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A message from The Beacon

On behalf of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee and the Honors Program, we are pleased to offer this second edition of Chesapeake College’s art and literary magazine. The abundance and quality of submissions are a testament to the creativity and varied talents of students in our campus community. For students who would like to participate in the design, editing, and production of the next edition of The Beacon, we invite you to register for an exciting new course, available for the first time in the Spring of 2010: ENG 140 – Literary Journal Production.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the production process for this second edition, including: the Chesapeake College English faculty, members of the Chesapeake College Writing Across the Curriculum committee, 2009/2010 Honors English students, Barbara Viniar, Kathy Barbour, and Jamie Gunsallus.

To see the journal in full-color and to view previous editions, please find our website at the following address: http://www.chesapeake.edu/peakehonors/community.html.

Enjoy!

Marc Steinberg & Dave Harper

SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR THE BEACON FALL 2010:
Please submit original prose, poetry, artwork, photography and musical compositions to: journalsubmissions@skipkack.chesapeake.edu
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There is no fire like passion
Like the passion burning in me
Tremendous flames are raging
This light of fire burns brightly
This passion has been sitting
In me for quite some time
Potential waiting to be leashed
Raw energy in its prime
Passion is as raw as it will get
As there is no fire like passion
Passion is fire at its fullest best
Providing a very rare sensation
A rare sensation is only felt
A few times in a person’s body
Something is felt only when and
Only if the person is truly ready
Fore, there is no fire like passion
Like the passion inside of you
Emerging from hidden depths
And chaos it starts to brew
Everything is badly disrupted
There is nothing that properly fits
Nothing seems to be going back
As chaos now comes and hits
Igniting the flame, bursting high
There is no fire that can compare
To the passion hot in our souls
It burns away all of the clear air
A dense, a dark, a dreamy haze
Is what has been created and left
By our great fire and fierce blaze
No fire, no fire, like our soul’s passion.
There was once a pocket of undiscovered territories in a series of universal domains. In an uncharted, black, limitless sea of nothingness, a pea-sized galaxy existed. This pea-sized galaxy was \(400,234,003,034,671\) light-years away from the Milky-Way galaxy and couldn’t be seen by high-powered telescopes on any planet. To reach this destination, a spaceship with technological prowess needed a dash of luck, a pint of courage, and a fifth of genius. Spacecrafts had to avoid black-holes, vacuums, dark matter, stars and nebulae because each of these chaotic forces devoured masses into an everlasting carnage. This was vaguely demonstrated when a child sucked ice chips through a straw and spat the liquid onto the floor, repeatedly. If one was so bold to surpass these macro influences of space, rough-textured, poisonous asteroids would collide into ships with unexpected ease. The smallest of these hellish and unpredictable, maroon and olive-green and violet, crater-filled abominations made up the size of Brazil. Even among the constant progress of earthing technology, transportation to other galaxies was not an option.

In the human year of 6,666 B.C., only one man discovered this pea-sized galaxy. His name was Henroid Oliver Jenkins, but nobody called him Henroid or Oliver or Professor Jenkins. People nicknamed him Hen because Henroid Jenkins resembled a female chicken. He had crimson spiky hair and a well-groomed beard. Hen’s natural hair color was Ruby-red, but it changed during each earthly season. He was an olive toned man with a Herculean upper body, but was born with very scrawny legs. His lower limbs were veined and wrinkled, making him look like a crumpled map of Utah. He walked with his head bobbing forward, his arms glued to his side, and each leg kicking out in an exaggerative motion. Hen smelled of mothballs and book dust. One shouldn’t be fooled by his appearance or smell — Hen was a very intelligent human being. Certain scrambled strains of deoxyribonucleic acid, coupled with molecules to encode hereditary traits, made this Hen-escape creature a prolific organism.

Hen researched sixty seconds a minute, sixty minutes an hour, fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, fifty two weeks a year, for forty years. A desk littered with sheets of mathematical equations, a chalkboard filled with theories and designs of unparalleled proportions, trashed papers overflowing in a wastebasket, and hundreds of labeled folders with statistics of scientific intrigue—this is where Hen spent most of his time. Like Einstein, most of Hen’s work was painstakingly tedious in nature. He had to create every detail of every option in different theories to rule out what works or doesn’t work. After determining a set of probable answers to one select theory, he had to put it to relative use. Most of his research was done at the Victorian Institute for the Abnormally Gifted.

Hen was paid to investigate and discover anomalies that the slow kids from Harvard couldn’t find. Most of Hen’s complicated works were funded by government warfare programs and offshore businesses, spending undisclosed amounts of wealth to receive answers to earthly problems.

Henroid Oliver Jenkin’s most secret accomplishment was when he discovered space travel. Units of sound, undetectable to any ear, produced a frequency of transverse waves. Each wave made up mechanical vibrations, which passed through any item imaginable. What Hen did was this: he combined a series of waves into an equation, creating a paradigm of relativity, and mixed his own deoxyribonucleic acid with the solution. He then combined the product of sound-bits, inverse waves, mechanical vibrations, acids, and tissues to a material possession for consumption. Hen mixed his fully developed function with a can of Pepsi. Henroid Jenkins finally became able to consciously travel with a pattern of waves across the vast reaches of the unknown. He hadn’t told anybody about this discovery. He was a peculiar man with many secrets and preferred it that way.

The invisible world, in a pea-sized galaxy

Hen slurped his mixed-Pepsi and wiped the brown from his thin lips. Some Pepsi soaked his crimson beard and dripped onto his white mad-scientist smock. He groaned, because the mixture of carbonation and sound-bits tasted bitter and gooey. The drink smelled of raw cabbage and baby poop. Hen’s stomach gurgled and pouted with pain. This was the worst part of his journey. He swished the goo inside his mouth and barely swallowed the vulgar sensation. The bitter taste made him reflexively gag four times into his calloused palms. As soon as he finished the drink, Hen’s eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he collapsed onto the fluffy woolen carpet.

Cells and tissues and molecules and organs and formulated Pepsi mixed together, randomly sending Hen through the darkness of space. His
physical being did not travel. It was only his entity of spirit – his soul – which made its way onto a nearly invisible world. As smart as Hen was, he could never choose the destination for his travels.

His consciousness landed on a melted-red rocky surface. Geysers shot out burning blue vapors from the ground, and volcanoes exploded in the distance. Molten hot lava splashed against black-tarred surfaces and disintegrated for covered pebbles. This land looked like a burning inferno and pink cotton candy. The sky was black and red, crying tarred residue from above. Hen’s entity floated above the ground, searching for life on this mysterious reality.

“Is this actually happening again?” Henroid thought, as he floated toward a scarred metallic forest of crystals. These crystals were sharp and jagged, sticking up from a series of forgotten holes. Each crystal was more indestructible than granite and gleamed in the stage of darkness. A low humming sound projected from the cerulean crystals, pushing echoes of coldness at sections of lava. The lava froze in the presence of these almighty crystals, turning from liquid fire to solid rock. And then, suddenly, a creature appeared.

This creature was mauve and wrinkled. It was a ball of brain-like sludge, slurring inside a jar of green liquid. The jar was connected to a fortress of spikes and metal-rubber-covered wheels, protecting the slime against the rough atmosphere of strangeness. The grayish, alloyed suit shined with a series of smooth red buttons. Each button was of a different size and shape, displaying importance for every function. The monster whirled and popped and jumped on the surface, which was surprisingly bouncy. The alienistic creature gurgled odd jargon. “GURGH!! GEE!! GURGH!! AARGH!!” slurped the creature. “BREEE!! SEEERRGHH!!”

Hen floated toward the monster’s physical form. The monster popped and jumped and rolled toward Hen. As Henroid Jenkins floated closer to the beast, he saw millions of miniature eyeballs on the freakish creature. They all looked in different directions and then gazed at Hen.

Hen: My name is–is Henroid Jenkins and I am from Earth.... I come... in peace.

Monster: GEEEEEERRRR!!! GAAAHHH!!! REEEEEE!!!

Hen: I am lost on this strange planet. Can you see me? Are there more

Playing with Light

Alexandria Koenig

The strange mauve creature reached its slimy tentacle at Hen and then pressed a button. The red button protruded from the machine, attached to the creature, and flickered violently. Black vapor escaped from the brain sludge’s diversified suit. When the button stopped flickering, it disappeared into complex machinery, transforming the creature into an entity like Hen. As this happened, steam shot from a far away geyser.

Hen: What... was... that? How–how did you do that?

Monster: You will know of your progress in time. You invented my Hypodynamic–entricalatlity machine three million years ago. Hen: Wha–wha–wha–am I... are you?
Monster: Please, do not talk. My name is Zug-Ug and I am transmitting brain signals into your entity. You humans have your languages and we have ours. I am a correspondent from the Galactic Alliance of Universes. I was sent back in time, from an invention you created to tell you of impending danger. I was told this is the third time you materialized on a different world.

Hen: How—how is this possible?
Zug-Ug: Many things are possible. You are the future inventor of many machines and an innovator of thoughts. I cannot tell you much of your future for it will disrupt the succession of dimensions. I can only say what they tell me to say.

Hen: Who are you talking about?! What danger am I in?!
Zug-Ug: I’m glad you asked. There is only one warning from my superiors to prevent your troublesome future. Do not drink too much of your own concoction. We need you to create more devices. If you drink too much, you will wither away into undifferentiated nothingness. You will lose everything... We will lose everything...

