

Perspective(s)

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Perspective(s)

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Sheep Camp Every Summer

John Watts

Every summer way up Black Rock Canyon,
Daddy breaks trail along the streambed.
Through brambles and thickets,
He traces the canyon's twists and turns.
Its walls lean in as if to topple down on him.
He tracks the flashing stream toward its source.
Here it disappears underground; there it surfaces.
Small black spiders scurry to their gleaming webs spun flat between the
rocks.

In The Fearing Time, these protector mountains folded their arms around
the People sheltering them from the soldiers. Protector bears hid the
People in their caves and stood guard against the soldiers.

We start for sheep camp in the early morning darkness.
The sheep must smell the mountain grass; they seem so eager, too.
Juniper and pinon give way to aspen and ponderosa.
Red paintbrush and purple shooting stars decorate our path to the heart of
the mountains.

Mommy is with us.
I love sheep camp because we have her to ourselves up here.
She carries a bag, stopping often to gather medicines.
Every plant has its use.
Brother knows this, too.
He bends down and plucks a flower:
"Here, Sis, taste it before the hummingbird drains all the nectar."
He tears off a Yucca blade and bites its base.
It tastes like cucumber, but then he throws it like a knife at me and Sister.
Sister has brought movie magazines.
We will read them each night at sheep camp
Until the love affairs are imprinted in our minds like lichen on rocks.
Will Liz leave Eddie for Richard?
Of course, she will.

Past the wire gate to keep cattle from the canyon's recesses,
Past the well with its pump handle hidden in the trees,
Past the rust red spires that tower above us, guarding the inner folds of
the canyon,
Past the fork that splits the trail to Aunt Esther's camp from ours.
Sheep camp's still far away, and the pop cans we hid in our packs are
heavy as boulders.

Last year at sheep camp Mommy awoke me before dawn. "We need
flour," she said. "Go back down to our house and catch Daddy before
he goes to work. Tell him to bring flour when he comes back up. Hurry,
child, you must catch him before he leaves for the mines." I ran through
the darkness. The rocks tripped me and the bushes grabbed me. I was at
the canyon mouth at false dawn. By sun-up, I was at the hill above our
house, "Daddy," I cried. "I ran all the way down." "I'm so proud of you,
my girl," he said. "See, you can do anything."

We round a bend in the canyon.
There the towering pine tree that Brother will climb to look for wander-
ing sheep.
There the cliff from which our superman brother, perched on a ledge,
will taunt us.

Do we know that this daredevil will someday meet his match?
No.
Brother is our tormentor and our hero today.

Finally, we arrive at sheep camp.
Daddy has dug up the blue pots and pans from the cave where we hid
them last summer.
He's repaired the sheep corral, pitched the miner's tent, rebuilt the shade-
house.
Everything is ready for Mommy and us kids.
This year he has even brought a bed frame and mattress springs for him
and Mommy.
Tonight we will go to bed when the sun passes behind the high canyon
walls.
Tomorrow we will begin our summer at sheep camp.

Pregame

Rae Ann Collard

“Look, it’s easy. I’ll distract, you grab, write it down, put it back. It’ll be fast and then we’re both eligible for the game,” Toby urged, the noise in the classroom cloaking their conversation.

“I, ... I just don’t know, I...,” Darren replied.

“Do you want to destroy your chance as Quarterback? If you flunk, you don’t play. She left the key. It’s like an invite!”

“Yea, but...”

“I’m going now. Don’t let me down.” Toby, now in play, advances to the podium.

By her desk, Darren stood. He sat. Yardage lost. He holds his stomach, wipes his head. Player fumbles. Toby has engaged the teacher in a question about the team project, to her delight. Yardage gained. He questions further, passes Darren a “get with it” glare and keeps questioning and clarifying her answers.

Darren stands, determines to play, moves to the desk, grabs a Kleenex, steals the key. Easy. Sits and wipes his head. Multiple choice. Good. He scrawls the answers, B, A, D,.... Finishes. Another Kleenex, test back in place, sits down. Play completed. He hears Toby say, “Thanks Ms. Nelson, that clarifies my confusion.”

Game over. Peer pressure scores and a conscience lost.

Hands



Lisa Grey

Elements

Hunter Rose

I sit next to this girl—I can't get my mind off of her. Her hair is a sheet of fine-hammered gold that gently cascades over slender shoulders—her laugh, a spring flower courting a butterfly. Startling cobalt eyes smile at me as I walk into the sterile classroom and make my way through rows of flat-black lab tables to my seat—I see no other and no one sees me.

As I near her, a slight ruffling of bag and adjustment of seat writes a novel to my desperate imagination. We sit in silence—intolerably close—learning the important features of sedimentary rocks and tectonic plate movement. Her scent is intoxicating—every inhalation is a powerful lesson in inebriation—I look forward to every session.

The professor tries in vain to capture my attention with talks of volcanic activity and earth shattering quakes but I am lost in the sea of hope to my right. Occasionally, she will catch me gazing in that direction and an elegant smile brings warmth to my heart. When she does speak to me, my tongue stumbles over my teeth trying to get the answer out the way my brain had formed it—always a loss.

Yet, the beauty of youth needs not the withered face of age to be its companion—an awkward chronologic reflection. Still, I know I am living in a dream-world. She is young, vibrant and beautiful—I am old, brown, and loathsome. When the geologic time-capsule opens, she runs away as fast as possible—yet she is always kind in taking her leave. Until our next class; loneliness will plant the weed of desire into my garden of dreams.

Trees



Ezra Pelt

resuscitate

joseph owen

computer screen smashed to preserve choppy syntaxes of stubs of grass
tufts sticking into my feet and
fingers tingling as rocks become flesh pulsing too bright to be seen under
glass oceans of stars
the joy of vision is that thoughts curve out under moving mirrors that
never collide cascading through
granite and sand
alive now to the wet black sandal and sun against my feet drying off im-
mersed in warmth
against cold bricks and stone
snow melt-off in the waves that still hold my breath as I let the move-
ment become real rising into rock
and snow where clouds and mountains blend together into winter melting
under my toes

Artist Investigation - Which Came First



Brett Burchfield

Feet



Lisa Grey

MAD - *The Birth of Mutually Assured Destruction*

Roberta Summers

Hey man, all you need to do is tweak the process a little bit. What's the matter, don't you know how to split an atom? I may be tiny, but I'm mighty. You've no idea of the destruction I'm capable of—sure you want to do this? You should see all the pretty colors, not to mention the mushroom cloud I produce. I know I'm a show off. Of course, you can't know yet how lethal I am, but what's the mutating of a few cells in mammals in light of the power I give. So a hundred-thousand humans die, give or take a few, not to mention livestock, dogs, cats, deer, you name it. And I haven't even tracked what it will do to reptiles, fish, insects—plant life? Who knows?

Ah, there you have it Dr. Fermi. Now you've got it. Not only can I release neutrons, but those neutrons will go on to split more atoms which will release more neutrons—if we get enough atoms splitting neutrons, we have fission—wow, what a blast. Now let me see, what kind of havoc can I wreak in the oceans. Ah ha, how about the devastation of all life around Bikini Atoll. Of course, in a few decades when I fade to half-life, the marine animals will begin to come back—mutated, but alive. What's that? A lump next to your dorsal fin? Tsk, tsk. I didn't say you'd come back the same, did I?

You silly humans, I could have wiped all of you out at once. See what I did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki? But it's much more fun this way—a little radioactivity here, a little there and you'll never know what happened. One day you'll have a tumor in your tummy, your breast, or one of my favorite cancers, leukemia, especially when the kids get it. How about testicular cancer, tee hee—really messes up your sex life. Your sons and daughters are sterile? Planet's overcrowded anyway.

Ooo, nuclear power plants—a legitimate peacetime application. Now if I just leak a little, I can contaminate a whole region of towns and rivers without being a bomb. No one can say I'm the bad guy anymore. But all it takes is one careless employee, perhaps a little tired. Just one teeny weeny mistake and I can spew radiation from Chernobyl to the East Coast of the United States. Hey! I love those winds aloft. Why my radioactivity can circumnavigate the globe in less than two weeks. There's no hiding place I can't get into—your water, your air, you name it, I'm there.

You foolish men, you have no idea the power you've unleashed and how it will change your lives—that is if you survive it.

