

MACMURRAY COLLEGE



**MONTAGE**  
SPRING 08

ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

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# Montage Spring 08

You have in your hands the Spring 2008 Edition of Montage, MacMurray's Art and Literary Magazine. Thanks to all of those who contributed art and written work for this edition, and congratulations to the winners of the short story and poetry awards. Thanks to Dr. Seufert for advice and ingenious inspirations. Main Street Printing and Steven Varble also deserve a round of applause for the final formatting and printing.

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Rachel Riggle

# Poem

Benji Evans

This is just a poem  
There is no hidden meaning  
No symbolism, no irony, no metaphors  
No real thought of any kind

So much is used  
To break down another's words  
That poetry becomes the enemy  
Of those whose books remain  
On shelves rather than in hands

There is no word play  
No alliterations, no allusions, no  
Bother on my part to force  
The reader to think  
This is as deep as I intend  
It to be

Free from convention, free from study  
From rhyme, from time, from line  
And everything else that forces analysis  
Rather than enjoyment.

# Five O'Clock Shadow

Danyelle Hooks

The smoke from their barrels swirls  
Through the air in a haze.  
The shells from their guns bounce  
Off the ground.  
Bloody corpses and moaning bodies  
Surround me.  
A five o'clock shadow of  
What just happened,  
A memory I'll never forget  
Of days lost to war  
And nights spent in terror.  
Maybe someday it'll be over,  
But for now, this is all we know.  
I've seen the end in my dreams  
And victory is not sweet.  
A razor skims the surface,  
Our troops all disappear,  
The enemy prevails.  
A new face takes the lead  
And a new regime has control.  
All is lost  
And we are forgotten.

Such things words cannot express  
but then here is my attempt  
to explain the gift of life:  
the fleeting form of comfort  
in a world where few things are certain.

Precious are those around us,  
only those who seem to care,  
those who would never leave us  
those who are always there.  
Precious is the life that was given  
to us by Christ the Lord,  
for he has set forth a way to live  
now and after death's afford,  
yet complications in this world  
in the mind, body, and soul  
make the life grow weary and numb  
and the heart a dark fortress.

Water holds no clarity-  
Reason holds no knowledge-  
God holds no purpose  
to those in this impasse.

Numbly trudging  
through the valley of death,

looking down at the overturned path:

The body has failed you-

The mind is lost-

God has betrayed you

yet you feel for him no loss.

Those around you

grow sick in contemplation.

You already sick

die in mere frustration.

Why then explain the properties

of that which we call life:

so fickle-

so fragile-

so flighty-

so trite?

I suppose it is because without life

there would be no sonnet

that I would care to write.

Without darkness

There is no light

as life fades away from the body

all too early, not quite right.

# Change with Time

Brett Aguirre

I couldn't stop running. The heat of someone or something was on the back of my neck. I didn't know how I got here, but I knew I had to get out. My heart raced; my breath became more and more winded.

As I looked into nothingness for my escape, the creature behind me seemed even closer. The only sound for me to concentrate on was the sound of footsteps, not of my own. Enough! I thought it was time to end this. I stopped dead, closed my eyes, and waited for the pain of great feet or the piercing of my skin by great teeth, but it never came. As I closed my eyes, I became numb waiting for what I didn't know, but what I feared. Upon opening my eyes, the abyss I was in vanished as if the light had been turned on. Now my heart raced even faster, for I stood in a blank white room. I breathed easy for the moment. My chaser was gone. As I stood alone I felt the eyes of another.

"What do you fear?" came a girl's voice from behind me. I turned to find a girl of ten or no more staring at me as though I were a funny picture. She smiled as though it were an easy day for her. Again, she called, "What do you fear?"

As if to an adult I answered back, "Change... I fear change. Who are you and why do you ask me this?"

She giggled as I blinked again. Then she too was gone, though her laughter continued even louder.

I tried to walk to be where she once stood. It took all my strength, and still I went nowhere as I looked down with the fear of the unknown again. To me it looked only as a spot until... it moved. It had hold of my feet, and it continued to grow outward. I stayed frozen on the black around me. My heart slowed to a stop as the darkness began to bare semblance to a man made of tar. As it took form, a face came



forth and opened its eyes. They burned red as if I had woken the creature from its slumber. The creature began to pull me down to see eye to eye with him. There was a hunger in his eyes that burned for my soul. I felt that devouring my soul was its only desire. The creature began to pull me down to the darkness with it. I struggled to no avail. I raised my hand as far as it would go waiting for a rescuer that wasn't there. Now, I could no longer hold my eyes open nor could I bare this death. In the dark I could feel a thud. I awoke on my floor. The thud that had jarred me from my slumber was me hitting the floor. I sat up scanning my room frantically for things that never came. Everything was the same as it always was, except that my room was oddly silent, and for a Friday, it seemed too quiet. As I stood up, I stood ready for a fight. I walked slowly to the door waiting for it to disappear. I clutched the cold metal handle and turned it until I heard the sound of the click. As the door opened to the hall, my presence became known as the door reviled its age. The sound of the creaking echoed in the hall and no one was there to hear it. I stood ready to run at any moment. I relaxed now thinking it was over until I reached the stairs. No breath could enter my lungs as I flew down the stairs still staring at the sight I beheld. I dropped to my knees with tears in my eyes. There was my mother suspended in air as she stopped falling. Everything was the same; never changing, never moving, always silent. I knew then that the creature had been real. It had devoured my soul. Forever my fear would suspend just as I had suspended in that dark hold of nothingness, forever.

