles and the Trix bowl.

“I find you guilty Trix Rabbit—the death penalty tomorrow.” The Trix rabbit was sent to a jail cell, were Crackle from the Rice Crispies was.

“So, what you in for?” He asked putting down his harmonica. The rabbit looked around his gray cell.

“I stole some Trix, why are you here?”

“Police found out that it wasn’t white sugar on my cereal.”

“Then what was it?”

“Let’s just say the sugar from the cereal didn’t make you go insane.” The rabbit sat down. Gray everywhere. The warden came in.

“Rabbit, what do you want your last meal to be?” He asked.

“Trix cereal.”

“No, well you blew your chance, see you later, oh wait your going to die, never mind, heh, heh.”

“Wait, no! Oh well, time to go...” The rabbit moped to the electric chair, but a fairy appeared! He may live!

“I’m here to grant you one wish, it can be anything!”

“Wow, anything? I wish for...Trix!”

“Trix? Are you kidding? You don’t want to be released or rescued? What a tool!”

The fairy gave him a bowl of Trix. He ate it and approached the chair.

“ANY LAST WORDS, RABBIT?”

“I guess...I just want to say that before all this I—”ZAP

The Trix rabbit died.

The end

A 4-Leaf Clover
By Michelle Bowen

I'm a 4-leaf clover
One in a million leaves
I have 4 sides
Others have 3
I can soar high in the breeze
Like a flying bird
Just wanting to be free
People say bad things about me
Because they don't believe
But when I do great things
They have nothing to say
When people walk, they may step on me
They think I'm dead
But I revive and I'm alive
I'm a 4-leaf clover
I have 4 sides
Others have 3
I'm the special one
Others have 3

A Place of Paradise

By Tenley Godfrey

Paradise to most people means sun bathing on the beach, pigging out on hamburgers and hot dogs, French fries, chips, soda, and cookies; shopping at the mall, and watching movies at home or the theater. Adolescents listen to iPods and mp3 players, constantly talk on their cellular phones, and communicate with friends for hours each day by instant messaging on the computer. My idea of a magical land is completely different however.

Envision miles and miles of vast farmland and endless fields of green. The entire ground is adorned with daisy and dandelion flowers. Ample wide, clear wilderness trails are the only outlets of escape from this place. The sky is always blue here, the sun shining bright. The birds are always singing, it's the perfect place to fly a kite. There are eternal rolling hills, several country houses, and even in ground swimming pools with girls in bright blue blouses. Furthermore, there are ten tennis courts, five basketball courts, one Waterslide Park, and two large workout gyms.

My family and only our closest friends live here. We eat only the freshest fruits and vegetables from the gardens, fish from the river, wheat from the field, and drink from the wells. Our clothes and linen are made from animal skin. Who needs a shopping plaza or a supermarket living like this? The days are warm and the nights are cool. The air is clean, light, and dry. A deep sense of serenity dances all around. There is no pollution, as we travel by foot and bicycle. This enchanted kingdom is our escape and disconnection from the world.

The Ocean
By Alex Pite

I am the boat setting sail.
I am the sandcastle being washed away on the shore.
I am setting off on a journey in the sea.
The beach is always at my side.
I walk along the wooden planks above the marsh,
As I hold onto the rustic rope handles,
I will not be afraid.
I can hear the waves rushing against the shore,
And the seagulls splashing their wings in the icy cold water.
This is my sanctuary.
The ocean washes away my negative thoughts to the middle of the ocean,
While it brings back joyful memories,
Just like the seashells being deposited at my feet, by the shore.

Baraka
The night sky
By Seetreeon Torres

The night sky turns different colors, pink, green, and even dark blue.

Shadows come from every living and non-living thing.

Clouds form as water, and the sun sails away as the night comes.

The night is here and we can make wishes of good to deep dark secrets.

Stars flicker on and off as millions of people from every country share
the same sky, making every wish to come true.

This is the way of life, and life is Baraka for you.

“Baraka” is an ancient Sufi word for “blessing.”

Flamenco

By Veronica Urquijo

In Seville they were dancing Flamenco. They were moving their bodies perfectly, side to side, up, down, every movement was spectacular as they followed the rhythm with their bodies.

Then a woman with the polka-dots dress, white and fuchsia, was the best dancer. She had straight blonde hair, and hazel eyes. She was called Maria. Then a man came by her, so she sat down. He sat beside her. His name was Esteban Ramirez. He had dark hair and blue eyes, but he had an expression of hate in his face. Suddenly Esteban slapped her in her face

“It was my turn to dance with you, not with that hateful man,” Esteban said angrily.

The woman started crying.

“I was dancing with the other man because I didn’t know where you were,” Maria said with a frightened voice.

Maria ran off and he started to chase her. She stepped on her dress and fell, her dress got dirty—there were no more polka-dots, it was all brown. Esteban was nearer each time her shoes fell. Then the man that was dancing with the Maria, who was called Jose, appeared from nowhere. He was running to defend her, and he started hitting Esteban. They fought and Esteban finished unconscious on the floor.

Maria and Jose went back to dance Flamenco.

Inspired by a photograph by Inge Morath.

7 o'clock

By Tiffany Zau

I was running away, running from what I did not know. I turned my head back and all I could see was darkness. Pitch black, complete nothingness. I squinted, trying to see what was in the distance ahead of me.

As I continued running, there was a thin beam of light. I stopped in front of it, staring at the ray of light coming through what seemed like a crack in the stone wall. The crack was perfectly straight, running from as high up as I could see, and all the way down to the dirty ground beneath my bare feet.

I placed my hands against the wall, feeling the cold and rough surface. I pushed gently on the wall; the ray of light was wider. I looked down, and the light illuminated the ground and my feet. I could see all the dust and dirt from running along the path and I had a cut on the inside of my left foot.

I looked back up at the stone wall, and the beam of light glaring into my eyes. I shielded my eyes and kicked the wall with my foot, which sent the wall (or what seemed more like a gate now) flying open.

I squinted from the sudden contrast, and when my eyes finally adjusted to the bright light, my mouth fell open. I stared at what was in front of me then at what was under me.

I turned around; expecting to see the darkness I was running through before, but it had all disappeared. All there was now, was what seemed like heaven, I was standing on snow white clouds that felt somewhat like marshmallows. I looked ahead of me, and all I could see were the clouds, going on forever, and the golden light, beaming down on me and everything else.