Limericks

a poem is words set to rhythm
a poet does what she can with them
if from time to time
her poems should rhyme
what a splendid gift she's been given

—Khris

i once met a poet called jane
her poems all sounded the same
but she blew my mind
when she turned a rhyme
using orange and my middle name

—Khris

poetry is song without music
it works any way you would choose it
but take my advice
and always think twice
before making light when you use it

—Khris

gnosis

joseph owen

shattered groves
stand over leather-bound papyrus
becoming dreams that never correct themselves

the soundness of flesh rises above fears
slipping away into chronic crashes of questions that cannot be answered
unless you bounce them off the solidness of trees
twisting around our spines
and singing to seraphim

Bridge



Anthony Bodine

The Joy of Falling

Kimberly Williams

The last time
I loved myself this much
had to be third grade, when Mrs. Nebel
tried to help me hold on
to myself in the hard pull
of my peers and pre-adolescence. She yearned
for me to live left-handedly, encouraged me
to make checkmarks “backwards” and cross T’s
from right to left. She saw my early penchant
for poetry, and accepted
my lack of grace.

Today, I shower slowly
as if I am a prize. As if I contain
all the beauty this world has to offer.
I settle under the spray and shave
my legs in the rain. I pull the razor
lovingly, longing for myself that loved
myself without
conditions. And when I lie down
under the water as it splashes warm drops
across my body, I feel freedom.
I greet myself under the faucet, acknowledging
how I’m heavier
for carrying Andrew, note how my breasts
are deflated yet a size larger post partum,
and think, why it’s finally time
to love myself again.

Why not? So I lift
my feet to the spray and let my heels know
the surge--this part of my body that never
experiences the joy of falling
water. Puddles form in the soft
spot of my belly,

and when I emerge from that shower
I am more than clean. I am cleansed
and finally whole again.

Love Was Too Small For This

Melissa Guitierrez

“I’m sorry, what?” My husband said, glancing at me and then at the man who sat across from us. His hand was laced through mine and in his other arm lay our sleeping child. It may have been me or my parental bias but our child was near perfect. He had slept through the night since he was born and rarely cried when he was awake. His blue eyes were a reflection of my husband’s, and if his hair was lighter than my own and lighter than my husband’s, so what? Our child was never meant to be a clone of us.

My husband glanced back at the man and then at me. “How-“ I asked and then my voice cracked. I cleared my throat one more time. “How could this possibly have happened?”

The man shook his head. His egg like head shone brightly as though he had polished it in anticipation for this meeting. “It shouldn’t have. We have provisions, safety guards...” Spots of red dotted his cheeks.

Almost three years ago my husband and I started in vitro fertilization. After spending the previous five years trying to get pregnant on our own we had finally gone to an upscale fertilization clinic for help. The safety precautions that the man listed were part of the reasons we had chosen *this* clinic to help us conceive a child. This was not supposed to happen.

“So, he’s-“ My husband now paused and shifted our child in his arms. The small bundle was cradled near his chest so that the baby’s ear was close to his heart. “He’s not ours?”

The man across from us shifted uncomfortably and adjusted his tie. “No sir. Not exactly.” I shot my husband a look that he didn’t catch.

“What do you mean, not exactly?” I demanded.

“If you haven’t noticed, this is not exactly the time to hold back information.” My husband snarled. In the ten years I had known my husband, I had never seen him this close to being enraged.

“Ma’am,” The lawyer started hesitantly, “Your son is *yours*, but not your husband’s.” The lawyer’s words seemed to echo off the empty space that suddenly surrounded me. My intake of breath was as sharp and broken as a damaged mirror.

He continued to explain how there was a second couple and when the other man had donated his sperm, it had been switched with my husband’s. Another woman had carried my husband’s child while I had

done the same for her husband.

In and out, it's easy. I thought. Still, I gasped for air seconds later. My husband was staring at me, the evidence of shock read easily on his face. His blue eyes seemed to suddenly match the circles beneath his eyes. From his arms, I heard our son (*my son, only my son now*) yawn and he stretched his hands up and cradled his father's (*not his father, not in the way that geneticist talk of*) strong chin. Mark didn't flinch away from the baby's soft touch as I thought he might. In fact he closed his eyes for a long second and reveled in that soft, sweet, silky touch. I knew he could smell the Cheerios on the baby's breath that he had eaten right before he had fallen asleep for his nap. The blankets that surrounded the small child were the softest that a pair of grandparents could find.

I stood abruptly and the chair I had been sitting in crashed to the floor. The lawyer, in his tweed three-piece suit winced as it crashed to the ground but my husband and child were completely unfazed.

"I think it's time that you leave. Now."

"I can only imagine how you feel Mrs. Johansson but right now that is not . . ."

"I asked you to leave." I hissed, my hands clenched at my sides. "Because you *cannot* imagine what kind of deplorable pain and agony you have just caused my family. Your immeasurable incompetence is unfathomable and pretty soon I'm going to lose my hold on a good vocabulary and resort to using common four letter words." I raised my hand that was shaking with rage and pointed to the door. "Leave now, or so help me god, I will *help you leave.*"

The lawyer stood and crossed the room quickly to our front door.

"Mrs. Johansson, I will have to return with the police if that's what it takes to retrieve the child-

"You will not take our child from us." Mark said, standing and pulling himself to his full height, which was a considerable amount compared to the round, soft lawyer at our door. I felt a hot rush of pride in my chest when he pronounced my child as his own as well. We had raised the child as our own, had loved him more than love could explain in a single syllable and we would fight to keep him now.

With a look at the both of us, the man turned on his heel and exited, closing the door softly. When I heard the screen door slam closed as well, I gasped again. Tears didn't just gather in my eyes, they bunched up and poured out of me. I gasped and cried and held on to the kitchen counter with both hands. Mark put the baby down in his bassinet and crossed over to me. He gathered me in his arms and I clung to him. He buried himself in my hair and we stayed like that for a long, long time.

Accidents of Fate

Franklin Dale Thomas

“I’m scared,” she said. She reached across and grasped my hand. I squeezed back.

“I know. Me too, my Love,” I said through the chasm that separated our two stainless-steel beds. A quick glance at the plain, white walls, the monotony of equipment and the aroma of aesthetic air pulled my focus back into my private field of vision. I closed my eyes again.

Fate had brought us to this place. Any one of a hundred thousand of life’s smallest choices would have brought a different outcome. But having her next to me in this critical moment of my life, and being there for her in hers, left me with but one conclusion: if any one of those choices had erased the hardships of the past, with the result being that this scene be deleted, I’d have nothing of it.

“Close your eyes and breathe deeply with me, Love,” I said. “Travel to the mountains and the fields once more with me.” This had always been my passion when it came to her. I’d tried for years to truly meld my thoughts with hers. And, with time, we had begun to see through each other’s eyes.

As we looked inward the field of vision narrowed, and in the center was a light. The kaleidoscope of colors was alive, flowing. The colors moved in ribbons and painted illuminated pictures on panes of crystal. There were flashes of children and animals playing, of deer running by, and birds singing in the trees. Picnics came and went, as did disputes.

I looked with dismay at our clasped hands. The once proud arms that connected them seemed to be but thin, porous bone covered by scant ribbons of flesh. Wholly betraying their ages were purple blotches that their owners had been forced to call their own.

“You need to eat now and keep up your strength,” I said to her.

Night



Myron Benally

“You too,” she replied, “You need your strength more than me.”

In gesture we lifted food to each other’s mouths. In that moment I took in the same air, laden with all the smells and mysteries, that I had so many years ago when we cut a towering cake. Smiles pierced the clouds between us.

“I don’t want to be apart,” she said with a whisper.

“It will only be a moment, my Love,” I replied, “and then we’ll tell each other of our new experiences.”

“Goodbye, for now, Dear,” she said.

The Kaleidoscope of Grandmotherhood

Traci HalesVass

A diminutive being, you float in warm liquid. You develop lightning fast, cells forming quicker than a blink. Before you could be known you were a part of your mother, connected to your father, and encompassing your ancestors from time backward, unknowingly including me, your grandmother, in your tiny embrace.

Your daddy cries to me in joy. My son's awe at seeing your growth thrills me. As a mother becoming a grandmother, I experience a new relationship with my son. I observe a young man change into a father. Your coming awakens appreciation in him for his upbringing, and we spend hours in conversation about raising children. Suddenly a boy worries about a future always vague to him before.

