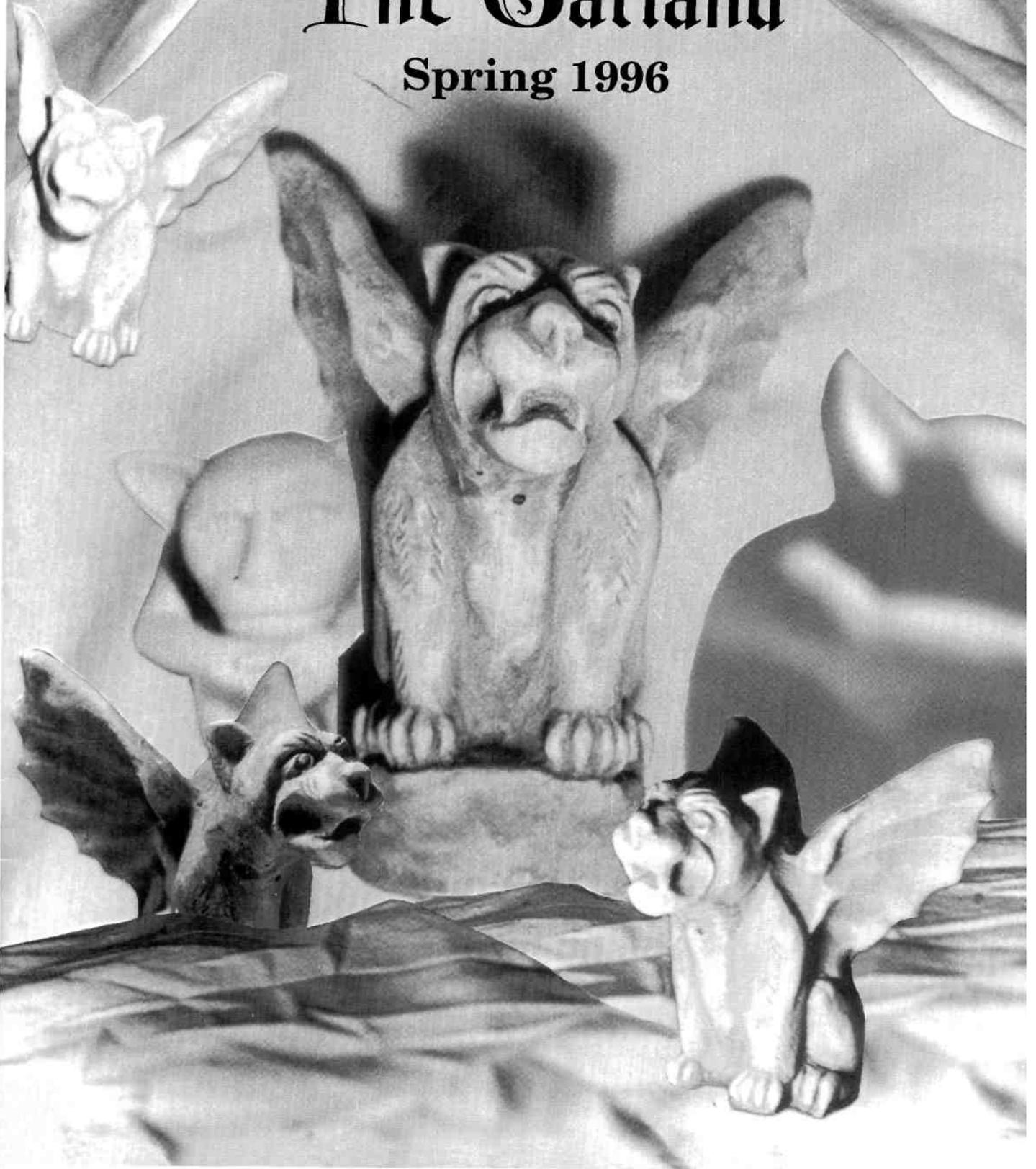


# The Garland

Spring 1996





# **The Garland**

**Spring 1996**

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## A Note from the Editor:

"Writing is easy. All you do is sit staring at the blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead."

—Red Smith

There's something disturbing--yet fascinating--in Smith's interpretation of writing. And it seems that many of the submissions we received this year apply to this quote. They made for some fascinating reading. *The Garland* has evolved a bit in my two years as editor, and I hope that it will continue to roam a path of passion and beauty.

I want to extend congratulations to all those who submitted. There is nothing more exciting than taking a peak at a cross-section of student writing. I hope that next year's editor will be wowed by your future submissions. (Keep staring at those blank sheets of paper!)

I'd like to thank Dr. Dan McGuinness for entrusting me with free-reign over this project. But I do know that it's time to leave--he enjoyed laughing at my struggles far too much this year.

And, well, I guess it's time to say good-bye to my much-loved, nightmare of an undertaking. Oh, how I'll miss copy-editing. . .

Finally, I'd like to dedicate this issue to Manuel--and to the sweet anticipation of watching our lives unfold before us.

Stephanie H. Fedick





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# Dragon

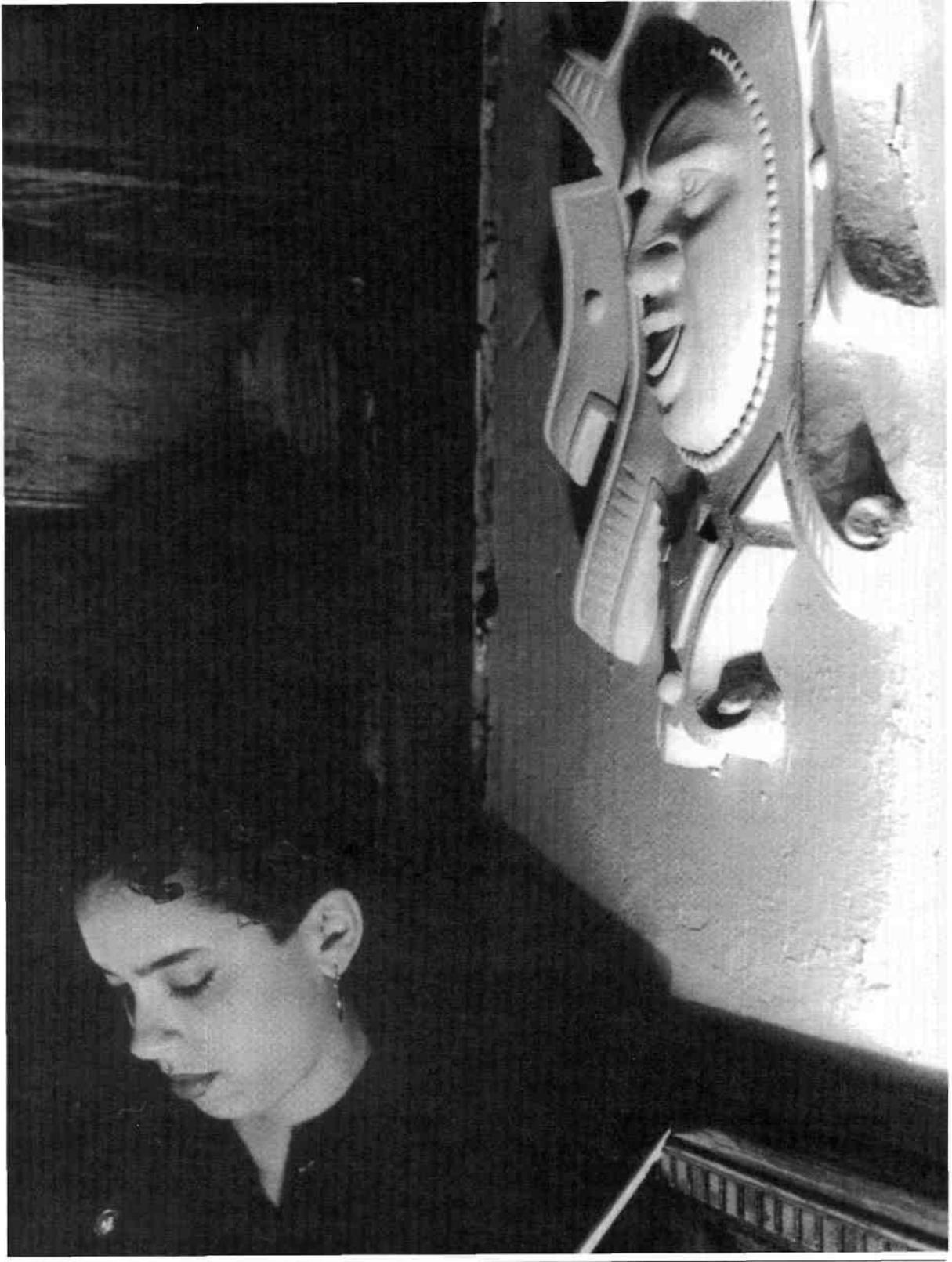
Janine A. LeGates

Down to the scum-lined lip of the bank,  
shuffling small feet through crackling  
layers of leaves speared  
by sticks like the dry bones  
of long-dead reptiles.