I looked down at my feet again, the soft clouds seemed to vanish and all I could see was that same nothingness as I had seen before. I fell, and I fell for what seemed like eternity and just as I was about to hit the ground, I stopped.

My eyes snapped open and I heard an annoying beeping sound. I rolled over on my side, and saw in glowing red numbers, 7 o'clock.

To The One and only Race

Shattered rainbows dribble kaleidoscope color debt
Silent tears drop thunder on deaf ears
When hot springs shiver and glaciers sweat

Raped rain forests: spending unprintable currency, we're inept.
Remember holocaustic genocide and learn from mirrors.
Shattered rainbows dribble kaleidoscope color debt

Now nature's wave of violence starts: We Over Slept
And ignorant bliss crumbles into waves of bloody tears
When hot springs shiver and glaciers sweat

Oceans intimidate, land retreats and not once wept.
While exploded rain drops cry screams of fear.
Shattered rainbows dribble kaleidoscope color debt

Mother's wrath: her immune system – to protect,
Reflect and learn as you peer deeper into the years
When hot springs shiver and glaciers sweat

Piercing green grass turns wilted: the blueprint is already set.
We are the heat-poison melting away our years.
Shattered rainbows dribble kaleidoscope color debt
When hot springs shiver and glaciers sweat

Nile Lundgren
2006

Burning Temple

for Nile

Iraqi oil fields burn and Dave breathes
the filtered smoke. Now Lebanon is being
smashed to dust. Somewhere someone
is praying. Somewhere someone
releases a lit candle on a leaf
into the Ganges. Fran is meditating
and Dave is drawing flowers. Let
myself go—into clouds and stars
arcing over a blue night
sky. Stone buddhas with soft
lips see eternally. White-robed
men keep spinning.

Inspired by watching the film *Baraka* (1992) with our class.

Morning Workshop

With Ms. Rader and Ms. McQuiston

Victoria Castillejo

Michelle Chin

Chelsea Drabik

John T. Gonzolez

Meg Nixon

Rachel Robb

Jose Santiago

Dante Van Putten

Claudia McQuiston

Leigh Rader

Water and Ground

By Victoria Castillejo

The water always hits my side,
It's time to have a talk
"Hey water would you mind
To have less rush?"

"It's my best thing,
It makes me different,
It makes me flow,
It makes me know"

"Well I profess to know
Fewer things and know them better.
So water would you mind
To have less rush?"

"That's why we're separate,
And can never join.
So let me go
And let me flow"

For I Am Alone

By Michelle Chin

Scared
No where to go
Alone
Five years old
Don't go to school
Locked up in the house
My very own dungeon to myself
I'm never safe
Never protected
Always abused

When I hear the door open and close
The click of the lock is my signal to hide
I try and try
But I am always found

As soon as he finds me I know what's going to happen
That look in his eyes is a give away
From the smell of his breath
You can tell that he's been drinking

He hits me
The pain is sharp
Tears start to form in the corner of my eyes
They glisten with fear

He yells
I scream in agony
I have no where to run
No one that will protect me

He hits me harder
It burns
Blood is in my mouth

I know I shouldn't try to fight
But I do

And it hurts me even more
First he goes for my ribs
Then my arms

And legs
I can't move

I only hear the cracking sound of my bones breaking
But I don't scream
Not one word is said
I lie there
Barely alive

I wish
With all of my heart
That the pain will end
Sooner than later I hope that I'll die

I know I'll just be lying here alone
He won't bring me to a doctor
I'll lie here for the rest of my life
I have no where to go
No one who will save me
For I am alone

REMEMBER ME
By Chelsea Drabik

There you are
Half dead
Mouth open
Nothing coming from it.

When I went to see you
You didn't see me
You didn't remember me.

You used to laugh
You used to have fun
You used to talk
What happened
To the girl
I once knew?

Now I say to you
I hate the way
You got in a crash
I hate the way
You don't remember
But most of all
I hate the way
You won't get better.

The one thing
I wish you could do
Is remember me.

Time stairs

Time Stairs

By John T. Gonzalez

A corner in the world
Made by frozen stairs
Delicate like a crystal tear
Forgotten and out of time

A hidden story
With sadness and darkness
Still with the greatest beauty
But no one will notice

The time still runs away
Around the frozen stairs
Things change, but they don't
Bikes, people and cars
But no one can see them

It's the story
Of frozen stairs
That with their beauty
Will stay alone.

*Inspired by a photograph
By Henry Cartier-Bresson*

PIRATE FRIGHT

By Megan Nixon

As the mist settled in to a dark gloom,
Birds squawked as a cannon went boom,
The song that settles fear into the depth of our hearts,
It's the song we wish never to hear 'till death do us part,
It's the ghostly song of pirate ships,
The sound of a ship as it heels and dips,
The crash of the waves and the talk of the crew,
Now listen to the words I say to you,
If you see a mist settle to a gloom,
And an old rusty cannon sound boom,
Sink to the darkness of the night,
Because

 You
 Are
 Sure
 To
 Have
 Some
 Pirate
Fright

Devotion
By Rachel Robb

Hearts filled with laughter
Mouths smiling bright,
Wet with sweet caress
Hands stroking lightly
Eyes gazing deep within each other

Smelling the sweetness of
his beauty and hers
Their touch uniting one another
She plays with his silky hair
Draped across his face
As they caress each other,
The world seems brighter,
The dark seems lighter

Nothing but one another
Nothing but his eyes,
Nothing but her lips
Nothing but the touch

Only whispers can be heard
“Love...” whispered the wind
in a tone softer than a breeze

The Way of Chihuahua

By Jose Santiago

I'm like a Chihuahua
Don't make fun of me
Don't underestimate me
Don't even try to do something behind my back
I'm like a sleeper cell
I will go at you with everything I got
Once u turn around I'll strike
If I seem scared I am
But I will fight back
That's the way of the Chihuahua
Always remember a frightened dog might fear u
But once you turn your back
He or she will strike

WISDOM

By: Dante Van Putten

There is no glory unless you put yourself on the line
That's why you should try your hardest
and do it all the time

Don't let negative people put you down
you'll have a smile then a frown
you'll be dark and melancholy like a cloud

Try to achieve our best in life

No matter how poor or rich black or white
eventually everybody is going to die

Don't be stupid and follow y the crowd

Don't let people try to get you in trouble
just say no and let it be loud

If You Look Back, You'll Soon Be Going that Way

All barnacles, driftwood and

I'm counting the cut, a steady
machine fuzz, square helicopter fins-

we sweat and who knows what

makes up this royal composition
salt's all rolled and swollen, no fireflies'

hum, nothing but you and the moon.