Vicariously I feel your daddy and your aunt fluttering inside of me when your mom tells me she feels you fluttering inside of her, and I realize time is circular. I remember the morning sickness, the cumbersome new body that grew around me, and the thrill as I followed each step of my babies' development.

Your mom has become more than my son's loved one. She carries an extension of me inside of her. Your conception fortifies the kinship between my daughter-in-law and me. Now she bears the nexus for the lineage, and we are eternally linked to each other.

My mother, had she lived, would have put her hand on my belly to feel her children kicking, and reminisce to me about her pregnancy.

I learned about my heritage at my grandmother's round oak table, while eating hot cookies dunked in cold milk. Warming up after a romp in the snow, I listened to her tell tales about my mother's growing up, stories my mom would never tell. And I look forward to having you sit at my table, eating cookies and milk, while I tell you about your daddy and aunt, and about your great-grandmother, and her mother before her.

Will you bring back with you the green eyes of my mother? Your coming makes me miss her afresh. Though you can never know her personally, you will know all about her. And I see part of her will live again in you. Somewhere in your genetic structure you carry the history of all

of us, all the way back to the beginning of time.

I am excited to hold you in a few short months, to feel your hot baby body radiating softness through a fuzzy blanket, have you grasp my finger in your wrinkly little red fist. The memory is tangible of a little boy or girl resting against my shoulder, bobbing his or her head, cooing quietly.

Your coming is awaited. Your growth is monitored. We are blessed to be chosen by you to be your progenitors.

Grandma



Cassie Arthur

The Story Keeper

Denise Hinson

First the floodwaters came. The waves buffeted the people, and each surge ripped away their stories, pulling them out on the tides. The creatures of the sea saw what was happening to the people's stories and felt sorry for them. The creatures raced here and there, seizing the stories and holding them close to keep them safe.

After the floodwaters came the drought. Seven years passed and the land died. The people became nomads, dropping behind them more stories, wondering what they were forgetting to remember. The creatures of the land saw, and felt sorry for them. The creatures raced to pick up the stories where the people dropped them. They held them close to keep them safe.

After the drought came the fire. It came upon the people during a starless night. The people fled before it, leaving everything behind—their homes, the existence they had always known, and the remaining stories. The creatures of the air saw, and felt sorry for the people. The creatures flew here and there, pulling the stories from the ashes. They held them close to keep them safe.

When the people returned with the dawn, nothing remained but black shadows. Without their stories, the people could not feel sorrow or regret, anger or anguish, because there were no longer words for these things.

Mother Vida stood on a hill overlooking the village, watching as the people stumbled through the destruction. She was saddened by the emptiness in their eyes and in their spirits. She no longer had a place among the people. She wiped away salty tears and returned to her home in the deepest part of the sea.

For generations the people wandered the earth. The creatures of the land and air surrounded them, speaking the stories and trying to remind the people that they were a family, meant to live together. But the people could not hear them. Believing the people would hear the creatures of the water, the land and air creatures went to the water creatures, beseeching them to give back the stories they protected. But the water creatures could not venture upon dry land. Only Mother Vida could send them to the people.

The water creatures went to Mother Vida, who rested in her home

in the deepest part of the sea. “Mother,” they pleaded, “return the waters to the land so we might give the people their stories.”

Mother Vida shook her flowing hair, scattering the water creatures huddled close to her. “The people have forgotten how to hear the stories,” she said. “It is too late.”

“Please,” the creatures begged. “We must try.”

Because she loved the creatures of the water, land, and air, and because she loved the people, she relented, and sent the water back to the land. The water edged onto the earth, slowly filling the valleys. Where water returned, life sprang forth. Bushes and grasses grew, and the trees put forth new leaves.

The people gathered at the river’s edge to marvel at the sight. The water creatures jumped from ponds and lakes, telling the people the stories. The land creatures rustled in the tall grasses, telling the people the stories. The air creatures flew from tall tree to tall tree, singing out the stories. They sang from the bushes, the treetops, and the breaking waves. They sang into the evening, until they were exhausted. Other creatures sang in the night until the dawn, whispering the stories into the dreams of the people. The people learned to love the sound of the songs. But the people could not understand them.

Mother Vida watched in sorrow. She had hoped the people would take back their stories, which the water creatures and land creatures and air creatures had protected all these years. Now she feared the stories were lost forever.

A wandering girl with eyes dark as the ocean followed the songs to the water’s edge. Unlike the other people, when this young girl heard the songs of the creatures, she felt a stirring in her heart. This young girl knew that what the creatures were trying to tell her was important.

One evening in warm summer, the young girl was sitting upon a large boulder at the water’s edge as was her custom. She listened as the creatures of the air gathered in the trees for their night’s rest. She struggled to hear the words beneath the quiet chirping and whistles; she leaned over the water, straining to see the water creatures. As hard as she tried, however, she could not understand, and her heart broke.

At that moment, that evening in warm summer, something happened that had not happened in the many years between the flood and this quiet night. As the girl felt her heart break, she wept. Tears fell from the girl’s ocean eyes and into the water, causing a ripple in the darkness that captured the sun’s last light and sent it in a silvery spiral.

Storykeeper continued...

The creatures heard the girl weep and saw her salty tears. With the chatter of a thousand voices the creatures raced to Mother Vida's home in the deepest part of the sea. They shouted to Mother Vida, "There is a young girl—she can hear the stories!"

"What are you saying?" asked Mother Vida.

"We have found the one to give back the stories!"

Mother Vida was not moved. "My dears, I will not allow you to be disappointed again."

"Please, Mother, please come to her."

"What makes this child so special?"

"For the first time in many generations there is one among the people with a heart big enough and strong enough to hear us."

"Even if this girl could learn to hear you," Mother Vida said gently, "it will take great strength to learn the stories, much less carry them back to the people."

But the creatures would not be swayed. "A heart that can break and fall into the water as tears is powerful enough to hold the stories," the creatures said.

Mother Vida grew silent. She flowed over the sandy ocean bottom as she pondered. Finally, Mother Vida turned to the creatures.

"Take me to this girl."

The creatures of the water and land and air rejoiced. They raced with Mother Vida to the place where the young girl slept at the water's edge. Mother Vida watched until the young girl awoke and sat up on the boulder. She watched as the young girl realized the water had shifted—a shadow moved where sunlight usually danced. The young girl was afraid and stood up, trembling. Mother Vida rose from the water, a shimmering silver vision. The young girl's eyes widened. Mother Vida watched the fear in the girl's face give way to wonder. "Child," said Mother Vida, "can you hear my voice?"

To the people, her words were the trickling of water over rocks. But the young girl heard her. The young girl licked her lips and tried to answer, but the sound that came out was hoarse and garbled. The young girl hung her head, ashamed at its ugliness.

Mother Vida said "Drink." Averting her eyes to the waves lapping against the bank, the young girl cupped her small hands and brought the water to her lips. The water ran down her throat cold and quick. She sum-

moned the courage to look into the eyes of the life spirit, and asked, “What is your name?”

“The creatures call me Mother Vida. You, my child, will be called the Story Keeper. You will be remembered as the one who gave back to the people their stories.” Mother Vida smiled at the young girl.

The people saw the young girl slip into the river. They ran to the water’s edge, searching for her, but she was gone.

As they traveled, Mother Vida whispered the girl’s story into her ear, reminding her of who she was, of her home and days past. She weaved an ancient history and placed it as a newborn in the girl’s heart.

In the home in the deep sea, the animals came to the girl, one by one. The creatures came to her with the stories, giving back what they had protected for so many years. She learned to hear, and as she listened the girl came to understand that the people possessed countless tales before the flood and drought and fire had stripped them away. She learned of the anguish of Mother Vida and the creatures as they watched the people forget who they were and where they were from.

The day came when the young girl, now a woman, yearned to return to the people and share all she had learned. But Mother Vida knew that the people were not like her. They might not hear the stories, even coming from one so much like their own. Mother Vida explained these things to the woman, but it brought sadness into her eyes.

“Let me try,” said the young woman.

“You are so full of love and beauty,” sighed Mother Vida. “You will only be hurt, just as the creatures were hurt.”