# Tainted Sacraments

Jonathan Ingram

And before capitalism,  
Debt exploited family gangs.  
Honesty: illegal justice.  
Loyalty meant nothingness,  
Obedience passed questioning,  
Sacraments tainted uglier.  
Violence won, (e)xpansion yoked.  
Zero.

## Atlantic

Benji Evans

We take this too far  
Counting backwards from the bright lights  
Again and again we're waiting tonight  
And from where we're standing  
The colors blind our eyes  
Forever in this moment  
If we survive the night



Untitled 1  
Liesel Reinersmann



Untitled 2  
Liesel Reinersmann



Pastel  
Tina Arnold

# Asking for It

Jesse Baehr

Enter. Enter. Enter. Enter. Wait. That's too many enters... Doesn't matter though, I have to idea what I'm going to type... Stupid assignments. As if my life isn't busy enough as it is! How the hell does everyone else find the time to do these? Between bills, work, and school I have absolutely no free time, and definitely not enough time for the homework that goes along with school.

Backspace. Backspace. Maybe I should just drop out. All I want to do is have a set schedule for work and have the rest of the time for myself. But then I'd have to deal with my mother's bitching and the general disappointment of the family. That's sad that that is the only reason I can think of to stay. Its not like the money will be so amazing when I get out of college... I'll still have to struggle to get a decent job, and I'll have to pay back college loans. Fuck... Maybe I'll win the lottery... Or, maybe something will just come along and put me out of my misery.

Spacebar. Spacebar. Death. Now *there* is a guy who has it easy. Oh ho, look at me, I go around killing people for a living. You say you have low living expenses? I have none! I get to experience all that life has to offer! I was there to help your mother Charlene leave this life when you little sister Maggie was born into it. I gave your grandma Marie the gift she wished for with all of her being, an end to the suffering caused by the cancer that thrived in her lungs. I was there to catch your best friend Jake when he leaped from the top of High Hopes Gorge. I was there when atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was there when JFK was assassinated. I personally escorted Dr. King to the afterlife. I hung around with Judas Iscariot. I had a blast at Pompeii. Me and Marie Antoinette lost our heads!

That guy has to be a pompous asshole. No matter how

famous you are, Death has met more people than you have. Death could probably pick up chicks like no other, I mean imagine all the name-dropping he could do! Oh, you're a scientist? So were a few friends of mine...

coughcoughNEWTONcoughCHARLESDARWINcough. Oh, sorry, I must be getting sick... If I'm not careful, it'll be the *DEATH* of me!

Why am I thinking about death? No wonder I never get any homework done, not only do I not have any time, I'm so easily distracted that it's not even funny! Christ, not only am I pretending that Death is a person, I'm also assuming that he's a pompous, self-centered prick. Hey, maybe I should write about it. It's not like I have any other ideas demanding to be explored... I'm in an aggravated mood anyways, I'll just make Death out to be a fool.

Yeah, I mean, sure Death always wins in the end but what about all the times you cheat Death? How often is Death left standing there, looking like an idiot? The guy probably has a real self-esteem problem too, most people do everything they can to avoid him... I bet that's why he hides his face under that stupid black hooded cape. That and the fact that he's probably fugly, I mean look at those bony hands! Can you imagine what kind of pasty complexion the guy has? I bet he doesn't take failure real well either, he's probably a sore loser... I mean, nobody can meet that many successful and famous people, win that many times, and live that long without being a bit of a whiner when he doesn't get his way. Hell, why am I still thinking about it? Start typing and see where it goes baby!

*Death self-consciously straightened his hood and followed Flatulent Frank thought the buffet line. Frank was overdue for a heart attack because of the awesome amount of fat encrusted foods he gorged himself upon, but, due to an unusual mixture of genes, he actually had a stronger heart than most athletes. So, Death found himself having to resort to cruder methods. This time Death decided to use Frank's food molesting ways against him by placing a jagged chicken*

*bone in an odd spot in his chicken. Frank immediately started wolfing down the copious amounts of food, which could have easily fed a family of five. Death chuckled as he saw this, realizing that at that speed it wouldn't be long before Frank swallowed his last unchewed mouthful. Frank took the ill-fated chicken thigh, swirled it in mashed potatoes that were yellow from the butter that smothered them, dragged it through the corn, piled salt on it, and dropped it unceremoniously into his gullet. Death held his breath and leaned in until his face was only inches away from Frank's now bulging eyes. Death cackled with glee as Frank began turning red, beating his chest with a closed fist. Frank gave up beating upon his chest and started pounding the table to draw the attention of someone nearby. Due to his loud table manners, his neighboring tables chose to ignore him, assuming he was just being rude. Frank pounded the table harder and harder, turning blue in the face. Death leaned in closer still and froze with anticipation. Frank gave one last mighty pound on the table, striking a spoon that was stuck in his butter-yellow mashed potatoes. The spoon flipped out of the mashed potatoes, catapulting the yellow mass into the face of Richard, a man who was having a rather bad day.*

Hey, that wasn't too bad... Maybe this is a good idea for a story. Let's explore the Richard angle.

*Richard woke up that morning with a major headache. He tried to skip out on going to church because of said headache, but his wife wouldn't hear of it. After half an hour of bickering about his laziness and lack of piety, and a dramatic increase in the intensity of his headache, Richard finally went. Today just happened to be the Sunday school's turn to be the choir. After that horrific ordeal, Richard decided to go to a nice quiet restaurant for a bite to eat thinking that maybe some food would help alleviate his headache. He was mistaken. Not only did the food not help, but he also had the utter misfortune of coming while some rude, overweight jerk was busy chomping and pounding on the table. His noise level had become so great that Richard's wife, Martha, leaned*

*in to whisper about how ride their neighbor was being. While leaning forward, Martha had spilled red wine on Richard. Richard was in his best suit. Not only was this suit classy and fashionable, it was a Versace and it cost at least 2 weeks wages. Richard immediately leaped from his seat and ran towards the bathroom. Halfway there, a yellow mushy mess splattered Richard's face, causing him to trip upon a misplaced chair and fly through the air.*

And here comes the punch-line...