Sediment trickles on crushed grass
and my skin is buttermilk, chipped

polish on a broken nail. What's

there to speak of but gravity? The
significance of blood, sunsets, last

night's dreaming. A horsefly lands

on the tip of your shoulder blade:
patience, we joke, *is a virtue*.

Industry is overhead and I mistake

satellites for stars, river mud runs
under us, a shower surging, the meteor

falls. You call it grace. I stay; I measure.

The effect of negative light on earth,
silence struck between two people.

Almost an ache, a hard-worn bruise, given

when the rain lifts. The purple aurora for
anniversaries and occasions, a breath taken

as the dark hair

unfolds.

-Claudia McQuiston

Oye Como Va

by Leigh Rader

Coffee-colored woman loses herself in the dance,
hikes up her skirt and feels her blood rhythm
call to the quiet one at the edge of the circle. Hips sway
as she closes her eyes and forgets all claims of history
in the radiant Latin midnight
that has no patience for the blues

Skirt stripes melt into lollipop swirls, magenta, saffron, vibrant blues
so delicious one taste bathes the dance
in the mango sweetness of midnight.
The quiet one steps into her insistent rhythm
knowing nothing of her history,
trapped by the way her graceful arms' sway

Drawn to the music, a stick and bone girl begins to sway
in the doorway, her despair so deep the blues
have turned to black. Her history
is written in the bruised notes that dance
down her fragile arm. She prays to feel the heart rhythm
of safety cradling her from shame at midnight.

But promises are empty once midnight
comes and goes. An amiga lifts her up and they begin to sway
in the moon's healing rhythm.
She remembers the night He taught her to breathe the blues
The trumpet cried as his eyes invited her to dance
and she, so beguiled by their intensity, could not read their history.

Tonight she crumbles under the history
of silence and shame he brought to her house in the darkness after midnight,
when stinking and slurred, he would stumble-dance
and shuffle-sway
through 12 bars of blues,
to use her body as an instrument for his own angry rhythm

She's a drowning woman, losing the rhythm
of her own soul song. Tonight she can surrender or write a different history.
Just before first light she rises, turns off the blues
that kept vigil with her through the terror of midnight
Today, she will put on Carlos Santana and teach her hips to sway
in time to a new dance.

Ms. Palm's Morning Class

Chase Burton.....	The Conscience
Kayla Desroches.....	The Lighthouse Mystery
Hillary Donahue.....	Sincerely
Michael McRae.....	Eight Poems After Inge Morath
Soo Park.....	Fan
Kelly Wieman.....	Father and Son
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The Conscience

Chase Burton

I am slumped on my knees on the block of wood, stained not just with blood, but with memories of past victims. On this “chopping block,” I see bruises: shame, fame, and fortune in each bloodstain. On my clammy cheek, I feel little pits of the rivets where others have died or have yet to die. Whether innocent or guilty of crimes that have taken special people from loved ones, they too have been here.

The tall, dark figure leans over, sharpening his cold, mirror-like axe. With every spark, there is a face. With every face, there is a story. And in time yet to come, I will be nothing but worm food. Once a great man, soon I will be just another spark with one more story.

And I whisper, “That’s good. Thank you, God.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Kayla Desroches

1989, June 7th

The lighthouse shone dimly in the night, its body stiff against the rain while the waves below it fought against the rocks. A fisherman walked along the muddy path, his bent head covered by a yellow cap made of the same material as his raincoat. He had just come back from the docks, and not having anything to bring back to his wife, decided to take the long way back past the old lighthouse. He thought about how abandoned the ocean had been that day. It was as if the fish had traveled south to get away from the Northern storm. The fisherman tripped over a rock jutting out of the path and his flimsy body was carried an inch toward the cliff. He thought, as he stood up, that he had better cause to worry about being carried off the edge than his wife scolding him for not bringing back dinner. The fisherman concentrated on putting weight on his feet as he slowly made his way to the stone lighthouse in the distance.

Reaching there, he wasted no time before entering and pulling the door closed behind him. The inside of the lighthouse smelled like dust and work, the remnants of long days attached to the walls. The circular room was dirty and bare except for a wooden cupboard painted rust-red on the left side. Giving it a closer look, the fisherman found it to be a handy piece. It had a prominent door, the wooden knob attached to it was the only part that was not painted, and its flat top could also serve as a table. The fisherman swept two fingers across the plain and lifted them up coated with dust. When he looked at the space he had cleared, he saw that it shone as if it had just dried. He wiped the dust on his coat and moved towards the winding stairs, eager to forget the strange cupboard.

The staircase was walled in, and the fisherman wondered how the lighthouse was so large but had so few rooms. Halfway up the stairs, a small platform and a door stood waiting. The fisherman opened it to find a small room furnished with an oak bed and table. On the table a large candle held itself straight, like a guard against the night. It would last until morning, he decided, and took out a match. He touched it to the candle

wick then shook it out. A window gave cold light to the room, but the warmth of the candle lent the man some comfort. Walking to the bed, he climbed under the covers and rested his head against the snowy pillow. It did not take long for him to fall asleep.

Little over an hour later, he woke up to a bitter stench. The light of the candle still shone, and did not reveal anything out of the ordinary, so he went back to sleep. A few hours later, the fisherman woke again, this time sure of the smell. It was the scent of rot. When his father was alive and owned a butcher shop, he would try to keep the smell out of his shop because it would give his meat a bad name. However, every once in a while his son would smell the decay.

The stench in the room grew so strong that the fisherman cuddled up against the wall, holding the blanket up to his nose to block the smell. It seemed to surround him, on his skin like a damp fog. Sure that he would not be able to go to bed with that constant stink intruding on his sleep, the fisherman got up and searched under the bed for a book or a magazine to read. What he found was a newspaper, curling at the edges with age. He got back into the bed and spread the front page over his lap.

Armeston Daily Newspaper
1949, June 8

Last night a storm hit Armeston, driving men, women, and children back to the warmth of their homes. Out of all the losses, the most horrific lay in the lighthouse on 'Reaper's Cliff,' which is known for its sharp edges and dangerous slopes. Police found Victor Row dead on the main floor of the lighthouse, where he worked as a keeper. He had cut his own throat after decapitating his brother, Erik Row, and hiding the parts in a cupboard. The conflict between the two is not known in fact, but a rumor has it that Victor attacked his brother, when Erik was going to commit him to an institution.

