

The Mitre 2007

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The Mitre

2007

114th Edition



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Bishop's University

A literary tradition since 1893

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Introduction

This year's Mitre was made possible by the strong support provided by the SRC. In particular, special thanks must be issued to Sarah Benn and Joy Chandler, who were always helpful in the production of the journal.

Thanks must also be given to those who submitted their creative works for publication; without your contribution, this journal would not be. The wide array of submissions, from faculty, students, alumni, and members of the community attest to the strength and value of this project.

And to the casual reader of the Mitre: thank you for your patience! At long last, the Mitre is here, and hopefully it will remain for another 114 years...

Sincerely,

Steven Edwards
Editor, 2007

Poetry

Twelve Flocks of Geese

Twelve Strait Formations
Flying High In The Sky;
As I Stand There Thinking
I Wish I Could Fly-

Way Up High

Prolicking With Tree Tops,
Dancing With Clouds
Kissing The Sun Beams
Above And Beyond It All
Leaving This All Behind
Never Looking Down Below
Flying On My Own Like A Careless Bird
Free To Fly Away And Catch My Dreams In The Sky
Directions Unknown To Me, But That's Okay

As Long As I Can Fly Away...

Twelve Strait Formations
Flying High In The Sky;
As I Stand Here Knowing
I Can Fly If I Try.

- Cecily Van Horn

Morning Comes

Morning comes
to flowers and fields,
from the ridges to the valleys,
each petal trading darkness for light,
passing dawn
one to one.

- Frank Willdig

Self Portrait: Beginning

Beginning my self portrait:
this is the colour of Mercy
on my cheeks, across my chin,
in the uncertain space between my eyes
a tentative truth

Outside the studio,
I imagine the emerging face
peeling itself from the wooden canvas,
easing its awkward self off the easel
to stand, balancing
on the beginning of arms and bust,
have a look around,
shake the bits of dust that settled
on the new paint in the night

- Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt

In the Summer Air

Tragedies in the summer air
Boys and girls, fun despair
Love a blaze, blinding glare
A skin too soft a skin too fair
With all these shirts but not a thing to
wear
Sex and drugs no passing care
Tragedies float in the summer air
A beautifully easy thing to bear.

- John Mitton

Canticum

Ubi candelae incendii cantant

Et aurum leti labrum ambulat

Luna rosam docet argenti ful-
gat

Caelum donum stellarum est,
hortus magi

Et cum fubulae gladii

Letum docet vitam vitae cantat

Et gladiorum non cantant

Ubi aurum est in toro leti

Ubi candelae incendii cantant

Song

When candles sing of fire

And gold walks the lip of death

The moon teaches the rose to
gleam of silver

The sky is a gift of stars, the gar-
den of a magician

And with tales of the sword

Death teaches life to sing of life

And sing not of swords

When gold is in the bed of death

When candles sing of fire

- Stephanie Mason

Quebec

Quand ta blancheur s'est mise
à danser et courir en kamikaze
pour mourir sur ma peau,
je me perdais encore dans tes rues
pour finalement me retrouver maintenant
te cherchant au milieu de moi-même.

- Ann-Marie Labbe-Morin

Ilium's O.K. Corral

They were noble men responding to times of need,
Dignified in courage,
Accomplishers of many a deed.
Like those warriors,
Of yesteryears most deadliest times,
Cowboy to marshal knew of confrontations ugly rhymes.

From swords of bronze -great blades to deeply cut,
Find revolvers and rifles,
With stock, barrel and butt.
From piercing thrusts,
And silver caps in swift flight,
Comes bedlam in bloodshed and justice by might.

Time through cycles and wayward days, ages gone by,
Saw reckoning as that,
Which exchanged an eye for an eye.
Those men of hard,
Who were forced to die before trial,
Now walk uneasy through the gentle halls of white isle.

Chaotic was their nature: hell riding along as companion,
Hunting murderess foes,
And reeking havoc from a stallion.
Reminiscent of men,
Who, in rage and hunger, did flee to Troy,
Killing all within sight, murdering Hector's innocent boy.

From the sons of Atreus to the likes of Doc Holiday,
Men imposing their will upon others,
Is no alien way.
For, justice has but not one truth,
Nature, or worldly design,
Because the Furies of now are still easy to find.

- Alexander Duggan

The Glove and Lack Thereof

The hide remembers the shape of her fingers
slender with tooth-tortured nails.
It has released the warmth of her aching knuckles
it once had possessively sheathed.

Cold beads of sweat from her tightly clenched fist
remain embedded in the lining.
The strong salty smell that has been left behind
smells of her stiff bony knees.

The matte black tone like her rigid back bone
so sharp with a cold, dull pain.
So stiff and alert, her shoes and her skirt
cram her thick bones into place.

The chapped skin of her hand, stabbed by bones from within
is exposed to the flesh ripping wind.
She desperately tries to hide it away,
embarrassed to be so exposed.

She shoves her raw fist as deep as she can
into her red woven coat.
She won't let the pain of her vulnerable veins
be noticed by inquisitive strangers.

- Katrina Payer

Tell Me about It

Tell me what you saw
in the distant countries you visited
through the monochrome deserts and
the glistening waters of the world

Tell me what you heard
in the tropical jungles of the Amazon
through the whispering mist and the deafening waterfalls

Tell what it smelled like
in the crowded markets of Marrakech
filled with fresh woven baskets and leather shops

Tell me what it tasted like
in the sushi parlors of Tokyo
dining on maki-zushi and drinking warm sake.

Tell me what it felt like
when you first put your fingers
through your lover's silky hair
after a long journey home.
How it felt like to slip between
the soft sheets of your bed
after hours of anticipation.

Tell me all about it
so I can dream of the tropical jungles of the Amazon
of the markets of Marrakech
of the sushi parlors of Toyo
and of the soft touch of your fingers through my hair.

- Sonia Sabourin

Sitting on Repeat

I hunker on the benchmark of my boredom
the TV rests,
angles in its empty eye.
I gaze at myself in its current vacuity
(I'll call it a she)
pathetic?
(guys call their cars girls)
yes, pathetic.

melody strangles me,
a heartbeat on repeat

Wild horses couldn't drag me away . . .

this song was meant to be shared
with someone else.

Instead,
all I have is the reminder of his face
and an innate pressure
to further express my denial.

I can't deny his constancy,
even here on this couch
and trapped in that box

Screw his silence
I can fill it with her.
Is this a hallowed place?
Does relief flood in with her double-dimensions?
not really
not enough

I long for intimacies,
to escape these cushions
and numbness
no more bars and glass--
I can bear no more calamities.

expect nothing, I quote--that's when you'll get it
though not while I sit on my ass, of course

how does one escape

escape?

- Olivia Anastasia Arnaud

Self Portrait II

There's an affection in the way the lines
rub up against each other
thick and layered in
a comfortable knowing,

Each brushstroke is
a year a moment a breath.
You can see the layers of skin upon skin
stretched, porous.

I decide it is no longer my face
but a face set free.
Today it does not have a name.
It is an invention.

I put the canvas on the floor,
face up
and straddle it.
Breathe into its nostrils.
At night I slide it under the bed,
away from the kids.
Eyes open wide, watching,
it reaches into the dark.

I am making a turban for it
from a scarf I brought back from India:
pink and red with tiny gold buttons shaped like stars.
It will be a covering for the hair and ears and throat
and maybe a veil for the eyes-one that you can lift and see under,
like a child's pop-up book with flaps.
I think about this at night, when the house is mostly dark.

- Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt

In the dark

1 I feel as though the world is torn
apart,
fornormed and scorned without a heart.
In doubt it seeks but has no start;
Scorned and lonely in the dark.

2 Meditation and long records
Of sheep in fields lacking shepherds;
Tracking carpenters and flightless birds
It falls apart just like a leper.

3 Concentrating on how He died
Now creates a moral slide;
His oral teachings are forced to hide,
Liars judge those that lied.

4 The war these days is killing men,
Filling coops with widowed hen;
Sewed up troops get cut again
And anxiously wait for it to end.

5 By condemning things that should-
n't be...
Wouldn't we breed mediocrity?
Lead not with fist but openly-
Scriptures synergize in unity.

6 The world will crumble and we will
see it.
Stumble at first then bit by bit-
Shattered dreams from a 'noble' fit;
Streams of blood from the communal wrist,

Heed these words that I impart:
Think before you embark
Fires come from a single spark.
Lest we die lonely in the dark.

- Jordan Conrad

Until Today

I woke up this morning and she was gone,
I never longed for her;
until today.

I walked through the places I had seen her
face,
I had not loved those places;
until today.

I took an old photograph out of the box,
I had not framed it;
until today.

I heard an old love song on the way to the
bank,
I had not understood it;
until today.

I put on the shirt she gave me,
I had not worn it;
until today.

I read a joke in her letter,
I had not laughed at it;
until today.

I picked up the hair pin from the side table,
I had not noticed it;
until today.

I looked out the window towards her place,
I had not seen the view;
until today.

I woke up this morning and she was gone,
I never longed for her;
until today.

Paul DiClemente

Untitled

Our hands no longer agreed
fell stolid and dumb
into the deep wells of
our autumn jackets

I absorbed the weather in my countenance
We walked near the lake without speaking
Our juxtaposition grew arbitrary
You became less determined

I bought pieces of cake for us at a cafe
to mark the end of a good run
I studied your face for a long while
You were astute enough to know why

- James Hatch

Since

I drummed my fingers,
Dirt soiled his, roots in between
Eroded, unmet.
He gazed as mine settled,
On the cultivated earth,
To seek, to bare his.
Held up against yours,
Every touch, a loss of height,
I have just flinched, since.

- Kate Jabalee

If you only knew what you put me through

The bitter taste dulls the searing pain
While shadows on the wall become vivid pictures
The room comes alive and crazy demands seem to be fulfilled
Anguish burns my heart as I once again confide in the bottle

My empty head leads my oblivious body to the temple of my doom
Voices echo all around,
But it seems a foreign language to my intoxicated head
Ignorance allows my body to move in mysterious ways

I am in a world where pain no longer exists
One last sip and reason and rationality cease to exist
People surround me but I cannot feel their touch
I only feel burning desire and the longing to please

I share a forbidden dance with someone I once knew
That door once closed now leaves a window of deplorable opportunity
My feelings seem to suffocate me as I gaze at distant memories
My thoughts leave me as I am taken away

My parts seem detached from each other
As they go where they are told to go
I go down I road I have traveled before but this time I am not alone

Every touch is a taboo thrill
Each kiss seems like it is our first
It all seems so unreal the mind deceives itself
Our twister game, like a tango for two

The night seems an enchanted dream
This fairytale with no regrets or mistakes
The alcohol finally puts me to sleep
As the room circles my head

Searing pain and blinding light wake me to the reality
Regret floods my head as I remember my not so fairytale night
I cry out in vain, my fear struck heart now in my head
What have I done!

My innocence is gone, my integrity is lost
And for what?
I can't drink this away, no bottle can dull this pain
Because I let you have what I never wanted to give you
I let you scar my soul and break my heart for the last time that night

The memory of that night haunts me day and night
Not because of what you did to me
But because of what you didn't
You didn't love me and I don't think you ever will
Every glance I get from you now hollows my heart
This is something I'll remember forever but all I want to do is forget.

- Jasmine Mason

Hers

you bend like a reed
around what he wants to see
can't you think of yourself
for a while?

his words won't get softer
for you or your daughter
no matter what you can put
in your smile

but you feel that someday
he'll leave, and you'll stay
to tend to the time
left behind

- Kayla Webster

The Island

The path weaves its way between the trees.
The sun filters through the branches,
casting mottled shadows on the trail.
Pillows of moss crouch on the rocks.
Leaves and twigs strewn across the ground
snap underfoot.
Roots bursting from beneath the soil
stretch across the path.

Squirrels argue, chasing each other
around the trunks of trees and across the branches.
The trill of a cicada fills the air.
Wind rustles through the trees,
carrying the smell of earth and pine.

My veins fill with sap and
my heart beats with the birches.

- Ellen J. Russell

Melancholy

Beautiful Silence driving me sad
Holding my heart like a crushed rose
There's peace in the air
But not inside my head where
my thoughts attack each other
violently though they can't hurt
So I let them be, knowing
that, when it's over
I can return and cry
in the sweet silence of sadness.

- Jennifer Schulz

The Girl

She will never be a painting on the wall,
Still she is beautiful.
She has the natural beauty of one filled with life.
She sees no shame in admitting what she believes.
She hides no truths from herself,
Silent one moment and passionate with strength the next,
She stands tall and her problems must be faced.
Saying only what she means, she means all she says.
Sides of her wonder yet to be uncovered hide away in the shadows,
Smiling at the knowledge that she knows not where she stands.
Still, uncertainties will make her reflect,
Stealing her confidence in herself.
Stopping her is impossible,
She believes in her dreams,
She will be.

Jennifer Schulz

A Night That Never Ends

A night that never ends is a day that always sleeps
Nothing now can halt the darkening dusk.
Twilight twirls in unison with the bedimming sky
as the sun is laid to rest;

No need for daybreak.

The wind whispers through the shadows
as the trees shudder from its touch.
Humidity subsiding to the bitter chill of the sun's absence.

Night jettisoned by the sun.

Footpaths dimly lit by flickering light;
intimacy obscured by darkness.
Familiar scenes now filled with mysterious distinction;

Contentment lost.

Only thought can comfort us from the death of day
thoughts of sun-soaked hills and secret shade.
We can almost feel the heat rise from the pavement,
almost see the sunlight filter through the maple in the yard.

Almost.

For a night that never ends is a day that always sleeps
and nothing now can halt the darkening dusk.

- Paul DiClemente

Something...

Something is not right,
In this world that is my own,
I feel distant and unsure,
Silent I drift alone,

This world has changed around me,
Leaving nothing in its wake,
The walls are closing in,
And I find it's all been fake,

I fight with all my strength,
Against this unrelenting force,
I want to stop it in its tracks,
But I can not find its source,

Nothing can be done,
To something that's not there,
I look around me desperate,
But can find no one to care,

I'll shut my eyes to hide my fear,
I'll learn to fade away,
There's nothing to be done,
To keep it all at bay,

The tears run cold along my cheek,
In a never ending flow,
Fading colour from my eyes,
There is nothing left I know,

I look with washed out eyes,
At a starless darkened sky,

No light to show me where to go,
No one to see me cry,

Alone I turn to a broken world,
Where dreams all pass me by,
This place that seems familiar,
It's where some come to die,

With no one by my side,
In this land of broken dreams,
Shattered pieces biting deep,
I am ripped apart at the seams,

Will no one come when I call,
When I cry out in desperate plea,
Forgive my darkest sins,
Please just let me be,

Should I stay all alone,
In a world so bleak and dim,
Maybe there could be more to this,
Maybe it's not all so grim

I want to see what's left,
In this blackened world of tears,
To let go my inhabitations,
To finally face my fears,

I'll need some one beside me,
To leave all that I've ever known,
Not someone that will criticize,
And cut me to the bone,

I can not do it on my own,
So come and take my hand,
It seems so small compared to yours,
In this cold forsaken land,

I have you hear so close to me,
It all seems so unreal,
How is it that you can know,
Exactly what I feel,

Promise that you won't leave me,
Like so many that have come before,
Surprised I find myself believing,
That there could be something more,

So please help me to free,
My soul that has fallen from grace,
Please take me from my darkness,
Please free me from this place.

