

CALLIOPE

THE STUDENT JOURNAL OF ART AND LITERATURE

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ANNANDALE CAMPUS | NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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VOLUME VII — SPRING 2010

POETRY

1	Linda Jean King	<i>Summer Eddies</i>	First Prize
11	Bao Chau Ngoc Vo	<i>An Erratic World</i>	Hon. Mention, ESL
12	Natalie Potell	<i>There are more cells</i>	
13	Jessica Redmiles	<i>The Small Marks</i>	
24	Natalie Potell	<i>The Fathoms and the Fingers</i>	
38	Mahvash Charmsaz Moghaddam	<i>Naive Bird Finds Food</i>	Hon. Mention, ESL
40	Vivian Ngoc Cao	<i>Water Flows Softly</i>	Hon. Mention, ESL
49	Joshua Lawson	<i>Couplettes for Jeanette</i>	Second Prize
62	Dan Conway	<i>Dark was the night</i>	
64	Natalie Potell	<i>Of This Skin</i>	
68	Jessica Redmiles	<i>Mass-Production</i>	Third Prize

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

6	Rachel Wattenbarger	<i>En Pointe</i>	Third Prize
9	Helena L. Perry	<i>Calm in the Midst of the Storm</i>	Second Prize
17	Ahn Tuyet T. Nguyen	<i>Sanctuary</i>	First Prize, ESL
18	Christine Ksanznak	<i>A New Beginning</i>	
21	Caroline Morgan	<i>Beyond Myself</i>	
26	Katherine Ayesha Raheem	<i>Scar Tissue</i>	First Prize
39	Shih-yueh Chang	<i>Early Morning Activity</i>	Third Prize, ESL
50	Teguwaze Gebreselassie	<i>Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony</i>	Second Prize, ESL
55	Anastacia Jacobsen	<i>Sisters and Snowflakes</i>	
58	Kimberly Jones	<i>The Secret to the Perfect Pumpkin Pie</i>	
60	Jaye Clark	<i>Summer School</i>	

FICTION

2	Natalie Potell	<i>the fields</i>	Second Prize
41	Joshua Lawson	<i>Seven Ate Nine</i>	
45	Joy Noel Straight	<i>Misfit</i>	First Prize
65	Shabnam Tehrani	<i>Leila</i>	

ART

	Andrew Freeman	<i>Just Another Monday</i>	Cover Prize
5	Megan Simpkins	<i>Figures</i>	
13	Oktawian Otlewski	<i>Guard Tower</i>	
14	Kareem Shoura	<i>The Lake</i>	Second Prize, Art
15	Elbert Cheong	<i>Green Hands 2</i>	
16	Seda Zirek	<i>Pink Tulip</i>	
23	Andrew Bieber	<i>Utopia</i>	
25	Seda Zirek	<i>Color Your Dreams</i>	First Prize, Art
29	Michael Cavanaugh	<i>Within This White Forest</i>	
30	Shanley Marie Culbertson	<i>Head 1: Scream</i>	
31	Jaewon Choi	<i>Passion of Christ</i>	
32	Da Eun Cho	<i>My Sweet Orange Tree</i>	Third Prize, Art
33	Mirim Yoo	<i>Still Life</i>	
33	Da Eun Cho	<i>Juxtaposition in the Mouth</i>	
34	Javi Ruibal	<i>Lioness and Cub</i>	
35	Da Eun Cho	<i>Landscape</i>	
36	Kareem Shoura	<i>Sunny After Noon in the Park</i>	
37	Oktawian Otlewski	<i>Self Portrait Gone Awry</i>	
38	Andrew Freeman	<i>Man in the Wallpaper</i>	
40	Amy Mathews	<i>Spirit of Art Class</i>	
44	Aaron Martoncik	<i>Paintball Player</i>	
48	Aaron Martoncik	<i>Supra Interior</i>	
51	Laura Lavedas	<i>Vase</i>	
52	Laura Lavedas	<i>Box</i>	
53	Coco Combemale	<i>Pink Vinegar</i>	
54	Erin R. Street	<i>Frozen Stream</i>	
57	Kazue Weissman	<i>Portrait of a Camp Follow</i>	
63	Oktawian Otlewski	<i>Hobart</i>	



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Submissions are welcomed from September through February each year at Calliope@nvcc.edu. Submission guidelines are available at <http://www.nvcc.edu/Annandale/langlit/eng/calliope>. Calliope reserves the right to reprint and present submitted works on the Calliope website and other media. Students interested in joining the Calliope staff as interns should contact the editors at the email address above.

calliope *kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)*

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses, presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes, played by a keyboard like that of an organ

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird, a hummingbird, sellula **calliope**, of the Western United States and Mexico.

Oxford English Dictionary



SUMMER EDDIES

by LINDA JEAN KING

Calliope First Prize 2010, Poetry

I drift on summer eddies, an exhausted dragonfly
drying her wings in dappled sunlight.
A slow mist curls upward like burning sage
releasing pain and prayers.

The tranquil river has forgotten
the winter storms that raged
in distant mountains
swelling it with violence
until in early spring
it shook and surged
and swept us under
for ten long nights
until Mom
in fragile weakness
finally
let go

Whispers nudge me in circles
beneath the shimmer of late summer.
Startled by a crimson leaf splashing nearby,
I begin to listen for the first rumblings
of the coming winter storm...
My aging father.

THE FIELDS

by NATALIE POTELL

Calliope Second Prize 2010, Fiction

I sit in my father's truck, in the two o'clock sun, in front of our house. Again I shift my legs on the vinyl seat as it re-glues to my thighs with sweat. My fingers roll around the edges of the hole in the door where a handle should be. The glass perched on my father's lips empties for the third time and he hands it to me and asks for another. I take it and reach through the passenger window to open the door from the outside.

The screen door slaps silently against the frame going into the house. The kitchen is quiet too in my mother's absence. Almost as if her week of being bed-ridden has caused the house to fall into hibernation in the middle of summer, and nothing moves. I turn the faucet on and fill the glass with water. Through the kitchen window I see my father with one sun-burnt arm propped atop the door, just staring. I lean with my tip toes over the sink and look out into the fields of wheat. I don't know what has caught his eye exactly but the way the grass flows is mesmerizing. He told me once that my mother danced like wheat on a windy day, and that's all I could think about three summers ago when I was eleven and the wheat had caught fire and burnt like matchsticks. I had closed my eyes, felt the burn of smoke in my throat, and imagined my mother's dress singeing her legs as she twirled within the flames.

I glance back at the truck and my father is looking towards me. My first instinct says duck, like I've been spotted doing something I shouldn't, until I realize he's not really looking at me – but rather the house. His eyes seem to rove from the porch to the upstairs sills, pausing on the corner window.

When I climb back into the truck my father takes the glass and places it on the dashboard. He rubs his palms over the back of his neck and behind his ears a little. He does it one more time and opens his mouth as if to say something, then doesn't. I want to ask him about the last eight months, but I don't. So we sit in the quiet until he speaks.

"Over there it's hotter than this; twenty, sometimes thirty degrees hotter." He drinks half the water in the glass down. "Never had enough water over there."

I knew he was home not from the buzz of the engine as it idled on the drive, but from the steadiness in which the front door was opened and the slow thump of his boots on the tiles. Where is your mother he asked, and when I told him she's still in bed, sick, he said fine don't wake her. So I made breakfast, just eggs and dry toast. We don't have butter I said. It didn't seem to bother him. At some

point he stood up and started wandering around the house. He stopped outside their bedroom door, and when I thought he was about to go in he instead put his ear against the wood. Maybe it was too strange for him to have her be so close. Maybe every day in the desert that he called her he dreamt of this moment, of being able to hear her turn over and breathe on the other side of the door, like she had fallen asleep with the receiver cradled in her arms.

My father's chest rises and sinks with the hot air, in drawn out breaths. He puts his left hand on the steering wheel and shakes it a little. That's when I notice the darkness under his fingernails and then a smear of dirt on his shaven head.

"I should have told you I was coming home early."

"It's okay," I say. "I'm just happy you're home."

He swallows fast the rest of the water, laying the glass in his lap this time. He coughs and spits out the window, clearing the sand from inside him.

"Is your mother ok?" he says. Still looking straight ahead to the fields.

"She has the flu. She's been sick a while."

"You been taking care of her?"

"Yea, I take care of her. But now you're back; things will be better right?" I don't know how, but I see that thought churn over inside him. Something has changed.

"Yea, I'm back," he says. "Things will be better."

I shouldn't ask, I know, but I've thought about it for too long not to. "What's it like over there?"

He doesn't say anything for a minute, maybe two, and then says "it's hot and dry and filthy".

"Did you shoot anyone?" He looks at me now – really looks at me.

"Even if I did I wouldn't tell you. Who a man kills is his business."

"I didn't say kill; I said shoot," I say.

He wrings his neck with his hands now, like he's loosening his shirt collar or rubbing something off of his skin. He just looks different. I glance down at the fourteen years of my hands, and they look nothing like his. It's not the roughness; it's something else.

"We would go out on convoys through the streets, on missions or to secure certain areas. Three, four humvees at most," he says. "You never stop. If you do, you get hit by an RPG, so you never stop."

I've seen my father run red lights before in this truck. Once when we were late for church – God will forgive us he said – and once when the fields caught fire.

He picks up the glass again and tilts it a little, to look down the length of it and make sure it's still empty. I ask my father if he wants more water, and he

seems to sit on the question, as if uncertain, before he says yes. I take my time too – going back into the kitchen and all. Even the water pressure seems sluggish now. It's when I turn the glass is full and I turn the faucet off that I hear my mother's feet on the hardwood floor; she's in their room but moving from the bed, the left side I think, to the bathroom.

Quietly I walk in the dining room and from there look out towards the truck. My father isn't in the front cab anymore, but instead searching through his pack on the bed of the truck with the tail down. Even pressed up against the window, I can't see what he's pulling out of the bag. I try to recite in my head the list of belongings he packed when he left, but the clarity of that memory isn't there anymore.

Now my mother is moving towards the bedroom door, so I run down the hall to cut her off where my father had stood and listened to her sleep. The water spills but I don't care. I need more time with him.

In the hallway I wait until the muffled sound of my mother's feet are almost upon me; I pull my limbs in tight and hold my breath. The knob turns a fraction – she holds it there. The thump of her head against the frame then jolts me like electricity in my bones. She sighs, lets go of the knob, and her sounds carry her body back to the bed which noiselessly absorbs her.

My father is back behind the steering wheel when I get in the truck. Something dark turns over in his palms, something that seems to drag him into the intensity of its stillness. I keep the glass firmly in my fingers. The slight cool of it keeping me steady.

"I brought this back for you; it's one of the kinds they carry," he says and lays a small knife on the seat between us. I pick it up and look closely at the blade, the curves of the handle. Once, it could have killed a man. The thought possesses me.

"How did you get it?" I ask.

"It's not important how I got it; that's not what I'm trying to tell you."

I put the knife back on the seat and watch my father's mouth for his next words. Watching his neck would be better though – I could catch the words there in his voice box and smooth them out.

"I killed a boy over there. A boy your age. I ran him right over." My father presses hard into his brow like it's aching, then opens the door and walks off a distance. He stands facing away from me, with his hands on his hips and his eyes on the sky. I know he's crying.

But I'm not like my father. When my grandmother died it was early in the morning. I didn't cry. I still went to school, and I didn't tell a soul what had happened. I just let her keep dying inside me.



FIGURES
by MEGAN SIMPKINS

EN POINTE

by RACHEL WATTENBARGER

Calliope Third Prize 2010, Fiction

Coming of age is something many cultures/societies celebrate. A Jewish child comes of age by having a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Hispanic children have Quinces, when children turn sixteen, Virginia issues a driver's license. For dancers, the coming of age is dancing en pointe – one of the most anticipated events for ballerinas, yet few achieve it.

Dancing en pointe means the ballerina has been approved by a physician to have sturdy ankles. A dancer should have five years of ballet classes and be at least twelve. Most importantly, the dancer has to find the right pointe shoes. After starting ballet classes at age three, being eligible to go en pointe meant I was finally going to be a ballerina.

One month before my twelfth birthday, the dance director of my studio called me into her office to discuss this milestone. If she approved, I would talk to my doctor and then order my pointe shoes. Miss Charissa was a short woman, with jet black hair that reached the small of her back.

“Rachel, do you believe you have what it takes to be a pointe dancer?”

I nodded, too excited to say anything.

“Are you willing to add another class?” she quizzed, knowing that I was already at the studio ten hours a week. Adding another class would mean I would be spending more time at the studio than at home.

“I'm willing to add two!” I replied. The smile on my face grew.

“Lastly and most important, why do you love to dance?” she asked unexpectedly.

I thought, ‘Why do I like to dance?’ Sitting in her office, feeling like the walls were falling on me, I had to think of an answer. What if I answered wrong? Would I not be allowed to go up en pointe? I inhaled and answered, “I love to dance because I can express how I feel. If I'm sad I become instantly happy. I forget what is going on outside the mirrored walls. I don't dance because my mother wants me to; I dance because I love to.”

“Sounds like you're a dedicated dancer. You have my permission to go en pointe.” I was one step closer to becoming a true ballerina.

