

NEV AND IMPROVED OF

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Seasick

Tight stitches of a finely woven sail, I keep you safe and guide your way...
You have worn me out and my colors have bled. I have fallen apart from your abuse
To an unrecognizable pattern.

Your contagious tears have flooded my tides. The thunderous cries and angry streaks of lightning Have weakened my senses. And the dark light at the dock Has shown the way for this lost ship. Have I lost your guidance?

The easterly winds have shifted And your sweet breath I once knew is now foreign. My timeless journey has just begun. How many times will I pass you by?

I will come when You have not called for me. Like nocturnal waves crashing rocks I will bring fear. The storms have washed away my childish ways And the new sea will bring us home.

Joseph Yoon

Brother Madley

ringmastered cheers for the elder and mothering calls for attention haunt his cheery demeanor. tipped by the hat and hassled by the whip alone in the red spot. he can't keep up the pace. Should he only be as peacefully fun his brother Jim.

Brian Dalley

3 Letter Word

Is it something to brag about? Or something to keep inside? Does it bring us to heaven? Or to hell? Do you want to have it? Or do you not want to have it? Is it risky? Or is it your job? Do you want to have it as a teen? Perhaps an adult? Or maybe not at all. Are you ready for it? Think before you answer. Let me ask you again. Are you ready for it? Yes or No. Don't answer to make others happy. Do it for yourself. For it is your body and your only body. Yes or No? Choose wrong, then you'll regret it. Choose right, and you'll be happy. Is it enjoyable? Is it dangerous? Is it what you've been looking forward to all your life? Or is it something you don't want to have in your life? Is it a sin? Or an experience? You decide for it is your decision.

Carl Burke

A Line

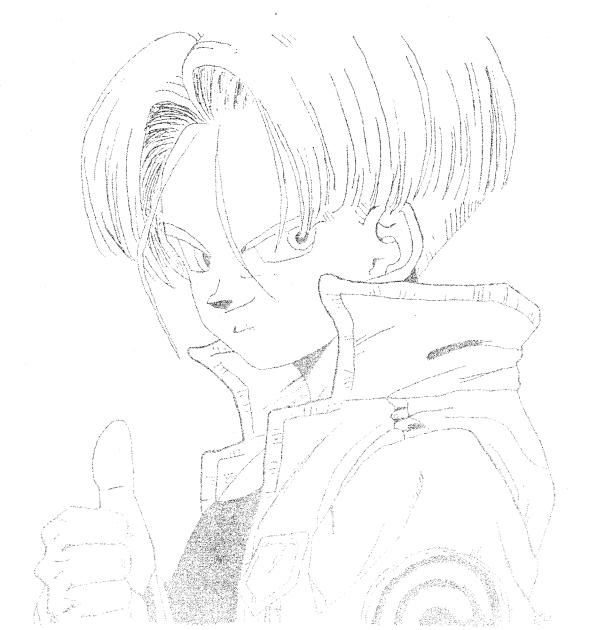
No color yet we see it clearly
No depth, width, or even length
But it holds us all
Trapped in a dimensionless void
Controlled by nothing
Yet controlled entirely
A line that has it's borders crossed often
Never to be recrossed again

Frank Schade

As I Wall

As the rain flows down I wait for her return I fantasize of her presence Her scent would linger in the air The scent that caused me to become powerless Suddenly Hose all use of my body I would become lost in her eyes Eyes that could tame a lion with one look Eyes that captured me, drawing me in, eyes that locked me in chains In chains I am enslaved to her every command I remember memories of her embracing me She slowly runs her hands through my hair With a passionate kiss, we become one in two different worlds Back then, time would be on my side for once and perish I placed my arms around her hoping that this moment would last But the angel that was in my arms withdrew long ago Never once did our eyes meet since then She turned her back perishing her own way I finally accept loneliness as a phase to encounter every waking moment But can I wait for eternity to end? I am forsaken, left with nothing but pieces of a shattered heart

anonymous-Dedicated to "Freddle"



The CRying [Video] Game

I ventured into our little video game As enthusiastic as a child in a candy store With \$5 in his pocket.

There were no losers in this game.

We started out equal -

You had your points,

I had mine.

But then.

Mine faded into you.

You were winning and I was losing.

Over the next few levels,

I won my points back-

Only to lose them to you again.

It was almost as if I was giving

Them to you.

I don't know how the game ended-I quit when you were on the verge of

Rescuing the princess

And

Saving the universe.

Game Over.

Stephanie Rosley

Masculine Deceptions

The cool breeze Of his gentle kiss Fades like snow on a summers Day His hands That once enveloped me Are gone, leaving cold death on my skin. He could have been mine. He should have been mine. But now another Enjoys his sillen voice And velvety tones. I was the Champion, and She the Contender, but my sword is fallen. And my heart has melted Away.

There Was A Little Beatle......