- Lesley McKirdy

Careful

She told me "Just be careful", so of course I ignored her. I thought I could handle it, I'm an adult, I don't have to fall in love. I can just be friends I said. "Just be careful" I was told, and I thought I could handle it, I don't have to fall in love, I can just flirt I said. "Just be careful" she repeated, and I thought I could handle it. I don't have to fall in love, I can just fuck I said. "Just be careful", she said with a sigh, knowing I couldn't handle it, although an adult, and falling in love.

- Nick Wilson

Ginseng & Taurine

I pour the liquid down my throat
relishing the mediciny taste.
Ginseng, taurine, caffeine.
She tells me it's not natural
and that it's bad for my body.
I don't care. I drink it down
knowing how much she hates it.
I savor the taste as though it's salt in a cut.
She looks at me in anger and fear.
I look her in the eyes, raise my drink in salute to her
and shave another day off my life.

- Nick Wilson

Hadrian's Wall

We built our defenses,
Stretching as far as the eye could see.
We had civilization.
Finally, we had peace.
The barbarian hordes were kept out.
We had our freedom.
We had our utopia.

Then their sappers came,
Digging under our walls.
They came in the night,
Sneaking past our defenses.
They came openly, in gestures of friendship.

They took our tools, and usurped them.
They took our weapons, and turned them
against us.
They took our utopia,
And destroyed it.

They made their own wall.
They made us the horde.
But we made their tools,
And we made their weapons.
And we shall come in the night,
Sneaking past their defenses.
And we shall come openly, in gestures of
friendship.
And we shall take back what is ours.

Nick Wilson

Twilight

I walked a lonely stretch of land,
a forlorn, wasted stretch of land
where golden temples used to stand
back in the Days of Awe -
but now these sleep beneath the earth.
I sang a war song without mirth
& walked upon these piles of dirt
& remembered the Law.

I saw a star low in the sky -
a barren, sullen span of sky -
a single star & wondered why
the world has gone amiss
& even as I looked at this
somewhere far-off a church bell dinned;
I thought of how we traded bliss
for chasing after wind.

I am an old man even now -
an ancient cripple even now -
& still I always wonder how
come we may never know
when not to talk & not to take
or pay attention lest we break
our oaths & finally forsake
our share of the morrow.

- Etienne Domingue

Krung Thep

Sky scrapers stand, against the night
As neon signs, they speak
To me, as they lean in
Closer, to teach
They edify, as street signs mumble
The cityscape lies down,
Floquently, what I cannot read
He covers me with letters
As my taxi bridges, the gap
Relating the 'here,' to home

- Kate Jabalee

The River

He approached with misgivings
Awkward and a little green
The flow was fast and menacing
Full of dangers unforeseen

Twice he was rescued by the river
But he learned, to his dismay
The same current can take you under
Some rivers can flow both ways!

Upset, but well-bred, he began to wail
"Forget the fabled beginner's luck
'Cause in the end, it never fails,
Cards will bite you in the ... buttock!"

He abandoned his chair
Escorted by his distress
His shoes heavy with despair
And his wallet weighing less

- Daniel Duvck

When I Come Home From the Country

I take refuge with my mother's
plastic bird
which she bought at Wal-Mart.

Together we sit with the house plants
and sing one song
over and over
at five-second intervals

while the city slips
into its nightly
dull orange death.

- Michelle Barker

Variations

I would like my house
to play like a violin
strung high to the North
the triumphant symphony
of weather sweeping
its solicitous bow
across the strings
while friends
change places
in upholstered seats
open programs
shift in anticipation.

And I stand by the stairs
in the belly of this cello
to conduct the spheres,
patiently tapping
my baton, awaiting
the attention
of the orchestra
the blustery musician
who has come to play.

- Marjorie Bruhmuller

The Places I Used to Be

There once were places I always went
never out of place.
I once lingered in the room with the hanging star
too comfortable to escape.

I haven't been there in some time,
haven't felt that contentment

The room at the top of the stairs
was always home,
never rushed or worried;
stressed or stifled.

I haven't been there in some time,
now too rushed, worried, stressed and stifled.

There was a porch with a burnt out light
the darkness didn't matter
the luminescence there
was of a different sort.

I haven't been there in some time,
now dark is just dark.

There was a backyard
too small for a deck,
too hilly for games,
we didn't care.

I haven't been there in some time,
where is the deck to place my chair?

In the front there stood a tree
too tempting to climb with its strong limbs.
We never had the urge to climb that tree,
too many things preoccupied our thoughts.

I haven't been there in some time,
I wonder what it feels like to swing from its
branches?

There once were places I used to be,
I haven't been there in some time.

Paul DiClemente

the crush
the crash
moonlight liquor
above the ceiling we look past
the devil in wait

the harpy
the banshee
ascending vigilance
privy to all our fantasy

the book ends when you begin to lead a lead pen through my
face through my brain for what art's in this head

my pocketful
my empty soul
you are going backwards, always I forward
in this circle

you get out and you never look back
not for no one

our eyes from a fifty year old dragon
the mind a '50's alcoholic's wagon
broken
faltered
not without its mistakes and
not unused

the crush at midnight
your own folly to take flight
the crash at dawn
or two hours or so after you wake you're gone

a finger-lit dance
burning paper with adult water like a trance
and clothes impart all sorts of things like this
I am better off beginning our conversation with your lips

Love is the last commitment you will ever make

Row

World play-ground

The government says its time to play the game of world dominion.
We line up,
face to face,
against or foe,
and the generals yell "hide and seek".

We count, One, Two, Three
then shoot.

One, two, three
then shoot again.

With every onslaught there are less people to find.

One, Two, Three
Shoot!

Then...
there are none,
but the prisoners, the wounded,
the dying and the dead.

The generals retire from recess with the sounding of the bell,
and the government starts the re-education of the young cadets.

- Kathleen Chiappetta

Ísland

Cool sun caressed our cheeks

North wind slid over our skin

We found the entrance to hell
And healing waters
To sanctify the union

Between Hell ----

Earth ----

and Heaven ----

- Kayla Webster

A Place

This place does not encourage time
to rush the day thoughtlessly,
the shadows pass at their own pace,
as warblers flit from tree to tree.

No schedules or agendas state
the course the long grass has to take,
and leaves will fall in their good time,
with no appointments they must make.

And I may worry through darkest night
and endure the tyrants' ceaseless clock,
their mindless fiats disappear
when in this peaceful place I walk.

- Frank Willdig

Statuesque

(inspired by Pablo Neruda's "To the Foot From Its Child")

On the left
It felt not quite right
It dangled
Lightly
With room to fill
Tons
Well, at least some
I could twirl it
It would whirl
And as I twisted it
It worn my flesh
I shouldn't have toyed with it
It was in its right place
On the left
They say it needs to ripen
To strengthen
Like those affections
I mean ours, our affections
They say I'll grow into it
But I have become still
I can't twist
Away
As I tugged on it
It tore me
As I wanted out
It dug in
It was soldered
To its right place
On the left
A second ago
One
Just one
It dangled
Heavily
Heavy enough
To fall
Off

They say it needs to sow
To solidify
Like those ways
Ours, of course, our ways
Our lives
They say the displeasure will wane
And I will come to appreciate it
As numbness crosses over
The threshold
It poured into my mould
Like plaster
And I was cast
Aside
On the left
Never right
When days were mine
I held no hand
Now mine is as touched
As sculpted
As cold
As marble
I have become none
We have become one

Kate Jabalee

I Need a Poet

the truth is

I'm no poet
and this is not a poem
but I do know some poets
and if I pay them
they promise to make me truly
divine

I've had such a sweet life
with so many colours
and enough cheap love in
different cities
to paint all the dreams
for the rest of my nights
but now my friends are finding themselves in others
living in sin with cats and wine
stepping naked out of youth
but I'm all spent now
and the perfect romance in all those teenage hand-jobs
is like a word mouthed but not sounded
and nobody will watch the sun rise with me
and I need a poet

- James Hatch

Dierdre The Automaton Goes Shopping

Fine was the morning,
Reflected in the shop-windows of her understanding,
The shimmering brasseries and virginal articles,
Lighting the dawn in hues of honey and lace.
She had struck with a crowbar, at her lover's face
His Ego was glistening through glass that was morning,
Splattered about blades of grass, however few
Clinging with desperation, toes curling
Straining to see,
Past frames and dead plastic little girls,
In the rustle of hedges

- Nikita Gourski and Patrick Gough

Self Portrait III: Negative Space

This is me skating,
one hand stretched out to keep from falling, one hand raised to the sky in adoration or a friendly salute.
I'm wearing thick white mittens because of the arthritis in my hands. Inside the mittens the hands are playing the new Chopin prelude. I have to keep them moving or they'll stiffen, and I won't be able to play the allegro. If you look closely, you can see the small finger in flight, through the mitten, emphasizing the staccato with a slight flourish. The mittens are from last winter's village church bazaar, a good deal and warm for the ice.
The left ankle wobbles inside the old skate because of the rusty blade and the double set of socks that make the feet too tight in some places. The middle toes are cold and the calf is threatening a cramp if I don't sit down soon.
There's a thermos of cardamom tea in the hut to the left; you can see part of the wall and the red door in the painting. The thermos is inside Brian's old hockey bag, next to my boots. I just want you to know that part.
I'm thinking about last spring's drawing class and the German model and how awkward I felt when I saw her at the theatre in the puppet workshop. I know her body so well.

- Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt

Dancing in Quebec

We dance with language here,
an uncertain waltz
of English French
français anglais

trying not to step
on each other's toes
as we find the right pace

patient when someone is just learning
the steps,
always yearning to make our bodies
flow like music.

Every once in awhile
we abandon caution
leave the waltz behind
and just dance

and somehow our feet follow
the saxophone's dizzying crescendo
without translating
every note.

You're doing the shimmy
while I try a mambo,
but each of us knows exactly
what the other one means.

Michelle Barker

Five and Twenty

I'm in the closet with Meme,
Johnny's taking a nap
Mommy's making dinner
Daddy's not home from work yet

I'm surrounded by stuffed animals;
they keep me company

There's a distinct smell
of buried laundry in here,
the scent of old pine
and Granny.
I won't know it till I've left this place,
but I won't ever forget this smell

I don't know it yet,
but I'll lose Meme
to the ravages of a hamster
in a pre-renovated bathroom

I'm still small enough
to hide behind the wood,
(spruce, or that hedge kind, maybe--
it gives me splinters
against worn yellow carpet
and luminous pink walls.
I can still curl up,
flanked by the wall and the footboard

I can see the maples in the window
naked and shivering
through the crack in the doors.
My queen-sized bed,
a hand-me-down for guests,
like when Grandma comes to visit

Meme hugs my shoulders
I cradle Shanny in my arms
I put on her furry jumper
because she told me she was cold.

I kiss her on the cheek
so she doesn't cry

Balls in her cabbage-patch head
have yet to rattle around--
my stepsister has yet to shake them loose
and I have yet to ruin her face
with crayon make-up

My parents have yet to separate
or my house to sell
or my dogs to sleep

I have yet to truly hate school
or know what it means to be depressed
or that my animals
will never wake up
and talk to me

I'm still in the closet,
under colours I will one day despise
with only the expectations
of going outside to play,
of falling asleep in Daddy's arms,
of getting to eat at the dining room table
while there are still only four of us
and no other chairs.

I have yet to know
that growing up
is the one thing
I should never have wanted

I have yet to wish
that I could stay in here
forever

- Olivia Anastasia Arnaud

Yellow Flowers

And then the dancer left me tho not to sing
but to wake a dormant eye thru the mist.
Broken music chords playing not a thing,
her laughing and lost to a boy never kissed

As I wait to sleep on a night forever long
the moon takes from my heart a shade of pale,
it is white and blank and absent any song
yet in its void remains her face under veil

So I sit along an ageing window sill
as visions of her dancing find my head
the flows of her beautiful body kill
the joy and memory of her dance in my bed

And then my lover left me so not to be
yellow flowers falling off a dying tree.

- John Mitton

You are never & I am now

I tire of easy solutions,
of the singsong make-believe
of boisterous institutions.
When everything is like
shattered mirrors -
when everyday feels
a little heavier -
I force myself awake.
Here - I can see

the light about your face
becoming dim, & slovenly
embrace the night within.
Let all the world
explode unnoticed -
because anyone can
start a panic
but turning the other cheek
is a real trick.

You are never & I am now.

- Etienne Domingue

My Mona Lisa

Martial once wrote of the scarus that emerged,
Fooled by man, rod,
And a fraudulent fly.
To be taken from below,
Into our world above,
This act, when perfected, can define beauty.

At first the fly rests solitary and motionless,
Soon to dance,
With the changing winds.
It is a careful number,
Binding man and fly,
Where bamboo gracefully extends his arm.

The result of this process stands alone,
Like none other,
Found within man's repertoire.
The fly's flight ends,
Upon mirrored glass,
And is met by ripples as a fish comes to rise.

Having surfaced, the fish has been deceived,
Tricked by a few hairs,
And some feathers.
Once hooked,
The fish will crave freedom,
But the rod can be stronger than all his will.

Forever he shall remember the fraudulent fly,
Always doubting,
Nature's tantalizing colours.
And, for his effort,
He is to be remembered,
Now the subject of a solitary mental canvas.

- Alexander Duggan

Strange Light

Pale light shines
Drifting like a star across
The water
Bright candescent
But soft shine across
My face
With open arms I embrace
You waver in my sight
Water clouding my eyes
Yes still
Such sweet sight
That you are before me
Frozen by some force
Your gentle touch
A wisp
Warm along my face
Trace each curve
Crave each touch
I give in
To the beating of my heart
To the rhythm of the waves
Eyes look deep
To eyes that look again
Close dark embrace
Your not there
Shadows cruel jest
Winds ghostly grasp
Let me be
Dreams come again
And let us embrace once more.

Lesley McKirdy

Republican Lament

You feed lies to full minds
Force it down and leave no waste
Regurgitated for another
And leaves a bitter aftertaste

You, with your dollar-sign tears
They snatched the feather from your cap
They, not knowing who they are
Throw your dart at the map

Like a vulture starved for power
You trade human blood for oil
Trying to hide uncertainties
Lay faceless bodies in the soil

Eyes sewn shut by propaganda
The stars and stripes begin to burn
Strike dumb those who contradict you
Your peoples' heads are beginning to turn

United we stand; we stand united
But laying in filth, we stand by you divided

- Katrina Payer

Taken

One last kiss to hold
A thousand heartbeats in one
Reluctant release
Words of love, of tears for sake
Of memories and dying time

A wave from the train
With fumes of coal from the track
Hesitant regret
Sighs of a breathless missing
Longing gone undreamt, undone

Entire lifetimes taken
Waiting on the platform, still
Dissolved and broken
An attempt to run from earth
And come back down to heaven

- Olivia Anastasia Arnaud

The Dancer

Shift over the edge, shift again
a line drawing with no shadow
Just a bareness that can't be traced
black ink and a white body, red lips

Coarse off-colored paper
years and years lie beneath
More is said that a voice could not realize
run your fingers over it

A comment not drawn
but taken from the style
Minimal, simple, understated; infinitely complex
the hidden kaleidoscope

Experience could be so nihilistic
but with such vested interest
That nothing becomes everything
and everything is every moment

Her face bears a knowing expression
as she dances with no one
If we could cure that sadness, somehow
let her love us

Except that only thin black lines
run along the paper
Our love is lost in the translation
an inadequate art.

