



Traveler **2012** volume 45

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**The Traveler** is a student creative arts magazine produced annually by the students of the English and Art Departments at Glendale Community College. Those responsible for this publication believe in artistic freedom of expression. Therefore, we have not censored the contents of *The Traveler*. We realize, however, it is important that the readers of *The Traveler* be aware that it contains some content of adult nature.

The theme for Volume 45, 2012 is inspired by the Chinese Zodiac "Year of the dragon." The dragon is the mightiest of the signs. Dragons symbolize such character traits as dominance and ambition. Dragons prefer to live by their own rules and if left on their own, are usually successful. As *The Traveler* is designed and written by student creatives, we have chosen to create our story using this inspiring sign as a design metaphor.

***Chinese Astrology** is based on the balance of **five elements**. Each animal of the Zodiac is derived from a combination of these elements.*

*The Dragon is comprised of Earth, Water and Wood.*



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Affirm it, visualize it, believe it,  
and it will actualize itself.



**Fiction**

*His Earlier, Less Celebrated Works*  
by Jared Duran

It's not the first time this has happened, nor is it likely to be the last. She runs her fingers through her hair, flips it to expose her neck. The effect is not lost on me. She allows the tips of her fingers to brush the small hairs on my arm and come to rest against my hand which is pointing to a passage in the book we are currently discussing. While the physical contact—the expression of attraction and lust—is flattering to be sure, the feeling is not returned. Though I do not respond in kind, and though these feelings are not reciprocated, I make no attempt to dissuade her from acting in this fashion. I dismiss the entire incident as nothing more than a misplaced, misguided manifestation of sexual frustration. An episode perhaps brought about by the subject at hand.

“Indeed—here we notice the author's obsession with sex as a tool for punishment, for manipulation, for evil even, but never as something born out of love. This is something visited time and again in his earlier, less celebrated works. As time progresses and he grows as a writer, these ideas all but disappear. Whether it is because of personal development or possible interactions that altered these views, no one can really say. Nothing has been written on his life, and, private as he is, he has offered nothing on the subject himself. However, this is clearly something of interest to note. Don't you agree?”

“Yes, professor, I've noticed myself, but what lasting effect is this meant to have on the reader? Are we meant to infer a warning from the author? Is he telling us 'be careful out there, ladies and gentlemen, this is how they get you'? Or is it something more sinister?”

*Was the author perhaps abused or taken advantage of in a similar fashion to his characters?*



For instance, in *The Hyena's Last Laugh*, Williamson is seduced by his best friend's mother—something that excites him at first, but then we watch as he deals with feelings of lost innocence—he has had something taken from him that should have been his to give at a time of his choosing. In fact, the concept of choice plays a large part in that book. It was not Williamson's choice to lose his virginity when he did, and when he makes the choice to end the affair, the woman (Mariposa, yes?) takes that away as well by threatening to tell his mother that his father is homosexual—a secret that Williamson is not supposed to know

and certainly never should have told Mariposa."

"Hmm, it's an interesting idea, but, again, we have nothing to back it up. Only Sven Bilgenhurst himself could say for sure. If only he'd break his silence and let us in on what he was attempting to convey. Well, I think that's enough for today. It's getting late."

*"Yes, professor, I'm sure you're right. Who knows what fantastic things my husband will invent to explain my tardiness? Martin has a suspicious side to him that I despise."*

Today is much the same, although I notice a few changes. Her attire has become more calculating—employing a strategic exposure of flesh. While managing to stay just this side of professional, her skirt has risen several inches above her knee, her blouse is more open around the neck. Her hair is done up with a clip—a disappointment at first (I promptly admonish myself for rising to the bait), but this too has been calculated for the purposes of removing the clip to allow her hair to fall about her shoulders. Throughout our conversation she plays with her thick, auburn tresses—twirling strands around her fingers, brushing locks away from her cheek, gathering it in one hand and moving it to the other side in order to expose her neck to the light and allow a faint trace of her scent to float across the table in my direction. I feel a thrill run through me that makes my skin tingle—followed by scolding, insulting words flung from a more sensible, reserved part of my psyche.

I am still able to control surface appearances. I am the very model of composure. We continue to discuss Bilgenhurst's early works. Throughout his early novels and short stories there is a sense that the author reveres those who show a level of restraint similar to my own. His protagonists heap praise upon men and women who stare down temptation and manage to turn resolutely in the opposite direction as they mire themselves in self loathing for giving themselves over to lust time and again with wild abandon. Williamson in *The Hyena's Last Laugh*, Samuel Harvington in *Fire's Trial of the Nineteen Seasons*, even Harrison Ledgeforth in *Reinventing the Fetal*—all are men and all succumb to the offerings of flesh, money, power. I turn to my own temptation and urge her to consider this interpretation.

"Well, yes, I would say that is very much the case. Now, consider this as well: The women to whom these men succumb are all spoken of with the utmost contempt, but they prove to be just as powerful if not more so than their more revered counterparts. It begs the question of whether or not these men could ever be satisfied. If, let us say, Josephine had eventually given herself over to Williamson's advances, would he not turn on her with the same level of contempt with which he regarded Mariposa?"

"Please elaborate."

“Mariposa, though not positively described as such, is every bit as powerful, intelligent, methodical even, as Josephine, but whereas Josephine has turned from desire and all its trappings, Mariposa has fully embraced them and indeed uses them to get every last thing she wants. Is not, perhaps in a more subtle way, Bilgenhurst making the suggestion that Mariposa wields even greater power? You see, the way I look at it from personal experience, if you can move through temptation and desire and lust and come out the other side with a greater understanding of how they can be employed and manipulated to your advantage... Isn't that individual more fully self realized than the one who simply turns the other way?”

As she speaks her eyes become more animated, her movements more excited. Even more so than her attire, her scent, I find this level of intellectual engagement irresistible. It is through this exchange that I develop a heightened sense of awareness for her physically. I turn back to the notes in front of me and rifle through some papers in an effort to regain my composure, but I know that we have to leave it here.

“I think that's good enough for today. We'll pick this up next week?”

“Oh.” Her mouth turns with disappointment. “All right then. Next week it is.”

“We made some excellent progress here today, and I think that we'll be able to begin putting a draft together shortly.”

I watch out of the corner of my eye as she gathers her things together. The wind appears to have been let out of her sails, and I regret that I am the one responsible. She rises from her chair and my gaze follows her as she crosses the room to the door. I imagine myself to be discreet, but I think I have failed (does she feel my eyes upon her?), for as she reaches the doorway she pauses and turns to look over her shoulder. The barest hint of a smile tugs at her lips.

Sleep has not come easily to me this past week. I have spent long stretches of night staring up at the ceiling grateful that my thoughts are not audible—I would not wish to wake anyone, and I am certainly not prepared to have any sort of discussion regarding the occupying subject matter. In my office now, I sit and stare through the steam rising from my coffee cup at the door—waiting for her to enter. The early works of Bilgenhurst are far from my mind, and this is disturbing to me. In times of turmoil I have always turned to my work for solace, but it is this very project that has brought her—this complication—to the fore.

Thinking briefly of the character Williamson, I identify with his predicament. Not the specifics per se, but the overall conflict. I feel that up to this point I have been an innocent—that she is manipulating me, ready to tear me apart just as Mariposa might have done. What is there left for me now but make a play for control of the situation? Her behavior is unacceptable and must be addressed. I have my reputation to consider and my family as well. There is simply too much at stake.



The door opens, and my resolve is sucked out of the room. She enters the office with an air of confidence that diminishes mine, but I rearrange myself and prepare to speak. She beats me to it.

"We need to talk."

"I agree. There is something going on here that simply cannot be allowed to continue."

"I'm afraid you're wrong. You think you have been so reserved, so controlled as to not let me catch a glimpse of what goes on beneath that carefully composed exterior, but I've seen the way you try not to look at me, the way you shift in your seat, the way you cross your legs underneath your desk. You want me."

"That's absurd."

"Is it?"

"We're both married."

"I know that."

"I love my family."

"Does he make you feel the way that I do?" She has moved steadily across the room to stand in front of my desk. I am nervous. My skin has gone cold. She leans over the table, takes my face in her hands and kisses me softly upon the lips. I am overwhelmed by her proximity, her scent, her softness. I have never felt this way before. She breaks away and sits opposite me. I tremble.

"I can't do this." The lack of conviction in the statement surprises me, and her response is exasperation.

"You know you can do anything you like." She crosses her legs and folds her hands in her lap. "I've made my move—now it's your turn."

I turn from her and look out the window. The season is turning, and the leaves have begun to fall away from the trees. I think of my husband and my darling young boy, I think of the woman sitting with me in my office, and I think of what would happen if I were to reach out and take her hand...

...But I do nothing.

My hands stay in my lap, my gaze pointed out at the commons below. What seem like hours pass, but they can only be moments. I am distantly aware of a contemptuous noise, the scraping of a chair, the opening and closing of a door.

**fiction**  
小说首位  
**second**  
place

*It Wasn't the Rain*  
by Jared Duran

"I do like pornography," Buddy said. "It's a lot of sweaty lovemaking and impossible bodies. What's not to like?"

"I hate it when they talk. Nobody talks like that." Max reached for the sugar and stirred some into his coffee. "And the acting! Don't get me started on the acting!"

"Then watch it on mute."

"And," Max looked around, then leaned in across the table, "I always feel guilty afterwards."

"Why? The only guilt to be had is if you're secretive about it. If you've got something to hide—anything at all—people can tell. Shame shows through." Buddy tilted his mug, frowned, scanned the diner for the waitress.

"I don't like watching the women with the implants."

"Now you're just gettin' picky."

"It always takes me out of it. It's not natural. It doesn't, you know, look right."

"Neither does a red-assed baboon."

"What does a monkey have to do with anything?"

"It's not a monkey, and it means you're getting bogged down in the details!"

"No, I'm—look; pornography is all about fantasy, right?"

"I suppose."

"That's the fantasy—all women are naturally beautiful."

*The door to the diner swung open and a woman stumbled in. She wore a long, baggy sweater and blue jeans. She was dripping wet; her makeup ran down in streaks. She avoided eye contact, but no one looked up. She seated herself in the corner booth.*

"That's not practical."

"That's fantasy." Max folded his arms over his chest. Buddy continued to scan for the waitress. Max tasted his coffee, grimaced, added more sugar.

"How you can drink your coffee like that?"

"Like what?"

"All that sugar."

"I like it sweet."

"I used to put sugar in my coffee. Then I stopped. It took some getting used to at first. Then, on a whim, I tried adding sugar. Awful—I couldn't stand it. It left this horribly sour taste in my mouth."



"I like it this way."

"Have you tried drinking it without sugar?"

"I like it this way."

"Sugar takes something away from the flavor of the coffee. You don't get all the subtle nuances."

"I said I like it this way."

"Well, at least you don't ruin it with milk." Buddy caught the eye of the waitress, winked at her. She ambled up to their table. She snapped her gum at them.

"More coffee?"

"The only thing I'd like more than coffee right now is to make slow, passionate love." Buddy leaned back and threw his arms out. "Whad'ya say? On the table or under it?" The waitress stared at Buddy, then slumped her shoulders.

"I'll be right back with your coffee." Max watched her walk away, then turned back to Buddy.

"Jesus, Buddy. What the hell was that?" He shrugged.

"You never get anywhere if you don't try." The waitress came back with a steaming pot, stared over Buddy's shoulder, and refilled his mug.

"You'll have to excuse my friend," said Max. "He's an asshole."

"You don't say." She wagged the pot in Max's direction.

"No, thank you." She spun on her heel.

It was late. There were only a handful of people in the diner. An old woman with no teeth and faintly blue hair sat at the counter. She was hunched over a slice of apple pie swimming in a pool of vanilla ice cream. She moved the occasional spoonful to her mouth, gummed it. At a table several booths away, closer to the entrance, three men conspired in close quarters over eggs and sausage.

### *"You'll have to excuse my friend."*

"What about Scary Spice over there?" Buddy inclined his chin in the direction of the soaked woman. Max turned to look in the indicated direction and then back to Buddy. Buddy wagged his eyebrows.

"Really?"

"Yep."

"Jesus."

"She looks like she might've been crying."

"It's raining."

"Sad chicks usually want revenge sex. Not always, but usually."

"What's the matter with you?" Max shook his head.

"There's just something about me I guess." Buddy grinned and took a sip of his coffee.

"You're ruining it for the rest of us."