I was casually walking, trying to Act Natural. Then I Saw Her Standing There. You said goodbye, I said hello. Eight Days A Week I'll Follow The Sun looking for you. Is this what they call Real Love? Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds and Anna were on Penny Lane thinking of the Revolution. They said, "I've got a Ticket To Ride on a Yellow Submarine." My Strawberry Fields are Forever, until a Blackbird comes and eats it away. I cry, "Hey Jude, don't make it bad. Yesterday seemed so far away because I Wanna Hold Your Hand." Since I Can't Buy Me Love, give me all your Money because (That's What I Want). Do You Want To Know A Secret? I Am The Walrus! Yes, I Feel Fine. Why? Y'Know She Loves You on A Hard Day's Night. In My Life, Julia, please Love Me Do or I'll be in Misery. Mr. Moonlight, let her know I care. Remember The Night Before, when I Got No Reply? I wrote a letter that said, "P.S. I Love You." Please Mr. Postman, deliver this guickly, then Twist and Shout. Tell Me What You See when Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band comes to town. My Guitar Weeps Gently for that Paperback Writer who was standing in the Rain yelling, "Michelle!" HELP! I need somebody! With A Little Help From My Friends, I can go far. Let It Be, Because Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me and My Monkey. Oh, look. Here Come The Sun. I'm as Free As A Bird that flies Across The Universe. Y'Know, All You Need Is Love, and you'll be fine.

Stefanie Weaver

Light

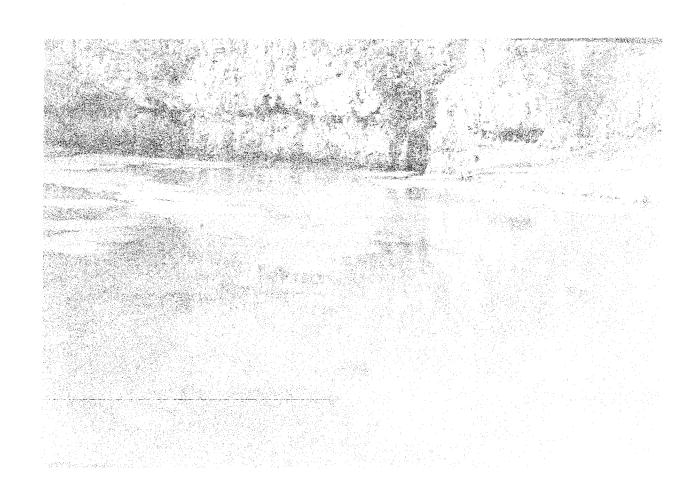
The on going fighter of darkness. It's the universal speed of the universe That cannot be conquered by man. It's the necessity of house hold life Like the courage of a tiger. When you are lost follow the light and G-d will have your soul.

Paul Racuglia

Waiting for the Miracle

Waiting for the miracle to come,
I stay, watching the distant ship's smoke on the horizon.
Streaks of the rising sun cast off what bears lilacs of light,
while each sparkle, like a morning sapphire, glitters
amidst a blazing blue body of creation and power.
Hying life breezes through the crisp matin air,
and then escapes, with a blink,
into heaven's wondrous white puffs.
How enchanting the sea is at dawn!
And all at once, I seize that the miracle is here.

-Nidhi Rana



There's a Stainless Steel Lining to Every Cloud

Raised pink flesh paints a picture of the anger, fear, and loneliness a little girl feels. Trapped inside me she struggles against my relentless repression. Her resilient spirit catches me off guard, and she runs towards the light (my darkness?) only to be forced back by the numb upper hand you taught so well. She yearns to run free and let go of her well-kept pain; maybe, someday she will.

Anonymous

Picture 254

Flippantly, I turn wrinkled page over page. A human mail order catalog: broken promises, vacant dreams. Suddenly I stop. Picture 254. Model-girl; Color tan-brown; Size-pint; Used-slightly; Smile-Will melt Jack Frost. Mesmerized I feel your silent heart entwine mine, strengthening my fleeting pulse. Like a possessed maniac I drive muself to meet you; lanoring the stop signs others planted in my path. The touch of your trepid hand cools my

moist palm.
I sense the pleasant grafting, skin to skin,
marrow to marrow, soul to soul.
Softly you exhale your past and inhale our
future.

MOMMY, TM LOST

June 24, 1996

I turned left out of his street with tears in my eyes. I began really thinking about what I did. At first, I believed it wasn't that big of a deal. It's not like we're married, I thought, as I turned onto Valley Road. It's not like I would leave Jason for him. I never should have told Jason. God, me and my guilty conscience. I pictured the look on his face when I told him. "How could you do this to me, Lucie?", kept repeating itself in my head. I could almost hear his heart breaking. All of a sudden, I saw headlights coming right at me. OH S - - T!!!

Sitting in my car on the side of the road, I turned just in time to see the taillights disappear in the distance. "YOU FRICKIN' IDIOT", I yelled at the moron, who was already far from view. What the hell! Idiot drivers these days. I remained there for about 5 minutes to catch my breath before I started my car again to drive home. As soon as I got home, I tiptoed up the stairs to refrain from waking up the parents and my little sister, and slid into bed without changing or brushing my teeth.

....unbelievable.....can't believe it.....baby.....come back......

June 27, 1996

The past three days have been a blur. I woke up today and felt so sick. The day after I told Jason about the "fling", I found out that he was in the hospital. A little after I had left, Jason went outside for a walk to clear his head. He was really upset. Well, out of nowhere this car comes and hits him. His mom heard the screeching of tires as the car fled the scene. She ran outside and found Jason lying on the ground, unconscious. He was immediately rushed to the hospital. I found out the next morning when I called him to see if we could talk about things. His older brother answered the phone and told me what had happened. I couldn't believe it. Could it have been the same guy that had almost hit me the night before?