Hen: Wow… this is too much to process...
Zug-Ug: Do not drink too much of your concoction.
Hen: What did I create? Where am I?
Zug-Ug: Do not drink too much of your concoction.
Hen: OK, OK. How—how much should I drink?
Zug-Ug: If I tell you, it will disrupt the succession of rhythms and balance will be destroyed in a vortex of ripple effects. You must find the right amount of your formula to drink, but you cannot test the amounts yourself. You will materialize on your green and moist blue planet in thirty five seconds. Farewell, Henroid Oliver Jenkins.

Hen: How—how did you know my middle name?

Zug-Ug immediately faded into light particles. The light particles transformed into an illusion of parallelograms and disintegrated into the metallic crystal. Hen reopened his eyes to find himself inside his physical body. He was inside his laboratory again with his wooden door still shut.

Henroid, continued from 6

His legs turned to rubber as he stood, spewing brownish-blue goo onto the soft carpet. Henroid’s hair was not crimson red anymore. It was strikingly white and receded. Hen’s traveling sucked life out of his entity and, in turn, showed its effects on his aged body.

There was a knock at the door.

“Who is it?” said Hen, as he gained feeling back in his legs. He was still seeing in tunnel vision and his head was throbbing with distress and confusion.

“Hen —“The woman cleared her throat. “Excuse me -- Professor Jenkins... Are you alright, sir? Can I come in? You’ve been in the laboratory for three days... since Friday, I believe. Nobody has heard from you.”

Hen walked with his numbed scrawny veined legs toward the locked wooden door of his laboratory. He unlocked the top bolt and pushed against the door, before opening it to a surprised face.

“Sir, what has happened to your hair!” said the surprised visitor.

“What do you mean?” said Hen.

“Your hair – it’s white!”

Hen said, chuckling, “Oh... I’m just trying a new look.”

“You look thirsty......... Do you want a Pepsi?” said Hen.
Letter to the Oppressed

William Bontrager

Just when I think there could be no more lows to sink to, I find myself once again, surprising myself with my depth of loneliness. Is it the media that spawned this horrible feeling? Who tells us if we do not have a significant other, then we are freaks? Looking back, I now even see it in the sitcoms I used to watch as a red-assed child. Take, for instance, Family Matters. You know the loveable black family with the goofy annoying neighbor. The family always has it together. We watch Laura and Eddie going out on dates and doing “normal” things, but then you had Steve Urkel, who was a veritable genius, and was smart and romantic and he had a good heart. But did shallow Laura see this? No, she would say, “Steve, go home.” And then she would date some smooth-talking guy who probably was riddled with STDs. That is not all. The red haired Kimmie from Full House was an eccentric neighbor who was always asked to go home while "DJ" had it all together. They didn’t look at the aging John Stamos who had an unhealthy obsession with Elvis and was stuck in a middle-aged crisis as anything but the “Height of Cool,” but a hyperactive girl who had an imagination was deemed “single,” “dateless,” “Lonely.” This is the media. It tells us constantly that we are not “right” unless we have a significant other. That there is something strange and wrong with us. But there are millions of us single folks, and you know what? If we don’t let society tell us we should be Depressed because we don’t have somebody, then we can take that energy that we have because we don’t exert it in relationships, and we can fill our lives to overflowing, more than we ever dreamed. After all, if Steve Urkel had said “screw you Laura” and pursued his science experiments, he could have gone great grand places, but he chose to hang out with those chumps, the Winslows, even though they told him to “go home” at least once every episode. Well, I am calling all those Steves and Kimmies and that big guy from Everybody Loves Raymond, and anybody else out there, to band with me and give a big hearty yell before we overturn Hollywood and end the lies for good.

The Blank Page

Bette Lucas

Blank is my page; an idea is naught.

I try to remember what I was taught.

“Just start writing,” is what she said,

But nothing is coming into my head.

What should it be? I ask myself.

A tree, a flower, a book on the shelf?

The subject escapes me as I sit and ponder.

Now my mind is starting to wander.

Get back on track! Myself I admonish.

It’s just a poem you must accomplish.

Well, looky here what I just did.

A poem about nothing. You go, kid!
Judas
Sarah Nichols

Molly glanced at the clock, 5:45, and as usual it was dinnertime. She quickly counted heads and sighed in frustration. Only three: John, Mary, and Logan, were sitting at the table. Yet again, Adrian was late for dinner. She sighed once more and shoved away from the table. John and the kids exchanged amused glances as she stomped upstairs to confront Adrian. As soon as Molly was out of hearing range, they began to take bets as to whether she would drag Adrian down to the table by his ear or whether he would come willingly.

Meanwhile, Molly had arrived at Adrian’s room and was pounding his door. There was no answer, but that didn’t surprise her. She didn’t hear any music coming from Adrian’s room, and she had raised him better than to ignore her, so that meant he was listening to his iPod. She didn’t regret gifting it to him for Christmas last year, but the Lord help her, it frustrated her to the core when he lost track of time because of it.

Deciding that permission was a thing of the past, Molly let herself into her adopted son’s room. As she saw him, she was struck by how much he had changed since the day when she found him. Though he was ten years older, she would always remember that sweet little toddler she found wandering in a park looking for his mommy. It was tragic that he was never reunited with his biological parents, but she couldn’t stop her selfish thoughts of how wonderful it was that she could keep the adorable child who had wormed his way into her heart.

He still had pitch black hair, but it was longer after so much time. It reached his chin because he didn’t feel like wasting any effort in going to get a haircut. His icy blue eyes were focused on one of the many medical texts he accumulated after deciding he wanted to be a doctor. Molly’s eyes narrowed as she took in his lanky form stretched across the bed. It was not as noticeable when he was standing and in motion, but he was far too skinny, mostly from the many incidents like this, where he was so focused on whatever he was doing that he forgot to eat.

“Enough is enough,” Molly thought as she crossed the short distance between the door and his bed. She yanked his headphones off and closed his textbook, despite his rather useless protests.

Adrian
Christine Bramble

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“It’s dinnertime. You are not missing one more meal, you hear me! So get your skinny butt downstairs now, mister!” Molly ordered. She crossed her arms and glared when he did little more than sit up on his bed.

“But Mom,” Adrian whined, “I need to learn this stuff if I’m going to be a doctor. I’ll be able to test out of a few classes if I learn this now and graduate from med school sooner rather than later.”

“How about you graduate from high school first?” Molly quipped, having none of his “I’m going to be a doctor” attempt to get out of dinner. “I heard it’s pretty hard to get into med school if you can’t even do high school biology. Why aren’t you studying that instead?”

“But mom, that stuff is so easy. And boring, but mostly mind-numbingly easy.” Oddly, he made another attempt at procrastination. His hope was to retrieve both his iPod and freedom to continue reading his textbook on anatomy. He loved his mom, and enjoyed verbally dueling with her more than he would ever admit to her face, but the way muscles and ligaments worked together in the human body was absolutely spellbinding.

“Too bad, and quit trying to distract me. It’s dinnertime, and you need to eat, so get downstairs, now.” Molly leveled him with a stern look that promised consequences if Adrian didn’t do what she told him.

“But...” Adrian started to speak, but Molly cut him off. Then she pulled out her secret weapon: her knowledge that he was, and always will be, a total mama’s boy.

“Please Adrian? If you don’t eat you’ll never grow and I’ll feel like a failure as a mother.” She “begged” while pulling her “pity me” face. Adrian fell for it hook, line, and sinker.

“Well, you raise a good point,” Adrian sighed. He hated it when his mom sent him on a guilt-trip. He heaved his skinny frame off of his bed and walked downstairs, while completely missing Molly’s victorious smirk.

Vaguely aware of his mom watching, Adrian sat at the modestly sized dinner table. He noticed his father and Logan passing Mary small wads of cash, and smirked. He was eternally amused that, for whatever reason, Mary was the only one in the family who had faith in
him and his ability to acquiesce to their mother’s demands. Of course, that could have something to do with the deal they made a couple of years ago, and the fact that she was his favorite sister, never mind that she was his only sister.

Adrian was about to congratulate Mary on her win, and ask for his cut, when Molly brought out the food. The scent of spaghetti drifted towards him; it was a delicious smell that, much to his embarrassment, caused his stomach to grumble. Well, not so much grumble as roar in hunger. This, combined with his flaming red cheeks, sent his family into peals of laughter at his expense.

“Jeez Adrian, when was the last time you ate?” Logan jokingly asked. Adrian rolled his eyes and was about to dismiss the question until Molly looked at him, and he knew he was expected to answer.

“I…” he began to say, but didn’t continue. “When was the last time I ate?” he thought. He wracked his brain, trying to find an answer, and was astonished when he realized that, beyond an apple before school, he hadn’t eaten a thing all day. In fact, he could barely remember eating a full meal all week. “Well, I’ve been busy studying my neurology book, but I’m writing my senior paper on the progression of ALS, so I kind of have to…” That and I have been spending most of my spare time at the hospital. I just don’t have time,” he thought, feeling that justified his not eating.

“I had an apple for breakfast,” he finally stated sheepishly before wincing. He just received one of his mother’s patented looks and that meant there would be an impending lecture.

“I don’t know why she’s so irritated,” he thought. “I just had a busy week. It’s not like I have a problem or anything, I just haven’t had the time to eat.” Then Mary, in an either completely tactless maneuver or a desire to disperse the darkening mood, grabbed Adrian’s arm and held it next to hers.

“Well geez, no wonder you’re so skinny! Your arm is as skinny as mine, and I’m just a little girl,” she teased. Much to Adrian’s growing horror, her teasing was the truth. Mary was three years younger than he, yet his bony forearm was as big around as hers. John saved Adrian from more teasing by heaping a mound of spaghetti on his plate and passing the salad bowl. Adrian diligently picked at his food and vaguely registered the chattering of his family around him. He didn’t truly listen to what they said; the tumultuous thoughts that were running through his head took precedence over everything else until his mother finally snapped at him.