*Just as Death raised his gleaming scythe to claim the life of Flatulent Frank, a flying cursing mass plummeted through the air into Frank's chest, causing him to expel the recently swallowed chicken thigh that was swirled in butter-yellowed mashed potatoes, drug though corn, and covered in salt, from his mouth into the face of a very surprised Death. Frank took an enormous breath of air and belched, while Death slowly wiped the majority of the slimy mess from his face, stood up, and stiffly walked out.*

Ha, that's great! I'm a genius! This is a definite A+ story! It has details, comedy, drama, suspense, everything! Damn, it just got really cold in here. Oh well, I can't leave the computer, otherwise I'll lose my train of thought. Oooh, hey I'm on a roll here. There goes another 3 pages!

*Death stomped his feet and jumped up and down, throwing a temper tantrum as the tree fell a few feet to the left of Flatulent Frank. Frank didn't miss a step, he merely placed his hands upon his prominent stomach in an attempt to calm what he thought was a foul bowel movement.*

Damn, I'm thirsty but I can't even stop my hands. It's like they're moving on their own! Oh well, this is good stuff here and if I don't get an A for it then that teacher isn't worth the paper his degree was printed on! What that hell was that? Could have sworn I saw something in the monitor reflection. I've got to stop eating so late. There's probably some medical journal somewhere that warns against it. Wouldn't doubt it if it is making me see things. Oh well. Ha! This is great!

*Death crouched beside a fire hydrant, waiting for*



*Flatulent Frank to pause at the crosswalk. Frank slowly but surely rumbled his way up to the crosswalk, and paused, albeit with great difficulty due to the momentum that Frank picked up whenever he moved. Frank idly picked up a ball of ambiguously colored, lint-like substance out of his cavernous belly button while watching the quickly approaching semi. Death, seeing his chance, leaped into action. Upon reaching Frank, Death crouched down, bracing himself for a herculean push against Frank's horizontally gifted backside. Right as Death plunged his bony hands into the spongy mass, Frank tightened what little could be tightened in his right butt cheek, lifted his right leg, (which was a feat unto itself) and passed the foulest wind to ever grace God's green Earth right into Death's shocked face. Blinded with burning tears and choking to death, metaphorically speaking, Death stumbled away as quickly as he could. Frank gave a satisfied grunt at the release of pressure and began his glacier like movement towards the nearest buffet.*

What was that flash? Thought I saw something in the monitor reflection gleam. Oh well. Man, I should be about done by now. Yeah, this is plenty for a story. Why am I still typing? I guess the story isn't done yet. This story is really taking a life of its own now... I don't even know what I'm going to type until I'm already typing it. This must be what inspiration feels like! What's happening now?

*Death let the very corpulent Frank be. The fat man would die in due time, as all mortals do. That is the one constant truth, you cannot truly escape Death.*

Wow, this is getting serious now. Where am I going with this?

*Death has a far more difficult and greater job than most people realize. Not only does Death have to claim the lives of mortal men, he must also be there at the death of other things. Death is there at the expiration of ideas, the deletion of files, the death of stars, and the end of any life.*

I should just stop this now. This isn't going anywhere, now I'm totally deviating from the storyline and I'm just

rambling on. Why am I still typing?

*Death is also there when a character dies on paper. Unlike how things are in real life however, Death is bound by the rules of the world the character lives in. Death is bound by the author.*

Why is it so cold in here?

*Death is forced to do whatever the author forces him to do. Death is forced to suffer whatever grievance the author forces him to suffer. Death does not like this.*

OK, I don't like this story anymore. I'm done. I'M DONE! Why can't I stop typing?!

*Death does not take such humiliations lightly, whether the author was ignorant of the situation or not. Death enters the room of one such author.*

I'm really freaking out here, why the fuck can't I move my hands from the keyboard?! Why am I still typing?!

*Death slowly walks up to the author, putting a quick edge to the curved blade of his scythe.*

What is that noise?!?! What is going on?! Oh God help me, please I'm sorry I didn't know!

*Death stops behind the author, who is now reduced to tears and pitifully useless prayers.*

Please leave, please don't hurt me, I'm sorry, I'll never write about you again!

*Death raises the scythe high-  
PLEEEAASE!!*

*the scythe falls.*

# Inquiry

Rachel Riggle

Never Never  
were there was  
A bee that did not buzz  
nor a teddy bear that did not fuzz,  
yet on an empty barren tree  
lives a cat without a flea  
that would argue much with me  
about what never were and was  
for there now is inquiry  
that there could quite be  
such a thing as a fuzz-less bear  
or a buzz-less bee  
for is it not right  
that a bee does not buzz when not in flight  
and a bear whether wet or shaven  
not fuzzy in the slight.  
So I suppose that cat could be right.  
Never never is better left to the land,  
and this poem should surely be banned  
for such nonsense has been planned.  
So let us part hand in hand  
set off for the big blue ocean,  
never never is without sand.

