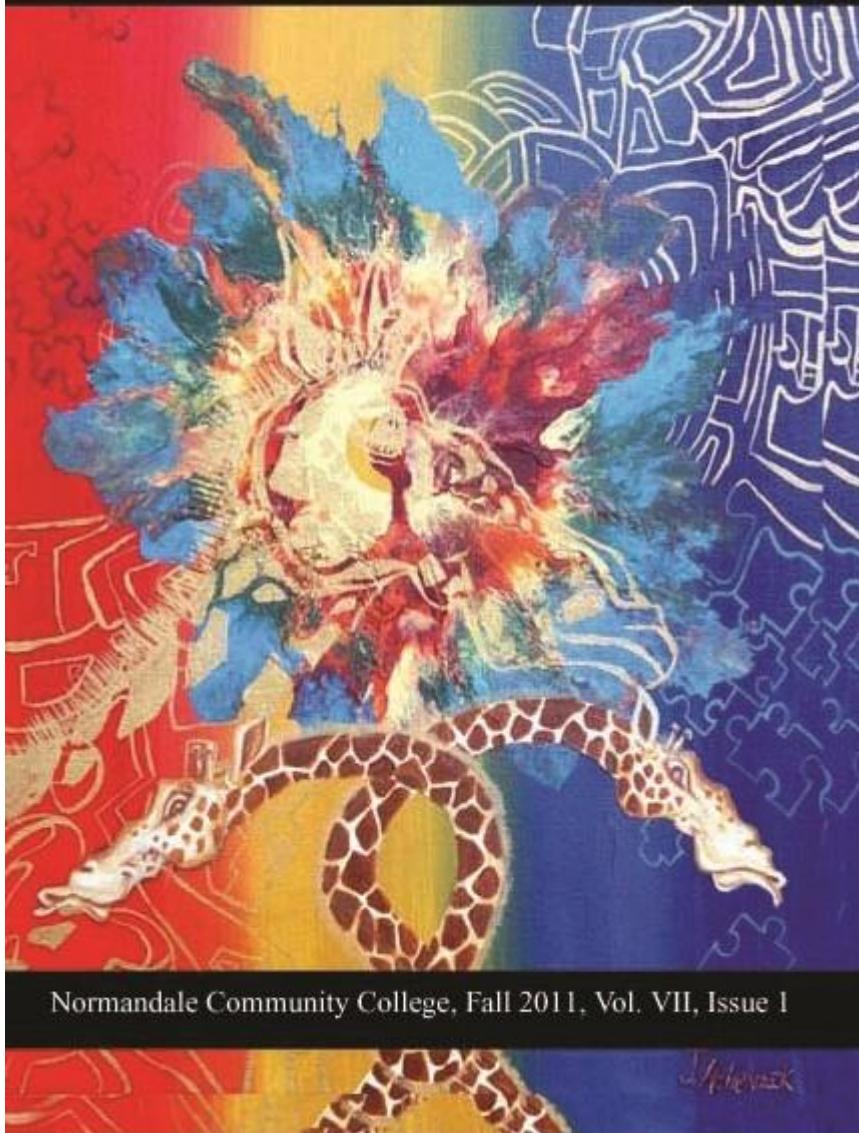


The Paper Lantern



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M. H. Hark

The Paper Lantern

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Schizophrenia

By Eric Grant

My brain is

splintered

with hollow point

needles

that threaten to blow holes

in my ass without

asking my permission.

Sometimes I need to pee

on the cat because she is a cat.

my head like a

hat.

Sometimes I make friends with

gnomes

that crawl on my

ceiling

cause it's better than

being afraid.

Sometimes I need

to fall on the

floor

like some other

crazy

person whom I've heard about but have never

met because something in my brain is

itchy and the color green often blinds me and need me

to poke holes in my cheeks while big packs of elephants roam

my dad's living room or mom's kitchen.

I knew,

sort of,

what I was as soon as I

woke up

on the cold padded green seclusion room

floor

with a super sore ass

from where the
needle went in.

My brain is tired from all
the pills and shots

that do nothing other
my friends than take away

and leave me lonely and fractured like the space
where all the other kids leave their bad feelings, between the doors

of the hospital and the doors to their happy nuclear family with two
German Shepherds and 1.7 children but I have never left my fracture anywhere
other than the hard floor I have to roll around on like some hedgehog waiting for
my next meal of milk

and Haldol
or Thorazine

in sharp little points of bitter attitudes
towards

people like crazy people are crazy.

“Shhhhhh”, says the nurse who has
the kind of eyes a grandma would have if there is a grandma who loves you.

Grandma is a
Sadist

Who
lies.

I have the kind of brain that hears all by itself.

The kind of eyes that explore a world no
one

else can
to see.
or don't have the courage

I see God on a daily basis.

He brings me water that clears out the chalky taste and paste

and makes my throat feel better like creamy cherry
dipped summer ice cream cones make the front
of my shirt

happier

Section

Sometimes I feel

or not feel depending on what I decide that day

and my stupid medication will make me sad

or angry, taking

away,

far away,

the happiness I feel watching the horses play on my sister's head holding their own rodeo in the tightly coiled tumble weeds of her hair while I giggle and rock and get exhausted hearing my mother tell me I don't have a sister at all but that I only think I see things, that really are there but that she, nor anyone else, sees or was invited to the rodeo that is held just for me until the clowns come to do the barrel races and I get tired from trying to rope a horse and I have to take another pill.

I think my eyes just fell out.

Sometimes I feel better and I can see things clearly. It's a bit lonely in a normal world even though I do get to see a lot of my real friends like Dr. Young, MD and my therapist James, PhD. They refuse to entertain me as much as the "not real" friends, but they do their best. My mother prefers me like this and I can attend school with the other children my age without getting called all the usual nicknames that children throw at other children they don't understand. I don't blame them. I call myself the names sometimes just to see how they feel coming out of my mouth and I think the words *douche* and *psychopath* feel really good on my tongue and I say them over and over to anyone who will listen. My doctor tells me that even though I feel better, I have to keep taking my little green pill and three red pills or else "bad things will happen," even though I tell him, "everyone likes a rodeo Dr. Young." Of course, I don't have the right kind of ears to hear him properly and he uses words I don't really understand because they are not in my language.

Sometimes I forget to take my green pill. It is so damn tiny that my big crazy fingers can't hold on to it properly and green colors blind me. My brain feels itchy.

I don't like it so

much and it hurts too much

until big elephants in the crazy

rodeo come back to my fleshy

super sick brain town to

entertain me

again.

Fairytales: A Tell-All- *Excerpt*

By Rachael Dosen

Whenever someone's telling stories about your love life, you're always the last to find out. Nobody knows this better than me, which isn't something I'm particularly happy about.

Truth is, if they hadn't made me put my full name on the marriage license, I probably never would've found out. I certainly didn't think anything of the judge's expression when he read it. "Cinderella Fenimore" isn't a name you see around very often, probably because it's too embarrassed to leave the house.

But then he asked if I was a fan of "the fairytale." *The fairytale*. That's how popular that wad of garbage is. It's the ultimate romance. The template of fiction. The truest, purest love story ever. And it's more full of crap than a cat with cholera.

The gall of that man. The absolute, ulcer-breeding nerve! The very day I get married, I found that arrogant toad told everybody that he got me instead. Sure puts a damper on your honeymoon, I can tell you that much.

Or at least it did for me. Marcel just thought it was funny. He told me to calm down and stop worrying. I told him to shut up, get me a pen, and let me vent, which he did, because contrary to popular belief, I don't go for stupid men.

My stepmother Michaela is a firm believer in the phrase, "Don't get mad, get even." For me, my being the former has never hindered my doing the latter. And if angry revenge got me into this mess, it might just get me out of it.

Let's get something straight here, okay? In my story – the *real* story - of "Cinderella," there's none of that magical junk. There wasn't an evil step-family. There wasn't a fairy-godmother, a pumpkin coach, or a glass slipper. What there was was Hansel Broglund.

Remember the kid from the "Hansel and Gretel" story? Y'know, breadcrumbs, candy house, witch flambe, that one? Now add twenty years, a

few million bucks, and eighty-five tanks of hot air, and you've got Hansel Broglund at age 29. Broglund was the chief advisor (so that's ten dirtbag points right off the bat) to the Duke of Pallarre, my home turf, and thanks to his brains, charm, and a conveniently attractive and marriageable sister, he was the most powerful man in town. Okay, you're thinking, so he's a weasel, but so what? He's a politician; they probably test you on that. And I'm with you. I'm no political vigilante - for one thing, I don't have a cape - and I wasn't after Broglund for vote-buying or anything like that. No, I was out to punish a more headline-worthy sort of "misconduct."

Y'know how I said this guy was big on charm? Well, he wasn't just using it in the treaty room. In fact, amidst all the panties being flung at him, work was probably the last thing on his mind. That's why everybody called him "Prince Charming" behind his back, although "Prince Massive Tool" would've worked just as well, if you ask me. Smart, handsome, and bling-tastically rich, Broglund had been in every skirt from here to Venezuela. Now for a while I didn't mind this, seeing as my own skirt had proved to be the exception to the rule. But then my kid sister tackled me at the door in tears one day, and things got personal.

"Cripes, Marilyn," I said, spitting out a chunk of her silky brown hair and trying to pry her arms off my neck, "get a grip." This was rewarded with a rib-shattering hug and a fresh batch of sobs. "Not-like-that!" I gasped.

By now, Marilyn was bawling so hard tears were running down my sleeve. "D-De-heh-laah," she wailed, "H-He suh-suh-sedd thu-thah-!"

Finally, I wriggled out of her death-clutch and took her firmly by the shoulders. "Look, kid," I said, "just calm down. Let's get you inside and I'll see if Michaela's got something for your nerves. You can tell me what happened then, okay?"

Marilyn nodded, and we turned back into the house, her sniffling, and me deciding what part of whoever had done this to her I was going to dissect first. Because despite what you've heard, I am grizzly-bear protective of my half-sister, and there's not a man in Pallarre who's not very, *very* aware of this. Marilyn's the baby of the house, a gorgeous dark-haired eighteen-year-old with blue puppy dog eyes and a waist the size of a pop can. She's lucky she's so sweet, or somebody'd have dropped her in a lake by now just for existing. She's a good kid and all, friendly as a summer breeze, but she's got this...*thing* for nerds. Show her the latest beefcake who me and my girlfriends are all drooling over, and she'll just shrug, but the sight of an acne-dusted nose in a textbook makes her palms sweat. She says nerds are great for "intelligent conversation," which makes me roll my eyes because love her as I do, I doubt Marilyn could *spell* "conversation." Nonetheless, she loves listening to 'em go on and on about their bug collections and their quantum physics and, well, themselves. It's kind of impressive, really. The kid's dumb as a rock, but she's twice as patient, and

she's still thinking "fascinating" twenty minutes after I started thinking "shoot me."