He's been in critical condition for the past three days and there has been no sign of a quick recovery. I had come in every day with fresh flowers and told him how sorry I was for what I had done and what had happened to him. I looked at his pale face, with the patch covering half of his left eye. I couldn't see or feel his soft blond hair because of the gauze patch that completely covered his now bald head. There are a few patches of blood here and there on the gauze. I held his clammy hand and talked to him. You know, some believe that comatose patients can actually be

influenced by what people say while they are unconscious. I told him I loved him and to give me a sign.
pleaselove herdon'thopenot trus
June 30, 1996 Things were looking a little better today. When I held his cold, thin hand, and told him to give me a sign if he could hear me, I felt his hand close a little more around mine. A hot tear trickled down my cheek. I looked up his arm at the intravenous needle that was feeding him. It hurt me so much to know that he couldn't even feed himself. I couldn't believe that had cheated on the only guy I had ever loved and I hadn't gotten a chanc to tell him how sorry I was. This couldn't be the end. He had to get better. He WAS getting better, I kept telling myself. I stayed through visiting hours and sat with his parents in silence. At ten the nurse made me leave, but relatives were allowed to stay for another hour or so. On my way out of the hospital, I passed by a little church room. Now I wasn't religious or anything, but I felt something drag me in As soon as I stepped in the room, I felt this surge of emotions. I looked around at all the old, oil paintings of Bible scenes: "The Last Supper", "The Parting of the Red Sea", etc. I knew this feeling had nothing to do with what religion I was- or wasn't for that matter. The pews were lined as in a normal-sized church. There were candles to light on the left and a huge, aged, leather-bound Bible in front of the pews. I sat in the back pew, bowed my head, prayed to SOMEONE to help Jason. As I began to pray, I felt the tears begin to flow. I couldn't remember how long I stayed there.
faultNO!tell menot fairlove you

July 2, 1996

The past few days, I had gone back to "my little church" before and after I went to see Jason, every fime praying he would wake up. He seemed to be getting thinner and thinner before my eyes. His pale skin had turned a pasty color. He kept looking worse and worse, but I wouldn't let myself believe that his outward appearance indicated his inner condition. I brought my CD player today. I wanted to play our song for him, in case he really could hear me. "I've Had the Time of My Life" began playing from the speakers as I began hoping. I held his hand close to my heart as the song continued. When it had ended, I looked up to his face and saw a small tear on his right cheek. I cried for joy and kissed him. When I told the nurse about it later, she shrugged it off as if it wasn't a big deal. She told me that on occasion there are comatose poticels that show signs of

consciousness, such as movement or tears. Unfortunately, it doesn't say anything about their fate. But, I wouldn't let myself believe that he wasn't getting better.

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July 4, 1996

He did it. He opened his eyes. I was talking to him, like usual, and I was explaining what had happened with the other guy. (I wanted to tell him the truth, in case he didn't make it). By the time I was done with the story, my eyes were brimming with tears. I told him again how much I loved him, how much I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him. I told him I hoped he could put this incident in the past. Everyone makes mistakes, we learn from our mistakes. I can't go back in time and change things. I asked him to please forgive me as I raised my eyes to his, only to find him looking back at me. I jumped. I couldn't believe he was awake. I was ecstatic. Then he turned his head away from me.

I had a dream tonight. I was a child again, probably six or seven. I was wearing a light summer dress. It was night and I was in a dark woods. I felt frightened, so I called for my mom, but it wasn't her that answered my calls. I heard a voice respond "I love you. I forgive you. Let go and....." I couldn't hear the rest. I tried to scream "wait, I'm not ready"...

Stephanie Rosley

[&]quot;So, what happened to this one?"

[&]quot;She got hit by a drunk driver on the 24th. She arrived at the hospital with a cerebral hemorrhage. She'd been in a coma ever since."

[&]quot;I heard her family decided to pull the plug".

[&]quot;It was for the best. There was no way she could have recovered fully from the head wound she received."

picks up tag "Her tag says she was only 18. Lucienne Auralia Safire. Nice name. Time of death 11:26pm."

[&]quot;Yeah, right after her boyfriend left the room".

Shades Of Gray

He pulls the trigger,
Now a man lies dead.
Killed for money,
To pay for family bread.
Is the shooter good or evil?
People are not black or white.
There's a shade in the middle,
In between the dark and light.
But, if no one's good or evil,
How on earth do we decide?
Whether man is good or evil,
Or if he's on the correct side.

Josh Shmikler

The flower that lives is the flower that gives Never is death better than life The struggle goes on to evolve for the better sometimes a tussle sometimes a strife So precious a gift to be valued so highly the cracks in the wall will eventually mend The journey is truly the cause for the trip Not just to arrive at the forthcoming end

Liam O'Donoghue

In Too Deep

Help me
I'm in too deep
Sinking deeper as the days go by
Just one big journey leading nowhere
Can you help me
Can you see the pain in my eyes
Can you hear me screaming inside
Trust me, heal me, free me...
Let me show how much I care
I wish I could tell the truth
That without you,
my life would have ended long ago.

Ode to the Locker Room

A humid film of stale deodorant hangs over me Cubicles temporarily house homogeneous homophobics Baritone grunts collide with slamming lockers A well conditioned masterlock glides through the familiar 20-38-12

Stripped of street clothes
Incarcerated into my crusty uniform
It's off yellow color defines the sour smell
A handwritten "SCHMIDT" accents the sleeve

I introduce my feet into raggy shoes
The insides deformed with eroded soles
Shoelaces stained with a semester's worth of dust
Loopy laces droop over like the ears of Sharpe dog

I feel good Oh I feel so good, HUH!

eli schmidt



His eyes dart to his rear view mirror again.