"Right—what would that be exactly? Sex? Women? And who is 'us'? I say what's on my mind, tell it like it is. Just

because you're a little chicken-shit pussy doesn't mean I'm doing anything wrong."

"See, that's what I'm talking about. It's—" Max ran his hands over his face and through his hair. "Look—it's not a matter of you saying what's on your mind, it's what's on your mind that bothers me."

"Is that so?" Buddy took another sip of his coffee as his grin widened.

"You know, you're lucky that coffee isn't in your lap. And what about that girl over there? You don't know the first thing about her."

"Don't need to."

"I don't know how you get away with half the shit you say."

"I dunno," Buddy shrugged.

"I guess I'm just a charming, lovable guy."

"Right."

"Max, if you have such a problem with me, why are you here? We "Well, I—I guess it's..." Max looked out the window, turned back to Buddy, then back to the window. The waitress walked up, looked at the back of Max's head.

"What's up with him?"

"Who cares? Whad'ya say we get outta here?"

"You wouldn't know what to do with me if you had me, Buddy."

"Oh, I'm sure I could come up with something." The waitress put her hand over her name badge.

"Quick, what's my name, Buddy?" The corners of Buddy's mouth sank. He scratched his head.

"Waitress?"

"Right. You guys gonna order food, or is it just coffee as usual?"

"Eve? Betty? What about Gloria?"

***"You guys have been coming here for three years now. You sit in the same booth, drink gallons of coffee, and leave a crap tip..."***

You make the same sad advances while your pale Boy Scout friend over there looks sick and apologizes for your behavior. Still, in all this time, you've never bothered to learn my name. You're a sad little man." Buddy looked at her, mouth open. Then he shut it and grinned once more.

"You know, Legs, you're right! From this day forward I'm gonna be a different sort of guy. Bring on the French fries!" The waitress looked up at the ceiling, counted to three, cursed under her breath, and walked away. Buddy chuckled to himself and looked over at Max who was still staring out the window. "Hey, Nancy, you giving me the silent treatment now?"

Max turned to Buddy, blinked a couple of times, stood up. He walked over to the table where the girl with the wet hair was sitting.

"That's my boy!" Buddy searched for his coffee cup as he watched Max, picked up the wrong cup, took a mouthful, grimaced, spit it back into the cup.



The waitress came back with a basket of fries and dropped it in front of Buddy. Buddy tugged at her apron and pointed.

"Do you see my man Max over there? There's hope for him yet!"

"Ha! If you think there's hope for him, he's doomed."

There was another flash of lightning—further off in the distance this time. Buddy played around with his fries, looked out into the parking lot, but there was no focus to his eyes. Sitting alone, all traces of merriment drained from his face.

*The rain didn't stop, but when it eased some, the diner started to empty out. The blue haired woman stopped playing with her pie and shuffled away from the counter. The three men threw down cash, donned hats and overcoats, and filed out.*

Now the diner was silent but for the low murmur of conversation emanating from the corner booth where Max sat with the soaked woman. They stuck to the topics of strangers—film, music, weather. Then Max cracked a joke about a man, his parrot, and his mother in law. The woman made an attempt to stifle the sound, but it escaped and the room filled with laughter.

"You have a beautiful laugh," said Max.

"Please, don't," the woman said.

"All right."

"It's just that I don't know you, you don't know me—compliments seem hollow."

"What's your name?"

"Scary Spice."

"So you heard that."

"What, your douche bag friend over there? Yep. And for the record, I'm not sad, and I'm never easy."

"What's your name?"

"Sonja."

"Sonja, I'm Max." Max extended his hand over the table. She took it and they shook firmly. "I told him it was the rain."

"What was the rain?"

"You."

"I was the rain?"

"No. Why you were all wet and streaked—that was the rain."

"You could've been wrong."

"But I wasn't."

"You chanced it anyway."

"That I did."

"Pretty bold of you." Their hands hadn't separated since the shake. The two locked eyes. Max broke away first, withdrew his hand, looked out the window.

"I'm going to ask you out now." He still looked out the window.

"We are out."

"I mean on a date."

"Why?" Max turned back to Sonja, but looked down into his lap.

"Because your name is Sonja, because your hand is soft,

because your hair is wet and your makeup is streaked down your cheeks, because you laughed at my joke, because it's impulsive. I need to do something impulsive—I'm never impulsive." His eyes moved up, searched hers. "And you're beautiful." She turned away.

"Don't," she said.

"Why?" With effort, Sonja faced Max.

"Because it wasn't the rain."

Stillness washed over Max. He thought, but it was scattered. His mouth opened, shut. He looked at the table in front of Sonja, noticed there was nothing between them. Sonja fidgeted, looked out at the cars, the lamp posts.

"Look," she said, "it's stopped." She rose from the booth, let her hand rest briefly on Max's shoulder, and left. He sat and stared at the spot where she'd been a moment before. He breathed in slowly, let the breath go in a long, slow sigh.

Buddy walked up to the table and sank down in the booth next to Max.

"Fake tits?"

"Shut the fuck up, Buddy."

"It's just that seemed like a sure thing. She was laughing. So, I'm thinking to myself 'how did he manage to mess this one up?' and then I thought about what you said earlier."

***Buddy got up, walked back to their table, got out his wallet, pulled out a few bills, and let them fall. He started to put his wallet away, hesitated, looked around, pulled out another bill, and left it with the others.***

"Stop talking."

"So, what was it?"

"It wasn't the rain." They sat there in silence for a moment. Buddy's right leg started to twitch.

"C'mon, kid, let's get the hell outta Dodge."

He waited at the door for Max, who was shuffling his way over—hands in pockets, shoulders hunched.

They walked out of the diner and stood on the curb. Buddy pulled out a crumpled pack of American Spirits and offered it to Max. He shook his head. Buddy shook one out, placed it between his lips, shoved the pack back in his pocket, felt around for is lighter, found it, lit the cigarette, and inhaled deeply. He expelled the smoke through his nostrils and looked up at the emerging moon.



Q. What is contained in  
everything?  
A. Wisdom.

fiction

小说首位

third

place

Moira

by Maneesha Lele

I felt like I was all thumbs as I put the finishing touches on the diabetic ulcer I was dressing. There was something palpably unnerving about Dr. Boyle's bulbous intensity. My right shoulder blade was getting twitchier by the second and the lingering cloud of the hydrogen peroxide I had used to clean the wound was making my nose itch. At times he reminded me of a praying mantis keeping accurate score as he waited for me to stumble. As though it were a foregone conclusion that I would.

"There Mr. Ferguson, that should take care of it." I signed the prescription for antibiotics with an extra flourish and handed it to my patient.

He took it, still staring at his foot in wonder. He swung both legs down from the examination table and put the generously bandaged foot down as if to test it. Then flinging an arm over his best friend's shoulder, he steadied himself on his good leg.

"Aye," he nodded. "That feels a lot better." He peered at my tidy scrawl and began to soundlessly form the words.

"Remember to stay off your foot until it's completely healed." I said.

"Aye," said Mr. Fergusson, nodding.

But it was the grin that worried me. I initialed the patient's chart

***Confident that I had done the best job I knew how, I looked Mr. Fergusson in the eye, cleared my throat and launched into my least favorite part.***

and nodded to Matron to remove the antiseptis trolley.

"Keep the wound dry, finish the course of powders we've started you on and stay off the sauce. We might not be able to save the foot if there's a next time. If you think something's wrong, come in straight away." I was aware that my voice sounded a little sharp.

Mr. Ferguson hung his head and looked bleak.

I sighed, not proud of my bluntness. But with some patients, it was the only recourse. "Do your best," I said, gentler this time. And felt a stab of surprise as he looked up, his gratitude evident.

"Aye, I will Dr. Sinclair. Thank you kindly an' good luck to ye. You'll make a fine surgeon one day." He looked beyond me to the surgical legend with xray vision standing over my shoulder. "Followin' in your footsteps then, Dr. Boyle? You must be right proud."

I wondered.

As my colleagues and I crowded into Dr. Boyle's study that



afternoon, the air of anticipation seemed to burnish the gleaming mahogany paneling. The hour flew by and somehow, by the end of the clinic, I had worked up the courage to voice the question no one else had had the nerve to.

We'd all been simmering with it for the past week or so.

"Sir, may we observe the surgery you're assisting tomorrow afternoon?"

*To his credit, he had let us touch, seize, squeeze, prod, pinch, grasp, poke, stroke and even auscultate the little mass on his wrist without so much as a murmur of protest.*

For once, I felt justified in my boldness. We had just spent the past hour beating to death all the possible options, as the man with the lump on the back of his wrist sat calmly through it all.

Well, at least now we could be fairly certain of a few things. That the lump didn't hurt. Or that the patient had the pain threshold of a Viking. And our unanimous diagnosis, based on efficient teamwork that had sent our spirits soaring. Albeit small, the success had been a foothold in the impermanent quagmire of differential diagnosis. I swallowed and tried again. Maybe he hadn't heard. "Dr. Boyle, do you think we might obs....." my voice trailed off as Dr Boyle's head snapped up. As the arctic blast of his gaze swept over us, chilling and razor sharp, he permitted himself a thin smile. The group huddled together.

The laser probe continued to record minutia as he spoke. "Ah, a spokesperson. How charming! Let's see....it took you all day to diagnose a mere ganglion. I think it just goes to prove what I fear runs rampant amongst young doctors today, namely, a simply appalling lack of clinical skills." He leaned back in his chair, making a steeple with his fingertips. His flashing ocular scythe continued to slice us into ribbons. Collective hope paled, then fled.

"Tell me, what then, would be the point of observing complicated brain surgery, probably far too advanced for you anyway?"

As, the fog of failure clung closer about us, clammy, blinding and irrefutable, the group gathered the tattered remains of its dignity.

"Why not instead, focus on deciphering the more obvious mysteries?" he said, his gaze returning to me.

I focused on the glassy row of plaques and framed degrees mounted on the wall above his head. It was better than feeling mocked by the muted halo of the gold and silver trophies on the armoire beneath.

Dr. Boyle stood up abruptly, advancing on the shrinking bracket of women on the frontlines, to which I now I belonged only in body.

"And as for you, why worry your pretty little heads about things

you'll probably never see in practice? Which, presumably some of you at least will go on to establish?" Then Dr. Alexander Boyle the III strode out, squat, pink faced and omnipotent. The group collapsed.

"Chauvinistic pig!" Patricia said as we caught up on paperwork in the doctors common room. "Don't let him win, Moira. You know he grows a little every time he wipes the floor with us." She flung her arms up into the air with a flourish. "And now he's a towering three feet, eight inches."

***A giggle escaped me. My best friend's scathing humor often kept things in perspective. But it was getting harder.***

It was almost time for evening rounds as I lingered in the shadows outside the half open doors of the children's ward. It was my favorite, but it was also where I was at my most vulnerable. Time and again, I had found out that children worked on instinct, not words. They absorbed everything. I was about to go in when I heard a shout from Matron.

"Just wanted to make sure you got this before I left. It's not every day we get presents," she said.

She handed me a slim, spongy packet, worse for the wear. The large, uneven letters on the front said,

"Dr. Moira Sinclair, St. Blane's hospital, Skye."

It had no return address. The single sheet of paper inside was worn, its lines fading. The ink was splotchy, and I could barely discern the words.

*"Dear Doctor Moira,  
Remember the stormy night I came in riddy an' wild eyed from the poison? I was prayin' it was all over, but lived to see another day instead, and hated you for it. You told me then it was all for a reason. That I had to hang on because just when I thought things were hopeless, something grand was bound to come along and I thought you were mad. Well it did. Her name is Fiona and she sends you this. She turned one today.*

*Fiona Mc Donald."*

My eyes were suddenly wet as I stowed the envelope carefully away in my coat pocket. I turned towards the children's ward with new resolve.

Dr. Boyle was welcome to his trophies.



Compassion is a way of being.

