Light Painting in the Desert
by Gary Eser
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MESSAGE FROM THE BEACON

On behalf of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee and the Honors Program, we are pleased to offer this fourth edition of Chesapeake College’s art and literary magazine. Students continue to awe and inspire us with the range and quality of their thoughtful and creative submissions. Notably, the 2012 edition is the first to feature a unifying visual theme, which was envisioned, designed, and executed entirely by our students. Anyone who would like to participate in the production of the next edition of The Beacon is encouraged to register for our spring design course: English 140 – Literary Journal Production.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the production process for this edition, including members of the Chesapeake College Writing Across the Curriculum committee, Linda Earls’ Creative Writing students, Barbara Viniar, Kathy Barbour, Jamie Gunsalus, and our student editors, the Spring 2012 ENG-140 production class. We extend special thanks and gratitude to Maggie Everngam and Rohry Flood, who provided the layout for this edition of The Beacon.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR THE 2013 BEACON

Please submit original prose, poetry, artwork, photography and musical contributions to:

JournalSubmissions@Skipjack.Chesapeake.edu
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Sunrise

by Zach Wise, Gary Eser, and Steve Willey
Shooting upward
from the deep thickness of despair,
I’m moving ever skyward
circling toward the air.

This dizzying dance
of control and release
makes me long for that mysterious
and soft center of peace.

What will I find there?
Struggle,
Beauty,
Strength beneath?

These are the voices
reflected and fair,
Griping and whispering
you must strip yourself bare.

Unearth the layers
peel back your false-self
Truth is arising,
it’s love that you felt.

God and Love and Truth,
not fear.
Even in despair,
He’s present and near.

Be still now,
Let yourself hear.
It was dark in the room, the pink walls held the posters quietly. The heavy metal music sang its song of loneliness without being heard. The main source of light illuminated the center of the room, the lamp clipped to my cheap wooden easel. When the ridiculously stupid easel wasn’t falling over from being improperly put together, it housed a large clip board. The clip board, in turn, held a single sheet of paper. That single sheet of paper, somehow, earned my hatred. But that one single sheet of paper, like all inanimate objects, could not speak a single word to defend itself.

The blank paper sat in front of me; its silence was almost taunting me. I knew the finished picture was due in just a few days. To be exact, it was due in one week, 3 days, and 5 hours. However, I’d had the assignment for three weeks already and the most that had happened was a basic outline had been sketched. Three weeks of time and all I had to show was seven lines. It was supposed to be a simple assignment. Just take an emotional photo and use that to create an emotionally charged drawing.


However, here I was, sitting in front of this silent paper. Next to that paper, I tried to gather the necessary materials; my pens lay across the desk and rolled their way onto the photo. The photo I had chosen was simple. In the foreground, a stone angel stood over a graveyard, turned away from the viewer. It was not an emotional photo. But I wanted to create the emotion within the drawing. I had the emotion and a list of its synonyms taped to the top of the clip board, a pen in my hand, and was ready to start this process. The photo struck me as so unemotional that I could have worried about failing the assignment. But instead, I sat in my leather desk chair, staring at this paper. I wasn’t sure why I was hesitating, yet I remained sitting in the chair for hours, watching the paper. Still, like most inanimate objects, it did not move and it did not speak.

Finally, as though the silence had issued a challenge that was unheard by ears and felt by the heart, the tiny nib of my trusty pen, that had accepted the duel of inanimate objects, scratched the surface of the paper. The pen reflected my own nervous hand as the ink sprawled across the top corner. Slowly the word ‘lonely’ emerged through my spidery handwriting. Next, the pen and I wrote ‘companionless’ almost on top of ‘lonely.’ My inanimate pen seemed to grow more confident with each letter. And suddenly, the page was filled with messy letters, each overlapping the other as more words sprang forth from the nib of my pen.
Lonely. Companionless. Alone. Cold. Grim. Dismal. Loveless. Dark. Lonely. Loneliness. Alone. Cold. Dark. Lonely. Again and again, these words wrote themselves across the paper. Gradually they started to layer into unidentifiable blobs. That blank paper, no longer really blank, seemed to have many words it could say, but still its silence continued. Maybe I was hoping for that paper to break the silence. Hoping it would point out that I was surrounded by inanimate objects, objects that would never speak, never feel, and never make me less alone. And on we wrote, the pen and I. Lonely. Alone. Cold. Loveless. Lonely. Always lonely.

This continued for days. The obsession of writing the drawing grew more and more as I started bringing the clip board, housing that ever silent paper, to all of my classes. I could not escape the paper’s will for me to write of loneliness upon its once blank surface. Anyone that managed to gain my attention long enough to speak with me, all of them, would say “It’s a beautiful drawing.” And, of course, I was irritated for being disturbed. There could never be an answer to their comments. I could not accept the compliments or respond with what I thought of that paper’s aesthetic appeal. If I had been able, maybe I would have told them that they were being lied to by the drawing. They only saw what the paper revealed to them. It’s not a beautiful drawing. That paper had a monster written upon its surface. The monster was lying to them. Don’t compliment it or the monster gets worse.

But it was just a piece of paper. And paper, as it has always been, is an inanimate object. The paper was not a monster. It could not lie to everyone. It can’t because it’s only a piece of paper with words written on it. However, the words were still being written. And as the words increased, my hostile view of this inanimate paper grew too.

On the final night I had to work on this drawing, this monster, I set it up on its easel. I wrote few words that night as my pens had retired to their scabbards. And suddenly, this paper and I were back to where we started. It sat upon the easel with its silent treatment, and I sat in my desk chair. The music that played during the paper’s challenge was now also silent. With the AC unit off, it too was silent. The only sound to be heard was the annoying chirp of crickets. I stared at this paper with my growing hatred. How dare it lie to everyone? What right did it have to tell everyone that it was simply a beautiful drawing? Why did the drawing reveal its monster only to me? Why only me? Why was I, alone, to bear the burden of its monster? Why was I alone?
And with its ever impressive silence, that paper could never answer me. Because it is nothing but an inanimate piece of paper, an object, so its silence continued. I looked around the room. I was surrounded by nothing but inanimate objects. Nothing would be able to answer me. I was alone. Lonely. Companionless. Cold, dark and dismal, but mostly I was alone.

If that paper could speak, maybe it would have revealed that there was no monster hidden inside its depths. The monster I had seen and had come to hate the paper for hiding was never there. For the paper is just paper, as inanimate as the day I brought it home. But like all inanimate objects, it does not speak.

After several hours of staring at each other, I attempted to ignore the monster that I alone could see. I tried to examine the drawing. My handwriting, neither beautiful nor graceful, covered the paper. Did I really put the emotion of loneliness inside the drawing made of my handwriting? I couldn’t tell. And of course the paper didn’t tell me.

Something inside my chest stirred. I assumed it was a response to the monster. But there was no monster inside the drawing. As I studied the drawing, waiting in vain for its silence to break, I fiddled with another inanimate object in my hands. It too was silent. And I was without a companion, left to fend for myself against a monster that doesn’t exist. I was companionless. I was alone. I was lonely.