The young woman ran her fingers through Mother Vida’s long hair, watching the locks float in the water. “I must do this,” she said. Mother Vida looked into the gentle eyes of the one she called daughter in her heart, and finally nodded.

The young woman and Mother Vida returned to the place where the young girl had slipped into the water many years before. As she rose from the river, the people were frightened and ran away. She pursued them, exclaiming, “Wait! Don’t be afraid—I have brought something that belonged to your fathers long ago. Please, let me tell you!”

But the people could not hear her, and turned away, hiding their faces whenever she approached. Again and again she tried to tell them their stories, but the people could only hear her words as a low moan and covered their ears to shut out the sad sound.

The young woman tried to find someone to hear the stories. Her

Storykeeper continued...

heart was overflowing with them, and it would burst if she did not give them back to their rightful owners. She traveled far, talking to all the people, but each time they only turned away. She returned to the spot by the river. She gazed into the water, waiting for Mother Vida.

The young woman cried. "I tried to give the people back their stories, but they won't hear me—they can't hear me." She hung her head. "I'm sorry."

"Perhaps you told the wrong people?" replied Mother Vida.

"There is no one I haven't tried to tell."

As her tears slipped down her cheek and into the water, Mother Vida smiled. "Try again," she said. The young woman began to protest, but then felt a small hand slide into hers. She looked up and realized she was not alone. Children were gathered at the river's edge. They were waiting for her, the young woman realized. She looked into the eyes of the small boy who had taken her hand. "Do you understand me?" she asked.

"Yes." It was no more than a whisper.

"Would you like to hear a story?"

"Yes." This time the answer came out strong and true. The young woman laughed, and swept the young boy up. She looked into his face, recognized the brow, the arch of the lip, and knew which story belonged to him. She began weaving his past into him. She told him of warriors, poets, scholars, and heroes, all who belonged to him. She weaved until the morning dew settled on her shoulders and the boy slept, a smile curving his lips.

The woman looked at the other children gathered around her. She smiled because she knew every one of their stories. As Mother Vida slipped into the sunrise singing a song of joy, the Story Keeper opened her arms to the small figures, and they rushed into her embrace.

Farmington Street



Connie Gotsch

Spoke

Alejandro Sandoval II

Took a bike-ride this morning—hadn't really planned on it either. Wintertime always seems to turn me into a sluggish hibernating bear—I stay indoors far too long during the cold wet season getting pale, lazy, and fat.

For three months my aluminum-alloy steed, *Giant*, has nestled, sullen and lonesome, in a darkened corner of a seldom used workout room—collecting errant shafts of muted sunlight as memories of happier times. Daily, I pass its smiling handlebars and winking reflector while en route to the bathroom, kitchen, or washer/dryer, and am forced to sternly remind us both that it's too wet and cold outside for a ride.

“We'll come back a mess.” I reason with its black, knobby, double O's. It grins back unrelenting—winking the truth of laziness into my subconscious.

“It's not that cold—look here's the sun.” It chides me. “Besides you'll warm up as soon as you get moving.”

“When it gets warmer we'll go for a long ride through La Plata Canyon.” I promise.

“Like last season.” It reminds me—and the hand-break levers shift that perma-grin into a knowing smirk.

Our debate raged on for what seemed like centuries—but actually it was more like ten minutes. No matter how much I begged and pleaded for leniency and compassion, I was met by a knowing smile—immovable and stony. In the end, the outcome was the same as every mortal versus colossus contest—the *Giant* wins.

Exchange Isn't Always Currency

Connie Gotsch

I'm the last out of the happy room, the Thai pit stop place. As I step away from the long palm-shaded building smelling of disinfectant and gardenia soap, mahouts lead elephants up a broad path for our ride through the Chaing Mei Elephant Park. Pachyderm feet thud beside brown human toes, and long, thick gray trunks hug delicate shoulders. The tiny men laugh, broad-brimmed hats shading their faces from brilliant sun and verdant fronds dangling from branches. I decide to fall in behind the parade. But teeth dazzling against dark lips, and black forelock tumbling into sparkling eyes, one handler takes my wrist pulling me next to his elephant. I'm not sure I'm happy. Weighing between two and five tons; and six to nine feet high at the shoulder, this largest of land animals could crush me. Instead the elephant turns a mild sable eye in my direction, rumbling gently. The mahout smiles. Fear vanishes. I extend my hand, touch the elephant's rough, bristled leg, and savor another Thailand experience. I return the mahout's smile. "Kopkumka," Thank you.

He presses his palms together, touches his thumbs to his forehead and bows, the Buddhist Hindu acknowledgment of my gratitude. The elephant steps off the path. Stretching and firmly but lightly grasping the animal's ear, he guides it back. His attitude has become familiar. Walking from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport into my first muggy Southeast Asian night, I sensed gentle toughness in the people I met.

Now, a tiny wrinkled lady in pink sarong, purple tennis shoes, and black Mickey Mouse t-shirt cheerfully blocks the trail head with a wicker basket overflowing with pungent bananas. "10 Baht." Bowing she points to the elephant. "Feed." He stretches his trunk. How can I refuse? Selecting a deep yellow bunch, I give her roughly thirty cents.

But before I can offer the elephant anything the mahout leads him to a hitching post where the other animals wait, and the earthy odor of dung mixes with the aroma of fruit. The smell is not unpleasant. It's natural in this place, where yellow carnations, red roses, and white lotus adorn temples, and open markets seethe with silver fish, crabs, shrimp, green frogs, black snails, sea turtles, juicy meat on ice, vegetables still wrapped in earth, live chickens, sweet, pine apple-like jack fruit, and rose apples. Steam

Elephants



Connie Gotsch

from charcoal grills announces that Thai cooks employ curry, cumin, garlic, and chili. The elephant smells fit right in.

At the hitching post, I break a banana out of the bunch. Ten trunks stretch toward it. Jumping, I think of a horizontal forest. Do I trust those big mouths not to take my hand off? The first elephant in line settles the question. Reaching between my fingers, he plucks the fruit as if lifting a Dresden china cup. Awed at his delicacy, I move down the line passing out bananas until I hold just one. Who shall have it? A tap on my calf makes me look down. A baby's outstretched trunk dances. I bend to bestow the treat.

Now each mahout saddles his animal and takes it to a set of wooden steps. Two at a time, my traveling companions climb to a narrow red seat fastened to the elephant with a gold cinch. The gray stairs shake as I scramble up, and even with cushions, the seat feels hard. My elephant lifts his mahout onto his head and moves so the next people can mount.

Exchange continued...

A jolt startles me. The elephant I'm sitting on has begun walking, crossing brown and ebony boulders no human could manage without a staff and cleated shoes. His rolling gait sets me swaying. I grab the hand bar in front of my seat as we rock down an incline and through a small clear amber-bottomed stream.

Thai knights jousted on charging elephants. For thousands of years, Chinese T'ai, Burma Mons, Aboriginal Australians, and East Indians wandered across Southeast Asia, settling down and driving each other out. The magnificent temples at Angkor Wat, today in Cambodia, passed between Buddhist and Hindu rulers. Today, Cambodia and Thailand squabble over religious relics on their borders. The Burmese-Thailand Railroad, built by Japanese prisoners during World War II stops fifty miles either side of the Thai-Myanmar boundary.

I ponder that as my elephant steps onto level ground and strolls. A rumble vibrates off beige palm trunks. My elephant flaps his ears. Glancing around, I discover the source of his excitement. The banana lady stands on a tall wooden platform resembling a miniature fire lookout. As the elephants ahead of mine pass, riders hand her Baht. She pulls tough green leaves off the fruit before tossing it to the buyers. I know she'll wrap her lunch or fuel her cooking fire with those leaves.

The banana lady smiles as I hand her another 10 Baht. I notice her teeth. Yellow and crooked, they crisscross. Lines cut into her forehead. People look young or old here. She looks ancient.

My elephant's trunk arches. I drop a banana. Catching it, he pops it in his mouth as I might a grape. How different I am from an elephant. How different from a Thai. Yet in our differences, each has something important for the other. No one culture or species has it all. I look up. A jet has left a white trail in the cobalt sky. Let it keep flying around the world. Let it bring us together to see the good, and exchange ideas to stop the bad.