# The Angelus

Austin Haedicke

A gentle wisp of smoke  
Leaves a burning in my throat  
A nervous bleeding in my brain  
Inhale and lacerate  
Cut deeper with every breath you take  
I am the new cancer  
I never looked better  
No tower stands forever  
Leave the frays and sever  
Watch you while I sleep and reconfigure

I take part in the angelus  
Our Father reign down on us  
Screaming lungs and bitter tongues  
Tear me down and tear me up  
Burn everything we love  
And I'll break away  
Someday, someday

My storm is still resting  
I think this feeling  
Is exactly what we need  
Write down the shame and sin  
Of our father's father and pay the debt

I can't shake this little feeling  
We burn bodies of angels  
Siphon venom from the weak  
Bite me once and now I'm shy  
Turn the page and carry on  
And I'll break away  
Someday, someday

Put me on a pedestal  
Like a precious moment collectable  
But my halo has a screw loose  
So let me slip and break against the wall  
Shattered dreams let me lay among them all  
I know I deserve worse  
But it terrifies me and I can't take it anymore

I take part in the angelus  
Our Father reign down on us  
Screaming lungs and bitter tongues  
Hail Marys never seem enough  
Bored and tired of my laments He said  
"I died for you one time, but never again"  
Oh, never again  
So I fall back on the angelus  
Once again, and again, and again.

# Sky

Liesel Reinersmann

Sky

Full of promise and

Hope

Full of deception

And empty.

The wire traps my mind

As well as my body. My

Eyes

Always looking up,

While others look down in

Shame.

Eyes

Look up searchingly

For a god so many

Believe

To be watching over us.

What does he do?

Laugh.

We think he'll save us.

He is the reason we are here.

The sky is empty.

But  
For a dove.  
So awkward,  
So out of place  
In a world so full of Hate.  
There is hope.  
I close my eyes.  
Strengthen my will.  
Now I am flying  
Over the chimneys  
Past the painful fences  
Flying  
    Higher  
        Away  
I soar over once  
Beautiful cities  
Breathing farms,  
Now destroyed  
Barely gasping  
    I fall  
    Faster  
Harder  
The vision fades.  
There is only one escape  
Only for my soul  
Never for my body.

# Fading Flowers

Jonathan Ingram

The calm and graceful beauty of the two story Victorian had always masked the turmoil within, at least as long as Timothy could remember. The drunken rage, the vicious beatings, the weeping mother, the whimpers of a child: these were not strangers to the Conrad household. Timothy watched it all from the shadows, holding his breath, waiting for someone—God, his mother, the police, *someone*—to intervene; no one and nothing ever did, though. Whatever happened to Timothy and his brother, they'd face it alone.

On more than one occasion, Timothy had thought of running away, getting himself out of Philadelphia, west to the Appalachians or even catch a ride on some barge moving down the Delaware. Timothy never would, though. He could never leave Mother and Adam alone with Father, even if they *were* both older and stronger than he. He'd never leave his family behind, even if it did mean finally escaping the Drowning Place.

He had always been afraid of the Drowning Place. A simple design, Father had built it in the basement when Timothy was only six. Though made of only an old bathtub, a clear fiberglass lid, and a padlock, the simple design didn't make it less dangerous. Father would lock him in the Drowning Place until his lungs felt as if they were going to explode.

Walking quickly past his brother, Timothy tried to ignore the large bruise under Adam's eye from the night before and headed for the kitchen. Ignore it; that's what everybody else does. Father is so damn powerful that nobody takes notice of what he does in his own house. *Well, I notice*, Timothy thought to himself, *and one day, the rest of the world will, too.*

"What's for dinner?" he asked, pulling a Diet Coke out of the fridge, shooting a quick glance at his mother dutifully washing dishes in the sink.



Her eyes were puffy and red, a clear indication that she'd been weeping moments before. She tried to compose herself, though, for what it's worth. "Oh, honey, I didn't see you come in. I..." she trailed off in thought, rummaging through the cupboards. Mother had scars all along her arm and in the florescent light of the kitchen, they were all too visible. He wasn't sure how to react, whether to choke down the fear that he, too, may someday sport them, or embrace the rage burning within.

"Mother, your arm," he began. She quickly drew her sleeves down, making them soggy with the soapy water they had been submersed in moments before, but hiding the signs of living in this house. With one hand, she ushered him out of the kitchen, moving to the refrigerator for the next round of rummaging.

"I'll save this family, Mother. You'll see." She ignored him for the thousandth time and continued trekking him out of the kitchen, moving the door of the fridge to block the entrance of the kitchen.

"Go watch television with your brother; dinner won't be ready for an hour." Tonight's pasta no doubt would be salted with her own tears. But if she wouldn't talk to him about it, or even acknowledge that it happened, how could he help?

Obediently and resentful, Timothy made his way to the living room, to face another reminder of the horrors going on in his home. "One day I'll save them," he whispered. "One day."

Adam was sitting on floor, neither watching *Smallville* nor reading the worn-out copy of *Stranger in a Strange Land* that lay on the floor in front of him. He simply stared at the flowery wallpaper, the sacred wall where his body had hit countless times when Father was drunk and enraged. He didn't appear to have even noticed him come in, but when Timothy spoke, Adam wasn't even startled.

"Why do you let him?" Adam ignored his question and continued to look intently at the wall, as if it contained some kind of secret to all of his family's problems that would simply

appear if one stared long enough. How could he expect the community to do anything when his own family—the abused themselves—ignored the problem?

Hearing the car pull into the garage, Timothy rushed to the closet, his castle, the shadows that could make him invisible. Hiding amongst the winter coats, Timothy closed his eyes, letting the darkness wrap around his body.

When Father walked through the door, Timothy could feel the fear rising in his throat and choked it down, pushing himself farther into the closet. He could hear the door slamming, the scampering of Adam up the stairs to his room, his own fortress, the calming voice of Mother trying to reason with a lunatic.