(Continued on P. 4)

The fisherman, being a Christian man, but not a superstitious one, was somewhat interested in the history of the lighthouse, but not frightened. What was dead was dead, and that's how it stayed. However, he wanted to have a dreamless sleep, so he ignored the whole story and moved on to an article talking about the farmers' market they held in 1949. After a while, the newspaper dropped from his hands, and the fisherman fell to exhaustion. His last thought will never be known.

*From the Armeston Daily News
June 8, 1989*

Obituaries:

Eleanor Cirst, aged 89, lawyer, died in bed.

Johnny Lon, aged 70, store-owner, found at work, dead from cancer.

Richard Koop, aged 54, store-owner, died from heart attack.

Samuel Reed, aged 62, fisherman, found decapitated in the lighthouse on Reaper's Cliff.

(An investigation is in process.)

Sincerely

Ari Donahue

Mariah Jameson gazed blankly at her computer screen. The sun shone in strongly through the clear glass of her eleven-story office. She kicked herself back and fourth in her swivel chair with her bare blistered feet. Her new Aldo sling backs were as stylish as they were painful, but being a working woman, she couldn't complain. She typed the date onto her blank word document and began to type a complaint letter to the director of General Electric. It was September 11th, another gorgeous autumn day, she thought.

Suddenly, the building shook strongly as if it had been whacked with a baseball bat. The pencil holder on her desk tipped over, scattering pens all over the blue carpeted floor. Mariah, without her shoes, walked slowly into the hallway poking her head around the door and watching as other office mates did the same. Alarms went haywire, buzzing in the craziest tones. The people all stepped out of their offices and headed towards the stairwell. Mariah gazed out the stairwell window towards the other tower. She couldn't believe her eyes; the other tower was going down like a wave slowly crashing into the rocks, pieces of the wall plummeting down to the hard cement of the Manhattan sidewalk.

She stood in front of the window frozen with fear, as she saw body-shaped figures pass the window; they had jumped.

She began to sprint down the stairs as fast as she had ever run before, each step quicker than the previous. First the 5th floor, then the 4th, then the 3rd. More and more bodies passed on the outside of the windows. She began to think of her husband, of her daughter, of her siblings, and mother. She thought of every happy memory to keep her going, her first kiss, every Halloween night, her honeymoon. As she approached the lobby, columns began to fall like dominoes, chasing after victims. The door grew closer, then the last column fell, and the building collapsed.

Barely breathing, barely thinking, Mariah lay there thinking of her family, and with the last breath of air she held within her, she whispered, "Sincerely, Mariah Jameson."

Eight Poems After Inge Morath

Michael McRae

-I-

Caged birds cry out
Asking to be free
As Mid-eastern people laugh,
Covering their faces with cloth.

-II-

Two children running prideful
As they flutter around a saint's picture.

-III-

A sculpture is listening with nothing to say
As it remains nothing
But an ear carved out of a block.

-IV-

A mid-day sleep.
Faces have been covered, concealed by news of the day,
Scared to face the people.

-V-

We cover our faces
With cardboard masks to hide our true selves.
There is nothing but a shy face.

-VI-

Feeling encased by glass,
I feel like a mime- -
Like there is no way out
As I push on the wall.
I can only look.

-VII-

The fountain flows
On the wet brick ground.
My one pair of heels face each other
As they laugh.

-VIII-

I hide behind a plant on the wet concrete
With my one pair of binoculars
As they try to say:
I see you.

Fan

Soo Park

standing still
with arms wide open.
firmly holding your head up
even with your feeble leg.
arms going
round and round.
blowing cold breeze
through the grating.

scaring away
the summer foe,
you are my hero.

as you are there for me,
I can live.

Father and Son

Kelly Wieman

Dear Frankenstein:

You put me here and I know you feel no remorse. All those years you trained me to be a cold-blooded killer, didn't you? Well, now I've become one.

You probably miss her, don't you? I remember how loudly she screamed; she didn't want to live, though. It had been clear in her eyes for some time that she was miserable. She didn't love you; she only stayed for me.

You came home that night expecting to find dinner on the table. But instead you found her mangled corpse. You did not scream, cry, or yell. You looked at me, your creation, and smiled.

Know now that I did this not for you or me, but for her. If I had left the deed to you, she would have suffered. This way it went by quickly.

I miss her, I do, but you have no right to. You did not love or hold her, or show signs of affection. She was never a wife to you, but rather a maid to clean your house.

You sick man, you will go to hell for the tortures you made her and me endure. Yes, I am here in solitude, but when I am free, you and I will end this insanity.

Yours Truly,
The Monster

Shopping Carts
(A Fictional Memoir)

Christopher Wickham

In high school, I was the \$h!t. I was the hottest guy, star quarterback for three years, but I paid no attention to my education, and now I'm suffering because of it. For most classes, I only did what I needed to do, to pass. Most people incorporate jocks as being idiots, but I wasn't in that bunch. When I did participate in class I did exceptional work and brought great ideas to class, I just chose not to do the work efficiently and instead I wasted my four years partying, and thinking football was going to make me a superstar.

My arm was incredible; I could throw the length of a football field, and have it pass through a car tire hanging from the field goal post. If I would have done the right things academically, I might have made it to the pros, oh yeah and if my shoulder hadn't ruptured.

If I wasn't on the football field I was causing havoc on my BMX bike. I and some of my friends turned an abandoned church into a skate park. Dave Mirra was one of the first to do a 360, so I wanted to try to do it with no hands, and it didn't turn out so good. While in the air, my bike spun out of control from between my legs and I landed on my shoulder, separating it instantly. It broke in half, into a jagged pattern, like an animal trap. My football career was officially over, so I sabotaged my academic career in return.

When graduation came around and everyone else was getting ready to go to college or into the military, I was the only one not progressing anywhere in life. My father runs a Wal-Mart, and they were one of the only businesses that would hire me because I had a high school degree. So, I took to it, even though I'd be pushing shopping carts around and doing other mediocre jobs. Hopefully in a couple of years I'll be floor manager in one of the departments, but only time will tell.

My friends think it's a stupid idea to be working, but I can't let them make me who I am. I have to do what's best for me and be optimistic about every opportunity that is thrown my way. I've already messed up, but I'm going to take small steps to make my life better.