Next came the visit to the doctor. My doctor had the stereotypical office. As I sat and waited for my turn, I imagined what the doctor would say. I saw him walking in and creating small talk. After he would let out a sigh and ask what I needed, I'd tell him. He would manipulate my ankles and tell me how strong

they are. Lastly, he would approve me to go en pointe. I knew that was exactly how it was going to turn out. How could anything be wrong? I'd never injured either ankle; I had nothing to fear.

If only that were how the appointment went.

The blonde medical assistant came to get me. I jumped up and ran over, only to turn and see my mom still sitting. I stood tapping my toes, waiting. When my mom finally got to where I stood, we were ready. We were escorted to a room and waited for the doctor.

As he walked in, I started giggling. This was it; I was going to be a true ballerina! I sat impatiently as he talked with my mother. When it was finally my turn, I was beyond ecstatic. I knew this wouldn't take long. I knew I would be on my way to the dance store shortly. The doctor turned toward me and asked, "Which foot first?" I kicked out my right leg. He then pulled at my toes, starting with the outside toe and working inward. I asked, "What's this for?"

He told me, "By pulling on your toes I am testing to see if there is any ligament damage. Also, when you're up on your toes, I want to make sure that the toe joint does not get damaged due to the change of weight that they would start holding."

"Sounds good to me," I stated, very sure I knew what he had just said, as if I was a doctor. "Next comes the ankle," he stated as he grabbed above and below my ankle. He then manipulated the joint. He explained, "By holding the fibula in place and pulling and pushing your foot, to pull it out of the socket, I can tell how strong the ligaments truly are."

"How?" I questioned. It sounded counterintuitive to me.

"If the ligaments in your ankle are not damaged, they should pull the foot back, instantly, like a rubber band. Right ankle looks great," the doctor stated, as the smile on my face grew. "Now, the left."

He started to do the same movements on the left toes as he did on the right. Everything went smoothly. Then, the ankle; this was not smooth. After manipulating the joint, forward, backward, pause, and repeat. The doctor looked at me and said, "Looks like you need an MRI."

"What?" My whole world was shattering.

"The ligaments in this ankle are not pulling your foot back into the joint like it should. Feel the difference?" He then manipulated my right foot and left. There was a difference, but would it keep me from going en pointe forever? The doctor then wrote an order for my MRI and left.

I slowly walked from the checkout to the car. My life was over; I knew it. I would never be allowed to dance en pointe. I was never going to be the Sugar Plum Fairy. I was through; my dancing career was over at twelve.

My mother scheduled the MRI appointment for the following week. I

was not looking forward to it. As I walked into the building, the temperature dropped twenty degrees. I sat in the waiting room, hoping they would skip me.

Finally, I was called. “Rachel, please fill out this paper work and take off all metal objects.” I took off my necklace and rings. Once the paper work was finished, I got escorted into the room with the machine.

The room with the machine was all white and unbelievably quiet. The technician had me lie down on an all metal table. She placed my ankle in a wire cage with pillows to ensure a tight fit. She wrapped me in a blanket and left.

I wanted to cry. I heard the door close to the room and slowly began to move into the machine tunnel. When I stopped, I heard, as if it was God’s voice, “I’m going to start the MRI, please sit still.” I agreed and tried to sleep.

Just about the time I finally felt comfortable, an obnoxious beeping sound started. It was a beep that was repeated over and over again, like fingers on a chalkboard. It made me more anxious. I closed my eyes and thought about being the Sugar Plum Fairy and fell asleep. I awoke to my name being called over the speaker and the table shifting. The technician came back in and took apart the cage my ankle was in, and my wait began.

I went back to the doctor’s office for my moment of truth. This was the deciding factor – would I be allowed to dance en pointe, or would I have to find another sport to consume the hole that dancing would leave? When called, I slowly went into the patient room and waited. I thought of other sports: swimming, dancing, playing soccer, dancing; I always came back to dancing.

And then the knock on the door came: this was it. I took a deep breath and shouted, “Yes!”

“Rachel, I have your results,” my doctor stated. “Your ankle is missing the calcaneofibular ligament.”

“The what?” I said. Why would he use medical terminology with me? I was twelve. “The Calcaneofibular ligament is one of three ligaments on the outside of your ankle. It prevents your ankle from rolling from side to side and holds your shin in place with the foot. It’s most likely a genetic defect.”

“Okay. Can I dance en pointe?” I asked. I really could care less about what was wrong; I just wanted to dance. “You can, but you have to take it easy. You can’t dance more than one hour en pointe a week.”

“Sounds great to me; I agree!” I replied and ran to my mother. Once through the doors, I shouted, “I CAN BE A BALLERINA!”

My mom smiled at me, and we hugged. I wanted to be a ballerina, I wanted to dance en pointe, and I fought for it. I was able to do what needed to be done, and I was going to be a ballerina. I came of age, not only in the world of ballet but also in my parents’ eyes. I went through the trauma of not being told what I wanted to hear, but I held my head up high and waited for the storm to pass.

CALM IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

by HELENA L. PERRY

Calliope Second Prize 2010, Creative Non-Fiction

As a relatively mild summer was drawing to a close, bathing suits retired to the back of the closet only to be replaced with the latest fall trends, stores advertised back to school sales, and children said their last goodbyes to their summer camp friends. One was beginning to grow tired of the coveted barbecued ribs and potato salad that was almost a daily indulgence, for it was often too hot to cook indoors. Time itself began to shift and daylight began to wax dim much sooner than weeks before.

Without warning, dark clouds filled the humid air. To say it began to rain would be an understatement; it began to pour. On the twenty eighth day of August in the year two thousand and five, my life and the lives of countless others would forever be changed. News reporters would call it the storm of the century. Katrina – a category five hurricane which would encapsulate the entire gulf coast, and whose fury would be felt for generations to come.

Watching the devastation from my television hundreds of miles away, tucked into the safety of a condo in Virginia Beach, and listening to the rain as it beat methodically upon my windows, I felt helpless. Never before in my life was I connected to people whom I'd never met before. It would have been easy to pick up the phone and call in a donation to one of the various organizations that were soliciting assistance. Yet, this time I would give more than money. I would give hope. After making a few phone calls I gassed up my Nissan Pathfinder, packed a few essentials along with my two year old son and headed into the eye of the storm.

I found myself heading south on I-95 without a clear sense of direction or a solid plan. Where would I stay once we arrived? As entire cities were now in ruins, did I make a hasty decision, one that would cost me in the long run? These were the questions that began to play over and over in my head. I am by no means a philanthropist; would I even have enough money to make the twenty two hour drive to the Gulf Coast and back home? As in other instances in my life, my determination often outweighed my rationality. My motto has always been: let the net will follow.

Ironically enough, the roads were virtually empty. And my toddler son was

abnormally calm. It was almost as if he too had a sense of purpose that even at such a young age he had to fulfill. Day turned to night and we pressed on. The famous yellow and gold Rand McNally map sprawled across the passenger seat confirmed that we were now close to Atlanta, Georgia. My eyes were growing heavy. I needed to get some sleep. I punched a few numbers on my cell phone and was beginning to grow impatient when my cousin finally picked up on the fifth ring.

“Hi Michelle. It’s Helena,” I said

“Hello stranger what are you up to?” she replied.

“Well, I need a favor; you see James and I are in Atlanta and need a place to crash for a few hours,” I said, trying not to sound as if I were begging. She and I rarely spoke these days; I was unsure of her reaction.

“What? You’re in Atlanta? How long are you in town? You drove?” she yelled excitedly.

“I’ll explain when I get there,” I replied.

With that she gave me directions to her apartment in Marietta, Georgia, which sat right outside of the busy metropolitan city of Atlanta. Upon my arrival I filled her in on my magnificent plan to single handedly save the city of New Orleans. She looked at me and shook her head and pointed to the fresh linen she had laid out on the sofa for my son and me.

After a few hours of sleep, it was time for us to get back on the road. I bid my cousin good bye and assumed the wheel of my Pathfinder. We passed through New Orleans; the entire city had been evacuated and deemed unsafe. At an Alabama gas station with lines that wrapped around the corner, we waited two hours for our turn to pump gas that was priced at \$6.59 per gallon. Running low on funds and energy, my hope began to wane. What in the world was I thinking? As most of the cars were heading away from the mayhem, I was steadily headed in.

I arrived in Houston, Texas, as I had heard that this was the place where most of the displaced citizens were now temporarily housed. Despite the temperature outside being a stifflly 102 degrees, people filled the streets. Everywhere I turned, there were masses of people. Some were in tents along the crowded city streets. Some were sitting at portable card tables, playing cards to pass the time while others sat and stared at nothing in particular.

Disappointedly, I was turned away from three volunteer centers, told they were at capacity and did not need any additional help. As I reached my breaking point, feeling both frustrated and helpless, something caught my eye. I saw a woman coming down the street with a little boy who looked about two years old and was holding her hand and hopping on one foot behind her. She stopped to wipe the sweat from her brow, and the little boy sat on the curb to inspect the

bottom of his bare feet. You see he was not hopping for the sheer joy of hopping. He was hopping because his bare feet were being scorched with each step.

“Excuse me, miss. Does your son need a pair of shoes?” I yelled from the window.

I know it was a silly question, but I didn’t know what else to say. It was obvious that the child needed a pair of shoes. She shook her head and walked over to the window of my truck and peered in.

I reached into the back seat and began to unbuckle the sandals on my son’s feet and handed them out the window to her. She began to cry. I opened the door to my truck. I stepped out and held her in my arms for what seemed like hours alongside the hot, crowded Houston street. Her sweat and tears became my own.

AN ERRATIC WORLD

by BAO CHAU NGOC VO

Calliope Honorable Mention 2010, ESL

Snow on trees, twinkle
a sudden wind blowing through
startled, tree on snow.

THERE ARE MORE CELLS, IN THE BODY OF A SINGLE MAN, THAN STARS IN THE GALAXY

by NATALIE POTELL

Tendons knot and uproot, as salmon fronds
in the crest
of a child's head
How to explain the specific gravity
of a curdled body, he says
Is impossible, like adding
another joint
to my calcified legs
-Soldier

I remember so little of her
quicksand hands gravitated down
a thin glass funnel – thin as a playing card
Edging towards
the finality of a year
Dying on my seventeenth birthday, never
seemed so simple

But I wonder still
What does an oil bloom, look
like under water?
What is the diameter of a bomb?
-Child

THE SMALL MARKS

by JESSICA REDMILES

In white-walled lowlight she had
A matchwork obsession with
Arranging her flammable parts in a straight line, then
Pouring the rain out of the bottle while they burned.
I was asking the sea of streetlights, flared like bright insects,
If they would stop crawling through my head on the dark roads between
The damned in their rusting iron fencework and
The alien place called home



GUARD TOWER

by OKTAWIAN OTLEWSKI



THE LAKE
by KAREEM SHOURA

Calliope Second Prize 2010, Art



GREEN HANDS 2
by ELBERT CHEONG



PINK TULIP
by SEDA ZIREK

SANCTUARY

by ANH TUYET T. NGUYEN

Calliope First Prize 2010, ESL

When I was a child of ten or eleven, my family lived in a small house in SaiGon city, the capital of Viet Nam before 1975. This house was where I spent my childhood and the place I will never forget is the roof of the house. My father planted two big fruit trees beside the house. I remember one was the star-fruit tree and the other was the tamarind tree. Every year, in July and August, these trees were full of ripe fruits. You could see the green with a little pink on the star-fruit and the light brown skin of the tamarind fruit.

This roof became my own private place. Many times, my best friend and I climbed up those trees and jumped from them to the roof of the house. The sky was as blue as the ocean with white clouds dotted over our heads. We would always bring a small knife so we could enjoy the delicious star-fruit which tasted like sweet milk. When I cut the star-fruit horizontally, I could see the white milk of the fruit and six black seeds shaped like a star in the middle. I have never forgotten the taste of tamarind either. It is sour and sweet but it always leaves a sweet taste after eating it. My friend and I sat and talked until we could smell the food cooking in the kitchen. Then we knew that it was late and time to eat.

This was also where I used to read. The sunshine and fresh weather in the morning always attracted me. The yellow sunlight spread all over the roof of the house. I could hear leaves rustle and smell the aroma of ripe fruits lightly in the air. I sat there and spent four or five hours reading adventure books. It felt very comfortable and peaceful.

In addition, if I wanted to escape my problems (when I didn't receive a good score in school, or when my mother yelled at me for some reason), this was my private sanctuary. Anytime I wanted to be alone, I would go there and nobody knew where I was.

The roof of my childhood house and all the memories about it are always deep in my thoughts. Even though many years have passed, today when I feel stressed I close my eyes and relive memories feeling the same peacefulness.

A NEW BEGINNING

By CHRISTINE KSANZNAK

The house is frigid, cold, and empty. The cat is gone, and Vince is already in California. I am the missing piece of the puzzle. I think about how fast this all happened. Will I really be able to say goodbye to everyone and everything I have known? I guess I already have.

Leaving work for the last time was hard. The tears were good, like a release. Standing in our empty house, I think about how I shut the car door and waved through the window. Would I ever see any of them again? They were my family for over ten years. My heart aches and I wonder how long it will be before I feel whole again.