Lucky Numbers 7, 2, 44, 28, 29, 33

**fiction**  
小说首位

**honorable  
mention**

*Nothing, Everything, and Stephen King*  
by **Emily Thomas**

*I never meant to hurt anyone. The thought follows me from a nightmare into waking; I never meant to hurt anyone. My right eye is crusted with blood and the dirt I have been laying in. It becomes clear that I am outside; I can hear birds arguing and a small trickle of water. From my near ground perspective I see moss clinging to shadow colored rocks in stagnate pools of water. I see myself at two years old begging my mother to let me hold my new baby sister. Pain lances through my head as the memory floats away; it's too bright. The world swims before me and melts into another memory: I am nine and my family has just pulled up to the town's only mall. As I slide out of the car I reach back and slam the door as hard as I can on my sister's leg. My perfect sister; the sun rises and sets on her face, going from a pale first light color to the deep red of the clouds before twilight. She screams and the sound pierces through my reverie. The sour taste in my mouth asserts itself and I vomit onto the ground. What have I done?*

*Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs...*

*Twenty Four Hours Earlier*

We've been tearing up the apartment for hours now. Not that there is much to tear through: one ugly couch missing a cushion, a card table currently holding a dismantled stereo, a cigarette burned blanket, and a stained mattress. Every stich of clothing we own is in a pile on the floor waiting to be gone through for the fifteenth time.

"Fuck. Shit. Monkey."

Whether this string of expletives is directed towards me or not doesn't matter. Trying to forestall the inevitable I manage to whine, "I swear baby, I checked everywhere. Please."

It's a mystery why I added the 'please' until a chair crashes into my face. I'd forgotten we owned a chair. Lee found it two days ago in a dumpster and affectionately named it George. After smashing my face he brandishes George at me like some enraged lion tamer. I try not to laugh at the image I've created, my front teeth are still here and I don't want him to correct the over sight.

"You couldn't have looked everywhere cause we ain't got it, have we! That was our last twenty bucks."

It's been six hours since the last time we smoked, and I figure we have at least two more until it gets ugly. That's the thing about meth you either have some or you don't.



"What about 'The Big Easy' Lee? She spotted us a ten last time; maybe she's good for another twenty."

"Damn it, Julie, you know my mom's in jail for another six months. Fuck sake!"

In order to emphasize this last remark, Lee throws George into our kitchenette and it explodes into kindling.

"So long George," I mumble to myself. Lee hears me and whips his head around, dark hair flying, his manic eyes skewer me like a bug.

His voice is a whisper now, "You better think of something."

He is staring at me, and I stare back unwilling to break eye contact. After what seems like an eternity, our silence is broken by a shrill ring.

"Are you going to get that?" he asks.

I make a move toward the phone. My eyes focused on his. I pick up the phone. It's my sister. Lee becomes distracted and begins sifting through George's remains. I turn away from the sight of Lee on his hands and knees trying to focus on what my sister is saying. A single triumphant crow from him has me making an excuse to my sister and hanging up. He is hunkered down on the laminate, cradling something in his hands. He is close to crying with joy.

"Did you find it?"

He clutches at his stomach and I can feel the hunger in my own belly. Lee croaks out one word; "Better," and bows his head while raising a little baggy full of crystals. There are tears in my eyes as the tension in the room blows away in a ragged sigh. We are going to be okay. Everything is going to be okay.

We snap into action, scuttling around the room. I hurdle the couch and snatch the pipe from my purse, grinning. Lee with his lighter meets me in the center of the room.

***We sink to the floor and select the largest crystal in the bag. Too big to fit in the delicate top hole it has to slide through the mouth piece before settling in the bottom.***

Light refracts into our eyes as the flame licks the underside of the pipe, causing us to hold our breath. The shard begins to melt and bubble, smoke spiraling out. My breath is coming out in ragged fits. The lighter goes off and Lee gently blows into the mouth piece to cool down the liquid. I'm turned on, desire for the drug manifesting itself where my legs meet. He hands the pipe to me and flicks the lighter. Amber colored light pulses from the depths of his eyes, demon-like with intensity. With the flame almost touching the bowl, I twist first one way then the other, and start my long slow slip into ecstasy. It takes us an hour to smoke enough so that my ears are tingling. I dance around the living room, pulling off unforgotten ballet moves and Lee cleans up the house. We talk about many things, which race out of our mouths like water through a sieve, while the sun sinks in the sky. After a while we lie on the floor together, holding hands the

way we used to. I bring the hand that isn't holding his up to my mouth and begin to devour my cuticles.

"I love you," he says, "I love you. I love you."

"We need money, Lee."

He gets up, his shoulders hunched, and peers between the blinds. "There goes Mrs. Bates. She's no spring chicken but she walks to the corner store every day."

"Her husband died two years ago. He really loved her. I bet he used to buy her beautiful things like jewelry and paintings; gave her everything she ever wanted."

"I have a plan. It's a good plan. You'll love it."

"I really should paint my nails."

"Fuck your nails," His lower lip puckers out, "Look at me! What's Mrs. Bates' schedule?"

Lee and I spend so much time looking out our window that we have most of our neighbors' schedules down to the minute.

"Well, if it's Tuesday she will be going to her club meeting at six."

"That's perfect! We can pay her house a visit, and relieve her of a few choice reminders of her dead husband. She's sure to have it all insured. She gets money and we gets money. Poof, magic."

"I want to buy you a cape and top hat, honey." I give him a winning smile and stroke his ego.

### ***He purrs like a cat. We find two flashlights and rummage through our clothes to find all the black stuff.***

It's a ten minute dress up session which, results in neither of us looking professional. The only black hoodie Lee owns has a giant image of Donald Duck embossed on the front. We're dressed and ready to go, but my watch reads four o'clock. We have all this time to kill and nothing to do; I feel like I am jumping out of my skin. I need to move, action please. Lee turns on a flashlight and nothing happens. We look at each other and laugh (we are still riding a super high). Now we have something to do; we need batteries.

The trip to the corner store should take twenty minutes, tops. When we get back home an hour has gone by. Things are starting to break down, coherent thought, time. Time is a face on the water. I giggle.

"What's funny?"

"Nothing. Everything. Stephen King."

I look down at my hand and the pipe is already there. We smoke more and realize that we don't have enough time to steal from Mrs. Bates. Lee and I are getting along so well that I don't want it to end. I suggest we do some Re-Con instead, which gets him laughing. He goes to the kitchen, reaches under the sink, un-tapes our guns.

"Let's go case the joint!" he says.

Guns in hand we creep out the door, dodging from shadow



to shadow, the mission impossible song bouncing around my skull. We are secret agents deep in enemy territory. Her house looms before us, a sentinel. Approaching the door I remember the flashlights are at home. Staring at the door my leg roams around and my toe finds a rock. Kicking it over uncovers a glint of metal. Key in hand Lee opens the door. I can hear a TV somewhere in the back of the house. Standing in the foyer we listen for signs of life. The old bird must have left the TV on when she went out. There is an overwhelming scent of potpourri. From the street light leaking in the window I can see a silver candelabra and head straight for it.

***Lee cocks his head and I hear a door open.  
My heart slams into over-drive making it hard  
to breathe as panic seizes me. A shadowy figure  
moves toward us with unnatural speed.***

It manages to say "Grra-" before I open fire. Three shots and Lee has the lights on. Gun steaming, I get a clear look at my boogeyman. Shit. Kid.

The kid's stomach is shredded. I'm still staring at him when his father sprints down the hall, followed by the mother. They say a mother's grief is the most heart breaking sound you can hear. They are wrong. It is the father that breaks your heart to pieces, bellowing like a wounded animal. Back and to the right of me Lee is telling them to shut the fuck up. The father is making strangled gulping noises and the mother has a glazed-over expression, nostrils quivering. Lee walks up behind me, chin over my shoulder saying,

"These people are going to die because of you," And kisses my ear. I shudder.

Something inside of me caves in and I crouch down, gun hanging between my legs. Staring at the boy I search for some meaning in his mangled innards. I glance up at the nearest wall and see a family photo. They grin down at me in their matching sweaters.

***I never meant to hurt anyone.***

I reach my hand toward the kid's red sneaker and Lee shoots the father in the chest, a bloom of blood appears under the pocket of his flannel shirt. The mother breaks her paralysis and charges Lee who shoots. Her head snaps back, eyes wide; I flinch when she hits the ground.

Lee comes over and nudges me with his foot and I lose my balance, my gun skids across the blood stained carpet.

"Get the fuck up, we got to go."

I take off running through the door; Lee is somewhere behind me. As I round the street corner I see a car parked out front of our complex; my sister leans against the hood.

"Oh my God, Julie. Shit."

I should say something, but my tongue is a dead fish. I hold

out my hands, my gun is gone and replacing it a bloody sneaker.

"What did you do? Oh man, always a mess aren't you. Fucked up all the time. Get that thing away from me. I'm calling the cops.... Shouldn't.... Lee's no good..."

Her words meld into a high frequency whine that splits my brain down the middle. She's obviously in shock. Hell, I'm in shock. Doesn't she ever shut up?

"Shut up," I mumble.

"What did you say!"

"Shut up, shut up, shut up!" Lee materializes by my side. "Lee make her stop. My head."

"Like this baby?"

I shake my head no and he grins at me. What have I done? I bolt. I can hear the thump of my heart and Lee shouting to head to the left. He is right behind me when I enter the forest, zigging and zagging through the trees. My feet go right even as I think left, left. The ground falls away, I run two more steps in the air before falling.

Darkness....

***I never meant to hurt anyone.***

***What have I done?***

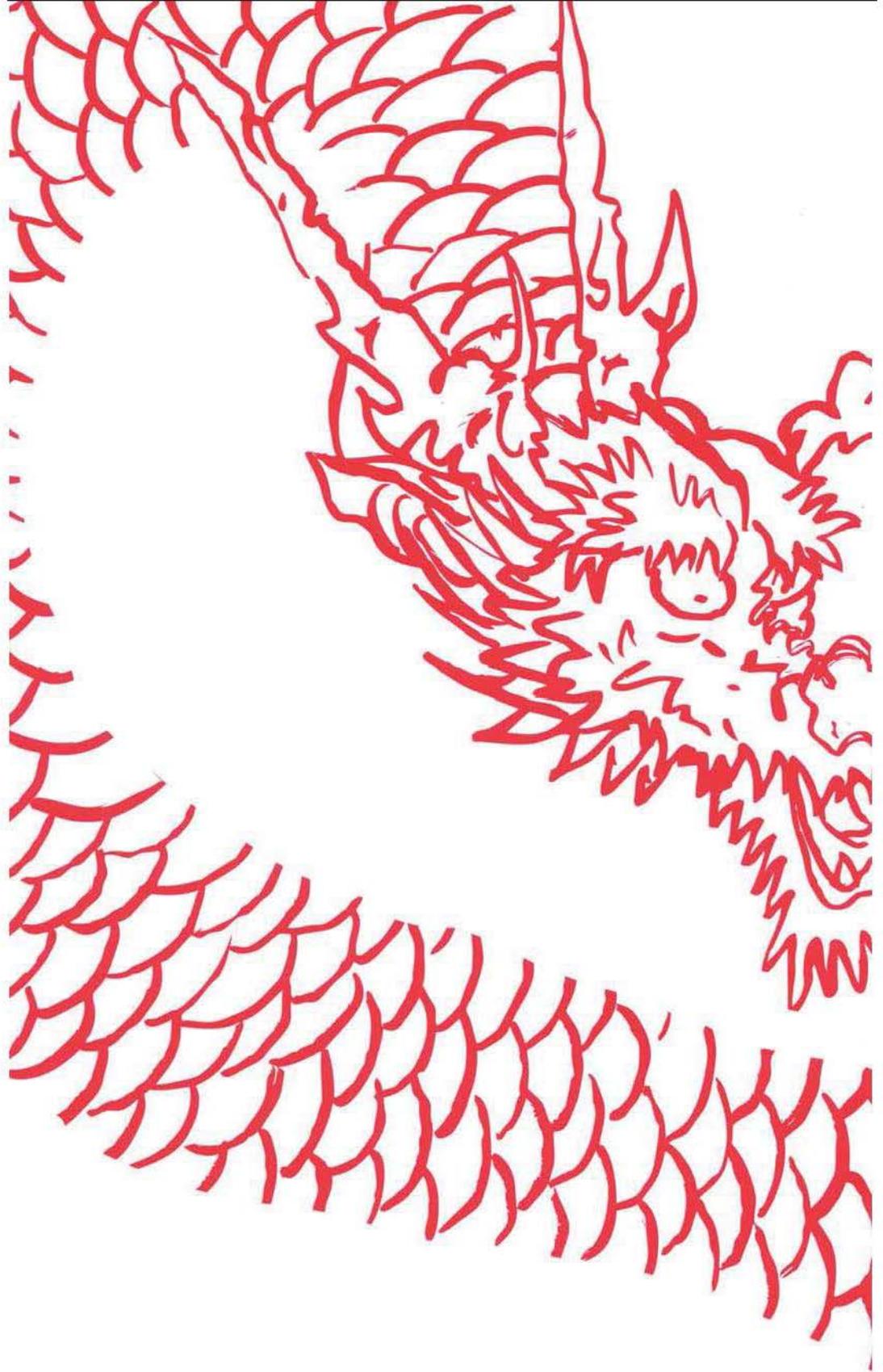
Trying to get up only drags my face through fresh vomit. Drifting through pain, I roll over. A bloody shoe clutched in my hand. I rub my thumb over the canvas and a shape blocks the sun.