The La, La Lady (A Ghost Story)

Shandelle Williams

Once there was a grandmother who lived with her grandson in a wooden cabin near the woods. Every day the grandson would go play in the woods and come home to his beloved grandmother for dinner. The grandmother would sit in her rocking chair and, according to the people, knit something. They never knew what it was but they always knew when she was knitting because she would sing a gentle song: “La, la, lala la.”

People who walked by would wonder at that creak, creak of the old rocking chair, mixed with that humming of a frail old woman who was always knitting something unexplainable.

One day the grandson went off into the woods, but night fell and he was nowhere to be found. The worried grandmother decided to go look for her treasured grandson but she herself never returned.

Some say that she and her grandson were eaten by the animals of the woods; others say that they died of starvation. All I know is that when someone went into the house to investigate, they found not one trace of yarn in the house. Everyone who knew the lady knew that she always kept a lot of yarn in the house for that “thing” she always knitted.....so.....were is it?

When all ways said and done, the house was torn down to make room for new construction. But if you go to that place in the dead of night, or if you go to a place where children play, stop and listen, and then you’ll hear it: “La, la, lala la...”

Where Water Meets Water
(Katrina, August 2005)

Jennifer Bondurant

Splashed on the back
of bent necks,
I sweat and glisten
down spines.

I am rubbed, too,
across foreheads,
and behind ears.

I am slipped between lips,
placed on tongues
of dehydrated mothers,
burning from the Mississippi sun.

I cool mouths
hot from panic
and drip down the back
of throats and lip corners
to meet my sister
at the sharp angle of a
worn human face.

We drop into a well
that rises above
the waists of men
and swallows a
place called home.

Foghorns

Christine Palm

There are sounds fading fast from memory; iconic sounds rarely heard because the contraptions that uttered them are obsolete. Soon, few people will recall the *brrrrrrrrrup* of a rotary phone, the way a typewriter's return bar *ka-dings* when you slam it over, or how the frozen handle of a metal ice cube tray *screeeeeeeks* when you pull it up. Automatic transmissions don't make the satisfying *reunt, reunt, reeuunnnt* of a disengaged clutch shifting gears, and no one with an I-Pod can imagine the suspense of waiting for a record to cycle through its *shhhhh-chit, shhhhh-chit, shhhhh-chit* until the needle catches the first groove and the song begins.

But the most iconic, and lamented, sound is the foghorn. More than any other auditory memory, foghorns signaled the start of summer along the Connecticut shoreline. Evenrude motors gurgled in the lagoon and the hollow *galunk* of bullfrogs echoed in the marsh, but it was in the foghorn's moan that I most keenly felt both the joy and the tension of an adolescent summer. When we sneaked onto the dock at night and dove into the black waves, the foghorns told us, "Deeep seeeea." But when my 14-year-old longing kept me on the beach after curfew and I ran home with my heart pounding, they scolded, "Youuuuu foool."

Once forgiven and safely in bed, I'd hear the adults talking downstairs and my cousin breathing in the bunk bed above. Out on the ocean, the foghorn's wave-washed voice kept me awake with its nightly yearning for land. But after about a week, on nights the fog rolled in, that lower, stronger breath became an exhalation that helped me sleep even as it warned other people -- faraway people -- of disaster. Of sorrow and danger unknown in that whitewashed, wainscoted room.

In their arcane way, foghorns were not only nautical, but musical. The older horns blew compressed air through a pipe called a diaphone to produce the familiar two-tiered call; a short E flat followed by a longer A flat. Because low frequency sounds carry farther than high-pitched tones, the foghorns of my childhood rumbled and boomed with a grandfather voice that rolled across the sea and in through the cottage window.

Depending on the severity of the fog and the choppiness of the waves on any given night, the tones seemed different, and said different things. Always, they sounded haunted.

“Whoooooo? Meeeeeee?” Or a shorter, plaintive, “Oooooold maaaaan.”

When our month at the beach was over, I listened back home for foghorns in the night air filled only with cicadas and the occasional car. Producing those tones on the piano was impossible, for traveling daytime inches rather than nighttime miles, the notes never sounded the same. Where had the sound come from, really? A lighthouse with its keeper? Was the horn moored to the very rocks it warned against? Or had the ocean itself delivered the disembodied voice from some undersea leviathan bellows?

Today, most large ships are guided by on-board, high-tech sonar that reduces shallow shoals and sudden rock outcroppings to blips on a screen. Each year, there are fewer boats to warn because over-fishing has depleted stocks. Near the shore and far below the surface, strange bacteria continue to change the Atlantic.

So now, when I listen for the constant, sorrowing moan of foghorns, it's like listening in vain for the sound of someone long dead; for a voice once heard unconsciously, whose absence could not have been predicted, and which no amount of listening will ever bring back.

Paper Café
Dr. Greene's Morning Class
Summer Writer's Camp
2006

Featuring prose and poetry by

David Gabriel
Danel Gimenez
Beum Seok Kim
Gian Lodevole
Eric Nishiyama
Daniel Shutov
Leticia Velge Urquijo

Teaching Assistant
Morgan Richards

Teacher
David Greene

The Girl For Me
by David Gabriel

In my life I want someone kind
someone who I can start a rhyme.

Who cares about the things I do.
Someone who is true.

The Girl that breaks the silence.
Whose love will create no violence?

Your voice soft and kind
your smile I can not forget
my thoughts are undermined
by your happy presence, you'll never make me upset.
All I wanna do is play Russian roulette
because I can't stop thinking bout u

Your thoughts carry me
Pirates rob my heart
I don't want it to be free
I want to be ripped apart

have my dreams thoughts and love
Taken and never let go of

She laughs and smiles to me and I just watch
and all she wants to do is kick me in the crotch

I think to myself

You are my key,

to my heart
I love you so much
we can't stay apart
I always want to stay in touch.

Her hair will glow
and I hope one day I can show
her that I no
how to take it slow

and no matter whom this girl shall be.
I know that she is the one for me.