“Honey, just sit down for a moment. You’ve had a long day at the office.” Father wasn’t to be reasoned with, though. He was in one of those moods he often had, wherein anything you would say would only make his fury grow. Timothy heard a rustle of movement and then the distinct sound of the thud of a body hitting the floor. He could hear the soft whimper of his mother begging, pleading for an end. He heard more rustling, more slapping, more thuds.

*Enough was enough*, Timothy thought to himself. Slowly creeping out of the closet and into the kitchen, he looked for anything to give him leverage against his all-powerful father. Eventually settling on a pairing knife, he made his way back into the living room, where the thrashing and bruising of his mother continued.

Lifting the knife over his head as high as he could, he prepared to smash it down into the back of his father, catching him by surprise. Ready to finally plunge his Excalibur into the back of the enemy, he was caught off guard when his father’s hand swung behind his back and landed a blow in Timothy’s side, sending him sprawling across the room. Desperately searching for the knife, Timothy moaned as fists of rage pounded on his slender body, leaving red blotches to cover his chest.

“Stop it! Stop it!” He could hear his mother shouting, though

she surely knew it would do little more than provoke his brutality even further. "You're a coward," Timothy whispered, hoping, wishing for more. The blows became harsher and the pain unbearable, but still Timothy stared into his father's eyes.

*This is it, he thought. This is the way out.* The community, the police, even Father's constituents couldn't ignore the cold, bruised, lifeless body of his son. They may ignore the bruises, they may ignore the rumors, but they could never ignore his death. "More," he whispered. "More." The assault continued well after he was coughing blood, drowning in it, even.

When Father finally had enough, he walked briskly to his study and locked the door behind him, while Mother rushed to Timothy's side to hold him, mixing his blood with her tears. If she was speaking, he couldn't hear it, his ears ringing so loudly.

"I told you I'd save you," he choked out, looking at the spot on the wall his brother was so intently focused on earlier that night. And the world around him began to fade away, one flower at a time.

# The Friendliest Hero You'd Ever Meet

Toni Dermott

Dedicated to:

~My brother, Orville Dermott~

I grew up watching the boy with the clumsy feet.  
Never did he pay much attention to where he was going.  
He was too busy talking to the people that were already there.  
The friendliest boy you would ever meet.

I grew up listening to the boy you couldn't always understand.  
Never was he worried about his pronunciation  
He was busy telling you about his day.  
The friendliest boy you would ever meet.

I grew up watching the boy who only rode on the "short"  
yellow school bus.  
Never was he worried what others thought about it.  
He was too busy waving to everyone to care.  
The friendliest boy you would ever meet.

I grew up listening to others make fun of,  
The boy with the clumsy feet,  
The boy you couldn't always understand,  
The boy who only rode on the yellow school bus.  
I grew up listening to others make fun of  
The friendliest boy you would ever meet.

I grew up watching the boy with the clumsy feet.  
And I learned, some people look different.

I grew up listening to the boy you couldn't always understand.  
And I learned, to listen a little harder.

I grew up watching the boy who only rode on  
the "short" yellow school bus.  
And I learned, he is extra special.

I grew up listening to others make fun of the boy  
who taught me,  
People look different and some times in this world you might  
meet someone who is extra special but you have to listen a  
little harder to hear what they have to offer.

Some people wish they could meet their hero.  
But I grew up with mine.  
And he's the friendliest hero you'd ever meet.

# The Responsibility of a Pink Elephant

Nicole Spiess

*I'm getting fat*, I thought as I tossed another handful of chocolate candies into my mouth. Purple stretch marks had begun to creep their way across my stomach and I had recently outgrown the waistband of my jeans. I was left with only a few pairs of ratty sweatpants and floral skirts that had a grandma feel about them. Tanner promised he would go through his stuff and see if he had anything I could wear. From downstairs, I could still hear our parents fighting. I pulled the scratchy wool blanket tighter around me, staring intently at the hole in my sock.

My parents had invited Tanner and his family over for dinner. My mom had vacuumed the couch cushions and had made more than just Cheese Whiz and Ritz for appetizers. My dad had gone out and bought some fancy pants bottle of liquor. The evening had started out cordial. We were all crowded in the living room, dressed in over-starched apparel, and tried to make small talk. When the topic of weather became thoroughly beaten over the head, there was nothing to keep them from dancing around the big, pink elephant in the room. Marriage was necessary in both of their books. Since I already had a green twist tie around my finger until Tanner could afford a ring, that was already taken care of. After that, the conversation turned towards living arrangement. Where would we be living? Somehow that tripped the trigger, and not long after that, the yelling began. My dad was purplish red in the face by the time Tanner and I slipped out. We sneaked up to my room, where we had been holed up the last two hours.

I glanced over at Tanner. He had been studying the tattered baby name book we picked up from a second hand store for the past hour. His shaggy blond hair hung in his coffee colored eyes.

"How about Ariel?" Tanner asked.

I shook my head, "Too Under the Sea."

“Betty?”

“As in Boop?”

“Lindsey?”

“Too slutty.”

“What was wrong with Wilma?” he asked.

“Too Bedrock.”

“God, Emerson, are you going to disagree with every name I give?”

“You disagreed with every name I found,” I countered.

Tanner shut the book and set it on the nightstand, “I say we just call the baby *it* for their entire life.”

“We can’t punish them because we can’t agree,” I replied.