Anyway, so this whole brain fetish of hers has geeks running after her by the truckload. They behave okay most of the time, but every so often a rogue one slips in, gets a bit cocky, and breaks the poor thing's heart. That's where I come in.

I set some milk and cookies on Marilyn's bedspread and flopped down next to her. "What's his name and where can I find him?" I asked. I don't tend to bother with trivial things like "what'd he do?" Frankly, I don't care. When somebody makes my sister cry, just point me in his direction and lemme rip.

Marilyn took a big, shuddering breath and winced. "Oh, you're gonna be so mad at me for this, Della..."

"Probably," I said, "but I'll get most of it out of my system dealing with him." I snapped my fingers under her nose. "Name, address, description, pain tolerance, go."

She bit her lip for a moment, then looked down at her hands and sighed. In a small voice, she murmured, "It's Hansel Broglund."

My mouth suddenly went dry. "Marilyn, what did you do?" I said. "What did you let him do?"

Tears started welling up in her eyes again. "H-He...he said he loved me...s-said I w-was special..."

I pounded my fist on the nightstand and jumped up. "God, I can't believe you, Marilyn!" I yelled. "How could you be so stupid? You know what he's like, everybody does!" I grabbed a handful of my hair and tugged, and for a minute I felt like doing the same to her. "Didn't I tell you to stay away from him? Didn't I tell you a million freaking times what a snake he is? I mean, pick up a newspaper, for Pete's sake, they've got a running list of his girls!"

My sister's lip started trembling then. "I'm sorry, Della," she whispered in that stabbed-by-a-begging-bowl-pitiful voice of hers. "You're right. I was stupid for seeing him." She hid her face in her hands. "He was just so nice to me. I really thought he cared, but..." She sniffled and curled up on the bed, face still covered. "I'm so, so stupid."

I stood there awkwardly for a minute looking down at her, and then my guilt pushed me back into my seat. Cripes, it's hard to stay mad at her. "Oh, you manipulative little wench," I said with a smirk, patting her on the head.

She looked up at me, confused. "I'm a what?"

"A wizard, Harry," I muttered under my breath. Her brow furrowed even more, and I sighed and waved it off. "It means I'm sorry for fighting and I'll give you a hand. I might need some stuff from Michaela for something this big, but I'll help."

Marilyn's face brightened, and a hundred and twenty pounds of teenager came flying at me again. "Really?" Oh, thank you, Della!" She planted a grateful kiss on my forehead. "I'm sure Mommy can get you an audience with

him, so just tell him how I feel, okay? Ask him what went wrong, tell him how much he means to me and how perfect I think we'd be for each other and everything, would you do that?" Her smile faded a little, and she looked down at her fingernails again. "I'd try myself," she said, "but he won't see me, and anyway he's so smart, Della, I wouldn't know what to say, and I know I'd look like a fool, I just know it! But you, you can get through to him, can't you? Can't you?"

I got up and dusted my dress off. "Sure I can," I said as I walked out her door toward the study. "I'd bet my life on it."

Or his, I thought to myself, knocking on the dark wood of the study door. Whichever comes first.

My stepmom and I usually see eye-to-eye on things: That God helps those who help themselves, that blue cheese is delicious, that Daddy needs to get organized and look both ways in traffic once in a while, that Broglund needed a good round kick in the ass, and, most importantly for my purposes, that magic is *awesome*. But there is one thing that we've never quite agreed on, and that's whether magic should be used for personal purposes. I say yes, she says no. Unfortunately, she's the only one who has any.

"Come on!" I begged. "She's your kid, Michaela, have a heart!"

"Cinderella, this is the fourth time in ten minutes you've said that to me," my stepmom said coolly, taking a jar of eyes out of her cupboard, "and it's not getting better with age. I understand you're upset, and I agree something must be done about this man, but he is a public official and sorcery is not popular with the court as it is."

"Oh, please," I said, putting my hands palm-down on her desk and bracing myself on my arms, "nobody would find out!"

But she didn't look up from the box of rat tails in her hands. "Can you prove that?"

I scuffed my foot along the floor and pouted. "No."

"Then we have a problem, don't we?"

"But," I said, throwing my hands in the air, "can't you cover your tracks or something? Surely you've learned how to do that!"

"Not anything fatal, no."

"I didn't say it had to be fatal."

Michaela looked up from her cauldron, eyebrow raised, an amused smile on the corner of her lips. "My dear girl," she said, "when it comes to Marilyn's boyfriends, 'fatal' seems to be the only thing you're interested in." She tossed a tail and a set of eyes into the cauldron, and the clear liquid inside turned vomit green. Hm, I thought to myself, that looks like it would be...interesting...

"Besides," my stepmother added, sprinkling grains of purple over the stuff and turning it into black paste, "you know my vows. Magic is only to be

used to help with the healing process, and contrary to your theory, Cinderella, vengeance is not one of its steps.”

“Well, then does Daddy have anything I could use?” I said, twirling the spoon resting on the side of the pot.

“Possibly, but I wouldn’t try him if I were you. His latest inventions are certainly powerful, but if you want to hit a target more than three feet away without burning your hand off, I’d look elsewhere.” She took the spoon from me and cleaned it on her apron before setting it down on her desk. “The answer is no, and I assure you it will remain that way.” She took a spellbook down from the shelf and cracked it open. “And that’s cough syrup, Cinderella, so you can put that flask back, it won’t do you any good.”

Scowling, I emptied the glass bottle I’d swiped into the cauldron and stomped out. “Wicked old witch,” I muttered.

“Now, now, dear girl,” she said, “‘old’ isn’t a very nice thing to say, is it?” She licked her finger and turned a page. “Anyway, you don’t really need magic for this,” she said.

I paused. “What do you mean?”

“You just need to be a little...” Michaela thought for a second, and then smiled. “Creative.”

Creative, I thought to myself as fat raindrops slammed into my scalp, *think creative*. Of course, it’s always hard to link “creative” and “humanly possible” together, especially when what you really want to do involves piranha tanks, 3 grappling hooks, and a ping-pong ball. That’s where magic comes in handy, and so I found myself tramping through the puddles back to work and the only other person I knew who had some.

“Bud!” I yelled, trying to make myself heard over the wind, which had been getting naughtier as the night went on. I tucked my fluttering skirt between my knees and banged on the costume shop door with my free hand. “Open up, nimrod, I need to talk to you!”

I heard the latch pull back and soon I was bathed in what little light wasn’t eaten up by Bud’s enormous shadow. “Took ya long enough,” I said, shaking the water out of my short, carrot-red hair. “C’mom, I gotta job to do, and I need your help.”

My stepbrother waved a hand the size of a couch cushion at the staff room. “Take a seat, kiddo,” he said. “What kinda job are we talking here?”

Woah, woah, woah, you’re saying, back up a sec. I thought Cinderella had 2 stepsisters? And you’re right. In a manner of speaking, anyway.

I plopped down in a chair and glanced up at him. “Y’gotta lemme borrow that lipstick sometime, it looks good.”

He laughed and tucked a strand of his blond wig behind his ear. “In your dreams, sweetheart,” he said. “You remember that necklace I lent you last

month? You said you needed it for just one night? Thing cost thirty bucks and I haven't seen it since. Ron keeps better track of stuff than you do."

I stuck out my tongue at him. "Oh, lay off about that, I'm looking for it. How's the wing?"

He shrugged, adjusting the bandage on his back. "Getting better since Mom took a look at it. That ointment stuff she made still stings like hell, though."

I should clarify something here: Courtesy of recessive genetics, Bud here, Michaela's kid, is a fairy. But that's not the reason for the makeup. Fairies, despite what you'd expect, aren't too into that stuff. Transvestites, though? Different story. Now, those two things would probably get the tar pummeled out of him every other hour if it weren't for the fact that Bud, the magical cross-dressing fairy costume salesman, is also 200 pounds and six and a half feet tall. It's sort of funny, seeing as my brother is the least violent, least vengeful person I've met in my life. But, like mother, like son, this pacifism tends to make problems for me.

"So," Bud said, taking a seat across from me, the chair groaning in protest, "you said something about a job?"

"Yeah," I said, "a really important one, too."

"Somebody want a custom costume?" he asked. "Cuz Halloween's over, so I'm sure we could squeeze a fitting in."

"No, it's a little more personal than that."

He rolled his eyes. "Red needs a place to crash again, doesn't she?"

I glared at him. "For your information, no she doesn't," I sniffed. "She's got her own place now, she's doing fine, and for the millionth time, you're only allowed to diss my friends when I'm not here, comprende?"

"Sorry, but after Goldy made off with the register last time-"

"-And ya notice we're not on speaking terms? Gimme some credit."

"Okay, okay," he said, "but then what do you need?"

I fidgeted with the end of my coat as innocently as I could. "Um, well, something's happened-nothing big, y'know-and I wouldn't have bothered you, only Michaela said she didn't have ti-"

"-No," he said. His eyes had grown to the size of teacups, and he backed his chair away as if I was trying to eat him. "Della, I'm not getting mixed up in another one of your little schemes, understand?"

"But it's just-!"

"Nope."

"C'mon, Bud, it's about-!"

He put his fingers in his ears. "Not listening!"

"Knock it off, this is-!"

"Lalalalalahhh!"

I tried to pull his hands away from his ears, but he held firm. "C'mon, dude, this guy did—"

"Don't know, don't care, not interested."

"Bud, it's one of Marilyn's."

Instantly his hands dropped to his sides and clenched into fists. "Do you want it instant or painful?"

I smirked, the creative cogs in my head finally starting to turn.

"Actually," I said, "I was thinking I'd try humiliation this time."

"Ah," my brother said, nodding sagely. "And would this humiliation be of the 'public' variety?"

I raised an eyebrow. "Is there any other kind?"

He grinned and stuck out a gigantic hand. "Happy to be of help, m'lady."

"Good," I said, an idea taking root in my mind. "I've got a feeling I'll need it."

A week later I found myself standing, mop in one hand and bucket in the other, under the withering gaze of the Duke's Head of the Scullery, which is the single saddest title since the king decided someone else should wipe his royal behind.