Nothing follows him, his paranoia sees what his eyes can't.

Wet windows rolled to the top,

He feels somewhat safe.

Nothing outside can hurt him, but something inside has a tight grip.

Always inside an invisible cage.

He never possessed the key that others seemed to have.

First to lose, first to let up, first to be lost.

First to die?

Today his last drop of dignity was sucked out of him.

The last liquid drop may take the longest before it reaches your tongue, But it is always easy to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get because it is alone with no ways to get be a second or way to get be a second or way to get be a second or way to get be a second or with no ways to get be a second or way to get be a second or wa

But it is always easy to get because it is alone with no way of escaping. He lights his last cigarette.

They put the other cigarettes in his mouth, he put this one in.

Health had been important to him way back, but who cares now?

They don't care.

Anger might develop within them when they realize that he is gone,

That their dart board has left them forever.

Other dart boards are out there though, many whose bull's eyes have never been hit.

His bull's eye has been hit.

He had lasted so long,

He was prey, but he was strong.

The right hunter came along today and made the kill.

The hunter had always been inside of him,

Waiting for the right moment

Waiting to make the kill.

As he approached death,

There was no red light.

His past did not flash in front of him.

All he saw was green.

Ross Wiemer

"DIGIT ROKIONE"

Motel receipts and empty bottles of beer, Secret handshakes and cool clubhouses. The corruption of my Concentrated Asians. Their ambitions rob my dreams, And darken my shine.

The cold cell floor warms
The bitter walls of my heart,
Where fear finds its resting place,
And my pride demises.

I drag my face on the floor and Look up to His swollen expression. I flinch from the wan glow And my heart can beat no more.

Joseph Yoon

If I Were

Banshees scream at me through my car window. I drive by, they're banging down my Olds. Trapped in twisted steel.
Stay and die.
Escape and drown.
The sea of faces swarm around me.
Individuals want to consume me,
Touch me,
See me,
Be me.
I screech they chant.
I am the ruler,
They follow.

Melissa Gwinn



A Soap Opera of Colors

The orange threw up onto the red who sang loudly into the night wind and cursed the blue because he was the moon. The green whispered quietly into the purple's ear and she announced firmly that she didn't want to have a relationship with him at the moment but told him to ask her again next week. The yellow, always eauer to listen to the pink's numerous problems because they were really good friends, got into an accident. (It was the pink's fault.) The sea-green was jealous of the green due to the fact that the green is a more interesting character on the show than he is. And black just stood back and watched everyone, plotting revenge against them all.

Plane

A simple solution to travel
Though a risky form of transportation.
A quiet ride turns to turbulence
And terror in the sky.
You're a man with no legs
stranded on an island.
Its chances are like the lottery
But the rich become the dead.
Enjoy your peanuts.

Scott Schell

sans

Making the Sunset

It is now, at this very moment, that I feel it.
All that has been for months finally touches me.
I am liberated, but scared for myself all the same.
To love, was to taste the bittersweet.

Senseless motions, meaningless words is all it was compared to this.

I felt it, but never like this.

The suffocating cloud seems no longer, and only trees remain.

Now, to love is to feel hope in the sincerest.

So here I am, giving to you my every possession and all that I'm worth,
What I can do, or moreover, what I can say,
I do not know myself.
Just know that I cherish you and finally feel my second soul,
And love you as the most delicate sunset.

- Midhi Rana

The Broken Mirror

The mirror shatters
In each shard I see people
That were not there before
One with dark, brooding eyes
That burn holes in my soul
One with a smile so beautiful
It must have been mixed from sunlight and stars

And in each shattered sliver
I see the me
That is hidden from the world
And will not reemerge
Until the mirror breaks again

Rani Gupta

Standing there, as a watcher, into the mist that covers her son.

A hand reaching out as if yelling for help,
coming toward her
slowly.

The gentle touch,

The warm breath on her frail skin,

The long kiss good-bye as they leave.

Faster than the speed of light they all disappear leaving her behind.

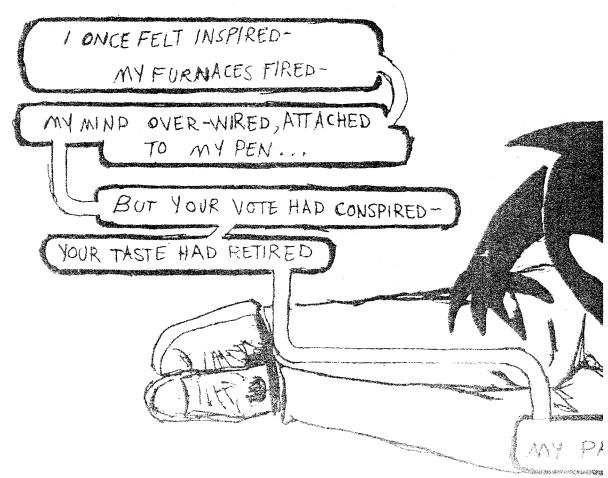
Stopping and listening for the different sounds of the lost love that can never be seen. A feeling that can never be released, except in the heart of another.

She waits alone with only her thoughts and the child bore with no regard for the past only for the desolate future that lies in front of her.