The monster that I saw inside the drawing was really inside of my own soul. That monster of loneliness was in me. I couldn’t understand that at first. But the paper knew. Maybe if the paper had broken its silence, it would have told me.

However, paper is always an inanimate object. And inanimate objects never speak.
STONE ANGEL
by HANNA KINGSLEY
My Strength
by Travis Stansbury

She’s my strength; I’m her weakness
She’s the reason why when I have her I have everything
I’m the reason why she has a hard time saying, “NO”
The reason why like the cliffhanger’s grip, she can’t let go...
let go of that feeling of being loved
let go of finally being complete
She loves that I love
But hates that she loves; me
I take pride in being her weakness
Being the exception to the rules;
being the 1 she’ll inevitably choose

Every hero has his strength; but none dare reveal their weakness
Everyone wants strength but no one desires weakness
True strength always endures
While weakness....
She’s my Strength and I’m Her Weakness
This is RELUCTANCE vs. PERSISTENCE
Possibility vs. Limitations
She is Love and Love is Her
Is there anybody out there?
Please listen to me
My mind’s made up
I have suffered enough
This agony and fear overruns me
Is there anybody out there?
Please come and rescue me
I fear the loss of my self-control
Without help I may just fade
This pain is unbearable
Is there anybody out there?
I have had enough
Of this never ending tragedy
Once I am taken over
It will control my soul
Without help I may just suffer
The greatest despair
Please don’t turn away
From me to you
I’m counting down my final days
Please don’t make me do it alone
Is there anybody out there?
Nena woke early from bed; “Today I finally get to weeping willow fields, the final resting place of the space pirate Captain Four Fist.” She spent her whole life dreaming of this day. Her father was one of the crew aboard the Shifting Star when it went down. She remembered the holo news broadcasting scenes of the great battle between the empire military and the hundreds of space pirates. Space pirates were what they were labeled; in truth they were freedom fighters. Nena, at the age of 18, was ready to go follow in her father’s footsteps and fight for what she thought was right, but first she had to pay her respects to her father and the multitude that fell before seeing their dreams coming true.

Nena left the inn and walked north until she could see the valley where the ships laid down in a crumbling image of their former selves. It was bigger than she imagined; it was going on for miles. Her heart heavy from seeing the size of the ship graveyard, she made her way through the wreckage. Checked each ship she passed. Took a mental note of each name. She continued down through the wreckage until night fell upon her. She leaned up against a rock and started to fall asleep.

“Fizz” as a bright light flashed over her head waking her up with a startle. She looked around and saw that the ships were all gone. “Fizz” another bright light flashed over her head. She looked up and saw that the ships were not gone; they were flying above her, fighting like they did 12 years ago. “Fizz” another laser fired from a ship right above her head. A small fighter crashed not even 30 yards from her. Dirt washed over her like a wave. Before she knew what she was doing, she was at the cockpit of the downed fighter. She released the emergency hatch and pulled the duraglass frame from around the pilot. She screamed in fright for in the cockpit was not a creature of flesh and blood but of bone. “Fear not lass, for I will not hurt you.” He coughed out with dust. At the moment, the logical part of her brain overloaded and shut down because this skeleton was talking to her, and she believed that he meant her no harm. “What is going on here?” She had to yell to be sure she was getting heard over the battle above. Another ship came spinning down to the ground. “We are doomed lass. The empress thought
it would be funny to curse us to fight every day, never knowing the rest of
the afterlife.”

“That is horrible; I mean what the empress did. I am Nena and I
came to pay my respects to my father. I was not expecting this. There has
got to be something that can be done to help you, all of you. This is a fate
worse than death,” Nena replied.

“Who was your father, lass? At least he may find peace in knowing
his girl lives yet, and I might be able to tell you of his resting place,” asked
the downed skeleton pilot.

“His name is Isic. He was aboard the Shifting Star,” Nena replied,
hopeful that she would find out where her father was.

“Ahh, good old Four Fist’s crew, that ship was one of the furious in
this eternal battle.” The battle raged on overhead. The skeleton pointed in
the sky at one of the larger frigate ships. It was impressive, lasers shooting
out of it in all directions, and the shields glowing blue with the absorption
of so many shots being shot at them, “That be her lass, the Shifting Star,
lives up to her name don’t she, with that blue glow?”

“Why do you do this? Why do you battle eternally? Why not just
leave the ships on the ground?” Nena questioned, confused and frustrated
that this horrible event happened over and over again.

“We can’t stop it lass, until our ships crash upon the earth we have
no control.” The skeleton responded with sadness in his dry voice.

“What is your name dear sir? It was rude of me not to ask earlier,”
Nena asked.

Light seemed to sparkle in his eye sockets for a brief moment.

“Oh how rude of me not to introduce myself, I am Jasper, pilot
of this hunk of junk.”

“Well, Jasper, hope you can get some peace knowing you will never
be forgotten. As you can see the Shifting Star has started to make her
crash landing so I must leave you. Thank you for pointing the way, my good
man.”

“Be safe there lass, and the best of luck to you on your adventures.
Oh by the way, watch for falling debris. And know you gave a spirit a mo-
ment’s peace,” the skeleton answered back, and you could almost see
the smile that would have been on the face of the skeleton before that fateful day.

A tear rolled down Nena's face as she turned from Jasper and made her way toward the Shining Star’s resting place. She knew she had to hurry for the battle was almost over. Seeing the ships crash and imagining what it would have to be like to exist in the same horrible day over and over again, a seed of anger took hold in her. She would have revenge for these people and their suffering.

The Shining Star crashed about a mile away from Jasper’s crash site. Nena got there as soon as the sun started to rise over the horizon. She froze for a moment, looked up, and saw a skeleton in her father’s coat. Her heart skipped a beat as she rushed into the crashed ship. As she entered the cargo bay doors, the ship changed from a newly crashed ship into a ship that crashed a while ago with moss and vegetation trying to take hold of it. Wires hung dead in the walkways. She continued to the place where she thought she saw her father.

She entered the viewing bridge of the ship, and there it was, her father’s jacket, old and holey. The skeleton inside had to be her father. She wiped the tears from her cheek and hugged the skeleton. As she let him go and tried to regain herself, she noticed that the skeleton was holding a book in his hand. She removed it with care. She opened it up. On the first page it read, “The Journal of Isic Scott.” The journal was her father’s. She flipped through it. On the last page it read:

“Nena, I saw you tonight; I hope you can forgive me for leaving you all those years ago. I felt it was the right thing to do and still do. I stood up for what I believe in. My only regret is that I will not be able to see you again. I can rest knowing I have a grown girl that is pretty and kind. I see you talking to Jasper over there; for a while we all felt the light return as you talked to him. You did him a great kindness.” Nena rubbed her eyes to get the tears out of the way to keep reading. “My darling little girl Nena, I need you to do something for all of us. It will be hard for you, but you will need to let me go and all of us can find peace. I need you to set the self-destruct on this ship. This will cause a chain reaction with the other ships. If there are no ships, we believe we can’t fight, and then we will rest in peace. I would also like you to give this journal to your mother. So she has a part of me with her always. I love you.”