Lee.

"I came back for you."



It's not the end yet.  
Let's stay with it.



**Nonfiction**

*Where She Belongs*  
by Maneesha Lele

Before the wild applause and heartfelt “bravi” ring out, a few moments of stunned silence pulse in the hush that invariably follows the dramatic finale of an operatic aria. Today, as if in honor of the annual event, the modestly sized, honey-toned wooden box that is Katzin Concert Hall has acquired a new sheen. Its distinction as the statewide venue for the all-important Mets Auditions sets it apart from the many other performance spaces at ASU’s Herberger School of Music.

*The warm glow from the stage cocoons the audience in soft light, yet the tension in the air thickens with every noise from within it.*

The acoustics here amplify everything: from hastily scribbled notes and whispered opinions to throat clearings and obstinately vibrating cell phones, from gulped sips of water to scratchy seat adjustments, from muffled sneezes to the noisy scuffling of real paper programs being carefully perused. The nervous clattering flies in the face of the neon yellow rectangles stuck to every wall and entrance door leading up to the hall, the signs that demand absolute silence and forbid entry until after the applause, testimonials to the significance of this musical event. Otherwise, even for critically acclaimed guest artistes, members of the audience must scan the top left corner of the back wall of the hall for a glimpse of the title and its composer, before the italicized white letters dissolve silently into the shadows. I stumble into my seat in the nick of time, and suppress a whoop as the judges announce the next candidate.

She appears in a deep blue dress that sets the mood for her first piece, a compelling, six minute long aria from an opera by a Mexican composer of undeserved anonymity. She and her accompanist work in perfect tandem to sound flawless, their polished performance showcasing every nuance of emotion and meaning, the musical ideas and diction complexities of the piece translated into effortless, beautiful singing. She takes us on a rollercoaster ride of depth and feeling, her voice now rushing forth like a mighty river, now poised at the precipice of another cadenza or now, as translucent and fragile as a dragonfly’s wing.

The judges are pleased. They ask for a second Beethoven piece, and yet a third, the famous “Dove sonoi bei momenti?” from Mozart’s, “Le nozze de Figaro.”

I try to reconcile this 25-year old diva, this curvaceous,



coloratura soprano, whose modest frame belies a spectacular sound, to the bespectacled, girl-next-door, jean-clad voice teacher who exclaims, "this is me under stress, most of the time," looking worried as she flaps in mid-air.

She breezed into our lives this semester and since the very first day of class, has alternately charmed and bullied us into doing our musical best.

As I recall, her resume had made our collective jaw drop even before we even heard her sing. Andrea Flores, with an Undergrad in Vocal performance from the prestigious Chapman Music Conservatory in California, currently training for a Masters in vocal performance under one of the most sought after voice teachers at ASU's School of Music, and is well on her way to a doctorate. The three judges in the back make me nervous for each candidate, perhaps because they can dash all hope with polite smiles and a definitive, "that's all we want to hear; thank you very much for your time," right after the first aria. Or stop a singer cold, mid-song or ask him or her to start any point of their choosing, which require a completely different mindset and characterization from the previous stanza or the earlier piece. I also marvel at the complexity of their task. To me, it seems as though all the candidates are in top form, their voices resonant and beautifully modulated, their diverse, incredibly difficult repertoires showcasing their dizzying vocal ranges and stunning performance skills, their voices throbbing with exultant emotion or saintly restraint, celebrating the splendor of mutual love or lamenting the hellfire

*I cannot seem to stop clapping as one of the judges announces Andrea's name as one of the finalists. She is all a-flutter as I offer a congratulatory hug.*

and agony of love, unrequited.

She tears up and looks as dazed as I feel. Yet I marvel at my own surprise. Because up there, going for broke, is where Andrea belongs, competing for the experience of a lifetime, a chance to sing at the Metropolitan Opera in New York .

I mull over the many directions this young singer is pulled in. Mother to eight month old, eighty pound, "baby" Great Dane, Calisto who takes Andrea for a run in the neighborhood park at 5 a.m. every morning. Wife to Eddie, the ardent young husband with the head for figures, who wanted to start a family "like, yesterday." And obliging granddaughter of the grandmother who lives in California, who asks her Andrea, "when are you going to going to learn to sing some real music?" And then proceeds to sob over the phone as Andrea reels off a couple of complicated rancheros and boleros.

I don't know about you abuelita, but I think she already has.

nonfiction

小说首位

second

place

*My Two Dads*  
by **Trueth Owens**

I can't even imagine how my dad told my mother that he was attracted to other men. They were in the middle of raising three children together, my younger brothers and me, and in the mess of life my dad realized—yes, realized—that he was gay. Fast forward another year and their marriage had officially ended with my brothers living with our mom, and I with my dad. I was thirteen at the time.

Of course this is not an unheard of scenario, but it's definitely not something you see every day. My mother, understandably, was not sure how to handle this news and spent a month in the throes of absolute panic. She refused to see a therapist or visit a support group, which was probably the wrong choice, but she was uncomfortable with sharing her situation and did not want strangers giving her advice. My dad, though, was patient.

***For a long time he was completely ashamed of himself for putting his family through something so socially risqué, and he maintained his usual routines and never deviated from what was normal. He was still a father.***

After things had settled and my dad, Robert, had become more comfortable admitting his homosexuality, my parents quietly divorced. The house was sold, and my mother moved in with her mom and took my little brothers, and I moved with my dad into a two bedroom apartment. Though it was strange and kind of chaotic, I remember being excited that I finally had my own room for once. My dad, in his embarrassment for what he was putting his children through, made up for it with kindness and he made it an effort to keep communicating. We even had weekly talks about where his life was going and what his schedule was like and, most sensitively, how I felt about him dating another man.

Living with my dad and coming to terms with his homosexuality was actually as hard as most people would think. I went to school and continued life as usual, except that instead of returning to a bustling house with my raucous brothers and the smell of dinner, I slipped into a quiet apartment to find notes from my dad telling me when he would be home from work and where to order food. It was incredibly eerie for awhile, and I don't know if it were witnessing the end of my parents' marriage or this new modern lifestyle, but I felt as if I had grown up very



suddenly that year. At fourteen, I felt like an adult. I came home and had a few hours of freedom to myself, and in the evenings I would have discussions with my dad that made me feel like a therapist. He was always asking for my approval of things; for example, was I okay with what happened between him and Mom? Did I still think of him as a dad? If I were ashamed of him? Things like that.

I asked him once if he married to hide his sexuality. This question didn't shock him, but he did seem very hurt by it. He made it very clear that he loved my mom. Their marriage was never a lie;

***he married her because her eyes looked like storms, because she lived life how she wanted to, because when she danced she blew him away***

he fell deeply in love with her, and at that time he had nothing to hide. Later he admitted to me that he had always been body-conscious of himself, which I already knew. But what I hadn't known is that he had actually always admired the male figure, and had been envious of well-shaped men. He wanted to be one of them, he told me with a red face one day, and he thought that maybe that is what had led him to discovering his homosexuality.

I was fifteen when he met his Owen, who would become the second love of his life. They had met through social networking and seemed to really hit it off, and Owen was very respectful towards me and my father's situation. I remember laughing at my dad because of how tentative he was to introduce Owen to me, and it worked out fine. He thought that it was wonderful that my dad had raised children, and he never caused any tension among our little alternative family. Quite the opposite, I saw a happier side of my dad that I didn't know still existed. It made me glad that they had met.

Then the oddest thing happened when I was sixteen. I had been mildly confused for awhile about my own sexual orientation because

Having not been a stranger to homosexual awareness with my father, it wasn't as difficult a struggle for me as it must be for

***I honestly couldn't think about girls in the way that my guy friends did.***

most teenagers, so I told my dad that I thought that I was gay. And contrary to what most people might think of the reaction of my gay father learning that his son was also gay, he panicked.

Now, up to this point I had thought I had a pretty honest, not terrible life. I didn't know how much my father suffered for raising me. I didn't realize that he had been criticized for raising me alone in his apartment, the son of a gay man. I was exposed to an unhealthy lifestyle, people had told him, and my life would be damaged because of it. He had three children, and the one he took

to live with him ended up being gay. Telling him that I was gay was, to him, as if I had admitted that they were right. As if because he was gay and I was living with him, he had made me gay as well.

He was wrong, of course. Even as an adult comfortable with my sexuality, I'm pretty sure that it had nothing to do with being 'exposed' to my dad's lifestyle. But he took it very harshly and fell into a blanket of near-hysteria. He blamed himself again for destroying his family, and he almost threw away his relationship with Owen. When I realized that I had become a catalyst in this, I was distraught myself. I told him that it wasn't his fault, and it took a while, but we both worked through it. If you asked him now about how he felt about me coming out to him, he would deny that he reacted negatively. Just like any parent would.

When I was eighteen, I started calling Owen, "dad," as well. Most of the time I used the endearment lightly and would use it to pester him, but I do believe we have grown as a family. I have two dads, and they are in love. As an individual, I am inspired by them. And as their son, I often ponder whether I will raise any children of my own.



Let reality be reality.

nonfiction  
小说首位

third  
place

*Whiskey Drenched and Burning Blank Canvas*  
by **Mason Gates**

I think of our first bed. She was there and once told me, held me rich while she said it, while she said she loved me. She loved my bed, our bed, she called it. She told me she loved me in that bed. She said she was so happy to share it with me. She said she wanted to stay in that bed all summer long. She told me all she ever wanted to do with her life was wake up next to me everyday. She told me she could make love to me forever. One time she made love to me for five straight hours without stopping. That's what she called it, Making Love. I loved that

She once told me she loved the way I smelled when I sweat. She said she loved to inhale me after I'd get home from playing basketball. She said she loved the taste of my stink on her lips when she kissed my neck and sucked on my chest after we went on a midday run. She said she loved the sloppy sheets of our bed after a week of Making Love in it three or four times a day. She said they smelled like love. She said they smelled like us. Like something we were going to be. Then she'd say it was more like something we always were.

She once told me she loved the way I smelled when I sweat. She said she loved to inhale me after I'd get home from playing basketball. She said she loved the taste of my stink on her lips when she kissed my neck and sucked on my chest after we went on a midday run. She said she loved the sloppy sheets of our bed after a week of Making Love in it three or four times a day. She said they smelled like love. She said they smelled like us. Like something we were going to be. Then she'd say it was more like something we always were.

She said she loved falling asleep next to me. She told me she never slept so well. She said my snoring sounded like those CDs of recorded waves crashing over the surf over and over again. She said it wasn't ever bothersome. She said it was soothing. I believed her. That made me so happy. She said she would dream about me even though I was right next to her. She said it was like having me in two worlds at once, and that she loved to see me everywhere, anywhere she could.

She told me one day when we were on top of one another, her then me, that she was sorry she'd made me chase her all those years. She said it hurt her as much as it hurt me. I looked at her and told her that wasn't possible and she knew. She said it still drove her crazy though. And then she mentioned that right now matters the most. I said of course. She smiled and put her head on its side on top of my shoulder. She told me again. She told me she loved me more. I said it was impossible. I could feel her teeth nibble. She said fill me up again. I did.



She said she loved getting drunk with me in our bed naked watching indie-movies. She said she loved to watch the Sopranos on DVD while getting drunk with me for hours in our bed. She said she treasured our drunken viewings of Comedy Central from eleven at night till two in the morning. She told me she didn't mind when I smoked in our bed as long as I didn't accidentally ash on her. She always liked to watch CNN in the morning and make coffee for us to drink. She would always throw a little shot of whiskey in mine but not in hers. She called it my fun coffee. She'd laugh and hit me playful when I'd switch hers with mine. She never drank in the morning, unless we were on vacation. The only place we ever went on vacation together was San Francisco. She'd said that's where all her doubts about us vanished, what little there were. She said she always knew, since we first met. She said even though we were just kids.