John Mitton

You Please My Senses

You are the water drops
tip toeing on my skin after a dip in the lake
My body gulps you down

You are the taste of the sun on my lips
your warmth fills me up with such joy
that even my toes are smiling

You are the swift dip in the road that
makes my stomach squint unsure
but then you catch me and carry me on my way

You are ginger snaps and snow flakes
tingling my tongue as I close my eyes
and savour every spark of sensation

You are the sound of grass bowing
beneath my naked feet
delicately giving, seductive and calming

You are the stars reaching out
with five shy fingers
You dapple me with pure light

You are the tassling corn
as it shimmies to the wind's tune
my hair, my eyes, my heart dance with you

You are the slab of rock and slats of dock
pressing against my back and feet
your musty, cool strength secures me

Your everything
is everything
I need

Katrina Payer

Downstairs

Quickly, quietly, I go down
the squeaky, slippery stairs,
only to see, placed on the cold
marble mantel, the lonely, limp flower
in a shocking vibrant red
with numerous flaws up close.

He slowly pushes the door closed,
as I take one more step down
but pause, as I see his furious eyes of red.
I remain still as I feel his stare
and I dare not glance to the flower
as the shiver makes my blood run cold.

I step once more and feel the cold
floor beneath my feet, as I am closer
to him, and further from the flower
that has wilted down
in the vase by the stairs,
and I look back, his expression I read.

But all I can see is the red
in his eyes, and the cold
accusation I understand with a mere stare.
What happened to our closeness,
A time where nothing could bring us down?
Now all that remains is a wilted flower.

Gone are the days with flowers
and chocolates wrapped in red
foil, as now its gone downhill
and all that was once warm turned cold
in our hearts, and led me close
to another...I deserve that stare.

The children haven't a clue upstairs
that Mommy, in receiving a flower
threw away her marriage, and closed
the door on the best years of her life. The red
of my teary eyes release drops icy cold
which leave marks on my cheeks as they roll down.

But as long as the stairs hold a vase of red,
a flower wilted by the cold,
hard raw truth, I can close my eyes knowing I've let him down.

- Lisa Shaver

Sea Voyage from Skye to St. Kilda, 1616

The wind being strong and stark
seemed to blow the Hunter and Bull
across the sky
while the moon staggered into
a sea of frost and fury.

Angus cried out to the echoless black
Donald gapped the rails in pure terror;
the world is a fearful place
when returning to its edge.

Huddled on deck,
cowering on the tossing sea,
we cast prayers to the God of Calvary
and where Mananan once held an awesome
sway,
the faith of the fathers preserved us from wreck.

Morning now comes.
And with it a calm.
Here are the islands of sheep and shoal,
a blasting geology,
of granite scarps and staes;
and the mists of Hirta arise
to greet both ship and tern.

I long for the mouth of Mairi
and the wee ones waiting on the sand.

Frank Willdig

Rainy Day Blues

Soggy shoes on my feet
With no direction, leading me...
Mind distracted with thoughts
Of those sunny days gone...

My entire soul shivers cold,
Wishing for the warmer times,
When you and I were together...
But those can never ever be...

Sitting on the window ledge,
Drifting on the edge,
Of this peripheral daze...
Watching the rain drops,
Trickling down reflections of me.

Without a friend in the world,
To sit on this window ledge,
To save me from the edge...
Lonesome, I am stricken by
These rainy day blues...

- Cecily Van Horn

Photography and Artwork



Untitled - Sandra Alain



Sunset Lullaby - Sandra Alain



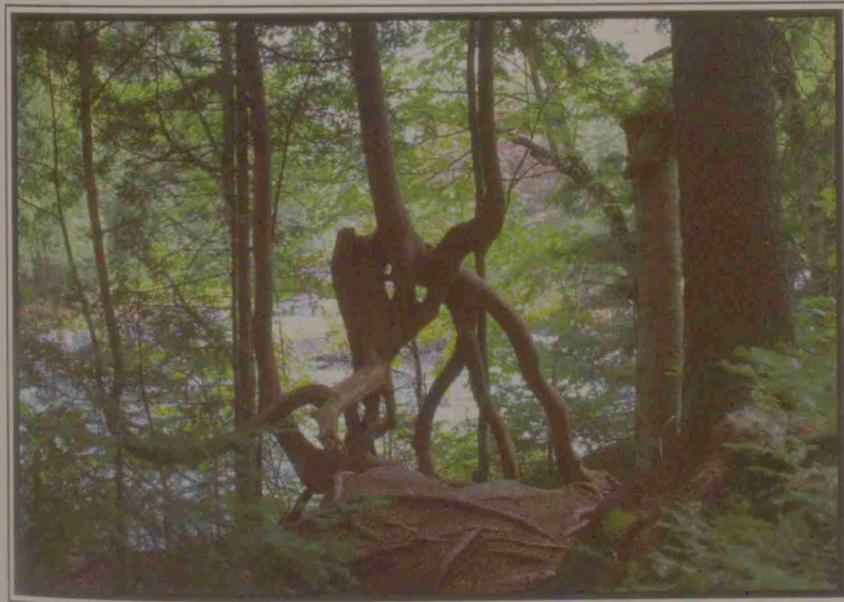
Equilibrium - Stefan Bruda



Maple Leaf - Stefan Bruda



Window - Stefan Bruda



Contorted Tree - Stefan Bruda



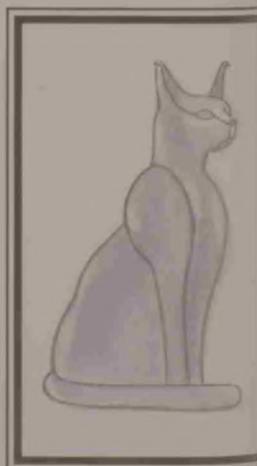
Coyote (Left) & Unipod (Right) - Etienne Domingue