Love, your father
Isic Scott
She just cried for a long moment, then went over and kissed the skeleton on the head, removed the jacket and whispered, “I love you father. The empress will pay for what she has done to you all.” Afterwards, she went over to the computer and set the self-destruct and walked out.

She stood on a cliff overlooking the graveyard. Tears still running down her face, she watched the ships go up in a blazing inferno one after another. She put on the old jacket and said one last goodbye after the last of the ships exploded into oblivion.

Her heart now set on the goal at hand, she would join the rebellion and make sure the empress would pay for what she did to these poor souls.
I saw you there, so long and lean,  
Your expression sober yet so clean.  
Your cheeks were hollow, hair so thin,  
Eyes so stern you could have been  
No more than two score and eleven years.  
Yet events of war would cause your tears  
To flow like blood from north and south  
And ever eloquence uttered thy mouth  
Added history and fame toward the book  
Upon which your hand rested in that nook  
In the photographer’s studio that day of days  
Before you knew of the smoke and haze,  
Of cannons fired on field and mount  
Turned brother against father in flowing fount,  
Of raging freedoms just out of grasp.  
Not black against white but slave with hasp  
Imprisoned in a life so beyond his control  
That many an Owner dug his hole  
And buried him there without a care.  
How could you know? How could you dare?

I saw you that day in Matt Brady’s suite  
Posing so staunchly for a carte de visite,  
A young chief aspirant so filled with hope  
That you could teach unjust folks to cope  
With righting the wrongs so long enforced,  
Again and again they were owner endorsed.  
The speech at Cooper Union was planned that day  
A rousing talk and you were on your way  
To become president of the USA  
So duly divided—a war in play.  
How could you know? How would you dare  
To show the downtrodden that we actually care?  
Enemy of the South, hero of the North.  
Another century and your plan would go forth.  
It still took fighting and rebelling for cause
To gain the equality for which you took pause.
I saw you that day and remember you well.
Four years later your life to quell.
Your dream lives on in our country today
As we shake hands and learn fairly to play.
I hear the cry for freedom riding on the wind;  
I strain my ears and listen intently, so that I may understand.  
Freedom’s song pulls on my conscience; it will not let me go;  
Listen to my heart it pleads...listen and you will know.

There’s an orphan in Moldova he is alone, but no one cares,  
He is hurting and he is angry, but alone his burdens he bears.  
I listen and I feel his longing for just one little hug  
I hear his song of freedom...the freedom to be loved.

In Uganda there is a soldier a few days over ten;  
He is crying and he is weeping for the things that should have been.  
If I listen very carefully, I can hear his weeping heart;  
I hear his song of freedom...the freedom for a new start.

In America there is a girl, shattered, broken and scarred;  
She was beautiful, she was lovely, but now she is marred.  
I hear her crying desperately for the hope she cannot find;  
I hear her song of freedom...the freedom for her life.

In India, in Sudan, in New Mexico and Pakistan,  
In North Korea, in Kenya, in Norway and Romania,  
In Maryland, in Brazil, in Rome and Israel,  
In every nation, and every tongue, I hear freedom’s song.

There is a man, there is a woman, weeping hopelessly,  
There is a father, there is a mother dying to be free.  
I hear them crying, and weeping, and wailing, their sorrows I almost feel.  
I hear their song of freedom...the freedom to heal.

I hear the cry for freedom riding on the wind;  
I have strained my ears and listened intently, and so I understand.  
Freedom’s song still pulls on my conscience; it will never let me go,  
You have listened to my heart it--sighs...you have listened and now you know.
I see things that are not there, in scared tears, and fears, by an instant of cares. Time seems to stop, as my will drops from the evil impulse chops, as my vision is free, happy and flying in mania; then crying as in an instant dying with no energy sighing. Monsters crawling, all around me call my name in whispers of death, to show my shame so scared. Inside my head they groan, in the greatest ease, these monsters in my life to seize, looking for ideas to instantly appease. Bipolar life has energy levels that exacerbate a high and low strife in life. Never enough sleep, waking up on a dime, because I’m always on edge; like I committed a crime. All my stupid thoughts need is a reason, to set my mind into treason and force my body to join its legion. Aching from awakening, your body starts shaking, twitching, and fidgeting, while your mind starts pivoting and shouting; just one excuse to let that nervous energy loose. Bipolar, bi-winning, I don’t see how this could be presenting; as I seem only to be resenting this condition that is continuously resetting! Worse and worse again, the voices are pulling; and worse this bipolar is fulfilling. Medication calms the nerves not preventing those stupid thoughts and words, as they creep into my mind like hidden swords.
Just one more cup...that’s all I’m asking...my head hurts...the room is fading in and out...I can’t believe three cups haven’t done the trick, Maybe it’s because of the lighting...you know for my eyesight straining...it can’t possibly be the blood vessels constricting,
The joys of life...oh how it’s so much better with a cup of coffee...you know the birds sing faster...louder...emotionally scattered,
This coffee might be getting to me...the formalities of it all...cup in hand...iPad in the other...zine reading for heaven's sake.

Is it the day-in-and-day-out pace that I carry daily...sugar in first...sometimes one scoop others maybe two,
The drops of splashing creamer that makes its home in the bottom of the pottery cup...you know the modern ones we drink from every day,
Then comes the mixture...black depths of strained grinds from the Colombian hills...gunfights daily for my mix,
Purpose and determined retrieval of my most beloved concoction...is there cause for applause...I think not my friend.

The many countries that make their livings fighting over the beloved beans...skewered existence of bony deportations,
How many lives must be lost for my single cup...make that two then three...the required amount to ease my mental tone of aspirations,
Do the resorts along the coast help to deliver the barges of beans through the Gulf of Mexico...
Customs allowing every ounce of the bean through...it doesn’t matter...the coffee calls to me...black glob in my lottery cup.

The fortified walls of nervous breakdowns that occur every day among every citizen of all countries abound,
Has everyone forgotten the concept of sleep...the turntable events that light up the night sky...the morning like bears chasing their prey,
But as soon as the liquid enters my body...the mass confusion ends on the flip of a dime...variables uniting around the block,

The seats are pushed in...the table is made...the world seems a lot calmer now...thank you Colombian mayhem...devils drink of choice...coffee.
Mask
by Hanna Kingsley
Walk in the Light
by Scott Fisher

Walk into the light and see all men in their faults and fights!
See the ghosts, angels and demons fly by them
claiming their side, but only look to the light for guidance.
Walk in my sight, stay in the light and look for the right;
because your fight is at the world’s claiming!
Walk in plain sight, walk into the light and see all men in their faults and fights!
By the dark and the night awaits the evil willing to fight, the deception that is not right, as the good remains in the light ready for the fight!
Stay on the side of good in the light, and don’t let others sway you to evil in the darkest night.
Father’s Love
by Amanda Scott

Gazing in the mirror
Pondering and frustrated
I questioned:
“Why does He want me?
How could He?
Can’t He see what I have done?”
The pain that I caused
I fought against Him willingly and yet...
He was the only One there
He came to my rescue
while I was lying in the pit that I created
When I thought I lost everything
He found me, wounded and undeserving
Broken by the World that hates me and treats me with bitterness
Welcomed me and soon rejected.
“Why does He care for me,
of all the wonders He has made in the universe?
Why?
Why?
Why?”