She told me she loved the way I looked at her when I first walked in the door, when she would beat me home. She said she loved how I watched her undress, before she climbed into our bed. And when she got out from under the covers to get dressed. She said I looked pale, sad whenever she had to leave and it made her feel special that I was so affected by her absence. She said she loved the way it always took me twenty minutes to kiss her goodbye whenever I had to leave her alone there in our bed. She told me I made her feel like an Angel. Like a princess. Like A Goddess. She said she worshipped me. I told her not as much as I lauded her. And then she would tell me to come back to her soon. Most of the time I never even made it passed the foot of our bed.

She used to tell me how I was destined to do great things, that I was king of the world. I would ask her what sort of great things and she would kiss me and say I was brilliant and it didn't matter and I would believe her and feel as tall as mountains and moons. She said there was nothing sexier than my smile when it was arrogant and assured. Out of the blue she would always say you are so sexy, for no reason at all, very random like when I was brushing my teeth or putting clothes away in drawers or reading or talking on the phone. She would say it when I wasn't doing anything that would be thought of as sexy. She would just stare at me with a cute smirk and her eyes real fixated until I'd ask her what and that's when she'd tell me how sexy she thought i was. To anyone else it wouldn't make any sense but it did to us. To me she always looked the most beautiful with her hair pulled back wearing an oversized T-shirt and bulky socks. She never needed make-up to be sexy. She didn't wear much, if any anyway. She never said it but I knew she loved that I loved that about her.

She said the only time she ever liked going out was when I was there with her. She said she loved going out with our friends to the bar because she liked being there on my arm. She told me I was the funniest man alive. She always laughed at my stories and didn't get jealous when I paid more attention to the group. I made sure her hand was always in mine. She would kiss me on the cheek for no reason while we sat around a table or played pool or darts. She said she loved the little shithole bars we'd always go to. She said I always made her feel at home wherever we went. She said she

loved all the songs I played on the jukebox. I always put our songs in the mix and she would smile and hug and kiss my face all over. She was always classy, even when she'd get a little drunk. She told me she always felt proud that she was the girl going home with me. When we'd get back to our bed she'd say all my friends' dates wished they were dating me instead. But it didn't make her jealous and she always meant it as a compliment. She told me she was lucky to be mine. I'd say it was the other way around and it was.

She said she loved when I'd put my head down on her tummy so she could stroke my hair. I would tell her her belly was talking to me and I'd ask her if she was hungry and she'd smile and say maybe a little darling. Then I'd say I hoped it was a little darling, our little darling. She'd pinch my neck and tell me not to joke about things like that. I never knew if it made her even a little bit excited that I'd insinuate here and there. I'd hoped she considered it in a good light, no matter how far-fetched she made it seem in her own head. She used to tell me we were too young and too crazy and too promising. I didn't care about all that. I wanted to do everything there was to do in the world with her. The skin of her stomach smelled like orange groves in heaven. She knew just how to rub my head. Sometimes we'd stay in that position and just listen to music for hours. Sometimes we would talk and sometimes we wouldn't say a word, too content inside the songs. She told me she didn't want to go away to college in Texas if I wasn't going to be there with her. She said she wanted to stay here with me in our bed. I tried half-assed to get her to enroll at the same college, but I never pushed it like I should have, like I should have to convince her to stay. I always agreed with her that her parents wouldn't allow it. I should have made it work. I could have. I should have tried harder to find a way.

She bought this three by four foot white canvas and some paint the night before she took her plane ride. She said we could paint something wonderful on it together and I could have it to look at when we spoke long distance. She said she didn't need anything to remember me because I was there inside of her. We sat in our bed weeping in each other's bare bodies all night and didn't paint a thing. She said she loved me over and over and I held her and told her the same.

After I moved into my college-campus place, I hung the blank canvas above our bed. I would sit there and stare at it every sully night. One night in the following spring I got really drunk and slept with some skinny, fake blonde that I had to kick out right afterward. I tried to call her but she didn't answer. I grabbed the canvas down and drug it outside into the parking lot. I threw it down and poured whiskey all over and set it on fire crying alone barefoot and worthless in the stupid night.



Education is the ability to meet life's situations.

Lucky Numbers 24, 38, 4, 26, 18, 42

nonfiction  
小说首位

honorable  
mention

*Snap, Crackle, Fizz.*  
by Trueth Owens

It's not quite a *rush*, as other people describe. I imagine the chemical construct of my brain and I visualize the electric reaction that takes place as I take my first sip after a long day. Initially I'll let it sit in my mouth, and my tongue is like a dolphin in a business suit walking down the street until it sees a fountain and realizes that it's an aquatic animal. It splashes excitedly, revels, then rests in contentment. The soda itself then drains down my throat, but the caffeine rises up like a vapor and penetrates my skull. Like milk poured into water, I imagine it as a silky chemical veil blossoming like an underwater mushroom cloud within my cranium and it massages my temples without the need for any external pressure. I relax despite that caffeine is, well, caffeine. I needed this.

That's how I feel about soda.

*I suppose technically I am 'addicted' to caffeine, but I know that if that were all it was, I wouldn't keep any interest in the stuff. No. It's the taste, the texture, and the delivery of soda.*

I have become a bit of a connoisseur; I can't handle the cheap stuff. Pepsi is best in bottles, but Coke is always the premier choice from fountains. That's how it is for me. The fizz, the caramel coloring, and the sweet sweet syrupy cold taste.

And hey, soda is also pretty universal. Who doesn't know about Coca-cola or Pepsi? Like Visa and Mastercard, you always have one or the other available to you regardless of where you are. Servers at restaurants like it that I don't ask for water; it adds to the bill. At the bar and someone badgering me about not having alcohol? Hey, throw a shot of Chambord into my Coke. Fine with me: just don't let me catch you trying to slide me a brewski.

It's been this way since I was a child, though I think that it is only now as an adult that I've become truly appreciative of soda's bouquet and understated elegance. I used to be told that I would dehydrate myself, that I would ruin my skin, *that I would get fat*. Well. I roll my eyes, and tell any haters towards me that my body is simply a machine that has adapted to soda-pop consumption; under my throat I install a new little filter when my body gets a little slow at separating the water from the corn syrup. Yeah right.

I suppose what I'm really trying to say is that I loathe the



idea of someone *who is not me* telling me that I shouldn't do what I like to do. The clearest example is, as soda is for me, what people eat and drink. Because there's a magical standard on what is *healthy* and what is *unhealthy*, people seem to think that they have the right to judge someone else because they are not conforming to the 'correct' paradigm. Well, let me tell you, I will consume what I want.

***It's actually a secret joy of mine to be told that I'm treating my body poorly, so that I can turn and give the 'ol up-and-down to whomever is lecturing me***

and politely let them know that I'm (usually) in much better shape than they are, so maybe the fact is that they should be drinking *more* soda. But seriously, if there is any negative effect of the stuff, I haven't seen it.

Except maybe for my teeth. That's one battle that I *have* had to fight. It hasn't been a negative experience though. My dentist is on my speed-dial and I absolutely flip-out-**love** seeing him. It's odd to me when I hear people complaining that they have a teeth cleaning, or an extraction, or a crown, or whatever reason they have to see the dentist. I would take their place in a heartbeat. We have it down to a ritual, and my life takes on the lyrics of Owl City's "Dental Care." I smooth my hair, sit back in the chair, and Dr. Mack gives me that lopsided grin with his usual routine.

Taking it easy on the soda, Alex?"

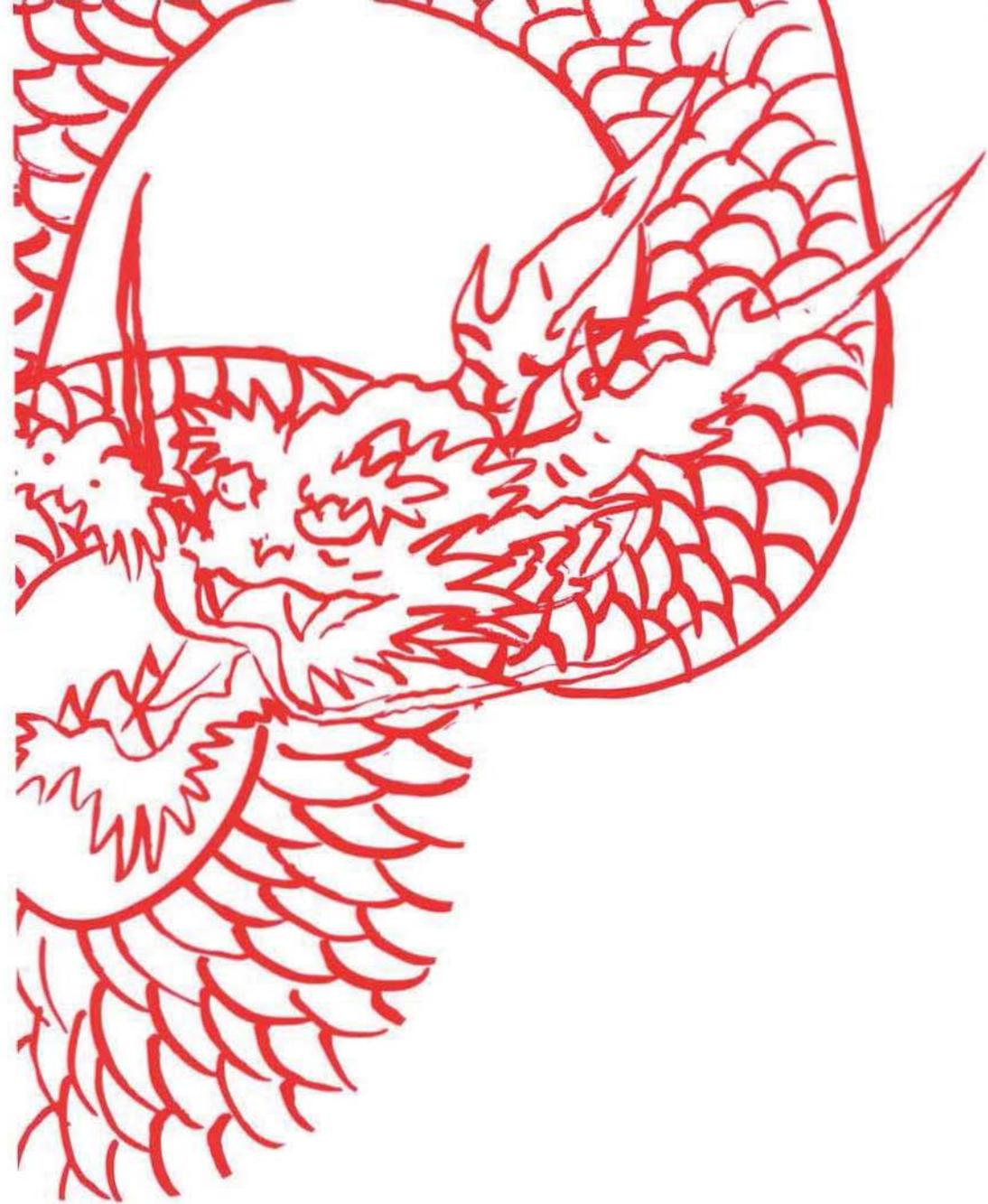
"Oh Mack, you goose. You know better than to ask me that!"

"Stuff is rotting your teeth, you know," he says with a sly smile, testing me.

"Nuthin you can't handle, I'm sure." I flash him with those pearly whites he's worked so hard on over the years, and we get down to business.

There are always going to be consequences for the lifestyles we choose. Vegans have a tough time garnering protein, PETA activists have to miss out on the classiness of draping themselves with fur at a dinner party, and I have chronically sugary teeth. But these consequences can be dealt with accordingly. Vegans can stock peanuts, soy and nutritional supplements; it's a hassle, but it works. Someone afraid to hurt an animal can wear faux-fur, and though it's not quite the same it still *looks* classy. And I have forged a lifetime friendship with my dentist.

Besides, if it bothered me when someone told me that I was doing something wrong or silly or unhealthy, I'd be a pretty pissed off guy 98% of the time. I take comfort in that I know what I like, and that it wasn't influenced by someone telling me it was good for me. I'll roll with the punches, grin up at adversity, and take a big 'ol swig of sweet, sweet soda. You could say that it's a symbol of my will to freedom. A tasty, refreshing symbol.