Untitled - Myrie Eaton

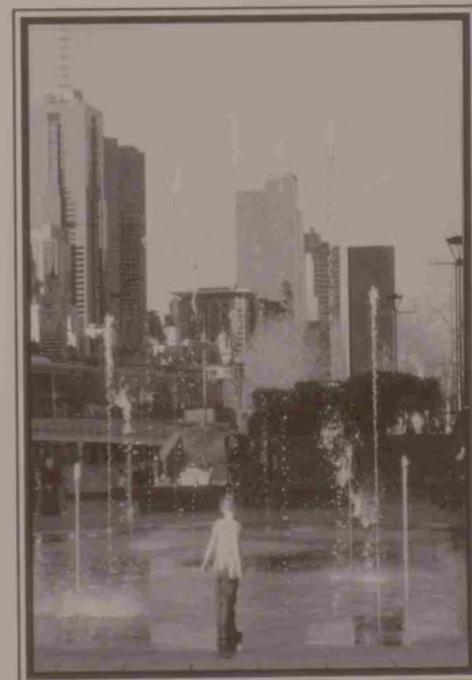


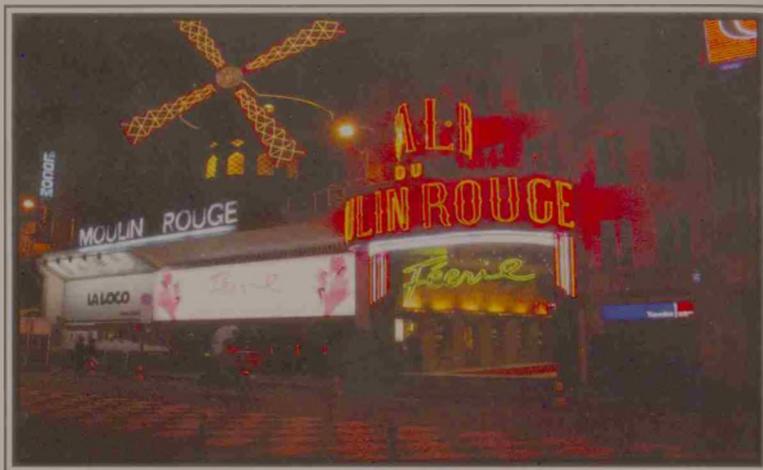
Untitled - Jane Tian



Bast - Phoebe Chan

Girl Edging the Fountain -
Kate Jabalee

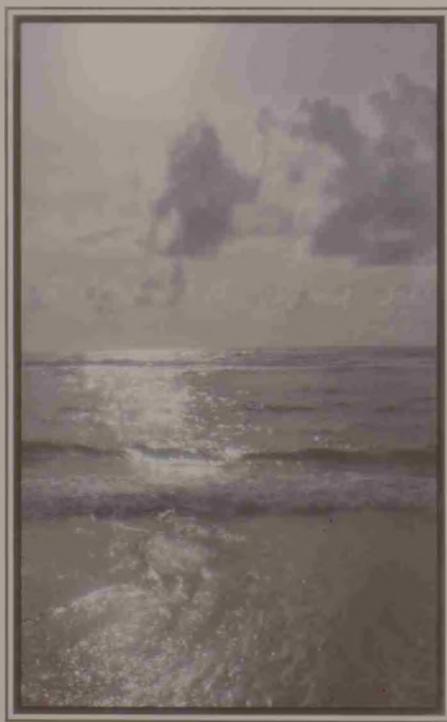




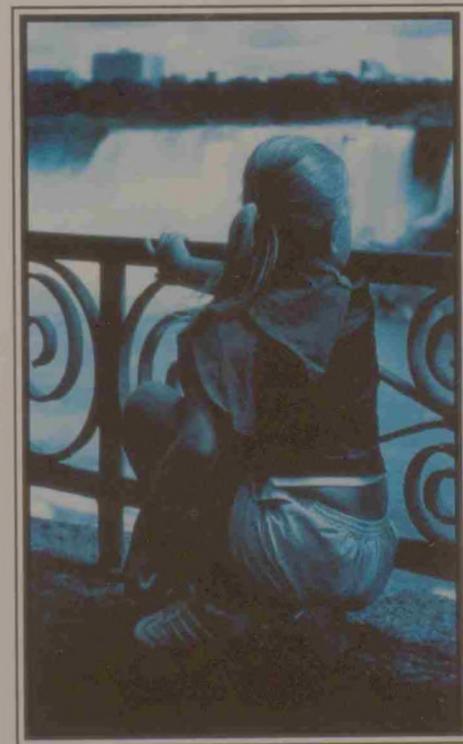
Moulin Rouge - Kate Jabalee



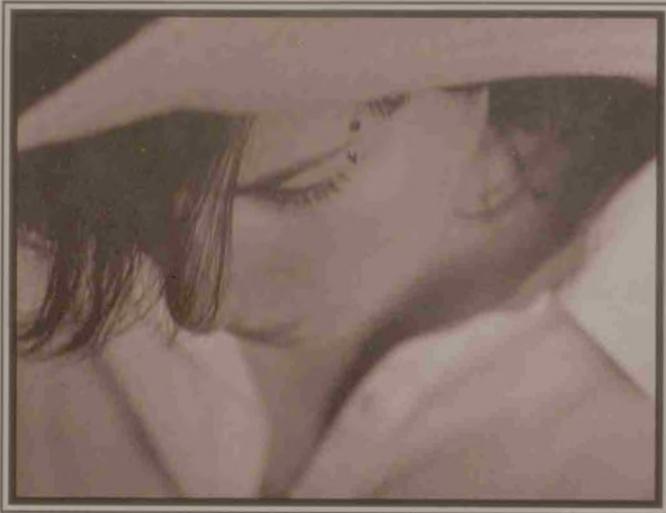
Dare to Be - Jay Mace



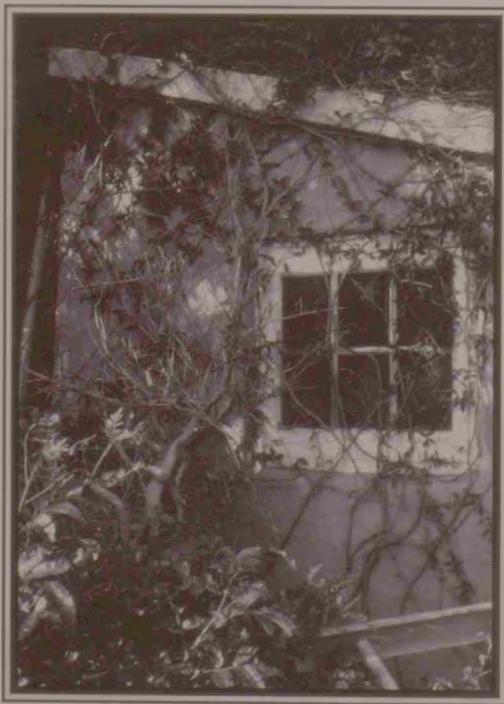
Waves, Rainbow Beach - Kate Jabalee



Futuristic Hope - Jay Mace



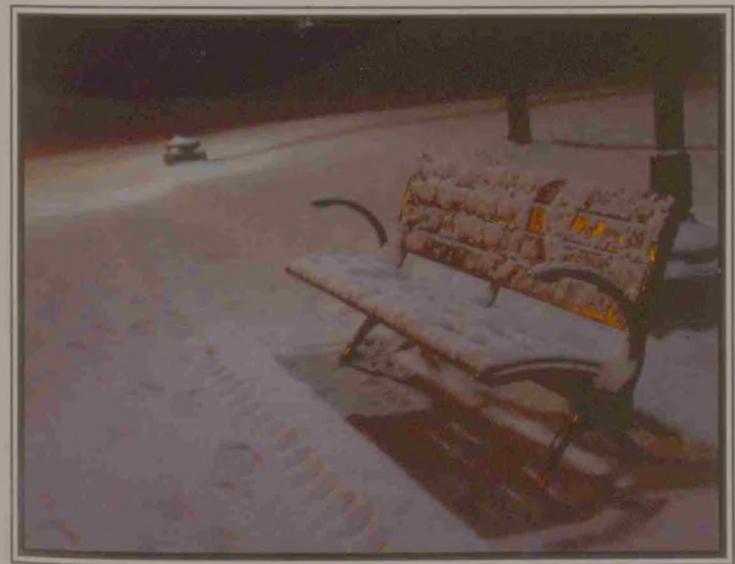
Untitled - Jay Mace



Forgotten Time - Lesley McKirdy



Garden Guardian - Lesley McKirdy



Golden - Lesley McKirdy



Palmtree - Lesley McKirdy



Reflection of the Inner Veneer - Sabrina Paternostro

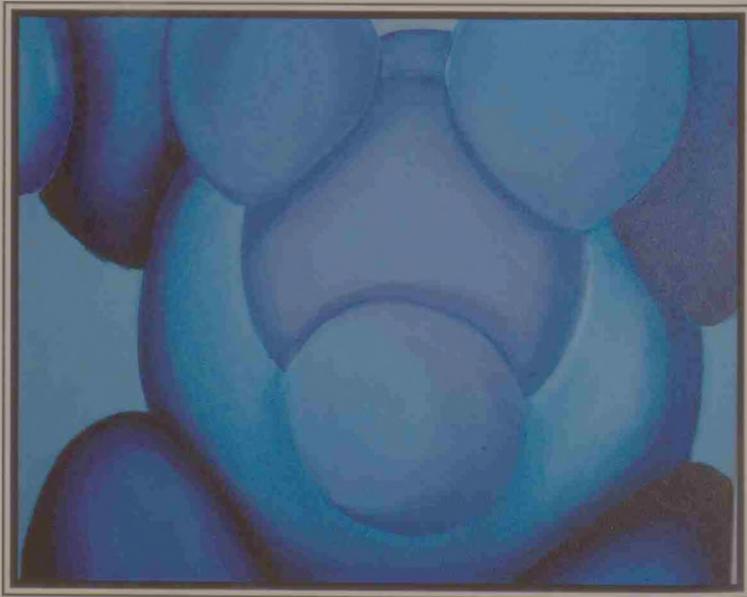
Loose Myself -
Sabrina Paternostro



Nike of Samothrace Study -
Sabrina Paternostro



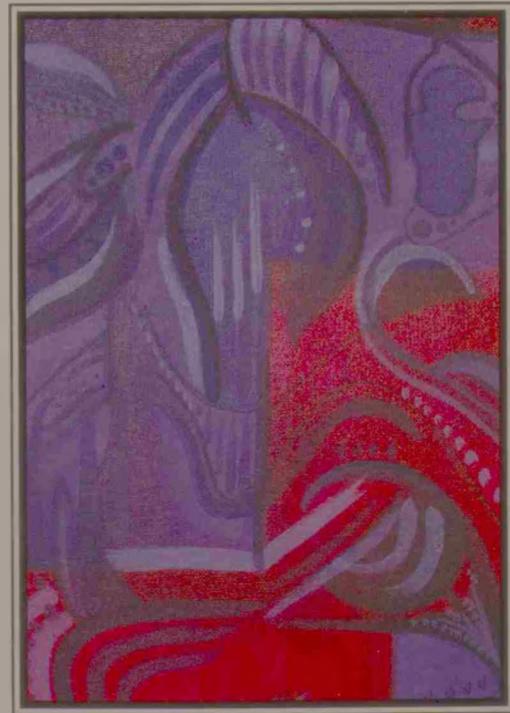
Untitled - Cara Said



Untitled - Cara Said



Untitled - Cara Said



Untitled - Cara Said



Rythm - Heather Sinnott

Short Stories

Michel Marceau

By Sabrina Courtemanche-Nouadir

Michel Marceau was a tall, bearded man. His coworkers loved him, and so did Marilyn Marceau. He was poignant in his argumentation, and equalitarian in his thinking: every lawyer wanted him as his scribe. Jacques, from accounting, called Marcel a "bon vivant"; and Marilyn bragged about her husband's exploits in court. But Marcel was barely alive. When he was awake, that is, Marcel was barely alive.

He felt that only in the presence of his dreams -his languorous, splendid dreams- did he really lead a good life.

He adored that moment at night, after finishing his regular paperwork, and Marilyn was already asleep, when he could lie in his cold, eager bed and conjure up another life. He imagined stories of wonder and beauty, in which he had the pleasure to interact.

Early every morning, Marcel rode the train from Neuilly to Paris. It was there that he found his greatest inspirations. He was always on the lookout for the next characters to his imaginary tales.

One October morning he had located a young lady, riding in the compartment next to his. She was bright, sunny, and beautiful; like any of those princesses you'd expect in children's tales. Marcel made her a maiden, lost on a boat in the sea. She was in love, of course, as all of his characters were. Her story was a happy one, full of adventure and suspense.

Last year, he had sat in front of a young, handsome student, who was sitting alone, writing on a book. Marcel imagined him as a poet in the late 19th century.

Damien, as he had come to call him, wrote about fairies and princesses, talking bears and flying dogs, singing yellow birds and evil dark witches. And late at night, when Damien was sound asleep, his creatures would come alive, and play with the commodities that lay around his bedroom.

Marcel was very proud of this particular story.

Today there was no one, not in near sight. So Michel looked around at the shadowy, awakening scenery. He saw houses and bakeries, standing on grey, gloomy streets. He loved his country early in the morning, when the world was sound asleep.

A church passed by, old and historical. He had found the site for his next adventure: a priest, in love with a parisher. Michel could imagine the endless hours of torture and melancholy inside that poor man's heart, which had renounced love and pleasure for a holy sanctity. Monsieur Marceau was never a religious man, but found an engraved poetry in its concept.

He could picture that woman, her candid looks and lovely scent. In his mind, she had Marilyn's young face. He could perfectly picture what the clergyman saw in her beauty, in her traits, in her smile. He recognized the tension and hardship that poor man would go through, simply to get her regard. Her charm and devout candor made him a better man. He decided to give this story a tragic end, and after years of harbored passion, that priest would kill himself, having nothing believe in anymore.

Now, to Michel, that church on l'Avenue de l'Esplanade buried the ghost of a man, slain by his vices and human flaws.

Michel arrived in Paris along with the sunlight, when the Parisians first wake up in all their romantic poetry. He walked up all the grand, glistening boulevards of the Centre Ville he had become so accustomed to. He marched by the old shoe store, which he had imagined was owned by a witch. He also walked by the Cinema, where he pictured all the stars of the past came to meet, and commented on the films of the modern day. Sometimes, when he knew Marilyn dined at her sister's house, Michel would indulge in a movie, hoping he could catch the ghost of Cary Grant.

And Michel arrived at the bureau, up on the Boulevard de Lavolette. After 30 years, he had yet to imagine a passionate story within the walls of this edifice. The office was too dark, gloomy and lonely.

And up the stairs to his tiny cubicle, Michel turned off his imaginary life, and crept into the mind of the man everybody was so proud of.

Collision

By Tammy Taylor

I'm writing this at the request of my therapist. She thinks it may help me come to terms with what's happened to me. I'm not sure. I have nightmares, and then I wake up to find the nightmare isn't over. They say that you'll know you're not dreaming if you pinch yourself and it hurts, but can't you dream that it hurts? I've been over this a few times with my therapists. She suggested I write it out, work it out, and get it out.

At least I can walk again. For the longest time, I had no feeling below my waist at all. Then my legs started waking up, from the toes up, slowly. I don't mean that all my toes woke up at once, or that one toe on one foot woke up at the same time as the other toe on the corresponding foot. In general, my left foot seems to have woken up faster, but that's because...

Things could have been worse. My car was totalled off in the accident. I was rear-ended by a drunk driver. I remember everything up until the light turned red. I remember seeing the light turn red. After that, I was in a coma for a week. Or a semi-coma, what's it matter? I was asleep, and didn't wake up for seven days eight nights. When I woke up, I was surrounded by strange faces; a doctor and a pair of nurses. The doctor called me Mrs. Thomas. "That's not my name," I said. "My name is David Travis." They shared strange looks. The doctor asked my address, which I gave quickly with ease. He asked me what I remembered for before the accident, and I answered in a likewise fashion. Then he asked me a strange question. "What colour are your eyes?" "What colour are my eyes? Blue, same colour as always." The doctor and the nurses shared that look again. "I'm sorry Mrs. Thomas." "David." "No, you are Maria Thomas, and you have brown eyes. It's all right here, if you need to remember." Then he showed me a picture, a driver's license, of some unknown lady from Nova Scotia. I've never been to Nova Scotia. "This is you."

I laughed at the doctor and asked him if it was a joke. I told them they could reveal the cameras, ha-ha, the joke's not that funny and I'd like to go home now. "You can't go home, Mrs. Thomas, you can't walk." "My name is MISTER David Travis and I can walk so

thank you I am going home." "No, Ma'am. You are not going any where." "I have my rights just you try and stop me." I tried to get up, but was held back by two slabs of concrete, not to mention the things stuck onto me. The slabs of concrete pulled me forward. What the hell? I had breasts! Big ones, too, the kind that had always made me trip whenever I walked outside on a nice day. "What is this? Some kind of a sick joke?" "Mrs. Thomas, please calm down or we'll have to sedate you." They sedated me.

That's basically it. I had an accident as a man, and came out of the coma as a woman. Not so difficult, right? Sure. The first problem was learning how to sit up with weight on your chest, or to sleep. Not to mention how to not play with your breasts all of the time. Once my ankles could bend of their own volition, I got to learn how to walk with those things on me. It was bad enough I would have had trouble walking as is, grinding my balls at every excruciating step. I missed my penis, the feeling of having it along my leg. In exchange, I had to get accustomed to long hair. I'd asked to have it cut, just shaved right off, but little Miss Thomas had put some card in her wallet that requested that her hair be hacked at as little as possible because she had some religious superstition about having her hair cut. So the doctors ignored my pleas for shorter hair, telling me I really would have preferred having it the way it was if I was in my right mind. That is, Mrs. Thomas would have liked having it if she were in my place, but she isn't and it seems to be my misfortune that she looks like me or that I look like her or that we look like each other.

Part of my therapy was partaking in a chi gong session. It was useful in learning how to balance my tits. Since I could not stand for long periods, I did the moves while sitting on a stool. I mediated on the ground with the others during the seated portion and amused myself by leaning my breasts onto my legs. Sitting cross-legged was one novelty, sitting in the lotus position another. I was the only one in the session who could sit in and maintain the lotus. I was also the only male in the session.

Despite the large breasts, the vagina, the lack of a scrotum, I still thought of myself as male. Why not? I had spent thirty years of my life as a male. Being female was a recent thing. I was sure I'd come out of the deeper coma, pinch myself and wake up for real. My God!

The pain that will come them! I bet my poor balls are swollen up like mangoes, maybe even cantaloupes. My penis will be shrivelled from disuse, or elongated with some build-up. I'm sure my chest will be sore as hell, too. A severe chest injury would explain a lot.

The hardest part of being a woman is dealing with men. I hate being hit on by every short guy I meet, or being 'accidentally' groped when I take the elevator. Or, even worse, the occasional guy who catches my eye.

In my dream world, I've been released from the hospital. Back to my job and back to pictures of my ex-husband, a man by the name of Carl Thomas, who calls me to make sure I'm okay and ask if we can get back together. I think not. I'm too busy taking advantage of my new status as a single female to check out other women. It's fun and easy and they don't seem to be bothered as they would if I were a man. Sometimes I think it's better to stay a woman, have fun with it. I could be a lesbian, and enjoy that. I suggested it to my therapist with a twinkle in my eye. She told me I should just accept reality. I guess she's straight.

A Runaway Apple

By Myrie Eaton

Molly sat listlessly on the window-seat in her room. Sam's motor-like purring overpowered any thought that tried to form in her brain. The weight of the large tabby anchored her lap to the seat, pushing her into the threatening softness of the matching down-filled pillows that Mom had eagerly picked out. Ignoring Sam's feline whine, she pushed the unwanted weight off. She threw the pillows onto the floor, and lay down on the small bench. She pressed her face against its smooth, polished wood. She stared out the window, but it wasn't the familiar view she remembered. What had once been an empty lot full of friendly trees, each challenging her to conquer their tallest branch, was now a daunting, impregnable row of soldiers, their branches long rifles cocked at attention.

Even the contents of her robin-egg-blue room offered her eyes no refuge. Smiling family photos mocked her. A poster of Justin Timberlake overlooked an exquisite Victorian dollhouse, outfitted with authentic-looking miniature furniture. A pile of ancient books covered the surface of her oak desk. One, titled "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," lay open, a notebook filled with neat rows of handwriting resting beside it, forgotten. A 'Best Friends Forever' picture frame was propped up on her bedside table, containing the image of four happy, supportive friends. She stretched out an arm and knocked it over with disgust.

Molly idly ran her fingers along the underside of the overhang of the window-seat. It hadn't been sanded and polished like the surface of the bench.

"Ouch!"

A triumphant splinter protruded from her ring finger. She poked and picked at it, relishing each moment of pain.

She had tried to talk to Mom and Dad. At her attempts of conversation, Dad had said over his shoulder, "Not now, sweetie. I've got people waiting."

Mom had at least glanced up at her face. Encouraged, Molly had almost opened up to her. But when Mom reached for the phone,

nodding a smiling face in her direction, Molly had accepted defeat. She walked away, letting Mom enjoy a good gossip session with Aunt Cindy.

At supper this evening, Mom and Dad had made easy conversation. The air around Molly's head had been thick with distracted, hollow words. Molly couldn't believe no one had noticed a difference in her. It was hard to imagine she could be so torn and ragged, yet look the same to them. Maybe Dad had been more influential than she thought in passing on his ability to mask emotion.

And now, would they pay attention? Tomorrow morning when she failed to join them for breakfast, would they focus their indifferent thoughts on her? Would finding her bedroom abandoned finally elicit a sincere reaction out of them?

She knew Dad would see it as desertion. When she was discovered missing, he would run his strong hands through his mahogany hair, which still looked thick and youthful. The delicate skin at the corner of his eyes might crease briefly, but he would never allow a single tear to stain his face. The small wrinkle across his forehead might furrow slightly, but no one would notice. His reaction would be practical and responsible, the qualities he had always campaigned for in her. But she couldn't be that smart, responsible girl anymore.

Mom would be shocked, but Molly wasn't sure what else. Dad would be considerate of her feelings, sympathetic of her grief. He would comfort her with some slogan like, 'We'll get through this together.' They would support each other. Soon, they would be able to return to their busy cycle of supper engagements and lunch meetings and afternoon teas in the garden and fancy charity balls, where none of the guests ever know who or what they were supporting. Their lives would be easier with no teenager to deal with. Family photos wouldn't be as convincing with the perfect filling to their sandwich gone, but there were a plethora of other characters they could choose to face the world with. They would get over this.

Her mind felt bleached. She wanted so much to stop treading water, to succumb to the cold, to surrender to the world. She rose from her vigil by the window, carefully set her bedside alarm, and col-

lapsed on the meticulously made bed, allowing herself the luxurious distraction of sleep.

The alarm screamed into Molly's ear at exactly 2:00 am. She pushed back the handmade quilt, and pulled on her favorite pair of jeans and a thick black turtleneck. She remade the bed, and placed her folded flannel pajamas neatly on top. Walking over to her bookshelf, she took down a photo album, and lingered over it for one last time. She removed one photo, a picture of herself sandwiched happily between her parents. About to slip it into her pocket, her fingers stopped, and instead placed it on top of her pajamas on the bed. She clamped her teeth together, and strode across the room, not allowing herself a look back.

She used the front entrance of the house, which was usually reserved for when company visited. Gently turning the polished brass knob, she opened the door and stepped out onto a porch bathed in platinum moonlight. Her eyes were captivated by the dreamlike scene. She descended the wide, wooden steps in a trance. Her foot hesitated before touching down on the sea of gleaming lawn, half expecting that physical contact with this wonderland would make it disappear, that she would be swept away by an ocean of nightmares, and awaken in her bedroom.

But it *was* a dream. The surreal had replaced reality. Her mother's vegetable patch was unrecognizable at her feet. The moonlight coated the sleeping eggplants in silver. Prickly squash-vine serpents attempted to strangle the onion greens. Heads of lettuce housed families of mischievous slugs. A delicate lace of string beans covered the wood lattice that surrounded the vegetables. A flicker of silver captured her vision. A moth, the butterfly of the night, landed gracefully on a browning hollyhock stock, all that remained of what was an explosion of green and burgundy last month. Behind the dying hollyhocks, a row of sunflowers hid their bright faces in the darkness, stubbornly waiting for the sun. The small brick-lined pond in the corner of the yard, so harmless and full of life in the daylight, was now a black inky pit. A wrong move, and she could be swallowed, falling into its oblivion.