I close the door to the house, locking it tightly. I won't be coming back. I'd better make sure the emptiness is protected. Mom is waiting for me in the car. It is just her and me now. Tomorrow is the start of a new beginning.

"All set?" she asks as I climb into the car.

"I think so," I answer back, tears stuck painfully in my throat, as if I am trying to keep my heart from bursting upwards.

I wonder; if this is our dream, why is it so hard?

Vince's voice comes into my head. "If it was easy, everyone would do it."

He is right. He generally is about these sorts of things. Vince is a great motivator after all. Inspiring people is part of who he is, though I'm not sure he knows that about himself. Still, I feel like a part of me is dying. I guess in a way it is. This will all be a memory now, not a reality.

I wake up the next morning in my childhood home. It still feels like home even though it hasn't been for many years. It still smells the same. There is a smell of age, musty and warm, that permeates from the antiques that fill the house. It is a small townhouse, but it is filled to the brim. The ancient wash stand looks at me from the corner, its marble top picking up the light from the kitchen lamp. I am still cold, as though the cold from my now empty house has somehow gotten into my bones. My nose feels like it could grow icicles. I groan a little as I get up off of my make shift bed, my mom's sofa. I haven't slept in a real bed for two weeks and I my back is starting to feel it. I need to start getting ready, but first, coffee.

Today is the day. Am I really ready? I think to myself. "Too late now if I'm not," self answers. I guess I'll just have to go with the flow. I hear the shower start upstairs. Mom is up. I'd better get my self together.

An hour later we are at the airport. It is cold here too. Will I ever be warm again? When I think of home, will I always think of it in the cold, grayness that

currently surrounds me? Will I remember the eight pound air that envelops us in summer or the cool breeze of fall when the leaves are on fire? I think to myself that thirty some years of memories will not just disappear when I get on the plane. Plus I have Mom, even if only for the week. She won't let me forget.

A ray of sunshine greets me out from the cold, dull airport. It is the ticketing agent. He gives us a warm smile and kind words as we approach; I am still cold. Mom is there beside me, but she somehow looks small, as unprepared for this as I am. She seems to appreciate this man's kindness as well. He feels to me like someone you'd meet sitting on the porch of an old country store, always telling stories, always with a word for everyone that passes his way. The lines that cover his face show that his life has been hard but filled with smiles. We turn away from the agent. I have already forgotten his name though he has left more of an imprint on me than he probably realizes.

Much like this whole journey, I have to give myself over and just have faith it will work out. I mention this thought to my mom as we approach the security gates.

"Life is a test of faith," she says. "You'll be okay," she reassures me. I know she is not just speaking about getting through security.

"Thanks, Mom," I give her a brief hug as we start taking off our shoes and filling up the grey plastic bins. "I couldn't do this without you."

The flight to New York was uneventful. Now we have a four hour layover to wait out. Fewer flights mean more layovers I guess. Mom and I decide that we should get outside. We find our way through the somewhat stale air of the terminal and emerge into the partly cloudy sunshine. The air is fresher than I thought it would be. I can feel the past at my back and the future like the sun on my face. I silently say hello to New York. Will I ever see you again? I hope I will but not too soon.

Eventually we are back on a plane, heading for California. Mom is giggling beside me.

"What's so funny?" I ask.

"I just love take offs," she says. "They always make me laugh. I don't know why."

I smile. It's good to know that no matter how old you get, you can still feel like a kid sometimes. I have the feeling that this is partly what this move is all about and why it is so sad for me. I am growing up and leaving the nest. I am finally an adult. I still feel like a child. Looking at my mom laughing as we take off, I feel like maybe that's okay.

It feels like the flight will last forever. There is too much turbulence. We keep having to change altitudes, which is giving me a headache.

Mom and I talk to the girl sharing our row. She is from New York City.

She's on her way to San Diego to see her boyfriend and then they are off to some far away place to work and play for three months. I don't know the name of the city she mentions but she says it's summer there. She is leaving the cold behind, just like me. She seems so young. It makes me worry for her but admire her as well. Would I have been able to let go at that age? I can barely let go now.

We are finally landing. Why does it always take so long to deplane? There are way too many people in such a small space. Now I am finally warm. I wonder if it's a sign or just claustrophobia. We get off the plane and start toward the baggage pick up area. I see Vince before he sees us.

"I don't want him to see me just yet," I say to my mom. She nods but she doesn't ask why. She doesn't know about the reassuring conversations we've had on the phone, three thousand miles between us. He's supposed to see me as I come down the escalator. Then it will be real. I think to myself that we do not control these moments. It is something else I will have to just go with.

I see the palm trees as the escalator descends. I can tell by his posture that Vince is checking email on his phone. I see the flowers in his other hand, pink and red tulips, one bunch for me and one for Mom. I am wondering what the air will smell like outside and how the palm trees will sound in the breeze? Am I really here?

Mom is behind me. I can almost feel her smiling. Then he looks up and we both smile. As we reach the bottom of the escalator, he embraces me.

"I told you it would work out," he whispers in my ear, his face beaming and warm. He hands us the flowers. He puts one arm around me and the other arm around my mom, leading us towards baggage claims.

All the pieces are here now. The puzzle is complete.

BEYOND MYSELF

by CAROLINE MORGAN

Standing in the Barbie doll aisle at Toys R Us, I clasped my hands together in front of me, and with a huge smile on my face, I begged my mother, “can I please, please, please get a new toy?” She looked at me and calmly said “no.” My smile turned into a frown, and tears started to form in my eyes. She watched me for a moment, as if she were trying to decide if I was truly upset or just trying to make her feel badly, and told me “be grateful for the toys you already have.” I promptly threw myself onto the cold tile floor like a sack of potatoes and began screaming and crying. I lay on my stomach, pounding my fists on the ground and kicking my legs as though I were trying to swim away. My mom knelt down beside me and told me to look at her. “Some people have nothing,” she said. Something about the tone of her voice calmed me down, but what she said to me went in one ear and out the other. Her statement didn’t make sense to me. I didn’t understand how some people could have nothing. We left the store, and the day went on, her words never more than a passing thought in my mind.

Many years later, when I was 23, I decided to accompany a missionary group that a friend of mine was involved with to Nicaragua, the second poorest country in Central America. I felt compelled to go after he had told me of the massive poverty that existed there. Although I knew he was not lying, I am the type of person that has to see things to believe them. When I compared his stories of the way the citizens of Nicaragua live to my own life, I began to feel guilty for being privileged enough to live in the United States.

I had been in Nicaragua for two days when we arrived at the dump in the capital city of Managua. There was a small school nearby where we had stopped to deliver school supplies, and as we were leaving, we decided to visit some of the people who lived nearby. I was surprised to learn that there was even a dump because of the complete lack of trash cans everywhere that I had been so far. Trash was strewn about on every street I had been down. I learned that it was because the local people would simply drop their trash on the ground rather than collect it in a can. As I stepped off the bus, I was greeted by a smell that I had never experienced before. It was so foul and so strong that it took my breath away. I immediately started coughing and tried to find something to cover my nose and mouth with. The air was thick with humidity and smelled like a combination of burning metal and rubber, similar to the smell of a vehicle when it is on fire. When the wind blew, the chemical odor was covered by the smell of decomposing trash and dead animals. It was clear and sunny that day, but there was a strange haze, almost darkness, surrounding the dump. I looked up at the

sky; it was grey from the fumes of the methane gas being produced from burning the trash. It seemed as though there was a ceiling on the dump, but it wasn't from the fumes. It was like a black curtain was floating over the landscape, rippling in the breeze. I stared at the sky, so puzzled that I momentarily stopped coughing. I remember asking myself why the sky seemed to be moving. The sky wasn't moving, but the vultures were. There were so many birds flying over the top of the dump that they actually blocked some of the light from the sun. They were bigger than any I had ever seen in the United States and were solid black.

I looked out at the dump and it seemed to go on forever. The piles of trash rolled along, almost like hills in a valley. Then I noticed something that I did not expect to see at a trash dump: houses. House after house lined the edges of the dump, lingering right where the piles of garbage stopped. They were not the type of house that I had always known; they were more like huts. Most of them had three walls constructed only of pieces of pressboard. There were no doors or windows. Most of the roofs were sheets of corrugated steel nailed to the pressboard. The steel roofs hung over the edges of the pressboard as though the people who lived in them were trying to create a porch effect. The floors were made of nothing more than the earth the homes were built upon. The structures were plain and boring, completely void of color or decoration.

As I was standing there trying to take it all in, I saw a young girl playing out front of one of the houses to my left. She must have been about three or four years old. The girl was wearing a tattered red t-shirt that resembled a rag used in an auto shop. Her shorts appeared to be made of cotton but the color was hard to distinguish through the dirt stains. She wore no shoes and was stepping barefoot on the trash-covered ground. I knelt down next to the little girl, who was kicking a rusted tin can around on the ground, and said "como te llamas?" She looked at me with large brown eyes and said "Evelyn." I talked to her about the can she was playing with, which she was now grasping tightly in her tiny hand. I wanted to know if she thought of it as a toy because she seemed possessive of it while I was talking to her, as though she was afraid that I would take it away. I waited a moment to see if Evelyn would explain to me why she was playing with the can, but instead she said nothing, she just stared at me suspiciously. In an attempt to befriend her, I cautiously asked if I could go play with some of her toys with her. Evelyn looked at me with a blank expression and said "esta es mi juguete" which means, "this is my toy."

Left speechless, I gave Evelyn a hug and smiled, and told her that she was beautiful. I immediately remembered that day in Toys R Us with my mom. Her words were now crystal clear in my head, as though she was standing right next to me whispering them into my ear. I no longer wondered how some people could have nothing. Instead, I asked why they have nothing.



UTOPIA
by ANDREW BIEBER

THE FATHOMS AND THE FINGERS

by NATALIE POTELL

I often wonder why you
 come back to me in my dreams
I remember your taste. Your touch.
Waves of sea green speak into you
 and out of me
your amber is my forever
I dress up, I dress down
But etched on my skin is the tales of our love
like lines in a palm
And I foolishly cradle them,
 the only children we will have
I foolishly read them,
 the only book we will ever write

And like the billows
in the sheets of steel between us,
like our vineyards – aged and yellowed
 from years of cruelty,
like the old red satin couch
that was our haven
 The dust still settles
coating our collected treasures
our most famished memories
with a soot blacker than the holes in your eyes,
And I cling to your beautiful arms
As they slip back into your frame
into the womb of time

Born again with someone else.



COLOR YOUR DREAMS
by SEDA ZIREK

Calliope First Prize 2010, Art

SCAR TISSUE

by KATHERINE AYESHA RAHEEM

Calliope First Prize 2010, Creative Non-Fiction

The 9-millimeter pistol tucked discreetly into his jacket pocket was small, efficient, and loaded. In the gun's magazine, six bullets waited impatiently. Two apiece, just in case. He pressed his thumb to the doorbell, flashed a smile at the woman who answered and invited him in.

Less than fifteen minutes later, he was descending the stairs leading to the ground floor. The home was unnaturally silent but for the dull sound of three metal bullet casings hitting each other as he dropped them into his pocket. Whistling softly, he left the way he'd come in.

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I've always wondered what God tastes like.

As a student at St. John's Roman Catholic School I went to mass every Friday for four years. I liked mass. I liked the ceremony of it, liked its comforting predictability. I liked the altar boys in their crisp white robes, flanking the solemn-faced priest as they approached the altar. I liked hearing the priest's voice as he gave his sermon, as he sprinkled holy water, as he addressed God, asking him to forgive our sins. I liked being a part of the congregation as we murmured familiar prayers in unison.

I liked the trappings of church: the rosaries, some simple and plastic, some ornate and antique, the Bibles with their frail, thin paper, the stained glass saints casting colors on the floor.

And I liked the sensations. The heady scent of incense. The sounds of people turning pages in the hymnal books or shifting in their seats. The feeling of the wooden banisters, rubbed smooth by countless hands trailing over them. The sight of the rafters meeting at a sharp angle directly above the altar so that the beams pointed to the heavens.

But I never got to taste. I wasn't Catholic; my family was vaguely Christian. We celebrated Christmas and Easter, but outside of reading the nativity passage in the Bible on Christmas, neither holiday was religious for us.

In a school of 600 students, I was one of two non-Catholic people – and the other person was my older brother. When the time came for my class to partake in the act of communion, I stayed behind in the pew as everyone else rose and filed past me. I sat, breathed the incense-laden air, listened to the shuffling

feet as one person after another received the sacrament of communion, ran my fingers over the wooden pew in front of me, raised my eyes to the peaked roof leading to God's front door, and I wondered.

I haven't seen the inside of St. John's Chapel since I left that school after fourth grade. Religion, an integral part of my life for four years, became something I only thought about fleetingly before bed each night when I prayed softly to myself: "Dear God. Please bless Mommy and Daddy and Hassan and Emily and let them all sleep well in their beds tonight and please look after everyone else." The little girl who had once written in her school journal "I love God and Jesus and specially Mary" was still inside me. I was still a believer.

May 28th, 1999. I was almost twelve, life was busy and full, and my nightly prayer was the only remnant of the church and religion I once loved.

It was 11:09 when the phone rang. Curious, I went upstairs under the pretense of getting a glass of water. We didn't get late night calls – in fact, a steadfast household rule was no calls after nine.