The gray trunk curls again. I toss. The banana misses the mark. Swooping, the trunk snatches the treat. I lean back and sway to the rhythm of careful elephant steps that disturb nothing on the emerald jungle floor.

Van Gogh

Roberta Summers

Not a crust of bread. He licked the paint from his finger. The light, capture the light while the wheat is golden. Hungry, he ate the paint. Light shining on the wheat.

He must paint, capture the light, light on the wheat, light on the golden wheat, Shining, shining. He ate the paint. Capture the light.

He saw the night, the starry starry night. Capture the night this starry starry night. The paint rushes over the moon this starry starry night. Capture the night. Eat the paint.

Don't leave me, friend. The pain, the pain. Don't leave me. Lonely, lonely night. The pain this lonely, lonely night. Who needs an ear? Ah, there's real pain. Eat the paint.

Crows fly over the wheat. Crows fly over the shining wheat. Capture the light. Crows over the wheat, the shining wheat. Black crows. Eat the paint.

No more pain, no more light, no shining wheat, no starry starry night. The crows are coming, the crows are coming. A bullet to my heart. No more pain.

Passing Strangers

Alejandro Sandoval II

I'm brown; not tan—beige—mahogany—copper—hazel—olive—burnt sienna—coffee—khaki—sepia—chestnut—bronze—red—yellow—or chocolate.

I'm brown, yes, but despite this distracting deformity I do still lead a normal life. Like most I am fully capable of rational thought—compassion—reason—understanding—love—wit—passion—desire—hope, and gainful employment.

I'm brown, and yes, I'm sorry you have to see that. Sorry that my presence makes you hold onto your purse a little tighter when I pass—sorry that if I happen to glance your direction you suddenly smell something rotten—sorry that we will never see a sunset in the same light—sorry that I have no choice but to be alive in your country—sorry that I accidentally stumbled into your perfect hike in the Grand Canyon, with your perfect family—that does not share this horrific affliction—count yourself lucky—I wouldn't wish this fate on my worst enemy.

I'm brown, and though it may seem unnatural I only speak English. I've tried to alter this anomaly by exploring my options in French, German (which seemed unnatural as well) Italian, and Japanese—in hopes that it would give the right impression of what I am—to provide a reason for those who stare blankly at me while I speak in perfect, unbroken English—a desperate hope that I can give some rest to their bewildered embarrassment.

I'm brown, not Mexican—Spanish—Indian—Native American—Hindu—Turkish—Moroccan—any brand of Asian—Polynesian—Iraqi—Iranian—Pakistani, nor South or Central American. I was born a fourth generation United States citizen on German soil. After four years in Bavaria I came home to a country that didn't have room for another brown face in its melting pot.

I'm brown, and though it may seem odd, I do not like baggy khaki pants—accordion music—broken English—gangs—guns—vio-

lence—70’s western attire—lowered cars that jump while proudly displaying my last name in Old English calligraphy across the back window—Being called holms, ese, brother—and could never live in a duplex packed full of 15 of my closest relatives. But I do like spicy food.

I am brown; but most importantly I am offended when you casually ask “What are you?” I know the truth behind any answer I might give—a guideline used by you as a slide-ruler that shows which stereo-type to apply to me. You mask your true intent with feigned interest and mock sincerity—all the while judgment sits furrowed on your brow because you just cannot classify me. So don’t be offended when I answer “I’m a human being—what are you?”

Tuesday

Franklin Dale Thomas

Bigot, redress!
The oppression has lifted
Now you can rise up
And take your place
With your fellow man!

Brother, redress!
We’ve been estranged
For centuries, now
Let’s forgive past errors
And walk forward as one!

Father, redress!
Obstacles and opportunities
Are redefined by the day
If we are to survive
We must go into the Village

Self, redress!
Live as example
Do not gloat for battles won
Or dwell on those we’ve lost
That our Family might do the same

As If

Kimberly Williams

“Poetry belongs to those who use it, not those who write it!”

--Antonio Skarmeta, *Ardiente Paciencia*

I've lost your words,
again.

They've skipped away
like a stone,
fled like
a fugitive,
skirted away like
a tumbleweed.

My guess is
 your words are tossing
 just under the waves
 off the coast of Nicaragua
 mixed in with the green
 stone necklace from Machu Picchu
that I lost
 turning cartwheels
in the surf,

or maybe they've slipped inside
the medicine bag
that was stolen off my nightstand
and ground into the dirt
of a rural *cancha* somewhere
in the Andes
just north
of the equator;

ah, perhaps they're blowing about
my sunny casita back home
or curled up alongside my cat,
forming letters that purr.

Meanwhile I'm far away
on a plane going even farther

bolting through space
and sky,

still trying futilely
to arrange your words
about me...

This moment teaches me
what I keep refusing to learn:

let go, let go
out and away—

As if I really could keep
your words;
as if I could contain or possess them,

as if words don't need
to be freed, let go of,
released from their pages
to fly off
like the thousands of snowy geese
in the Bosque each March,
swimming across the pacific New Mexican sky,
gliding in a gorgeous stream
of geese
forming
V's, W's and Y's along the way...

I should know already that beauty emerges
in the stillness between movements, freedom comes
in release.

Like sacred symbols, souls, and snowy geese,
words must go where they will

to live.

Sleeping

Traci HalesVass

I thought I would like
 sleeping in the middle
 Stretching out
 Not getting kicked

But the middle
 is too far from the alarm
And too close
 to your absence

Passage



Ursula Woody

Only Eighty Nine

Mychal Davis

The day was bright, but, in my mind, it was dark, deep, and mysterious. My eyes could see what was in front of me, but my thoughts were blind. The body was in full function yet the conscious disturbed and lost in this wilderness of the unknown. As it slowly found its way back to reality, I knew it would be the last time I would see my parents for this duration. As my hands let go, so too did my immaturity. The airplane was waiting for my next step into what was to be the next painful three months of my existence. My last good-bye I saved for my little brother. His eyes, so innocent and curious, could not comprehend what was happening. I kneeled down to him and said, “Brother is going now. Brother is going to Boot Camp.” He looked at me with such amazement when I stopped hugging him.

“See you later, Brother,” he said to me.

My throat choked and my body left to the plane. My mind stayed there, in the terminal where my family gathered. My boyish self stayed there. Now it was time to become a Marine. Today would be the first day in my ninety day journey to become a United States Marine. It would be a day that I will never forget.

We landed on the San Diego tarmac, and I looked out the window to see the beautiful city, only to witness what countless others have before me. In crimson and yellow paint marked the words “United States Marine Corps Recruit Depot,” behind a seven foot high chain link fence. I observed this annoyance and proceeded along to the USO. How long and strenuous it was, waiting for some sign to know what it was I was supposed to be doing. Three others arrived in the USO main office. I sat alone waiting and waiting and waiting.

The elderly receptionist, so kind in her words, said to me, “Be careful now. They’ll be here any minute.”

In retrospect she lied straight to my face. But her kind voice soothed my anger. The hours passed by and more recruits arrived in this little office. All of us were sharing the same feeling of insecurity and strange new events that were about to unfold.

The day left and the sun laid his head down to rest once again. The chill evening air filled the room. Or was it the silent grizzly mood that filled our minds? I can’t vaguely recall.

“GET ON YOUR FEET!”

So sharp, the words pierced my ears, and any feeling of myself I lost then and there. “Get on my bus!” We were no longer individuals, no longer Mychal or Steve or Mitch or Joe; we were all together now.

On the bus, the world felt as the silence before the storm. Crowded shoulder to shoulder and our heads between our legs, we anxiously awaited our next instructions. The bus stopped. We could have been on the moon for all we could have known. The next words we heard changed the way we would talk and speak for the next ninety days of our lives.

“The last words I will hear out of your mouth is “”Sir”. You understand me?” Instinctively we replied, “Yes, sir.”

A disappointed look came across his face. “When you talk, your words will be loud, sharp and crisp. You understand me?”

“Yes, Sir!!!”

“Get off my bus!”

Our identities were shed as we stepped off the bus onto the “Yellow Foot Prints.” Standing straight, hands clenched and at the trouser seam, head up, chest out, feet at a forty-five degree angle, and elbows slightly bent, we stood at attention. We would acknowledge this stance for the rest of our journey. The next few hours we would be tested, as the civilians we were would disappear into a small one foot by one foot box. Our heads were shaved deleting our once solemn personalities. We would have one last phone call to our loved ones back home.

