

# New York State Summer Young Writers Institute 2006



**YOUNG VOICES:**  
An Anthology of Student Work

# The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute

The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute (NYSSYWI), sponsored jointly by the New York State Writers Institute at the University at Albany and the Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks, is a week-long, intensive creative writing workshop for students who attend high schools in New York State. Now in its 9th year, NYSSYWI is held the first week in July at the Silver Bay Association YMCA Conference and Training Center in Silver Bay, on Lake George.

Thirty students are chosen each year from approximately 100 applications, and these young writers work with three professional writers to produce new poems, stories, and imaginative essays during the week they are at Silver Bay. Admission is determined by evaluation of original creative writing samples submitted by the student applicants.

Apart from participating in three classes each day, students usually hear visiting writers who appear in the Writer's Voice Readings by the Bay series, and they have also attended the Writers Institute's summer program at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs a number of times to meet with nationally-prominent writers. For the last two years, Darin Strauss, author of *Chang and Eng* and *The Real McCoy*, has traveled to Silver Bay to read and to work with NYSSYWI writers.

Our goal is to bring talented high school writers into a relaxing, inspirational environment with professional writers, offer them recognition and respect for what they have already accomplished, and encourage them to develop new work and to grow as writers. The combination of instant bonding with peers and getting to do what they enjoy doing on the shores of a beautiful lake in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains – where, when they're not writing, they can swim, use canoes and kayaks, hike, sail, and

play tennis – has produced lasting friendships and wonderful new writing for the last eight years.

What you hold in your hands, this anthology, presents the best of what our NYSSYWI students produced in early July of 2006. Interspersed are images from the summer session and comments from the students on their experience. In a short period of time, with pieces to produce in three different genres for three demanding teachers, these students created work that are funny, moving, troubling, dramatic and, finally, remarkable in a number of ways. It was our pleasure to watch as these poems and stories emerged at Silver Bay, and it's your pleasure to discover them here.

William Patrick  
Director

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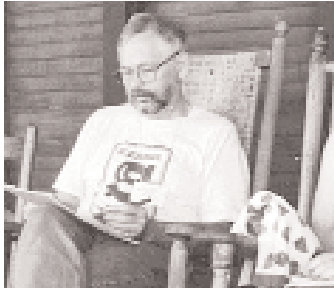
Applications may be requested from the Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks, or downloaded from the Writers Institute website at [www.albany.edu/writers-inst](http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst).



## Summer 2006 Faculty



KATHLEEN AGUERO is the author of three volumes of poetry, *Daughter Of* (Cedar Hill Books, 2004), *The Real Weather* (Hanging Loose Press, 1987) and *Thirsty Day* (Alice James Books, 1977), and co-editor with Marie Harris of *An Ear to the Ground: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 1989) and *A Gift of Tongues: Critical Challenges in Contemporary American Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 1987). She is the editor of *Daily Fare: Essays from the Multicultural Experience*, (1993) also from the University of Georgia Press. She has taught writing to students in grades K–12 in the Poets in the Schools Programs in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Presently she is an assistant professor at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, MA.



ROBERT MINER has written for the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Esquire*, *Redbook*, *Glamour*, *Parents*, *Outside*, *Self*, and *People*. His first novel, *Mothers Day*, was about a single father—an outsider’s view of motherhood from the emotional inside—and critics called it “fearless and original.”



WILLIAM B. PATRICK, who founded and teaches at the New York State Summer Young Writers Institute, is a writer whose works have been published or produced in several genres: poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, screenwriting, and drama. *Saving Troy*, his creative non-fiction chronicle of a year spent living and riding with professional firefighters and paramedics, was published in December, 2005. His memoir in poetry, *We Didn’t Come Here for This*, was published by BOA Editions in 1999. *Kirkus Reviews* called the book a “marvelous memoir-in-poetry and a wonderful hybrid, written in a voice that’s compassionate, fresh and American, without ever proclaiming itself such.” An earlier collection of Mr. Patrick’s poetry, *These Upraised Hands*, also published by BOA Editions in 1995, is

a book of narrative poems and dramatic monologues. Patrick’s novel, *Roxa: Voices of the Culver Family*, won the 1990 Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award for the best first work of fiction. He works each year with middle and high school students in the Adirondacks for The Writer’s Voice at Silver Bay.