Down to the mud-slicked lip of the bank,  
stumbling over the chipped  
gray slate which crumbles,  
like scales flaking from the side  
of the petrified lizard.

Down to the steaming dank lip of the bank,  
the heaving wind sighs  
through the trembling reeds,  
and breathes its hot poison  
across the back of your neck.

Here, where the swirling current devours  
the virgin earth of the bank,  
dare to dip one sacrificial toe  
into the lapping maw,  
dare to wake this dragon.



# Afraid of the Dark

Robert J. Quinn

## *I. Opening*

Sometimes,  
When the wind blows across your closed eyes,  
And you press your back into me,  
I think about the deep bruise of night  
Hanging outside my window,  
And how the stars are like blemishes  
On the perfect surface of darkness.  
Sometimes I don't think at all.  
Sometimes it is comfort enough to lie with you  
Next to me.  
Sometimes I know what I'm saying  
When I tell you that I can save you.  
Sometimes it even makes sense.

## *II. Childhood*

As a child it was impossible to fall asleep  
Until everyone else had gone to bed.  
The bedroom was next to the living room,  
And the light from the television was a reminder  
That there was no being alone. My back pushed  
Against the wall, half-lying half-sitting in my bed,  
The covers pulled up to my eyes, waiting for darkness.  
There were pirates on the wallpaper  
And they were there to protect.  
In the darkness they came to life and drew their swords  
To defend against villains who rose out of fear like smoke  
In faint moonlight.  
Without the moon there was safety,  
The pirates standing guard against the light  
While they revelled in the hiding place of deepest night.  
But most of the time there was light, from somewhere,  
And sleep came like worry onto the edges of the shore,  
The pirates disappearing and dreams as dark as pearls  
Rising in their place.

### *III. Adolescence*

I was only fifteen.  
Everyone knew how to smile the way that they  
Should to feel sorry for you,  
But my cousin was still dead.  
The coffin was closed because  
The body wouldn't have looked like her,  
But would have been a scarecrow version of what she used to look like.  
I could swear they had a picture of her on the lid,  
As if it were just a coffee table in the living room  
Of a distant relative. The picture of her was smiling  
On her wedding day, so we could remember as was and not as is.  
I was the one who believed in God, who knew Jesus.  
I was the strong one.  
They designated me to pray.  
"Our Father who art in heaven, why did this have to happen?"  
The windows were like flat mirrors into which my relatives  
Looked to be sure they were still alive, and that their dresses were  
The right degree of somber.  
My cross is my strength and I can carry yours too  
If you brought the nails and can hammer them into  
My ankles and wrists.  
I was strong but I felt forsaken,  
And I died on the cross of their salvation.  
And I have not risen.

### *IV. Adulthood*

My shadow stepped into long and short spaces,  
And streetlights leaned against the night  
Showing the edges that could hide  
A stranger, a victim, or both.  
Trees stood to the sides like silenced  
Witnesses who saw what happened  
In the time between day and night  
That filtered like a grainy photograph  
Into my vision. Each block of pavement met the  
Next in a firm handshake, pushing apart  
As hard as they could while remaining together,

Till they rose in resentment of their union.  
Like a nervous actor moving through the spotlight,  
I hurry through the streets afraid of things other  
Than the buildings and the grass and the trees.  
Night has never been as bright as it is now,  
And I wish for the darkness to return because  
At least in darkness you cannot see them coming.

*V. Opening*

Sometimes your body shudders  
Like the aftershock of an earthquake,  
And I feel it against my arms that are wrapped around you  
As if we were dancing.  
Sometimes when I feel the vibrations of  
An aftershock course between us,  
I think about calling you away from death.  
I tell you that you are only sleeping and I ask  
You to rise. I tell you that the darkness cannot hurt you.  
But I always keep my eyes open,  
We lie still waiting for the morning to cover us like a blanket.  
Each movement is slow as if time has left us defenseless  
And the pirates of childhood are no longer able to defend.  
The shadows move across the wall as dawn slips through the window  
And I wonder if what we see is fiction or truth;  
Sometimes there is no difference to be shown between them.  
I think about calling your name softly like Christ called the girl who  
Had died. I've tried miracles before, but  
I cannot raise you if I cannot raise myself. Darkness  
Lies like a threat that cannot be ignored, as the wind  
Races past us, causing our bodies to shiver like winter,  
And I don't know how to ask if I'm  
Allowed to be afraid.

# Raven

Janine A. LeGates

Crows explode from the lit fuse of telephone wire,  
shattering shrapnel across the barren blueness.

The hissing smoothness of highway  
winds its destiny to the foot of the lake,  
the Lake of the Raven

    shrieking past on a facade of concrete,  
    glassy reflections of the sun's blankness  
    wheel, a handle, a flash of flesh.

The proud sun shoots impotent daggers at the moving waters,  
glinting off ripples which feather the surface.

Cocooned in jagged oblivion  
of steel and glass and rubber,  
they deny the existence of the carrion waters  
and make of the bird their symbol

    dark and dangerous, seductive in leather  
    cawing from the headlines.

Appropriated for curving beak and wicked talon,  
for blackness of eye.

Forgotten is how they fit together  
to screech and flail and thrash indignation  
from beneath the lake's sleek surface,  
denied always the scavenger's pleasure,  
that flash of flesh.



# A Metafictional Excerise Gone Horribly Awry

Brenna McBride

Our setting for the evening is a dimly lit, mildly romantic cappucino shop located in Any Metropolitan City, U.S.A. The small, round tables each hold a small, round candle fighting to keep its flame alive for just two more hours. The air is filled with smoke, cocoa beans and the low moan of a saxophone. It's close to midnight, early fall, clear skies, numerous visible constellations. Ah, l'amour.

It's entirely possible that she hates cappucino. The next morning she may very well feel her stomach converge as all five senses will not be able to abandon the pungent aroma of Italian coffee and processed cream. But the task that lies before her is not a pleasant one, and he loves the place. Always better to ply them with sugar before you rub in the salt.

I suppose she looks quite lovely; he will think so, though she never will. The weak flame casts a soft, shadowy glow upon her smooth complexion and makes her blue eyes (no gray--more depth) appear huge in her head. Her blond hair (no, light brown--brunettes have more mystery) falls in loose waves around her cheeks. She tucks some annoying strands behind one ear and sighs. Wistfully. Sadly.

Sadly? you might ask yourself. What has she got to be sad about? She's young, she's pretty, she has a boyfriend who loves her. She's on a date in the middle of the city in some trendy restau-

rant where the orders have accent marks. She's probably not even paying! She, you might say with some bitterness, has probably never known the agony of waiting for a phone to ring, the crushing disappointment of being told she's a wonderful friend, the horror of attending a major social function by herself. She, you proclaim, has no right to sigh so prettily and so sadly.

Oh, shut up and read.

"I love you, Claire," her companion says tenderly, in a move guaranteed to irk all you lonely hearts ever more so. "I love how you look in that blouse. It makes your skin glow."

Her heart begins a slow journey to her feet. Here he says the words that most women of the nation can only extract from their significant others on national talk shows, and she so wishes he would never say them again. She looks at his lovestruck eyes across the table and feels no sudden fluttering of the heart, no quickness of the pulse. Just empty, that's her.

"What are you thinking?" he asks teasingly.

She smiles forcedly. "Oh, nothing of any interest."

"Anything you think would be interesting to me, Claire."

Readers, you are obviously having one of two delayed reactions to this poor, disillusioned young man so ardently in love with our heroine. The first is that you cannot believe what a lunkheaded

fool this boy is as to not be aware of the utter apathy reflected in the lady's eyes. When feelings die, it's hard to ignore the corpse; one can only project false emotions to a certain degree before the absence of sincerity becomes painfully obvious. Claire's feelings have obviously not died on this very evening, at this very cappuccino shop, yet her boyfriend continues to smile and whisper words of love as if the angels were arranging for their eternal bliss at this very moment. You may feel the overwhelming urge to feel the palm of your hand connect with the side of the young man's face, to put your mouth next to his ear and exclaim, with utmost emotion and clarity, "SNAP OUT OF IT!"

Then again, you may be the sensitive, romantic type, a survivor of many tear-jerking breakups that left you ten pounds heavier and low on Puffs Plus, and you might sympathize with our not-quite-a-hero. You may direct all your animosity and fury towards the unsuspecting Claire, and may be producing gruesome home movies in your head of how she would look with every strand of that mysterious light brown hair ripped out of her head, one by one. You may think that her boyfriend, her poor, blind, adorable boyfriend, is too good for her. He needs a real woman, you say, someone who can return that intense emotion with the maturity and stability that he needs. You wouldn't happen to know anyone who fits that description, would you?