**Poetry**

*MLA Malaise*  
by Philip Murray

**MLA you are**

hours editing paper  
mushy gray matter

**MLA you are**

toast falling butter side down  
a morning headache

**MLA you are**

car keys locked in windows up  
i n c o n v e n i e n t

**MLA you are**

high pitched wailing semi brakes  
e x a s p e r a t i o n

**MLA you are**

hot coffee spilled while driving  
n o t m y c u p o f t e a

**MLA you are**

summer's car filled parking lot  
b o t h f u l l a n d e m p t y

**MLA you are**

vending machine malfunction  
m e c h a n i z e d m a d n e s s

**MLA you are**

nails dragged across chalkboard  
b o t h e r s o m e c l i c h é



**MLA you are**

E n g l i s h 1 0 2  
r e q u i r e d d a f t n e s s

**MLA you are**

a c a d e m i c d i s s o n a n c e  
l o w e r e d G P A

**MLA you are**

d o u b l e s p a c e d t i m e s n e w r o m a n  
w i t h n o v a r i a n c e

**MLA you are**

d a n c i n g w i t h a w k w a r d p a r t n e r  
D o r o t h y ' s t o e s n u m b

**MLA you are**

s i d e w a l k c r o w d e d w i t h t e x t e r s  
c e l l u l a r d i s e a s e

**MLA you are**

s t e p p e d i n m o l t e n c h e w i n g g u m  
s t u c k b e t w e e n m y t e e t h

**MLA you are**

t h r o w n r o c k s c r a c k i n g m y w i n d s h i e l d  
c o n f o u n d e d v i s i o n

**MLA you are**

r o a d w a y c o n s t r u c t i o n d e l a y s  
u n a v o i d a b l e

**MLA you are**

a n a r g u m e n t w i t h m y w i f e  
u n n e c e s s a r y

*A Mother's Sorrow*

**Consumed**

With the love I feel for this little

Boy I nourished for nine months,

Labored with for 32 hours, Cherished

For three months before he was

Ripped away from me,

**By**

God's will, or his sick sense of

reasoning. To let me wake thinking my

Child had slept his first whole night

When really he'd been stolen in the

Dark replaced with still empty body.

**Rage**

Bartered for a place in my mind.

Wanting to take over my mind,

My thoughts which had come to

Damn god for showing giving me

A miracle and taking it back, leaving us



**Lost**

In the void left by my child  
    Meant to live long after me  
But cut short. And while  
    I want to blame everyone, I  
know it won't help because

**In**

The end my son, my first child  
    Is gone and no amount of anger,  
No quantity of tears or threats  
    Or even promises, can change  
What is and save me from the

**Despair**

That has consumed me, till I'm only  
    A shell, and all I can do is  
Explain again and again that  
    my child is gone. What's worst of  
all, is I still wake up thinking he isn't

... **Gone**

poetry

小说首位

third  
place

*I am*

by **Chalan Johnson**

I am a daughter, a woman, a student,  
a surrogate mother, a best friend,  
a lover, a humanitarian, an addict,  
a **child**, a fighter, and an animal.

I am not a maid, a weaker sex,  
a **victim**, a traitor, a hater,  
a junkie, a joke, a liar, a cheater  
a manipulator, or a barbarian.

I am the culmination of my mother's  
Choices, but not her **property**.  
I was born from the pole, but that  
does not determine my destiny.

I am not "predisposed" to be a drug  
**addict** like my mother. Nor am I  
more likely to be a whore as she was.  
Her choices do not mold my fate.



I rebel against my lineage.  
I ease my pain with shades of ink,  
And dry my tears in sheared hair.  
I slake my anger with red **warrior** paint.

I am not a **prisoner** of my heritage.  
I endure the pain she causes by shutting down  
And when my heart has hardened  
I burn away the parts of her I see in me.

I am obsessed with my mother.  
Her failures, her false teeth,  
her anger, her shame,  
her **e n t i r e t y** .

I am obsessed with not becoming her.  
Not lazy, not immature,  
Not absent, not plain,  
Not **predictable**, not her.

I am an army of one against  
a stripper who couldn't keep her  
legs shut. My obsession fuels me,  
ignites me, frees me, enables **me**.

poetry

小说首位

honorable  
mention

*We Live In*  
by **Mason Gates**

the head.

the cradle in which thoughts are rocked

a n d w a k e u p

**c r y i n g**

**w a i l i n g**

at nervous hours in the daft night  
morning, w h a t e v e r .

The crib from which  
mental smoke rings are bellowed

**I s i t**

waiting for the sky to cry

raindrops wetting up the world  
another crooked beat from nature

the cloud's **w e e p i n g**

happy go lovely

a r e m i n d e r

a place setting for one & every.

You stagger along

**w e a r e f u l l**

the meal delicious  
so many tastes & colour

s a v o r y h i n t s

forceful flavors.



***The earth engages***

our crib built of oak  
a sweet stench of hot coals.

We burn it all

***flippant***

***we flip***

dreaming of somersaults & cartwheels  
hide and go sigh.

***I laugh***

around that muddled tavern  
slurping away  
to get at what is left,  
the artificial suns' caress

We traverse the 'scape  
waxing poetic

***failing*** to even nick Whitman  
or Poe.

They both laugh at us  
at best.

This is the clearest thing I have never understood.

---

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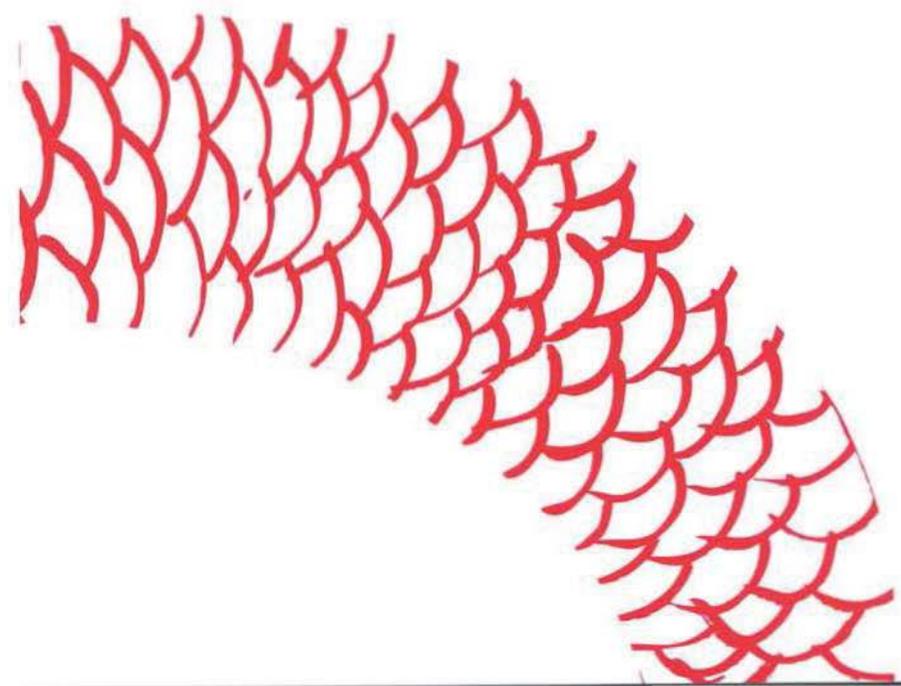
## Graphic Design

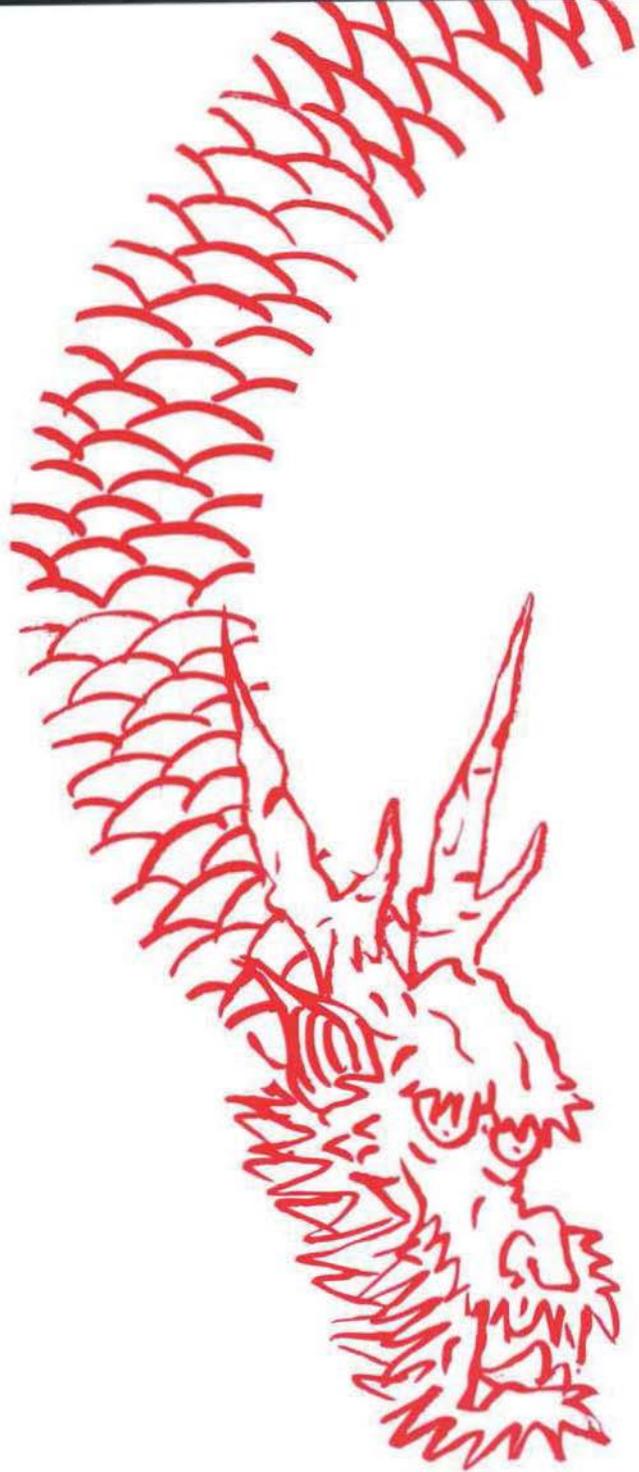
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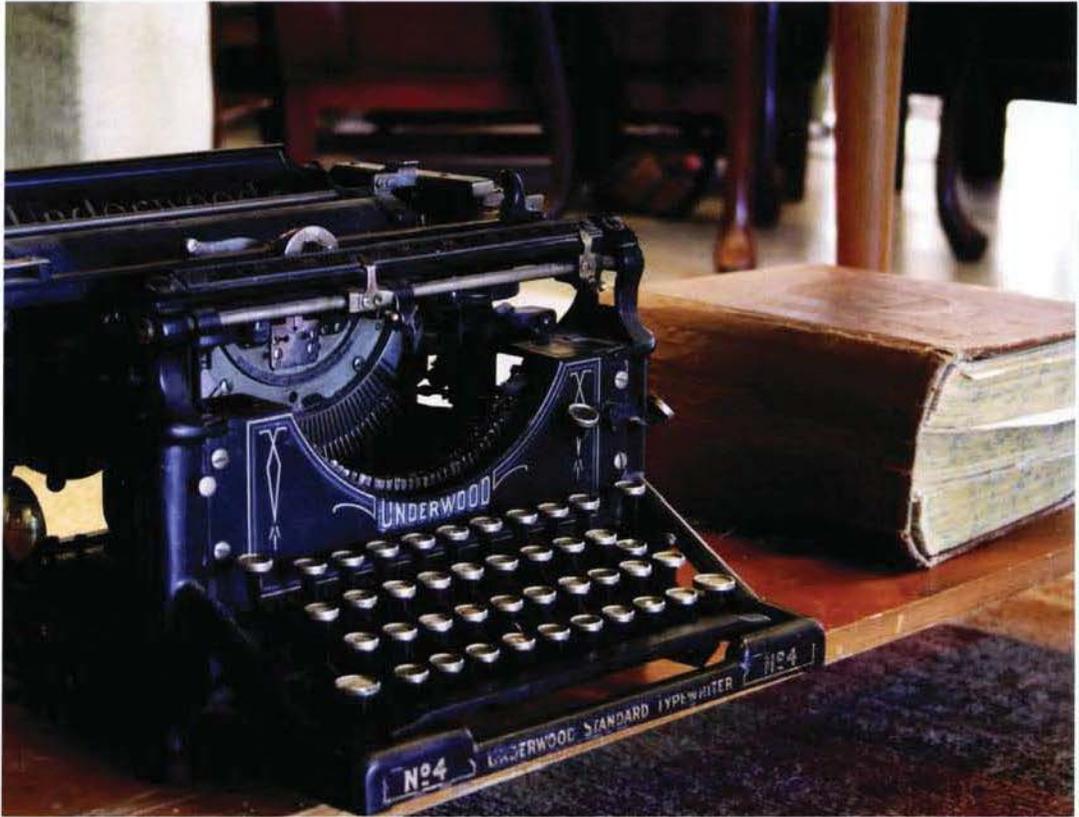