# Corduroy Pants

By Hannah Bewsher

CORDUROY PANTS JUST SORT OF SUCK when it's hot out. . . and because of the waled cling of them, I was thirsty, but to get wet and cool, not to drink. Before my mind even tried to catch up, I was walking towards the lake. Along the way things just fell off of me. My shoes were the first to go, left hanging on a fence post, dripping. It was the trail that led down to the Greek Place; that nostalgic wind tunnel that I can't stay away from for more than a few hours. Then at the edge of the beach my notebook was left pinned between two liken-covered rocks.

I finally stood under the cool dome of the memorial, my jeans rolled up past my knees, trying to make them as un-corduroy as possible. After only minutes by the water I was in, unable to reason with the five-year-old girl in me that would rather be wet now, then suffer the cold walk back. A speedboat hummed by and I watched the wake roll in, daring it to leap up on me like an untrained dog's, wet, sandy paws. The off-white foam clung to the fabric of my pants and the hem of my T-shirt. I slapped the water as it rolled in, smiling despite myself. Nearly up to my waist and navigating the rounded, marble-like rocks with catfish feet; my toes nosing around for stable footing. And that's how I walked, waist deep and unwilling to stumble onto the beach until the very last minute, until I wasn't thirsty any more.

When I did come out, dripping, grinning, the sand clung to my feet, feeling oddly soft after the rocks and current. I started to walk back the way I'd come, gathering myself up again. I kicked the rock off of my notebook, and scooped it up, then grabbed my now warm bottle of water. With one finger, I hooked my sandals off the post as I trotted by. As I walked back I found myself cutting across the lawn, and came to the cool stone barrier of the labyrinth. I stopped in the damp

grass and looked down at the worn earth and the bricks lain deep. I dropped my things on the ground and left them as I let myself be shepherded inward.

It was strangely comforting. Summer's events just melted off of me with each step. I wasn't a teacher. I wasn't a leader. I wasn't a writer, or an artist. I was stripped down as I walked, losing pieces of myself and I felt light, new.

My foot pressed down in the soft earth in the center of the circle. I looked up at the moon. It was milky and pregnant, fertile with wide, smooth hips. A pine tree towered over me, and as I started to walk straight from the center towards the wide trunk, the sound of wet corduroy brushed with each step. Then I heard the rustle of dry feathers behind me, and I turned. Two young crows, hoppers, we used to call them. Just old enough to fly a little, but not with any strength of stamina, they simply hop around in the tree, clapping wings and squatting to beg food from patient parents.

They walked slowly, with a reptilian swagger and they watched me with beaded eyes. Hardly five feet from me, the two handsome birds

and I stood for a moment in the circle. The smaller of the two carefully picked up a piece of woody mulch and flicked it into the air, simply to watch it fall I assumed. He did it several more times as I watched in quiet humor. The other bird made eye contact with me for a few rhythmic seconds; enough time to see soul behind those amber-rimmed eyes.

The mother swooped down, landing like a wave. She bounced a few steps on the gravel before muttering in harsh whispers to the two young crows. Taking up my things I walked away and as I started down the hill at a quick clip, my damp pants started again, that damned corduroy noise and I heard flapping behind me. I turned to find the two hoppers trotting after me, their mother striding on long legs after them, like an elegant woman in a sleek, black dress.

At that point, I really could only laugh, and they held interest much longer than I'd expected them to, following me a third of the way down the hill before their mother grew nervous and called them back with a hollow, throaty chuckle. They leapt and flapped back up the hill, looking to all the world like any other child on the beach. ■

“ . . . the people who attend NYSSYWI are some of the most creative, down-to-earth, and wonderfully eccentric teens that can be found in New York State. I was awed by the talent of both the faculty and the participants, and Silver Bay will always be remembered as one of the best experiences of my life. ”

— Lily Ringler

# When the Sky Opens Up, Will the Rough Waters Rise?

By Kate Bosek-Sills

The sky opened up that beach evening  
As we ate imported fish and rice  
Under the umbrellas  
Advertising a brand of water  
The place didn't even carry.  
The sky opened up, but not as a holy spectacle:  
The light that people claim to see  
When they're alone.  
I got that lightheaded feeling you get  
When you stand up too fast  
But instead of the feeling being in my head  
My chest decided to claim the sensation.  
The wind blew stronger and the water looked as if it had been replaced by a shaded green algae  
We thought of going back in  
But quickly let that idea sink to the bottom of the lake.