The Head, a beak-nosed old woman with beady green eyes and spectacles, glowered down at me and sniffed, "Not much arm muscle on you. We'll have to remedy that."

Lowering my eyes to the floor, I bit back my usual *up yours, lady*, and squeaked out a brief, "Yes'm."

The Head made a mark on her clipboard and then tucked it under her arm. "Well, Miss Fenimore, I suppose we can give you a try."

"Yes'm."

"True, you've almost no experience—"

"Yes'm."

"No references of note—"

"Yes'm."

"And we'd prefer more attractive staff members at such a high-class establishment—"

"Yes'm." *Oh, what I wouldn't do for an "up yours, lady" right now.*

"But, we're in a pinch, so," she let out a heavy sigh and waved her hand dismissively, "I suppose you'll have to do for the time being."

"Yes'm. Thank you'm."

"Very good," she said. "We'll start you off changing the bedsheets, which shouldn't take you too long." She took off her glasses and cleaned them on her handkerchief. "After all, there's only a hundred and twelve."

My heartbeat came to a screaming halt. “A-A hundred and twelve what, ma'm?”

The Head glared down her nose at me again. “Beds, you silly child. Get to them!”

I bobbed my head and shuffled away, but my nerves were starting to gnaw at me. I gritted my teeth and closed my hand around the packet of bee stings in my pocket. I had to find Broglund's room, and fast.

Yet after poking my nose in what felt like a million and twelve rooms, I was still out of luck. Arms crossed, I turned the corner and found myself face to face with a massive portrait of the fat rat himself. I screwed up my face as I examined it. It was eight feet tall and three feet wide, done on smooth canvas in deep, rich colors, and set in a heavy, cherub-covered golden frame. Subtlety was clearly not this man's thing. “I'd like to rip it out and feed it to the buzzards,” I muttered to myself.

“Goodness, is it really that bad?” a male voice drawled from behind me, and I froze.

Little Monkey

By Karen Wallace

He is hanging from the stairs, 10 feet above the ground

My heart jumps in my throat as I try to be nonchalant

Great swinging George, we smile.

90 miles an hour all over the house,

Let it outside, it will wind down eventually.

3 foot 8, 40 pounds of pure energy.

Was I ever like that? I think I was years and years ago.

What, why, how, always full of questions

He wants to know everything, and he will some day.

Enough to be president, or a rocket scientist

Watching his tornado dance, he can be a rock star, or a karate master
Whatever he wants, the future is wide open
As long as we don't ruin him with our
Fears and disappointments
Our doubts and disillusionments
Our shattered lives.
Hope, Confidence, Dreams
Never let these things go
Little Monkey

Untitled



By Julius Coffman

The Old Man in Winter

By Paul O'Halloran

He stands alone,
the old man in Winter.
Aloof to the cold
in a white field of frost tipped grass.
He is unshaken.

Snow flakes fall gently on his shoulders and crown.
He does not brush them off,
too proud to shiver.
The wind cannot knock him down.
He stands even taller.

200 years old today,
the last survivor in a world of progress.
His body is frail and contorted,
his arms twisted and bare.
He has lost his beauty.

In Autumn, as Winter approaches,
the old man weeps auburn tears.
But Spring will arrive, then Summer,
and the birds will remind the old man
how to be young again.

Rabbit Season

By Levi King

"Who goes there?" The voice called from the hilltop, where the speaker stood silhouetted against the setting sun.

"No one of consequence," said the man below, "I am merely a traveler in search of shelter for the night."

"Shelter! Ha! You couldn't be further away from shelter!" jeered the guard, "It's rabbit season, ya know."

"What? Rabbit season?" the traveler called back, confused. Trudging up the hill towards the guard, he asked, "How does that have anything to do with it?"

"The rabbits attract the foxes o' course! Ye don't want to be out here in the wild country during the times that the hungry foxes prowl. It ain't just rabbits they be hungry for."

The traveler boggled at him. "Foxes? Why would I be scared of foxes? They're hardly shin-height!"

"It ain't the size o' the foxes that makes 'em dangerous!" exclaimed the guard, getting right up in the traveler's face with his eyes wide. "It's the number of 'em! A clump o' them can tear a man apart!"

The traveler was about to inform the guard that foxes did not travel in packs, much less in "clumps," when it occurred to him that the guard didn't seem to be guarding anything at all. "Er, pardon my curiosity, but what compels you to guard an empty hilltop like this?"

"This ain't just an empty hilltop! It's the highest hill for leagues in every direction! I'm up here to act as a lookout for the village over yonder, o' course." He gestured towards the north with a short sword, where a small town was faintly visible in the remaining daylight.

Squinting, the traveler realized that would do very well for shelter, and asked the guard why he hadn't mentioned it before.

"Because it ain't shelter! It ain't safe during rabbit season. Y'see, the rabbits swarm the village to get at the gardens we plant. The foxes naturally follow! Most o' me fellow villagers 'ave harvested what they could and left for the season to safer climes. I stayed behind to watch the village."

"Look here, sir," said the traveler, who was getting quite impatient, "you are armed with a sword and bow. You must be braver than most of your fellow villagers if you're the only one to stay behind. Why on earth do you fear foxes, who do *not* travel in packs, when you could easily kill them or chase them away?"

"I told ye, the foxes travel in clumps, not packs! They form up into one great beast with a roar that shakes your bones, and they ain't afraid o' me puny sword!"

Suddenly, from a nearby cluster of trees came a low growl, and a great orange beast leaped out to gallop up the hill.

"I told ye! I told ye they traveled in clumps! AAAAAAUUUGH!" The guard ran down the opposite side of the hill as fast as he could, dropping the sword in his haste.

The traveler stood stock-still, processing this bizarre turn of events. The beast lunged towards him.

His last thought before it ripped out his throat was "What's a tiger doing in England?"

A Piano's Gentle Sound

By Keighley Null

A sealed, top glazed wooden piano

All eighty-eight keys silently sitting

Untouched, the bench pushed up far

Underneath by the pedals

Dust has gathered and coated the unopened

Top that was the door to the inner workings

Sheet music strewn all over the floor

A small girl comes and wipes the dust off

And picks up the music, placing it above

The keyboard to where they belong.

Pulled out the bench and sat down

First time in years, the piano made sweet music

Each note playing through the air, filling the house

The keys and pedals finally pressed down

Each song played was a bird gently using the summer

Breeze to glide along, and then land for a bit before
Starting up all over again, the songs were the river running
Calmly in the back yard

Each note, prettier than the chirping bird, or that of the
Flute or any other instrument, the sounds and notes carried
To the outside like a sailboat in the open sea

Music, each note, so gracefully played like a ballerina on stage
Each end nicely played out, after the songs were done being played,
The girl left the piano alone again, but this time, the music was not on
The floor and the body was not dusty because she would be back

Pinafore and Straw Hat

By Teresa Klotz

I'm like that little girl
in the Mary Cassatt painting.

The one that stopped me
in my tracks, that time in Chicago,
maybe five years ago, I think.

The one that changed me –
woke me up to myself.

Cornflower pinafore,
straw hat controlling her sandy hair.

She can't be more than seven.

Blue eyes forlorn
and hopeless. Shoulders
limp in defeat.

She wouldn't take her eyes off me,
like she knew too much.

It calms me to see her twin

in this mirror-separated at birth.

My hand on the doorknob,

I close my eyes and wait

for my breathing to even out,

before I go back out there

and ask for a divorce.

What Happens at Recess

By Teresa Klotz

It's not true. All kids do not love recess. Only the people who've forgotten what actually happens at recess still believe that. As predictable as a TV sitcom, seconds after that bell rings, the doors explode and waves of children wash onto the playground. The clock is ticking.

Teachers in their Ray Bans channel the juice of FBI agents. Highly attuned to plotting behavior, they scan the crowd, the perimeter, the kickball diamonds, moving in when they catch a cluster of kids, huddled up, heads drawn together. But they can't catch everything - some of these kids are just too good. Behind closed doors in the teacher's lounge, they call it the "Fifteen Minute Miracle," the damage mean kids can inflict before the next bell.

Maybe some of them have an M.O. about whose life they're going to ruin, but my money says most of them aren't that smart. They're just looking to stick it to someone, and the formalities are irrelevant.

When the telltale shadow of the hulking she-hemoph finally fell over me that day, it was like I was trapped in one of those time-elapsed nature films on "The Wonderful World of Disney." I couldn't have been easier prey, paralyzed by the brick wall at my back and the solar eclipse of her face in my face.

Inspired by sheer nastiness, and time running out, she acted fast – right upside my head. And before the bell rang, through clenched teeth, she made her position clear, "You tell anyone, and I'll find you and smack you again." Then she was gone just like she arrived – like Adam Sandler's butler in *Mr. Deeds*. Whoosh. My stinging cheek and ringing ears were the only evidence we'd ever met.

What landed me in her crosshairs that day? It's not even worth wondering about. Odds are she just had time to squeeze one more in before that second bell, and it was my luck to be between her and the door.

Verenazza Cappuccino

By Teresa Klotz

Changeling

By Hanna Wille



You were the jawbreaker

that my parents never wanted me to have.

The threat is in the name

of what could happen, but I

lodged the sinful sphere

into my mouth

anyway.

Solid sugar so sweet

m e l t s a w a y

as each layer is

exposed.

So appealing before,

so delectable and seductive,

now is disappearing...slowly.

You started as pure white

with multi-colored speckles of hope,

and now each time I look,

you're different and distant.

Creamy to fiery red, like a temper

ready to erupt. Now red to somber gray,

you're concealing your true colors because you

just

want

out.

As you reach the finale, you let me know

that you loathe me because you

liberate the sour powder tucked away in your core that's like
sharp, microscopic daggers cutting me
from the inside.

And then, you're gone.

Tasteful to tart,

Dense to dust,

Mighty to meager,

as your name foretold,

you've broken me.

Hipster Breakup

By Eric Grant

I like watching break-ups in coffee shops.

The way depression gets stoned
in free range beans and organic cigarettes until
even the most sophisticated beret wearing

mother-fuckers devolve into beasts.

I like the way that the emotions cannot be faked.

Like the inevitable sound of a fork scratching against porcelain or that hoarse scream of a baby on an airplane, makes buttholes pucker up in a desire to not react, which makes the reaction worse.