The apple tree stood alone, occupying center stage of the garden. Molly was drawn closer. She was staring at it so intently that she jumped when something fell from its commanding branches into the grass below. The ominous silence that had been growing was disturbed. Goosebumps attacked Molly's flesh. She cautiously stepped closer, and leaned down toward a clump of grass that hid the fallen object.

It was just an apple. A small, unripe apple, its skin blemished with scabs. Molly wondered what had made it fall early, before it was ripe. Wondered what had killed it.

Molly glanced at her watch. She tossed the apple carelessly behind her, and moved towards the only exit- a white swinging gate under an arbor shrouded in red roses. The gate only protested gently as she pushed it open, but the tangle of encircling roses grasped desperately at her. They captured the hem of her sweater. A yank from her pale fingers rescued it, but this gave the delighted thorns a chance to bury themselves in her flesh. She gasped and stood motionless as one solitary drop of ruby blood shattered on the white paint of the gate.

Molly gratefully left the ensnaring world of the moonlit garden, and entered a pool of artificial light cast by a tall streetlamp. Shards of smashed beer bottles made the asphalt street glitter. She breathed deeply of the piercing night air, and hurried down the road.

A lonely willow leaned on the garden fence, crying drooping leaves as it watched the outline of the fleeing girl become smaller.

The Editor

By Stefan Szary

This is an excerpt from a full novella entitled "The Editor". This excerpt takes place in 79 AD Roman Alexandria.

Eventually, finally realizing that the night sky was nearly fully upon him, Lysias gave up and climbed down the ladder to the ground. The sharp calls of the jackals that prowled the vineyards at night echoed among the greenery of the gardens. Their work was just beginning. They had an agreement, Lysias and the jackals. He would tend the grapes and the earth during the day, in return the jackals would keep the mice in check. Every so often however Lysias would break the agreement by leaving them shreds from his diner table. The jackals never seemed to complain about Lysias' generous breach of their unspoken contract.

Making his way back through the gardens, stopping every few feet to mend a crooked eve or to pick up discarded branches, Lysias eventually came into earshot of the home that he and Aeson's shared. It had become much larger than the original house that their father had built. Aeson had ensured that a vineyard as successful as theirs was in possession of a home that suited such fiscal achievement. Rising two stories where it had originally been one, the expensively cobbled walkways and fountains that bordered it were attractive, Lysias had to admit. Still, he preferred the rougher and purer life of the vineyards that surrounded it.

Coming closer still, he could pick out voices from the open windows. Aeson was entertaining guests, again. As the house had grown, so too had the number of visitors. Looking back up into the sky seeing the first shimmering of the stars, Lysias made one more attempt to render some hidden wisdom from the deepness of the heavens. Like usual, there was nothing. Instead Lysias sighed and made his way through Aeson's elaborate gardens and into the house. The noise of the laughing guests seemed clumsy to Lysias in comparison with the serene silence of the vineyards he had just left. Still, the warmth of the home was a welcome feeling as he exited the cooling air of the night.

"Ah there he is!" exclaimed a man who was leaning against one of the walls, a silver cup of wine in one hand. "Aeson," the man continued, "why don't you share your younger brother's stalwart work ethic? Look at him, covered from head to toe in the soil that makes you two so wealthy. He looks more like a slave than the maker of the best wine in all the empire!"

Lysais' brother was reclining on a couch opposite the cheerful man and laughed at the comment. "My brother prefers the company and honesty of the jackals and vines to the likes of you Davos," Aeson jibbed in return. Lysias' brother was more worldly than himself, but still he was the oldest and never stood for even the slightest ridicule of his younger sibling.

The man, Davos, laughed heartily at Aeson's reply. Lysias smiled at both of them. The feeling of the place was one of comfort and familiarity.

"So continue Aeson," said another man who sat next to him. "What was it that the thief took from you?"

"Oh not too much," replied Aeson. "He took what he could carry, a silver dish or two, nothing else as far as I could see."

"Wretches," said the man who also held a goblet of wine. "I've told you before, it would do you well to hire permanent guards for your lands. How long before thieves slit your throat in your sleep and steal everything?"

"Stop your worrying Pelias," replied Aeson laughing. "Besides, we have our guardians. The jackals keep the real thieves away. It's the mice that threaten me more than any poor soul from the city. Aren't I right dear brother?"

"The jackals have not failed us yet," replied Lysias smiling.

"Both of you are too much like your old father," laughed the man named Pelias, "too free spirited. Let me warn you though, the more wine you sell the more real thieves will come to pay you unexpected visits."

"Come brother," called Aeson, "sit and relax. You've earned yourself that."

Hesitating, wanting nothing more than to leave Aeson and his buyers alone, Lysias eventually gave in and settled himself on a vacant couch.

"So tell me Lysias," continued Pelias who crossed the room and settled himself on the last couch. "How does the crop look this season?"

"Good," replied Lysias honestly. "Though the rains have been sparser this winter, I think that the vines are suffering because of it. There is still a good yield, but I worry..."

"That you thieves will demand a lower price," interjected Aeson. Lysias was too honest for the good of their shared business. Asked a question he would answer honestly. Aeson was the better at bartering.

"You insult my genuine curiosity Aeson," replied Pelias feigning insult. "I'm far too ignorant of the intricacies of rustic talent. I merely wanted to hear an expert opinion."

"You merely want to sniff better prices Pelias," Aeson replied. "Just know that the quality will be the same or better, as always, and that if the price changes it will only be more expensive." Aeson's words seemed to quiet the seemingly benign inquiries of Pelias. Lysias was simple in commercial matters, but he was no fool. He could see that just beneath the amicable attitude of the men lurked their predatory selves, hunting for profit and the best prices from the vineyard.

"You're far too suspicious Aeson," replied Pelias. "Watch yourself my friend or you will become as conniving as the Egyptians themselves." The jibe was friendly.

"You're more Egyptian than he Pelias," spoke Davos who had remained silent until this point. "You seem to enjoy the company of dark mistresses more than anyone here."

"I am an appreciator of the fine things of the Neilos," smiled Pelias. "There are more vintages in this land than wine Davos. It is too bad you're so loyal to your wife, you're missing out on much Egypt has to offer."

"It's the Nilus, Pelias," replied Davos, "and if I'm too loyal to my wife, then you are too loyal to the Ptolemys. Latin is the language of the land now."

"Latin," spat Pelias with obvious distaste. "A language of the brutish Romans. Tell me Davos, do you prefer Euripides in rude Latin or the poetry of Greek?"

"You didn't seem to mind so much when you purchased your citizenship into the empire," replied Davos.

"How is one to conduct business without it?" asked Pelias honestly. "I never desired it. I need it to make ends meet however."

"You still enjoy the protection of the legions however, would you prefer Parthian rule?" asked Davos.

"I would prefer Greek rule if you want my honest desire. We dealt with the Persians well enough at Marathon."

"New times and new rulers my friend," replied Davos. "Drink your wine and enjoy your Egyptian lovers."

"True men of Hellas," exclaimed Aeson laughing. "Politics is never far from the mind of our people. But Pelias is right however, the politics of love are far more entertaining, and rewarding as well."

"Listen to this one," exclaimed Davos turning his attentions to Aeson, "speaking as one who has not joined my own ranks. You have a wife now as well must I remind you, the politics of love soon disappear with a wife let me assure you!"

"She is prettier than your wife Davos," laughed Pelias looking for some retribution, "let us just hope that she bears better fortune than other Egyptian women. Cleopatra was the doom of more than one Roman."

"Can you believe these two men?" laughed Aeson turning to his brother. "I think they are the same as the mice chasing jackals outside."

Lysias only smiled in response. The idle banter of these businessmen was entertaining to him, but it soon lost its allure to his ears. Then suddenly, the room took a sudden shift in atmosphere. As if bidden by the conversation that had turned to her, Aeson's new wife walked into the room and all eyes were on her.

"A my lotus," smiled Aeson standing to greet her. "You have come to save me from these barbarians."

Anippe embraced her husband with more passion than Lysias felt comfortable with, though Aeson did not share his brother's prudence. She was tall and her dark Egyptian hair fell freely to her thin waist. Around her forehead she wore a golden tiara that held her free hair from her face, it matched the golden serpent bracelets that curled

around her left arm.

"You must show you're guests more respect my husband," she spoke elegantly turning to them. "It is they that furnish our lovely abode."

Something in Lysias cringed at the fact she claimed the home as her own. Married only a month and the Egyptian woman had assured herself of her place in the family estate, still he stood and greeted his sister-in-law politely. She kept her distance however, her eyes noting the soil that caked his clothing and arms.

"A true statement," replied Davos. "So tell us again Pelias, what was it about the Egyptians Aeson had to become so wary about?" Pelias remained silent however, his face turning a slighter shade of red.

Seating herself beside her husband Anippe reached forward and plucked several grapes from the low table that rested between all of them, the collar of her loose white linen dress hanging lowly. Lysias noted Pelias' quick eyes steal a glance at her slightly exposed cleavage.

Looking at his sister-in-law Lysias had to admit that she was indeed one of the most beautiful women he had even seen. Her dark eyes worked brilliantly with the smooth oval of her face. Her figure was one that invoked desire from any man that saw her and envy from every woman. He had known her for less than a year and he had cautioned his brother over their quick marriage.

Anippe was the only daughter of an Egyptian bombyx trader and had been accustomed to the pleasantries of opulent living since her birth. The two brothers had first made acquaintance with Anippe on the pleasure vessel of one of the buyers of their wine. The cruise had been pleasant as the large barge paraded up the Nilus. The owner had purchased their wine exclusively for the river event and had in turn invited the two brothers to join in the pleasantries. The cruise had proven as a valuable opportunity for the brothers to further their clientele.

During the drinking and merrymaking, Anippe had made a point to introduce herself to both of them. Lysias had been cordial. Though he was still a man and had been slightly enamoured himself with Anippe's stunning looks, there had been something about her

that had not sat well in his judgement. Aeson however had been far more welcoming to her advances and had suspiciously disappeared from the party on the main deck as the night had worn on. Indeed Lysias found himself alone at their home for several days after the cruise only to welcome Aeson back after his absence with his proclamations of love.

Two months following their amours on the Nilus, Anippe's father had succumbed to a terrible bout of malaria that he had received in an excursion south into Nubia. Aeson was more than willing to console his new love though Lysias had grown more concerned over his brother's love struck demeanour. He had remained silent however until several weeks before the wedding that Aeson had announced soon after Anippe's father's death. He had laughed off Lysias' warnings at first, but after he had pressed the issue Aeson showed startling anger. Since then Lysias had kept his peace, content with the hope that his brother was truly happy. Still he felt uneasy around Anippe and was slow in trusting her. It was a coldness that Anippe had been tactfully attempting to dismantle.

"So when will the only other bachelor in the house decide to take a lover?" Davos asked changing the entire group's attention to Lysias.

"My brother?" exclaimed Aeson who wrapped a gentle arm around Anippe's waist. "He already has taken one."

"Truthfully?" exclaimed Davos.

"Oh yes" laughed Aeson. "Thousands of them in fact, all neatly stacked at the great library. You see Davos, Lysias' true love is not the earth, it is the scrolls of knowledge; though they are covered in as much dust as the vines outside."

Aeson's remark brought hearty laughter from all the men present and even a smile from Lysias' own mouth. It was true. Lysias had managed several excursions into the great library within the city which was normally reserved for professional scholars. Amid the laughter however Lysias' noted Anippe's eyes which were locked on him. Her gaze made him somewhat uncomfortable and he decided to take his leave for the night. Standing he spoke.

"I will leave you to your conversations," he said politely. "I'm in need of a good wash, a change of clothes, and rest." He added the

last word as an afterthought.

Anippe stood at the same moment as him.

"I share your boredom with these simple men," she said elegantly in practiced Greek though her Egyptian accent came through. The mix only added to her seductiveness. "I apologize dear husband," he said bending forward to kiss her, "you are alone with these barbarians as you have called them."

"See!" exclaimed Pelias, "she had already betrayed you Aeson." Aeson laughed and poured all of them more wine.

"Come," said Anippe motioning to Lysias, "I will summon someone to pour your bath."

Left with little option, Lysias followed his sister-in-law from the room. He caught half of a lewd joke from Pelias as he left which brought long laughter from all three.

He followed behind Anippe through a darkened hallway for several steps before the Egyptian woman spoke.

"How are you vines dear brother?" she asked turning back to him as they walked.

Like her attitude with the home, Anippe calling him 'brother' sat uneasily with Lysias.

"They are healthy despite the little rain" he replied.

"Always the responsible of the two," Anippe said more to herself than Lysias. "I have seen the way you tend to the vineyards Lysias," she continued. "It is admirable the gentleness you show them. I have also seen you feed the jackals late at night after Aeson is asleep. Don't you worry that they will turn on you and take your hand?"

"They know what I bring them. They recognize me."

"Still," she replied. "You have to be wary of such beasts; they can turn on you as quickly as lick your fingers."

Lysias chose his words carefully with Anippe. Their conversations had been sparse since she had taken up residence in the home and always were inquisitive into Lysias' inner thoughts. It was not that he was outright suspicious of his brother's wife, there was simply something that was hidden behind her eyes and hips that made him instinctively wary.

"Do the vines give you so much pleasure however Lysias?" she asked as they both walked into the room where the household's sole bath was. "Your wines have made you a very attractive bachelor in Alexandria. I doubt that any sweetness of fruit can match that of a woman."

"I have never compared the two," Lysias answered. "They are two distinct pleasures, either of which in excess can ruin the flavour." If Anippe wanted discourse on the pleasantries of life Lysias would not shy from such argument.

"You have been wandering the halls of the great library too long brother," Anippe laughed. "I am not here to argue with you about the philosophies of love." Turning to an aide that had walked into the room Anippe instructed the young Egyptian boy to fill the marble tub with water.

"You have never been to the library Anippe," replied Lysias. "you do not know the treasures it holds."

"How little you think of me my dear new brother," she exclaimed in reply. "I am no stranger to the tenants of love, only I respect Eros more than you do."

Lysias was struck by the Anippe's sudden reference and surprised himself even further by his eagerness to respond.

"Love is three-fold Anippe, Eros is but the first and most loud of the three. Physical pleasure remains nothing without Philia, the appreciation of the other."

"If only the world was more full of Agape, Lysias," Anippe smiled back, fully capable of a debate Lysias had not known. "You are the younger brother and your paternal love of humanity is equally as naïve. The sooner you learn the ideals of your philosophies only exist in your scrolls, the sooner you will enjoy the winds of Eros."

"It is the struggle that earns one merit Anippe," he replied. "Without hope there is no Agape, and men become little more than whimsical beasts."

"Spoken like one truly ignorant of the pleasures of Eros. It is strange that a maker of wine thinks so poorly of it, it is usually with the help of Bacchus that Eros is given its full power. Are you truly impervious to his whims?"

"No man is," Lysias conceded, "Eros has its charms, I will admit".

"Then there is a male heart that beats in you still, you admit it!" exclaimed Anippe laughing.

The house attendant returned with a massive jar of water which he poured into the already half full tub. The noise of the water filling made Lysias eager to sink his tired limbs into its warmth, but the unexpected discourse with Anippe held his attentions. Her eyes were alight with an intellect Lysias had only guessed at before, though there was something else in her irises that was not purely scholarly. Drawing closer to him she continued in her soft voice.