“Adrian, quit picking at your food.” Adrian focused on his plate for the first time and realized that, despite feeling stuffed, he had barely touched his food. “I must have filled up on my salad,” he thought.

“I’m full.” He said simply with a shrug of his shoulders. He knew this was a mistake as soon as the words left his mouth.

“Adrian, you still have over half a plate of spaghetti left, how can you be full?” Finish eating.”

“I know I have half a plate left, but I’m full. Why am I going to keep eating when I’m full?” Adrian retorted. John, Logan, and Mary watched in shock as Adrian actually stood up to Molly. This was unheard of; Adrian was such a mama’s boy that he never actually instigated what could turn into a huge argument. They continued watching without uttering a word, waiting to see how things would unfold.

“Adrian, trust me, you’re not full. A small salad and a few bites of spaghetti does not fill any person up, let alone a seventeen year old boy. Now finish off what’s on your plate.”

“No.”

Time froze. Though John and Logan usually bet against Adrian coming down to dinner when Molly went after him, he never actually told her no. Never. He could reason his way out of doing something; he could beg his way out of dinner, but he never told her no. John, Logan, and Mary felt somewhat afraid as a dark look passed over Molly’s face. She was pissed.

“What did you say,” she ground out, leveling Adrian with a dark look as she waited for his reply.

“You heard me. I said no.” During all of this Adrian had maintained a passive demeanor, as though he went head to head with his mother often. How he looked on the outside was infinitely different from how he was feeling, so despite appearing calm, he was actually a shaking mess on the inside. He was praying that his mother would drop the issue, but that was unlikely. She was like a bulldog; once she bit down, she never let go until the issue was finished. In this
case Adrian was the unfortunate bull, fighting to dislodge his attacker despite his adversary’s advantage.

“Damn it Adrian, I’m sick of watching you waste away!” Molly shouted. She was desperate for Adrian to listen, but she knew he wasn’t ready to yet.

“What are you talking about?” Adrian asked, shocked by the turn of events. He was expecting to be locked in the bathroom until he ate, or something similar at least.

“I’m talking about you! I’m talking about you being so preoccupied with everything but your own well being! Have you even noticed that you haven’t eaten lunch in months? You just bring home whatever I make you, every day. I can’t take it any more!”

They stared at each other until Adrian, in a rude and unusual gesture, pushed away from the table and rushed from the room. He pulled on his rollerblades, his preferred mode of travel, and left the house. He raced down the sidewalk of the suburban neighborhood, the patches of light from the street lamps the only things preventing him from being overwhelmed by darkness. It was cold and he was wearing only a loose t-shirt and jeans, but he didn’t care. The warmth emitting from his muscles as he rolled along soothed his frazzled nerves, and the cold was a minor thing to him anyway.

Without thinking, he made his way to Newbury General, the hospital he volunteered at. The hospital was his refuge; he spent every spare moment he had there. The scent of antiseptic, the slight buzz of the machinery, the constant chatter of the nurses, he loved it all. He rolled in through the emergency room entrance and waved to the receptionist as he went by. He made his way to the locker room; there were always a few spare sets of scrubs that he could use and the night shift nurses would appreciate his company if not his help.

Adrian walked down the hall, clad in navy blue scrubs and a pair of sneakers he fished from a locker. He looked down, staring at his hand as he went. His long fingers were bony, each joint and ligament stood out. The skin covering his hand was stretched tight and blue veins were visible under the pale skin. He shook his head and lowered his hand. He didn’t have a problem, but he couldn’t escape the nagging feeling that his mother was right.

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Pools of Energy

Bremer Acosta

As the moon dances above the sky, I gaze into the mirror pool and it gazes back at me. The reflection of an unknown face ripples. My eyes flicker with nobody around, except for the dismal echo of the consciousness. In the depths of my body, past the flesh, tissue, blood and bones, there is a strange entity hiding. It screams to escape, but I hold it tightly to my core, afraid of people discovering it. Sometimes, it attacks at chaotic moments and I can’t control it. The more I stare into these reflective waves, the more my energy explodes. It desires satisfaction from all sources – to be loved, cherished, and adored – to love, cherish, and adore. It wants to grasp more energy and become blissful in the journey. As time rages and the unknown face melts into pools of darkness, the entity becomes inhibited.

I ignore my little friend.

It becomes weaker and slows down to the conformity of my generation. I search for it. I scream for it! Where did you go? Will you ever return to me? It evolves into an ugly twisted jackal, searching for mischief and mayhem on gloomy nights. It chokes in pools of liquor and suffocates in the aroma of stale cigar smoke. Half-dead, it stays hidden. The rippled waves lay still now and the unknown face wants recognition. Is it too late?
It’s Raining Today

Sharon Cole

I wake up with a pounding in my head that seems to echo all around me. What a painful migraine, it is the worst one I have had in a very long time. I wearily get up, start a pot of coffee, look out the window, and that is when I notice; it is raining today. Why today of all days? I am already so stressed out with the day’s events that I can’t even think straight. Maybe the weather is just a reflection of my mood. This is such a gray day.

I arrive at the funeral home early, making sure that all the preparations are done. I also want one last look at her in private. I know I should be grieving over the loss of my mother, but there is a tinge of freedom involved. She was not what I had ever imagined a mother to be. A mother should be loving and caring and compassionate, ready to give her life for her children. She was nothing like that!

I remembered when I was 17 years old; she came home from work one day and started yelling at me for not doing the dishes. I was confused because I had done the dishes right after breakfast before I left for school. Not in her opinion, though, there was a coffee cup in the sink. I told her that my step-father had just finished a cup of coffee. The next thing I knew she had thrown the cup at me. The cup hit me right in the mouth; my lip was busted open! There was blood all over my face, and then she slapped me and told me to go in the bathroom before I got blood on the carpet. Not once did she apologize.

Oh how I hated that woman! How could God give me such a mother? Maybe I was adopted...when I was a young child, I used to pray that I was and that my “real” mother would come and rescue me any day. But no one ever came.

Here I am now, standing at her funeral, unable to shed a single tear. What must everyone be thinking? I do not really care; my nightmare book is finally closed. I can now get on with my life and start living. I thought I had started living the day I was able to move out on my own. God had a weird and twisted sense of humor.

Mother got very sick and the doctors did not expect her to live, but the horrid beast did. I always said she was too evil to die. Turns out I was right. She got well enough to go home, but could not be there alone. I still had no worries; being the youngest of six there was no way I would have to stay with her. Once again, God had a twisted sense of humor. None of my siblings would take her in, and they refused to stay with her. No, she didn’t want them there either; she wanted me there. Welcome to purgatory!

I had to travel often, just to tend to her childish needs and wants. She would not take “Mom, I don’t have the time for that right now, it’s too far away,” for an answer. She would begin to scream and curse, and if that did not work, she would start to cry, saying, “No one cares about me.” Oh poor baby! When did she ever care about us, or me for that matter? She sent me to live with our abusive grandfather at the age of 13. I thought that she was bad but this man, this venomous man, made her look like an angel sent straight from heaven, albeit a dark angel.

The only peace I found was when she would drift off to sleep. Joyfully, that would happen about every three hours or so, and she would sleep soundly for about two hours at a time. Oh, God, how much more must I endure? She started refusing to even sit up on her own, or go to the bathroom on her own. How horrifying to wipe your mother’s bottom like that of an infant. Seriously God, how much more do you have planned? I screamed at the top of my lungs, but quietly in my own head, I can’t take much more of this!’

It was Tuesday and two days before my birthday. I woke up realizing that mom had not yelled for me yet this morning. She must have been very tired. I went to check on her, and it felt like a ton of bricks had just fallen on me as I realized that she was not breathing. She had died in her sleep and looked so peaceful. It almost looked as though she were smiling, not that I would know what that looked like. I don’t recall ever seeing this sullen woman smile a day in my life.

Looking at her in this dull, uncomfortable resting crate, it still looks as though she is smiling. I hope she does find some happiness at last. The murmurings of viewers stir me back to the reality of the day. As I greet familiar faces coming in to pay their respects to our departed mother, I realize that none of my siblings have shown up yet. I step outside to see if they are in the parking lot, but they are nowhere to be found. The only one to comfort me on this grey, mournful day is the steady, cold rain, and my dead mother’s corpse.
**Tossed At Sea**

Bonnie Burton

Your dreams and goals may change again; your life may take a turn:

You think you’re headed starboard, the sea begins to churn.

We never expect to run aground, sometimes stuck spinning round and round.

Your ship is in port, but your life’s out to sea: sailing your vessel, rough waters there may be.

Two lives so different—so far away, an anchor to stabilize just for today.

You’re floating along on your raft of strife; you hit the rapids, changing your life.

The freedom and possibilities abound, you’re off sailing—nowhere around.

Life has calmed here on my dock, tomorrow I’ll climb to the highest rock.

You’ll return just in time to catch the last wave:

It’s not you ---- I’m trying to save.

So just for now we’ll sail our own ship, searching for the tides to rip;

When they do and you’re tossed at sea, light your flare and search for me. Throw me a life vest, cushion or rope.

Shine your light and share your hope.