It was then He said:
“I Love You”
[ the mirror shattered]
Swiss chard in its rainbow hues,
Green leaves with fiery stems shot through.

Broad lettuce leaves splashed with red,
Some deep crimson through the entire head.

Yellow pea-pods, translucent with light,
Kale and beet greens purple and bright.

Row after row, splashed with colorful beams,
But mostly where I look, I see green.

Green is the world in which I stand,
In the garden before me, the greens in my hand.

Lines of it bright in the rich brown soil,
Vibrant and alive, the fruit of my toil.

Shades innumerable, a dizzying array,
Lime, kelly and olive each interplay.

Green are the trees in the surrounding grove,
And the grasses like feathers beneath my bare toes.

Each plant stretching, turned up to the sun,
Leaves dancing in the breezes that through them run.

I lean on my hoe, my own face to the sky,
For green is the color which sets the soul fly.
What was that sound? I thought as I barely drifted off to sleep in my painted white wicker chair. The cushion was thick and soft with faded pink flowers as it cradled my tired body. There was a tall, wooden privacy fence surrounding the backyard. It seemed the gardening was never finished no matter how many days I spent on hands and knees pulling uninvited weeds from the rich, moist soil. My favorite wicker chair was strategically placed at the edge of a tan-pebbled pathway that meandered across my backyard among the flowers and shrubbery. As I lounged there in the solitude, the sun kissed my face and hands like an old familiar lover come to visit. I sighed and smiled when his face appeared before my closed eyes as I drifted. I had not thought about him for many years.

There’s that sound again, I thought. It was a rusty, metallic squeaking sound on the street side of the yard where the never-used, wrought iron gate wasted its time. As I raised my head, it was difficult to focus with the bright sunlight filling my vision. A voice that seemed oddly familiar called out, “Hello, Marge! Were you sleeping? I knocked at your door but got no answer. Your car is out front, and I worried that something might be wrong.”

By that time, my wits had gathered about me enough to see that there was a white-haired elderly woman dressed in black tramping across my flowerbed of bright pink, New Guinea Impatiens. I sat upright, stupefied that she would uncaringly batter them so with her carelessness. Irritated, I asked, “Do I know you?”

“Well, you should,” she said indignantly. She continued her pace across the yard until she was standing in front of me blocking the sun. “I’m the one who’s going to make you pay.”

“What?” I asked in utter confusion.

“Don’t worry, Marge,” she continued. “You will never know what hit you.” With that she raised a wooden pole about the size of an ax handle that she had been carrying in the folds of her long black skirt. I saw the descent of the blow and reflex made me cover my head with my arms as I screamed. The blow was so hard that it rendered my left arm useless with pain. I leaped from my chair and knocked
her to the ground with the force of my body. She flailed her arms trying to hit me with the pole again, but lying on top of her, I was able to hold her down. Again and again she lashed out at me, her blows landing harmlessly in the air around us. She tried to scratch me with her fingernails, but I managed to raise my head out of her reach.

“Who the hell are you and what is your problem?” I yelled while still wrestling with her. She was strong for an old woman, but I was physically fit and got the best of her. Reaching across her, I tried to twist the pole out of her grasp. She bit me on the back of my arm, and I screamed again.

Wrenching the pole loose and grabbing it, I managed to push myself away from her and began getting up off the ground. With a mighty roar, she came up with strength uncharacteristic of the elderly, grabbing a handful of loose pebbles. She flung them at my face, but I knocked her back down with a hard blow to the head with her own pole. Bleeding and cursing, she sat up and looked at me, stunned. She began crying in frustration.

“What is this all about?” I asked holding the pole over my head, ready to let her have it again.

“Don’t try to tell me that you don’t know,” she demanded through her tears. I yearned for my cell phone that was tucked snugly in my purse inside the house. I wanted to call the police. No one heard (or heeded) my screams and it looked like I was on my own with this demented old woman.

“You took my Harry away from me forty years ago, and I never really got him back,” she said in a hoarse croak.

“Harry?” I asked, breathing hard from the scuffle. “Louise, is that you?” Ignoring my questions, she continued her emotional tirade, “Harry died today and with his last breath, he whispered your name. I want to kill you for that.”

I gasped as I suddenly remembered the face that had appeared to me just moments earlier. It all made sense now. There was a long hesitation as I stared incredulously down at her sitting on the gravel path with her empty hands in her lap, blood streaming down her face. My arm throbbed with every labored beat of my heart.

“If I let you up, are you still going to try to hurt me?” I asked finally.

She snuffled. “I guess not,” she said, resignation in her voice. “You’re pretty strong and you have the weapon.” She rolled over onto her hands and knees and pushed herself up. I continued to hold the pole threateningly until I saw that she had calmed herself. We stood looking at one another, tears and blood streaming
down her face while I tried to process what had just happened. “I’m sorry Harry died. I didn’t know,” I finally said, shame filling my soul. “Yes, we had an affair, but that was years ago. We were young and foolish, and it was short lived. Because of you we stopped. Neither of us wanted to hurt you.” I hesitated wondering if she understood what I was saying.

“How can I make this right, Louise?” I asked. “Can you ever forgive me?” Louise shook her head and continued sobbing.

“Harry must have loved you more than anyone to have stayed all those years” I added. “Surely, you must know that.”

“I thought he did until he said your name,” she said through heart-wrenching sobs.

“Oh, Louise,” I said as I reached out and touched her hand with my own. “I am so sorry. I had no idea there would be so much pain from something that happened so long ago.” I gave her a tissue from my pocket as my hands trembled.
Her Smile
by James Schultz

She smiles and my heart hurts
It hurts like a forgotten muscle
But her smile is not for me.

She smiles and I’m filled by joy
The joy that one feels only for another
But her smile is not for me.

She smiles and I long for her,
Long for her in all the ways one can
But her smile is not for me.

She smiles and I wish to know,
What it is she smiles for,
But her smile is not for me.

She smiles and I pretend,
Pretend that she could smile for me,
But her smile is not for me.
I remember when your head was still
The size of half my body,
And even standing on my toes
Your back was high above me.

Of horses I was frightened, yet
Something in you was calming,
Your gentle eye and steadiness
Took the fear out of what was alarming.