Every attempt to keep the cup steady proves useless as the dialect of the emotions translates into her hands until the fingers shake and she finds herself with quivering fingers and a puckered butt all in an effort to keep from losing her shit and throw the vegan Venti Macchiato all over the fucker sitting in front of her who's frowning in a mixture of benign neglect and boredom.

He planned this of course.

Sit outside in the veranda in summer sun where typical guards are down

and the mind is more pliable.

He bought the coffee
to oil and sharpen his mind
the way whiskey can
oil and sharpen the tongue.

I watched the storyline unfold
and the creases on her face
go from the smooth and lovely
to cracked, the way windshields look
after hitting a deer.

She had that look in her eye too.

I didn't feel sorry for her.

She may have deserved it.
Maybe she had committed
the horrible sin of ending a pregnancy or
maybe it was something as benign as
telling his mother that her roast beef was dry.

Maybe it was something she forgot to do,
like mix his organic granola in the wrong proportions
of dried fruits and nuts.

Maybe he was just spouting hipster bullshit
balancing his fake black rim glasses on a Roman nose
wool beret covering curly hair
that I'm sure she has grabbed on
screaming his name in orgasm. Of course, now
she wants to shove those fake glasses
up his ass, and pull that hair into his own bitter
cup of pretentiousness.

She is beautiful.

Even with her face a broken
windshield in a rain storm, her grey eyes
look strong enough to chew through bone.

I consider giving her a ride home
when he left her crying into last bits of
watered down whipped cream.

I opted against it though.

I prefer to remember her like this,
the emotions she cannot hide
making her more lovely now
than before the crash.

Chemistry

By Emily Klehr

It's not the sick green-colored
Liquid bubbling over a Bunsen burner,
but it could be confused
with a turkey baster
dripping its clear solution into the glass vase
still bubbling, billowing smoke
Until it explodes in your face

Or

It turns into a beautiful White Admiral.

Either way it's scary as hell.

Looking at letters broken
parts of a whole unless
it's mastered. The real perfect perfume
is clouded over with gray smoke of all your
Mistakes.

Sometimes you get close, but
you can never really be sure
of the correct elements until you break
it apart, but breaking apart an already whole molecule is nearly impossible.
Have to give it a day or two, see
if the smoke returns or if maybe this one

will bring a smile or One- Eyed Sphinx's to the brain.
Because the butterflies left
30 concoctions ago.

It's finally when you're able to see
the whole molecule without glasses on the eyes seeing
the pieces that make it complete, that build
upon each other a bond
stronger than Elmer's glue.

It's when adding any more Neon Ne10
could only produce a disaster.

Don't speak about it
Once the secret formula passes lips
it's Cursed. When another's ears twitch
at the words, the elements crumble.
The molecules no longer sound. With a little
vibration, a sensitive movement could cause them to break away,
to float in a mist of quandary. And the shiny, finished
Opal is placed on display
Capped up in a bottle. Where no one is able
to examine it. Where it is set to live
producing its own light

not meant to be inspected

just understood.

Must I Explain?

By Teresa Klotz

I never said life is about looking good, but there's no shame in a good girdle. Never waste hard-earned money on cheap bras. And never leave the house without your face. I don't care how good your hairdresser is, the shampoo-set won't last the whole week if you don't tape your curlyques to your cheek and sleep on a satin pillow case.

We eat dinner at the dining room table, and your dad gets first dibs on the chicken gizzards. Vegetables come in cans. Spam is meat and Velveeta is cheese. Ham on Easter means you eat pea soup for three days after that. Chung King Chow Mein is ethnic food. So is Ragu. Without Campbell's cream soups, there's no question we'd starve to death.

No means no. We have kids - we don't need pets. If you're going to sit on my sofa, put a shirt on. Every wall should have a nail in it. There's no such thing as too much bric-a-brac, and every stitch of it will get dusted, every week. Likewise, floors and bathrooms get scrubbed every Saturday, by hand, on your knees. In a family of eight, every day is laundry day.

It's non-negotiable (like bedtime) - everybody gets Dramamine and everybody goes to the biffy before the station wagon pulls away from the curb. I don't care how soon we'll be dumping it so your sister can puke, that supply of hard candy and orange slices begins the trip in the ice cream bucket. This car only stops to let your dad knock heads together, or to rinse out the puke bucket.

Sunday school may be optional, but the Sons of Norway Junior Lodge meetings aren't. On the Fourth of July, you get sparklers. Because I'm not giving you kids anything that'll land you back in the emergency room. Yes, *The Sound of Music* and *The Ten Commandments* are true stories. Family is family. If I have to make turkey dinner for these people, you can get back in there and play with your cousins.

One Night

By Jamie Wallace

I awake with the sun shining brightly on my pale skin,
blankets rumpled and kicked to the floor.

I bury my face and breathe deeply the scent of him.
tangy cologne and sugary sweat,

Our clothes are spread messily throughout the room,
a trail leading from the door.

One of my black heels lies on
the bedside table propped by a sideways picture.

The sound of the shower assaults my ears,
as I peel linens away from my skin.

Quietly I stroll to the bathroom door and
press my ear to the cold hard surface.

He is still here, humming softly with the beat of the water
running over his muscular frame.

I open the door and tip-toe to the shower,
the humming stops. The only sound is his slow breathing.

He pulls back the curtain that separates us
just enough to admit me to the warm water within.

When the water turns cold we both emerge
draping towels around our wet figures.

I sink slowly onto the softness of my bed
Watching as he pieces last night's clothes together.
He dresses in a slow hurry, not wanting to rush
he pulls his loosely fit clothes onto his tight body.

Taking me in his arms he kisses me softly
and whispers in my ear *goodbye*.
As he walks out the door I know
I would never see the man again.

Forever Appeal

By Jason Hollenbeck



Forever Appeal

9' x 7'

Acrylic

Wood

98th Street Blues

By Christof Mitchell

Cut me quicker, cut me faster
stab me with your heartstring flutter!
The mutters beneath your quiet spaces.
As time embraces each other's faces,
we breathe ourselves alive.

Blood pumping penance to the gods we question.
Affections for music through fingerprints left on coffee tables.
Whole able bodied pieces, incomplete
with the grounding of our feet
to Uptown carpet meadows.
This shows to be the closest thing to having wings.

Fellows and fairy folk
toke on hipster house grounds.
There are sounds of modern machinery,
marching with their bells and hellish hoses.

Still chosen are our words,
curved to fit our skins,
cut and comfortable with common pens.

Make me quiver, make me shiver,
inject me with your slivers of silence!
Pry it open till I bleed prose.
And if I yell “No!”
Just comfort me.

Haloed halogens searching
for a birthing of serenity.
Just symbiotic sympathy in glances.
Chance meetings of heathens,
breathing blasphemy through our breasts.
Chests rise and fall as war-drums
call out and crumble all our walls.
Our vaults are absent of their guards.

It's a hard path back,
backtracks with backpack in tow.
98th street goes back to alone.
Tomes of tempered temptation

come without finger flirtation.

Just a two hour vacation

from taupe tunnels,

and I can't wait for the next.

Breath me beauty, breath me blood,

Flood my lungs with actions,

A bastion for your words!

Put angel wings on this dead blue bird,

And make this poetry!

Romantic Poetry

By Christof Mitchell

What is this I hear about how "romantic" the "art of poetry" is?

Because to me there's nothing romantic about it...

It's clouded, I found it in a dumpster,
deep within a literary bunker.

Hunkered down, drowned in its own originality.

Practically hypothermic from a thermos
of burnt coffee and clocks that read “4 a.m.”

So I walked around the block,
And all the doors were locked,
because I came a knocking the night before.
All slam score whores

tore the chore of my own creativity.

"Little birds and bees please, tell me
what could possibly come next?"

See I bet this poem impresses you.

But this,
this is just a two for one,
scraped from the scum
off my computer desk.

Tested by the defrag lag of my own brain,
Reading "lame at best."

Please press any key to be a better poet.

Bin Bag Bob

By Paul O'Halloran

Bin bag Bob
hated his face,
so he wore a black bin bag
to hide his disgrace.

He despised his nose,
he loathed his ears.
His putrid beady eyes
reduced him to tears.

He would walk down the road
and people would stare,
but his face was hidden,
little did he care.

Cruel fate had he,
or so he came to believe,
until his life would take a change
one golden Autumn eve.

He walked down the street
and what should he see?
A head in a bin bag,
a situation same as he.

He peered thru the eye slots,
such a surprise
to see it was a woman.
He couldn't believe his eyes.

They stopped in their tracks
and time stood still.
Remove your bag, said she.
Remove yours and I will.

They held their breath,
on the count of three,
they pulled off their bags
and their souls flew free.

He looked into hers eyes,
she looked into his too.
You're beautiful, he said.
She replied, so are you.

Orange Red

By Devona Brown

It's hard to get the left brain to stop--
(that spot is open; just drive slow up
in-between. Don't crunch the piles of
leaves covering each side)--when
it's been walled off for so long. The right has

to butt in--

Like, hey, look at that blue neon sign
that says, "Restwell Mattress,"
funny thing,

how the M in mattress is brighter than

the rest of the letters.

Funny because you, me--every one of us
in this are droopy eyed, saying yeah,
I heard you, but that's about it.

*Edward Abbey says:

“to believe that this sweet
virginal primitive land will be grateful
for my departure...Grateful
for our departure? One more expression
of human vanity.” What good is
blue neon lights when all the leaves
are turning, and
no one has hair
blue, but there is so much
fire and so much orange. There

should be fire, because
the leaves are dry and ready to
burn, and as I carve into pumpkins digging
out clumps of wet sticky viscera with seeds
solid as bone. I could throw those
seeds onto the fire of

leaves and roast them.

Does the pressure of my chewing

cause that clip in my left brain to

press and rub?

Has the tissue filled

in where there once was abnormal

arterial

balloon expanded

by rushing

blood?

*Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness; page 334.



Untitled

By Jason Hollenbeck

Fleeing

By Jamie Wallace

“Where are we going?” Elise ran to keep up, her legs pumping, muscles twitching with strain.

“Just keep running,” said Elijah. “We don’t want them to catch up.”

Elijah and Elise ran, the forest flashing by them in a blur of golds, reds, and greens. Their heads swiveled back in turns, waiting to see someone behind them. After running as far as she could Elise stopped.

“I can’t run anymore,” she said breathless. “Can...we please stop.”

Elijah stopped and walked back to her. “We can’t stop,” he said. “What if they catch us?”

“We have been running for hours,” she pleaded. “If they are still chasing us they are very far behind.”