Tanner sighed, before stretching out beside me. He laced his fingers, nestling them behind his head. I lay down next to him, resting my head on his chest. I breathed in, catching the faint smell of soap. Sometime during the spring of sophomore year, Tanner began sneaking over in the middle of the night, to escape the ongoing verbal war between his parents. He would shimmy up the drain pipe and into my bedroom window. He’d crash on my floor until the pink fingers of dawn began to stretch across the ceiling. Even after the fighting had ended, Tanner would still appear at my window.

“We have Lamaze class tomorrow. I’ll pick you up at nine,” I could feel the rumble of his voice through his chest as he spoke.

Some of those late nights, sleep never seemed to find us. We’d lay awake for hours talking, about the little things in life. Tanner liked grape suckers, I like cherry. He still had a deck of Pokemon cards, and I still had box full of My Little Ponies. He confessed he wet the bed until he was ten. I confided in him that I still pick my nose. We both admitted we had never actually done it either. Soon a pact was formed that by graduation, if we were still virgins, we’d be each other’s first.

“I got my pay check yesterday. We can go price cribs afterwards.”

Obviously, one of us wasn't a virgin anymore.

Tanner had taken on more responsibility than a seventeen year old should have to take. Especially when it wasn't his burden to bear. I told the baby's father. He hadn't been the one with in the bathroom when I took my sixth at-home pregnancy test. Hell, he hadn't even gone with me to buy them. He hadn't held me in his arms as I cried myself to sleep that night, whispering to me that everything would be okay. He didn't act like anything was different when he saw me in class. He had his own family; a wife, two sons, and a dog. He lived in a nice house, in a nice neighborhood. A neighborhood that he wouldn't let be overrun with the scandal of his knocked up babysitter. He wasn't going to let this one time mistake ruin his teaching career, his life. He gave me the money to take care of it, and I took it. It wasn't like he loved me or had wanted the baby now growing inside of me. Did I even want the baby growing inside of me? Was a child conceived from a rape truly ever wanted by anyone?

I cried when I told Tanner I was going to get an abortion, and asked him to go with me. He held my hand all the way down to the clinic. As he helped me fill out the paperwork, Name: *Emerson Skinner*, my mind began to race *Could I ever forgive myself if I went through with it?* I glanced over at Tanner, trying to find some strength to hold onto, when I saw tears rolling down his cheeks. When I asked him what was wrong, he replied that he couldn't let me go through with it.

In the middle of the clinic, Tanner got down on one knee and proposed with a green twist tie he had in his pocket. He promised me he would keep a roof over our heads, and food on the table. We left the clinic, hand in hand, blank forms still sitting on the counter. He took all the wrath and blame our parents poured out onto him. He got a job, making minimum wage bagging bruised bananas and over ripen melons at the grocery store. He read the baby the rhythmic books of Dr. Seuss, and held my hair back when morning sickness was at its worst. He gave my stomach whisper soft kisses whenever he would leave.



I couldn't understand how Tanner could hold that much love for a child that wasn't even his. I knew biological parents who wished their children would just disappear, diapers and all, so they could go on living their lives without a care in the world. Still, Tanner truly wanted my baby and me.

Tanner stirred besides me, "Emerson?"

"Yeah," I murmured.

"Do you think the baby will love me?" he asked quietly.

I rolled to my side and found myself staring into his eyes. I could still see the same glow in his eyes when we first saw the blurry blob of baby on the sonogram screen.

"Em, that's our baby," he whispered, taking a hold of my hand.

I reached out and laced my fingers through Tanner's. I slipped his hand beneath my shirt, and cupped it against my swollen stomach. The warmth that radiated from his palm sent shivers down my spine. His hand began to tremble beneath mine, and tears began to form in his eyes.

I smiled, "Tanner, our baby will love you, as much as I love you."

# Beacon of Despair

Brett Aguirre

I lock the door as I enter the canvas of my greatest work. I feel the cold floor and I know the room inch for inch as I plan to end it all. My brush a razor and the paint my own to paint one picture never to be repeated ever again. I have a pride seen only in mad men put into books made to scare children. I slow my hand as my heart races by I can't stop, I hear it...its death and life playing a duet of the cycle I am about to hold dear. I press the razor to my wrist and bleed my emotion; the pain feels as if a thousand hatchets are hacking at my skin and they like it. I look to the mirror and smile for I know my work is far from finished. I do not shake, I feel almost no pain, I feel the numb of love of another, and feel the pain of another drip out as well. I reach down and cut up my thigh waving back and forth. It feels like a snake on my leg. Now I feel love of all and the creation of an artist. I feel incomplete as I slit my eyelid in two. I see blood and it burns to be a god like me as I laugh. I feel tired and unfinished as I pick up a needle and see it draw closer and closer as my mind flashes a thousand memories through my head and I can only see blood. I scream in joy, howl in relief, and laugh in beauty of ones greatest work, ones self. I look now at untouched hands and look at the mirror of my one blood red eye. I am speechless- no longer knowing which is I as my work looks at me and knows what I do its still me. I see tears in that creature's eyes, tears of blood as he disappears. I hear one word from him and its sorrow. I wake from this dream shaken as in pain yet no mark is there. I feel unloved. I feel pain of things I never did. Still it seems I am numb.

# Stimulation

Danyelle Hooks

I'm a loner.  
I know I'm different.  
That's the way I'm meant to be.  
But each day, I search for something human,  
A connection inside this cold heart  
That lets me believe for just a few moments,  
That this is real and  
I'm here, now.  
I may not have a lot to give,  
But I'll give you what I've got.  
If, for just one second,  
I can feel.

I knew it was going to happen.  
As I lay there and he stroked my back.  
I wanted to whisper,  
Put your arm around me.  
I needed him to do that for me.  
The last few seconds of restless sleep.  
We finally connect.  
My alarm goes off.  
We are dead to each other once more.