My parents and brother were in the kitchen, the latter with the phone fixed to his ear. The tiny television on the kitchen counter was showing a breaking news story. I looked at the screen, then at my family's faces, bewildered, wondering why footage of police tape outside a suburban home had their eyes glued to the little screen. Before I could ask what was going on, I was stunned into silence by my brother's voice, by the words he was repeating again and again.

"Oh shit. Holy shit. Jesus Christ, that's his moped in the driveway. Oh Jesus Christ. It's his house. Oh Christ, it's his house." Face ashen, he dropped the phone and put a hand to his mouth.

Tears rolled down my mom's cheeks. My dad was slumped against the counter like someone had plunged a fist into his gut. My brother's face was frozen in an expression of disbelief. His eyes were wet, and I knew that of the three of them, he was hurting the most.

I went to him, my sixteen-year-old brother who hadn't cried in years. I slipped my arm through his and took his hand. He didn't look at me, didn't speak. But his hand tightened on mine until it hurt.

I didn't let go. I stood there, confused and on the verge of tears myself. And I stayed there with his hand in mine until both his legs and his defenses caved and he slid, sobbing, to the floor.

His name was Leith, and he was sixteen years old. He and my brother had the same best friend, a guy who gradually gravitated more toward Leith than

Hassan. It had caused friction between the two, but only days earlier they'd fallen back to friendly acquaintances, if not friends. They both had tickets to attend HFStival, an annual concert thrown by a local radio station. Hassan's last conversation with Leith was about their shared excitement and their vague plans to meet up at some point during the show.

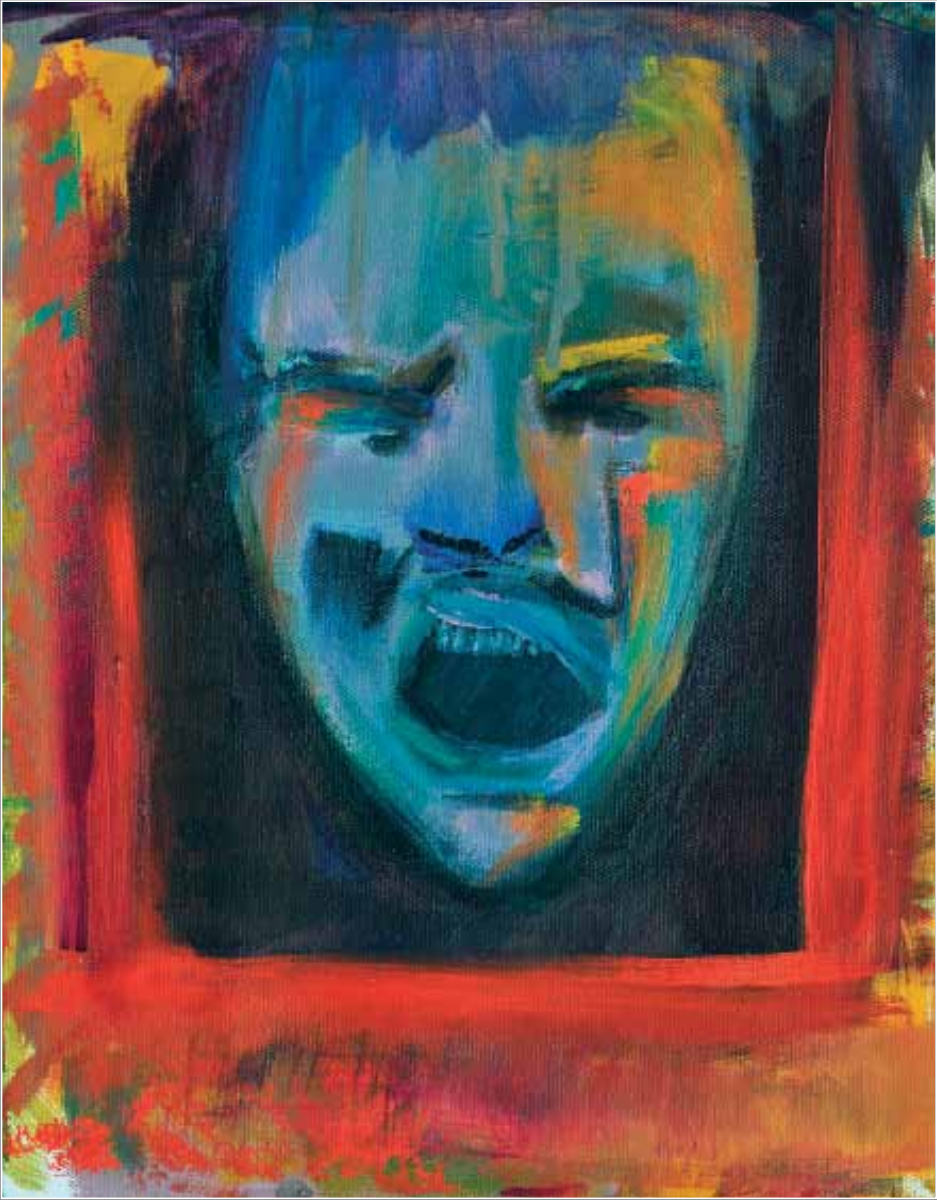
His parents were friends with mine; when the boys were younger, the two played soccer together on a team coached by my dad. There's still a photo on our wall of the sweaty ten-year-olds beaming after winning a McLean Youth Soccer championship. Leith's smile is wide and mischievous as he gives bunny ears to the kid next to him. Despite his youth, he was one of those kids you just knew would one day make girls swoon. And he did. As one of my older brother's friends I was contractually obligated to have a crush on him. The few times he sent a smile my way my prepubescent heart beat faster, and in those seconds, I only had eyes for him.

We'll never know why, on a pretty summer day, a man walked into the family's home and walked back out, leaving three bodies behind. Some people argue that the horrible things that happen in life are "all part of God's plan." I think that's complete crap, a lame excuse to justify poverty and natural disasters and the extermination of whole races of people. A lame excuse to justify why God would allow a sixteen-year-old to be shot point-blank, in his own home. In the span of seconds, any verbs connected to Leith's name went from present tense to past. In the span of seconds, he went from a living, breathing adolescent to a body, to a memory.

Whatever part of me that once believed was ripped out, the wound left to harden into scar tissue. And I don't wonder what God tastes like anymore. Now I know: he tastes bitter, like a lie on your tongue, because that's exactly what he is.



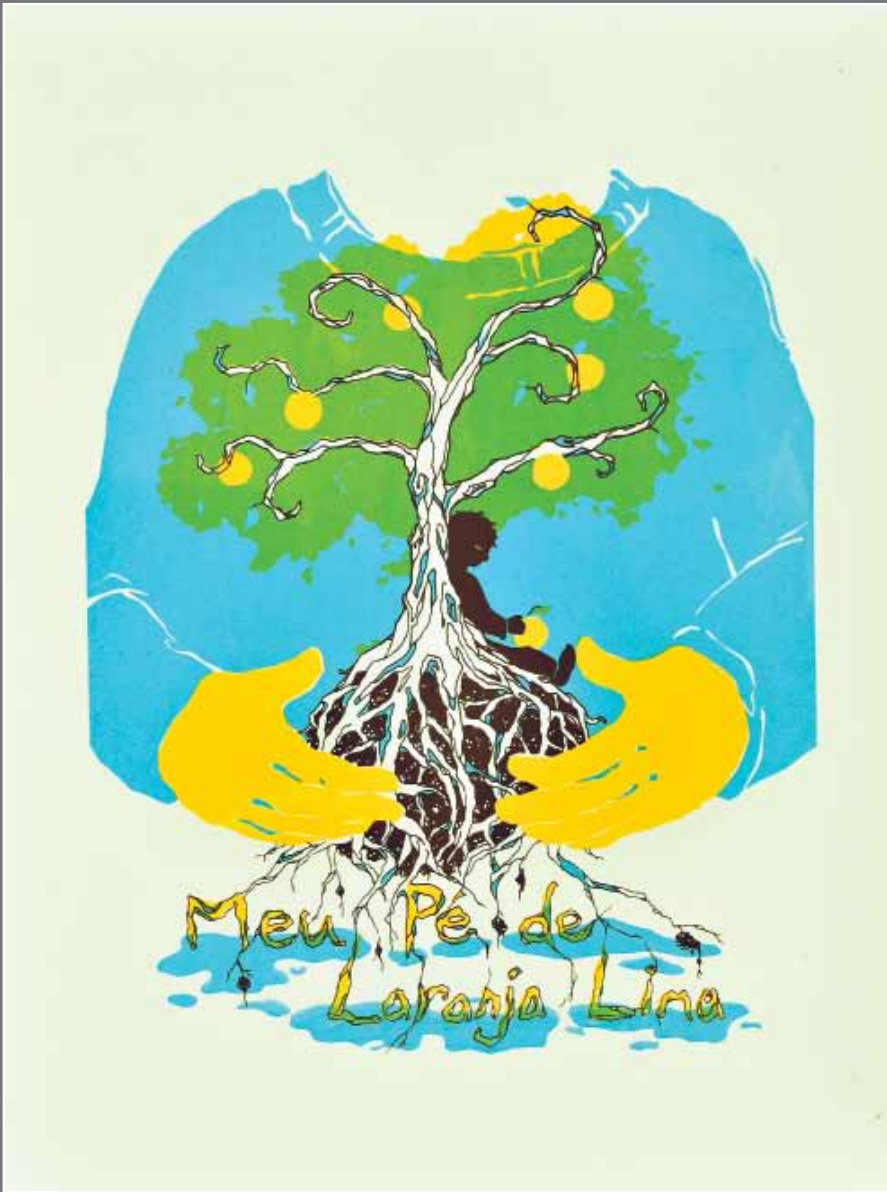
WITHIN THIS WHITE FOREST
by MICHAEL CAVANAUGH