Before, only an hour,  
The water met me ten feet down  
From the wooden pier for the first time.  
We worried about the undertow on the other side  
And the rocks that protruded from the water's  
Fluctuating surface like the wrinkles  
In tree bark.  
My chest felt light then, too.  
Adrenaline filled my body  
As my feet teetered apprehensively on the edge  
Filled with a nervous air  
Like a child's first time down the metal hill  
Shrieking screams echoing in the open air  
High-pitched laughter chiming as it halts to a stop.  
I screamed.  
I jumped into the water.  
I laughed.  
I jumped again.  
Then the wind began to scrape  
The top layer of chill from the water  
And coat our bodies like a paint primer.  
We made for commercial ground.

The sky opened up that night  
We could still smell the algae and the sand  
As the sun dripped into the horizon,  
The moon found a detour around the downpour of sun.  
The moon battled for attention with the opening sky,  
But retreated in shame,  
It's beauty now a normalcy  
As all eyes now focused on the hole in the sky.  
I cannot even describe what it looked like,  
Now,  
But over the road, Lake Avenue,  
Blacks, burned red, and scalded yellows mixed together  
To form a break.  
A hole.  
An opening.

# Jackie

By Laura Colaneri

My best friend is

The full moon sailing across the sky, shining brightly  
Sometimes obscured by clouds.

The stars, forming their patterns and pictures,  
Two fish dancing.

The sun, shining brightly, smiling wildly,  
Then taking its leave, giving her other side, the moon, a chance.

She is not the planets, forever orbiting,  
She is that which watches over and controls the orbit.

Once more, she is the stars,  
Winking, mysterious secrets never to be told,

She fills up the vast emptiness with light,  
And then creates the dark, and resides within it

Many parts forever coexisting, opposite, in balance,  
The moon and the sun fall in love with Earth's shaggy green hair.



# Third Sister

By Michele Colley

Katie is  
Strange music  
From another room  
Pop music  
Played sideways by angels  
Nursery rhymes  
Backward in Latin  
An operetta  
Completely in gibberish

Katie is  
A creature  
A bunny  
On speed  
A tick  
With a grudge  
A butterfly that bites



# Lust

By John Francis Dieterle

HE HAD OBSERVED HER FROM AFAR FOR ages. He was unaware of when she began to appear everywhere he spent his time, but he immediately began examining every detail of her. He had stared longingly at every part of her that he could absorb, cherish, and obsess over: her thin, sloping shoulders; her slender, white neck; her fiery hair; and anything else that would fuel his ridiculous masturbatory fantasies. This obsessive ogling had only sated him for so long before he craved the warmth of her body, the touch of her slender fingers, and the feel of her smooth skin in his hands.

He found out that she was a waitress at a coffeehouse near the used bookstore he worked at. He had never bought coffee there because it was too expensive for him. He had glanced into the window, longingly staring at the food he could not afford to buy when he saw her bus-ing a table with a smile that warmed him in the cold weather around him. He paused for a while and stared into the window. He left after a few minutes of watching through the window; it was cold outside.

One day after leaving his job he passed by the coffee shop again and saw her. Giving into temptation, he ran into the shop. "Money be damned!" he thought with an inward grimace. He ordered a cheap coffee from her and opened the book that he was reading. He'd forgotten almost everything from the time that she came back with the coffee to the end of his stay at the shop. All he remembered was the sensation of extreme nervousness and that she accepted an invitation to take a walk in the park with him. Words of triumph rang in his head upon this acceptance; his mind was so overpowered by this acceptance that he almost couldn't believe it. He waited for her shift to finish so that they could walk through the park together; every minute was agonizing torture to him. The thought of

being able to view her beauty up close only extended the feeling of agony in every minute and second he had to wait.