"Let me warn you of one thing dear Lysias," she said raising her arms to his shoulders and pulling at the folds of his tunic. "All men who ride upon their morals must fall one day. Just be careful you do not fall so long that you will not rise again." With that her quick fingers deftly pulled the folds of his tunic at his shoulders letting his shirt fall to the floor. Though he stood there with his thin pants, the closeness of Anippe and the smell of her perfumes made him feel more naked than he was.

"I am no Icarus," he replied reaching up and taking hold of her hands that were on his shoulders, pulling them down. "I know when I fly too close to danger."

"Who said anything about danger?" Anippe asked smiling coyly. "Your bath awaits you dear brother. You don't intend to undress in front of your sister-in-law do you?"

Dumbly Lysias turned to the bath which had been filled several times now with the warm water the attendant had brought. Anippe had entangled him in a strange argument with the lure of philosophy. Glancing back at her thin frame it struck him that the golden snakes that entwined themselves around her arm was a suitable decoration for her.

"Mistress," the voice of the attendant who had filled the bath mercifully broke the uncomfortable silence. "Master Nekho has arrived, he awaits you outside."

"Thank you," she replied. Turning back to Lysias she spoke. "Enjoy your soak Lysias, not too much however. The pleasantries of warmth are the whispers of Eros you fear so much."

"Thank you Anippe," he said. "I will take my bath now."

"I am not here to stop you," she replied. With that she turned and walked from the room leaving Lysias to undress with only the young attendant to watch. Turning to the young boy he dismissed him, but not before he told him to instruct Aeson that Anippe's priest, Nekho, had arrived. As little as he trusted Anippe he trusted her religious confidant even less, he felt his brother should know the Egyptian priest was again paying his wife a visit.

Finally alone, Lysias eased his soiled body into the water. The warmth of the bath was more welcome than he had anticipated though its soothing effects were tainted by Anippe's last warnings.

When Lysias thought that he had nearly pinned what it was about his brother's wife that made him uneasy there was a new facet to her character that baffled him even further. Thoughts on Eros clouded with the answers that still eluded him. He had lied to Anippe. He was as weak in the face of Eros as any man. Though if anyone knew who it was that called to his heart he would be looked upon even more as a dreamer than he already was.

A fleeting thought of Anippe's curves and lips skirted across his mind which he quickly deflated. She was a beauty and a master of seductiveness, but any attraction to her was only appreciative of her beauty. Lysias had no intentions for his brother's wife. The woman whom Eros had pointed Lysias' desires towards was within the walls of Alexandria itself though she rested still further behind invisible walls that were by far more impervious. The answers to how to scale these walls still was unknown and soon Lysias forgot everything and let his mind rest amid the steam of the bath that his body lay in.

The Siren Call

By Eleanor Gang

With the passage of time, memory tends to lose depth and time flattens into a two-dimensional picture, the moment itself caught in a still photograph. A siren wails in the distance and I am immediately transported back to my childhood, before the sound calls up a different image, that of my own son, wanting so much to achieve independence, yet so easily discouraged when his attempts to fly ended in disappointment.

When he was perhaps 10, he and his sister and I planned a bike trip into town to buy lunch at Subway, a treat he anticipated with relish. I had an ulterior motive, to get him to ride his bicycle, a vehicle that languished in the garage for the most part. We rode single file down the hill beside the cemetery, my son sandwiched between my daughter and me, she at the fore, I the watchful eye abaft, duly instructed to keep on or inside the white line that bordered the steep incline. There were places in the road where the pavement had buckled and cracked with winter freeze and spring thaw, and my son, so intent on following my directions and not experienced enough in the art of two wheels, did not swerve to avoid the uneven surfaces, but instead rode right over them, his front wheel suddenly twisting out of his control, and he was flung from his bike down the grassy verge into the graveyard. Instead of continuing on for the promised lunch, he walked his two-wheeler home, refusing even to ride it on the flatter return trip. It was years before he mounted a bicycle again.

The memory invoked by the siren came from around the same time. There were no cookies in the house, not that that was anything unusual, but on this occasion my son wanted cookies and, furthermore, he was determined to make them himself. I went through cookbooks with him until we found a recipe that satisfied and for which all the ingredients were at hand. It meant grinding oatmeal in the blender to create oat flour, but that added to the fun. Then, remembering my own mother telling me of my older brother's experiments in the kitchen, I left, made myself scarce, secure in the knowledge that my daughter could supervise her younger brother.

When I returned, the aroma of fresh baking filled the house just as my son was taking the golden-brown biscuit laden sheet from the oven in order to transfer his creations onto wire racks. The first indication that things were not as they should be surfaced when the cookies did not remain whole, but disintegrated in yielding to the spatula, crumbling into smaller pieces. They had no integrity, and those crumbs tasted terrible. I knew immediately what had gone wrong, but needed my son's confirmation.

Opening the cookbook to the recipe in question, I queried him on every ingredient. He was adamant that he had made no errors. I got to the leavening agent, the recipe called for baking powder, and asked him, "What did you use?"

"I used baking powder!" he cried.

"No," I insisted, "go to the pantry and show me what you used."

He reluctantly obliged, returning with the cardboard box of baking soda.

"Aha!" I exclaimed. "This is not baking powder. It's baking soda."

"What's the difference?" my son wanted to know.

"Baking soda is a base which needs to combine with an acid in order to raise or leaven baked goods. Baking powder has already both the acid and base combined in dry form and merely needs the addition of moisture to produce the desired chemical reaction. Here, I'll show you."

I then put into two small bowls some water and a spoonful respectively of baking soda and baking powder. Into the former I added a splash of vinegar.

"Watch," I instructed. The chemical pyrotechnics did little to allay his disappointment, his sense of failure. I was reminded of another baking disaster, one that happened to me.

When I wasn't much older than he was, my mother had been sick in bed with the flu. It was her birthday and I was determined to do something to make her happy. Without telling her my plans, I decided to bake a cake from scratch. I really ought to have known better: so many of my attempts at domesticity had ended in disaster.

Probably the most memorable was the time the automatic washing machine chose to give up the ghost the first time I ever did a load of laundry by myself.

Growing up, I had very few responsibilities apart from doing well in school and keeping my room passably neat. My mother generally took care of everything else: the laundry, the cooking, the shopping. We had a cleaning lady for the housework, since my mother also worked all day, but we kids were not expected to contribute much. On this other occasion, though, my mother was also sick in bed with the flu and asked me to wash a load of laundry, giving me explicit instructions regarding the operation of the machine. I did everything exactly as I was told; but when I came downstairs during the spin cycle, in anticipation of putting the clean, damp clothes in the dryer, I was greeted with a flood. The basement floor was covered with water gushing out from the bottom of the machine, headed for the drain. I came upstairs and asked my mother, "Is the washing machine supposed to be spilling water out all over the floor?" The incident became known thereafter as "the time I broke the washing machine," and precipitated the purchase of a new appliance, the old one pronounced irreparable.

My mother also being bedridden on this other occasion actually aided my plan, so that I wouldn't have the same problem that my cousin did when she attempted a similar surprise. She was from Ottawa, but came to Toronto to complete her last year of high school and lived in our basement for the duration. She was older by several years, technically my second cousin (her mother and mine were first cousins), and I looked up to her a great deal. She wore makeup and sexy clothes, and everything she did was cool.

Once more it was my mother's birthday and, deciding to do something nice for her hostess, my cousin had baked a cake and decorated it imaginatively, adding the finishing touches just as I was getting home from school. It was to be a surprise, but my mother arrived from work earlier than expected and my cousin, anxious to hide her handiwork and mistaking the loud clumping of my shoes for my mother's heavier footfall, headed in the wrong direction with the cake, only to practically collide with the birthday girl herself as she was

hanging up her coat in the vestibule closet. To her credit, my mother played blind and dumb, pretending ignorance and acting suitably surprised when presented with the cake, aglow with candles, for dessert. She told me years later that she had not been fooled, but chose rather to save my cousin's feelings which had been so well intentioned.

I selected the recipe for my birthday offering with care, mixing my ingredients with love, to make a beautiful yellow cake. I made only one substitution, which proved to be my ultimate undoing. All her middle age my mother struggled with her weight. She first started gaining when she went back to work fulltime to a desk job when I was in grade one. Up till then, she ate immense quantities and remained thin. I still have a chain belt of hers which she gave me when the ends no longer met around her thickening waist. After she had her radical hysterectomy, the fat was attracted to her middle like iron filings to a magnet. She followed one diet after another, joined Weight Watchers and popped pills, with no lasting results. Obsessed with her appearance, she would constantly compare herself to strange women on the street, asking me, "Am I as fat as she is?" It wasn't until she was in her late 70's, early 80's that the weight started melting off. The stress of caring for my father during his final years caused her own subsequent shrinkage. She is now shorter and lighter than I am, an abrupt turning of the tables.

So, aware of my mother's constant battle of the bulge and determined not to undermine it, I decided to use a product I found in the kitchen cupboard instead of the sugar called for in the recipe. It was called *Sugar Twin* and the directions on the box reassured me that it could be used safely for all my sweetening needs. Not realizing that I was tampering with the chemical makeup of the cake (I already knew about the difference between baking powder and baking soda), I switched one for the other, using a full cup of *Sugar Twin* in place of the higher calorie alternative.

I was feeling pretty happy, anticipating my mother's surprised face and eager consumption of the local treat. While the cake was baking, I washed my mixing bowls and utensils and got rid of the evidence of my arcane activity. As with my son's disastrous experience, my moment of truth arrived as I removed the cake from the oven. A

beautiful golden colour, there was still something terribly wrong. The top, instead of being convex, was sunken looking. When I flipped it out of the pan onto the wire rack to cool and peeled the wax paper off its bottom, it seemed to squish instead of land with the expected bounce. Tentatively I nibbled a few crumbs. They were terrible! I wanted to cry.

Not knowing what else to do, I fled to my mother's bedroom and confessed the whole story to her, how I'd wanted to make a cake for her birthday, how I'd wanted it to be a surprise, how I'd respected her diet and used a sugar substitute, how it hadn't risen properly and tasted terrible, and how I'd just wasted flour and eggs and vanilla and baking powder, not to mention the cup of *Sugar Twin*. The tears flowed unchecked.

My mother, to her credit, did not laugh at me, did not call me an idiot, nor did she immediately point out my error, that I should have substituted only part of the sugar with the synthetic *Sugar Twin*. Instead she comforted me, told me to put the disastrous birthday cake in the compost before my father found it, for he would surely salvage and eat it, and use instead one of the mixes she kept in the cupboard for emergencies.

"But what about all those eggs," I cried, "and the flour!"

"Don't worry about it," she reassured me. "We can afford more eggs and flour." And so I ended up baking a Duncan Hines cake for the birthday celebrations instead. But as I sat on her bed, being inconsolably sorry for myself and wallowing in my feelings of self pity, my mother sick with the flu and the cake that was meant to demonstrate my love for her collapsing on a wire rack in the kitchen, we heard an ambulance siren several streets over. After it passed out of hearing range, my mother turned to me and said, "No matter how bad you think you have it, someone else has worse trouble."

Thirty or so years later I sat at the kitchen table with my own son, heartbroken and despondent, discouraged over the waste of eggs, butter, oat flour so painstakingly ground in the blender, and at the ultimate lack of cookies in the house, and I remembered my own, similar experience. So I said to him, "I'm going to tell you a story about something that happened to me."

My son is a young man now. He's gone on to bake many more batches of cookies successfully and never made the same mistake again. But now when I hear a siren in the distance, I recall two stories of overwhelming defeat, mine and his, and I still think to myself that no matter how huge and insurmountable my problems seem, there is always someone out there who is worse off.

Camp Six

By Terrie J. Carlson

My official answer to your question would be that we were just following orders. Most people who've read the report know all the facts so they don't bother checking my story. But you're not interested in the facts are you? You're here because you want to know the truth. You want to know what really happened. Well you could say we wanted to serve our country, but if it were as simple as that, we'd all move on with our lives. As you probably guessed, that's something I'm having a hard time doing. After what we saw, what we did, I don't think it's going to be that easy. Sorry. I'm getting off the topic.

So as ordered, we got to Camp Six to survey the area. I sent Corporal Chalmers and Sergeant Anderson to get a closer look while I covered them. When Chalmers got closer to the camp, he must have looked through those binoculars about three or four times before he said anything. Then he looked through them one more time just to be sure.

"Are you sure this is it?" whispered Chalmers.

"Yeah, this is it," Zeek said.

"Then you'd better see this for yourself."

Sergeant Ezekiel Anderson, or "Zeek" as we called him, didn't get surprised too often. He'd been in the Marine Corps a long time and seen too much stuff to be stunned by anything. He'd seen it all, man. After he took those binoculars and viewed Camp Six for himself, I could honestly say that he had his first shock in years.

"This can't be right," Zeek muttered. "No, man, this ain't right at all."

Looking back, I would call our mission a successful failure. We'd been trudging through the jungle for almost two weeks before we found the camp. My team did what all Force Recon Marine Units had been trained to do - hunt down the enemy. And we found them. Even though Camp Six was strategically positioned in this part of the jungle to be undiscovered, my three-man recon team boiled in the hot sun and sidestepped every booby trap to find it, to find the enemy. We should've been proud.

"One, two, three..." Zeek counted silently under his breath. "Eighteen, nineteen..."

"Forty-four," Chalmers said interrupting Zeek's take of inventory. "They've got forty-four..."

"I know, Mike. I can count, you know." Zeek usually kept his mind on the job, but I can't blame him for being irritated with Chalmers that one time. We were all hot, tired, and we wanted to go home. Two weeks in the jungle is no picnic. It was the middle of the afternoon when the sun was at its height and the humidity didn't make it any easier. That kind of heat has a way of throwing you off balance. When it's not doing that, it's making you stew. Besides, Zeek was just thrown off, you know?

"That's more than they said would be here," Zeek said almost to himself.

"I know," Chalmers answered.

Let me fill you in on what we were up against. Camp Six was roughly about the size of a football field. Surrounding the camp was your usual barbed wire fence to ward off intruders. Every corner had watchtowers and inside the perimeter were a bunch of barracks where armed guards made their rounds - there were many armed guards.

"Let's go back and tell Sergeant Mitchell," Zeek said.

While staying on their stomachs, they moved back slowly into the bushes and disappeared from the sight of the soldier who strolled by the fence. They gathered their gear and crawled to my position. I kind of already knew what they were going to tell me, but I waited for their report anyway. Zeek placed his M16 at his side and dropped himself on my right.

"Well?" I asked him. "Was Chalmers right?" Zeek just answered with a nod.

"So what do we do now, bro?" asked Zeek. "Not only are there more hostiles than we anticipated but..."

"I say we call it in," interjected Chalmers as he appeared on my left.

Zeek shot back, "We can't just call it in, Mike. We have to maintain radio silence, remember?"

"That's only until we've confirmed the location of Camp Six,

which we've found," Chalmers told him.

"We can only confirm that this is Camp Six if *The Target* is inside," Zeek said.

"Which we did an hour ago," Chalmers spat out.

"Hey!" I whispered to both of them. "We aren't going to make a move yet, so just relax, okay!" And like that, Zeek and Chalmers shut their mouths. That's how it works in the military. You follow orders if you're a grunt and you give the orders if you're in charge. The chain of command must remain intact. Always. When you're taking orders though, you have to assume that the leaders always know what to do. That's why they put me in charge, right? I was *supposed* to know what to do.