He doesn't know I'm awake,  
Waiting for him to make the move.  
No, there we lie,  
Divided by this great imaginary wall  
That imprisons us in our own lives.  
Each wondering what is on the other side of the fence,  
Waiting for fate to rear its ugly head.

## (Skin)

Danyelle Hooks

There's something about (skin).  
Lying on your bare chest,  
Exchanging body heat,  
I collapse into you.

There's something about (skin)-  
The comfort you feel  
As another strokes your shoulders and back,  
The only barrier between your body and soul  
And mine-was broken down by you.

There's something about (skin).  
Layers upon layers to uncover the depths beneath-  
And you've peeled them back one by one.  
You know the real me.  
And for once, I'm comfortable  
In this (skin).

## Ashes

Marissa Meloy

Seven rings around this rosary  
Pockets full of posies  
To conceal the smell  
Of the dead  
Like ashes we all fall down.



Yellowrose  
Tina Arnold



Embrace  
Tina Arnold

# A Time

Tiffany Pitman

The darkness of her mind wrapped around her like a tight blanket. All she could think of was how she wished she could look away, turn and run but she couldn't. She was stuck there looking at him. Her blood boiled while her mind was teeming with what she would say to him, but no words would come out. All she could do was sit there and listen to the horrible story he told. He looked to be about fifty or fifty-five. His face was dark brown like baked clay and his hair jet black. It seemed strange that his hair was still black after so many years. His eyes were like two pieces of cold black coal set in his face. His mouth was pale and thin. His teeth were not yellow but were not white either; they were in between the two shades. His build was that of a short, fat man. There was nothing appealing about him. She loathed his very breath and his very existence upon the earth; but she had to stay and talk to him. She had to wait for the moment.

He kept on talking; he was telling her the story about how he was hunting a deer once in the backwoods of Missouri, over by Clinton County. He was retelling, almost reliving, how he had stalked a deer without it even knowing he was there. As he spoke little bits of hamburger and pickle came splattering out of his mouth and hit the table. How fitting that such a revolting thing should eat as equally as revoltingly. His eyes began to gleam as he retold the moment that his arrow left his bow and pierced the side of the deer and how he ran up to it and saw the blood oozing out of the wound. As he went on through the story he became more and more animated with his descriptions. When he told about pulling the arrow out of the deer he stuck his knife in his burger and pulled it out. Undoubtedly the remnants of ketchup and pickle were to symbolize the blood and entrails of the deer.

As he told about stringing the poor creature up he

pantomimed pulling on some rope and then he used his own butter knife as a stand-in for his hunting knife to show how he slit the throat of the dead animal. He went into great detail describing how the blood fell and how he removed the entrails as well as how he did what he called, oh yes, how he “field dressed” his newest trophy. While he talked, and acted, and spat, and farted, and performed all of his many, least of all unappetizing, most of all degrading acts, her mind began to twirl around what else happened in those woods; how he stalked another poor creature and stabbed this poor soul, this barely-a-woman with another arrow.

He had field dressed her, ripping away her innocence and her childhood like the skin off a deer. He wears her screams and pain like a trophy. Yes, deer were not the only things that were hunted that day, but he did not pay the same respect to this woman-like child that he paid to the deer. It would have been better if he had cut her throat and strung her up to die and bleed out. Instead he left her alive, badly beaten and hurt, but still alive. She was the one who had to go back and tell her family, bear their stares and angry words. She had to live through the nightlong raid of the woods looking for the missing huntsman. The potbellied sheriff looking at her with mocking eyes, thinking that she was lying. No one ever fully believed her story. She would have been more than happy to have died that day as a deer than have to live with the many repercussions and punishments that happened because of that day.

As her thoughts drifted back into the conversation, she noticed that he was done eating and talking, and was now looking at her with fire-filled eyes. He began to talk in an all too fake seductive voice.

“You did not eat much my little blossom”.

She almost choked on her next words, “I am hungry for a different kind of meat.”

She tried to look playful and sexual: batting her eyelashes at him, taking her spoon that had strawberry ice cream on it and licking it off very slowly and softly. She had to draw



him in. Seeing her do this enthralled him. He had to have this sweet treat; he had to conquer another mountain. He looked at her with hungry eyes. He started at the tip of her head and worked his way down to where her v-cut top cut went oh so deep. He began to imagine her in oh so many different ways, which were all satisfying to him; he wanted her and she knew it. But just to make sure she began to rub her foot up and down his leg. She then leaned in and said, "You want to get out of here and go somewhere quieter?"

This was all the encouragement he needed. He called up to the waitress and asked for the check; he waited impatiently as the dinosaur-like creature, who at one time might have passed for a woman, waddled over. He paid her right there and told her to keep the change. The girl might have been impressed with this gesture if it had not been for \$19.50 and he paid with a twenty. With the bill paid they both stood up and began to walk out the door. As they made their way outside he wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her so close to him that she thought that she might vomit, but she had to keep it together just until his time came. They began to walk towards his car but she couldn't go there. She had to keep him on her turf. She stopped almost too suddenly and said in her best sex deprived voice, "Aye Papi I don't want to wait. Can't we go over there? Can't we do it now? Please Papi? I promise I'll be good." She bit her lip a bit and made sure that her eyes twinkled at him. You could see that he did not want to spend money on a hotel room, especially the cheap sleazy one that she had motioned to. But it was close and she was beautiful. She could see him beginning to think it over. She had to convince him to go over there. She then had a thought, "Papi since you paid for the meal let me pay for a room. Please? I really want to." This caught his attention. "My little blossom if you really want to we can go there. Are you sure you want to pay?" He so hoped that she would.