I remember scrambling up the fence
To sit atop your back,
No saddle beneath me, just my hands in your mane
As I urged you along on our track.

We rode in that corral every day
And my joy was in constant abound,
Only sixty feet of deep orange sand
But you patiently went ‘round and ‘round.

I remember the first time I fell from your back
Sitting startled in the soft sand,
You circled back and stood at my side
And anxiously nuzzled my hands.

I wasn’t afraid as I got on again
We trotted around once more,
And when I fell the next time I laughed
And climbed back up as I had before.

I remember when I finally learned
To keep my seat strong and my hands steady,
Poised on your back I rolled with your movement
As we rode ‘round that corral in harmony.

We cantered around ever faster
A fearless wonder in my soul,
I held my hands up in the air
And it was beautiful.
UNTITLED
BY LAURA LORD
Moon Over Atlantic
by Bette Lucas
VALIANT CAESAR
BY Scott Fisher
Black Skimmers
by Gail Bounds
UNTITLED
BY LAURA PÉREZ
I looked up and saw a star.
The sky above me was deepest black, impenetrable, like the icy depths of a mountain pond. It was wide open, the edges restricted only by the limits of my human vision. Twinkling points of light were scattered across it, covering the entire expanse, some larger, some tiny, leagues and leagues away. But this star stuck out for me, defying its similarity to those around it. I always knew it, every time.

“Go to that star.” Kylee’s voice was a whisper in my head, swirling through my thoughts. I remembered how we’d sat on the porch railing that night, legs dangling as she stretched her arm, pointing it out to me. “Go until you’re standing right beneath it. If you ever need to find me, that’s where I’ll be.”

“You can’t reach a star.” I’d squinted at it, memorizing the point of fire that seemed almost to brush her pointing finger. “I’ll be walking forever.”

She laughed, quiet. “Not with this one. Trust me.”

I’d never gone out to that star then. It was her place, the one she went to when she didn’t want to be around anyone at all. Not even me. She had those moods sometimes, and I knew enough to leave her be. I probably never would have gone to that place, if it hadn’t been for that one night.

I’d run the whole way, across our lawn to the edge of the woods, stumbling through the trees with my eyes ever glued on that star. My breath was ragged in my chest, gasping and burning my throat as I burst out of the trees, out into a meadow. It was huge, the fringes of the trees distant on all sides. The moonlight was shadowy and silver, but I could see Kylee in the middle of the clearing, on her back in the thick grass.

“Kylee!” I ran over to her, throwing myself down beside her and tugging at her hand. “Come. Come now.”

“Rae.” Her eyes were closed. “Not now. Let me—”

“You have to.” Hot tears stung my eyes, my breath coming out in violent puffs. “Georgie’s stuck. She fell through the ice on the pond; I can’t get her out by myself—”
Kylee’s eyes were already open, processing the horror, the thought of our dog shivering and helpless in the frigid pond. Then she was on her feet, her hand clenching tight around mine. She sprinted back into the woods pulling me with her, holding me up.

The same way she held Georgie up, pulling her from the icy pond. I could see her scamper across the ice, her body shaking with cold, bundling herself against my chest as I held out my arms, waiting on the shore. The same way Kylee held her head above the water as the ice cracked beneath her, plunging her into the pond. The same way I couldn’t hold her up, my own sister as I watched, screaming and reaching as the entire frozen surface of the pond split and heaved, breaking any path I could ever have taken to save her. Now I looked up at that star, cold and brilliant above me. It never moved. I could always find it, always follow it, right to the center of this meadow. I always did, every night as the darkness filled the sky. I knew Kylee was up there. She could watch over me from the heavens, they said. They said she was always with me. But just in case, I always came. If she looked, I knew she’d know where to find me.
The proton...oh you positive charge or magnificence...kingpin of the nucleus by tenfold...powering your way through like rams on a castle wall,

The power they bequeathed you...full and knowing of the incoherent consequences of your power driven madness you electrical charge,

I wonder sometimes how those other parts of the equation...those charges of negative and neutral composition will treat your insanity,

You run round and round...completely understanding the foreseen delay of various factors that make your existence obtainable or disrespectful.

Have you no common sense for the positive charge...you electron you...drawing negativity along every corridor of every nook and cranny,

Follow the leader you say to the others...but they don’t listen do they...is that why you’re so negative...emotional distinction you are,

I tried to display my sense of correlation between your existence and theirs...can’t see past the wall of spinning particles that make up your life,

Hummingbird you are...a low buzz of tangible evidence that yields jewels of life...every combination of life expectancy intertwined within each other.

Neutron...may I call your name now...you lifeless nothing that somehow makes the world go around...simply swimming through everything,

You emotionless reality...you never spoke a word of dysfunction...remorse is nothing but a recollection you know all too well,
The wisdom of all is in the hands of you...even though you care nothing to represent the perpetual notion...how many will suffer until you care,

Open up your emotional Pandora’s box...let all realize that the world isn’t a fantasy world...tilt the sands of timeless strides.

Then it split...it split wide open...a matter of time before science catches up to your perfection...isotope isotope where are you going,

Let the human culture use your infinite ability to build time machines...cloning on massive scales...redefine your skills,

The world will see your greatness...your glow of bright colors of blue...green...reds...and yellows...spectrums of light that seemingly go on forever,

The time to shine is now...repose and reshuffle the decks of science...let culture unite and put your elements on display...Life will go on.
I have all these friends and all these people around me so often. We have sleepovers. Big ones, with a lot of people, boys and girls. And we’re everywhere, and I’m a part of something then. But sometimes, they all fall asleep at once, it seems. And they’re sprawled around my room, and they probably smell of alcohol, but they still look somehow picturesque. I guess it’s because they are living, which in itself is beautiful, despite personal poisons. I look at them, and I question my presence, sometimes during parties, and sometimes while they sleep. I still feel extracted. And I feel the same as I do at this moment, like I’ve never belonged to anything in my life.

I wonder if when we’re all older, and some of us have died, and some of us are successful and some of us are addicted to things, if we’ll remember anything about now. I wonder if it is significant, because if these are the best years of my life, then I have to question what will make the future worth living.