Alone for an eternity,
who are we to judge her actions,
Are we any better,
Are we any wiser?

by **EENNY MORATAYA**







You wonder where you go when you die

We all go to our separate churches every weekend

Just so we can appease any fears that we have about this uncharted area

We make movies just to see how it might be in heaven or in hell

Try to show that working hard and being a good moral person will really get us

Somewhere

But you see there is a terrible flaw to all of this; it just doesn't work

Sure anyone can be a great moral person, a great student, and a diligent worker,

And yet you just might find that person on the streets dead

Who killed that hard worker with those great morals?

We did

Our great society with all its advantages let this man be killed

Why?

Because we all believe that hard work will pay off in the end

So this hard worker with great morals got killed on the streets because he had a nice

car

And we all wonder, where did he go

David E. Kim

Asleep
Cocooned in the warmth of my own body
Camouflaged in the dark cover of night
My subconscious grabs hold of the reins
Spiraling down into the dark secrets I keep from myself

Curiously, familiar faces from my waking hours are now spoiled Life is passing by in an obscene and angular fashion AnxietyUnfamiliarityConfusionBitternessAnxietyPanic Lam lost in surroundings that were once my home

The snapping of my cyclids reveals a new scene My scanning eyes instantly reassure me false visions of my own undesired creation wither away The silence of nightfall calms me

.....Until 1 re-surrender my consciousness

-eli schmidt

she cracks
the whip hard and fast,
welting flesh demands my cowardice,
crowding the sky, and my love,
simple it should be to escape this night.
I must abandon
my fear,
so that I might find equality
with her.

Brian Dalley

In the Footsteps of the Carpenter

we leave the security and wealth of Glenview, the five-bedroom houses turn into tar-papered hovels, loaded up is a van filled with anticipation, paint, nails and hammers clutter the back seat, but we forgot the most important thing we forgot to pack our hearts. discmans and gameboys fill the void they left behind, we leave with this emptiness in our chest.

in the blue grass state, a family lives beyond poverty, ignored by the springtime jockeys and gamblers. while the equestrian lovers frolic in the Caribbean sun, families huddle together to ward off an impending death, for their paper thin walls don't fend off the icy breath of winter. regardless, their love radiates like the warmth of the summer sun.

As the roads corkscrew around the mountain our mission is placed before us, the emptiness aches as the blighted house cries out for help. boards try to loosen themselves, trying to escape this distress begging for paint to cover their past. the yard comes in focus, broken toasters and fans lifter the lawn. the walls have openings, peepholes to the world. the pungent aroma of ammonia is stale in the air, emitting from the urine soaked sheets. the acrid smell assaults my senses. roaches invade the kitchen cabinets, like flies on a rotting carcass.

with rubbery knees I remember "we are here to help" regardless, together we work hand in hand, rich with poor, Christian.

transformed with point and affection the house is its converse,

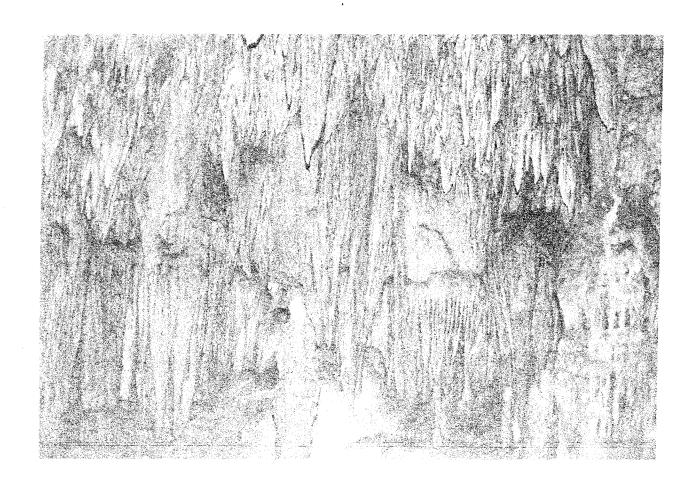
from decaying to desirable.

no longer will the frigid fingers of winter be cold on their shoulders.

they call us their saviors, but that's what they are to us. they taught us that we are lucky, lucky to have one another, though isn't that what God's love is all about?

we left wearing rose colored glasses the emptiness is now filled with love. we found our hearts in Kentucky, and perhaps that's where they'll stay.

-Lauren Gernady



Sometimes

Sometimes,
I wonder.
I wonder about everything under the sun And beyond.
Why do I wonder?
I wonder.
I guess that life is just so
Confusing
That it is necessary
To wonder.
And to question and doubt
Everything.

Sometimes,
I wonder.
If anyone is really, truly,
Satisfied.
Or if they're just existing,
Pretending,
Believing that they are happy,
While they're not.
Is everyone miserable, depressed, and
Suffering?
Or is it just
Only me.

Sometimes,
I wonder.
Why are people born upon
This planet.
A person spends their whole life watching sickness, death, and
Poverty.
Until the day that their life
Expires.
And another individual fills the gap
Left behind.
Only to continue
The cycle.

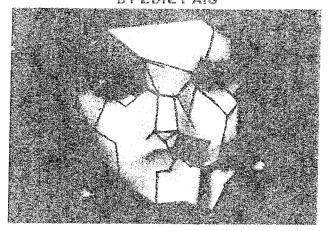
Sometimes,
I wonder.
Is there really such a thing
As true love?
Or the story-book
Romances?
Where Prince Charming sweeps you
Off your feet.
To be together,
Forever?
Or, in reality, is there only betrayal and
Resentment?