HEAD I: SCREAM
by SHANLEY MARIE CULBERTSON



PASSION OF CHRIST
by JAEWON CHOI



MY SWEET ORANGE TREE
by DA EUN CHO

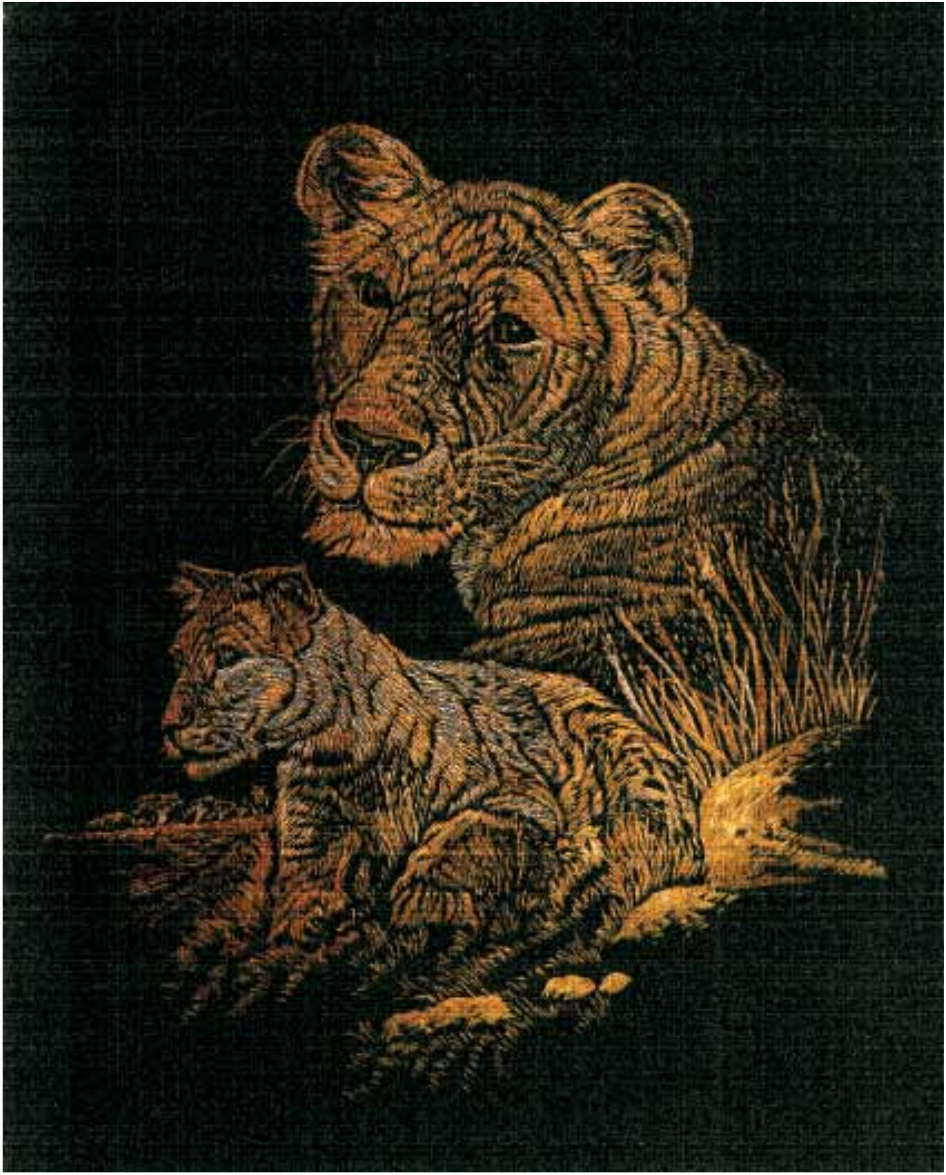
Calliope Third Prize 2010, Art



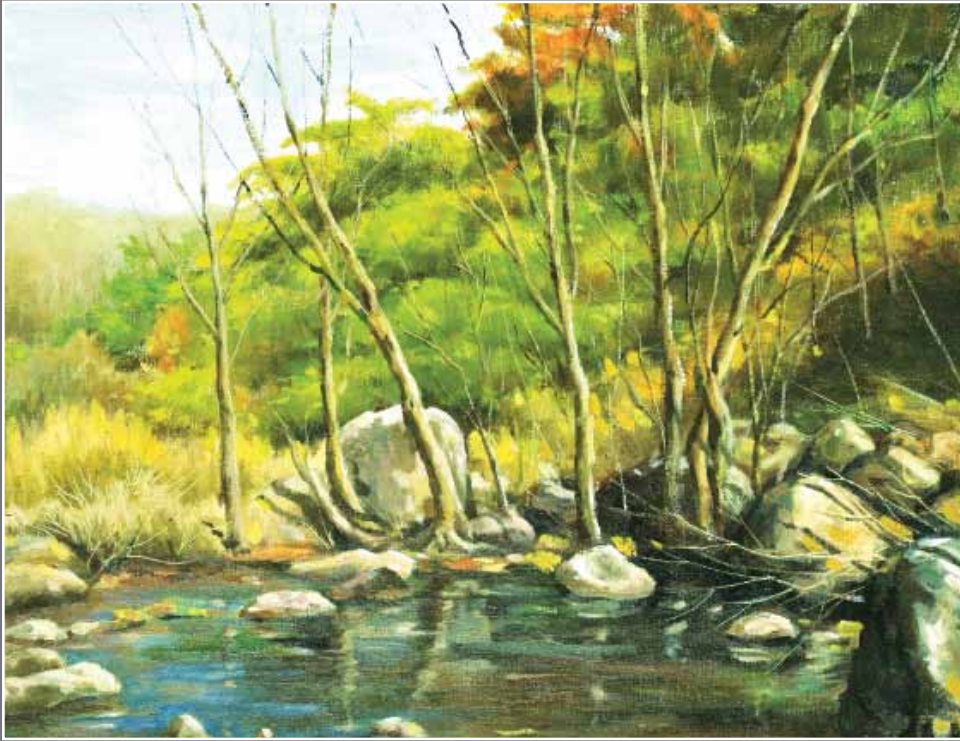
STILL LIFE
by MIRIM YOO



JUXTAPOSITION IN THE MOUTH
by DA EUN CHO



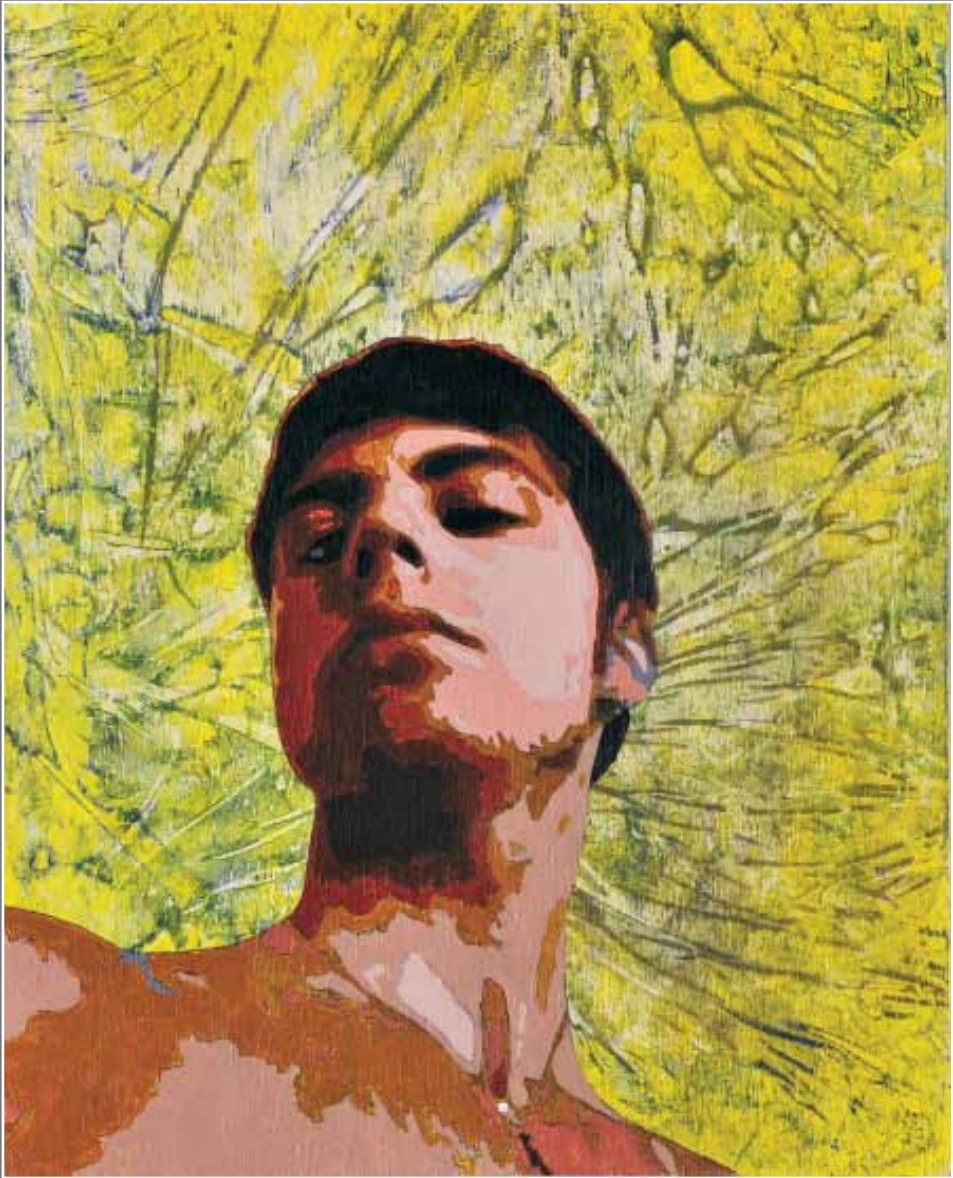
LIONESS AND CUB
by JAVI RUIBAL



LANDSCAPE
by DA EUN CHO



SUNNY AFTER NOON IN THE PARK
by KAREEM SHOURA



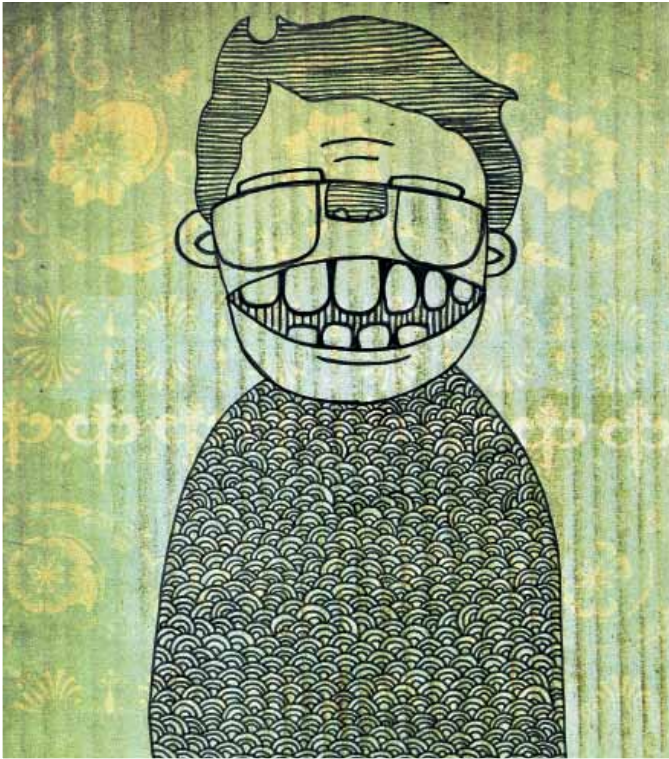
SELF PORTRAIT GONE AWRY
by OKTAWIAN OTLEWSKI

NAIVE BIRD FINDS FOOD

by MAHVASH CHARMSAZ MOGHADDAM

Calliope Honorable Mention 2010, ESL

Naive bird finds food
From the ruthless urban ice
You're oblivious.



MAN IN THE WALLPAPER

by ANDREW FREEMAN

EARLY MORNING ACTIVITY

by SHIH-YUEH CHANG

Calliope Third Prize 2010, ESL

Everyday before dawn breaks, there are some people gathering around the town square of the local temple located in the center of Fongyuan, Taiwan. That square, which has been planted with camphor trees surrounding the side of the square, is as tiny as a basketball field. Even though it is not spacious, it is a good place where the residents in the community nearby begin their vigorous life.

The early morning Taichi practice is the first thing taking place in the square. Taichi, the old Chinese martial art, is widely practiced in communities and is popular with senior citizens for health reasons. In ancient China, it was designed for protection against robbers. As time went on, however, Taichi became a slow, relaxed and peaceful movement which helps to build a stronger body against disease.

About five o'clock in the morning, people begin to gather around the outside of the temple and have warm-up exercise before actual practice. Some of them might spend the first several minutes chattering about things that occurred in the neighborhood, or rumors about politicians and celebrities. Others lean on the wall of the temple comfortably, yawning and stretching their arms and feet. It is still dark and mist covers the square in the silent morning. When the soft melody played by Chinese musical instruments is heard, the Taichi practice starts.

Everyone follows the commands from the instructor to begin movement. Later, they start a series of continuous boxing and kicking movements. The uniform movements follow the tempo of gentle music. They might deliver a punch, spread their arms, strike with a heel or kick with a leg along one direction. Turning and heading for another direction suddenly, they follow up other fluent boxing and kicking movements. The actions keep on coming without a pause. Each skilled action accompanies constant exhalation and inhalation, which helps people to gradually concentrate on their internal sense organs and release external stress.

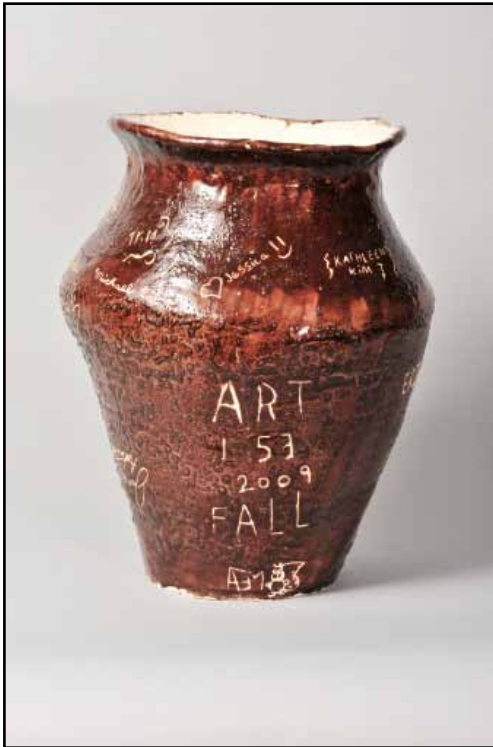
As the sun emerges from the distant mountain, most of them drop a little sweat. The motionless shadow of camphor trees on concrete floor of the square is in sharp contrast to the people practicing Taichi. As the music ends at 6:30 A.M., the morning activity is over and the busy working life begins.

WATER FLOWS SOFTLY

by VIVIAN NGOC CAO

Calliope Honorable Mention 2010, ESL

Water flows softly
I stay, thinking of illusions
The rock still erodes



SPRIT OF ART CLASS

by AMY MATHEWS

SEVEN ATE NINE

by JOSHUA LAWSON

“Oh my. Very interesting. Very, very interesting,” Madame Lucy commented. For a moment she considered expressing it was ‘very, very, very interesting’, but quickly ruled it out. She examined the pretty young girl’s fate-line, taking particular notice of the girl’s smooth, youthful palms. There were no calluses on her warm hands. Lucy rolled her eyes in spite. They were not like her hands, which had cracked and wrinkled with age.

Lucy interlaced her fingers. They were bare. No ring adorned her finger. No perfect symbol of love and union decorated her hand, informing all other suitors of her unavailability. Though at times it certainly seemed there was. Her hands had been warm and smooth and youthful like the young lady in front of her. She had been beautiful once.

The girl stared at Lucy, curiously awaiting her judgment with a quiet smile and an excitement she had not felt in years. It was a smile that embodied contentment, happiness and a life lived fully. It was a beautiful smile, and it drove Lucy mad with envy. It drove Lucy mad with the urge to destroy it.

Lucy pondered this overwhelming desire. She pondered the consequences of death, disease, divorce, misfortune and miscarriage on the joy that graced the young girl’s face.

Lucy hesitated.

She closed her eyes and held her breath for a moment.

Releasing the air from her lungs she exhaled her jealousy, remorse and resentment.