While walking through the park he noticed a physical attribute that he had missed: her mouth. Her full lips opened into a cave of red whenever she spoke. He caught himself staring into it when he saw her yawning; it was everywhere, swallowing him whole. He expected that when he touched those lips with his own and he entered her mouth that a sensation of undeniable, eternal bliss would come over him and make him feel complete. There was nothing beyond her mouth to him.

After walking in the park for a while she said that she was tired and

cally tried to feel what he had wanted to. He searched the girl's face for the feeling he had longed to feel. An eternity passed and still nothing happened. He gazed at her pure, white skin, which once held all of his dreams and fantasies. Nothing. Her blazing, red hair that was seared into his mind and once ignited his dreams brushed against his arms as it did in his fantasies. Nothing. He felt her breasts pushing against his chest, her thin waist in his hands, her cool hands pressing against his cheeks, her shapely legs knocking against his. Nothing. All was as he had dreamed it, except that there was no feeling of completion. The sensations of failure, of misplaced hopes, and misery overwhelmed

**“ I started coming here three years ago and in that time so much of my development as a writer and even as a person has been due to one week every summer on the Silver Bay campus. I hope the ‘next generation’ enjoys this place as much as I have. ”**  
— Caitlin Sahn

wanted to sit down to rest her legs. They sat down on a bench and she turned to him, grasping his shoulders and gently pulling him to her. He succumbed to her and greedily ran his eyes over everything he had wanted and now possessed. She was now so close to him that he could see all of her pearl white teeth as her pink tongue formed words that fell on his deaf ears. As he drew closer to her he inhaled and treasured her scent. He saw her eyelids pull over her cloudy blue eyes, and he began to close his eyes in anticipation. His lips met with hers and he felt...nothing.

His eyes shot open and he franti-

him. Her every action had built up his hopes and, in a moment, quashed them.

After what seemed a lifetime of hopelessly struggling through this desolate landscape, they broke apart. Her left hand slipped to his chest as her right slid to his shoulder and her lips curled in a faint smile as she surveyed his face. She lifted his chin up after he turned his face downward, ashamed. His eyes stared straight through her. Her hands slid down his body into her lap. A feeling of horror boiled up to the surface in him as the girl's eyes welled up with tears. ■



# Untitled

by Jason Fishel

**15 April 2005**

Dearest Margaret,

I know you told me to wait until you get back from Bermuda, but Bobby just wouldn't stop his nagging. You were right. With you gone I'm starting to appreciate all you have to do as a mother. Don't rub it in. For something to happen now, while you're gone, is exactly what I don't need, thank you very much. So anyway, our boy now has a new pet turtle, you know, the little striped ones. I had one of those little guys when I was a kid; they were so popular around the town, I just had to have one. I got Bobby's at that pet store off Elm, you know the one. I hope you aren't mad; he'll probably want a dog next! Well, I'm sure he'll take good care of it anyway. You know I'm not much with words, but I may as well keep on e-mailing you. Talk to you soon, Maggie, and tell me how the trip's going.

Frank

**16 April 2005**

Maggie,

I saw the strangest thing on the news today, especially with Bobby just getting his turtle and all. The anchor said that the sale of turtles was made illegal by the FDA since the Seventies, only a little while after we had our own turtles. Anyway, the newsman said that these days, people have been selling turtles illegally! The guy at the pet store said he had the turtles around for educational purposes, which I guess is probably legal. I don't know. I wonder if the little guy is contraband! What a hoot that is! But really, what you told me is just plain wrong. I know you get crazy about these sorts of things, worried mother, sure, but there's nothing harmful about letting our boy have a pet. It's very clean, really, and it doesn't take much maintenance at all. Now that you've heard this, don't you go and get all worked up about how you

think I could have broken a law. It's not worth it for either of us. Enjoy your vacation, sit through your medical conference, and don't worry about silly things like you sometimes find yourself doing. You'll find out you can trust me as soon as you start giving me chances to prove it again.