Elijah stared at his sister for a moment. She looked tired; her once long and beautiful hair was tangled and damp. He too felt very tired and wanted to stop running, but his fear of the enemy was strong and his instincts told him to run like hell. He struggled with himself for a moment, wanting to tell his sister to get back up and keep running, but his exhaustion won and he sat next to her on the wet forest ground.

“Okay, we will rest for a while,” he said. “Then we move and move fast. If we get to the boats before morning we might be home free.”

They sat for a while in the dark damp forest. Creaks and cracks in the distance made Elijah jump and place his hand on the dagger at his waist. As they sat the weather changed slightly, cool wind played in the trees, stinging their skin and raising goose pimples on their arms. Elijah wrapped his arm around his sister and rubbed her shoulder lightly. He could feel the tension in her body, she was as afraid of the enemy as he was. He knew that it was his job to protect her and he didn't mind the task at all. But the feeling that he wasn't doing a good job made his insides ach. It was his fault they were in this position. His fault they were being chased by the most brutal men in the world.

The sounds of the forest were making him more nervous the longer they lingered. He knew that the enemy must be getting closer but didn't yet have the heart to make Elise move again. He could feel her relaxing a little and didn't want to ruin it for her. He looked up at the dark canopy of trees above him. Their leaves blew in the gentle wind and droplets of water trickled down on them, wetting their faces, necks, and arms. Elijah knew if they sat any longer they would freeze, he sat up right and looked at Elise.

“Time to move,” he said.

“Ok.” Elise sounded dejected as she stood shakily and brushed the twigs and leaves off that stuck to her legs.

They began walking swiftly through the maze of trees. The path becoming harder and harder to navigate, rocks and fallen branches littered the forest floor and caught their boots and pant legs. Large branches hung low above them and soon they were pushing the wet branches out of their path. The sky was beginning to brighten as the sun peaked over the horizon. Elijah began to feel hope that they would make it out of the forest and away from the enemy. But just as the thought entered his mind it was pushed out by crunching and cracking under large bodies. He and Elise froze. The sounds were coming closer and moving faster. They both looked around nervously, seeking a place to hide. Elijah pulled Elise toward a thick set of trees whose branches hung low to the floor. They stepped lightly into the shelter of the branches and crouched down listening sharply to the sounds around them.

“I know they’re here,” said a deep gruff voice close by. “Keep looking.”

“We will never find them in this mess,” said the high voice of a woman.

“I can smell them,” said the first. “I know they are close.

Elijah and Elise listened without breathing, crouched behind a large tree. They couldn’t see their pursuers, but could hear their footfalls close by. Elijah reached slowly to his belt and closed his fist around the hilt of his dagger. He knew that if they were found his dagger wouldn’t do much good, but he would go down fighting to save his sister. He felt Elise begin to tremble beside him and placed his free hand on her shoulder. She looked at him, fear prominent in her wide green eyes. He leaned down so that his mouth was close to her ear.

“When I say go I want you to run,” he whispered. “Please,” he pleaded as she shook her head. “I may not be able to save both of us, but I can save you.”

Elise was shaking her head but Elijah nodded pleading silently with his eyes. *When I say go you run* he mouthed. And he looked forward to where the crunching feet of his enemies were. He pushed her slowly away and pulled back as she reached for his arm, her great green eyes wide and scared.

“RUN!” He shouted the words as he ran toward the sounds of the enemy with his dagger in his hand.

Elise turned and ran as fast as she could, branches of the trees slapping her in the face as she went. She ran in the direction of the sea, the sweet smell of salt guiding her. In the distance she heard the sounds of her brother fighting their enemy. She heard a yell of pain and knew that someone had died. Hoping against all the odds that it wasn’t her brother she burst through the last of the trees onto a pebble beach. Slipping and sliding on the slick wet rocks she skidded to the edge of the beach where a small pack of boats sat waiting. She climbed into a small boat and with a shaking hand started the engine and speed away from the beach. With fear and anger in her heart she turned back to look at the deserted beach.

“Goodbye brother,” she breathed. “I hope to see you again.”

Measurable Success

By Karen Wallace

Justine wandered down the hallway looking for Room 27. She really did not want to go to this meeting. She would rather be out running, or at the dentist having her teeth drilled, anywhere but here. She spotted a coffee machine, a brief reprise, and dug in her pocket and came up with a few crumpled dollar bills. She really did not want coffee, but this was the only delay tactic that came to mind at the moment. There were some plastic chairs next to the coffee machine. She fed her money into the slot and watched the cup drop and fill with steaming coffee, then took the cup from the tray and collapsed into one of the hard uncomfortable chairs. Her mind was moving over the events of the last few months, thinking back to what had brought her to this place. She was a very successful business woman who owned her own bed and breakfast, was a member of the Roseville Chamber of Commerce, was active in various charitable organizations, and part of the leadership team at her church. She sat for a while, reflecting on her life. All in all it was a good life, if a little lonely. There were always people surrounding her, but they were mostly acquaintances, not close friends or family. Her parents were gone, and as an only child there was no family. She thought she had been in love once, but he had melted away like the summer sun over the ocean. Maybe her lack of close companionship was part of the reason for this mess.

Justine glanced at her watch, noticing the diamonds around the face rather than the time. It was a gift from her employees on the tenth anniversary of the opening of her inn. The place had done very well, and the success was

shared with her loyal staff. Finally she noticed the time; it was late, and the meeting would start soon. Slowly she rose from the chair, and shuffled down the hall once more on her quest for Room 27. There were a few more doorways before the dreaded room appeared. Justine drank the rest of her coffee, and crushed the cup, then walked into the room. There was trash can in the corner, and she walked over and discarded her cup, eyeing the room. There were several tables set up in a square pattern, so one could look over the table to those seated across the room. There was also another table by the door, well stocked with beverages, and one in the back piled with pamphlets. Justine most definitely did not need more coffee. Her attention went from the layout of the room to the other people milling around. There were several men, and a couple of women. Most of the people seemed older than her, although she always felt younger than she really was. A heavily bearded man walked up to her and held out his hand,

“Hi, my name is James.”

“Justine” she took his hand, he had a very firm grip, and kind eyes.

“Is this your first time here?”

“It shows that clearly?” Justine smiled tentatively.

“Well, yes, but I am here every week so I notice new people. Why don’t you have a seat, we will be starting soon, and relax, you are among friends here.”

“Thanks, I think I will.” She chose a corner as far out of the way as possible and attempted to fade into the background. The room was slowly filling up, people stopping to grab a cup of coffee, or some water. Some of them stood around in groups chatting amiably like old friends. Others behaved much the same way as her, furtively sliding in and sitting quietly. As a people watcher, Justine liked to try to guess what people did for a living. The guy in the three piece suit looked like he may have just stepped out of a court room, a lawyer maybe. A woman in scrubs was possibly a nurse, or maybe a doctor, some sort of medical professional. Then there was the guy in jeans and a t-shirt, with grease staining his fingernails, probably a mechanic. This occupied her for several minutes. There was a computer geek, a surfer, a college professor, wearing a tweed jacket with elbow patches, and a cheerleader type, all kinds of people.

Soon a quiet looking man she had pegged as an artist moved to the middle of the room.

“Let’s get started, everyone take a seat please.” The nurse/doctor took the seat next to Justine and gave her a wan smile and a nod. Justine nodded back. Soon everyone had found a seat and the artist introduced himself.

“Hi my name is Carl, and I am an alcoholic.” The whole room answered back.

“Hi Carl.”

“It has been 3 years 17 days and 12 hours since I last had a drink” The room exploded with applause and congratulatory comments,

“Good job.”

“Way to go Carl.”

“Awesome job dude”

“Thanks, it has been a long hard road and I still fight the demon daily, but thanks to God and my friends and family I stand here before you clean and sober today.” Carl walked around the room as he spoke making eye contact as he went. He looked into Justine’s eyes and said,

“You too can be clean and sober. We like to start our meetings with the serenity prayer; you all have a copy on the table in front of you. Please read it with me. ‘God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.’”

Justine bowed her head in her own silent prayer. She was no stranger to prayer, although lately it seemed like she had forgotten how to pray. No, that was not it; she had simply not bothered to pray. She had let herself be dragged down to the bottom of a whiskey bottle. How had this happened? How could it have come to this? She was a very responsible successful person, not a drinker. She could not be an alcoholic; it was just not possible.

But it had happened. It started with a glass of wine after work to relax. Things had been a bit stressful for a while, there were some repair issues on the

inn, and the insurance company seemed to want to fight her on every expense reported. Then one of her long-time employees was caught stealing money. Marvin Anderson had been her front desk manager for eight years. Realizing he had been stealing from her for most of that time was a very personal blow to her. Soon her glass of wine had become a glass of whiskey, and before long it was half a bottle a night. She supposed her loneliness had something to do with it as well; she had recently begun to feel the lack of companionship in her life. On that fateful night the whiskey was gone, and she needed more. Driving to the liquor store, she was pulled over for drunk driving. She was not a social drinker; in fact none of her business colleagues or acquaintances even knew about her drinking. She drank alone, at home, and hid it very well. But the reality struck home while sitting in the court room waiting for the judge to hand her his decision. It was her first offence; she had never even had a traffic ticket before. The judge fined her and sentenced her to community service, and required her to go to AA meetings 3 times a week. Justine was so embarrassed and had not told a soul about the arrest, it was humiliating and she was very angry with herself. It had been three weeks since that night, and she still had not given up the whiskey. Oh she was very careful not to drive, and even went to a different store to buy her bottle, but she was still drinking.

Looking up from her musings, Carl was repeating her thoughts.

“I never believed I could let myself get to this point. I am a very successful architect with my own company. I have a beautiful wife and amazing kids. I almost destroyed them along with myself, my business and my life.”

So here she was in a room full of strangers. Strangers that all were going through the same thing in some way. Her attention focused back on the proceedings. The Lawyer had just finished telling his story, another tale of a successful person who could not handle the pressure of his life. His wife had left him, after he attacked her in a drunken rage. He had been sober for 30 days and was awarded a medal, or a chip of some sort. Tears ran down his face. A few more people stood and told their stories. They were stories of regrets and rock bottom experiences. Justine decided to call her Pastor as soon as the meeting was over. He would help her get through this. She stood, took a deep breath and said,

"Hi, my name is Justine, and I am an alcoholic. It has been less than twenty four hours since I last had a drink. My rock bottom moment was when I was arrested for drunk driving. I am here by court order but I want to change my life." Carl came over to Justine and said,

"We have all been there, at that fateful moment when we realize we cannot go on like we have. That we must change our lives, or we will be destroyed. We are here to help you."