**Art**

photography  
首位  
first  
place

*"A Return"*  
by Jessica Mauss



Digital Photo

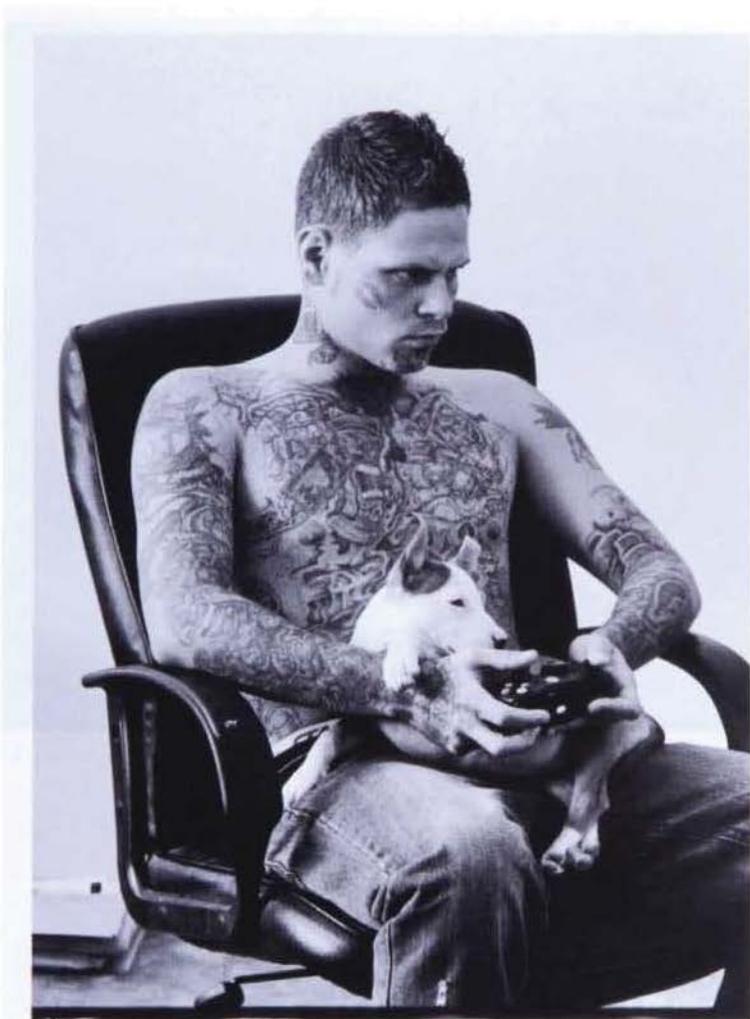


photography

第二名

second  
place

*"Untitled"*  
by Cheryl Vaughan



B&W Photo

photography

第三名

third  
place

*"Am I Beauty?"*  
by Devin M. Washington



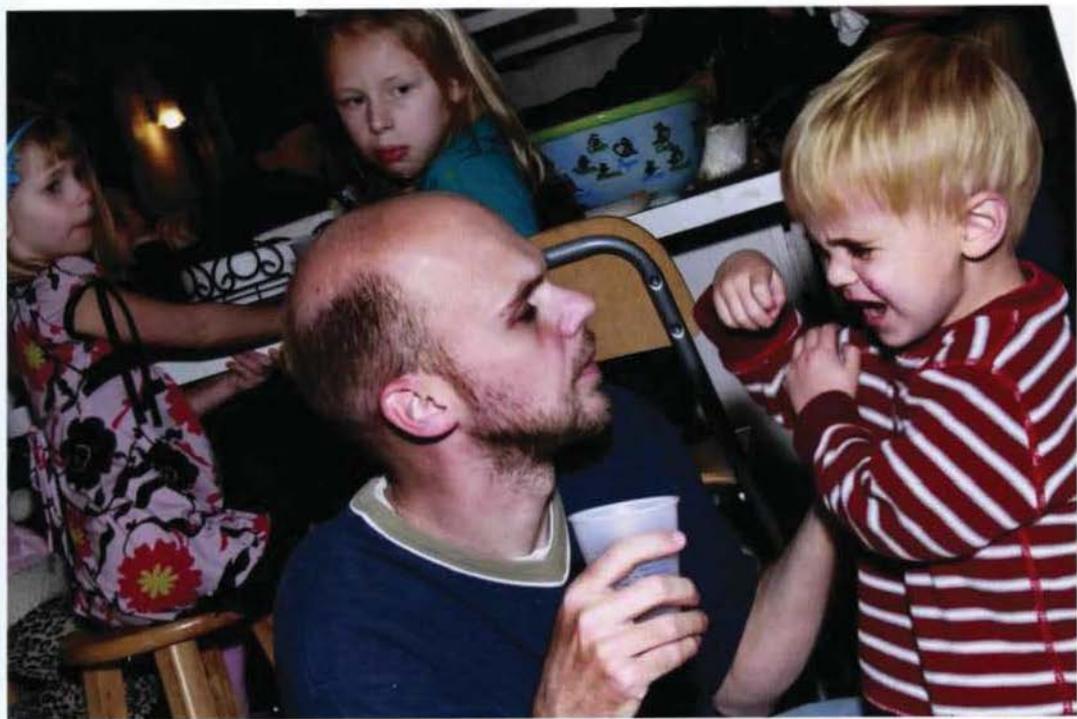
Digital Print



photography  
荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Domestic Variations #87"*  
**by Amon Livingstone**



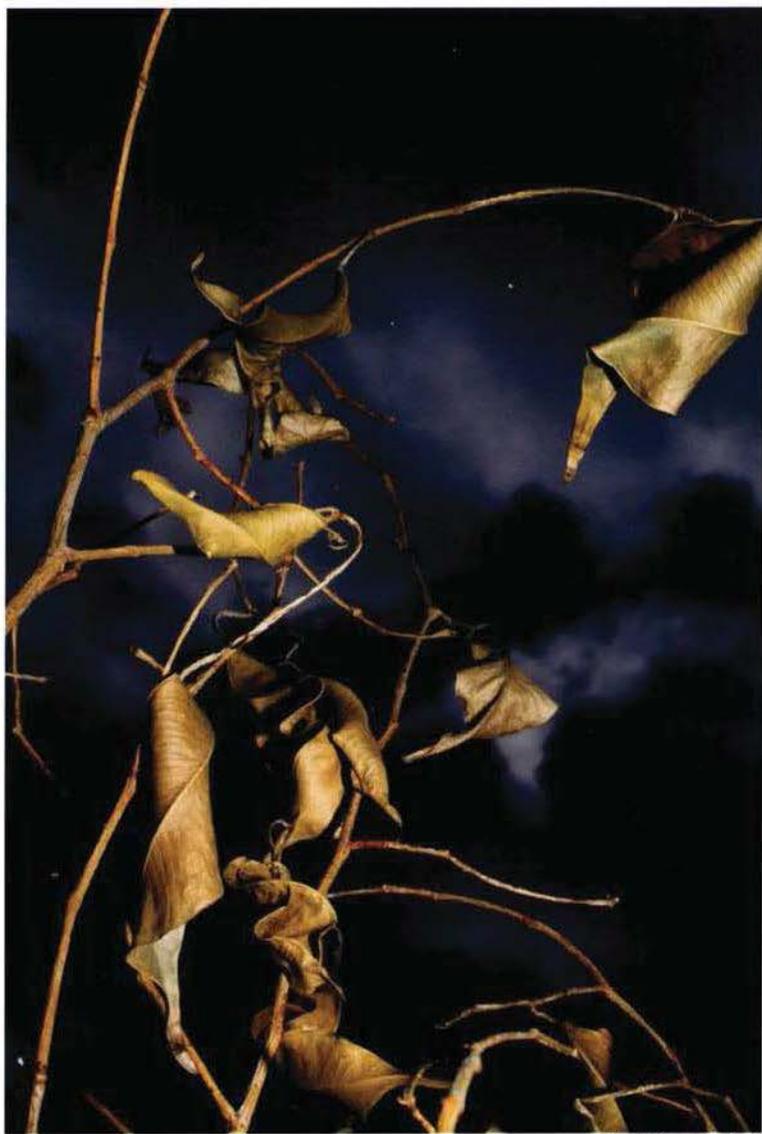
Digital Print

photography

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Untitled"*  
by **Shelbey King**



Inkjet Print



*"Untitled"*  
by **Thomas Ingersoll**



*"Artistic Dilemma"*  
by **Devin M. Washington**



*"Sunlight Forest Road"*  
by **Kelly Terreri**



drawing  
首位  
first  
place

*"Dreamer"*  
by Kelly Morford



Scratchboard



drawing  
第二名  
second  
place

*"Elbow"*  
by Christina Cole



Colored Pencil, Pen, Marker

drawing  
第三名  
third  
place

*"Latex Study"*  
by Janet Cini



Charcoal



drawing

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Self Portrait 2011"*  
by Laura "Liz Rose" Rosen



Pen & Ink

drawing  
荣誉奖  
honorable  
mention

*"Treatment"*



Pastel



*"Still Life 101"*  
**by Lisa R. Widowski**



*"Saturday Morning Vomit"*



painting

首位

first  
place

*"Untitled Orange"*  
by **Ross Stuetze**



Oil on Canvas



painting  
第二名  
second  
place

*"Bubbles & Feathers"*



Watercolor

painting  
第三名  
third  
place

*"Vulture"*  
by Kelly Morford



Acrylic on Canvas



painting

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Puppet Theater"*  
by Lisa Lara



Acrylic on Paper

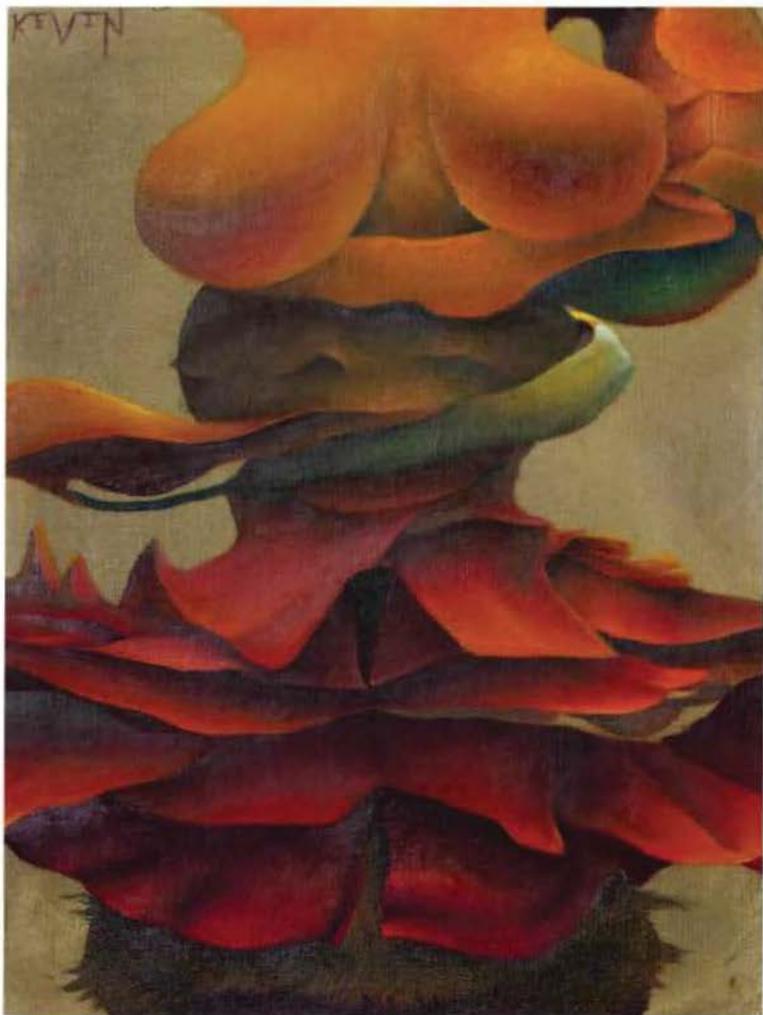
painting

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Because"*

by Kevin J. Hardy



Oil paint



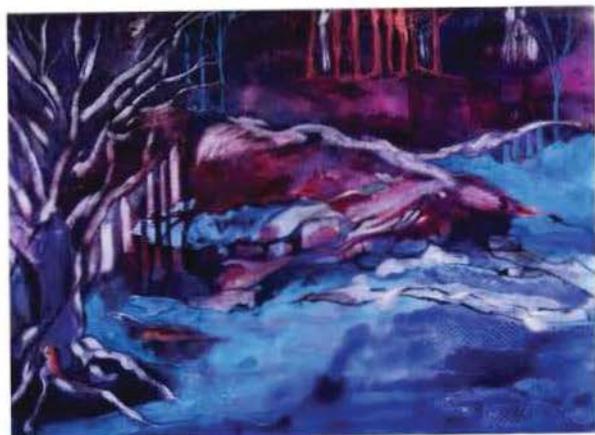
*"The Butterfly Charmer"*  
by **Claudia Martinez**