He reaches over and takes Claire's hand, which has been resting lightly on her napkin. I think it is time to give him

a name.

"Jamie, we need to talk about something."

"As long as I get to hear your voice." He smiles.

"Hear my words, Jamie." Okay, now she means business. There is an edge to her voice, a firmness to her words that even those drowning in a hopeless sea of love cannot ignore. Jamie's hand tenses, his grip on her tightens. But he doesn't let go. Can't let go, no sir.

"I'm listening to every syllable," he responds.

She takes a long, shaky breath. She needs to get it all out now, before the nausea it creates becomes a permanent fixture.

"Jamie, you know it's not working anymore. It hasn't for a while, you've got to know that."

"Well, if I've got to know it, Claire," he says with the faintest tremble in his barely audible voice, "why is it that I don't?"

I think it would be appropriately frustrating right now to send the waiter over to the table, pad and pencil in hand, hair moussed, smirk wide. "All set to order?"

"No," Claire replies with tight lips, while Jamie's eyes begin to fill.

All right, this is entirely too painful a moment to continue to observe. Let's give them some privacy, shall we?

Oh, don't whine. It's immature.

# The Early Morning Wind And On Through the Night

James Healy

In the past  
The collection of monsters, demons  
And the like  
Have gone under the progression  
Of the stars,  
Into the night and through the morning  
The early morning wind  
And the night of late day,  
I am bound to both.  
We are bound upon ourselves,  
Set us free  
Freedom from our boundaries  
Reach beyond our limits,  
The possibilities are limitless.

The early morning  
The dawn of day  
So much time--  
It is coming soon,  
Very soon.

The early morning wind  
Will carry me.

The sun shines  
The water answers its call  
I go forward into the day  
And on through the night.

To the night  
I descend to the dead,  
The dead of sleep  
And the dead of dreams,  
We do not communicate  
Yet a common bondage we have--  
Soaring through the images  
And past memories,  
Problems in our mind  
And things of yet to be.

You have traveled many miles  
You have seen and seen again  
The early morning wind and starry night,  
What do you say  
O traveling companion?  
Where does your day take you to?  
I will travel the morning wind  
Into the day  
And on through the night.

# Leaves

Caroline Define

walk on the black-brown of the dead  
sodden leaves that fell late last night  
as you leave because I have said  
I cannot go with you in flight.

I stand here in the door watching  
quietly the rain fall onto  
your bowed head, hair limply drooping.  
And myself? I long to trap you,

but I see now that I have failed  
when, with each sick second, I hear  
your soggy step and the breaking wail  
of the morning bird smashing air.

leave quickly now I am trapped  
in my suffocating glass cage,  
against the wall, my desperate head  
beats the emptiness to rage.

dream about me tomorrow eve  
and I will find your restless sleep  
as the stars rise and fall above me,  
a faithful vigil I shall keep.

when the leaves dry and crack and crumble,  
return to this skeleton home,  
where I sit waiting and humble  
to see how lovely you have grown.



# A Victim of Perception

Caroline Define

Tonight  
Like so many other nights  
In the diminishing light  
I begin to fade.

Weed-infested ego  
Growing rampant, wild in the Garden of Eden,  
A land once plentiful with reason  
Now choked by self-deception.

Zombie-like  
I stand  
In a rippled mirror land  
Twisting my perception.

Holy crosses on the hill  
Beckon to me: "Rectify your soul, replenish your body."  
But the bread of life slips through my fingers and disintegrates in the salty sea  
Killing my redemption.

The weeping willows say  
In strength, they neither fall nor crack  
I watch with envy as they bow to the goodly earth,  
And as the sun slowly sets behind my back  
I fade.



# Thoughts when Cleaning out my Junk Drawer

Michael Gerardi

There is no thought in my mind, only clutter;  
    as is the young man's drawer in his desk.  
Pieces of things kept and forgotten. . .  
    A gift; a watch, unwound and timeless.  
A picture; a memory, crinkled and blurred with pencil  
    shavings.  
He blows the dust away and sees a young face appear like a  
    wraith through a dense fog.  
On paper her cheek feels gritty, sticky, and tacky. . .  
    sweet. . .*and soft*. . . *and sweet*. . .

*But oh, How soft! How warm!*  
    *How bittersweet the touch of her cheek was to his.*  
*His ear drawn slowly across her cheek felt like a*  
    *Homecoming; like a liberation.*  
*The sweet slow friction of cheek on cheek,*  
    *lips on lips,*  
*provided the spark for a love that came out of nowhere.*  
Love was a stone tosser, and he a reluctant martyr.  
Love was an unexpected gift, and she an anxious recipient.

Out of the clutter, a file is imputed and entered.  
The tacky, sticky, wrinkled picture is pushed aside to the "special"  
    pile,  
Only to be covered by another pushed on top of it.  
Another picture,  
Another memory,  
Kept and forgotten.

# Look you behind

Dani Glaeser

Look you behind you  
forward and sides.  
Watch for the lady  
with all to hide.

See you the sparkle  
within her deep eyes?  
Notice when with her  
the facade of lies?

Can you not know  
that she smiles like a spider?  
Waiting for you to lay  
tortured beside her.

Do you not wonder  
what's real and what's not?  
Her gleaming eyes smiling  
a thing not forgot.

A flip of her hair  
and you lie on the floor.  
A touch of her lips,  
and you're begging for more.

It's just when you think  
you'll hold her in your arms,  
A twist and a turn  
and you realize the harm.

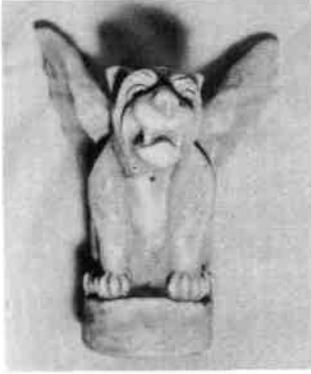
And then she has left you,  
all shattered and torn.  
Your heart has been shredded,  
your emotions are worn.

But still you remember  
that innocent face.  
Her simple caresses  
and violent embrace.

Forever she's damned you  
but wasn't it fun?  
You never will realize  
that damage been done.

So look you behind you,  
forward and sides.  
Beware this lady,  
who knows what to hide.





# Celestial Beings

Dani Glaeser

No common bond between us  
we sit staring at one another  
guessing from our celestial places  
what the other is thinking.  
We continue on our separate paths  
that almost parallel  
looking across the barren space  
between us  
to watch the other.  
Hiding behind planets  
for a closer look.  
Stars sparkle in the dark void  
distracting us  
now and then.  
As you catch my shy glance  
from across the way,  
a memory from long ago  
fleets across  
only to be replaced  
by lack of understanding.  
No longer in our physical world,  
communication  
is different here.  
Puzzled glances exchanged,  
heads turned away,  
we resume course.

Sometimes so close,

we could almost touch.

Yet we simply look.  
Dare we even try to find a common standing?  
Just enough  
to allow a touch  
across the gap.  
Or shall we continue the glances  
without words  
forever in our own worlds  
Silence  
dulling the atmosphere  
we are forced to share, and  
Thoughts  
about the path the other travels.



# Two Creams and Three Sugars

How living in the Colorado Rockies had me brewing

Anonymous

Wednesday, August 30, 1995

I wanted a cup of coffee more than anything in the world.

I moved into my brother's apartment in Colorado Springs, Colorado, two weeks back with no furniture, no television, no radio and no couch. I even lived without a futon for a few days and floated around the lofty apartment in silent martyrdom, because the last thing I was going to do was fly back home with my free voucher ticket from Delta that I had scrambled up on my return trip from New Orleans over Spring Break, when a troop of Mormon members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints descended from nowhere and a bump-offer was blasted, or rather, crackled over the system of trumpets. I picked up a free flight because going home would be raising the white handkerchief.

By the second day I seated myself in the lemon box of sunlight that warmed the lime carpet in our front room, in view of snowy Pike's Peak, along with the cellular and the Yellow Pages, which I two-fold employed as a table. I was going to get myself a job. I was going to throw myself to the winds of summer employment and hopefully not get snagged on a minimum wage hide-away-job. I called fifteen restaurants and made my rounds that afternoon on foot which meant an hour's walk downtown; although I didn't mind because the sidewalks on Nevada Street were wide, and the boulevard run-

ning down the center of the street was lined with healthy tulip trees and shady green maples. Some of the people were out mowing their lawns or tending to their landscaping and offered a friendly glance or exchanged looks of congenialities.

My second week in Colorado, jobless, my pride was dissipating in the Palmolive while I sponged the dishes in the sink by my own spindly will. I flashed a sheepish grin towards my brother who was pounding around the kitchen floor like a Clydesdale in his bare feet, making his morning toast. I tried to angle myself in crannies of the kitchen, forcing the smallest profile of me available to his peripheral vision, as he scratched the cancer from the top of his burnt bread and medicated it with butter. Perhaps I'd blend in with the paint like one of those camouflage lizards in the desert if I didn't move, so I took tiny breaths and only circled my wet wrists in the sink suds.