"I am not good at accepting help." Tears were beginning to leak from the corners of her eyes; some of the tension that had been held in for so long began to release.

"We are here to offer whatever help you feel you can accept." Carl turned to the rest of the room.

"The meeting is adjourned, please feel free to remain as long as you need." They closed again with the serenity prayer and people began to leave. Justine stood and headed to the door.

"Justine, can we talk for a moment? Carl asked.

"Sure I guess."

"Come over here." Carl led her to a corner of the room and pulled up two chairs.

"Please sit down." He said. Justine perched uncomfortably on the edge of the chair. Wondering what he wanted, she was a bit uneasy. All this sharing of her personal problems with complete strangers had been a bit unnerving.

"I can see you are uncomfortable, I apologize, it is not my intention to make you feel ill at ease, but I sense in you a desire to overcome this problem. I would like to offer to be your sponsor. Do you think you would be okay with that? You need a sponsor, but if having a man for a sponsor does not work for you I know a couple of ladies that would be happy to step in and help you." Justine thought for a minute, working with men was not a problem for her, most of her colleagues were men, this would not be an issue. She liked Carl, and sensed a deep kindness and strength within him.

“I would like that.”

“Great, here is my number, call me anytime.” He handed her a business card.

“We should meet at least once a week away from the meetings, will that be a problem?”

“No, I can manage that”

“Good, call me and we will set a time.” He rose and led her over to a table that held some literature and handed her a book.

“This is the 12 Step Program, it is one of the best proven methods for recovery. Are you ready for this?”

“Yes I am. I want to stop.”

“Okay, as of this moment you no longer drink. Is there booze in your house?”

“Yes”

“Can you get rid of it alone?”

“I think so.”

“Not good enough, is there someone you can trust to call and meet you at your house?”

“Is that really necessary?”

“Absolutely, one of the first steps on the road to recovery is you need to realize that you cannot trust yourself when it comes to the booze.”

“Okay.” Justine dug out her cell phone and dialed Pastor Josh’s number.

“Hi Pastor, it’s Justine Moore, I have an emergency and I need your help. Can you meet me at my house in half an hour? Great thank you very much.”

“Very good, remember, it is very important to let those who you trust help you through this. You do not need to do it alone”

“I will remember, I better get going, thank you for all your help Carl.”

“Do you feel comfortable giving me your number?” She found her business card and gave it to him.

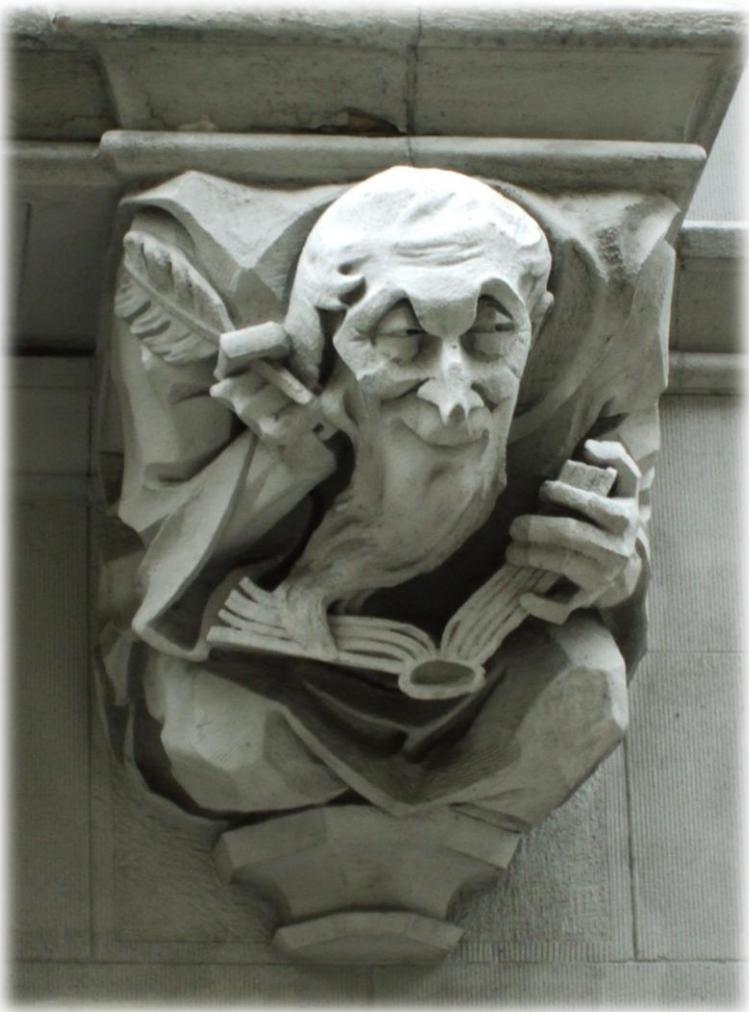
“Please call me anytime you need to, if you want a drink call me, if you need a drink call me, any time day or night.”

“Alright, I will. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight Justine and good luck.” Justine turned and walked out the door and into what she prayed would be her new life.

NYC Gargoyle

By Teresa Klotz



The Hidden Lives of Trees

By Matt Swenson

Do they sit in the dirt,
lamenting their motionless fate
as insects eat away at their hearts?

Or do they start to move,
loosening their cramped muscles?
A group of old men playing poker
around an rusting card table.

Gaunt branches rustle,
golden leaves flutter towards the earth.
Trunks groan as the foliage touches the ground.

A gnarled oak whispers of deception,
pointing a knotted finger in accusation.

A tall pine rustles in laughter,
needles shivering, anticipating the next hand.

A slim yew bends to rake in the winnings.

Jealousy

By Emily Klehr

Like cut grass in the summer
the green blood oozes into the bottom
of my shoes
Little open dirt-stained
hands beg for plates of sliced cake.

Balloons swing signaling
sad magic swindles
that children insist are not real.
The frosting sticks
to the roof of my mouth,
bitter taste buds smarting. I wander.

Glad to capture butterflies,
pick flowers away
from the screams, giggles, cacophony of the party.

An Ode to Spell Check

By Rachel Christenson

The world we now live in is filed with wonder full knew things. We have computers, calculators, dishwashers, microwaves, and moor – all sorts of useful convections we take for granted. Among thees is spell check.

Every year schools around the nation teach children too spell, knot even considering the fact that all most everything they will be righting will bee on the computer, witch has spell check. All thees children rely knead to no is the basic roles of phonics, and they will bee fin. Take this essay, fore example. I am knot particularly good at spelling myself, butt as I right, any mistakes I make are underlined in read bye my trustee spell checker, and I can simply pick a word from the options it offers. As you can sea, this essay is completely free of ares, and yew would never have noun I have trouble with spelling if I hadn't tolled you.

To conclude, I must say that, in my personal opinion, schools shooed no longer teach spelling to there students. Spell check is all they rely knead any moor, excerpt for a phonics coarse. Spell check is a wonderful knew time savor for the world.

The Stairway to Heaven

By Paul O'Halloran



Sweet Steam

By Hanna Wille

Sweet strawberry shampoo is what pulls me back
to that bathtub. To the small room where
the red heat lamp shone from above,
melting our chills out from our body

after the chilly autumn stroll
with our dad who, then, didn't have to work
on Saturdays. The feel of the steam and the sound of the
running water splashing on the bottom of the bumpy tub

eventually turned into the music of
my sister and mine's voices while we
swam with our mermaid Barbies. It was normal
to be naked in a pool of water with

my sister, as we relished in the soap bubbles and
now dirty water, dreading the moment where
we would have to wash the
Santa Claus bubble beards from our face

and carefully exit the tub, making sure not to
slip on the water that had splashed onto
the tile bathroom floor. The Suave strawberry shampoo
was the sweetest smelling smell

that we knew. But now, as I reminisce and
wash with plain Pantene, I wonder
if it was the cheap shampoo, or
the memories that are sweeter.

Old Stories 1963

By Richard Train

Two kids down on Wilshire Blvd.
a brown eyed artist,
a blue eyed warrior,
talking to the forgotten men
down on Wilshire Blvd.
by the VA hospital.

Where old minds live younger days through talk and wine.

Two kids touching cold fires within old souls,
bold stories through cracked lips,
old stories through bent smiles,
neglected memories shown through nervous glances.

Of forgotten youth.

Of distant paths.

Of forgotten lands.

Of distant loves.

Faraway glances of what might have been.

Down on Wilshire Blvd.

by the VA hospital.

Two kids down on Wilshire Blvd.
listening to stories of what has been,
exchanging inquiring glances
questioning life through those who have been.

Listening to silent tears that cry from within

old souls

bare souls

long forgotten souls

lost souls where no sun will shine

long gone forgotten dreams

no longer seen.

Forgotten streams with no beams.

They who lost the means,

down on Wilshire Blvd.

by the VA hospital.

Two kids down on Wilshire Blvd.
with youthful paths to wander and clear
two kids with nervous smiles
now questioning what waits for them...
Down on Wilshire blvd
by the VA hospital
in a bar full of crumpled dreams.

Why

By Eric Grant

Because you are you
and bring crystal rocks to the blind man
behind the fast food dumpster
reeking of rotten grease and feces
gutted fish swimming through sewage
eyes roll back and dream of Pegasus
and you are his Perseus with Medusa's head
Laying down his ice covered helmet of
broken concrete killing him
quickly enough.

Because he is he
and watches little pink girls like
aqualung
breathing thick acrid air across a black tongue sticky,
as little visions of skirted knee high stocking
nymphs on plastic playing
feeling and knowing
safe
jungle gym teasing
him until his eyes roll back
and his pants split.

Because she is she
laid down like the reaper
after the war blind
with the sweat of hulking rocks pumping bullets into her stomach
Cringing under five dollar love and black
eyes and yet another self-
abortion with grandma's coat hanger
laying first the faux fur coat on the
first payment to the executioner at the
rape gallows.

Because I am I
and put tap water and olive oil on the foreheads
of the distraught promising

an on time departure but the train tracks have been torn down.
And the station is lost
somewhere in that red plush
confessional floor with
all the other strawberry lollipops,
tears and,
semen soaked paperwork.

Shine Sir?

By Richard Train

The Ginkgo trees were budding green. Across the street from the intersection of Broad and Erie, customers hurried to complete their shopping at the Sun Ray Drug store. On Saturday afternoon, outside the Eagle Bar, business was always good for a man needing a shoe shine.