*"Garden"*  
by **Sylvia Husted**



*"To Dream"*  
by **Nancy Gunn**



ceramics

首位

first  
place

*"Mini Box"*

by William Solan



Ceramic



ceramics  
第二名  
second  
place

*"My Favorite"*  
by Julianna Mosolygo Posta



Ceramic

ceramics

第三名

third  
place

*"Angie"*

by Grace L. Silvas



Ceramic



ceramics  
荣誉奖  
honorable  
mention

*"Industryal Show"*  
by Arik Spaulding



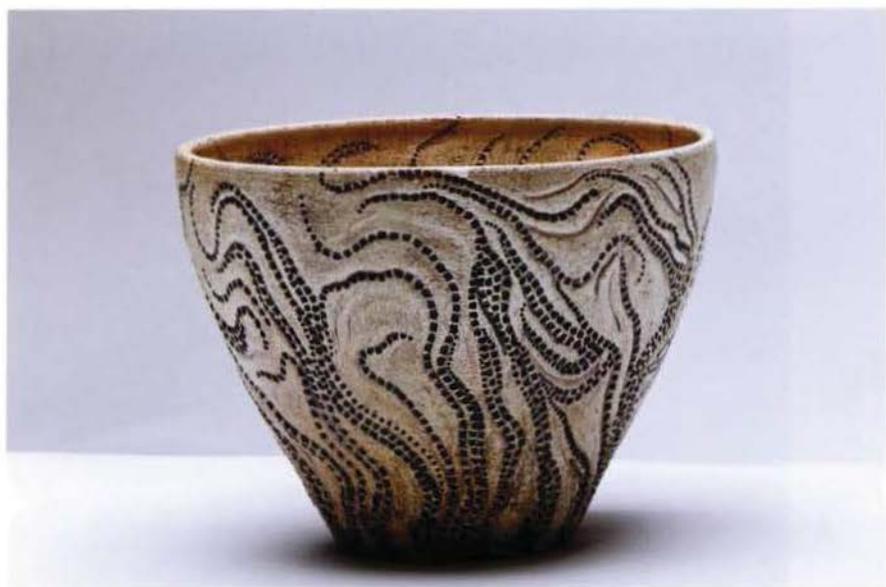
Ceramic

ceramics

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Currants Bowl"*  
by April Watt



Clay



*"Insert Title Here"*  
**by Arik Spaulding**



Ceramic

sculpture  
首位  
first  
place

*"Black Veil Bride"*  
by **Shawna Smith**



Assemblage



sculpture  
第二名  
second  
place

*"4.2.11"*  
by Erika Del Mundo



Mixed Media

sculpture  
第三名  
third  
place

*"Imagination"*  
by **Aleyna Rigby**



Found Object, Mixed Media



sculpture

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"The Artist"*  
by **Martine Cloud**



Stoneware

sculpture

荣誉奖

honorable  
mention

*"Spring"*

by William Solan



Ceramic



sculpture  
accepted

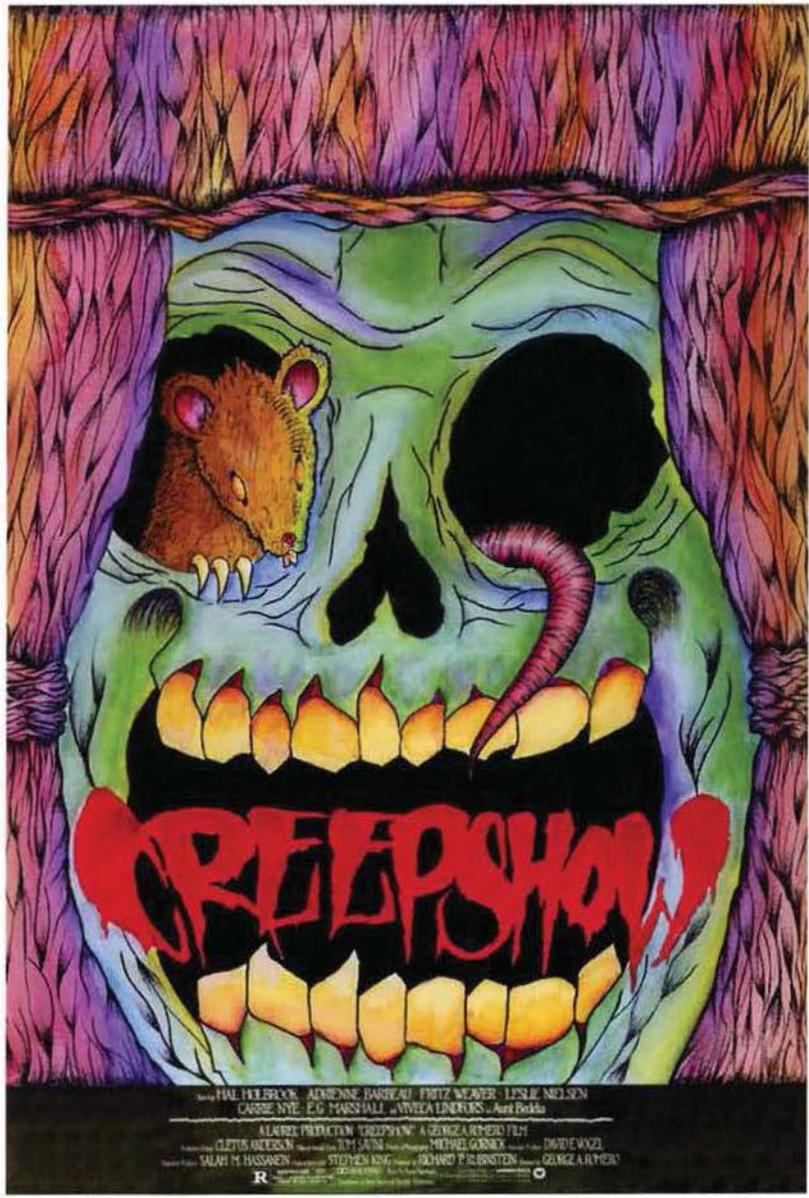
*"Peeling Back the Layers of Beauty"*  
by Richard Sawyers



Mixed Media

graphic  
design  
首位  
first  
place

*"Creepshow"*  
by Chuck Wan



graphic  
design  
第二名  
second  
place

*"Sorry We're Dead"*  
by **Chuck Wan**



Acrylic on Canvas



You are in the  
vicinity of a good time.  
Get the shy to join in.

static  
computer art

首位

first  
place

*"Perspectives 1,2,3"*

by Haik Muradian



static  
computer art  
第二名  
second  
place

*"BOOM!"*

by **Spencer Kenny**



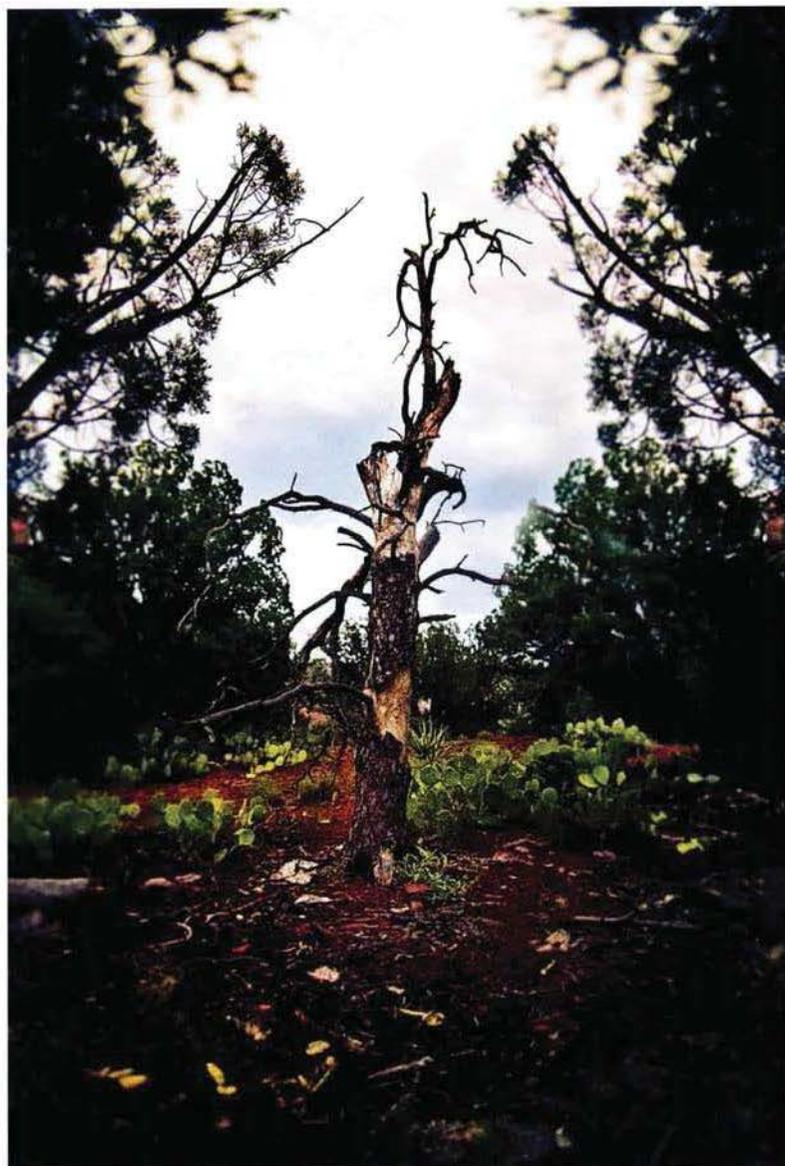
static  
computer art

第三名

third  
place

*"Untitled"*

by **Thomas Ingersol**



*"Coca-thletics"*

**by Daniel Jay Margiotta**



*"Etherea"*

**by Kelly Morford**



## Credits

### **Student Graphic Designers:**

Casandra Briningstool

Ryan McDowell

Irene Mortimer

Jet Stroup

Barry Tuberman

Chuck Wan

### **Student Literary Staff:**

Philip Boddy Jr.

Penni Brown

Kyleen Daley

Mason Gates

Trevor Grace

Joey Grimes

Anthony Marciano

Pam Thompson

### **Student Fine Arts Staff:**

Miranda Deel

Miguel Monzon

Billie Spencer

**Faculty Advisors:**

Sharon Forsmo, Visual Arts  
Michelle Granstrom, Graphic Design  
Dean Terasaki, Visual Arts  
John Ventola, Literary Arts

**Faculty Literary Judges:**

Jeff Baker  
Renee Barstock  
Vicky Campo  
Shelley Decker  
Gina Desai  
Tammy Gee  
Gary Lawrence  
Rashmi Menon  
Mike Mullins  
Steve Piest  
Phillip Roderick  
Matt Spivey  
Mark Viquesney  
Lori Walk  
Joy Wingersky

**Special Thanks:**

Margaret Brittingham, Community Reader  
Marla DeSoto, English Department Webmaster  
Dawn Meyer, Traveler Procedural Advisor  
Mary Jane Onnen, English Department Chair  
Bobby Sample, GCC Web Applications  
GCC Creative Writing Faculty

The kind of advice we do not  
like to take often turns out to  
be the best.