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**Iris**

Ashley Houtz
The Christ Episcopal Church, founded in 1672, located on the main street in Saint Michaels, Maryland, has intrigued me for quite some time. When choosing a place of worship to examine, then comparing and contrasting this church with religions learned through my world religions class, naturally I took advantage of the opportunity to familiarize myself with this beautiful stone church. Christ Church is eloquent and has a brick barrier around the sides and back of the churchyard. Gravesites are all around the church, many with old and large gravestones. There are large double doors in the shape of a half oval. After passing through the double doors, there is an area with pamphlets and books. Just past the available literature, there are several rows of wooden pews. There is a Parish House separate from the church. The location of the Parish House is adjacent to the church. Here you can find the offices of the Reverends.

On October 28, 2008, I interviewed Reverend Mark S. Nestlehutt, Rector of the Christ Church of Saint Michaels. We met in his office located in the Parish House. He was very kind and open, allowing me to ask questions, which may have been difficult if there were different circumstances. I am very grateful for Reverend Nestlehutt’s willingness to enlighten me on the traditions and beliefs of the Episcopal denomination. The responses provided by the Reverend were very detailed, and I left with even more information than I had planned on receiving.

I opened with a question that had the potential to be a little too nosy and received a very gracious response. The first question was, “How did you come to believe in your chosen religion?” The answer was very straightforward; “85–90% of the population adopt the faith of their parents and grandparents.” The Reverend also informed me of a book called Finding Your Religion. This book helps the small percentage of people who decide to choose a religion different from their families.

The next question I asked was “How does this religion differ from other denominations of Christianity, such as Methodist?” Here is where I really began to learn some interesting aspects of the Episcopal religion. He explained how the Episcopal religion is more like that of the Roman Catholic religion. The sacramental element is more significant for Episcopalianians rather than that of an evangelical element that the Methodist church embraces. The Holy Communion, for instance, is the most significant part of the service, unlike some other denominations of Christianity, which magnify the Word of God and partake in the Holy Communion once a month.

A similarity between Methodist and Episcopalian denominations lies in the placement of Bishops or overseers. There are many shared components of all Christian and Catholic religions. All of these denominations embrace Jesus. The Holy Bible, in one form or another, is embraced by these differing denominations as well. The New Revised Standard Version of the National Council of Churches is used by all Episcopalian churches.

Another question I asked was “What is the main objective of the sermons?” Here I learned some more interesting information. There are pre-established readings that are shared during worship. The service consists of the following readings: one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament, one from Psalms, one from the Gospels and one from the Epistles. The sermon relates the teachings of these readings in contemporary situations. By relating the readings to a current issue or area of life, there is a better understanding and receptiveness from the congregation.

I had always assumed that many Catholic and Christian religions were very similar; however, there are many differences between the Episcopal denomination and that of my own, Methodist denomination.
That which is fresh is what she wants,
This professor of mine who constantly hunts
For words and phrases so rarely used
That describe just right or keep us amused.
Old similes and metaphors simply won’t do.
Think, girl, think! It must be new.
An impossible demand of one my age
Who is salt and peppered and covered with sage.
Lost in Fear  
Rebecca Barringer

Running, Lost, and scared to stop.
Huffing, Puffing, but crying not.
Too shocked to shed a single tear,
Just running, brambling, lost in fear.
Drowning, drugged, gulping for air.
Streams of sweat run through my hair.
I stop now and fall to my knees,
My stomach clenching...a painful squeeze.
I can’t go on. I must lie down...
Rest for a while on the soft, cool ground.
My eyes close heavy, swollen, red.
On the pillows of leaves I lay my head.
If it catches up I’m surely gone,
But I must stop now. I can’t go on.
I’m much too tired, my body’s dead.
Jumbled obscenities rampage my head
It’s coming now. I hear it, close.
I must get up, out of repose.
But I can’t move, I’m surely done.
The creature’s coming, and I can’t run.
She Blinked  
Falynn Jones

She blinked and blotted the liquid lonely that had run from her eyes off of her cotton cheek with a trembling hand. She met the eyes in front of her with an icy glare. Dual mosaics, they were perfect in life. Green, brown, and yellow, the colors of amber once had a glimmer of innocence. Time had since destroyed the clarity of her inner portals. What was amber, now onyx. Onyx turned to steel as she stared into herself. Emptiness had devoured her and slammed the windows shut; you could feel the freeze inside without a touch. The innocence long since given away like extra change on a street corner.

Desecration and determination swirled in the masochistic tango of her mind. She broke the stare and looked behind her. In reverse, she saw the day when all of her wishes were granted. She could still taste the moment when all of her dreams were smashed, burned, and scattered. Long ago the wind had taken them from her.

It had come back to take her. Around and around, she flew up and down, dancing with her dreams; she almost cracked a smile. Then she opened her eyes; the waterfall behind her lids had not ceased and now was not even worth trying to dam. Off the tip of her nose and onto her lips, a salty drop was intercepted by her tongue. She licked her lips and craved again the sweet crimson copper.

The glazed surface was pretty enough to fall into, smooth and silver...ice. She thought for a moment that she would jump. She envied the beautiful phoenix, risen from the ashes. What is the opposite of a phoenix? What will come from the frozen depths of nothingness? She wanted so badly to jump into the fire and melt her frozen heart. To put the amber back where the onyx remained. She wanted out of the ashes.

Staring once again into empty dark sockets, rallying the few nerves left standing, blowing smoke, and spinning wheels... She saw the mosaics grow, larger, larger. The waterfall went dry as ice ran through every vein.

The looking glass opened as she let go. Red ran like a river down the white marble as she sank down, down, down...

The florescent burned a hole in her brain as her eyes shot open. She had no idea how much time had passed and did not care. The throbbing behind her eyes grew greater as she struggled to gain vertical stance. Her bare foot found a shard of the sharpest red ice, and it plunged itself deep into her heel. Oxygen left her lungs as she went down faster than she had before.

Time for a subconscious intervention, she thought, as she spun around in nothingness. It was too late now to see how quickly black turns white and hot turns cold. How rapid the transition from life to death.

They found her with no note, broken on Sunday. The shattered mirror framed her delicate figure like that of the power she sought in herself. She appeared to be dancing with nothing in particular, a large piece of glass embedded in a vein. They found two onyxes lying on the marble floor. A piece of amber clenched in her weak fist. They said she looked beautiful even without life; they said she looked free. They carved the stone, “Beauty in the Ashes.”
Your Smile

Angela Walls

As I sit here and reminisce
There are no photographs
No, memories are all that’s left
I remember us as kids
Playing McDonald’s and Barbies too
Swimming and sleigh riding … remember you broke my leg?
I remember your bright blue eyes and that great big smile
Yeah that big ol’ smile is what hides my broken heart
It gets me through the night
And wakes me in the morning light
It helps ease the pain of memories there will never be
And reminds me that somehow this was meant to be
I remember as time went on and we got older
Our visits seemed so far apart
And now all too short
I remember something was always changing
Our age, your hair, your clothes, or life in general
And boy my life is forever changed
But the one thing that always stayed the same
Was your bright blue eyes and that great big smile
Yeah that big ol’ smile is what hides my broken heart
It gets me through the night
And wakes me in the morning light
It helps ease the pain of memories there will never be
And reminds me that somehow this was meant to be
I remember when I heard the news
All I could do was cry
You had done it so many times
On that bike you were flying high
They told me you were the passenger
To dinner you had gone
And never will you return

Bridge of Love

Bette Lucas

Raining, continued on 35
Finally!

Jamie Gunsallus
Japanese Boat
Laura Perez

You both were playing it safe
The drunk in the car was to determine your fate
Our imagination haunts us all each night
But the pain subsides at the memories of
Your bright blue eyes and that great big smile
Yeah that big ol’ smile is what hides my broken heart
It gets me through the night
And wakes me in the morning light
It helps ease the pain of memories there will never be
And reminds me that somehow this was meant to be
The day we said goodbye
Was the worst day of our lives
He thinks about what could have been
What should have been
If he had known the outcome
He would have stood in your place
He wishes he could have died that night
Your dad remembers old trucks, spinning tires, and smoke filled cars
And his little girl’s bright blue eyes and that great big smile
Yeah that big ol’ smile is what hides my broken heart
It gets me through the night
And wakes me in the morning light
It helps ease the pain of memories there will never be
And reminds me that somehow this was meant to be
Yeah I can see you now
Riding the golden roads in heaven
With arms wide open, a heart of gold, your bright blue eyes and that great big smile
Yeah that big ol’ smile is what hides my broken heart
It gets me through the night
And wakes me in the morning light
It helps ease the pain of memories there will never be
And reminds me that somehow this was meant to be
Yeah I know this was all meant to be

Raining, continued from 30
White Warrior

White Warrior is a mysterious white deer that is seen rarely at Presquile, but has been seen often enough to be considered a legend, or ghost, of the area. It is a beloved children’s story once told to me in her own language by a young Native American Indian girl named Little Flower.

“It was during the time when the trees were just beginning to bud,” Little Flower began, “and the meadow had turned a bright green where the wild onion peeped its bluish-green, pointed cap above the tender blades of grass to watch the warm sunshine perform its magic on all living things. There at the edge of the meadow stood the giant white deer that had become known to all who saw him as White Warrior. He acquired his name by reputation, having proven himself very brave on many occasions. He seemed to be a spirit among the wildlife that was often surprising. One moment he was there, such as now, and the next moment he was not.

“His head held high, nostrils flared, muscles rigid, rack with its nine pointed fingers leaning toward the bright blue sky,” she pointed her fingers toward the sky, “he stood in anticipation of the danger that lurked in the dense pale-green woods beyond. It looked like he was carved from stone.