I sometimes think they’re void of meaning, those interconnected relationships. And I treasure them anyway.
Pieces
by Christine MacNett

Broken pieces shatter
In slow motion they fall
Hear each one
The sound of shattering
Falling
The sound of each piece echoes in my mind
As it hits the ground

I reach to pick them up
They cut
Making me bleed
But I don’t stop
I have to pick them up
Put them back
Into place

So I get the big ones
The pieces that seem so
Precious
And though I bleed
Slide them into place
I think
This isn’t so bad

The bleeding slows
The pain dulls
It’s back together
Or so I think

I try to fill it
But
The big pieces aren’t enough
It all leaks out
Over and over I fill it
But nothing stays
The little sparkling slivers
The ones I missed
Glitter on the ground
And remain
I Need To Cut My Grass
by Mark Baker

Look at it...ten feet long and counting...sunshine rays pouncing...and worst of all...the rain is coming,

I have to hurry and cut the grass...the sunshine equals happiness...the rain defines the sadness...heartbreak over many blades,

So where do I begin the fear...snakes are bound to hop from their holes...ants marching like armies on patrol,

There has got to be a better way...maybe start on the edge of the high grass and work my way in,

Or simply cut a strip right up the middle...box my fears into two separate entities and begin climbing the tiers,

Has no one noticed how high my subconscious has grown...strand after strand of high grass piercing my emotions like swords in a wall,

The obnoxious insects beckon my name from their humble homes among the towering forests...how I’ve grown fond of them,

It’s funny how Love has become the grasses’ binding molecule...helping to keep it together...perceiving it faster,

But the rain is coming...and I must shed the growing monstrosities that have overgrown my soul,

One by one I will wipe you clean...clean shaven like a beard before the five o’clock shadow...rough patches need not call,

I will smite those stragglers...those blades of grass that still wish to do me harm as I walk to the mailbox I haven’t seen in years,
Friends I’ve yet to hear from...the devil’s own pickpocket taking from me as he pleases...I will have no more of this mess,

The world is to riddle the thoughts of my afterglow...the questioning of why the sudden grass cut into greener pastures,

The walls have been pulled down...I have stepped onto the streets and walked over to the car that sat lonesome outside,

Many many years have passed...the dawn of new deliberations will beckon my attention...I will take the call...Freedom from the captive High Grass.
As I lay upon my bed
back straight and confidence high
I begin to ponder about life
Will I always be alone?
This question strikes my mind
With fear pain and devastation
The fear of being alone creates a hole in my nonexistent heart
The pain is unbearable without someone at my side
The devastation that the pain created makes me wonder
As I think about these feelings
I slowly but suddenly begin to shrink on the inside and out
My confidence gets lower and I just want to hide from the outside world
But as I slowly lose hope
Something begins to catch my eye
All I can see is this white glowing light heading my way
What could it be?
As I jump out of my bed
I begin to walk closer to the light
As I got closer my smile got bigger
To cure my curiosity
I slowly approached the figure
What could it be?
My eyes began to brighten
The fear of being alone
disappeared
The pain had ended as this figure began to take form
As I gazed upon this creature I realized it took shape in my desire
The shape of a male
A beautiful male indeed
Glowing eyes
A beautiful smile
And a precious heart
As we gazed into each other’s eyes
He reached out his hand
Put it directly where it hurt before
But I didn’t stop him
Everything began to fade away
It was as if it was just him and I
Alone
Together
Forever..
Happily
Ever
After
I cannot say that I have had an incredibly significant epiphany or moment of personal growth in my life; it has only just begun, and I feel that that will happen when I have more experience through mistakes and faults. Although I can say that I have had a smaller, simpler realization of happiness and that there is no comparison to the happiness that I feel when I am able to ride my horse under the warm glow of a sunset. The first time I truly noticed how it affected me, I was riding my horse through the woods behind my home. Riding was, and is still, an avenue I use to rid myself of stress, whether it is from work, college, or family. When I ride, I am able to work through the mess of thoughts that cloud my judgment, which more easily allows me to make wise decisions. On this particular day that I was riding, it was early fall and closer to late afternoon. I felt the persistent heat from the sinking sun slip through the cool breeze to touch my cheek, and I could not help but hold a smile. The colors that surrounded me were crisping the leaves, making them crinkle with reds and oranges. Some still held soft, buttery spots of yellows and lively greens. But they all glowed with a pink hue that I could feel warm me from the inside. From the trees, I looked out to the open field of sweet grass. Each blade was full of water and gracefully bent with the weight of it, changing directions every time the breeze rolled over the open space. Back in the woods, I saw the dusty rays peek in and out of the trunks of heavy, bark-laden oaks and dogwoods. I followed the solid shadows of birds and squirrels as they interrupted the streams of light; they jumped and fluttered, chatted and whistled. There was no need to see the actual form when the shadow was so alive. I would then realize the streams of light were once again whole and undisturbed, continuing downwards and allowing the molded, brown, and black leaves on the earthy floor to also be acknowledged.

After being in the woods, I had to ride through a development to get back to my barn. It was then that I felt such immense happiness that I wanted to cry. I had found a beautiful and serene area in the midst of a densely populated area full of the noise from amplified sound systems, modified vehicles and houses that seemed to have foundations
that were increased with infrastructural steroids. I had come to realize that regardless of my surroundings, at any point in my life, I could always find a place of happiness because those things that surrounded my physical being would never have the potential to infiltrate the containment of my mind and the precious memory that it held of that day in the early fall.
The Mighty Follicles
by Adam Brome

In one young man’s life there was never anything more powerful, or brilliantly beautiful, as his hair. With a shake of his head, women fell to their knees, the earth shook, and a star exploded. A little flip of his bangs and a flower was split in half, creating a vortex of charm that lasts for several hours. Since he was born, never has this man been without a follicle on his head. A brilliant white in the beginning, slowly shifting to a shade not unlike fossilized tree sap, holding the DNA of some long lost creature. Blindingly perfect even in its messiness, the hair of a god adorned this man’s crown, a golden crown that kings trembled beneath and queens stared at in awe. It was always a strong beacon for the many lost ships that are drawn to its radiance from across the oceans of life. My name is Adam. My hair is powerful.

When I was a child, my hair was so powerfully blond it was white, like a series of straight silky clouds, or strands of the finest thread bleached in the sun. The barber complimented me on it, and I got a lollipop because of my hair! My father said all the kids got a lollipop, but I did not believe him. Why? Because he has no hair and, therefore, by all rights, has no understanding of the power of hair. It must be terrible to go through life without the warmth of hair upon one’s head. He seems to get by though, and I think he has a toupee that he wears to get his proverbial fix of follicles.

I even got notoriety at school and made tons of friends. My hair, combined with my Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles lunchbox, drew in a wild throng of followers. I never got bad marks because my hair helped me study. I could read in the dark it shone so bright, and it also turned the pages for me. My hair was indeed very helpful, especially when I tried out for the soccer team. The ball and goalie were no match for me and my brilliant hair. I was the lord of my follicly advanced world.

Unfortunately, as I grew older, my hair began to lose its luster. It faded, from a brilliant white gold to a dirtier, cheaper metal. Thus, my life began to take a turn for the worse. My hair could no longer light the way on my path to becoming an adult. I became lost in the dark, blindly flailing about in the dark. I had just entered middle school and was going through a lot of changes. Puberty set upon me like a rabid
wolf, rending me limb from limb, taking me to new heights, but burying me like the bones of a slaughtered animal to be enjoyed later with a cool drink of clear river water. As I changed and my hair changed, I began to doubt myself. Maybe I had done something that turned my hair this way. Maybe this was punishment. My usual swagger became more of a limp as I dealt with the harsh realities of a changing world and hair-do. In an attempt to hide my hair I began to slick it back with an inordinate amount of hair products. Combining this with a terrible fashion sense, complete with short-sleeve, dragon detailed, button up shirts, led me to be classified as a nerd, instead of a legendary figure with impeccably groomed hair. I was struck down from god of my world to another pawn in the system, changing my style and morals to fit in with different cliques and groups. I was always searching for an escape to my solitude and lack of awesome locks.