As we finished rumaging through our supplies, we finally had the comfort of sleep. Our feet ached from the running around. Silently crying in our bunks, we finally rested.

I lay down on the stiff mattress and thought about all the things that I had done. My mind was racing as I began to go through endless amounts of memories, both happy and sad, trying to figure out how in the hell I arrived in that place. No explanations or events clearly came to mind. I reminisced on my family. I wondered what they were doing, thinking, and dreaming. I listened to the prayers of the boys all around me. “Oh Father who art in Heaven.” says the boy two bunks down. “Father God, I give myself to you,” mumbles the boy across from me. “God please forgive me in all that I have done,” whimpers the boy above me.

I utter, “Lord, you know why I’m here better than I do. Your guidance and direction led me here. Please help the others who are

with me. Watch over my family. Watch over my friends. In your Name, Amen.” I convinced myself that I was here and that I had to finish this. I glanced at the calendar they had passed out and marked the first day off. Only eighty nine more to go, I thought. Only eighty nine more until I can see my family. Only eighty nine more days and nights of nonstop hell in this place. It’s only eighty nine more days I comforted myself and fell asleep.

Dance Man



Roshawwna Paul

The Whetstone

Roberta Summers

In a small grove of aspen trees near a curve in the creek rests an ancient whetstone wheel that is used for sharpening axes and plow blades. The wooden seat and supports for the stone have weathered to dove gray. Deep grooves create gullies following the grain of the wood.

This is my favorite place—a place where I feel peaceful and happy. I tug my thin cotton summer dress under my backside so I won't get slivers and sit listening to the musical chatter of the stream as it dances over pebbles. Stretching my skinny legs, I try to reach the pedals that spin the wheel.

An occasional swarm of gnats darken the filtered sunlight over the creek. The fresh smell of the stream like the fragrance of electricity in the air during a rain beckons me. I abandon my post on the whetstone and flop on my belly at water's edge. Holding aside my sun-streaked braids I sip the icy mountain water then wipe my mouth with my wrist. Sitting up, I slide my bare feet into the water. Yellow-green moss covers the stones making it easy to slither into the stream. Not caring about getting my dress wet—it will dry in the summer heat, I lie flat on the shallow stream bed gazing up through the trees that hang over the water at the cloudless cerulean sky. Cold water burbles over my body causing the golden hair on my arms to stiffen on top of goose bumps. Thoroughly soaked and refreshed, I return to my daydreams on the seat of the whetstone.

Morning Fog



Ray Babbit

Frosted Leaves



Jazymn Nielson

equinox

joseph owen

solitude between collisions where the light of forgotten stars makes the ledge an ambience of water
still as ice

sky and flesh silent

grooves in the skin collecting vapors of words sent out as arrows beyond human control and therefore
divine in their recklessness like Eden's swords waving ointment cleansing the climactic silence

lizards connect gods with rocks spinning into a circle beneath the moon

leaves continue their organic dance into yellow in the scorching fluid of cold weather and then
vanish on roads going into cliffs around the broken edges of lost skies

Home



Regina Keeswood

The Bike Races Farther Down a Blurring Grey Road

Chelsea Marissa Baeza

The Ducati shoots forward
And shifting wind
through our thoughts.

I feel your smile
as your recklessness creeps
up my arms.

My grip
(around your waist)
tightens.

Tension falls
from my shoulders.
Here, you never disappoint me.

In front of me
There is only you
Behind me apprehension swirls
In forgotten tension through the wind.

Graffiti



Kris Henderson

Graffiti

Khris Henderson

The graffiti is gone. No more Westside, Eastside, Southside. No more racial slurs or pseudo-Satanic imagery. No more crude messages with confirmed slut's phone numbers attached. No more band logos of x-ed out swastikas. The classic artwork has been painted over with big rectangles of sidewalk gray, way-off-white, and the local favorite: refried bean purple-brown.

SERCO fencing company has corralled off all the good parts. There is no longer any human access to the shadowed concrete "apartments" that line each side of the bridge. Way back and way up where Homeless Bob once found a fetus wrapped in cheap brown paper towels.

No more of those shenanigans. The bridge is now lit by six high-lumen fixtures that are encased in steel mesh and is monitored by four tiny indestructible cameras. It feels almost military or institutional, with none of the reckless freedom that being "under the bridge" once entailed.

There is evidence that the old ways are not completely forgotten. Plenty of broken forty bottles, smashed Budweiser and Fosters cans, the occasional syringe. A receipt from Payless Shoe Source for a pair of boots that cost \$9.62 after tax and a drowned shopping cart face-down in the muddy water.

These are the only remnants of what this bridge once was and the middle-aged white women who walk their dogs through here seem to take no notice. This is their turf now, and I doubt I'll ever return.

Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose

In a swirl of lanterns and white linen,
Golden light reflects privilege.
Portraitist to the wealthy,
J. S. Sargent casts a spell,
Two girls innocently absorbed
in their duty, for Mummy,
Lighting lanterns
for a garden party.
Servants wipe the sweat from brows,
rushing in and out
with heavy trays.
What delights await them?

Sandra Nelson



Sandra Nelson

Seeds

Alejandro Sandoval II

“Stay out of those damn trees!” His irritated rumble chased me—half-drowned by a slamming wooden screen door. The grove of pecans, cottonwoods, and oak whispers my name—their leaves thirsting for the rest of my tale. Freedom—mystique—adventure—await beyond the line of disheveled duplexes. Deep in a twisted tangle of thorns I wage miniature dirt-wars with sound-effect munitions for frozen green militia. The best stories are told by only one person at a time.

“Who do you play with when you’re outside?” She would casually pry—adding too many beans to my plate.

Boba Fett, Darth Vader, and Snake-Eyes appear from pockets wearing war-paint streaks of mud—Stormshadow, still missing in action.

“Who goes with you?” She gently clarifies while pouring iced-tea into a glass too big for my eight-year-old hands.

“no one”

“No one? Ever?”

“mostly”

A diamond rolls down her face and a tree emerges into an unnoticing world from a lone seed.

Lost in Winter



Rochelle John

Untitled



Jazmyn Neilson

The True Measure of Love

David Goins

My wife has a dark brown, very prominent, T-bone steak shaped scar on her right cheek. I see people stare at her in stores, point their fingers from up under their chins as they whisper to each other about her. She never seems to notice. But sometimes in the parking lot she'll silently move in front of me and hug me hard. I, of course, hold her tight. She is very tall and slender; her chin rests on my shoulder as she squeezes hard and snorts out her frustrated breath in my ear. I know she's self conscious about it because her hand will sneak up to touch the edge of it when she's embarrassed or feeling shy. Our children have never seemed to notice it; they, when getting a hug, will rub their faces on her cheeks equally. Nor do any of the neighborhood kids' seem to notice it. I do remember that at a barbeque once one of my friends from work was fixating a bit on her; he got a sharp elbow to the ribs from his wife. I think he was staring because she is so beautiful. After my brother met her he asked me if I was sure I wanted to marry her because of the scar. I haven't spoken to him since. The scar means nothing to me. We've been married twelve years and I've never brought it up. Why should I. She's beautiful and I love her.

Evening Sun

Chelsea Marrissa Baeza

I feel the flush of red that creeps
over the fleshy tones of sky.
the soft blending
of peaches, papaya, and plum. I inhale

the exquisiteness
of sinking light, let its warmth fill
me to the point
of revelation, where I can
no longer tell the difference between its heat
and my breath.

My body is a prism. I can exist forever
In the midst of the setting sun.

Time is a blending of colors;
I am a blending of colors.