“All was quiet except for the twitter of bright birds hopping from branch to branch in their daytime social dance. The air was still. In the dead leaves strewn about the woods floor, there was a rustling noise, which proved to be a gray squirrel as it darted out from underneath his musty ramblings. The squirrel scampered up a fat tree with a kernel of corn left over from harvest in his mouth. When he reached the branch high above White Warrior, the squirrel sat up on his haunches and raised his forepaws to hold the kernel of corn. Munching sounds drifted down to White Warrior. The squirrel seemed unconcerned, yet watchful of other critters who might challenge him for his prize.

“The quick darting motions of the squirrel had not made White Warrior flinch, for that was not the kind of movement for which he was watchful. He stood as if frozen in time, never to move again. He did not bend his neck to taste the lush green grass and clover that
reached toward his knees. He did not notice the unconcerned honeybee flitting from flower to flower, gathering yellow dust on its legs. Nor did he notice the orange and brown butterfly gently flapping its wings around his ears and antlers. White Warrior’s attention was riveted on something unseen in the direction of the forest.

“Within minutes the sky began to turn dark as clouds rolled in from the west. White Warrior’s head dipped toward the grass as he sniffed the air. He snorted. His head bounced back up, and his nose twitched as again he breathed deeply, smelling the heat-charged humid air. A rumbling noise began off in the distance, and the sky grew darker as the clouds began rolling.

“White Warrior made a high-pitched squealing noise, a warning of danger. Soon the forest came alive with deer poised at attention. They stopped in the woods when they saw White Warrior standing at the edge of the meadow. They stood among the safety of the trees, tails tentatively wiggling their own warning of danger nearby. White Warrior turned his head to look at them but then turned back, watching attentively. He snorted again, then wiggled his white fluffy tail.

“There was no longer any sign of the sun having shone brightly just moments before. Suddenly lightning flashed and the rumbling of thunder sounded soon afterward. White Warrior’s head darted toward the grass, then bounced back up again. He stomped a hoof in the rich grass about his feet and snorted again. A ‘Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z’ sound pierced the air and lightning flashes, followed immediately by a deafening crash of thunder. A dead, broken tree exploded into thousands of wood slivers, spraying the herd of deer like rain. The remains of the stump began to smoke. White Warrior’s warning tail stood straight up, and he began loping across the meadow.

“The other deer followed White Warrior, their white flags of warning also raised. Bouncing high in the air with every lope, they bounded across the meadow toward a group of mature trees, more dense, to offer a canopy against the impending storm.

“Another flash of light and crash of thunder and the rain began pouring, but it was too late to have an impact on the now-burning tree trunk that was as tall as two men. The flames began shooting into the air. As bits of burning wood fell onto the dead leaves at its base, they ignited and began to burn wildly. Soon the entire tree was consumed by roaring, crackling wildfire. Despite the rain, the fire began to spread along the ground to other trees. The tree next to the flaming trunk was a cedar tree, and it burst into flame with exploding force. The fire went from tree to tree using the dead leaves of fall as its vehicle.

“The deer began to panic and some ran off, away from the fire, white tails dancing through the trees. White Warrior stood alert at the edge of the forest, somewhat sheltered from the rain by a thick canopy of pine overhead. The birds had flown away, but the squirrel was still on the branch. He had dropped the kernel of corn to the ground below at the first crash of thunder. Now he seemed frozen to the branch upon which he sat, chattering his panic and terror. The fire was headed toward the little squirrel, and he did not know what to do.

“White Warrior darted out from under his shelter and loped toward the tree where the squirrel wildly chattered his dilemma. Stopping under the tree, White Warrior raised on his hind legs, and his antlers reached up toward the squirrel. The squirrel jumped off his branch onto White Warrior’s antlers and held on for dear life while White Warrior bounded back to the safety of the evergreen trees. He bent one knee in a majestic bow, tucked his chin toward his breast and bent his antlers toward the ground, lowering the little squirrel, as gently as a soft southern breeze, to safety. The squirrel sat up on his hind legs and chattered his thanks, or his indignation, for it was hard to tell, to White Warrior and then loped away farther into the forest.

“The fire was spreading rapidly, and White Warrior looked from the small group of deer back to the fire and then back at the deer again. He stomped his foot and snorted, wiggling his fluffy tail. The other deer seemed undecided about what to do. They ran away a short distance and then came back to White Warrior, looking toward him as their leader. They would not leave without him.

“Suddenly there was a scream from the woods. It was a human scream. White Warrior began to prance around in nervousness, anticipating the rescue of something more. He trotted back and forth along the edge of the clearing. He knew better than to trust the humans because he had seen how they had slain deer for meat and hides.

“The scream came again, but this time it was closer. White
Warrior bounded across the meadow with hooves that hardly touched the ground. He dashed around the fire and into the woods in the direction of the cries, now turning into sobs.

“The only other sounds to be heard were the roar and crackling of the fire as it consumed tree after tree, spreading into an ever-widening circle. As White Warrior disappeared into the fire, the woody smoke smelled acrid and made it difficult for him to breathe. He bravely sucked it into his lungs and exhaled great gray puffs of smoke through his nostrils. The initial dead tree at the fire’s center now lay in ashes among its own roots. One entire side of the meadow had become an inferno of towering fire that scorched the thick green grass and clover where White Warrior had stood.

“Suddenly a great ball of fire burst through the flames and flew into the middle of the meadow where it stopped. The ball of fire went down, then rolled in the cooling grass until it was no longer on fire. In the grass lay a young Indian boy who had ridden on White Warrior’s back to safety. His clothes were charred but he was unharmed.

“White Warrior’s beautiful white fur had been burned away. All that remained was his pink skin, which was now beginning to form great blisters as he lie in the cool green grass.

“The Indian boy stood up and walked over to where White Warrior lie on his side. He touched White Warrior’s nose. By then it was raining hard, but the lightning and thunder had stopped. Tearfully, the young boy told White Warrior to stay there; he would get help. Then he disappeared through the woods away from the fire.

“As the rain fell, it wetted the trees that had not burned and eventually the fire died down. The rain also cooled the burns on White Warrior’s body, and suddenly he was no longer there. True to his reputation, he had disappeared much like the steam that rose from his blistering body.

“When the young Indian boy returned with his father to help the scarred deer, they found an empty meadow except for a few wildflowers and a wild onion watching over the events of the day, vouching for the truth in the legend of White Warrior.

The moral to the story is: if one sees a white deer, do not hurt it, for it is a magic deer filled with love for all of creation.”
Walking Down the Beach

Brittany J. McMahon

I stared up at the log cabin ceiling and sighed. Making a documentary is both tedious and humdrum. Having to smile all the time when the camera was on me was beginning to make my face hurt and I was eternally bored. Camping is on my top five least-liked activities list, cabin or no cabin. It was an all-expenses-paid trip, though, so I couldn’t and wouldn’t complain. Besides, when it was all over I was going to be on TV! That fact certainly helped to silence my complaints. This trip, I got to enjoy one of the most simplistic experiences of life and I wouldn’t give that up for anything.

The cameras were currently following my mother, Dolly, younger brother, Austin, and sister, Maggie, as they explored our campgrounds. This was an activity I had already experienced, at the request of the documentary folks two days earlier, and I was in no hurry to do it again. The woods that surrounded our small, but well-laid-out cabin in the east were very beautiful, with their lush green leaves and moss-covered trunks. However, the path was rather rocky, especially for my poor overused scooter, and my tires kept getting caught on the various rocks and twisted tree roots. It was just too much of a fight for the easily-drainable battery that fueled my only real means of transportation around the vast grounds.

I heard my father long before I saw him. His footsteps had become as distinctive to me as his voice. The screen door swung open, with a whining creak, allowing my father and about twenty mosquitoes entrance into the almost unbearably hot cabin. He walked to the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of water from the refrigerator before coming to sit next to me on the uncomfortable bed.

“Bored?” he asked. I didn’t really want to tell him the truth, having promised myself I wouldn’t say anything negative, but my dad knows me better than anyone. He knows I hate camping, the outdoors, and living without my technology; he feels the same way. He’s just much better at hiding it than I am. Reluctantly, I nodded, hoping that I was not about to be on the end of another, “Be grateful. This is a free trip” speech like the one my mom had delivered to Austin.

Beach, continued on 46

A Diamond, A Pearl

Jill Haslup

Beauty is within her; integrity is her display. She is an unwavering creation.

Can always count on what she has to say. She reminds me to care, not letting me give into despair. She tells me to fight. Take a stand for what is right. I could lose but win I might.

She tells me when I’m good, says she’s proud and impressed. When I am down – not at my best, she prevents me from being depressed.

She is dedicated, she is unique, dutiful and sweet. Thorough, unorganized, tidy and neat.

She is all of these things and then some too. A loyalist, trying her best to see your point of view.

She is a pleasure, a joy in life. A rose, a good girl. Worthy of much. She’s a diamond, a pearl.

She is much to many. A blessing to all.

She is much to me. My help, directing me, my sight if I don’t see.

She is my best friend that sparkles

An essence that is pure; together, they dance combined – they twirl.

She is a diamond. She is a gem. She is a pearl.
The Rain

Ashley Houtz

Each crystal drop falls on the ground,
Spinning, splashing, round and round...
The clouds that fill the dull, gray sky,
They’ll slowly move on, by and by.
A tap on the window, a drip and a drop,
It seems like the rain will never stop!
It starts out slowly, with gentle drips,
Landing on my fingertips...
Then it pours on the thirsty earth,
Causing the flowering buds to birth...
The lightning and thunder fill the sky,
With the glory of the Creator on high.
Then very slowly, the rain gives way...
To the bright, warm sun, and light of day.
Maggie, and me on the ride to the camp. He chuckled and then pulled me to my feet. “Let’s go take a walk on the beach then.” It was a marvelous suggestion indeed, except for the fact my scooter was currently recovering from a completely depleted battery, thanks to an early morning fishing trip, not that the machine could’ve handled driving on the white sand without sinking in anyway.