Political villanelle
By Danel Gimenez

Open your ears, close your mouth and hear
Nameless, shameless, and restless five share a piece of bread
for dinner, lunch and breakfast
Yet look at the people; they're still here

Greedy snake your political ways mar the peoples culture,
you're a vulture, so for the sake of better days let
your end be near
Dirty scavenger of money and power, 10 babies, 10 mothers, 10
men, died today under your government, will it last?
Open your ears, close your mouth and hear

Listen to the crying mothers, hear their shared sorrow? For
the babies they lost to the rough cold that slipped
through the four aluminum walls of their so called
homes, see their eyes, see their fear?
Now every day's like waking up to a heavy, moist, damp summer
Morning after a hot august rain
Yet look at the people, with regret of their vote, they're still
strong, still here

We've walked around looking through garbage so much and
for so long we've become garbage engineers, all thanks
to your corrupt political sphere to whom we are all
sheer
Presidents like Chavez give people better days, help dissolve
away the pain
So open your ears close your mouth and hear

In one ear you hear your starving babies and in the other one
you hear the news of how your life they budgeteer
We are the poor, most of the time the most humble of all human
beings, but to fatten your pockets, to gain more power
you destroyed all our opportunities of looking past our
own frontiers

Yellow Umbrella

by

Beum Seok Kim

One rainy day, Billy was in school, realizing he had no umbrella and hoping that the rain would stop by the time the school ended. A bell rang telling that the fifth period had ended. Another bell rang telling the last period had ended, and also taking away Billy's hope.

Billy was a fifth grade boy, who always made trouble in his class, who had a big scar in his face. While in class, he didn't listen to his teacher, didn't do what he should do, even though he never gave any harm to other classmates. All he did was sitting still, acting as if he knew nothing but sleeping and blinking his eyes. But when he had recess, he made terrible sounds and screams, running around in the classroom. He stole everything, scissors, pencils, notebooks, and any other things that are not expensive. He was one of the boys that everybody quietly hates, but never expresses their hatred in words.

Once, at the beginning of the year the teacher gave out a paper to everyone, saying to write about yourself, such as what your parent names are, where you live, what you like, etc. The teacher gave fifteen minutes for the assignment, and everybody went quite. All were scribbling something down, some in unable-to-identify handwritings. But there was one kid, a boy sitting still, who didn't write about his parents. The teacher took every single paper from the class, and called Billy, for he didn't fill in his parents' names. He was asked why he didn't, but did not answer. He was asked again, and again did not answer. Thinking that he is a trouble-maker-kid, the teacher tried to call his parents, realizing the phone number space was also in blank. She thought for a while, and sent back the boy back to his seat.

The next day the teacher called a several boys, all coming on walking in different directions form school to their houses. She asked if they saw Billy going to his house, and the boys all looked at each other as if they didn't see. One boy with freckle all over his face said he did. He was Terry, a boy who knew Billy since they were young. He asked if he could talk to the teacher individually, and the two were left behind.

“Billy, even though he looks like a trouble-maker, was not like that until third grade. He was a kind and gentle kid, knowing what is right and wrong. He was like the boy who knew everything and had the answer I needed whenever I asked for help. He was always smiling, so bright that every classmate liked him. He was also a good son for his family that other parents were jealous about his family. But one day, a day that could never be forgotten for Billy, everything was taken from him.

“Billy was invited to a friend’s party that was quite far from his house. The parents refused to let him go, but not acting as usual, Billy didn’t agree to his parents’ decision. He wanted to go so badly that he packed everything already, waiting in front of the door. Unfortunately, the parents allowed him to go, and took his three-year-old sister with them, riding in the car. The family was happy as ever, not knowing the disaster approaching. When they were half way there, a truck was coming from the other side, maybe with a drunken driver. Unfortunately, a car accident occurred and all of the family except Billy died.

“It would have been hard for a 10-year-old boy to stand alone in the world, especially for Billy. It would have been like losing a place where you can lean against. From that time, he acted as if he really had nothing left but a scar in his face. He once told me that it was entirely his fault to not listening to what his parents said. He stopped talking, he didn’t listen to anyone, and he just sat on the chair, thinking about something that nobody knows. More and more of being alone led to the present Billy.”

After hearing the entire story, the teacher was shocked and felt sorry for the boy. She stood up, went back to her class, but the only thing she could see from the whole picture of the class was Billy, being alone again.

Everybody got up, all carrying an umbrella, and went out. But Billy, with no umbrella, was standing alone waiting for something to happen. Eventually, he just stepped out into the rain, but something really happened. He couldn’t feel the rain dropping to him. He walked a little more, still no feeling. He stopped and looked up. It wasn’t the rainy and cloudy sky that he saw it was a bright yellow umbrella, held by his teacher. And Terry saw a picture of Billy and his teacher, holding hands together, so he put his extra umbrella back into his backpack.

A Solemn Tragedy

Gianpaolo Lodevole

The hard dirt floor seeped with water and the walls splashed to a sweeping flow of movement. The seams of the house were spitting water rapidly. Outside the rushing mud slid against and around the shack built of loose pieces of sheet metal. A boy trapped in a tall eucalyptus tree struggling for his life. The rain smacked against his skin like sand and the wind whipped up flying debris. The little boy was in a hostile situation indeed. People were running out of their shanties and huts off the very dirty and trash filled streets in a very run down south Nigeria. The storm was disastrous and many died in one way or another.

The next morning came and the boy was still up in the tree, the city was flattened to the muddy ground. The tree was stripped of its leaves and there was household materials floating in water or caught in foliage. The boy thought to himself, with tears running like a stream down his dark cheeks, that his mother was gone. His mother was lost in the harsh waters from the heavens. With the rough bark between his fingers and the leaves brushing his legs, he made his way down the tree. His ripped off-white shorts and his t-shirt were mangled with dirt and water. He stepped down to the moist ground and marveled at what happened. He didn't see a soul anywhere. His dark brown eyes were wide open and scanning the landscape for any sign of a positive alternative for help, but nothing.

He lifted scraps of debris to search for something, anything to help him get out of the situation he was in. He walked down the muddy street with the squishing noise making the only company around. The slight after breeze of the storm past through his hair and flapped the torn strands of his t-shirt. The sun rose up from the waterfront and illuminated the glassy puddles in the little crevasses of leaves and ground. He was in a state of confusion and didn't know where to turn, to turn for help, or to start finding his beloved mother. He was sure in his mind that she was gone forever, but thinking of her in mind gave him the courage and the strength he needed to help himself.

The coastline was hemmed with sandy beaches and jetting rocks from the calm waters before the break in waves. Dirt filled drops lying on his forehead dampened the

stray hair. His body was now weak and cold. He walked out of the rubble filled street to the beach, where he made his way to the edge of the water and dipped his fingertips in. In seconds, he got a flashback to the flood when his mother was lost forever. He could hear the shrieks of fear and the pain of his mother. He came back to reality and everything went silent in his mind, like the sound before a bomb explodes.