“You are very happy,” Lucy said, looking into the pale green eyes that sat before her. “Your life line is long and your fate line suggests great success. It would appear you have a long and happy life ahead of you. You are very blessed darling.” Her words rung out flat and detached, though the response they evoked in the girl was full of emotion. Full of life and passion. Things Lucy had lost long ago.

“Thank you so much!” the girl’s smile grew, “I can’t wait to tell my husband! Thank you so much Madame!”

The two exchanged pleasantries and the girl soon left the dingy Palm Palace, Lucy’s place of business since the summer of 1977.

She had spent the last three decades profiting on people’s desire for change and yet, she herself had experienced none. Not only was her ring-finger still bare but her hair still worn up and her nails still French manicured. She still took the bus to work and she still spent Sundays at home with a collie that had come and

gone several times but was still named Indiana.

After a few minute's peace, the front door of her store opened and the bells dangling from it rang. She left the back room and made her way to the front desk.

The man who had entered her lair was trim and well dressed. His black shoes shone in the dim light of the room as he slowly, carefully made his way to Lucy's desk. He kept his eyes on the floor, looking up only every few steps to avoid knocking anything over. During these cautious, momentary glances Lucy was able to catch a glimpse of his eyes. They were glazed and reddened, his soft blue irises almost entirely overshadowed with exhaustion. The sight of them made Lucy herself tired.

"Welcome to Madame Lucy's Palm Palace. How are you today honey?"

The well dressed man brushed his fingers through his thin blonde hair and looked Lucy in the eyes. Very professional.

"I'm alright. How are you?" he asked politely.

"I'm doing well, thank you. What can I do for you?" Lucy asked.

"You tell the future?" the well-dressed man asked hopefully.

"Oh, I'm sorry honey. I'm a palm reader." Lucy replied, honestly disappointed that she would be unable to help the handsome young man.

"Right. You tell the future," he responded wishfully.

Lucy was taken aback.

"Honey, I know what I do for a living. I read palms. I do not tell the future," she replied irritably. The young man began to seem less handsome.

"Well, can you do what you do for me?"

Lucy rolled her eyes and beckoned the man behind the desk and into the back room. The room was lit by four lamps, one in each corner. An old wooden table sat in the center with two well-crafted chairs on either side.

"Take a seat honey," Lucy pointed to a chair.

The well-dressed man sat down, looking about the room for a crystal ball.

"Alright, son, let me see those hands," Lucy said reluctantly.

Lucy held the young man's hands. His hands were cold, his knuckles were bruised and his palms were callused. She stared intently at the lines on his right palm, observing his life line.

"Your life long sug-" Lucy was cut off.

"Are there going to be any more Star Wars movies?" the well dressed man blurted.

"What?" Lucy asked, after a moment of confusion.

"Another trilogy. Is there going to be another trilogy? A sequel trilogy?"

Lucy tried desperately to make sense of what he was asking. She remembered Star Wars. She remembered it had come out when she was much younger

and she remembered seeing at least one child with a laser sword every Halloween since. Had there really been two more since then? She hadn't gone to the movies in years.

She had gone to see a super-natural romance once. With a beautiful man. She remembered his thick head of brown hair and his strong arms. She remembered he held her tight. She remembered how hard it was to get used to sleeping alone. She remembered buying a leg pillow.

"Honey, I told you, I'm a palm reader. Do you want to know how long you're going to live? Do you want to know how successful you're going to be? These are things I can help you with." Lucy was quickly growing irritated with the well-dressed idiot.

"I don't care about those things. I just need to know if there's going to be another trilogy." He rubbed his hands through his hair. "Tell me the future. Tell me if there's going to be a sequel trilogy."

"Honey, I do not tell the future, I am a palm reader." Lucy looked him in the eye, emphasizing each word. "A palm reader."

"It's the same thing." The man was growing desperate.

Lucy looked up at the ceiling, shaking her head with irritation. This smart-dressed man was an idiot. She began frantically thinking of a way to see him off.

"Honey look-" the well-dressed man cut her off once again.

"Please," he begged. His fatigued, blue eyes looked into hers. "Please, I have to know. I have to know what happens to Luke Skywalker. Please."

"What the hell are you talking about, honey? I'm sorry I just don't understand."

"I need to know if Luke Skywalker finds love," the man begged. "Does Luke Skywalker find love?"

"Honey, you've got to go, I'm sorry. I just can't help you."

The well dressed man rubbed both hands through his hair and stared at the ground.

"Sorry," he said. He got up and pushed in his chair. "Have a good day Madame."

Lucy watched the man walk out, eyes on the ground, intermittently looking up with caution. She wished someone would call her Lucy.



PAINTBALL PLAYER
by AARON MARTONCIK

MISFIT

by JOY NOEL STRAIGHT

Calliope First Prize 2010, Fiction

Surrounded by men, worker men, with their own slang and “ring a di ding a di ding” swang that isn’t exactly country but is more than just red-neck; the kind of men who don’t go by their real names. Maybe their mothers knew that one day their sons would grow up to be worker men and named them accordingly, like “Luby” or “Bubba” or something. You might be guessing that I felt out of place. The answer is yes, and for this fact I thank God. It would be frightful if I did fit in. I’m quite accustomed to not fitting in and have even learned to find enjoyment as a misfit. It feeds my curiosity about those who are different from me. So this job wasn’t too much of a discomfort. Being born into a family with four boys ahead of me, I was basically born not fitting in. Naturally as my birth, I have continually and mysteriously fallen into male-dominated circles of life. Regardless, the work had to be done, summer morning sleep had to be chronically cut short, and the money had to be made to provide for my ultimate and ironic destination to an all women’s college.

We called ourselves the “Pond Doctors.” It was like a child naming her pet turtle “Cheetah.” The “Pond Doctors” were only one of many different segments of the entire corporation. We were responsible for cleaning, repairing, and building ponds. Building was not exactly our specialty. In fact, the first pond I built with my crew was the first pond ever built under the name “Pond Doctor.” Others in the corporation worked landscaping, road construction and all that other “hoopdy hoopdy,” as my boss would say. My boss (everyone called him Smiley and I never dared question it) was, in his words, originally from “North Cacalacky” and was only working in “firginia” because a judge had sent him here for anger management counseling. He had a ten-year-old daughter back in North Carolina that everyone said he spoiled to death when she came to visit. Simply knowing that he had a daughter eased my fear of his potentially precarious character. Smiley was a talker, so I could pretty much write his autobiography but I would really rather not.

After five weeks into the routine of things I found myself going by the nickname “Cat Tail Kitty” (thanks to Smiley and a Cat Tail picking incident) and shoveling out a massive dirt hole with four slimy shirtless men, Shaggy, Slim Jim, Wisconsin and Luey. We were building our first pond with a waterfall that would end up being half the size of the pond itself. My vocabulary had expanded. I now knew the meaning of tamper, trencher, rubber lining, level,

bobcat and more.

The first step in the pond building process was to mark it out by laying a thick rope tied end to end on the ground in the preferred shape, which in our case was a peanut. The second step was to use our shovels to cut out the simple outline of the pond without digging too deep. Then we cut out the first of the four shelves around the perimeter. After the shelf, nine inches deep with a twelve-inch width, was completed, we measured it to see if it was level all the way around. We tamped it with a manual tamper to compact all the dirt and make it precise and perfectly flat. A tamper is a deceptively heavy tool made out of the densest metal. It resembles some kind of Paleolithic tool with a simple rod sticking out of the center of a thick flat square piece. After tamping the shelf we would measure it again to be sure it was perfectly level. Then we would start on the next shelf. Not really knowing what I was doing, I simply followed my instructions, curiously anticipating the next step. Sometimes I would ask questions but other times I would just wait and watch. Very often my instructions were wordless motions to hold something down or pick something up.

“Hey Smiley, how are we going to line this pond?” I asked hesitantly.

“Damnit!” he yelled, then glanced over at me as if he had just cussed in front of his grandmother. By my mention of the liner, Smiley realized that he had forgotten to pick it up. Smiley’s profanity was predictably followed by a sincere apology. I just smiled, really laughing to myself. Smiley somehow only heard himself cuss every twentieth time and would apologize to me as if it was the first time he had ever slipped up. The funniest thing about it was that I never complained about his cussing. I don’t really cuss myself so maybe that’s where he got the idea. Or maybe it was just his southern gentleman deciding to kick in every once in a while. A good cuss can appeal to my ear, though cussing as a habit is as worthless and irritating as those who repetitively make insincere apologies for their continual offenses. I guess that’s why Smiley’s apologies were so humorously endearing. They were sincere yet his offenses were hopelessly habitual.

Despite our set back, due to the missing lining, we continued to shovel. We shoveled until Shaggy, the loser of Rock Paper Scissors, returned with it. Our job in Woodbridge was an hour away from our offices (where the liner was left), so we all knew we had over two hours of shoveling ahead of us. I had formed a unique system of shoveling. I would place the point of the shovel in the dirt, hold tight to the wooden rod and then pounce on it with both feet as if it were my childhood pogo stick. After the shovel had satisfyingly sliced through the dirt, roots, and rocks I would bend the rod back, heave it up and toss. The men, on the other hand, seemed to have gone to the same shoveling school. They simply placed the shovel, kicked it in with one foot, scooped it up and tossed. We had to use shovels, for the needed precision, since the pond was only going

to be a small fish pond. The beautiful modern digging machine, the Bobcat, rested beside the hole, resigned to the job of holding large rocks in its bucket. The presence of the Bobcat only caused unnecessary frustration in my weary digging body. Knowing the potential of the Bobcat, how it could tear a hole in the ground within a few sweat-less scoops of its bucket, exasperated me.

After the tedious process of digging four perfect shelves, tamping them and making sure they were level all the way around, Shaggy returned with the liner. We started the process of laying down the flexible rubber. We cut the excess liner off from around the edges and placed large rocks, some over fifty pounds, on the shelves to make the rubber mold to the shape of the hole and stay in place. At this point our pond looked more like a child's attempt to make her own backyard pool. Smiley installed the filter and worked on constructing the waterfall. He used the trencher to tear up a narrow ditch in which the cords leading to the filter would run. The trencher looked like some kind of wild beast. This was not a machine you could ride, but you could stand behind and grab hold as if you were gripping two horns. It was about the size of a buffalo, with an oversized chainsaw contraption sticking off its front. As I was lazily entertained by Smiley's labors over manipulating the beast, I checked the time. My watch said six o'clock. We had worked overtime. There was still much more to do before the job would be completed. We had to push back the mounds of red soil from the banks, fashion the waterfall with slate stone and pebbles, cover the surface of the pond with stones to protect it from punctures, and then fill it with water, plants, and fish. After the job that day, I was designated to drive the bulky, flat bed, stick shift truck to the dump.

The actual work was not what bothered me. It was the way I felt it might change me. My hands were calloused and rough. My body was covered with dirt, bruises and sweat every waking summer day. If nothing else, that summer gave me a new appreciation for the luxury of being clean and well-groomed. The more I worked the more I felt that my femininity was being stripped away. I couldn't help but be curious about whether the roughness and filth ever got tiresome to the men. Did they ever yearn for cleanliness the way I did? I pondered over these questions one early morning as I half dozed in the tiny back seat of Smiley's truck. Before gaining any enlightenment, I was startled by his voice, "Cat Tail Kitty! Di ya want any grub before we git ta the site?" This was the moment each morning that I reconciled with the reality that it was indeed another day of work. It was another end to my sleep. I sat up abruptly and said, "Ok, I am officially awake. Punch me in, boss." Smiley laughed and we hopped out of the truck to once again congregate with all the other worker men at the worker man hour of seven a.m. at the beloved worker man convenience store, 7-Eleven.

It was here, every morning, that I was reassured in the most barbaric way

that I was still indeed feminine. This 7-Eleven was like the secret meeting place for worker men. There were no outsiders present. They were all rough, unkempt, booted, donut and beef-jerky eating, coffee-drinking, men. The line behind the register was Hispanic, black, white, long, and solely occupied by these wordless men. All the wordless men's eyes stared at me. I was an outsider. How did I know about their meeting? Was I really one of them? Some stares I could interpret as curious while others were the kind of stares a woman gets only because she is a woman in the most sexual sense. I felt the kind of femininity that I despise, the very opposite from what I might feel when a man opens a door for me or twirls me while dancing. In the midst of this silence I could anticipate going through every morning, I would find myself forgetting my desire to be feminine and just wish that I could man-morph, at least for the fifteen minutes I spent in that convenience store.

The summer came to an end, the money was earned, and I hadn't man-morphed, but I had gained something. I had a new understanding and sensitivity to the unspoken American subculture, worker men, with their own walk, talk, and eating habits. For most of them, work was their livelihood and future. For me, it was only a means to supply for my future, my education. Driving to the women's college, my eyes were drawn to the worker men on the side of the road. I found myself wondering, what do they go by? Are they yearning for cleanliness? Do they have a daughter that they love to spoil or are they misfits like I was, soon to move on?



SUPRA INTERIOR

by AARON MARTONCIK

COUPLETTES FOR JEANETTE

by JOSHUA LAWSON

Calliope Second Prize 2010, Poetry

Goslings float in single file
on a lake in the spring sun

and green leaves grow anew
and this town is dying.