That morning I rose early, a little after eight o'clock. I pulled myself up from my futon with both of my hands that weren't quite awake yet, but functioned like meat hooks onto the window sill. I pursed my cottony lips up to the wind screen and cried a little moan out of our one-story apartment at Mr. Chevata, who was mowing his lawn, while my heart puffed against the window crank. I was not fully convinced that

it wasn't the back-end of a motorcycle parked through my wall, with the exhaust tube sealed up to my mouth, revving up. I was fully awake now, as I lay back down in the warm puddle of realization that this wasn't a fire drill, that I hadn't left the keys in the ignition of my brother's Pathfinder which was on its way to Mexico, that I was indeed alone in the company of my bed. I cursed Mr. Chevata and his lousy cross-hatched lawn with indifference, my mind changed directions, and I thought that if I could wheel myself out to the kitchen this early that I might get to be the one to place my fingers into the smooth black concave button of the coffee-bean grinder. Magically under my palm the beans would rumble and crack like ice in a blender and quickly mash into the equivalent hum of a fine bisque along with the over-haul of the scent; I had to get up. So I guided myself up slowly and Mr. Chevata was no longer mowing upside-down over my head, but was further down near the subway. In the early morning kitchen haze I took my first sip alone and glanced up at the door frames out to the garage and both bedrooms to see if people I didn't know with shiny, blemish-free faces and fully functioning demeanor would come barreling out like in the Folger's commercials, but nothing happened. I was glad and decided that being unemployed was liberating, and that if I could just fit my head inside my blue coffee mug, well then I'd never leave.

Poor Richard's Bookstore on Tejon Street is nestled in between your proverbial suburban coffee shops and craft

stores with piles of bohemian stuff jammed up against the windows with all the major credit card stickers pasted above one another on their door. I stepped inside, since my conscience was somewhat clear by my deed of doing the dishes which I did not mess, and besides, I had some free time. It was like any other used book store I have ever lollygagged through in Manhattan, New Orleans, San Francisco or Baltimore with the given middle-aged patronizing, wearing thread-bare cardigans (although not thrift store hip), bearing striking physical flaws. The quintessential used book store employee has tendencies; tendencies such as scorning at you when the over-head bell rings to signal your entrance, your eyes meet like you're a freak in one of those Lon Chany movies- "Gooba gaba gooba gaba, one of us..." Finally you locate the chutzpah to walk up to one standing on a stool reaching for the heaviest, dustiest book you've ever seen next to the Bible in your family room. You are ready though; you pose a Jeopardy answer.

"He was born cross-eyed until the age of four when he had corrective lenses made, and his works are categorized in the philosophy section?"

The air around you thickens like Knox, in the silence you could expect a response such as their "dipping" the end of their glasses in their mouth while they climb inside their brain to scan the card-catalogue that is ever present.

Then suddenly, like a mime pulling its hand down over its face, they perk up, like a dog begging for a bit of meat, to reply:

"Who is Buckminster Fuller?" and you're free at last to roam without hindrance.

About two hours later I trundled up to the desk with my eyes low because the abstract, and presumably tangible man that I spoke with wanted to adopt me because I had broken the secret code to join the club. I dumped a waterfall of used books up on the beige counter and jammed my hands inside my overall pockets. I wiggled my fingers inside as if I were seven years old again on my first trip to Leo's corner store for candy-corn, being two dimes short of a warm silver that rolled around on the counter-top. I then regained the momentum I had lost the two hours of recalling four letter hunks of the alphabet—Thomas, Tobias, Virginia, Wolfe-Wolffe-Woolf, and jerking my head to the side, I relieved myself, and dug into my back pocket for my gold card.

So I needed a cup of coffee. My brother had turned in early that night and all I wanted was to submerge myself waist-high in the imagery of Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar", which I had picked up earlier that day along with my usual Jacuzzi of caffeine and nicotine when dusk was knocking at the door, being that there was sparse lighting in the house--surprise, surprise. I packed my spiral notebook, a Rollerball ink pen, cigarettes and Sylvia in my patchwork Buddha-bag from Malaysia, which I stepped out into the shadows protected by my I'm-in-another-town-no-body-knows-me-yet bubble of safety and headed towards the Dunkin' Donuts four blocks down on Filmore Street. I held

fast to my bag and people in their passing cars thought I was stepping on hot coals, but I was trying to test the grassynubs and fist-sized boulders that made up the sidewalk. I crossed through traffic and caught the eyes of the drivers frozen in their bearded seats, hands-on-wheels. I crossed through Filmore Street and the first thing I noticed was that the table I sat in the previous evening in front of the shop was not there; so I dangled my head back from its normal resting position to note the pink and orange Dunkin' Donuts sign was indeed the same one, that I hadn't slipped through the brown-patch lighting across the street. Then it hit me that "Dunkin'" meant dunking your donuts in coffee. I had always taken the name for granted.

I stepped inside and asked the nicest Chinese woman in the free world where the tables and chairs outside had gone, and she smiled and squinted like a dripping watermelon slice and said they had been stolen. I paid for a medium cup of coffee—the best-all-night-just-right-temperature coffee you can purchase in the free world and the Chinese woman tried to give me a free glazed donut and some munchkin holes because obviously I was distraught with my ridiculous bag, and steaming cup of styrofoam, refusing to sit at one of the numerous vacant tables inside because coffee meant cigarette; it went unsaid. I thanked her but refused the donut and just as I turned to leave I thought that we were both on the escarpment of a complete hot and salty tear-jerker. I didn't know if it was because of the crime of

stolen property which upset me or because I was such a friendly customer, and she was hoping I would stay offering me donuts, because she was too nice to be working such a ludicrous job where divorced, overweight women swerve into the parking lot with their brights on around four in the morning snapping their gum to purge on four or five strawberry and angel cream filled donuts before they turn in for the night, complaining in between swallows and dropping crumbs in the folds of their polyester pull-over tops and underneath their stools. Nothing happened, and I stepped out and into the light that shown through onto the naked concrete and thought I might just go ahead and sit right down, but I stalled, took a sip and ran my tongue through the perfect, creamy temperature and strode out into the night again. I thought about picking up a few lamps tomorrow for our place. My coffee was spilling out of the triangle top and spotting the front crotchety-section of my over-alls as I searched up and down Filmore Street for lighting and a piece of something sturdy to sit down upon, Sylvia was suddenly patient at the bottom of my pink, yellow and blue patchy pieced bag. I made a wrong turn perpendicular to Filmore into a residential area with Neighborhood Watch signs growing up under every lit street lamp, like a bony finger jabbing at your side. You could almost hear the voice behind it. Sure enough, Mrs. Gomez popped her head from behind the wind-screen, the faint yellow light from the porch like an omelet over her perm and dangling down the side of her face. Just passing

through, I thought to myself, and quickened my pace on the sidewalk (which did not exist in residential areas) without catching the breakfast plate again. I imagined all of the ladies on the block tomorrow connected to one black phone cord, lined up as if they were in adjoining phone booths as in cartoons, all in different pastel aprons, the receiver imbedded in their shoulders and both hands in stainless steel bowls of floury bread dough, or tuna and celery or marinating chicken breasts, discussing a particular person in over-alls carrying a stupid bag. I was mad that she made me feel nervous. After all, I wasn't selling crack-cocaine, I only wanted to read a book. Tomorrow, I thought, I will drag our gas grill behind me on a rope, pulling it in front of Mrs. Gomez's house, and ask her for a package of hot dogs. That would really give them something to gossip about with their meaty hands moistening in the supper concoctions.

I high-tailed it around the corner and my inertia kept most of my coffee intact, up the front steps to our gutless apartment. I dragged a wet plastic lawn chair in from the backyard and pressed it up against the sliding glass door, where a sliver of precious light shown from the lone ceiling fan inside. I gently lowered my coffee, that was still hanging in there with a hint of warmth to comfort me in my predicament, on the green turf coating of our back steps. From my bag I pulled out my book and set it under the fig tree to my right while I lit a Camel Light for which I had audaciously displayed my NY state drivers license that morning at the 7-11 mini-store. The

smoke curled in little ringlets around my head and I looked up at the ceiling fan inside behind the thick glass and thought about what it would be like to be deaf, inhaled—how strange that smoke curls up when there is no breeze, but under a spinning ceiling fan it carries straight. I was never good at science. So I had my light to read my book, and a seat to sip my coffee, and even cigarettes to smoke outside our house of Bedlam. I opened the book and read, "nothing outside the slick marble and plate-glass fronts along Madison Avenue." How strange to start with an uncapitalized sentence fragment! This is what famous authors do, I was learning every second, and then I noticed I was on page two, and I needed to ash my cigarette. I flipped back to the first page and felt relieved that I noted my mistake before I had the chance to discuss my discovering, like in grade school when you waved frantically at the teacher with the wrong answer and you were thankful that you hadn't

been called on. You swore you'd never trust your intuition again, yet like a trapped insect—you kept banging your head into the wall of embarrassment time and time again. The turf would burn if I ashed on it and smell like burnt glue or like the inside of your microwave after you've charred popcorn in it the very first time because you were skeptical about the two and a half minute cooking recommendation, come on now, and the next thing you know there's a billowing cloud emanating from your kitchen and you wonder if it's the beginning of the end, in your kitchen no less, Armageddon. The ash was equal length as the filter by now and I didn't want to walk out behind the fig tree into the darkness where the grass was wet and the slugs were on their neighborhood watch, so I ashed in my cup of coffee in the fury of it all, and I read the first line of Plath for the first time, my nerves hanging by a thread.