Sometimes,
I wonder.
How have I come to be
So wary.
To me, trust is a
Fragile thing.
It can shatter at
Any time.
Sometimes I wonder if I
Am normal.
And if I am, then I feel sorry for everyone like m
Even me.

-Laura Elizabeth Mallory



YOUR EXISTENCE AS A DUTY: DICTIONARY DEFINITION BY EDIE FAIG



MOVE ALONG, SWEET VEHICLES,
GO ON, PLUMP MACHINES.
ROBOTIC AND CHAOTIC
AND ITS ALL THERE IN YOUR GENES.

STEP UP, FATELESS DUMMY,
POSE HERE, MATRIX CLAY.
LEAVE YOUR DIGNITY IN SHAMBLES
AND ITS ALL THERE IN YOUR PLAY.

RUN FORWARD NOW, KIND CLOCKWORK
PLOW ONWARD, CIRCUIT MILE.
NEUROTIC AND EROTIC
AND ITS ALL THERE IN YOUR SMILE.

Lose your face to the desire.
Throw your mind into the mask.
Drop your head into the garbage
And its all there in your task.

Kyle Parker

Sleeping peacefully underneath my powder blue down-comforter, I smiled in my sleep as I dreamt of warm beaches and the salty ocean lapping around sun-warmed body. While I frolicked with glee in this utopia, the phone at the side of my bed jolted me awake. I sat up straight and stared at the receiver for a moment, as if I couldn't understand what was happening. After glancing at my digital clock and noting that it was only 2:00 in the morning, I groaned and dutifully picked up the receiver. I hope it's not the office I thought to myself as I almost incoherently said "Hello?" into the mouthpiece.

"May I speak to Carlie Hoyer?" A woman's faint voice could barely be heard. It sounded like there were a great deal of people in the background, and the woman on the other end was straining to hear my answer.

"Yes, my name is Carlie. Can I help you?" Because Matt always phoned when they needed assistance, I inwardly sighed with relief when I knew that the office didn't need me and waited for the woman's response with closed eyes.

"My name is Nurse Neuman and I work at St. Peter's in Los Angeles."

Never even venturing outside of the state of New York, I became confused. What could this possibly do with me? I wondered silently. I started to wake up a little bit more and forced my green eyes to stay open.

Nurse Neuman went on slowly and with great hesitation. "I'm not sure who you are or what your relation is to our patient, but a man named Kyle Parker recently wrote your name on a piece of paper and the name of the town in which you live in." Nurse Neuman paused for a moment, as if waiting for understanding on my end.

Confused and bewildered, I tried to clear the cobwebs from my brain and strained to remember the name, Kyle Parker. Nothing came to mind. "Ma'am, are you sure this

man wrote my name down? I don't know anybody by the name of Kyle Parker. I'm sure this is all just a big misunderstanding."

The nurse was slow to respond. When she finally did, she said quietly, "Of course. I'm sorry to have bothered you. However, if you do happen to remember Mr. Parker, please give me a call at 401-257-0975 extension 400. I hope you have a nice day."

We hung up the phone and as I settled down into my covers to fall back into my wonderful dream filled with sand and seagulls, the phone rang once more.

"What the hell is going on?" I muttered to myself as I picked up the receiver. "Hello?" I snapped, completely wide-awake now.

"Hello, my name is Jonathan Frand and I would like to speak to a Ms. Carlie Hoyer."

"This is Carlie."

"Ma'am, I know it's quite late in New York and I'm sorry to keep you awake, but I'm a lawyer and I work in Los Angeles. I have just been notified by a hospital that my very close friend and long-time client is close to death. Over the years, he has accumulated over three million dollars in assets and holdings, and has named you the sole inheritor of his estate. I would like you to come down to California and sign some necessary forms that will seal this inheritance and"

"Mr. Frand, I'm sorry, but I don't know anybody in California. This is all quite a shock to me and I'm afraid to tell you that I think there's been a mistake. Unfortunately, I know no one who is that rich and although I would be happy to take that money, I simply don't feel that I am entitled to this." I cradled the uncomfortable phone with my shoulder and used both hands to rub my temples because I felt a full-blown headache rapidly approaching my aching body.

The lawyer elected his throat over the phone and fold me patiently. "Malam, my orders were to ask you to come to California as soon as possible. I will fill you at on

everything once we are face to face. Until then, I can tell you no other information. Your plane leaves in about five hours, and I would suggest packing enough for a week."

I sat in my bed in disbelief. "This is preposterous!" I blurted. Unable to think of what else to say, I sputtered, "And, and, and I don't even know his name for God's sake!"

Mr. Frand was startled. "My goodness, I'm sorry. I can't believe I forgot to tell you. His name is Kyle Parker, and he is in a serious coma that will probably prove to be fatal in the next few hours"

"Mama, let's go! I'll be late for school if we don't leave now!" I yelled as I grabbed my sack lunch from the kitchen counter. My mom lazily walked into the room where the wallpaper was peeling down and the paint oven wasn't working properly.

"All right, baby, just give me a moment." She sat down at the old squeaky table and sipped the weak coffee from the mug that she stole from work. "What time is it?"