Heavenly Sunlight



Rachel Adams

Timeless



Roxie Sandoval

FOR

Christy Ferrato

for prep **1.** Used to indicate purpose: As in, uranium is a critical component for both nuclear power generation and military nuclear weapons. From 1945-1988, uranium was mined on the Navajo reservation for the purpose of making atomic bombs, as part of the Manhattan Project. **2.** As being or constituting: Because times were hard for the Navajo, most families were thankful when mining started on the reservation because they were given employment. The miners were used for experiments. By the late 1930's, there was no scientific doubt that the concentration of radon in the air in uranium mines was the causal agent for high rates of lung cancer among miners. **3.** Because of: 133 of 150 miners died of

lung cancer and various forms of fibrosis, working for the uranium mine in Shiprock. **4.** Used to indicate suitability or fitness: In 1979, one of North America's worst disasters occurred when a uranium waste retaining damn at the Church Rock mine near Gallup burst, spilling radiation and toxins into the Rio Puerco, making the water unsafe for human and animal consumption. **5.** On behalf of: There were no unions for Navajo miners working on the reservation. **6.** In spite of: For all the evidence documenting health problems associated with uranium mining, most miners and their families were never compensated for medical needs and loss of life. **7.** With respect to: The Navajo language had no word for radiation. **8.** Used to indicate equivalence in exchange: Navajo miners were paid minimum wages or less. Copies of pay stubs provided by a Navajo miner from 1949 show a wage of \$.81 to \$1.00 for an hour of work. **9.** Used to indicate a duration of time: The people worked for years in the mines without face masks, ventilation, or clean drinking water. They breathed radioactive air and drank contaminated water. **10.** In honor of: Green hard hats were awarded to men for their work at the Kerr McGee mine near Grants.

Mask



Roshawna Paul

Ephemera

Laura Kerr

From my father I inherited protruding ears, irreverent humor and a desire to walk—in towns, cities, hanging valleys, and above timberline, in dry heat or heavy rain. Sometimes I walk with large, throbbing ideas, but more often with thoughts of moderate size and only modest importance.

On a recent, misty noonday walk, I followed the trail system around the San Juan College campus with only apple-sized thoughts to consider. The crusted snow revealed heavy animal traffic, so it was easy to abandon work-related concerns. Without snow cover, this desert realm reveals little of its animal life, and all the snowy week I have delighted in its ephemeral revelations.

The coyote must have moved slightly. I look up just then from my examination of snow and tracks to see him in a parallel wash, considering me. He wears an elegant silvery coat and sports handsome black accents around his face.

“I did expect to see you here. Not at this hour,” I call over. We observe one another, neither moving. He is a tight-lipped sort, but eventually responds (I’m sure of it), “If you were a rabbit, I’d eat you.” I nod to him. Fair enough. His fur, healthy and full, shines in the mist and I do not doubt him. I continue forward on my path then stop and turn. He has vanished, of course, as coyotes do.

Vanished also were my previous thoughts. I was free. My father is a wise man.

Orange Line



Rochelle John

Clothesline



Ann Bauer

Boy

Traci HalesVass

His yard, his world: a tiny, windblown square of hard ground, with no trees or flowers. But in his world he was the king. He built The Highway along the alley-side so he wouldn't bother his mom. Magical cars raced on The Highway. The green car was the fastest; it could go 20-90 jillion miles an hour. One of his mom's visitors gave it to him. Sometimes the visitors would bring him treats—things mom couldn't afford. Mom couldn't afford much. Poor mom. He had to be a good boy, and quiet, so he wouldn't bother her. Especially when she had a visitor. Sometimes the visitor would stay for a long, long time. Then he would have to stay outside even if it got dark, or he got hungry. That's when he would drive his green car to go see his dad, who was a famous, handsome actor. Once his mom's visitor was especially nice, and he got to stay inside and play. The visitor gave him a coin, and laughed at him when he tried to flip it into a beer. But then he had to go outside again. Sometimes he wished he could have some Kool-Aid, but mom had to buy beer for visitors. Mom had it really tough and he had to be quiet and not bother her. But it was okay. He had The Highway. And he could take the green car wherever he wanted to. He would go see his dad, who was maybe even a rock star. His dad would give him Kool-aid. He was never a bother to his dad.

Krinkles



Natasha Lee

Complicated Coffee

Brittany Page

I don't want complicated coffee. Nor do I want nine theatres to pick from or five freeways to figure out. I want a Dr. Pepper; a cigarette that I roll myself, without filter and a back porch with a screen door that squeaks when I open it and slams shut behind me.

I want a wicker rocking chair to lean back in and my great grandmother's quilt that passed down through the generations to be wrapped around me as I sip hot chocolate made with whole milk and extra marshmallows. I want to watch my breath push past the steam and out into the rising sun, fighting to peak over the aspens and pines and then I want to go back to bed.

I want to watch dueling hummingbirds at sunset as they fight over red sugar water and the one, the one with the bright rusted chest puffed out like some British royal as he claims his crown on the feeder shaped like a hot air balloon, and I want cats who live to watch.

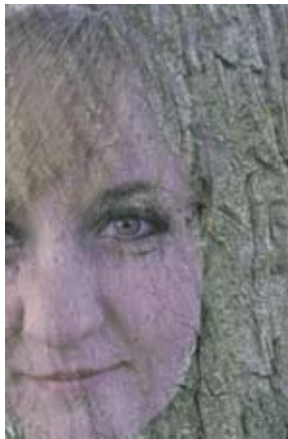
I want five cats. No more or less. I want to be crazy cat lady. I want a white one with a blonde face and pink nose who looks like a lady perched on the deck. I want a Siamese, mocha in color with crossed eyes as blue as the turquoise I wear around my neck whom I can laugh at and who loves me and me alone. I want an ugly cat. One who's missing an eye or an ear, with a crooked tail and whose tongue hangs out of its mouth because it no longer has teeth to hold it in. And maybe a cat who was abused that I must nurse back into love.

I want hair that's free in follicle treachery. Hair that disturbs the river with its untamable virtue. I want calloused feet that tear the sheets while I sleep; feet that can defend themselves against the wild of jagged rocks and pine needle floors.

I do not want a husband who one day might feel the need to tell me I need to trim my toe nails or eliminate books that have trickled out of the library and into the hallway in stacks. I don't want someone in my life to tell me I need a real job and how ridiculous I am for growing vegetables that I will never eat. I do not want to have to explain that it's not about the vegetables, it's about the dirt underneath my fingernails, the monotonous digging and planting that tunes every sound and every thought out of my mind, leaving just me down on my knees, for no one, but me.

I want to be where it's quiet, and I want to be where justification of self is as necessary as a tree watching what it eats.

Spirits



Anthony Bodine

Window



Hillarie Hansen

Love blood

Traci HalesVass

She crashed her hand through the window when he explained he wasn't "into this" as much as she was. Her fist curled as he spoke, her arm tensed and pulled back. The punch was gratifying in its release, electrically tingling when she pulled it back. Blood pooled, purply glistening as drops slid to the floor.

He applied a tourniquet and drove her to the hospital. She wept and he kept quiet. He picked her up after surgery, tucked her in bed, fed her soup. She was silent, druggie; he chatted lightly about unimportant things until she fell asleep.

He drove her to the doctor for bandage changes and physical therapy. His conversation sounded like the cardboard banter of the physical therapist.

She leaned into him when he led her up the stairs with his hand around her waist. One night he got into bed with her but when her passion grew her arm started throbbing too much. He got up and left.

When her bandages were removed and the stitches taken out, he stood with her in the driveway. They kissed deeply; then he pointed to the attic above them and told her to open the window to cool the house. She walked in and turned as he was walking away.

And he didn't call.

Two days later she phoned him, got his answering machine. Left a series of messages. She drove by his house. Parked across the street, there was a little red Honda parked next to his pickup. The front door opened and a woman walked out. He circled his arm around her waist.

She got out of her car and walked over to them. He introduced the two women and the other said she'd heard about the injury, how was the wrist?

He thanked her for stopping by, said they were leaving now and he'd talk to her later.

He didn't call. Two weeks later, after she had left several messages, multiple hang-ups, and done quite a few drive-bys (the Honda was there each time) she drove to the bar in town. Slammed two shots and picked up a cowboy. He threw up in her bed and left his shirt when he walked out.

Hung over, she phoned him again. This time he answered. They talked casually and he asked about her pain, the physical therapy. She asked if he'd gotten her messages. A pause, and he acknowledged he'd heard them and he'd seen her driving by and parking across the street. He asked her to stop, please, it was scaring his girlfriend.

"Then what am I?" she asked. And hung up before he answered.