## The Outermost Island

Karen Dwyer

Years ago I would sink beneath the surface of the water,  
Drifting to the deepest part of the pool,  
Allowing the water to hold me very still, stilled.  
Listen to the quiet--the muffled honey drone of white noise  
That only later one knows to be the sound of the body's seven  
Orifices learning to stabilize the inside  
With the out. A vacuum. A black hole. An abyss where definition  
Comes from the not instead of the is. Deaf.  
Later when I heard Beethoven and learned that he was near deaf  
And never really heard the final symphony, I understood anger-  
Its place in the world. That blessed banging that shows  
How close euphony and cacophony really are. Always the strong  
Broken chords that marked any end.  
All that energy bouncing and banging in his silent angry world,  
finding a place on someone else's piano for someone else's ears.

# pain

Tom Panarese

below are cars  
(the slicer of a deli machine)  
looking down  
(Olympic dive for the gold)  
walk away  
(found something for tomorrow)

morning  
(a sadistic epilogue)  
my wrist  
(will the blood be red)  
my blade  
(will it flow well)  
my thoughts  
(will it hurt)  
my face  
(somebody help me do this)  
my face  
(somebody break the mirror)  
my face  
(somebody help me up)  
her face  
(she's right there)  
her face  
(can't I see her)  
her face  
(help me help me)  
my face  
(use the shards to slice)

your face  
(wake me up)  
your face  
(nice and clean down the vein)  
your face  
(why)  
my face  
(all I see is red)  
her face  
(tears on black)  
light  
(it is cold now)  
evening  
(I am cold now)  
night  
(I am done)

never again  
will I feel.



# Ecstasy of St. Theresa (as seen at night)

Tara Knapp

My wings flutter against the night  
And the moon moves in shadows.  
Heat burns inside you  
As cloth clings to your body,  
Burying breasts.  
Your legs contract,  
Eyes close,  
Tongue quivers.  
I smile at your pleasure  
And strike again with my arrow.  
You call His name.  
Wish for his face.  
I cringe with jealousy, but allow  
His light to fill you  
As the night climaxes  
And you scream.



# To Maura About Things Unknown

Catherine Dawgert

Frozen sun and sisters shrunk to fit in a  
3x5 glossy world of colored dots and blurs,  
I give you the eternal wheelbarrow ride through  
peanut butter patches and paddle ponds squiggled  
pink with worms. Your baby tooth smile, mine  
gapped with pink gums, our laughter caught in  
gray autumn air, I did not know what I know now  
someday you'd be eight years old, and your  
yellow white hair would darken, freed from its  
pigtail prisons, and you'd fall and skin your  
knees, marking your heart with scars deeper than  
the picked over chicken pox that dot your arms.  
Scarier monsters than  
the closet kind would seep into your room  
and in the dark my whispered stories  
of Princess Maura's magic  
could not make them go away.  
Did you ever want my wheelbarrow rides  
did you need my story's shield at night?  
Or did you see what was unknown to me,  
that it is I that really needs you?



# Suburbia

Elizabeth McKeever

Lying on legs that had yet to be shaven  
We pondered the ice cream man  
And the continuity of outstretched  
Manicured lawns.  
We walked to elementary school  
In saddle shoes and sundresses  
With Peanuts lunchboxes, and  
Waved goodbye  
To mothers in station wagons.  
Never imagining our future scorn,  
We buried our noses in It,  
The safety sickening,  
While we walked the line  
Between innocence, conformity, and  
Parody.



# Water-Melanie

Stephen DiDomenico

Her crispety, crunchety, curly-cues of watermelon-smelling hair  
lie thick, meshed together, like sugar vines intertwined--  
life lines of the patch.

But unlike her, i have fallen from the Tree,  
severing the stem which nourished me,  
rotting my apple core eternally.

Her twin-dimpled cheeks: a pair of dimples on a melon rind,  
stamped by divinity, encapsulating the fruity flesh within.  
But my flesh tastes sour, hardened by pride, bitten my selfishness,  
i will hopelessly lose the fruit i love.

Her luscious lips: the juicy pulp of a slice of watermelon;  
her kiss tasting like a water[melon]fall,  
softly caressing my overripe, wrinkled skin.  
Yet i cannot return the flavor for mine is tartfully distasteful.  
Why, God, Why. . .  
. . .why can't i love her like she loves me?

Her shy eyes: blackened, melon-choly-seeds,  
enclosed inside, hesitant, hidden within the hardened round.  
But yet,  
unconditionally,  
she snuggles me warmly, like the cozy cushion of a melon bed,  
like God's pillow, only snugglier.  
Why can't my pitted core soften under her dimpled smile?  
i will die a hungry fool.



# Benjamin's Way

Dani Glaeser

It was quiet out here. The sun was starting to peak up over the tree tops, as the wind teased the surface of the water. Ben shifted his feet back and forth in the boat. He scratched his head and adjusted his line. It wasn't hot yet, but it was going to be. He could feel it. His black lab, Jacob, lay passively on the bow of the john-boat.

He loved this time of year. It was peaceful here. He could never decide if it was because the water was so calm, or the way the trees surrounded the lake, blocking out the rest of the world. It was just him, Jacob, and the fish in the water. Whenever he came out here, his mind seemed to settle. He figured that it was because the air was so pure.

It was this place that kept his mind clear from the things going on back home. It had been ten years since Mabel passed away and his daughter had decided to move in and take care of him. She had become so dependent on him, though, he would hate to think what would happen to her if he. . . .

Two quick pulls came from the end of his rod. He started to reel in his line. It took a good fifteen minutes, but he was eventually able to tire it out. It was a good sized catfish, at least eight pounds. "Well I'll be darned," he said to Jacob. He smiled with pride, and strung it along the side of the boat. It had been a while since he had gotten a catch like this; he could feel the excitement tickling in his stomach. Amy would be proud. As he headed towards another of his favorite

holes, Jacob lifted his head in agreement.

He didn't catch much else for the rest of the day; a few bluegills and a trout. It was about five o'clock when he was pulling into the driveway. Amy was probably worried. Ben usually came in around two o'clock, but after the catfish, he was still reeling on the hope that he would catch another. He hadn't been feeling too well lately, so she was probably afraid that he had hurt himself, or gotten lost. As he parked the car, he looked up at the house. Amy was peering out from the kitchen window. Even Jacob raised his old head from the seat to look at her. He looked at Ben and then put his head back down.

Ben laughed. "Yeah, we're late again, old boy." He scratched the side of the head of his black lab. "Amy's probably worried sick about you." She was standing at the front door, dish towel in hand, waiting for them to get out of the truck. Her blonde hair was pulled back, and he imagined her furrowed brow above her feisty green eyes. He could only really see her hair, since his eyesight was getting bad, but he wouldn't wear glasses. That was out of the question. He could still see enough to know when a fish was biting his line and to stick a worm on the end of his hook, and that was all that mattered.

He couldn't help but try to figure out what she'd do. First she'd scold him as if he were a child, and then she'd hug him and tell him how much she cared. Then, she'd offer him something to eat.

He smiled to himself as he got out of the truck.

He loved Amy with all his heart. She was a good girl with a great mind. She had graduated college with honors, and was studying in law school now. She had worked so hard after college to save up for law school. It took her nine years, but she did it. Now she went to her classes at night and watched him during the day. She should probably be married by now, but he liked her staying with him.

"Dad?" Amy walked out to the truck. He tipped his cap to her and walked over to unhitch the boat from the back. "Hey, I was wondering if you wanted some meatloaf for dinner since you've been away all day."

Ben nodded to her. She was always so considerate. She would never come right out and say she was worried, but he could see it in her eyes. Her green eyes were questioning, and she was wringing her hands in the dish towel she had brought out with her.

"Sure, sweetheart. Meatloaf is fine. You didn't worry too much I hope?" He walked over to her to give her a hug. He knew that would make her feel better. It always did. Even Jacob came over to reassure her. She smiled and rubbed him behind the ears.