"Yes papi I really want to." Anything to get him over there.

"Ok Blossom we'll go over there."

Yes finally he saw things her way. As they walked she had to fight off his many advances. It really was just a short walk across the highway to the Sleepy Hollow Motel. But during the whole hundred-yard walk she had to divert both his hands and his tongue at least five times apiece. What a horny old man. When they reached the clerk's desk at the motel she knew it was all to clear that they were not married by the way the greasy old Mexican she was with was looking at her and barely having enough restraint not to throw her on the desk and take her right then, right there. But he did hang on to what very little decorum he had ever had. The clerk gave her the key. And they were out the door and down to their room in no time at all. The time was coming very close now; she had to hurry. As she was putting the key into the lock he came up behind her, pulling her close, his hands making their way to the Promised Land. When she was lucky enough to get the door open they almost fell in since she was pushing with such force. As they entered the room she turned on the light, threw her bag on the bed, and began towards the bathroom. As she walked he grabbed her wrist and tried to pull her in for a kiss. But she was able to pull herself loose and she looked at him with those big brown eyes and said, "Aye not yet Papi don't be so hasty. If you rush to pick the first tangelo you may get one that is not ripe." He responded with a resounding, "But Blossom we are here and we are ready. The time is right. Why are you stalling?" She had to get into the bathroom. What could she do? Oh yes. "Because Papi I want to get more comfortable first, for you." Then she walked over to him and did the one thing she hated most. She gave him a very long, very passionate kiss. The strength it took not to vomit in his mouth was immense. She than backed away and looked at him intently.

"That should hold you until I get out of the bathroom, Papi." She than walked to the bathroom wiggling her butt as much as possible, just to make sure she still had his attention. And she did. As she entered the bathroom and shut and locked the door, he took off his clothes with the greatest haste. Too bad

all he had for underwear was plain white boxer shorts, but at least they were clean. But he had not planned on meeting his little Blossom and having a night with her. He pulled the blankets back and sat on the edge of the bed and waited. She came back in but she was still in her clothes and she was holding a book and a pen.

"I thought you were getting more comfortable, my little Blossom. And what's this?"

He looked puzzled and very confused.

"I wouldn't expect you to know what this is. This is a book and this is a pen, *Emile*.

"How do you know *that* name?"

"I know a lot about you Emile, for instance that you haven't gone by that name in a very long time, and also that you raped that innocent girl twenty-one years ago. Do you remember that?"

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, I know I know, but no matter if you want to admit it or not, the time has come for you to pay. Do you know what kind of pen this is? It's a white out pen. It can erase ink. Oh, and this book is my newest one, I think it could be a best seller. That's right, I'm an author, a rather famous one too. But I had no worries about you finding out who I am. You only read Playboy and the like, anyways the whole book is about how I hunt down and find the man who raped my mother twenty-one years ago. And in the last chapter I look at him, call him father and then shoot him in the head."

You could see the fear in his eyes. The very mention of death made him horrified.

"Oh don't worry *Father* I'm not going to shoot you but I'm going to fix this chapter if you don't mind."

She began to open up the book to the last chapter, took the cap off the pen, and set to work. Just as she did he jumped off the bed and lunged towards her. But it was too late; she had

already begun and with the first stroke of her pen he fell down to his knees in agony as he looked at her with confusion and terror. She looked at him very matter-of-factly and said very coldly. "But my editor said that I needed to shorten it by one chapter. So I picked the one you were in *DAD*. She began to white out the pages. With each stroke he was in more pain and became more transparent. By the last word on the last page he was hardly even there. He looked at her with hollowed eyes and said oh so weakly and meekly, " Please daughter, forgive me. Do not do this to your father, I am sorry for my many crimes." She bent down and looked into his eyes where no true remorse lay just fear and hatred for her, "Oh *Dad*, I am glad that you are sorry for raping my mother, trying to sleep with your own child, lying, cheating and being an otherwise disgusting individual. But I'm afraid it is too late. I can't undo the damage that I have done here, just like you can't undo your damage." She began to start whitening out the last word then she stopped and looked at him as if she may show compassion for this very un-revisable act. Perhaps she could say something, anything, to him that may at least put him at ease before sending him away . . . but she didn't. All she said was "Good-Bye Emile." With that she made the final stroke that sent him to his end. When he was gone she gathered up her bag and her book and left the room. She returned the key to the clerk and said "Thank-You" with little more than a fake smile. As she left the motel and walked down the road she couldn't help but think that for twenty-one years she had worked towards this moment just to end up killing the thing that she had become; how cold the truth can be.

## Night Eater

Jonathan Ingram

The Night is a devilish thing,  
Slowly seeping in around us.  
The Darkness brings deceit, or Death.  
Look up, my child, at the pale Moon.  
Its soft light holds no power here.  
The police are weak, like your moon.  
In this city of Sin, they fall,  
Unable to stop the Evil.  
The ghetto gangs, murdering mobs:  
None can control their own people.  
Only one thing to stop the Night,  
One thing to end Sin of Darkness.  
It is I; go, bask in my Light.  
For I am Dawn, the Night Eater.  
I am the Bringer of your Hope,  
The Sin Eater, the Night Stalker.  
I am your god. I am the Sun.

Dedicated to dear Metcalf,  
For sage words given to us all.  
“Well, then prose becomes poetry  
When the lines have space between them.”  
Paraphrased a bit, but true still  
To the spirit of his Wisdom.

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MacMurray  

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