“Shine Sir?” The kid asked the patron, leaving the bar. The man passed by without replying.

“Shine Sir?”

“Shine Sir?”

The man stopped, “How much kid?”

“A dime, sir,” replied the kid.

The man placed his worn shoe on the shoe shine box.

“How long kid?”

“Five minutes, Sir.”

Dreaming of ten cents, soon he would be rich. He could buy a pack of baseball cards. A Mickey Mantle or Joe DiMaggio card may be waiting for him. He knew the pink bubble gum lay hidden, within the Topps's baseball players. He dreamt of the sweet tasting bubble gum, as he labored on the worn shoes. His young lips started whistling, “Yankee Doodle.” His little dream was simple, no one could take the sweet pink dream away from him.

The tops of the shoes were worn. He knew if he tried hard enough, he could fix them. He pulled rags and polish from the box. With a shoe dabber, he placed a heavy coat of black polish on the shoes. He buffed with his brush, and buffed with a rag. The shoes still looked old and worn, he placed a second coat of polish on the shoes, repeating the buffing routines. He polished the man's shoes the best he could, the best his soft hands could manage.

The day was cool, wind blew grit down the sidewalk, stinging his face. He did not care. He was rich.

After five minutes, he announced he was finished. The shoes did not look very good. The shoes still looked worn and old. His efforts were to no avail.

He looked at the man's eyes, and saw the disappointment in them.

The man said, "I expected a shoe shine to make my shoes look new, kid."

Ashamed now of his work, he lowered his eyes. "I am sorry sir, but the shoes are worn and I can't make 'em look new."

The man stared at his shoes. His glazed stare now turned toward the kid. The man uttered a few words, stood up straight and started to walk away. The man did not pay the kid. The kid suddenly felt very poor. His eyes followed the man as he walked away. Watching the man, an empty Topps Baseball wrapper pushed by the wind seemed to follow the man.

The empty Topps wrapper, he would do like the wrapper, he would go after the man and ask for his dime.

He caught up with the man, grabbed his sleeve, and said, "Mister, Mister, you did not pay me my ten cents."

The man stopped, turned to face the kid, saying, "Beat it kid or I'll back hand you." The kid would not let go.

The man struck him across the face. The force of the blow knocked the kid to the payment. The contents of shoe shine box flew across the sidewalk. The man glared at him in anger, turned and walked away.

The happy face, the little lips whistling "Yankee Doodle," the face that was so rich, was fighting back tears. He told himself, *I must get up and chase the man*. A hand grabbed him from behind and stopped him. A stranger, standing there watching, held a dime out to him.

Helena, Montana

By Teresa Klotz



Embrace

By Jamie Wallace

I lost all sense of time and place,
the moment that he touched me.
He slithered serpent like over my body,
warm at first. His hands caressed me gently,
leaving tingling heat where he touched.

It became hotter

His caress no longer gentle.
Hands soft and warm turned to
tentacles of fire wrapped around
every inch of my body, leaving raw red
welts. His touch lashed at my face,
tearing at my flesh, stripping skin from bone.

I clawed at the pain, scratching at the
face of death. Each breath burned as
heat entered my chest and licked at my lungs.
Laughter filled my ears as I took my last breath.
And Death embraced me.

The Present in Past Tense

By Mindy Paurus

The autumn colors smear themselves on my
Wishful thinking daydreams where your locked heart
Stirs in whimsical clouds; you tell me all
The time is all ours to spend in dreaming
I ponder the mystery of you every
Day those glass blue eyes avert from my own
What are you afraid of my handsome prince?
The future stupor you paint is water
Color that is fast fleeting that brushes
Over my silly iron chains; Darling
Will you dance with me and set me free as
A small sparrow chasing the summer warmth?

Vanilla scented memories sting me
But your aqua reef will always be there

[EGO]R

By Emily Klehr

It gives you a hump back, maybe
a boil or two. It certainly makes you walk
with
a
limp
That puts the word “swagger” to shame.
Most of all
it sears your insides
and shrivels your heart.

Even with all of these features
you actually believe that you’re
Hot. That’s the worst
part. Does it really make you
a better person if you only *think*
you’re better?

Not even a kiss from a princess
could cure the beast
within. Mostly likely,
you’d hook the poor girl and kill her
slowly. Just for the need to feed your ego.
And you wonder
why you have no friends.

Your ego makes you ugly.

Stung by You

By Jason Hollenbeck

Pressing across the back of her hand my
body was pushed down onto the bed soft
as her lip vibrations began to walk
along my skin my mind fluxed drunk, spinning
separating everything besides this
moment this fall season, with her winter
body cools me slowly sliding down her
honey quenching my bee devotion in
her determination climaxing now
selfless kisses as much water as in
my body slowly completing her need
hands whispering nothing, Damn! Her breath screams

The Evanescence

By Rachel Christenson

The rolling pin clattered to the floor as the old woman dropped it, her hands shaking, tears streaming down her face. Falling to her knees, she covered her eyes with flour-streaked hands, not even pausing to wipe them off on her worn apron. She cried out just one word, but in that word there was a despair, an utter hopelessness, that one would not normally expect from a small, white haired old woman who was bustling around the kitchen and whistling cheerfully just moments before: “*Why?*”

There was another person in the kitchen with her: a small boy, his face smudged with dirt, his trousers consisting more of patches than of their original material. He stood over the old woman, calmly staring at her, and on his face was a look. A look of understanding, impatience, and guilt all wrapped up into one. A look that was not right on the face of a seven-year-old boy. A look that, had it been on the face of anyone else, would have seemed for all the world like he had caused the old woman's grief.

And outside, witnessing it all, stood a man.

“Sheriff! Something awful's been going on! Threats and messages and disappearing and the whole lot! You've gotta —”

“All right, all right, slow down a minute. What's your name?”

The dirty, ragged young man scowled, wiped his brow, and said in a low, reluctant voice, “Harold Frelling”.

The sheriff nodded as he jotted this down on a form. “And how old are you, Mr. Frelling?”

“Twenty-seven”.

More writing. “All right. Now I'll get to you in a minute; I just need to copy this down in my book —”

“Now look here, Sheriff.” Harry thumped his hands down on the desk and leaned in close. “The widow Nelson's gone missing, and if I were you I would do something about it, not just sit around in my nice cozy office filling out useless ledgers. Now what do you say?”

The sheriff met Harry in the eye, and said in a perfectly calm voice,

"Mr. Frelling, I would appreciate it if you would sit down. Now who is this widow Nelson you're so keen on rescuing?"

Harry stared at the sheriff in astonishment. "Why Sheriff, you took dinner at her house just last night! What do you mean you don't know who she is?"

"I mean I don't know who she is. I took dinner at home last night, and I don't know why you should know anything about where I ate. I've never even met you before."

"Sheriff, what has gotten into you? I come here every Friday night to drop off bread for the orphans, baked by Mrs. Nelson's own hands! Now please stop fooling around; this is serious business!"

The sheriff gave Harry a strange look, then slowly stood up, walked around the desk, and stood to face the poor man, who at this point was breathing hard and had a wild look around his eyes. "Mr. Frelling, I'm terribly sorry, but I'm afraid there's been a mistake. I don't know you, we don't give out bread here on Friday nights, and I certainly have no idea who this widow Nelson is you're talking about. Now, unless you have some information to clarify yourself, I would suggest you go home and see about getting some rest."

A look of realization slowly spread across Harry's face, and he stood up, put on his tattered hat, and said, "yes, sir, I think I'll do that, just as soon as I've finished another errand or two. Good day to you!" With that, he swept out of the door, leaving the sheriff with quite an unusual string of events to sort out.

Thursday, June 26

This is a letter written to myself, Harold Samuel Frelling, as a reminder in case something happens to my memory as it seems to have happened to everyone else in this town.

I was born a poor orphan boy. However, contrary to current popular opinion, I am not a petty thief and beggar. Because of the assistance of Mrs. Catherine Nelson, who helped me and numerous other orphan children like me, I am (or at least, was) a blacksmith's apprentice and perfectly able to take care of myself. And Mrs. Nelson was a real person, though at this point I am beginning to question my own sanity on that point. I have spent a week now, thoroughly questioning everyone I could find to see if they knew anything about her.

This is what I have concluded: No one, excepting myself, remembers anything about Mrs. Nelson. Her house appears to have been abandoned for over a decade, though I distinctly remember visiting her there a mere seven days ago. And anything she did to influence this community seems as if it never happened. I no longer have a job or a house, though I do have my pocketbook, which I was carrying when I saw her disappear. But I get ahead of myself. All of the orphans she helped are now back on the streets, and several people whose lives she saved during the typhoid fever outbreak two years ago apparently did

not survive. In short, there is no sign that she ever existed.

One week ago this evening, I went to visit Mrs. Nelson. We were taking our tea in the sitting room when there was a knock at the door. This was a common occurrence, as almost everyone in town knew Mrs. Nelson, and frequently came to her for advice or assistance. So she went to the door, and I remained in the sitting room. I could see what was going on in the kitchen, but whoever was in there could not see me, unless they were making an effort to do so.

The visitor was a small boy. I had never seen him before, which was unusual, but it did happen occasionally, so I thought nothing of it. He talked to her for a while in a low voice, and I ignored them. I preferred enjoying a scone to straining my ears trying to overhear whatever it was the boy was saying. He probably just wanted to know what herbs he should use to help his sick mother, or something of that sort. I had heard it dozens of times before, and I honestly did not care.

And so I sat, absorbed in my own thoughts, until I heard it. There was a clattering sound, as if something had fallen on the floor. I turned around abruptly, just in time to see the rolling pin roll under the cupboard, and Mrs. Nelson fall to her knees with a look of complete and utter despair, completely ignoring the fallen rolling pin. "Why?" was all she said, and the boy looked at her, as if – oh, for all the world as if – HE were the cause of her sudden and complete upheaval.

How I wish I had done something! How I wish I had rushed to her side, and – oh, I don't even know what I would have done. How I wish I hadn't looked away! But, alas, it is too late. While I watched them, they turned their gazes to the ceiling, and I looked too. Seeing nothing, I looked back down, only to find that they had both disappeared! I rushed to where they had been, but I am sad to say that there was nothing there; not a sign of their presence but a moment before.