"Did you catch anything today? You stayed out longer than usual." Her eyes had that worried look in them.

"Just this." He held up the fish with pride. He saw by her smile that she was proud too. Carefully he handed it to her.

"You know we've got to go and see Dr. Lambert tomorrow. Did you load the

boat up by yourself?" She seemed calmer now, the hug always worked. It reassured her.

"No, no. Lou and Sam put the boat back on the trailer and wiped it down for me. When you gonna come out there with me? It's been a while you know?" He saw her get that distant look, like she was remembering something. Her eyes were kind of glossy and he wondered if she was thinking about how much she loved it out there too. They used to go fishing all the time when she was younger. Her face glowed when she reeled one in, and held it up with pride. She never was afraid of lancing the worms on the end of a hook, or cleaning what she caught.

"Maybe someday. I've got a lot of work to do right now. I have an exam next week. Now c'mon, stop distracting me. It's getting chilly out here and you have to eat dinner. I bet you forgot to eat your lunch?" That was his little girl, she knew him too well.

"All right, all right. Just let me get this boat put away." He continued to unload his bait box and the cooler with his lunch still in it.

"Don't worry about the boat, we can get it tomorrow. Now let's get you inside. All we need is for you to catch a cold before you go and see the doctor."

Dr. Lambert was a good man who knew what he was doing. Ben used to go to Dr. Wilson before he passed on. Wilson had been his doctor for forty-some years and it was hard to find a new one. Took him a year until Amy found Dr. Lambert. You can't trust anyone these days, but Amy trusted him, and that was good enough.

Amy was quiet tonight. She kept eating her food, but he could see that something was on her mind. She must be worried about her exams, he thought. Ben didn't feel like a conversation, he was tired, and his back was starting to ache, but she looked like she needed to talk.

"So, how was your day today?" He took a mouthful of meatloaf.

Amy looked up, as though startled. "Oh, uh, fine. I did some studying, went grocery shopping, did some cleaning around here. Oh, and Mr. Bryant sends you a hello. He hasn't seen you in a while." He noticed how she looked down at the mention of his name. Bryant was only thirty-five, a good, hard-working man. He had been the grocery store owner for the last five years, always giving Amy a flower or candy when they stopped in together. Did she like him? Amy should settle down and get married at some point, but this was kind of soon. Ben still needed her.

"Well, tell him I said hello back," he grumbled and looked down at his plate. He hadn't noticed the pink carnations until now. There they were, sitting out in the middle of the table.

"I will." Amy was smiling while studying her plate.

The rest of the meal was silent. Ben continued shoveling meatloaf into his mouth until he was full. Jacob looked up a couple of times for table scraps that Ben passed him every now and then. "That was delicious Amy. Each time I have it, it just gets better."

He knew she would blush, the red spread through her cheeks and stopped at her neck. She looked down at her plate

and played with her food before she looked back to him. "Thanks."

He smiled at her, and pushed his chair from the table. He was tired and achy. Yawning, he stood up and stretched as much as his old bones would let him. "I'm going to bed now. Do you need any help with the dishes?" He knew she was going to say no, she always did. She never wanted him to overexert himself, even if she had studying to do. She was such a good daughter. He could always depend on Amy.

"No, Dad. You get up there and get yourself some rest. We've got a busy day tomorrow." He noticed her eyes were thoughtful. Her face was withdrawn in some way that he couldn't place. Shrugging his shoulders, he went up to bed followed by Jacob. Sometimes, he just didn't understand her.

Around ten or so in the morning, he piled into Amy's Toyota. Ben thought it was nice, but it wasn't a Ford. He liked Fords because they were made by Americans. At least he thought they were made by Americans. He knew one thing, a Toyota was made in Japan. "Should've bought a car made in America," he mumbled.

He could see that Amy pretended not to hear him and she got in the driver's side. "So, how are you feeling this morning? You haven't complained about your back since we called Dr. Lambert."

Ben resisted the urge to rub his shoulder. "It feels great. Never felt better. I told you that he didn't need to be called." He didn't dare tell her he must have slept on it wrong again. Maybe it was the way he was sitting in her car. It would probably feel better if he were sit-

ting in a Ford. He felt the urge to ask her about Bryant and his pink carnations. He didn't feel like fighting with her before the doctors. His blood pressure would go up and then she wouldn't talk to him for the rest of the day. Whenever he asked her about marriage, both of them ended up being upset. He could never understand why. He only wanted to find out whether or not she was still going to be with him. I'll ask her later, he thought.

Back when Mabel was still with him, his back never gave him any trouble. "Strong as a horse!," she used to say, especially when he was being stubborn. It seemed like only yesterday he was working at the docks, getting paid for doing what he loved. His boat brought in more tuna than any of the others. He could lift barrels of fish with his sturdy arms, and run from port to stern without missing a beat while the other fishermen had to work at their sea legs.

Then there was the birth of Amy. He looked at her in the car. She sat looking straight ahead at the road in deep concentration. When she was born, he knew that she was going to be important. Her big green eyes took in everything. She had Mabel's blonde hair, and his eyes. His hair used to be brown. He reached up to touch it out of habit. It was now gray. Not a streak of color was left in it. He missed those days when he was strong and young, he took care of Mabel and Amy back then. And now....

"We're here," Amy said as she pulled into the parking lot.

He stepped out of the car slowly. He didn't want to agitate his back any

more than it already was. He noticed Amy watching him, probably trying to figure out whether or not he was telling her the truth about how he felt. Placing his cap on his head, he followed her into the building.

"Good morning, Amy. Good morning Mr. Arbor. And how are you today?," the receptionist asked in her patronizing tone. Ben never liked how she always talked down to him, treated him as if he were a kid when he was still old enough to be her father.

"Fine," he grumbled as Amy helped him to the chair. "Dad, do you want me to stay here? I've got some errands to run if you don't need me."

She was probably going to see Bryant. He held his tongue from saying it aloud. "Go ahead, but don't be too long. You know how I hate these offices."

She smiled and gave him a big hug, and kissed his cheek. "Thanks Dad."

"Mr. Arbor? Dr. Lambert will see you now. Come with me."

As he stood up, his back twinged. He sat back down, took a deep breath and was able to stand this time. He hoped that no one had been watching him. As he followed the nurse back to the examination room, he decided to make sure she knew that it wasn't his fault that he had trouble standing up. "Those damn chairs. You all should get new ones. They're too hard to get out of."

The nurse just nodded sympathetically as she and Amy helped him in to see Dr. Lambert. He knew that she didn't actually believe him, but he figured it was worth a try. He was actually

glad that Amy left. He wanted to hear what the doctor was going to tell him first, and then he'd decide what to tell her.

"So, how are you doing today Ben?" Dr. Lambert walked over to him and sat on the stool near the examining table.

"Not so good, doc. My back's been painin' me. I didn't want to tell Amy, 'cause she'll get all worried, you know?"

"May I take a look at it?" That was the one thing about Dr. Lambert. He never tried to embarrass him. He always seemed to treat Ben like an adult and yet with respect for his years of experience. He never rushed Ben's exam, and he took the time to listen to him.

Dr. Lambert helped him out of his jacket and flannel shirt. His hands were strong, yet gentle. They were cold at first, and Ben flinched, which hurt his back a little. Dr. Lambert immediately rubbed his hands together to warm them before he tried again.

"Sorry about that, Ben. I forget how cold my hands get. Have you been fishing lately?" Ben could feel his fingers testing his spine and massaging different muscles. He closed his eyes and tried to relax.

"I caught an eight pound catfish out there yesterday. Not much seems to be biting lately. I tell you, doc, it seems like that's the only time I'm not in pain. It's just something about that water." He could picture his favorite spot. It wasn't as good as being there, but it helped him get his mind off of the examination. He could see the leaves beginning to turn orange and yellow, and the bent white oak that hung just a little bit over the

water.

"I know what you mean. There's just something about being out there by yourself. It's just you and nature. You forget everything else, at least until you have to come back to the dock. Well, Ben, I can't feel anything wrong with your back, so I'm going to have to take a few x-rays if you don't mind."

Ben flinched as he remembered the cold metal tables they made you lay on while the nurses contorted your body into different directions. "Ah, is there some other way?"

"It's up to you. If you want me to find out why your back hurts, well..."

Ben swallowed hard. "Okay. But it better be soon before I change my mind."

Amy was smiling when he had finished with the doctor. He was still a little stiff from the X-rays, but Dr. Lambert had given him some medication for the pain. He was feeling grumpy, and the fact that she had probably been with Bryant was beginning to annoy him. He wanted to go home, get something to eat, and watch some television. It was too cold to enjoy fishing, and as much as he enjoyed it, he didn't want to agitate his back.