Mother tends her garden
and a collage of flowers bloom

and Father is paid in cash
under the table, under the sun.

Birds rejoice in choirs
over flocks of mourners

and a funeral procession proceeds
down neglected public roadways

and a eulogy is written in poem
and this town is dying.

ETHIOPIAN COFFEE CEREMONY

by TEGUWAZE GEBRESELASSIE

Calliope Second Prize 2010, ESL

The coffee ceremony is a very special event in Ethiopian culture. The ceremony is carried out in the presence of guests, during religious holidays, and simply on a daily basis. The ceremony is a unique example of Ethiopian hospitality. The major parts of this ceremony are washing and roasting the coffee beans, grinding the roasted coffee, and brewing and serving the coffee with snacks.

First, the coffee beans are collected from farms or bought from any grocery store. In this traditional coffee ceremony the coffee beans are washed with gently warmed water by hand until the beans are clean and then a fire is started in a small charcoal stove. The washed beans are put into a small pan and held over the fire. The ceremony is led by the women dressed in traditional Ethiopian costume of a white dress with a colored woven border. The women roast the coffee beans by shaking the pan back and front, left to right, so the beans won't burn. Once the beans are roasted and turned black and shiny, the room has filled with an enticing aroma of the freshly roasted coffee.

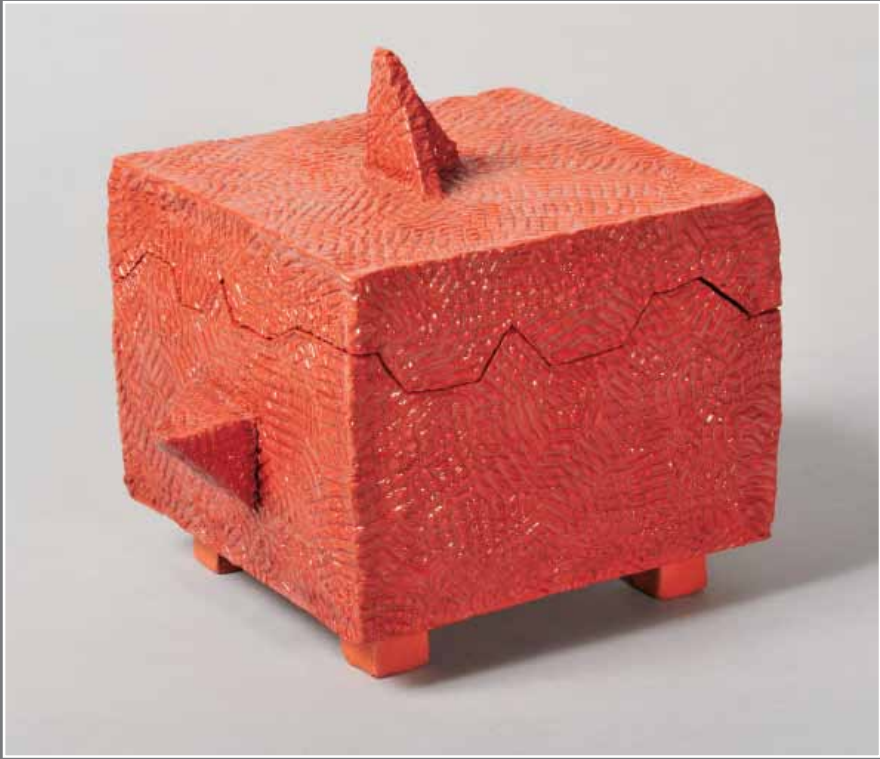
The next part of the ritual is traditionally grinding the freshly roasted coffee in front of the guests. The beans are ground in a small bowl called mukecha. The mukecha is a deep and small wooden bowl. The coffee beans are poured inside, and then crushed with zenezena, which is a wooden stick that is used in up and down movement until the beans are crushed into a fine ground.

The last step of this ceremony is brewing and serving. The water is added into a black traditional clay pot called Jebena; then the ground coffee is poured into the pot and put over the fire until the coffee boils. The smell of boiling coffee fills the room tempering the sense of all the participants of the ritual. The coffee is then poured from the pot to white ceramic cups in a continuous motion. This is a very essential step because the coffee remains free from the residue. Finally the coffee is served with snacks like popcorn, nuts, or traditional bread.

In most parts of Ethiopia the ceremony is also a moment when thoughtfulness is given to human relations. Social, political, and economical issues are raised and major community problems also discussed. The ceremony is a unique lifestyle and an example of Ethiopian cultural hospitality.



VASE
by LAURA LAVEDAS



Box
by LAURA LAVEDAS



PINK VINEGAR
by COCO COMBEMALE



FROZEN STREAM
by ERIN R. STREET

SISTERS AND SNOWFLAKES

by ANASTACIA JACOBSEN

As I woke up this morning and rolled out of bed, I looked out the window at the snow and thought, “What a lovely day today will be.” I had called out sick from work today because of a horrible stomach virus I must have picked up from a coworker earlier in the week. As I stumbled downstairs in my medication-induced haze, I turned on the TV to watch the local news. Flashing across the bottom of the screen like a Hollywood marquis was a listing of the local school closings. I watched eagerly to see if indeed, school had been cancelled for the day.

As I sat on the couch watching the screen so intently, I drifted off to sleep and dreamed about the blizzard of 1996, which coincidentally also occurred in February. That winter I was in the eighth grade at Rocky Run Middle School. I remember sitting on the couch that February morning, like a potato, as my mother would call me. I was watching and waiting to see if I would have school that day. My teacher had planned to give a test that day, and I was not looking forward to it. As I watched the marquis across the bottom of the screen, I saw that school had been cancelled for the week. It was like Christmas all over again; I was so excited that I ran into my sister’s room to wake her up and tell her the good news. That storm was every student’s dream; by the time the storm had passed, we had been out of school for one week and had a second week of 2-hour delays each day.

As I woke up on the couch thirty minutes later, I looked out my back window at the snow on my back deck. It was really starting to accumulate quickly. I laughed to myself, thinking about the time that my sisters and I had built a “snow family” on the deck at my mother’s house. This was quite a feat of creativity. We rolled out each of the 15 balls to build the five snow-person family in the yard, and then had to carry each ball up the steps onto the deck. At first we did not think it all the way through and were making balls that were simply too large to lift. However, after a few tries we started over, leaving the big balls in the back yard at the base of the steps. We each built ourselves and then worked together to build our parents. As we worked to accomplish this task, my mother watched out the kitchen window with a smile on her face, no doubt because her children were finally getting along.

No good snowball should ever go to waste. As soon as we finished the snow family on the deck, my sisters and I each rolled one of the massive snowballs into the front yard. We discussed what we should do with them. One option we talked about was stacking them to make a super huge snowman in the front

yard. That was quickly outvoted as we were out of carrots for noses, as all five carrots were already in the snowmen on the back deck. After that was out voted, we decided to make these snowballs into snow-chairs. We packed snow around the base of each ball for stabilization, and then carved a seat out of each ball. We sat in our chairs for about 10 minutes before our rear ends were simply too frozen, and we went inside.

Being that we were going to be snowed in for the weekend, my sister and I evaluated the status of the refrigerator and freezer. We determined that we needed popsicles, medicine and cough drops (for me), and movies from Redbox. We got in the car and drove to Wal-Mart before the roads got too bad. When we got home from Wal-Mart, I took some medicine and curled up on the couch to watch one of the movies we had rented. Somewhere in the middle of the movie, I fell asleep, and slept for the rest of the day. Oh what a snow day it had been.

I woke up the following morning, to look out the window and see that the snow had continued to fall. I decided to have a light breakfast and watch the rest of the movie. After I had finished watching the movie, it was time to take it back to Redbox. My sister called Giant to make sure that they were open and we donned our snow attire and headed out on foot to the Giant behind our house.

Along the way there, I looked out across the fallen snow and remembered a game that I played in the snow with my grandmother as a child. It was a game called the fox and the goose. We started by making a huge circle of footprints in the snow in her back yard, and then making a cross through it. One person was the fox and the others were the geese. It was like tag, where the fox was it, but you could only move within the paths that had been created in the snow. I loved snow days when I was young because it meant we were able to go to Grandma's house and play the fox and the goose, until we were so cold our fingers felt like they would fall off.

We made it to Giant, with few complications. We returned the movies and bought ingredients to make chili while we were there. As we started walking home, we passed some steep sledding hills, which reminded me of the times that my sisters and I would go sledding in the back yard at my mother's house. It was not the steepest hill but it was good enough for us. We loved to go zipping down the hill on the red sled. We liked it even more when the neighbor's dog "Charlie" would chase us down the hill from the other side of the fence. We laughed and played for hours on that hill every time that it snowed. It is one of my favorite memories of time spent with my sisters.

As we continued on the way home, we trudged through snow that was up to our hips, and I nearly lost a shoe along the way several times. I thought back again to the blizzard of 1996, when I had lost my boot in the snow by the lamppost. I had wanted to see how deep the snow was and had plunged my foot

into the snow bank and lost my boot within the snow bank in the process. My mother told me that I would have to wait for the snow to melt to find it and that in the meantime I would not be able to play in the snow. My sister looked out for me that day because she did not want to play in the snow alone, so instead she dug my boot out of the snow bank for me.

As I look back at the memories of my days in the snow, I realize that all of my memories are of times spent with my sisters. I must be truly blessed to have two such wonderful girls to spend my life around, getting into trouble and skating around it. Either way, I know they will always be there for me to dig my boot out of the snow.



PORTRAIT OF A CAMP FOLLOW
by KAZUE WEISSMAN

THE SECRET TO THE PERFECT PUMPKIN PIE

BY KIMBERLY JONES

People all over the world claim to have discovered the secret to the perfect pumpkin pie, but I believe the secret is not in the pie, but in the adventure before the baking. Every autumn when the leaves start to fall, when the air has a bite to it, and the children return to their classrooms, the pumpkins are ripening and waiting to be picked. This is when my four daughters Victoria, Michaela, Shelby, Alea and I find a local patch and search for the prized pumpkin. With that gourd, we will prepare its meat and add seasoning for taste so that we can make it into pies, cakes, breads, and other delights. Some will be frozen for another day of baking when we can relive our adventure.

On the morning of our outing to search out our pumpkins, there is an excitement in the air that rivals Christmas Day. The morning fog is rolling off the trees to reveal a beautiful array of reds, yellows and green hues in the trees. Mittens, scarves, and coats are donned as we pile into the car with our mugs of hot chocolate. We are on our way. Arriving at the pumpkin patch, the girls spy the tractor and wagon that will serve as our transportation to the back forty where the pumpkins wait. This is the only part of the day I am not looking forward to. Itchy hay and lifting the cumbersome red wagon onto the tractor bed are hard but necessary. I do not know who is bouncing more, the children or the hay trailer, as it drives over the ruts and divots in the ground. The kids love it, so how can I say no. After we disembark, the girls hit the ground running. Each pumpkin is carefully inspected. Which one will be claimed as the girl's prize? One child wants one that is tall and skinny; another wants one that is short but perfectly round. The little ones just want something that they can carry back to the wagon. I am looking for color and size – bright orange or white and something that will easily fit into my microwave for steaming later.

After each one is chosen and dusted, we make our way back to the barn. This can also be an exciting time because of all the other pumpkins that we pass. The girls often change their minds or just want to add more to the wagon, but I remind them that we can only take home what we can pull. Back at the barn, we drink some warm cider and the girls climb on the mounds of pumpkins and bails of hay. This is the perfect time to get a group picture for the scrapbook.

Back at home, the girls are ready to make the pie, but they are unsure how to get it from the pumpkin to the pie dish, so we head to the kitchen. My eldest daughter, Victoria, puts on an old movie to set the mood and we start washing

the pumpkins. As I cut off the tops to scoop out the guts, there are oh's and ah's from everyone. Alea, my three year old, loves to squish the guts and seeds in her fingers. With the seeds washed and set aside for roasting, it's time to start steaming. Each pumpkin is cut to fit in the microwave and covered with clear plastic wrap. Water is added to steam for about 20 minutes. While we wait for it to steam, the girls gather around and draw funny faces on the small squash we picked out at the barn. Shelby and I love the ones that look like little green ghosts. Once the meat is tender, we carefully scoop it into the blender to puree. By this time there is a sweet sent of pumpkin in the air. Anticipation is growing so much that the girls are nearly beside themselves. It's great fun as everyone has a part in the process. Part of the pumpkin puree is set aside for pie later on, and the rest is measured, packaged, and labeled for the freezer. This will last us all year and each package has just the right amount of pumpkin we will need each time we bake.

Now it's time to bake. The crust is rolled, and all the ingredients are mixed together in the Kitchen Aid mixer. Each girl takes a turn adding a spice or ingredient. The flour is always a treat because it looks like it has snowed in our kitchen. While the pie bakes, we take care of the clean up and sit around the fire with some warm cider and talk about all the memorable things from the pumpkin patch.

I am reminded of a quote by John Greenleaf Whittier, "What moistens the lips and what brightens the eye? What calls back the past, like the rich pumpkin pie?" Is the pie rich in love or sweets? To truly be the perfect pie it would have to be love. After a day like ours, we will have a taste of perfection every time we use our pumpkin and remember our exciting day. That is indeed a secret that should not be kept to ourselves.