Frank

**17 April 2005**

Maggie,

No time to write, sending you one just so you don't worry. Bobby's puking all over, so more later. I promise. Everything is fine, the chaos'll pass quickly. Just forget about it and put your mind on the simple pleasures of the Caribbean.

Frank

**17 April 2005**

Maggie,

Sorry about the one earlier today. I was. . . well, I was stressed. Bobby came down with something. Now don't get worrying about this. I was reading that last e-mail you sent me, and you got downright rude. If anything, anything at all, made me think I needed you here, I would tell you. I can handle it. It looks like a stomach flu, and it'll pass quickly I bet. He's been throwing up real bad, and he's running a fever now. I think. I can't find the goddamn thermometer. I've got him in bed now, he says he's feeling better.

Missing you. Really.

Frank

**18 April 2005**

Mags,

Bobby's in the hospital. Now hold on. For Christ's sake, don't come home on account of this. You have work to do, I'm sure. His doctor, Dr. Fox, tells me the symptoms look a lot like salmonella (he's having diarrhea now, too). She's not an expert, but she's seen it before, in an eighty-year-old woman and a couple of

kids like Bobby. Besides, she tested his poop, and I guess the right bacteria were in it. She says it could be from a reptile or like uncooked eggs or something. I didn't tell her about the turtles. I could probably get in trouble for that. This thing with Bobby'll pass. What we definitely don't want is a lawsuit on our hands. Do they do lawsuits for turtles? I bet they do. You see the dilemma, I'm sure. Don't worry too much about what could happen to me.

Frank

**19 April 2005**

Margaret,

God damn it, Margaret, I know you're worried! I told you he'll probably be fine. What else do you want? For now, we have bigger concerns, I'm sure you realize. Both of us. We need to lose that fucking turtle. I've obviously learned why the turtles shouldn't be sold illegally. I'm so glad you took the time to point that out to me, but I bet the cops won't want to hear that. I'm leaving Bobby alone in the hospital now, and I'm ditching that turtle. Wish me luck, babe. Wish me luck. You'll see. I'll get things back to normal all by myself.

Frank

*Author's Note: Frank's general incompetence would arise again and again in his marriage to Margaret, and eventually would lead to their divorce. In his grief, he would turn himself in for his illegal turtle trade. He could get anywhere from twenty-five years to life in prison; the case is working its way up to the Supreme Court. Bobby would recover from his bout with salmonella, and would soon travel to the armpit of Ohio to live with his mother and her new boyfriend. It is there that he would meet Lee Jolley, and the two would, in the not so distant future, form one of the most successful cage fighting tag teams in the history of the Ultimate Fighting Championships. ■*

## “Rain”

By Vivian Foung

OH, LOOK, THE STUDENT THOUGHT. She’s back in the rain again. Crazy girl. She’s all wet—god, her jeans have even changed color. They’re like one of those shading boxes, where you make each box increasingly darker. I guess she stepped into a few rain puddles, which, by the looks of it, are quickly becoming pools.

I wonder why she’s always out here, dancing in the rain? Well I say dancing but it’s not really dancing—it’s more of a jump outside-put up your arms-spin around till you fall to the ground dizzy type of dancing. So mostly she’s just spinning in the rain. Like a sprinkler.

But honestly. What appeal does being a sprinkler have for her? You’re being covered in water, which can’t be pleasant. Which is, in fact, what is happening to her right now. Her shirt and jeans are wet—the shirt looks like it’s sticking to her, it’s that soaked, and her jeans are peppered with raindrops (and of course, there is the radical change of color from light blue to black as you look down her jeans). I mean, she is wet. The most typical adjectives following that word are cold and miserable.

But I’m watching her now, and it looks like she’s almost happy. Maybe she is happy. Could that possibly be? Could she really be happy even with a soaked T-shirt and jeans that are splattered with rain? Well if she is happy, she isn’t alone. The weather is happy too. It sounds a bit weird, but it is. The rain is a sun shower, so the sky is light and the sun is shining. I’m half expecting to see a rainbow jump out of the sky. If the weather can be happy, then maybe she could be too.