He was angry that he was forced to depend on other people. He used to be able to lift whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. He would do what he wanted without having to ask anyone. And now here he was, being driven by his daughter, who was probably going to get married any day and leave him to suffer alone. "I am not a weakling," he mumbled to himself, but Amy had heard him.

"What did you say, Dad?" She looked at him quizzically.

"Nothing." He answered harshly.

She stopped at a traffic light and looked at him. "You feeling okay?" She touched his hand with her own. He pulled his away and crossed his arms.

"So what did Bryant have to say?" He could tell from her expression that he must have looked angry. He didn't feel sorry, though. He was angry inside. He had lost control, and he would rather feel angry than helpless.

"I went to the bank today I went to the grocery store yesterday." She looked at him, and he could see her eyebrows raise in question.

"Never mind." He kept his arms crossed and stared straight ahead at the road. Amy must have known that he didn't want to talk anymore, because she was quiet too.

A week later, Ben found himself sitting in Dr. Lambert's office once again. The week had been frustrating for him, because all he did was fight with Amy. He would keep asking her about her relationship with Bryant, and she would in turn avoid the topic, or deny it profusely. Then, on Thursday, she had gotten so angry that she left the dinner table. She got up, put her coat on, and left him there. He could hear her car pulling away as he finished his meal in silence. Jacob didn't even bother him for table scraps.

He felt bad that he hadn't given her any time to study, or be by herself. He hadn't been fishing for days. It had either rained, or the wind was too gusty to cast a line. He had forced himself to stay in the house, and questioned her about Bryant every chance he got. Maybe he hadn't been fair to her. Maybe



he should leave her alone for a while. He knew deep down that he was being unfair, but he didn't want to admit it. When he got home, he would go to the lake, and give Amy some time to herself.

Dr. Lambert was running a little late. Ben could tell that the doctor had bad news for him. The way he kept putting his hand on his head was a sure sign that the news was bad. "Amy, why don't you go and sit outside while I talk to the doc?" He smiled and patted her knee to reassure her.

"Dad, I really want to stay and hear this. Please." Did she notice it too? If it was bad news, then he wanted to be the one to tell her, not the doctor.

He noticed that Dr. Lambert nodded to her, and she stood up to leave. She kept glancing at the both of them unsure of what to do, not wanting to leave. Eventually, she left, and the doctor looked him in the eye.

"Okay, I know you're not gonna tell me anything good, so let's get on with it." He crossed his legs and clasped his hand together. Mabel, give me strength, he thought.

"Ben, I don't know how to tell you this..."

"Just say it. I'm strong, I can handle it."

"You've got bone cancer."

"Cancer?" He had heard the word before, a long time ago when his brother had died of lung cancer. But his brother got it from smoking cigarettes. "How? I mean, I don't smoke. I never have."

"I can't tell you how you got it. It just happens in some people. But the fact is, you have it."

Ben clasped his hands tighter.

"How long do I have?"

"It's at an advanced stage. I don't know why you didn't come to me sooner."

"But what's Amy gonna do? How am I going to tell her?"

On the way home he noticed Amy was quiet, and kept blinking her eyes a lot. "I know he told you. I can see it in your face." He played with his cap in his lap while trying to avoid her eyes.

"Yeah," she took a deep breath, "He told me."

He was surprised at how collected and calm she seemed to be. Mabel would have been a nervous wreck at this point. He looked up at her face, searching for some reason, and then she looked at him. Her eyes were teary, but they were clear and strong.

"So, what are you going to do?" Her eyes turned back to the road.

He sighed and said nothing. What could he say to her? He could give her a hug, but what would happen when he couldn't do that anymore? God, he felt helpless, more now than ever. Dr. Lambert had told him that it would become more painful, and he might have to go for chemotherapy. He knew it was hopeless though. He could feel the tears rising to his eyes, and he struggled to hold them back. Not now, he couldn't do it now. He had to be strong. He couldn't let Amy see that he was in pain, or that he didn't want to die.

As they pulled into the driveway, Jacob bounded out to meet them. He waited patiently for Ben to get out of the car, then began to bound over towards him. As if by instinct, the dog stopped and sat before Ben, whose eyes could no longer hold back the tears that were be-

ginning to stream down his face. "Good boy," whispered Ben as he scratched the dog's head.

He wouldn't look at Amy, even after they got into the house. He just went straight to his room. He could feel Amy's glance upon him as he painfully climbed the fifteen stairs to the second floor. He wanted to glance back and look at her, to tell her not to worry, but he knew that it would do no good. He only had a year at most to live, and he was scared. He couldn't let his daughter see his fear. Now she could go and marry Bryant. She wouldn't have to take care of him anymore.

He walked over to his bed and sat down. He took off his shoes and let himself feel tired. He picked up the wedding picture of Mabel and himself from forty years ago. "I've let her down, Mabel."

Mabel was so beautiful back then. She was beautiful up until the day she died. She kept her hair long even when it lost its blondness. The times they had back then. She was such a strong woman, with such a big heart. Maybe that's why it finally broke. She was just loving too much for her own good. Her heart attack was hard on him, and since that day Amy had been with him.

He was never really sad about the way she went. She had said she wanted to die young and quick, and she did. He did miss her, though. They used to spend quiet evenings walking along the lake. Mabel couldn't swim, and she hated fish, but she loved looking at the lake.

He was getting tired. He placed the picture back on his nightstand and turned off the light. Sleep took any other

thoughts from him.

On Wednesday, he got up early to go to the lake. He had stayed in his room for the past few days, and knew that Amy was worried about him. Her eyes seemed to be puffy and red whenever he saw her. Several times, he caught her standing at his door, watching him, but she never said anything to him. She would be there long enough to meet his eyes, then walk away. It was as though she knew that what he needed now was space.

He hated to look at himself in the mirror because of the dark circles that had formed under his eyes from his restless sleep. He was seventy-seven years old, and already looked like a skeleton. "Yup, I'm almost there."

Jacob had stayed by his side since he came home after talking with Dr. Lambert. The once passive dog was continually on the alert. He wouldn't leave Ben's side, and now he sat beside him, watching his every move. Ben would laugh at Jacob when he would do this. "I know you, you're just waiting to run and get Amy if something goes wrong."

Ben had managed to get Lou, who lived next door, to drive his truck down to the pond and unload the boat for him. While he waited, he threw a stick to Jacob, who happily retrieved it for him. He had managed to get Amy to go out for a refill for his prescription painkillers. By the time she would get back, he would already be out on the lake, on the mirrored waters, just him, Jacob, and the fish they would catch.

Lou had almost finished putting the john-boat into the water. Ben called for Jacob and grabbed the cooler from the truck.

"Now Mr. Arbor, are you sure you should be fishing? I mean, a man in your condition and all?" Lou looked down at the ground and scuffed his shoe.

"I am perfectly fine, young man. Now you remember what I told you. You just sit tight and don't tell Amy where I am at if she asks. You got that?"

"I got it Mr. Arbor," Lou replied.

Jacob leaped into the john-boat and Ben painfully managed to situate himself in the driver's seat. "Got room for one more?" a familiar voice asked.

Ben had to look twice as Amy, fishing hat and all, helped herself aboard. "You can't outsmart me that easily, old man. Now let's go catch some fish."

He thought his heart would break as his tears crept down his cheeks. It had been years since they had been out on the water together. She was so busy with school and taking care of everything that she never had the time. After the past couple of weeks, seeing her here was the last thing he expected. But here she was, sitting with him in his john-boat, playing with his dog and sticking worms on the end of their lines.

They fished for a while in silence. Every so often, she would look up to him and smile, or scratch Jacob's ears. She looked so young out there, like she did long ago before she left to go to school up north. She was almost thirty-three, but she looked like she was twenty-one.

It was funny how as much as Mabel had hated the water, Amy loved it. It was too bad that Mabel never liked to fish. They always got along so well before she died.

He decided that he would take Amy to his favorite spot, where the white

oak hung slightly over the water. As soon as they pulled in, he could hear her suck in her breath as she took in her surroundings.

"Dad, it's absolutely beautiful here. And so peaceful." For a brief moment, he thought she sounded just like Mabel. He smiled, and cast his line into the water. Amy did the same. Jacob laid contentedly between them, looking over the side only to see if they had caught anything.

"So, you gonna marry Bryant?," he asked her. He tossed a line over, and watched her reaction.

Her face got red, and she began to laugh. "What are you talking about? Mr. Bryant is the town grocer."

Ben began to blush. "Well, the way you were acting when you told me he said hello the other day, I thought, and the pink carnations...I thought..." The heavy sadness that weighed on his chest was lifting, as he realized what a fool he had been.

"Dad! C'mon now, you know me. I told you that I'm not going to settle down until my schooling is finished, and I still have another year to go." She began to smile, and looked at him as though she had the solution to a great problem. "Is this why you've been asking me so many questions? Did you think I was going to leave you or something?" Her blonde hair was glowing from the sunlight, and he could see the sunburn starting to show in her cheeks.