SUMMER SCHOOL

by JAYE CLARK

Today was the day my carefree, tomboy heart had been waiting for all summer. School was right around the corner and I wanted my vacation to go out with a bang, not a whimper. Little did I realize I was about to learn the biggest lesson of my seven young years before the first school bell rang in September. It was the end of August and, “Heck, summer vacation was almost over,” I griped to my big sis. She was five years older and bossy as hell: “Tie your shoes, comb your hair, and quit picking your nose, yada, yada, yada...” but she’d always looked after me even when we fought like cats and dogs. Grandma and Granddaddy T., big sis and me had motored down to Cape Hatteras in the old Lincoln, or “the Continental,” as my Grandma used to call it, for some fun in the sun. As usual she insisted on bringing along Pierre and Fifi, two of the most spoiled, yappy little poodles I’d ever laid eyes on. There was never any point in arguing against bringing them because where Grandma went, so did Pierre and Fifi. I spent the ride trying to ignore Grandma’s “babies” with their smelly hides (I don’t know why poodles stink more than other dogs; they just do).

Granddaddy T. loved Cape Hatteras because fishing the deep blue Atlantic was his favorite thing to do. “No finer place in the world to land a big one,” he’d preach to anyone willing to listen. I was an ardent disciple and shared his passion and sense of adventure. Hatteras had always meant brilliant sunshine, warm water and shining seas. The sea had always been a benevolent giver of her treasure from the deep: fish, fish and more fish. No reason for me to doubt her now, but this day she would offer a lesson she believed I needed now, not later.

She sat swaying gently in the breeze, our sleek and shiny white fishing vessel. “That’s her, the Lucky Lady,” Granddaddy T. pronounced. Grandma lagged behind, trying to keep Pierre and Fifi from falling off the dock and ending up in the drink. Suddenly the first mate was there, helpful and bustling, grabbing gear, bags and dogs, “Welcome aboard!” he boomed. Next Captain Jim, a scruffy looking old salt with smiling eyes, pumped Granddaddy T.’s hand, ever hopeful. “Here’s to a good catch and a big tip,” he laughed. Even the fishing rods were standing at attention awaiting their marching orders. Finally we were getting down to business: Lucky Lady, with blue skies, calm seas and no clouds on the horizon. It was time to damn the torpedoes and full steam ahead!

As we headed further and further out to sea, the gentle hum of the engine and warm sun on my face lulled me into a peaceful drowsiness. Lucky, lucky beautiful lady of mine, land ho is long gone. I thought back to last summer at the “Y”: Mom laughing, “She swims like a fish!” I’d felt at one with the water

and fast as lighting. Now, full of myself, I thought, "Yep, old Mother Nature ain't got nothing on me." My daydreaming was interrupted by Grandma's yipping dogs, "Let's use 'em for bait," I told Big Sis. She smiled and said, "Behave yourself," then turned away and sat on the deck.

Finally we had arrived at "the spot," a secret place known only to Captain Jim and Granddaddy T., the place where all our fishing dreams would come true. The place to catch "the big one," the stuff legends are made of, and I never doubted it for a moment. The fast paced rhythm of bait, cast, hook'em and net'em began. The first mate performed this wonderful dance in a fluid motion, offering the occasional, "Nice one girlie!" I was so caught up in the frenzy of our fish dance, I failed to see the lesson I had coming was already in motion. Not that it mattered; nothing I could have known or done would have stopped it.

Darkening skies, rain drops splattering and now ungentle winds, forceful and punishing, ended my ignorant bliss. The sound of dogs barking, big sis and Grandma were so sick, oh God I might throw up too..... "May Day! May Day! Fishing vessel, Lucky lady taking on water in heavy seas with both engines down!" Captain Jim screamed into the radio and then yelled back at us, "Everyone hit the deck!" No need to drop down as I was thrown hard onto the deck by the rocking boat in heavy swells. I was too frightened to be sick; diesel fumes mingled with the smell of seawater barreling over the sides of the boat. The hull hit the sea like a concrete barrier after each huge wave. "Ouch," I was hit on the head by falling debris from the boats galley, and the water was getting deeper. Lucky Lady, I was betrayed! We were tossed about like unbalanced laundry in my Mom's old washing machine. I could think of no one else on the boat; I could not raise my head, afraid of what I might see. I could not scream or cry. I was just so damned afraid.

I wanted to be back at the "Y," swimming like a fish, a big fish in a little pond. But I realized I'm not a big fish, just a guppy, swimming with the sharks. Mother Nature, I'd been schooled! Lesson over, the bell has rung, please let me out of class now, I thought. But I was staying after for detention and so on we rolled and pounded, rolled and pounded until I was numb inside and out.

Suddenly, over the howling wind, I heard a booming voice "Lucky Lady this is the Coast Guard, prepare your vessel for rescue!" At last, at last I could raise my head up and look around. Lesson over, class dismissed. I could go home and things would return to normal, but I knew I would never feel full of myself again: just a guppy, not a big fish after all. Those days were gone, never to return. They would remain forever on the bottom of the sea, aboard the Lucky Lady.

DARK WAS THE NIGHT, VOYAGER GOLDEN RECORD

by DAN CONWAY

I want the recipe to muted, scratchy blues
I want to know
how many burlap collars
how much speckled ash
how long to marinate in slick, black mud
underneath sweltering southern porches
for weariness to seep up from bare soles
and swell through open gullets



HOBART
by OKTAWIAN OTLEWSKI

OF THIS SKIN

by NATALIE POTELL

Flaccid waters still, beneath the feathers
of my shorn shoulders
but your hands
rest where they may, amidst
 Thirty-two iron teeth
catching my hair as they unfurl
under the pressure, of a thumb
Leathery hands you tan
with fleeced oil from the germ
 of this skin
buckling, inside the mass
of a cicada's
stained glass wing
Within the frantic pull
an aureate pink egg
 worms through
As I bury who I am
 in my bones
and pray
they never break.

LEILA

by SHABNAM TEHRANI

The dwindling flame of the kerosene lamp was enough to light the words on the page. “Oxygen is an element in the chalcogen group of the periodic table.” Leila whispered the words as she leaned back against the rug pillow, her legs stretched out on the kilim covering the naked floor. Her black entangled hair embraced her neck and she adjusted the red blanket over her shoulders. She looked among the scattered books around her in search of her notebook and spotted it to her left. Extending her right arm and bending her torso over her twisted, still hand, she reached for it with the other. Opening to a blank page, she wrote in Persian script, “Chalcogen.” She closed her eyes and repeated the word. Her mother snored lying on a comforter across the room. But it was the tick-tock of the clock beside her she felt the most. Three days remained before her chemistry exam. “Oxygen is used to produce steel, plastics, textiles...” she read.

From the window, she heard the flutter of wings and a gentle drop on the ground. She read on. The whizzing sound approached her. And she looked to catch a glimpse – a ladybug flying around the glass chimney that encircled the flame. She turned to her book. “Oxygen is produced from water...” The circling continued, as she saw from the corner of her eye. She turned to face it. The bug came closer to the top edge of the glass chimney. It paused and landed on the top curved edge. Slowly it crawled inside and down the constriction of the chimney. It stopped and spread its wings open, but it was unable to fly. The flame waned. Leila’s eyes followed the wick from the burner down to the glass fuel tank. It extended to the bottom surface of the tank, penetrating the last of the lingering drops of oil around it. Leila looked back to the page, moving her eyes over words, lines, and paragraphs, unable to blink. The black text started to fade until it became one with darkness. Leaning back, she heard the sound of flutter whirr past her.

She was awakened by the sound of piercing bells, the alarm. Looking towards her mother’s bedding on the ground, she saw the top blue blanket pulled aside and the beige comforter empty. Her eyes surveyed the books and notes around her and landed on a single sheet containing the periodic table of elements. She folded it and placed it in her pajama pocket. Leaning on her good hand, she rose from the ground. Out the window she saw her mother leaning over the howz, the garden pool. She was sinking clothes into the water and rubbing them against each other. Leila wrapped herself in a floral shawl.

Her mother, Bahar, smiled upon seeing her step out of their door. “Salam azizam, my dear,” she said, continuing to massage the clothes fiercely.

“Salam. Why so early on a Friday?” Leila blinked hard upon seeing the sun.

“Maryam is coming. I want to finish my chores before she comes.”

“I don’t know why you always anticipate her arrival so much.”

“One of these days she’ll bring us good news. This town relies on her match-making skills.” She grabbed a white garment from the howz and twisted it tightly, drawing the water out.

“Maman, please.” She stepped hastily across the yard.

Spreading out the garment wide, she gave it a swift shake and placed it on the clothesline. Leila felt a few drops of water hit her face.

“Where are you going?” Her mother asked as she pranced back to the howz.

“I want to get the key to the basement.”

“Ahan, you finished the oil again. At least go wash your face first.”

“You’ve already showered me with some cool water.” Leila smiled as she approached the landlord’s apartment. She reached out to knock when she heard pounding on the front door. She looked to her mother whose body was bent over the howz, head turned sideways to see the door.

The door was pushed open and the partial figure of a woman peeked through it. Then a gentle knock was heard. “Anybody home? Am I interrupting anything?” The piercing voice of Maryam cut through the cool, autumn air of the yard.

“Befarma, welcome. Come in, come in.” The mother dried her hands with the end of her long, brown skirt and waltzed towards Maryam, her short, plump figure now fully inside the yard. They kissed on the cheek. “Leila, come, see who’s here.” She gestured with her arms.

Leila walked over and greeted the guest.

“So good to see you!” Maryam smiled as she brushed a few gray strands of hair from her forehead and tucked them under her gray headscarf. “Am I here too early? I hope I’m not intruding. Ah, you’re doing laundry. I came at a bad time.”

“Not at all. It’s good to finally have you here. Laundry can wait. Please come inside.”

Maryam and Leila sat next to each other on the floor, leaning against the large rug pillows opposite Leila’s corner. The mother was placing a kettle of cardamom chai on top of the samovar. Leila took out the paper she had placed in her pocket and began studying it.

“I’m sorry. This room is so messy. Leila was just about to clean it before you came. She studies a lot, you know.” Then, turning around, she saw Leila lost in the paper she held. The mother whispered loudly, “Leila!” She shook her head, glancing at the page. “We have company.”

Leila sighed and set the paper aside.

“Maryam, something interesting happened a few days ago.” The mother sat

back against the pillow in Leila's corner, pushing aside her books. "An ant had crawled inside Mina's ear – you know, our landlord – and Leila got it to crawl out by just placing a drop of olive oil in her ear!" The mother exclaimed, smiling towards her daughter, who smiled back weakly.

"An ant! You're kidding! How did an ant... and Leila thought of that? Well, what fortune to have her here then for your landlord!"

"Yes, she was very grateful." The mother smiled proudly.

"Indeed, Leila's a very courteous, intelligent girl." Maryam took off her glasses and began rubbing them with the tail of her scarf. "And I think you'll be pleased to know my news."

"What is it?" The mother said, trying to stay calm.

"If you recall, Bahar, in your last visit to my house, there was an older woman there, Khanoom Ameri. She has a brother, three years younger than herself, who is looking to get married. And though Leila was not there that day, I did point you to her and told her that you have a very respectful daughter. She came to my door just two days ago and said her brother is very eager to meet her." She took her glasses and slid the ear stems inside her headscarf. "What do you think?"

"I knew she was asking me so many questions for a reason. We're lucky I was there." The mother laughed and glanced at her daughter. "Leila! What did I tell you this morning?"

The mother was sitting with her legs bent and parallel to each other. She was leaning slightly forward with her hands by her sides, touching the ground. Khanoom Maryam sat tall, smiling. The kettle began boiling, emitting the smell of cardamom.

"But we don't know anything about him." Leila said in a soft voice. "And he probably doesn't know much about me either."

"Well, I told Khanoom Ameri all about your demeanor. And no doubt she's told her brother," Maryam explained.

"Of course she's told him." The mother nodded.

Maryam continued. "Well, actually, I didn't think there was any need to tell them about your... just let them meet you first. I mean, just look at what you did a few days ago. Most people wouldn't know how to get an ant out of a human ear with two hands, much less with one."

Leila pulled her shawl away from her left hand, which lay as still as she could ever remember. She reached for the paper she had set aside and rose up. "Thank you for thinking of me with such a high regard. But I know that I'm not who they're looking for. Enshallah, God willing, I'll see you again very soon." She stood, tucking the paper under her left arm. Then she stepped out and walked over to the landlord's apartment. She would finish the periodic table by sunset. But more oil was needed for the night to illuminate the chapter on compounds.

MASS-PRODUCTION

by JESSICA REDMILES

Calliope Third Place 2010, Poetry

When they leapt out of the sky
The first inkling was of birth and they fell to the ground
Sleeping.
Second came the dream of growth, they stretched
Into the soil, and were born.
The curtains rose on flat baked earth
But the diva was a no-show, so
They relinquished the role to the sleepers
The dreamers
And it was made the tapestry of deep magic sparkling on opening night.
Then on second show, the evening matinee
The lights screeched down on their unwillingness as
Randomness was forced out of its patternless flow and
In the glare of the whiplash of light,
Each and every last of them withered before overture.