I sighed in exasperation. "Mama! It's already 7:30 and I told Cindy I would meet her at her locker in ten minutes! We're not going to make it on time. I've already gotten two warnings about being late and I can't afford to be late again."

"All right. Come on." My mom grabbed her ratty coat and red scarf that she always were and we walked out of our crumbling building into the brisk, cold morning air. The gang members were still sleeping, and their illegal activities put on hold while the sun was just poking its head above the horizon. Mama would never let me walk to school alone. She was always afraid that I would get shot or something. Not that I minded this. I always enjoyed her company. And she was right - the gangs in my neighborhood were becoming more vicious as the years went on. Mama always complained about our neighborhood, but she couldn't afford to rent out another place in another part of town. Her job as a waitress just couldn't cut it.

"Here we are. Now haby, I'm working double-shifts today because Debi wanted me to cover for her, so I won't see you until tomorrow morning, okay?" She hugged me tightly and smiled at my twelve-year old face.

"Thanks, Mama." I kissed her tired mouth and went skipping off to meet my friend. I looked back to see her after 100 feet, and saw her gazing at me in an odd manner. Hesitantly, I waved and waited to see what she would do. She quickly brightened and waved her red scarf at me so I could see the color from afar. I didn't know at the time that she was dying, and she never wanted me to know.

I stepped off my plane and looked around aimlessly, not knowing what was in store for me. I had been given a first class ticket, and was treated like a queen by the flight attendants. Now that was never like home with Mama - always scrounging around for dimes and quarters and hoping that a miracle would happen I thought to myself as I stood in the airport with a dazed look on my face.

In ten seconds, a well-dressed elderly man with distinguished graying hair and black Armani shoes, holding his jacket in one arm and a single white rose in the other, came up to me and said warmly, "Hello, Ms. Hoyer. I'm Jonathan Frand, we spoke on the phone." He presented me with the flower and took my arm graciously. He looked weary and sad, and had a few red splotches on his face. Mr. Frand smiled when he noticed that I was scrutinizing his face and putting his wrinkled hand on my shoulder, turned to face me.

"I'm afraid I have some bad news. Mr. Parker died at 10:00 this morning. Come, why don't we go to my office and I'll tell you everything."

I sat beside her bed and tried to make her more comfortable. "Can I get you something to drink or some soup to drink?" I asked her softly.

She mouned and slowly shook her head. "Nothing, Carlie, nothing. I'll be all right."

"Please, can't I take you to the hospital? I'm sure Cindy will drive us there. It's not that far and then you'll feel a lot better, you'll see," I pleaded with her, trying to put some sense into her stubborn soul.

"Carlie" she gasped as she tried to sit up in bed. "Carlie, no doctors!" she shrieked. "No doctors! Do you hear me! No doctors!" She continued to scream until I finally nodded my head curtly. She then laid back onto her pillow and swallowed deeply. "Carlie, always love and never hate. That's the trick." She softly and lovingly rubbed the red scarf that was in her right hand laying next to her body.

"What Mama? I don't understand." I held her bony fingers in my shaking hand and tried to warm her body up. The heater wasn't on because we weren't able to pay the bills last month, and the county had turned our electricity off.

"You'll understand later." She smiled as she fell asleep. I gazed at her brown hair which was falling out slowly, and the white hairs that were creeping into the sea of brown. Her face looked so hollow. Pale as a cloud, she dreamt of happy days and warm nights. I would never hear her speak again.

Three hours later, we were standing in the foyer of the biggest home I had ever seen. "This is . . . mine?" I whispered.

"All of it. Every single thing you see is yours. Mr. Parker also instructed that I advise you in any legal matters you may have, and to also be of assistance to you in whatever additional questions you may have. I'll leave you alone for awhile so that you can soak up some of the information I have just told you about. I'll be in the kitchen, making some phone calls."

With that, Mr. Frand smiled and walked away. Not knowing where to go, I walked up the huge winding staircase, sliding my hand gently over the oak railing. "All mine," I repeated, as if trying to convince myself that I was really awake and not dreaming.

I walked into a huge bedroom that appeared to be Mr. Parker's. After standing in the doorway for a long time and gazing at the elegant furnishings that decorated the room, something caught the corner of my eye. A lone picture frame, sitting atop a huge mahogany dresser against the side of one of the wood-paneled walls. I slowly approached the gold frame and picked the picture up. It was of Mr. Parker and a beautiful young woman, both radiant and smiling at the photographer. Tears came to my eyes as I kissed the woman's forehead.

"Hi, mama," I whispered.

Then, I shifted my gaze and looked at Mr. Parker, and in a daze, carefully touched the side of his face.

"Hello, father." All of the rage that I felt and the anger that was buried underneath my cool exterior seemed to dissipate. Replacing these violent emotions were ones of pity, remorse, and the one that startled me the most, forgiveness.

I looked around for Mr. Frand, and seeing that he wasn't nearby, started to talk outloud. "You were never around when we needed you. And I hated you for that. I used to cry in bed and curse you even though I never knew who you were or where you were. I just knew that I hated you."

"Mama was different though. She accepted your non-existence. I once cursed your name outloud in her presence and she turned white as a sheet. Until the day she died, she never spoke harshly of you. And I could never understand why. She was such an extraordinary woman."