Finally, when all hope seemed lost, a light appeared in my world. A new found strength rose up in me and I leaped to the heights of Mount Olympus once again. I had discovered conditioner. This singular bottle of fine smelling hair care product took my dulled brown hair and revitalized it. It was a veritable Agua de Vida for my tresses. There comes a time in every boy’s life where he blossoms, grows, and he becomes a man. I had done it! I had taken something that was once beautiful, turned to rust, and I made it like new. My hair was an oyster with a beautiful radiant purpose destroyed by pollution and found on a shore where a young child finds it, the Holy Grail of all shells, and holds it high for the world to see its beauty. This was my shell. This was my Holy Grail. I had completed my life’s crusade to return my hair to the place where I could do anything with it and it would make the world smile. The color remained but the unadulterated power had returned. I was back. I was strong. I am Adam. Please don’t touch the hair.
I bow my head
I clasp my hands
I hit my knees
I laugh

Scratch that
Quickly
Before the Book-thumping
Holes-In-Their-Rollers
Sorta women
Roll me
Flat flat flat

I believe in their God
I believe He has a sense of humor

Who else could have made the platypus
The okapi
The hairless mole-rat
Me

Who else could have made me

There isn’t enough correction tape in the world
To cover the words I’ve done
The deeds I’ve wrote
Scratch that
Scratch that with enough ink to cover
A blanket to drown out
My smile, my laugh

I believe in their God
Who else could have made me
Live each day like you have nothing left; even
If it’s a long day you will survive.
Take the risk your life depends on,
struck down on the line to defend what could
be gone. Eyes on the skies with the birds in the air,
free as far as those long white clouds can see so fair.
Live each day like you have nothing left,
when your whole life, love and liberty,
shifted, too far solid that it slipped
away, but you still stand.
Get out there, get out there;
take the step to the top and you will never drop.
No one can stop you on the top of the world, by only taking one
forward hop.
You control the universe by one step.
Every choice you make starts with what you are
willing to trek with a millisecond left to wreck.
It’s been a long day but I survived anyway. Taking
a risk is the only shot you have, down the bottom
line there is nothing left; but to do all you’ve planned with what you’ve
got.
Weep, O Earth, weep,
Weep if you must.
Wash away our sorrows,
Wash away the dust.

Weep upon my face,
Weep when you get the chance.
Weep, O Earth, weep,
Weep and I will dance!
the wrinkle in the current
that's washed out to sea
the moment in time
when everything's free
morning by morning
the moon doesn't fade
uprooted adventures
from turning the page
nowhere to go, nothing to see
the wrinkle in the current
doesn't have eyes
but, it knows where it's going
way out to sea
the wrinkle in the moment
was creased by me
stomping and splashing
the water so cold
dragging me under
I'm left there alone
Pier
by Emery Schultz
Before and After Photography

Crabs View
by Emery Schultz
We are a collective mental breakdown
Do not mistake our beauty for strength,
Our recklessness for wisdom
We are one lie, one liar
And we revel in it
Looking
by Parker Wise
It’s six o’clock in the morning and I’m wide awake. The only noise I hear is that of my boyfriend’s heavy breathing next to me. His hot breath washes across the back of my neck in little puffs. Gently, I unfold myself from his arms, slip out the door, and let it close behind me with a squeak. I have a few moments to myself, and even though I quit smoking months ago, I go outside and sit on the steps and breathe in the cold, wet morning air. It’s only a few minutes to myself, a few precious minutes until, “Mommy, I’m awake.”

The miniature tornado that is my son, the devastator with the bright grin on his face, is awake and at the door. I smile, come inside, and begin my day.

First things first, and I’m searching the floor, behind the couches, under the table, on every single shelf, until I find whatever specific truck he’s looking for this morning. I find it and hand it to him, and finally the bottom lip is sucked back into his smile, and he’s racing off to perform stunts and crashes on my dining room table. For the moment he is occupied, and I’m in the kid’s bedroom, looking at my daughter, who has yanked the covers over her head and is already whining.

“It’s time to get up.”

She grumbles, whines, and rolls over, the blanket crunched in her fists and hiding everything but the wispy tangles of hair that poke out around her pillow. They have a metal closet. One of those annoying loud ones that you can’t open without making a huge racket. So I’m opening it, and pulling out outfits, and the little terror of a toddler is back in the room. I pull out a shirt for him and he tells me that he wants a car shirt. I dig through the pile, show him three different shirts, before he picks the first one I showed him.

“You have school this morning. Get up, or we’re going to be late.”

He’s stripping naked in the middle of the room, waiting for me to help him get dressed and fussing because he can’t get the sleeve of his nightshirt off his hand that still has a death grip on a monster truck. I take the truck and he whines some more, until the shirt is off and I hand it back. He’s laughing and saying, “I gotta butt.” He’s dancing around the room as she’s finally peeling herself out from under the blankets, and sliding her feet to the floor.
“I don’t want to wear that.”

I look at her with absolute exasperation. “You haven’t even seen what I picked out yet.”

“I don’t want that one.”

Now she’s whining, and I tell her to pick out her own clothes. I chase down the naked dance king and start attempting to get clothing on his booty-shaking body. At least she’s awake, and she’s pulling through the closet for clothes that she likes, which look remarkably like the outfit I picked out for her.

I am patience.

Ten long minutes later of, “Help me with my socks,” and “I can’t find my shoes,” and we’re in the living room. I’m handing out Pop Tarts like a prize, and turning on some sort of cartoon that will hopefully keep their attention for the few moments I need to find clothes of my own.

There’s a pot of water on the stove boiling for some lumpy, instant coffee, and I don’t even remember putting it there. But it’s steaming and by now my boyfriend is awake, and I’ve forgotten to pack his lunch. So I’m pouring scalding water into a cup and making sandwiches. I might as well make my daughter’s while I’m here. I search for ice packs and snacks, and no she can’t have that one, because she had it yesterday. I’m out of ham, and I wonder if she’ll notice if I use bologna.

He grabs his lunchbox, kisses me quickly, and is out the door for work, and I’m still in my pajamas. I take a sip from my cup, and it’s cold. It also tastes like nothing but water, and I get a chunk of powder that explodes in my mouth like a miniature bomb. I forgot to stir it.

At some point I’m dressed, and so are the kids. Teeth are brushed, hair is combed, and I’m trying to find hair bows that match exactly, because otherwise it just wouldn’t be right.

“No you can’t bring your truck to daycare.”

“You have to get your shoes on. Now.”

“What do you mean you can’t find them? Look.”