“Can’t. My scooter is beyond dead,” I informed him. He reached over with one hand and grabbed my lesser-used canes while holding me up with his other. Smiling, I slipped my hands through the uncomfortable plastic cuffs and grasped the hard rubber handles firmly. I had received too many cuts and scrapes from losing my grip to just hold onto them loosely. My multicolored leg braces, which didn’t match with any outfit, creaked with every step I took, but my family and I had long since grown used to the irritating noise. The ramp’s downward slope was difficult for me to navigate, even with my dad holding onto my arm so I couldn’t fall.

However, the journey was worth it. The beach was a marvelous sight; the white sand appeared orange in the glow of the descending sun and the waves glittered as they crashed. We traveled the small distance from the cabin to the soft sand as quickly as was possible with me on my canes. The sand didn’t crunch under my tennis shoes or the rubber stoppers of my canes as I had expected, but rather held sturdy as we traveled. I could understand now why the characters in my favorite books and movies walked the edges of the ocean. They did it because it was tranquil, so unlike the rest of the chaotic world. My dad and I chatted, in low tones, about unimportant topics as we strolled. This was an experience I had never had before and I enjoyed every second. I smiled as we continued a good distance down our private beach. The temperature changed very drastically with the disappearance of the sun and we were forced to return to the cabin just before we got too cold.

I was all smiles upon reentering our temporary abode. I had managed to walk down the beach for the first time and I didn’t even fall. My mother, however, was less than happy when the two of us forgot to wipe our feet and got sand all over the cabin. I liked the way the sand looked on the wood and, for the rest of our stay, refused to let mother sweep away the evidence surrounding my bed. I wanted the reminder for as long as I could have it. After all, who knew how long it would be until I could walk down the beach again?
She looks at me with her wide, almond shaped eyes. Her tiny steps are unsure. One hand grips her small chair, while the other reaches out to me. She trusts me. My chest is filled with her thick, black curls. I hold her safe from the world. She manages to embellish my spirit with her smile, as she finds peace from her childish play. This diminutive creature comforts me. Her laughter travels through my flesh and blood, its objective: to steal a piece of my heart. Her laughter accomplishes its quest. For Jayla possesses a piece of my essence, forever. Yet, my love suffers not. It is amplified beyond the reach of time. Her cries of pain sting like salted, opened wounds. I would sacrifice my existence to comfort her. Somehow she knows my life is hers. Her pain dissipates into a beautiful bouquet of giggles. My soul is at peace, for Jayla shines.
Dire Consequences  
Brittany J. McMahon

“I have to get to Michael!” That was the only distinguishable thought in my otherwise frantic mind. I raced as fast as my full, white wings could carry me across the sky. My auburn hair spread around me in the wind, but did not hinder my sight as I searched. Leaving him was foolish. I did as I swore I wouldn’t when I first received my charge.

I had pleaded and petitioned with the council to let me guard Michael. They’d never before let a female guardian angel guard a male human. At the time it had seemed like an archaic rule to me... now I realize they were right in that restriction. I understand now. They were avoiding complications like this. My pleas were heard; however, and despite reservations, I was granted my request on one condition, one simple condition, and I couldn’t even abide by that.

I shook my head, forcing my whole mind back into the situation. Michael had to be around here somewhere. I closed my eyes and let what I called my Michael-locator take full control. The burning in my heart that was my Michael-locator led me over the various crowded New York streets, and I hoped desperately that I would reach my destination in time. There was a sharp pain in my stomach, and my surprise caused my wings to falter for a second. I fell two feet in the air before I was able to regain control of my flight. I felt, rather than saw, the blood flowing from the wound in my mid-section. My face paled as I realized what this meant.

“Every wound inflicted upon him will also be inflicted upon you, Annabelle,” I had been warned so long ago. I took a couple shallow breaths and lowered myself closer to the city as the pull became stronger. He was here somewhere; I could feel him. “If he dies of unnatural causes, Annabelle, you will be stripped of your guardian status.” At the time that had seemed like the worst possible outcome of this...adventure; now it was the least. If Michael died, then I would probably pull my own damn wings off by hand. I couldn’t lose him. I needed him. Where was he?

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Bumpy Log  
Alexandria Koenig
I shouldn’t have let my jealousy get control of me. Running away from him, like a schoolgirl hurt by her first crush, was a foolhardy move on my part. A guardian angel has years of various trainings to deal with complications. I was prepared for any situation, or at least I should have been. I would have been if I had listened when the council first informed me that female guardian angels weren’t allowed to guard human males. Too bad I wasn’t for conforming to rules.

A searing pain slashed down the left side of my face, the white translucent skin blistering and burning. I resisted the urge to raise my hand to cover the wound, knowing that if I did, I would plummet to the ground faster than a human could blink. The pull to Michael was growing weaker. He was losing too much blood. I flew closer to the ground. I didn’t have the energy in me anymore to produce my shield, hiding me from human sight. The council could do with me as they wished later, and I wouldn’t say a word in opposition.

I sailed down a dark alleyway at the insistence of my Michael-locator. My brown eyes found his blonde head instantly, though he was mostly hidden from plain sight by two overturned metal trashcans. He was much worse than I had honestly expected. His blonde hair was matted with dirt, mud, and bits of trash. His left cheek was smeared with blood and blistered just like my own. His right eye was swollen shut with the beginnings of a black eye, and his left eye was closed in immense pain. His legs were twisted at odd angles, and I flinched at the thought of his legs damaged in the way that they probably were. His basketball career would be over for the season, if not longer. I cringed, knowing how much that would upset my Michael. His hands looked crushed as he tried in vain to find something to hold on to or grab. I landed gently halfway down the alley and walked the rest of the way to my broken charge.

“Please!” he begged desperately hearing my approach. “Don’t hurt me anymore. I’ll give you whatever you want just...just...don’t.” His words broke my heart. I did this to him. I hurt him like this. I caused him this damage because I broke the most basic and necessary rule.

“Oh Michael,” I whispered standing beside his damaged form. “Annabelle?” he questioned, uncertain. He turned his head in my general direction, being unable to see me. I knelt beside him and stroked his hair gently. He sighed, knowing for certain it was me now, and rested his sore head in my lap. The floral and rainy smell of my white cotton dress soothed him in its familiarity about as well as my touch.

“I’m so sorry, Michael.” I closed my eyes and focused my powers into my hands. I used my great abilities to raise Michael and sit him in my lap without causing him any harm.

“Sorry for what, my love?” He asked. He was trying in vain to hide his pain from me. He should know better than that by now. I had been his guardian for all of his seventeen years now. I knew him better than anyone else ever would. I knew his every quirk and kink. I knew his normal stormy blue eyes lighten when he feels happy or mischievous and that they turn an almost black blue when thinking things not meant for children under seventeen. I knew him...and he knew me. He knew me more than charges were ever meant to be known, that I was ticklish on the sole of my left foot, that I dreamed of having a family, that I liked my hair being played with, that I preferred slow tender kisses. He knew all of this, and it made it so much harder to do what I had to now.

“I broke the rule,” my voice cracked as my tears flowed down my cheeks. “I broke the rule and now you’re hurt.” He tilted his head so that his right cheek rested against my chest. He turned his head to reply, but the sound of footsteps passing by the mouth of our dark alley caused us both to freeze. Soundlessly, my white feathered wings wrapped themselves around the two of us protectively.

“Annabelle...” he wheezed trying to deny my implications, but he was in too much pain and losing far too much blood to continue. I smiled, sad and happy in the same moment, and rested my face in his golden hair. I took a deep breath, breathing in his unique scent.
“I can fix this,” I whispered, knowing very well that he could hear. “I can fix this, Michael.” I kissed the top of his head reverently. “Just hold still, okay? Until it’s over.” I felt him take a shuddering breath and knew he was about to try to talk me out of my next actions. I put a single finger against his rapidly paling lips to stop his coming disagreement. “I failed you, but know this: I do not regret it. I would break the rule again if it meant I got to experience all that I have with you.” I was tempted to pause and gather my thoughts so that they came out just right, but Michael didn’t have enough time left for that. I could feel his blood slowing as it poured onto my dress and hear his heart beat slowing. “You will live the rest of your life as though I’d never existed, Michael, and you’ll be happy and have twenty beautiful babies just like you deserve.” More tears fell unchecked into his hair. “I will be waiting for you when your time here is rightfully finished, okay? I do not want to see you until that time, you hear me?” I felt him nod weakly once against me.

There was no more time. I called all my power, every single molecule of it, into my being. It lit me from the inside out like a cool fire. I turned my palms, stained with Michael’s blood, skyward and channeled it there. It built and built, and I placed my palms against the crimson painted skin of my charge’s stomach as it flowed from me. I felt everything he felt as he was feeling it. I hoped it was working in reverse as well. As Michael’s wounds healed and his body grew stronger, I felt my energy and power ebbing from me. I held onto it as long as possible to be certain he was fully healed.

I could no longer hold onto the power and let it go back where it belonged. My wings were now dust around the two of us, burned by the extreme amount of power that no guardian was meant to use. Michael scrambled off my lap faster than I had ever seen him move before. I collapsed onto the dirty alley since I had neither his weight nor my wings to help hold up my limp weight any longer. My heart was faltering, and I knew these were my last few moments on
Desmona

Abigail Shaffer

I felt like a stalker. I wasn’t doing anything wrong. Well, I wasn’t doing anything criminally wrong. Ethics were another matter. I’ve always struggled with a strong conscience and usually knew the clear definition of what was right and what was wrong, what was black and what was white, but this was so gray that I wasn’t completely sure. There was this tiny voice inside of me that was crying out saying, “Don’t do it, this isn’t right!” but I was trying to squelch it and tell myself that it wasn’t my conscience talking, but my fear.