I did see one thing, though, and that is my motivation to keep searching, until I find out what happened to Mrs. Nelson. As I rushed into the kitchen, I saw a man by the window. In that one moment, I took everything in. His red hair; his sharp gray eyes, his golden pocket watch. The half-smirking look of pity he gave me. The strange blue ring he wore. I saw all of this in a moment, and then he, too, was gone.

Seven years after the unusual events aforementioned, a middle-aged man walked up the path to the old cottage in the woods, the one that used to be the abode of Mrs. Nelson. He twirled his walking stick and whistled merrily as he walked, and his eyes sparkled as he rapped on the huge oak door with his stick. A moment later, a rosy little girl with big eyes hefted it open, and tipped her head back to peer at his face. "Mithter Thimmons!" she lisped, and ran into the kitchen, leaving the door wide open and the cheerful Mr. Simmons

unattended. "Mama! Mithter Thimmons is here!"

A pretty young housewife stepped out into the entry, wiping her flour-dusted hands off on her apron. "Why, hello Arthur! We weren't expecting you for another half-hour! Come in, do. Gretta, be a good girl and go call Daddy, will you?"

Sitting alone in his den at the back of the house was the man who must have been "Daddy." He was poring over a page, his face evincing a look of the most intense concentration. The paper was worn and the ink faded, and there were notes jotted all over it. When little Gretta waltzed in and nestled herself on his lap, he hardly even noticed. "Daddy? Mama wants you to go talk to Mithter Thimmons now." She pulled at his sleeve, giving him an imploring look. "Daddy?"

He looked down at her, his face resembling that of a man who had just woken up and found that he had been transported from a dungeon to the throne room of a fairy tale castle. After a few seconds, he seemed to come back to himself, and nodded his head. He lifted her off his lap and stood up, smiling. "Well why don't we go find him, then?"

As Harry (for Harry Frelling was the master of the house) walked out the door, the paper fluttered to the floor. It was a journal entry, dated the day before Mrs. Nelson's disappearance. At the bottom, it was signed, *Wilma Nelson*. And scrawled hastily across the top were the words: "MUST FIND RED-HAIRED MAN."

It was the middle of January, and a furious blizzard raged outside, thrashing the trees about and covering everything with a cold, swirling layer of white. Nearly everyone was indoors, as the blizzard's ferocity hindered all but the most desperate folk from carrying out their business. However, deep in the woods, where the trees were so thick that hardly any snow or wind could penetrate them, a ragged, stooped, tired-looking young man stumbled along, apparently searching for something. It was Harry Frelling. He was freezing cold, his feet were soaked through, and he had been walking for over thirteen hours. Moreover, he had absolutely no idea where he was. Thus, there is little need to convey his joy when he crested a hill and saw, in the valley beneath him, a small cabin. Little explanation is likewise needed to describe his hasty scrambling down the hill, his triumphant knock on the door, or his exhausted collapse on the front step.

"Why are you coming after her? What were you thinking?" Harry started awake, finding himself on a cot in a cozy little den, face-to-face with a shriveled, white-haired old man with an intense look on his face. "Why did you think you needed to figure out what happened to Wilma?"

Harry hastily sat up, rubbing his eyes. "I – she – who – who are you? Where am I?"

"I think you know, at least if I tell you that you have found what you were looking for."

Harry stared blankly at the old man, altogether too confused to understand what in the world was going on. After a long pause, he said simply, "you don't have red hair."

"Ah, but I know the man who does. Now tell me," and he moved to the edge of his seat, "why are you looking for Wilma Nelson? What could you possibly gain from finding out what happened to her?"

"Well... she happens to have been a very good friend of mine, and she – wait. Why would I tell you? Why do you even want to know? And how do you know that I was looking for her?"

"Never mind that. All you need to know is that I know who you are and what you're doing, and I also know how dangerous it is to look into this. If you value anything in your life, anything at all, you will break off your search, go home, and forget the name of Wilma Nelson."

Harry awoke in his own bed, with his wife beside him and a fire crackling merrily in the grate. He had no idea how he had gotten there, but he did know for a fact that his little escapade had not been a dream.

He was little surprised, however, when neither his wife nor his daughter seemed to recall anything about his having been away. Whatever was going on, it seemed to involve the amnesia of everyone around him. And despite what the old man said, Harry was determined to continue in his search until he found out what in the world happened to Wilma Nelson.

Harry now spent most of his time in his study, laboriously poring over papers, journals, trinkets: anything that could possibly give him some hint as to what had happened. At this point, eight years later, his search had become more of an attempt to prove that he was not insane than anything else.

His wife worried about him; the townsfolk worried about him; but still his search continued. And though no one knew, his little seven-year-old daughter watched him day and night as he turned his cozy little den upside-down, searching desperately for something that might give him a clue.

It was the ninth anniversary of Wilma Nelson's disappearance, and still Harry had found nothing. He was in his study as usual, poring over papers, when he heard a knock at the door. His wife was out having tea with a friend, so he went to answer it

"Hello, Master Frelling. May I come in?" It was the strange little white-haired man. He walked nonchalantly into the kitchen, as if he was a good friend just stopping by.

"Master Frelling – or would you prefer I call you Harry?" Harry just stared, pale and unmoving. "Harry it is, then – listen, I'm afraid I'm going to

have to skip the small-talk and just get straight down to business. I hope you'll forgive me?" A faint nod. "Well then. Harry, it has come to our – that is, *my* – attention that you are still searching for this imaginary friend of yours –"

This was simply too much. Harry burst out: "She is NOT imaginary! And though I don't know who you are or what you are doing, I do know that you are one of the few people in the world who knows she exists! Now what do you want with me?"

The strange little man was not taken aback in the least. He continued on with a methodical assurance, as if reciting from a script he had gone over hundreds of times. In a cool, collected voice, he said, "Harry, I warned you about the danger of this situation. You should have stopped searching when I told you to. But you didn't, and now you know too much. You see that symbol on the ceiling?" Harry followed the old man's gaze upwards, and gasped. And that was the last that was heard of Harry Frelling, or of the strange little man. There was no longer a soul in the house.

Or so it seemed. Around the corner, watching the whole interaction, stood a little girl – Harry's daughter. She saw her father disappear, and immediately rushed into the room. And as she knelt down, she glanced at the window...

Standing there, witnessing everything, stood a man. A man with flaming red hair and a half-smirking look of pity. He looked at her for a moment, and then he, too, was gone.

Mama's Boy, or What's Wrong with this Picture?

By Rachael Dosen

Look what I drew, Mama!

Yes, I know, I drew it on the wall,

But you're not supposed to look at the wall, that's why I drew all over it!

Yes, it's painted, Mama,

Just like how you paint your face – why?

Because it is you, Mama!

I painted your face with happy things

Upon this barren, ugly wall.

Would you rather I left it that way?

Don't say that, Mama.

You're not listening, you're not looking – see?

I made you, Mama,

Made you out of tulip bulbs and Easter eggs

And little shards of sunlight that I mixed with melted grass.
I took the copper-coated beach sand and photo album covers
To paint a summer weekend smile on your lips,
Instead of the lipstickey blood and alcohol smell
I have to sacrifice my goodnight kisses to when I wash it down the drain.
I crushed up all your diet pills, Mama,
And boiled them with the hair you pulled out of your head
When the other ladies weren't looking, because they weren't looking,
And spread it over a base coat of "anywhere-but-here" to make the sky.
I broke the bottles in your bedroom, Mama, the browns and pinks together.
I spilled the rabbit-eye-approved, narcotic-scented blood inside them on the
warping bathroom tile,
Used the broken glass to cut up the ugly ladies million dollar dresses and their
silent, sneering mouths
Because you said those bottles made you forget the other things,
Forget how you thought Daddy was looking
Even though that's how he will be looking if you keep throwing all those bottles
at his head -
It was a joke, Mama. I'm sorry, please, come back, come see -
See? I took your lemon-scented fingernails and my birthday fingerpaints
And lay them on a bed of butterfly wings,
I steamed whispered sighs and "truly beautifuls"
Over the atomic honey colored sunrise of the day after a holiday and used the
fumes to dry the paint
In over-arching loveliness – Mama, don't you want to see?

Put the sponge down, Mama, why don't you like it? I do!

Stop scrubbing off my painting, Mama, stop tearing off your skin!

Why don't you love it? Why won't you look at it?

Put down the hard water, Mama, put down the hard heart getting harder in your hand

As you use it like a scouring pad, and look!

Why won't you look, Mama? Why are you smearing it?

Don't you wanna see how pretty you are?

Last One of the Day

By Keighley Null

Bread in the oven
The freshness of the French bread
Smelled when taken
And placed on the table

The steam coming from each slice that is cut
And placed on a plate, adding some butter
That melts, spreads over the top
Spilling over onto the plate

Last but not least shaking of garlic powder
Over the top, mixing in with the butter
Spread over each slice, garlic bread
Take a bite, the sweet butter flowing with
The taste of the spicy yet tongue tingling garlic

Back to the stove, holding the pan
Pouring the red sauce flowing from
One place to another
The smell of tomato

The beans roll over each other to the bowl
Like animals going after the watering hole.
The meat dances around, and falls down,

The steam rises from the new bowl
Reaching to the sky
The red sauce, beans and meat

Tomato's tangy taste and filled with spices
Beans soft and mixed with the savory meat
Together chili

Love Coupons

By Richard Train

A warm summer breeze

a cold winter's night.

I'll save our love coupons

for the next few years,

to keep me warm

on those cold winter nights.

I'll look beyond

those worn curtains

in my room,

and touch the warmth

of what was us.

I'll use one of my coupons

that once was us,

and touch for only a moment,

but only in my mind

the memory of us.

The Paper Lantern is the student literary journal of Normandale Community College, 9700 France Ave. South, Bloomington, MN 55431. It is edited by members of the Creative Writing Club. The project is made possible by the Normandale Student Life Activity Fee.

Officers and the following members of the Fall 2011 Creative Writing Club produced this issue:

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Submit your creative writing to the Spring 2012 issue of *The Paper Lantern*! All work is reviewed anonymously and acceptance is based on literary merit.

Works in all genres of creative writing (poems, fiction, memoirs, short plays, etc) are considered, with a limit of 1000 words for poetry and 2500 words for prose and drama. All works must include an author's name, address, phone number, and email address at the top of the page. Multiple submissions accepted. Submission is open to registered NCC students only.

Send your submission as an email attachment to club advisor Lynette Reini-Grandell at Lynette.Reini-Grandell@normandale.edu. More information is available on our website, ThePaperLantern.org.