Sheepishly he glanced down. "I've been such a fool." What had he been thinking? This was his little girl. She would choose a cultured man, not a grocery store owner. Looking at her he knew

that she was making a conscious choice to be with him. Holding her rod in her left hand, she petted Jacob with her right. She sat back in the passenger chair completely relaxed, smiling at him.

"You know what Dad? I just wanted you to know that I love you. And even though I don't know what you're going through, or the pain you feel, I want you to know that I'm proud of you. I have always been proud of you and what you've done for mom and me, and well. . . . I just thought that you should know that." Amy looked up at him with her watery green eyes, and Jacob nuzzled his hand.

A warm, almost tingling sensation was building within his stomach, rising to his chest. It was ready to overflow and spill out of him into the air around him. His heart was so full of love. This

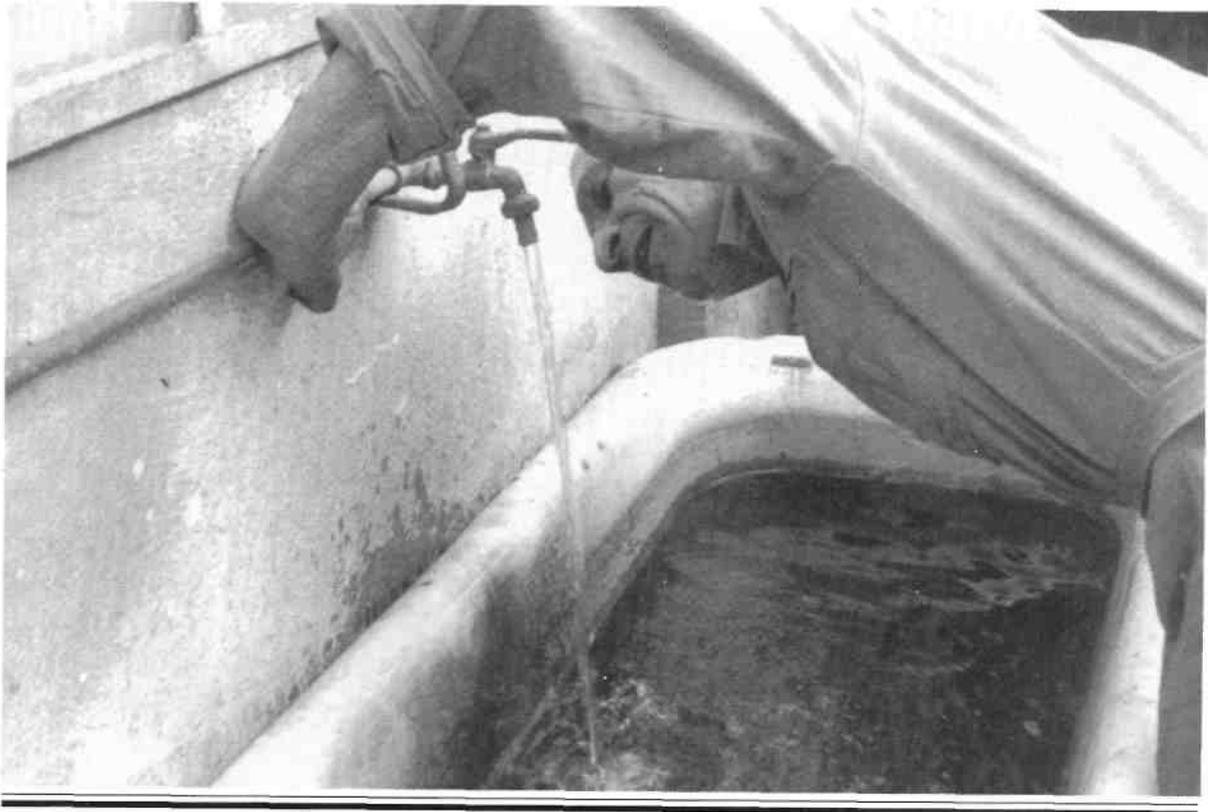
was his little girl sitting before him, only he could see that she was a woman now, just as proud and strong as her mother was. All this time, he had thought that it was her who depended on him, but it had always been the other way around. It didn't matter now. If he left this world today, or tomorrow, he knew that she could handle it.

She had his fire in her eyes, and her mother's will. Ben sat back and shifted his feet. He scratched his head, and waited. He knew that he was going to make a catch today. He looked once more at his favorite spot. If his time was going to come, he wanted it to be here.

"Hey, Dad?" Amy was watching him.

He cleared his throat. "Yeah?"

"Do you think we can do this again sometime?"



# Egypt

Tara Knapp

The click of her heels  
Taps upon marble  
Raising ancient ghosts  
From their cherished coffins,  
Their dim chambers,  
Dim places of death.  
And, I watch her modern heels  
Forget the past that surrounds her  
In a dustless tomb.  
The statues stare in horror,  
The sphinx, the pharoh.  
They frown, they frown, they frown,  
They cry.  
O God of Thebes, of the Nile,  
Rise and drown her in the past-  
Rise before she disappears Without having been.



# Truths Told on the Dance Floor

Michael Gerardi

Tonight I saw the woman

I could love.

She was unaware of my distant admiration;

my quiet scrutiny of the strobe light  
highlighted her perfect features glistening  
with sweat.

Give me a reason to love you, sweet child,  
for I would bring you flowers.

I think I could rejoice in you,  
in your beautiful. . .

*Beyond Lies there is simple erotic pleasure.  
nakedness.*

*Slow torture.*

*The delicacy of a mouth on the nape of a neck.*

*Flesh Exploration.*

*The kneading of dough.*

*Anticipation of that final touch which causes  
a burst of air to fill the lungs.*

*Maybe you would even trust me,  
and imagine love in my loveless eyes.*

*I might even say "my love" truthfully,  
yet faithlessly.*

*Isn't this what you wanted after all?*

*Living in a sleep, cashing in a dream,  
unaware of the emotional price yet to be paid.*

body.

The house music comes to a slow fade.

The light softens,

And she fades into the crowd,  
out of my life,

While fixing her ponytail.

# holocaust

Tara Knapp

I lie in a pit of warm, red glue  
as night drops like a guillotine.  
Death surrounds me, frozen corpses  
grow heavy and bury me, my wound  
stabs.

The wind is warm, scented,  
the last breath of my child.  
Fire licks the naked body,  
flesh melts, charred ribs burn. My eyes  
grow with terror, my hand struggles  
to silence my mouth. Yet the scream  
leaks out like a yellow fog from cold  
concrete walls.



# Letter from Myrtle Beach

Karen Laird

I can trace your profile in the sand,  
and the photograph is a  
vague black and white memory  
of words whispered in an unlit room.

Past the jetty, a single flower  
hunches towards the absent sun,  
and somehow blooms despite itself.  
I, too, shiver when I feel that warm.

And once again, it's August  
when all life ripens to a fever, to a fire,  
desire swelling to an inevitable crash,  
as the blue limbs of the ocean  
rise and fall  
in a frenzy.  
If you were here,  
my hands would dance over  
the smooth browned skin you wear  
so coolly in the beach's granules,  
treading through rivers of muscle, of flesh,  
drifting towards  
an unreachable shore.

Leaving on a northern bound Greyhound Bus,  
I learned that promising is a defense,  
one feeling is too pure, too dramatic, to utter.

Today, in Carolina,  
the southern rain whispers of loss,  
Regret leans like a  
wilted lily.

# Jealousy

Dani Glaeser

You let it die the day you succumbed  
to that slithering in your ear.  
Now you let the serpent's coils  
caress your willing body  
You listened to its silky hiss,  
as it slithered onto your bare shoulders.  
It wasn't long before you were  
almost buried in those scaly coils.  
Your head was left uncovered and  
your eyes took on that greenish glow.  
It was difficult for me to move,  
without stepping on its slithering coils.  
Now to look at you all I can see is your eyes,  
writhing with the poison of your new master.  
You shake with anticipation,  
to spread your new venom  
upon an innocent victim.  
And now I watch as you wither,  
the green serpent feasting upon your childish heart.



# Lucretia

Janine A. LeGates

I seek my own dark title,  
bastard princess of stained glass.  
You sit across from me  
and gorge your fill on the feast I have set.  
Do you now know the power I have?  
I will be the mistress of my own black touch.  
In five days your rotting innards will shrivel up,  
and choke the wretched life  
from your corpulent form.  
My father's will be done.  
Another pastry, my Lord?  
Perhaps some wine?  
Your greasy fingers stuff shreds of meat  
through your bloated lips.  
Hallowed be his name,  
fulfilled be his every desire.  
I am his handmaiden,  
and my skills serve him alone.  
When at last you lie with the worms,  
my trespass will be forgiven  
washed clean by his hand,  
his probing, seeking hand.