“Please don’t chase the cat.”

“Your shoes are not on the ceiling. Stop looking up there.”

I’m kissing her quick as my mom sits at the computer and tries to show me videos off the AOL news page. I watch a moment of one, laugh lightly, take another sip of my cold, chunky water, and run out the door.
with my arms full of books. The twister that is my toddler is in his car-seat, and I only have to get out of the car three times to get things I forgot today. The drive to daycare only takes a few minutes, and he sings the “Bad to the Bone” song the entire way.

I am an alarm clock.

I’m in my first, or is it third, class of the day and my phone rings for the second or tenth time. My Uncle has lost something, have I seen it? What time am I getting home? I need to talk to you. Can you keep a secret?

I write stories. My stories, everyone’s story. People tell me their secrets, and I have to keep them, bottled up inside with all my stories, where they bounce around in their silence. I listen to everyone, and I guess I have that look. You know, that I-can-tell-her-anything look. That she-can-be-trusted look. My phone is buzzing in my pocket and it’s someone else, with a new story that I’ll never be able to tell.

I am a confidante.

I walk in the door and it’s late. It’s beyond late. My arms are loaded with books, and I’m guzzling an energy drink like my life depends on it. My mother is the only one out there waiting for me. Dishes are piled in the sink, and the rooms look like a toy store threw up all its used and broken merchandise across the carpet. “This house is a mess. You need to get your priorities straight.”

I am a maid.

I’ve been at school for thirteen hours today. I’ve slammed my head into my desk repeatedly over any number of x equals five times the square root of negative forty-eight divided by x raised to the third power. I’ve sat at work and helped people write their stories that they don’t want to tell, and don’t want to write, and I can’t write them, because they aren’t mine, and I’m only there to help them do it. I’ve read Shakespeare and Sophocles until my brain aches, and I wonder why they couldn’t just come out and say what they mean. It’s late, and I’m tired of riddles.

I am a student.
I go to my kid’s room, and my daughter is asleep. My son is tossing and turning, and he spies me through the crack in the door.

“You’re home. Mommy you’re home!”

It’s a plea. In that moment I have relieved all his fears that this Monday would be different, this one she wouldn’t come home. I haven’t seen him since this morning when I dropped him off at daycare, and for him, the day has been never-ending. He leaps from his bed so fast, he slams his knee into the side of it. Sitting on the floor, he whines and cries and I scoop him up. I kiss his knee, and it’s all better. So we lay in his bed for a moment and he cuddles against me tight, before I kiss his head and slip out of the room.

I am a doctor.

I maneuver around the headphone set attached to my boyfriend’s head to give him a kiss. His eyes stay glued to the video game, but I know he loves me because he tells me he saved me some dinner in the fridge. I’m hungry, but I’d rather just lay here, and I curl up with my blankets and watch him save the world from zombies, demons, orcs.

Eventually, he turns it off and lies with me. I’m curled into the mold his body gives me, and we’re comfortable enough to lay there with each other in that not-quiet silence. We’ll make love later, desperately, like two people who haven’t been near each other for months. We’ll fight one another in it, make it a battle of wills. There is nothing easy or soft about our passion. It’s a storm that washes over us, under us, around us. It fills us and drives us, until we’re back into our places, and I’m settled into my spot against his body.

I am a puzzle piece.

I’m versatile. I am an electronic piece of technology. I am every untrained professional. I hold every job I never wanted. I’m material. I’m an over-loved teddy bear with the stuffing pouring out between the stitches.
Bayberry
by Sarah Eglseder
Chaos turned the world inside out and upside down, and I did not know where I could be found as my world started to drown! Wearing a huge frown on his crown the king of the world was bound in the catastrophic life, he had been so proud, as death came around. This is the world of chaos clouds, with fire flying from the sounds of the pounding ground that surrounds. No hope left, nothing left to shift this chaotic rift, as the God of the universes steps down to encounter this demonically driven drift, as we became lost from its swift shifting dark gift. This is the end of the world and every choice you take to stake is another one you can account for in the persecution of the evil world, all uncurled and frilled. The time is now to be tested and the evil of the world will be arrested and resented, as all the Angels of the Lord are presented. The glory of the Lord is then directed to the subjects He had protected, for He is forever resurrected! The Lord our God on high, bow down and praise Him in the most holy cry for Heaven to fly. Stop and think every step you take is another chance to stake by the choices you decide to make and every word you say is a new line to lead you astray. We live in a lonely world with lonely people all searching for a way, someone that can be with them and help them as the world begins to fray. What is wrong with this world left in greed; in a crippling disaster with fist fling uncurled? Everything falls apart from the start and only God can free this heart, then the world could change instead of falling apart. Stuck in the seduction of sin pulling at your heart to win, God says that shouldn’t begin, as the demon has you in a pin. Maybe it’s time to give up, but this is a constant fight and the Lord will always be there in your sight in all of His might! Disaster lives on your lie, in your shifty eye as you move to the door to fly; I will sigh as if to ask why! Disaster destroyed the world as your heart came uncurled, wrapped tight in the sword you radically hurled.
I tip my hat to you, to you
the beautiful girl in the room
must you leave? can’t you stay?
sit on down to hear me play

doesn’t know I’m even here
but still my song will find her ears

I tip my heart to you, to you
the beautiful girl is leaving soon
it’s only a muscle of natural love
that yearns for more to rise above

through the shambles that hold your clouds
the beautiful girl inside the crowd
must you go? can’t you stay?
to hear the words I have to say
For the longest time
and without relevance
this ponderer of theory
of philosophy
this thing
having no prominent features
plain
like gray of skies and blankets once blue
had sight for only things within reach
or
things within desperate grasp
nothing stretching beyond the norm
or leaving the comfort of ambiance
or nostalgia
to experience anything more
a pain so useless
so thoughtless
but acute in numeric value
yet with goals so tiny
it fails to reach these pieces of self
the things it longs for
become its self-definition
its identification
upon entering the world of other soul-like specters
sprawled upon each other
in a combustion of almost human collaboration
thought and understanding
and learning
and confusion
its little mind is preyed upon
lined up in tiny seats next to some other forms
of course
thinking the area here
is not so complex
rather simple in structure and schedule
they have it all figured out
the meanings of phrases
dates and internments
and plaguing voices
screech for silence
how much sense do you make
scribbler in the sea
the thing is all alone
and sometimes content
sometimes not
it travels on
unsure destination
judgment
beauty by breakage
and discipline by others and self
the thing is always being molded
change
like today’s
never really stops
closed eyes and shallow fevered breaths
count the minute minutes ‘til the dawn
and another wisp of tasks to be completed
self is not found in the things
or the life forms around you
yet
the thing
sitting
is longing for the something more
always too far to see or reach
small and useless at times
feeling of little self-worth
keep your limb outstretched
and be thankful for the gray
it is a color after all
Before and After Photography

Lilly

by Emery Schultz
The Hand of God
by Mackenzie Collier