"By the way, before we get cold feet, let's not forget what this guy did," Zeek added.

"What are we, stupid?" Chalmers said. "We haven't forgotten. We watch CNN. But we can't take *The Target* just because they have..."

"Didn't I say relax?" I ordered again. The weak links in the chain of command were starting to show themselves again. Realizing that my tone was just above a whisper, I calmed myself and turned my attention to the camp. Who could forget what *The Target* did?

Camp Six was under the direct command of a man Joint Operations Command named *The Target* (you understand this information is still classified, so I can't give you the all the details). Without any exaggeration, he was the world's most notorious terrorist. According to intelligence reports from the CIA and NSA, *The Target* was responsible for nine terrorist's attacks. Five of those attacks were on U.S. soil. The most shocking of those attacks was on an elementary school that killed forty children. Washington was still trying to figure out how he pulled off that one. So in response, all branches of the United States military began their hunt for him. The Marines earned bragging rights for finding the approximate location of the camp first, so the Maritimes Special Purpose Units of the Marine Corps were dispatched all over the country to find the "Baby Killer", as American journalists venomously called him. Force Recon units poured over the entire territory to find Camp Six because it was

believed to be *The Target's* base of operations. Although terminating *The Target* was the goal, taking out the camp was an extra bonus that the Marines were looking forward to. My team and I had reached our primary objective. We found the camp. The rest should've been easy.

"We're going to hold this position for the time being, clear?" Once again, Chalmers and Zeek recoiled into submission. "You're sure, right?" I asked Chalmers again.

"Positive, Sarge," he replied.

I had to make a decision. I mean if I had hesitated, they would have thought I was, you know, soft. "I'm calling it in," I said as decisively as I could, but then I caught a glimpse of Zeek shaking his head.

"What?" I asked.

"Nothing," Zeek answered.

"You got something to say, bro, then say it," I said with a terse tone.

"I've got nothing to say," Zeek replied with his head down. "You're in charge, Bobby. I just work here."

"You don't think we should call it in?"

"I think..." Zeek stopped himself, fighting the urge to speak his mind. "I think we should follow your lead, Sarge."

Feeling even more frustrated than before, I grabbed the receiver from Chalmers' backpack and contacted the base. It was the right thing to do, right? "Bird's Nest this is Little Bird. Do you read me?"

After some static, Captain Lyle Winters responded. "This is Bird's Nest. Have you found the target area?"

"Affirmative, but...uh...well there's been a complication in our mission."

Winters replied in an aggravated tone, "What do you mean by complication?"

"It appears as though we've found the target area."

"Well good for you, Little Bird. I'll be sure to polish your medal for you when you get back. What's the problem?"

It was hard not to come back with the same acid sarcasm, but I let it slide. "Well, Bird's Nest, as I said there's a complication."

"What is the problem?"

I swallowed hard and answered, "There are more hostiles than we expected?"

"Standby, Little Bird," Winters said.

Somebody filled me in later on what had happened at headquarters. The command center was surrounded by a bunch of military personnel who wanted to see an end to this thing. Apparently my answer sounded awfully ridiculous and the officers didn't take to kindly to it. As soon as Winters muted the volume on the communications console, Colonel Len Peterson cursed me out something good.

"Did I misunderstand, or did we send the elite in there?" Peterson hissed. "I vaguely remember reading somewhere that Force Recon Units were the most elite soldiers in the world. These boys were trained to deal with complications. What's going on?"

"Just hang on a minute, sir," Winters said. "Mitchell will get it done. He's a bit of a philosopher, but he gets the job done."

"Then why does he sound like a buck private who's afraid of his own gun?" Peterson snapped.

"You tell me," Winters told him. Peterson paced while Winters barked orders at some of the junior officers.

"Maybe this kid just needs a motivation. What do you know about him you tell me about him, Lyle?"

Captain Winters leaned back in his seat and called to mind my personal file. "Gunnery Sergeant Robert Mitchell. Age 25. Born in Jacksonville, Florida. Father ran off after he was born. Completed a degree in English Literature before joining Force Recon. The story I heard was that he wanted to be teacher, but then he volunteered for Special Ops instead. I think it's because his mother died before he graduated. They were very close. No brothers or sisters. He's the first African-American in the history of the Marines to..."

"He's got no family?" asked the Colonel.

"No, sir."

Inspired, Peterson said, "Get him on the horn. I want to talk to him."

Meanwhile, Zeek decided to break the silence.

"If you're still open to suggestions, I think we're wasting time here, bro," Zeek said after much reflection. "We should have taken out *The Target* a long time ago."

"Now you want to debate," I said.

"I'm just saying, there's no sense dressing for the party if you ain't gonna dance, you know?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Chalmers cut in. "What if we go in and one of those guards spots us?"

"Just hear me out for a second, okay," Zeek said. "What if we just take *The Target* and not the camp? We will have at least met the mission parameters."

"That's not up to us to decide, Zeek," I argued without looking at him. In fact, I couldn't look at him. "That's not even our mission. You know the camp has to go."

"Well then what are we waiting for?" Zeek asked angrily.

"We were assigned to find the camp. That's our job. Let's just wait and find out what's next on the menu," I said as assertively as possible.

"We hunt down terrorists, bro. *That's* our job," Zeek insisted. "Now I agree that our primary objective was to find the camp, but you said it yourself that it has to go. We have an opportunity to take out number one on the FBI's Most Wanted List and we're just standing around looking pretty."

"We still have the problem of Camp Six. It still has to be taken out," said Chalmers.

"Then let SOCOM worry about the camp. If we lose *The Target* now, he might not turn up again," Zeek said.

"Are you suggesting we go in there now and finish them all off? Just the three of us?" I asked while wiping the sweat from my face.

"We've done it before," Zeek said.

"It's not the same, Zeek," Chalmers said. "Did you see what we're up against? Don't get me wrong, I'm not scared or nothing, but we've never dealt with...you know...these kinds of hostiles."

"Fine," Zeek said with an attitude. "Just remember some-

thing, Mikey. There were kids in the school that *The Target* hit. If you ask me, this is our way of paying back the favour."

Michael Chalmers did his best not to lose it, but he got real mad and said, "What kind of logic is that?"

"All right, that's enough! Both of you just shut up! This is the last time I'm telling you both to keep quiet! This is not a committee and I'm not interested in your opinions! You want to debate, join a debating team, but in the meantime I don't want to hear what you've got to say! Start acting like Marines and keep your mouths shut!" My outburst did nothing to ease the tension for any of us. Although I got them to keep quiet, their words were a painful reminder that my only true companion that day was the problem at hand, and it wasn't welcome.

Suddenly, Colonel Len Peterson called out over the radio. "Little Bird, switch to secure channel nine." When it was done he continued. "Son, talk to me. What's going on?"

"Intel told us that there were going to be sixteen hostiles. We count forty-four," I complained again.

"Well sometimes intelligence is inaccurate, son. You have to deal with that," said the colonel.

"I know that, Bird's Nest," I said.

"Little Bird," Peterson went on. "I need an honest assessment from you. Given the current data and what you've observed so far, can you confirm that this is the target area?"

"Affirmative."

"Okay, now listen. This is very important. Are you able to eliminate both *The Target* and the target area?"

"Of course we're able to hit *The Target* and the target area," I answered somewhat condescendingly. "But as I was trying to say before, there's a complication that is difficult to deal with."

"Little Bird, I'm having a hard time understanding the complication of your mission. You just told me that you can hit them both."

"I know. It's just that...well...we've never dealt with this kind of...uh...issue," I stuttered.

"What are you talking about?" Peterson answered trying his best not to grind his teeth.

So I told him. I told him in full detail what the complication was. I didn't pull any punches. But you know what the strange thing was? Peterson wasn't the least bit shocked. It was like as if what we had seen was child's play and we shouldn't have bothered the big boys with it.

"Have you forgotten who's in charge of the target area?" he asked.

"No, Bird's Nest. I'm fully aware of..."

"Then you must be aware of the importance of your mission."

"I am," I said with a frown. "Have you forgotten what I just said?"

"Have you forgotten what this guy has done?"

"No, Bird's Nest,"

Peterson took a long breath to calm himself down. "Are you scared, son?"

"Repeat that, Bird's Nest," I asked. That question came as a surprise.

"Are you scared?"

"Considering that the odds are really imbalanced, yeah I'm a little scared, but I'm trying to make you understand..."

"Well it's normal to be scared. I don't know a single Marine who isn't scared when he's in a hot zone. But just remember something. We're at war, son. The enemies are terrorists. They play dirty and they play to win. Little Bird, I don't like the cards we've been dealt. Three on forty-four isn't exactly a fair fight, but this is what you're trained for. Now's our chance. Now's *your* chance to take the fight to them. You're not some homesick recruit who wants to run home and see his mama. You're elite. You're the best freedom fighters that your country has to offer and your country is asking you to fight for its freedom. Now you've been given a direct order to eliminate the enemy. Do you read me?"

"Loud and clear."

"Well then, put the complication in perspective and get this thing done."

I'd love to tell you that the speech stirred me on, but it didn't. I had heard him say the same thing to a PFC who was scrubbing a toi-

let just a week before. I'd also love to tell you that I appreciated his concern, but I didn't. As childish as this might sound, I felt neglected. It suddenly became clear that Colonel Peterson wasn't interested in my worries, opinions, suggestions or revelations. Peterson got on the horn to remind me that this is the military and we follow orders. No questions asked. So, I just blurted out, "Understood."

The radio clicked off and I looked up to see the faces of Zeek Anderson and Michael Chalmers. I wondered what they were thinking. Did they think I was weak or noble? Did they respect me or did they respect me enough not to say anything?

"All right, guys. You know the drill. Zeek, you and I will set up the charges at the designated targets and on my mark we blow the camp. Chalmers you provide sniper cover. Are we clear?"

Chalmers didn't say anything.

"Chalmers, are we clear?"

"Bobby, there are kids in that camp." Chalmers said.

"Mike, we have our orders. Now provide sniper cover."

"I can't kill a kid, Bobby."

"That's an order, Corporal!" They both nodded, but they had a hard time looking at me. I can't blame them.

It took us thirteen minutes to eliminate camp six. Apparently, it's some kind of company record. Now that I think about it, it was easier than I thought. We should have been proud. But we weren't. No three-man team had ever completed an operation with those odds against them. And no one in Special Ops has completed a mission with that much precision since then. Our op was perfect, if I can use the term. We set up the charges and left. None of the guards saw us go in and none of them saw us leave. A couple of minutes later, I hit the remote trigger. There was an explosion...well, you know the rest.

Our chopper touched down on the airfield. We spilled out and marched to the command center. Colonel Peterson saluted us and then dismissed Zeek and Chalmers. Peterson called me aside and began his debriefing. The only thing I could do was brace myself for being told off.

"Well?" he asked.

"It's done, sir," I told him. "It's like I told you on the radio. No survivors."

"Good," Peterson said while looking down at the ground. He finally raised his eyes to meet mine. "I feel I owe you an apology, son. You boys were initially ordered to do reconnaissance, not direct action. You see, Washington has been pushing for results for months now and I guess we got a little trigger-happy. I just wanted you to know that you did good. You did real good."

"Did I?"

"Yes. You served your country well," he put his hand on my shoulder while we went for a stroll. "I understand you're waiting for a commission, is that right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let me give you some advice. You can't expect to lead a platoon if you panic in the field. If you want to be a lieutenant some day, you have to be able to make decisions under pressure. You can't let the men under you see you whine because the odds are against you. It tears down morale."

"Permission to speak freely, sir?" I requested. "I think my initial report was misunderstood back there. I never said there were *too* many. I just said that there were more hostiles than originally expected, sir." Our stroll stopped and his hand fell off my shoulder.

"Mitchell, you told us that there was a complication and then you went on about the odds. I think we understood you just fine. What you fail to realize it is how that must have sounded to the people around you."

"How it must have sounded? Sir, the complication wasn't about the numbers; and how it sounded doesn't concern me right now."

"Need I remind you of who was in that camp? They were the enemy."

"They were children. The camp was comprised of young children. The sentries, the guards, they were all just kids, no more than ten or eleven years old. *That* was the complication and you know it. That's why I contacted you in the first place, but you shrugged me off. Am I the only one who's bothered by that?" I guess I just wanted

Peterson to understand what he had ordered me to do. In fact, I needed him to make sense of what he had asked me to become.

"I don't think I like your tone, son," Peterson said. "We followed orders based on solid intelligence from SOCOM. We served and protected our country. Are you questioning our intelligence? Are you questioning my decision?"

"I'm not questioning anything, sir," I continued ignoring Peterson's intimidation. "It's just that a lot of things aren't making sense right now. For one thing, I don't understand how one minute intelligence is inaccurate, and now it's solid. If it was the right location and it fit the details of that intel, but why didn't SOCOM pick up on the kids?"

Peterson began looking down at the ground again. Peterson began looking down at the ground again. He kicked at a stone with the toe of his boot. When he finally raised his head, his eyes didn't quite meet mine.

I stepped forward and said insistently, "Sir, did you know that there were going to be children in that camp?"

The colonel said nothing.

Our little chat was cut short as Winters emerged from the command center and approached us. Peterson ran his hand through his hair as he listened to him.

"Sir, Washington wants a report. They're on the horn as we speak," reported Winters.

"Go back and tell them I'm on my way," barked Peterson.

Peterson and I faced each other, leaving us exposed to the sun's searing heat. He took a deep breath and put his hands on his hips. "What can I say, son? This is the military. We enforce policy. We don't make it."

My only comeback was more silence. A long, bitter silence. You know the kind of silence that's more hurtful than insults, the kind of silence that builds a wall so high it can take an eon of apologies and kind words to tear it down. That kind of silence. But that wasn't enough. Something had to be said. Someone had to be condemned. So, just as the colonel was about to make his exit, I called out, "Colonel Peterson. May I make a request?"

"Go ahead," he sighed.

"I'd appreciate it very much if you didn't call me son."

Peterson looked at me coldly, but then took another one of those deep, relaxing breaths. "Fair enough." Then he abandoned me on the airfield. Under most circumstances, a soldier could be court-martialled for speaking to a superior officer the way I did. With all things considered, I think Peterson knew that both he and I had a lot more to be guilty of.

A sinking feeling grew in the pit of my stomach as I thought about what we had done. I thought I was going to be sick, but then I realized what that feeling truly was. Fear. Fear of what I was capable of doing. This bizarre Q and A spun around in my head. What if there weren't children in the camp? Would I have hesitated? Would it have been any more right? What if it was my child in the camp? Then again, what if it had been my child in the elementary school that was attacked? My thoughts immediately went to the little soldiers I met in jungle. *Did any of them get away all right?* I thought. Unfortunately, I already knew the answer. *Did it even matter to anyone else?* I knew the answer to that too. Peterson was right. We are fighting a war and during that one decisive battle, we suffered a great causality. Now, if only we could bury and grieve the loss of our humanity. For the first time, in a long time, I knew what had to be done. It was about time that I started to make some policies of my own. Back at the bunker, I found one of the platoon staff sergeants and asked, "Hey, man. Could I type something on your computer?" He obliged.

With a feeling of inspiration, I sat in front of the screen and began to type: I am writing this letter to inform you that I can no longer serve in the Marine Corps. The reason for my departure is that I am finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between a terrorist and a freedom fighter.