I was on Blog-Net.com, a popular site where people leave daily blogs about what they did with their day, what they feel, and what they think. Sometimes, really creative people even write little stories for their blog subscribers to read, but for the most part, it’s just a social sort of thing where friends can keep in touch through reading each other’s blogs and talking in the private chat rooms. I was getting ready to set my password and username so I could log on as a first time member, but I was nervous. It had always been my desire to join a blog and show the world what was going on in my life, but I knew that I wouldn’t be able to do that with this account; I had a completely different purpose in mind. The username I set was Desmona, although my real name is Natalie. There was no way I was going to use any of my real information. My reason for doing all of this so secretly was rather a long story. A year ago, I had fallen in love with a boy named Drew.

Unfortunately, he ended our summer relationship by moving away before I ever had a chance to tell him how I felt. I was never sure if he had any feelings for me or not, but I never stopped thinking about him. Now, a year later, I still can’t let him go. When he had still been close, he told me about Blog-Net.com and encouraged me to check out his weekly blogs. I had done so, and was able to read them without being a member, but I was unable to communicate with him or comment on his blogs. At first, I had thought that I might just join the website in order to talk with Drew, but then something happened that changed my mind. He nearly stopped emailing and communicating with me completely. It was as if he were trying to cut me out of his life altogether, and I did believe that to be true. I knew that his college life was where he went to escape the depression of his home life, and that he was trying to release all ties with the area in which he had grown up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He was trying to cut ties with me too, because I was part of that area. It hurt, and I wasn’t ready to let him out of my life completely, not yet. I knew that I probably would never see him again. He had told me so the day that he left, but he had promised to write, and so had I. Just because he wasn’t going to carry out his end of the bargain didn’t mean that I was going to give up as well. I still loved him, and I still needed him. That is why I decided to join Blog-Net as an anonymous person. I figured that, if he wouldn’t talk to me, then maybe he would talk to Desmona. The name is kind of strange. I don’t like it much myself, because it reminds me of Shakespeare’s ill-fated Desdemona, but I had a purpose for this too. The college that Drew attended was the Desmond Iglesias School of the Arts. My idea was if I wrote to him, commenting on one of his blogs, that he would take notice of the strange name, so like the name of his beloved college, and would write back to me. Of course, my plan was farfetched and highly unlikely, but I wanted to try it. Well, I did, but my conscience didn’t. It was still screaming at me to forget about the whole idea.

A week after registering as a new user, I made my first comment on Blog-Net.com. Drew had written a particularly beautiful piece about his life as an actor, and how he loved slipping into characters and seeing what it was like to live as someone else. Setting my cursor down in the comment section, I began to write. “I completely agree with you. The beauty of being an actor is being able to try on many different people and see things through their eyes while still getting to be the best person of all, yourself. -Desmona.” I had hoped that this would spark his interest. Every day after I left the comment, I checked my profile on Blog-Net to see if he had responded. I was beginning to become discouraged when finally, four days later, I got a response.

“Hello. I don’t believe that I know you. Are you new to the blog? Thanks for the comment. I appreciate it. Few people understand what it feels like to be an actor, and that it’s so much more than just pretending. I am guessing that you are an actor yourself? That’s an interesting name you have, if you don’t mind me saying. It caught my eye, since I am attending the Desmond Iglesias School of the Arts.

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Have you ever heard of it? -Drew.”

I was ecstatic! He had completely fallen for the name trap and was right where I wanted him! From then on, we began to chat, first on each other’s pages, and then eventually in the private chat room. He found me interesting, and mysterious, he said – interesting, because of my unusual name and mysterious because I was so careful to not give out personal details that would give away my true persona. I loved talking to him. At first we just talked about our acting careers, although I was selective of what plays I told him I had been in, since he and I had first met in a show. As we “got to know each other” better, we began to branch out and chat about our home lives. I refused to tell him where I was from, other than the state, and he said that my lack of details was “aggravating... but he liked it!” Online, he began to explain in more detail about his family to me as Desmona than he had ever to me as Natalie. I suppose that he felt safe enough to confide with the distance of a computer screen between us. It turned out that his father had abandoned him and his mother when Drew was only three. He had never quite gotten over that. If that had been all, everything would have been fine, but then his mother had remarried. His new stepfather was a master of verbal abuse and liked nothing better than to vocally destroy Drew’s mother and Drew, whenever he was unfortunate enough to be at home. I now understood why Drew had to leave and why he didn’t want to get attached to anything or anyone who would remind him or possibly bring him back near his stepfather. My heart softened a little, and my feeling of abandonment lightened when I learned of this. He had his reasons for leaving, and they were valid.

At this point, I thought that I might stop writing to Drew and cancel my subscription to Blog-Net since I felt a little closure at his leaving. I never carried through with this thought, because I just couldn’t tear myself away from him. Drew was as sweet online as he was in person, and I could feel my love for him growing through every message. I even suspected that he was also growing in his feelings towards me.

One morning when we were chatting together, he asked me if I had a boyfriend. This caught me off guard, and I wasn’t really sure
what to say, so I put down the simplest answer I could think of, “No.” “What’s a sweet girl like you doing without a boyfriend around?” he asked. “I would have thought that you would be taken already.”

I wrote a smiling icon, and before I knew it, I was telling him a watered-down version of how I had been in love with a boy who had told me the day he left that he wouldn’t be coming back. “I’m still heartbroken,” I informed him, surprised at my own boldness.

For a few moments, he didn’t respond, and I became afraid that he had caught on and recognized my sketchy story. I breathed a sigh of relief when he wrote back, “Gosh, I’m so sorry. I would like to say that he sounds like a jerk, but I feel a little guilty. I once did something similar to a girl.” Without pausing to correct the spelling mistakes that his hurried fingers created, he recapped our story together in a paragraph. I began to cry. So he had noticed how much I had loved him. He knew all along! Now was the perfect time to ask him the questions that I had been wondering about for a whole year.

“Why did you leave her like that if you knew that she loved you?” I asked innocently.

“I was beginning to have feelings for her, but I knew that I couldn’t stay because of my stepfather and school and all. I didn’t want to lead her on.”

I respected him for this. “If you have feelings for her, why don’t you go back to her? You don’t have to stay near your stepfather. I’m sure that she would be glad to see you again and that she still loves you.”

“No. I can’t. I’m ready to move on with a new life, new people, and hopefully a new love soon.”

I was silent. The feeling of my broken heart against my chest was particularly strong at this moment. I didn’t know what to write.

Seeing that I wasn’t writing anything, Drew surprised me by saying, “You know, Desmona, you remind me of her a little bit. I don’t know what it is, but there is just something about you. I suppose that it is your innocent sweetness that even comes across on the computer screen.”

After this conversation was over, I didn’t go back onto the blog for several days. I just couldn’t face him. The pain was too fresh. So

he had loved me, or at least had the beginnings of feelings for me. The crushing blow had come when he had said that he was ready to move on with a “new love.” His final comment about Desmona reminding him of me scared me a little. If he had noticed a similarity, what was keeping him from figuring out the whole deception? I hadn’t planned on what I would do if he discovered my secret.

I allowed the days to turn into two weeks before I returned to the blog. When I logged in, I checked my messages. There were a couple from Drew. The first was a simple message talking about various things, like we often left for each other. I noticed that he had written it the day after our last conversation. The second message was more interesting, however.

“Desmona,” he wrote. “Are you alright? I’ve missed you over the past week since you haven’t been on. I didn’t realize how much I enjoyed our conversations until you weren’t on here anymore. I hope that everything is okay in your life, and that it’s nothing serious that has kept you from writing. If it isn’t anything serious, then I have to ask a question. Are you mad at me? Did I say something that made you angry in our last chat? If I did, then I am sorry. I miss you, please come back. Don’t leave me hanging like this! –Drew.”

As I read the note, I had half of a mind to just leave him hanging as he had done with me when he had left and said that I would never see him again, but I couldn’t do it. I loved him too much, even if he didn’t love me. I decided to write back a short, but brief message, since I was still stinging from the blow of our last conversation when he had said that he was over me.

“Drew, I am not angry with you. It was a personal matter which kept me so long from the blog. I’m sorry if I worried you. –Desmona.

We had little contact in the following week. It was my turn to distance myself from him. I now knew that he didn’t love me as me, and it was time for the charade to end. At least, I thought that it was the end, until I got a shocking message from Drew one day.

“Dear Desmona, I know how private you are about this whole online thing, but I want to see you; I have to see you. I want to meet with you next week. I don’t care where you are. I will go wherever you say. Just name the place, and I will come. I know that
you will think that I am crazy, but I’m really beginning to fall for you. I have feelings for you, and I’ve never even seen your face! Please, please agree to meet with me. If you ever had any consideration for me at all, you will at least grant me this one request. At least if we get to meet with each other once in person, we will be able to see if there is anything real between us, because I believe that you have felt something of what I have been feeling. If I am wrong, I apologize for my boldness, but I must meet you. Love, Drew.”

My first reaction to this note was one of extreme joy! He loved me! He finally loved me as I loved him! I had been waiting for this for so long, that I could hardly sit still for pure bliss! I wrote back as quickly as possible, and instructed him to meet me at a café that I knew well. It did not occur to me at the time, that it was not me as Natalie whom he loved, but me as Desmona.