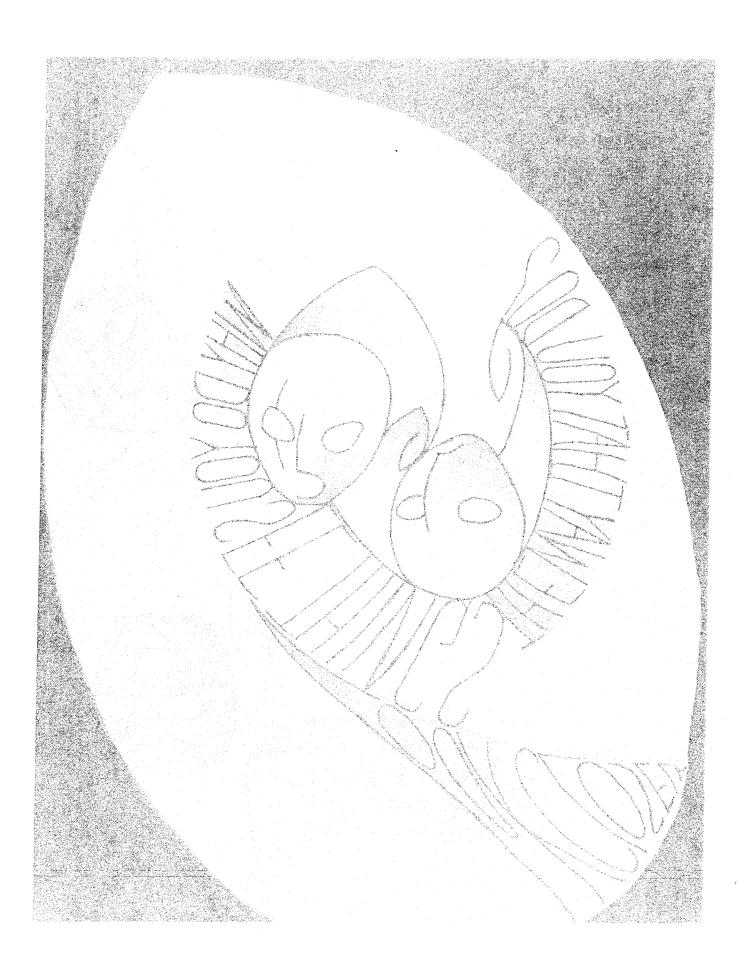
"You know what her last words where before she died? They were, 'Carlie, always love and never bate. That's what the trick is 'I didn't understand her at all. I hated God for taking her away from me. After all, I was just seventeen years old, fresh out of high school and no job to support myself. Mama was all I had. She was my life. But no, she never said anything bad about you. She worked three jobs at once - did you.

know that?" I nearly flung the frame to the other side of the room, as the memories flooded my brain. "She didn't deserve to die! Not her. Not mama."

I sniffed as the fat tears rolled down my face and I carefully placed the old picture on the emaculate dresser. As I gazed blankly at the designer curtains hanging in front of the window, I whispered, "Maybe, Mr. Parker, I can be like her someday."

Rummaging through Mr. Parker's office, I found a desk drawer that was locked. Immediately interested, I called out to Mr. Frand who promptly located the key and opened the drawer for me. He reverently left the room and went back to the kitchen while I discovered dozens of photographs of me and Mama. School pictures, candid pictures, pictures of the apartment where we lived, pictures of Mama at work - everything and anything a person could take a picture of concerning me and my mother was in that desk drawer. I went through the pictures with sadness and delight, marveling at how healthy and vivacious Mama looked until the year she died. I was delighted to have these pictures, as they could never afford a camera. At the same time, I was mildly freaked - finally knowing that for all of my life, he had been watching me and keeping track of me.

And then I found it. After years of wondering where it was and upon finally finding the object that I so fervently searched for, my emotions ran from disbelief to anger to relief. I sat on the floor and gazed at it for a long time. I didn't want to make it dirty and it still hadn't lost it's smell of flowers after all these years. Memories flooded my system and as I sat there, clutching the red scarf in my hands, I thanked Mr. Parker silently for finally giving back my mother to me.



Observations

Sometimes when the moon hugs the horizon and glows an ethereal crimson, I believe the world will encounter Armageddon in the next second.

Photographs are deceiving: they may freeze time but they can never recreate the past for the present.

Leaves of grass reach towards the mist and pray that they dandelion aren't migrating towards their home.

You may be brilliant, but if you can't communicate your ideas then you're worthless.

Although it has soothing qualities, fire is one of the most destructive as well as replenishing forms of nature.

We live our lives following our shadows, believing in nothing but darkened light and nameless faces.

Stars always make me smile.

Just as the leaves in September turn rainbow, so must the cycle of life spin around and make us all dizzy.

We regard flowers as being beautiful because they die.

The toughest part about a death is being alone.

sans

The cake that you baked for me has burned.

Melted frosting,
Thick and foamy.
It drips down the side.
Crispy charcoal pieces,
Lying on spongy brown wedges.
Three candles turned gray.
Their colors have died.
Making a wish,
Ashes scatter.
Our cake has burnt.

-Sarah Ridolfi

Fantasia

I fly over the school, the wind soothing my face...
The anger which comes at me like a train trying to rid me of my fantasy...
I live a dream...
I am stuck like glue to paper...
Will I wake?
From place to place I wander,
I can only remember,
this fantasia that holds me in its grip,
like a nail in wood.
I want to escape from this fantasy but don't want to, it is enjoyable but I have forgotten the angels of life,

my mother, father, and sister.

Jeff Dachman