He fell to his knees and looked at the orange sun. The slight ripple of waves crashed at his knees. His mouth open with awe, staring upwards. His arms out wide and the feeling of life being flushed from his body. He lost all hope at this moment and relaxed his mind. From his knees he fell, with a splash his face submerged in the salty water. Swirling sand enters his mouth. He didn't struggle and he didn't panic. The life flowing through him was only but a feeling at this point. With a whisper to himself he said, "I'm coming mommy...I'm coming."

The Average Man

By Eric Nishiyama

Billy Everdale was your average guy, black hair, brown eyes, and came from a pretty decent background. Ever since Billy was a little boy he wanted to be an astronaut. This dream was so strong that all throughout school he got nothing but A's. Later though in high school he changed his mind to becoming a CEO. He decided to do this because he wanted to have a steady job that and the fact that his parents told him to and didn't mind the thought of an occupation in business. Billy continued to get A's but at the same time spent much of his life only studying and never really got into a relationship with anyone. He studied about all these people who had left their mark in history for doing things that were truly amazing. Time passed and Billy ended up finding himself in a constant schedule of waking up, checking the news, brushing his teeth, going to work, eating lunch, going to work, eating dinner, watching the news again and going to sleep. Billy continued to wake up brush his teeth, pay the bills, eat at some restaurant, and go to bed. One day though, Billy woke up and he was an old man. He turned on the news and there he saw the first man on the moon who he knew had all his family cheering for him.

Random Haiku
By Daniel Shutov

Sitting in my class
Can't think of what to do here
Ink is out I shout

Talking together
Hanging around in the blue
These are my brothers

Alive tall and green
It just keeps trying to find me
I look at him too

Eating a taco
Eating at a Taco bell
Eww what is that smell?

Call me any time
Only if someone is sad
I tell them to smile

Eating a salad
It is very healthy
That's why I'm skinny

My holiday in Namibia

by

Leticia Velge

A time ago, in February, I went to Namibia with all my family. We took the plane from Lisbon and we flew to Windhoek which is the capital of Namibia. All of us were dreaming about a safari, so my dad decided to organize one. When we arrived, a guide picked us up, and we went to our one camp which was three hours away from the airport. Our camp was amazing. We slept in bungalows in the middle of the nature, the animals all around us and it was a very quite place. We were there for one week and we saw all types of animals: giraffes, elephants, oryx, elands, buffalos, sables,...

Every morning we woke up at 5.30 and we took the jeep to have a look at the animals. In the jeep, there was a seat in front where my brother was seated; when we are near the buffalos, one of them started to attack us so we ran quickly to another place. My brother was very frightened because he almost fell out of the jeep. We were looking at the animals all morning and sometimes in the afternoon.

One night we went to sleep in tents near the river and we made a camp fire. It was really fun but I was a bit scared. After having dinner, we went to bed and I slept with my sister. Through the night, I heard something moving and diving. I had some hesitations if it was one of the guides who was with us or if it was an animal. Silently, I stood up, and when I opened our tent door I saw a big crocodile that was standing on a rock. What did I do? I didn't scream, I just went to see my dad and I told him that there was a crocodile outside, so we both went to see it. On purpose, my dad made a little noise and the crocodile turned around and went again to the water. After five minutes, my dad and I went to sleep.

The next morning, I told everybody that I saw a crocodile and the guides said to me that it happens very often. In this morning we went rafting in the river, but it wasn't real, because there were no waves. We all went in the same boat and for fun the guides and my brother decided to push my sister and I into the water. When we get on the boat, my mom showed us eyes which were just on top of the water. I said that it could be a crocodile, but the guides said that it was a hippopotami! Everybody expect the guides

were scared, but they told us that if we are not in their territory they don't do anything. After a while the hippopotami left so we went tranquilly back to our bungalows. We had just four more days left and we were looking for different types of animals; and some afternoons we stayed at the camp reading or going to the pool.

The week was unforgettable, and I learned so many things about nature and animals. It was a great family holiday and I had the chance to visit a new country.

Grace Surpassing
By Morgan Richards

Sunday mornings in mid-summer my father drove past fields of dew-covered Queen Anne's Lace on his way to preach out Garfield Road in Wirt County, West Virginia. Last I checked, Wirt was the county with the smallest population east of the Mississippi. In Wirt County there is one town, Elizabeth, three schools (elementary, middle, and high), and one Exxon service station. Out Garfield, Dad had five United Methodist churches—Liverpool, Fairview, Center Valley, Mt. Mariah, and Mt. Pleasant. Liverpool, with an average attendance of about thirty to forty, was his highest-attended church; Center Valley had the next highest attendance with maybe twelve to twenty attending on a Sunday morning, most all of them members of the McVey family whose farms surrounded the small chapel. The other three churches averaged about four to six parishioners each. Since there were five churches, Dad preached on a rotating basis—two one Sunday, three the next. The Sundays Dad didn't preach for them, the churches held their own Sunday schools.

These churches were Dad's first charge as a part-time local pastor. When people decide they want to be United Methodist ministers, they are first required to take on one of these local charges (a charge meaning a small group of low-attendance churches) to see if their calling is true and if they can handle the demands of the ministry. So Dad accepted his appointment at age thirty-two, continued working as the night shift manager at a Nashua Photo Processing plant during the week, and traveled across the county every Sunday to tend his tiny flocks.

In the meantime, the rest of our family continued attending the Elizabeth United Methodist Church, where Mom was serving as choir director. We'd accompany Dad to his church picnics, the occasional evening services, week-long revivals, and fifth-Sunday sings, but most of the time we just went to church in town, never missing a Sunday morning service, except when one of us took a turn going with Dad.

My twin brother Patrick and I are the oldest; that year when Dad took his first charge, we turned eight. My younger brothers Bill and Ben were five and two, respectively. Ben was too young to go, but Patrick and Bill would take their turns leaving the comforts of the Elizabeth church—central heating and air conditioning,

indoor plumbing, cookies and Kool-Aid during children's church, and kids our own age—to ride out with Dad to his churches, which were occasionally heated, never air-conditioned, and if any kids were there it was because they were visiting their grandparents for the weekend. They weren't regulars.