I got his response the next day. He was as overjoyed as I was, and agreed to meet me there the following Saturday. This would have been good if my nagging conscience hadn’t gotten the best of me. I just couldn’t do it. I had already deceived him online; I couldn’t let him walk into that café thinking that he was going to meet the imaginary Desmona, and find me instead, the girl he had cast off with the rest of his old life. No matter how much pacing and crying I did as I thought over the matter, I couldn’t let him meet with me when he was expecting Desmona. With tears streaming down my face, I logged onto my Blog–Net account and opened a message window.

“Dear Drew, I have done something terrible. I have lied to you. I am not who you think I am. Desmona was just a name that I came up with to catch your attention. I am really Natalie Parker. Yes, that girl. I have loved you since last summer, and I never got over the way you left me. When you stopped writing, things got even worse. I couldn’t bear not having any communication with you, so I decided to pretend to be someone else so that I could talk to you anonymously. That is why I created the Desmona persona. I never intended for things to go this far. I’m sorry if I have hurt you, I never wanted that. If you can still find it in your heart to meet with me, I will still be waiting for you in the café on Saturday because I still love you and long to see you again, but if not, then I understand and will never bother you again. I love you, Natalie.”

I pushed the send button and through Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, I waited for a reply that I knew would never come. I was half afraid of what it would say if it did somehow miraculously come, but nothing did.

When Saturday came, I drove to the little café and took a seat at a cozy little table made for two occupants. The café was bustling with people eager to get their coffee and settle down with a good newspaper or book. I searched the crowd for the one familiar face that I dreaded would not come. Ever since I had written to him, telling him the truth of my identity, I had been telling myself not to expect him, but I simply wouldn’t listen to myself. My heart yearned to see his face just one more time.

People came and went, men in overcoats with newspapers tucked under their arms, mothers with strollers and cooing babies, teenage girls with their boyfriends on a date, and then one dark haired, dark-eyed boy who stood well over six-foot, stepped through the door. He wore a light blue, striped T-shirt and blue jeans. His hair was swept away from his face in a neat part, but looked a little windblown. I jumped up from my seat, a smile rising to my face as my heart soared! It was Drew! He had come after all! I ran to him with wings on my feet. I threw myself in his arms and cried on his shoulder. “I didn’t think that you would come after my last message,” I told him through sobs.

I could feel his arms about my waist tighten as he picked me up. “That’s why I had to come. When you told me who you really were, I was so happy! I realized that it had been you all along that I had loved, not Desmona. The two of you seemed so similar, that I wondered how I had not put two and two together before!”

Pulling away from the hug so that I could see his face, I knew that he spoke the truth. He was crying too, and people were staring at us, but I didn’t care. “I love you, Natalie,” he said. “And I never want us to be separated again. I’m sorry that it took me so long to see that.”

I smiled and wiped one of his tears off of his face and leaned into him for another hug. “I love you, Drew!” I whispered over his shoulder as I closed my eyes and thanked God that I had known when and when not to listen to my conscience!
Conformity Sublime
Bremer Acosta

Subliminal messages of the Rubik’s Cube,
Decaying generation captured on YouTube,
Videogames absorb your mind,
More cash for more of your time,
Ads scream a false sublime,
Emptiness is all you’ll find.
Fashion trends live today,
Death by consumption is the only way,
Forget your troubles, buy some shoes,
Spend more money to cure your blues!
Television politicians share your pain,
Oil companies have much to gain.
Politics of the polls’ consensus,
Forget free thought and be pretentious,
Biased thoughts help you to lose,
Watch the high-rated Fox News!
A country progresses on excessive fear,
The vision of humanity is unclear.
Self-discipline was forgotten in the past,
How much longer will procrastination last?
Eat at McDonald’s every day,
Cardiac arrest is on its way.
I must drink coffee to stay awake
Seven more hours until the crash takes
Become as beautiful as the teenage queen,
A false reality of magazines.
Public education is always suppressed,
Ignorance is very well dressed.
Obey magical, linguistic creatures,
The deceiving world hides its features,
Slaves of society follow a thoughtless time.
MySpace seeps into my unconscious mind.
I forgot to experience the moments of life,
I was very busy buying an infomercial knife,
My mind is injected with a dose of greed,
Buy, Buy, Buy! Need, Need, Need!

Ducks
Sharon Cole

Image of ducks.
Summer Fun

Emily Steedman

Generally, if your place of residence consists of a lawn five times larger than your house, you’ll find your options sorely limited when it comes to possible alternate activities. However, as I mused over this thought, I smiled to myself because I knew that as limited as my options are in this rural town I call home, I have always found a way to keep myself entertained. Today was no different. My cousin, Ann, who shares my mother’s sun-bathing obsession, had come over yet again. She has short golden hair and brown eyes that still hold flakes of fire in them regardless of her mood. We must see each other every other day and somehow we still seem to keep each other company without driving one another crazy. She and I were standing in the shallow end of my pool with the sunlight from the water reflecting onto our satin brown skin like nature’s personal ribbon.

Maureen, my “city” cousin as I like to think of her, was also down for the weekend, and she was sitting on the step ladder that allowed entry into the deep end of the pool. She wore her blonde-streaked red hair down to her shoulders, and her purple bikini worked to emphasize her pale, alabaster skin. She’s about a decade older than Ann and me, but she’s an avid moviegoer, so we always have something to fall back on in case there is a lull in the conversation. She was conversing in humorous tones with my parents, who were lounging in some chairs behind me.

Ann and I were discussing our work; she works part-time as a secretary at a landscaping firm and I work a few days a week at a produce stand. (Yeah, I know my job is so small-town, but the pay is good and the work is simple enough.) Ann was telling me about another communication blunder that her employer, Nell, had committed. I was listening to her story, but I kept getting distracted. I knew that the ladder Maureen was sitting on was quite often home to spiders, and not the tiny, insignificant kind that you can squash with your thumb. I decided to suggest to her to remove herself from the possible hazardous environment after Ann finished her story; hopefully, this would settle the feeling of unease in my chest every time I glanced her way. I could tell Ann was about to reach the conclusion of her tale so I angled my body away from her, preparing to face Maureen. As I twisted on the spot, I caught an image in my peripheral vision that did not match the scene from one minute previously. I swung my head around to face Maureen head on, and as I took a breath the air caught in my throat. On her stomach, to the left below her belly button, was a spider the size of an infant’s hand, its eight legs were stretched out equidistant from each other. It was an odd site, almost like a reverse image of the nighttime sky in which the star was dark and the surrounding space light. Even from the distance of twenty feet, I could still make out the dark, bark brown hair on its body.

In synchronization, my right hand rose from my side and directed itself, seemingly of its own accord, at Maureen as my half-breath rushed out of me and I uttered in a completely deadpan voice, “Oh my God.”

My body locked down in shock or fear, I’m not sure which, and I felt my eyes grow wide, a difficult feat since I was facing the sun. Maureen smirked at me, evidently believing that I was trying to tease her, an occurrence that I was regularly guilty of. However, when someone points a finger, your eyes naturally follow it. She looked down. She saw it. I saw her lunge off the ladder, and she must have flown half the width of the pool. As she arched downward by the inevitable pull of gravity, time slowed down. I saw her hair angle with the wind the force of her body created; I saw her desperately trying to brush the annoyed arachnid off her stomach as it scurried across her abdomen with an unnatural grace, as if it were gliding instead of running. In the back of my mind I heard her short, frantic screams, but my ears were muffled by some unseen force. I briefly acknowledged Ann’s hand on my arm, trying to pull me with her out of the water. I submitted without really understanding what I was doing. I turned my back precisely when Maureen crashed under the surface of the relatively calm water. Ann and I waded through the knee-deep water, spraying it high into the air as we retreated. As we reached the steps, the surreal quality of
the moment evaporated from my mind and I started to scream with terror in congruence with Ann. Our feet touched the dry cement and I turned around to see Maureen emerging through the waves she had just created. She was hyperventilating and pushing the water away with her hands, afraid that the creepy crawler was near her, coming to seek its revenge.

My parents remained calm and collected throughout what seemed to me to be a waking nightmare. Mom ordered Ann to gather the long-handed net to scoop the monstrosity out of the pool while I retrieved one of my Adidas sandals to kill the creature. Ann spotted it floating in the deep end of the pool, its legs once again spread out to form an eight-pointed asterisk. By now, Maureen had hauled herself out of the water and stood dripping and shaking with goose bumps raised on her long, thin arms. I’m not sure if they were from fear or the sudden change in temperature. I turned my attention back to the job at hand. My concentration narrowed as Ann scooped up some water, presumably with the spider in tow. She maneuvered the net over the cement and then flipped it over. I saw the brown mass fall onto the ground and I leaped forward to finish it off. I needn’t have bothered. Somehow, even though it was near-drowned, the spider dashed right towards me! I slammed my shoe down on it again and again, letting out a short, loud squeal of terror as I hit it. After about a dozen or so smacks, I was finally satisfied that the mashed brown mush was not going to do any more harm to my family.

I rose out of the crouch I placed myself in during my moment of hysterics and my blue-green eyes met Ann’s. The second our eyes connected we busted out laughing, realizing the absurdity of our overreaction. I looked over Ann’s shoulder and saw Maureen wearing a slight frown; apparently she was not amused with the situation. Ann and I walked over and sat down on the pair of lounge chairs we had claimed earlier with our towels, still hooting wildly over the hilarity of our response. I thought, as I stretched my limbs out in my chair, that we country girls sure know how to have some summer fun.
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