Young At Heart

By Ian Jones

She laughed as she took the sunglasses off the rack, you don't mind if I have these, do you? And of course he didn't. Its not like she was using him for material gain; she always (daily) said how if she wanted a man for his money she wouldn't be with him. But then she wasn't with him, not really. They told others that they were man and wife, they bickered playfully like a couple, but it was, as she often said, the most platonic relationship with a man she had in her life. He would respond by saying, I'm training you, or, well its about time, or some other stupid joke. They were like that. But others didn't know. People (the few young townfolk he had befriended) assumed they were fucking, if not dating. And she would always say, you wish, or I wouldn't stoop that low, or some other dumb joke. The venomous history that they opened to the world shocked strangers. But most people got a kick out of their act. She had been going to the small university an hour away, but the school administration had asked her to take a year off in the light of her dismal first year marks. All very politely of course, but she was bitter. She took him to the local bar, The Mustang, a place he had ventured into once during his seven years in town, and complained for hours about the bullshit that the school was putting her through, and how much she hated their fucking rules. She always swore, but she swore even more after a few drinks, a few double screwdrivers that would, with increasing frequency as she became less and less coherent, be put on his tab. Now she worked, part-time, at the convenience store right beside the drugstore he was assistant manager of. That's how they met; he had stopped in for a diet coke to drink with the sandwich he had made that morning for lunch. She had started talking to him, she was a talker and he was pliant. She invited herself to join him for lunch at the fountain in front of the town square. He ate his tuna sandwich while she talked, and talked. When she began explaining the fucking problems she was having with that joke of a school, he said, oh I guess we have something in common then. I went to that school as well. She exhaled smoke (she smoked a pack of menthol cigarettes a day) and said, so, you know what a fucking joke of a school they are then? He thought for a moment. He didn't dislike the

school; he had got good grades, and been liked by his fellow students and respected as a serious pupil by his teachers. Ya, it's kinda a crappy school I guess, but what do you expect? It's such a tiny school. She ignored this and kept complaining about the administration. You know what I like about you? You're absolutely in love with me, and it drives you nuts! This was later that same night at The Mustang after her sixth drink. He had just started his third beer. He never went out to drink anymore, and the smoke and loud talk of the workingmen at the bar and their polo shirt clad sons and daughters clustered around the sole pool table threw him off balance. Most nights, he drank cheap gin, cheap wine, or cheap beer in front of the TV. Sometimes, when the alcohol made him feel cocky and creative again, he would sit in front of his computer and try to write stories like he always told people he wanted to do. But he never went out. She went on and on about some ex-boyfriend that had treated her like shit, but the beer and noise were becoming fuzzy, so he squinted and tried his best to nod at the right times. Eventually she started to feel like socializing and struck up conversation with the freshly scrubbed boys at the next table. They were local kids, the oldest of them not yet 19. Several of them attended the nearby university. I'm only going to that shithole because it's so close, the one with a thin line of facial hair that ran along his jawline said. He was, tall, good looking, and his confident eyes declared the luck he was having fucking all the pretty girls at school. Or maybe it was just the bland confidence of youth, whichever it was, he automatically disliked him while she leaned over to his table, showing more and more cleavage. She told the boys that the man she was drinking with was 31. 31! They said, surprised, playing it up to her obvious amusement and his tolerant grin. But the boy with the eyes just smirked. He knew what the cleavage meant, and he thought he knew what the 31 year old wanted with her. So he smirked. Soon the noise and smoke turned into a headache that the beer could not assuage. The boys talked about hockey teams they liked and teachers they hated and girls they wanted to fuck, local and otherwise, while the smirking boy flirted with the girl. By this time she was fairly drunk, but she carried it well. The marriage game amused and shocked their young audience, but most of it seemed lost on them, so around midnight he left the smirking boy to his prize and went home to sleep off the

headache. That was their first night out, but she made him come out at least twice a week for months after that. More often than not, the nights played out in the same manner as the first. They would chat at their table while more and more of the smiling, already drunk (pre-drinking they called it) kids would congregate and smoke and swear and do all the things they weren't supposed to until she felt like talking to others. They would play the marriage game throughout the increasing din of drunken youthful noise but only when they had an audience. Sometimes she would see one of the boys she had recently fucked. That's what she always called it. Fucking. And then she would complain about the way they had mistreated her, how they had acted like fucking children. That fucking kid is almost 20 years old, she would say, I mean, be a fucking man already. See? The kid won't even say hi to me! He would listen, nodding sympathetically, offering the advice of patience and moderation that he didn't really mean, and that she didn't really listen to. He came to know these groups of kids through her introductions and gossip. He knew most of their secrets, heard all of the most recent news through her. After only a few weeks, she knew all the major characters in this small town drama and had created her own identity among them. Now they all said hi to him when they shopped at the drugstore, or joked with him about some drunken antics of someone he barely knew. It was almost like having friends, except they always were mindful of what they said about her around him; everybody assumed he had a thing for her. She said she was his best friend. Really, who else could you even call your best friend? He thought about it, and said blushing, ya, I guess you're right. Afterwards, she reminded him of this when he would say something like, I don't know why do I put up with you, or I want a divorce, when she would say something especially nasty during the marriage game. But her as his best friend troubled him more than he let on. He began to wonder what had happened to all the smart and funny people he had known at school. He had gone to parties, hung out at friend's places, so where had they all gone? That was seven years ago he realized with something approaching horror. He hadn't thought about this in all the years he had worked at the drugstore, first as a stock boy, then cashier, and now assistant manager. He was the only candidate to become manager when his aging boss retired. His parents would say,

hey good for you when he told them of his yearly raises or future prospects at the drugstore. He had started working there part-time during his last year at the school, and had started full time the day after his last exam. It had seemed the thing to do. Now he wondered, do I want to work here? What happened to all my friends? He looked back on the last bunch of years with only vague recognition. She started bringing him out more and more often, bringing him along to BBQs and group movie outings, and the kids would laugh and joke with him as an equal, although, following her lead, they all joked lightly about his age. He liked them as flavourless, interchangeable and temporary companions, but he saw in their eyes the wild desire to be elsewhere and he knew the light tone of their mocking would eventually turn to acid and he would be the constant joke. He remembered the old losers they had hung out with as kids, using them for their access to the privileges of age, and laughing behind their backs. He saw the same fickleness of youth in her eyes one night, and it stopped him cold. They had been drinking at The Mustang again, when he saw her open laughing mouth across the room, and the boy beside her laughing as well. He knew they were laughing at him. She was always saying how she was gonna leave this shithole town, and everybody knew it was true. She was the type that made everybody wonder how such a likable, colourful person could end up in such a small nothing of a town. People like that went on to better things in big cities. He was the type who wondered how he had ended up in such a shithole of a nothing town, although it seemed a natural fit to everybody else. It was the type of town he had sneered during the road trips of his youth, and now here he was, and her laughing eyes demanded to know why. When she disappeared one day soon after, nobody was surprised. She was like that: young and cool, ready to hit the road at any time. That he had called in sick that day was surprising for his boss but only because he rarely called in sick. When he returned the next day, his boss asked him how he was. Ok, he said, ready to get back to work. That night he drank a bottle of cheap gin and tried to write a story. He gave up after an hour and watched a re-run of 'Law & Order' instead.

To Dance upon a Dream

By Gordon Lambie

I want to tell you about a dream I had, if you'll allow me.

I was in a small room, a small white room that had not a door or a window, and all over its walls, filling every bit of space, were thousands of sheets of blank paper. They were pinned there with little clear push pins that wouldn't come free. I stood in the midst of all this and simply beheld the room, turning my head in all directions and seeing the exact same thing. It was a room without shadows, but it was also a room without life.

Then, before me, in the middle of this room, there was a desk. It too was white and shadow-less. Like the room it was angular and lifeless, but it seemed to carry a depth of purpose. All aspects of the room seemed to lean towards this desk, not physically, but in some not quite tangible spiritual sense everything was focused on this desk. It seemed to be a part of the floor, not so much bolted down as some sort of odd growth, yet still looking manufactured.

Passing around this desk as I examined it the air in the room stirred and the papers on the wall fluttered on their single pins. There was a whisper of feeling, a hinting of life, in that wind, but it faded as the papers settled and I continued to examine the desk.

It was simple, a surface and two solid supports. There were no drawers, no spaces in which to hide things nor any surface on which to store things other than that which was plainly visible. It hadn't been there when I entered the room, but I hadn't seen it appear either, it was simply there.

As I looked, there came to be a paper on that desk; a blank white sheet in the dead centre of that one available writing surface. Just as with the desk it wasn't that I noticed it only at the end of my examination; that's simply when it first came to be there. Such is the way of dreams, as I'm sure you're well aware.

I had noticed the paper from a crouch, as I looked across the flat desk, but when I saw it, it called to me, and pulled me back up straight.

Something about this paper made it different from those on the wall, though in all appearances it was just as much a blank sheet of

white paper as any of the wall sheets was. Again, I felt a slight breeze and some elusive presence hovering somewhere just beyond my sight and sense. My scalp tingled as I felt the room around me with my mind. There was some message just beyond my grasp here, some rung to a ladder I couldn't see just waiting for me to step up onto it.

Frustration began to build up in my chest as I gazed at the paper before me on the desk, and the more my chest tightened the more I realized how agitated I had been the entire time I had been in the room.

With that realization the room groaned and creaked as if the weight of the world had suddenly come upon it, and the papers on the wall were once again windblown, this time much more violently, though none were torn from their pins. I looked up as they were tossed and my attention was thrown from the desk top for a while.

The wall sheets were blown hard and it frightened me, there was a great puissance in whatever was happening around me, a great force was being put upon this room and I had no means of escape. A seed of claustrophobia suddenly bloomed in me as I realized how trapped I was, and in desperation I ran over to a wall and pulled down handfuls of paper, trying to find an escape of any kind.

My attempts were fruitless, behind every blank sheet I saw only solid white wall, and every sheet I tore down miraculously reappeared unharmed right where it had been as soon as I turned away. Hope fled from my mind, and I turned back to look at the centre of the room.

The desk had turned black.

The sheet of paper was still exactly as it had been, white, clean, and in the exact centre of the desk, but the entire writing surface was a malevolent flat black, as if it were made of coal. As I saw it the air in the room calmed, and I was suddenly very cold. My breath came as mist and goose bumps covered my skin.

The smooth hard floor burned my bare feet with its chill as I walked back to the desk and reached out to touch its darkened surface. Unlike coal it left my fingers clean, but it was warmer than the rest of the room had become and that inspired an indescribable unease in my heart. It became suddenly much harder to breathe, as if my lungs were suddenly afraid to draw in the air of the room. Something about the

air was important to me, and to draw in too much seemed somehow unwise.

Chilled and fearful I stood in the lifeless room and stared fearfully at the desk, getting the distinct feeling that I was missing something important.

As I thought I again became aware of that odd charge in the room. Though afraid, I was still left with the impression that there was something else there with me, and it seemed, as I stood before that desk shivering, with feet that were rapidly numbing from cold, that I could almost see a presence stirring the air around me. There was a not quite visible force swimming past the pages on the wall almost like an otter, twisting and twirling in a beautiful chaotic dance. Every time that force came near the fear in my chest seemed to lift and float away for a second. Every time that spirit drew near me the world warmed just a little and my breath came all that much more easily.

Despite my fear, the knowledge that I wasn't alone in this space brought a smile to my face, and I took a few moments to just listen to the dancing wind in the sheets. My eyes closed and my head turned upwards. I felt in that one moment that I could be truly content to just stand there forever, feeling that presence around me and knowing that I wasn't alone.

That moment lengthened into several and had I not already been asleep I might have drifted off to dreams all that much farther away, but something called my attention back to the room where I was, and as I re opened my eyes, I saw something new.

Sitting on the desk to the left of the paper, was a six inch long metallic letter opener with a smooth reflective handle and a distinctly pointed tip. That tip was pointed away from me, so that the handle was toward my hand, and in the light of the room the whole instrument seemed to shine, as if with some divine meaning and purpose.

When I reached out to pick up the blade, it shocked my hand, and I drew back for a second, giving the tool a sideways glance. What had the shock been, a warning perhaps? I was compelled to take up the blade, but my own paranoia restrained me from doing so until something in the wind whispered to me that it would be alright as long as I took proper care.

Re-extending my arm I grasped the letter open firmly in my

right hand and gazed at its sheen. There was something mystic about the blade, its handle was cool to the touch in the already cold room, but not unpleasant to hold. Clutching it I felt as if I had come across the key to some great unfound door, as if this blade held the answer to all life's questions if I only knew how to use it. My fingers caressed its surface as if it were a dear friend. I didn't notice initially, but the opener was the only thing in the room with a shadow.

I stood there for some time, just holding the knife and staring into the depths of its reflections, feeling the wind on my face and wanting with all my being to be with this spirit that danced about my heart. In the reflections on the blade I could see colours and feelings in the room that I didn't get a sense of by just looking around. Something in this blade was distinctly potent.

The reasoning of dreams is something that will always be beyond me, and I suppose I will never really know what drove me to do so in the dream, but as I stood there looking at the blade, I was filled with an uncontrollable need to drive it into my own arm. So, drawing my right hand slowly up and angling the blade to my elbow, I swung down and plunged the letter opener into my left arm, on the inside of the arm, just two inches below the elbow. The arc the blade made in the air seemed a rainbow for a fraction of a second, and as I swung that presence in the air suddenly spiraled around my body, filling my heart with warm coloured light.

The blade burned intensely as soon as it pierced my skin; the handle remained cool and pleasant to touch, but the blade was like fire. I cried aloud, falling forward onto the desk as the handle protruded from my arm. My body shook with the pain and I thought in that dark moment that I might die, but the wind blew in that moment and the darkness seemed to pass. Raising the strength of will to look down at my arm I saw something extraordinary.

The skin around the blade was blistered and the wound seemed almost to smoke; what I could see of the blade glowed like steel freshly drawn from the forge, but quite beyond all that pain, what fascinated me was the blood. I bled freely, rivulets of blood were pouring down my arm onto the desk and the paper below, but the blood flowed black.

Where the blood flowing from my wound touched the desk,

the surface regained its pure white glow, and when the droplets fell upon the blank page words formed where they hit. As I bled out onto the page a letter of poetic beauty grew before me and though my body shook now more than ever with the pain and chill, something about seeing that page filled consumed my pain and fear before they reached my heart. With every drop of that darkness that poured out of my wound I felt lighter, more at peace and less bothered by the growing pain.

As I watched and as my arm bled more and more the page filled until there was no blank space left on it, and when that had happened the wind in the room caught the droplets flowing out of me and carried them in a beautiful flowing dance to all the other pages of the room.

I watched as this spirit who had calmed me so in my times of fear helped draw this odd darkness out of myself and cover the walls with a beautiful epic poem. Every page was filled and every corner of the room was covered with words borne straight from my heart.

By the end my body was left broken and drained. It was ill and shaking constantly, it was an anchor for my heart, but nothing more. As the last few drops were carried from me by that mystic wind, I felt as if I was being carried away with them. When I look back now I see that I was, for at the end of that dream I stood no more, but danced about on the winds, not limited by the walls of that odd little room, nor held back by my fear; just happy and free, held back by nothing, and more alive than I had ever been before.

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

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Scott Baker
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Marjorie Bruhmuller
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Phoebe Chan
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