She pulled the ladder down and climbed to the attic. The steps were difficult to maneuver with the sore arm. She pushed aside broken furniture and stacks of molding books. Layers of grease, dead moths, old dirt filtered the sun through the far window. She cleared a path to the window, opened it, looked down the three stories to the concrete driveway below. Closed the window, latched it, wiped away some of the dirt. She walked to the stairs and turned, visualized the run, the jump, the fall, impact, the blood, and his arms around her again, but her feet wouldn't move. Her whole body resisted. She sat, raising a puff of dust that made her cough. Long, long after the dust had settled, she rose, dusted off her jeans, and climbed down the stairs.

En El Mirador

Kimberly Williams

I am surrounded by sunset.
Three hundred and sixty degrees
of brilliant burning sky.

The Sandías
are a watermelon
dropped and split open—
jagged fruit flesh afire.

To the west, the clouds hang low enough
to touch
the earth, and they, too,
form a salmon sky ablaze.

Suddenly, it no longer matters
if I'm going backwards
or forwards
east or west:

I am engulfed by the sun,
wrapped in its fire,
like a bee enveloped
by crimson petals:

The softest flame
burning alive.

Water View



Anthony Bodine

Puddles



Ezra Pelt

“A Childhood Ended”

Gene Ulrich

Headlights flash

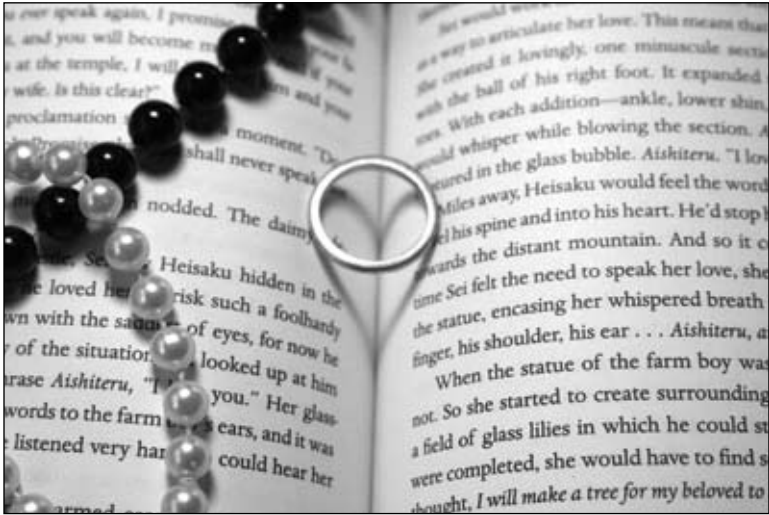
brakes shriek

Crushing of bones;

Red flows bright

on black asphalt . . .

Aishiteru



Kimberly Owen

The Spoon

Virgil Mathes

Our bedroom is filled with a diffused morning light, bathing the room in an otherworldly glow that is grounded only by the reassuring cooing of pigeons outside our window.

But that's not what woke me. My boy is hollering for me from the other end of the house. I'm snuggled in with Laurie, and wish only to lay still and enjoy the feeling of her body against my back, her fingers toying with the hair on my chest. We get so little of this now.

But Derek is being a shit. He's quite capable of getting out of his crib and walking to our room; he does it nearly every night around three a.m. Crawls in like he owns the place, and is there when I wake up around seven. If not at three, then now, when the early morning light (or the pigeons) wakes him, and he makes his daily trek. This morning, for some reason, he wants Daddy to come and carry him into our bed. I

refuse. Today he has decided that he needs some extra show of servitude from his elders, but I won't do it. I'm cozy and warm, and wish only for a quiet cuddle with my wife. He can come if he wants, but I won't fetch him.

"Daaddyyyy!" His call begins low, then crescendos down the hall like one of those old air raid sirens from the forties.

"Go get your boy," Laurie moans. She neither knows nor cares about my take on parental power struggles; she only knows that she can't doze peacefully amid the racket he's raising. My boy.

I get up, irritated at his insistence, and pad blindly down the hall. An errant Lego bites my arch; I curse softly and continue limping toward his room. He is standing at the foot of his bed, peering over the railing with his bright morning face, wholly pleased at my appearance. I scoop him up roughly. He grips my shirt tightly and rides my hip to our bedroom. We crawl in, and I try to re-establish the spooning with Laurie by laying Derek on the outside. This is his regular spot; he has reserved for himself a "side" of our bed, and this is it. His face beams with glee.

"Are you happy, Derek?" Laurie asks. "Did you get what you wanted?"

He smiles broadly before answering. "Yes."

We are able to resume spooning, briefly, but already it isn't the same. I'm now caught between my two great loves, laid comfortably enough against my wife, yet also trapped by a squirmy bundle in front of me, forced to lay my hands against my lap for protection from his little kicking feet. Laurie reaches across my body, but her caressing fingers now play through Derek's hair rather than my own. She hopes to calm him down, and it does seem to help. For a time.

But it is not quite enough; it never is with small children, and he begins to climb over me.

"Behind Daddy," he says, sticking a foot at my shoulder.

"You want behind Momma?" I ask, hoping to distract him. He nods. "Okay, get behind Momma." Laurie opens the covers to her back. He begins to comply, but then shakes his head.

"Behind Daddy," he repeats, and crawls on top of us, his bony knees piercing my ribs. He tries to wedge between us, to separate us, smiling all the while. He doesn't know what our ultimate separation would mean to him. I reach up and swing him off, plopping him down again on his own side of the bed. His side of our bed. He launches another attempt.

"He's determined to get between us," Laurie observes.

He mounts us like Edmund Hillary. Those bony knees gouge my

Spoon continued...

side, but I remain still, as though sleeping. There's still the spoon, I tell myself, concentrate on the spoon. I reach up and peel him off again; he laughs. On the third offensive I steal a glance at his face; it beams with childish enthusiasm.

"I've had enough," Laurie announces, and concedes the rights to her side of the bed. Derek slides down beside me and throws an arm across my ribs. "It's not worth the abuse to stay in bed," she says. Laurie gets up to make coffee, and takes the spoon with her.

Heather



Adam Telford

Haikus

childhood is this
fear of the dark and your mom
and the boogeyman

adulthood is this
fear of the sun and your boss
and the calendar

death is simply this
fear of nothing and no one
and quiet for once

—Khris

What's it to you?

Alejandro Sandoval II

My poetry comes from the smell of fresh rain on hot asphalt—a blazing crimson sun sneaking its way below the horizon—wildflowers tickling a mountainside in springtime—a puppy's breath as it licks my face clean of taste—poverty—a desperate need to be understood, and not condemned—a solitary childhood in a full house—soft breath gently caressing the crook of my neck—bike-rides through green trails—disappointment—a stiff cup of jet-black coffee—the plunk of a leaky faucet—waking up to deer in my camp—German chocolate cake—a good guitar in the hands of a beginner—smoldering eyes fixing me in a longing gaze—Mozart—a stand of golden aspens intently watching every flash of my sword during a training session—snow—the deep murmur of a raging river at night—the light touch of a hand slipping around my waist—my big, blue, backpack and new burnt-orange tent—the musty-sweet smell of mimosa trees in the summer—the melodious aria of a violin—terminal loneliness.

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Traci HalesVass
Humanities Department
halesvasst@sanjuancollege.edu

Visual Arts Submissions to:

Kathleen Chambers
Art Department
chambersk@sanjuancollege.edu

Editors & Designers



Sheridan Carrera

Is graduating from SJC Spring of 2010, with an Associates in Digital Media Arts and Design. I'm seriously engaged in graphic designs and have a passion for creating & developing both traditional & original photography portraits, as well as creative image editing.



Jennifer Hargrove

Is graduating from SJC Spring of 2011, with an Associates in Digital Media Arts and Design.



Alejandro Sandoval II

Alejandro has been in the Four Corners area for eight years now. Originally a playwright with a pension for screen writing he is finding a new found love in fiction and poetry.



Roberta Summers

Roberta Summers, Author of *Pele's Realm*, a novel, and a student completing Creative Writing Certificate requirements.

The students of San Juan College present "Perspectives," our 2010 Art and Literary magazine.

Inside you will find a multi-faceted
sampling of visual



and literary arts that
represent some of the finest
work of San Juan College
students, staff and faculty.

Student artists, editors and
designers have collaborated
on the development,
creativity and work required
to bring this magazine

to publication. We
have worked with
faculty advisors in Fine

Arts, Humanities, and Design & Media
Arts. We wish to thank them for their
advice and the freedom to create our
magazine as a gift to the college and the
community.