I didn't take my turn to go with Dad very often during the winters. Because the parishioners could rarely pay their pastors, let alone spend much on the upkeep of their church buildings, they saved as much money as they could on the heating bill by only turning on the furnace when they arrived on Sunday mornings. Even though I'd sit as close as I could to the huge floor furnace grates, I wouldn't thaw out until about the time we stood up to sing the closing hymn, which we had to sing a cappella since any given church would usually lack either a piano or a piano player, or both.

But in the summer, I looked forward to getting up earlier than the rest of the family and riding out to Dad's churches with him. Since I got to ride up front in the truck, I didn't have to worry about getting carsick on Garfield Road like I usually did when we would pile in our full size van to visit my cousins who lived in PeeWee. Garfield wound tightly through countless tobacco fields and cattle pastures, the road hugged the hillside, bordered on the other side by the narrow creek that ran through the fields. Most of the churches were perched over narrow valleys, the headstones in their cemeteries looking as if they were sliding down the hills. It took anywhere from a half hour to an hour to drive from our house at the dead end of Camp Barbe Road to the two or three churches we were going to.

And of course the one-room clapboard sanctuaries were saunas come late June and all the way through September. Farmers in their long pants and plaid shirts sat through evening services with sweat dripping from the ends of their sharp noses. Women in long dresses fanned themselves with the hand-held cardboard fans from the local funeral home, which were decorated with a painting of Jesus the shepherd or Jesus knocking at the door on one side and Matheny-Pomroy Funeral Home written in bold print on the other. When it was time for prayer, the men, and sometimes a few women, would all head to the altar, get down on their knees and start chattering like baseball players, their voices rising and falling and rising again until everyone was sweating and shouting, their eyes squeezed shut, faces red, white knuckles gripping the chancel rail.

They'd go on and on until they wore themselves out, their pleas becoming raspy and soft, until Dad closed the prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Dad never was and still isn't a hell-fire and brimstone preacher. Once during a revival, a visiting preacher took the pulpit and raged from one side of the sanctuary to the other like a fighting bull; his face flushed dark red; my brothers and I cowered next to my mother in the front row, trying not to get hit with the sweat and spit that flew off of him as he flailed about in his righteous fury. Dad has never carried on like that. He stands tall and elegant behind the pulpit, often stepping down to walk contemplatively around the front of the sanctuary as he speaks. Sometimes he'll put his hand up to his chin in thought or spread his arms for emphasis, but he never points, he never yells, there is never a burning fire in his eyes. A few times he has wept.

I don't remember any sermons from those summers; I don't remember even trying to pay attention. When I went, I sat by myself in the front row, staring out across the valleys through the open windows, which let in both the sweet smell of new-mown hay and the sharp scent of fresh manure. If I had to go to the bathroom, I held it. I wasn't afraid of the smell of the outhouses, only the snakes and spiders I knew would crawl up out of the dark depths below my wooden seat.

Dad always says his sermons are going to be "about God and about twenty minutes," and that's usually all I can remember after the benediction every week. What I remember, though, especially from those summers is sitting there in the hard wooden pews, soaking up the sound of my Dad's voice as it floated like dust through the sunlight. When he'd finish preaching and come sit next to me, I'd lean against his side, shifting my weight so I could rest my cheek against his soft, warm shoulder. Behind the altar table and gold cross in every church, the same painting of Jesus hung—the fair-skinned, slight-featured Jesus with the soft brown hair and sad, yet kind, blue eyes. When I wasn't looking out the window or watching Dad, I was looking at that painting, wondering just what Jesus might be thinking.

On our way to church in the mornings, when it was just me and Dad, he would almost always remember to drive just the right way over the tickle hills in the road—the ones that made your stomach fall if you cruised over them at precisely the right speed. He would also stop at the Exxon and buy us both a cold one—for me, Dr. Pepper or Mr.

Pibb; for him, always a Diet Coke. He would sometimes hum some of his favorite old hymns—Just a Little Talk with Jesus, On the Jericho Road, The Old Rugged Cross. Occasionally he'd pop in a John Denver Greatest Hits tape, and we'd both sing along to Country Roads and Thank God I'm a Country Boy. But usually we just drove along in silence, admiring the grazing cattle and the wildflowers in bloom. Summers in West Virginia, the fog in the mornings and the haze in the evenings make you feel as if you are in your own world; there are no sharp contrasts, no clear lines. Even the songs of the cicadas and sparrows are muffled, soft. Speaking seems like too much work, and unnecessary.

This summer I am twenty-two, and my father is still a minister. After serving those five churches for two years, he went on to attend divinity school, living four hours away throughout the week and coming home every weekend to serve a three-point charge. Since then he has held two other appointments in the western and southern parts of West Virginia. His faith grows ever stronger. I, on the other hand, no longer believe in God, at least in the way my father does. But when he speaks of "God's plan" for me or about "the grace of God that surpasses all understanding," I still nod, though slightly and silently. I can't see myself ever telling him that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is no longer the god of Morgan Richards, daughter of James. I'd rather always be the one he asks to go along with him to the Cokesbury Bible Bookstore or to visit parishioners in the hospital, always the one he'll stop with to get a cold one. I always want to be the girl sitting beside her dad, holding her arm out the window on summer evenings, smiling as the Queen Anne's Lace bows when we pass.

Knocking Down the Old House

A Parable of Atheism by David Greene

The house stands in shambles, but it is still standing. The whole edifice leans a little to the left such that the doors don't quite line up in their jambs and the windows aren't quite sitting right in the frames. Most of the shutters have fallen off and the wooden sideboards are peeling like a snake after a full meal. Inside, the house is old—very old. Once it was the home of a very nice couple, but now it is not much more than a sort of architectural after-image, like the phantom images one sees after a photographer's flash.

First comes the wrecking ball: decisive blows knock in the walls and begin to bring the house down. More precise machines move in afterward to crash through the support beams and the pipes. The work of deconstruction is completed by careful individuals who take out each plank of wood one piece at a time; each sliver of glass that once let sunlight into living rooms and through which children gazed at stars; each old relic like the beautiful old brass doorknobs and handles.

When the work is done what has happened is not that a house has been laid low through disbelief or destruction, but rather that a foundation has been uncovered, revealed. The root of the word “revelation” lies in the dancer's act of unveiling herself before her audience; thus does “God,” if I may be so bold as to use such a word, allow the truth to be uncovered and unveiled for us. No-one is healthy living in someone else's old house, we must uncover the foundations that are still viable and build houses of faith for ourselves.