However, doesn’t she know that she could catch pneumonia and die? Does she want to die? How horrible would that be?! When you’re born, what you do is live, not attempt to die. By dancing in the rain. That sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? Girl dies by rain. It would be an interesting headline though.

I guess she really doesn’t care though. It’s almost like she doesn’t care that she could die. She doesn’t care that she’s soaked. That dancing in the rain has no distinguishable appeal. So what on earth is she thinking?

Well, I suppose that you COULD say that she is living in the moment. Aren’t all the therapists encouraging us to do that? Live in the moment. Don’t think about what happens next. Don’t consider the consequences. I mean, it’s risky, but it’s true. And it looks like she believes it.

Oh, the rain is stopping now—yep, it’s definitely slowing down. And now it’s gone. Aww. The girl looks so sad. Oh wait, no—those aren’t tears, they’re just the leftover drops from the rain. Yep, she’s smiling now. A lot. That’s a really wide smile actually. Who knew a mouth could stretch that far? But anyway. So I guess then, that it is safe to say that she is happy. She was happy when she was dancing in the rain, soaking wet, feeling the raindrops hitting her face. And she is happy even when the rain has stopped falling. ■



## Memorable Experience

by Audrey L. Henkels

“HERE, TOSS IT OVER HERE!” YELLED senior Chris Leon, wailing his arms to emphasize the fact that he was open. Tall, burly, blonde, smart, a tremendous athlete, a legend of his own sort, it was surprising that he was not covered by at least five of his opponents. As the white disc sailed high overhead, chucked by Rajiv, an intense, short, Indian kid, with all his might, three of the members of the other team began sprinting towards Chris to rectify this error.

Chris ran backwards, looking up at the frisbee flying above while simultaneously glancing around

him at the uneven ground, the grass slope, the nearby trees, the bright sun, and then the quickly approaching Stephen and Marissa. Jumping up at the key moment, swatting away Stephen’s arms with his left hand, and extending his right fingers high toward the sky, he made the picture perfect catch. He and his teammates started to cheer as they had just made their sixth touchdown of the game, putting them ahead of us by one point.

Sighing, I turned away to jog over toward my team’s side of the field, my light blue T-shirt already soaked with sweat from our earlier six-mile

run. Stephen threw the frisbee, his powerful biceps flexing as he flung and released the plastic object, starting off the next round of this fevered game of Ultimate Frisbee. As I ran forward, instinctively following the trail of the disc like a newborn bird follows her mother, my thoughts began to drift.

Tonight was the first high school dance of the year, and as a mere freshman, I was looking forward to finally graduating from the awkward stage of cooties and sitting on the bleachers and passing notes through your friends to ask someone to dance. I had heard that at the high school dances, everyone dances during the slow songs, and it wasn’t a big deal. Middle school boys were just silly, I thought, as I absent-mindedly bent down to tie the laces of my Asics running shoes. A few seconds later, I popped back up, now contemplating possible outfit combinations for tonight. Maybe I could wear that three-quarters silver top I have, I thought, with my darker jeans, or maybe —

Wham! A white blurry object flashed before my eyes and my head exploded in pain. “Ow!” I screamed, inhaling sharply.

As I stared ahead in shock, I saw Chris’s face about a foot from mine, his mouth slowly dropping open from an expression of grim determination to a round “O” of apologetic surprise. Seeing his right arm, still extended but unconsciously lowering to his side as if disconnected from his body, I realized that it was the hard rounded edge of the frisbee that had just smashed into my face. I guess Chris had failed to register me as an obstacle in his path of destruction as he had wound up to sling the disc to some far away destination behind me.

I staggered backwards from the force of the impact as blood began to spurt out of my nose. I desperately jammed my fingers below my nostrils to try and stem the flow as a



pounding began that resounded throughout my skull, taking over my entire mind. All of a sudden, I realized Chris was saying something—an apology, I think—and then so was my friend Marissa, who had suddenly appeared in front of me, but I couldn't hear either of them, my senses were so dulled by the pain.

I fell to me knees, then to my back, the grass soft and fragrant and cool in the shade. I noticed my peers paused a moment to stare at me but quickly loose interest like two-year-olds being distracted by a swinging mobile as they took off sprinting, following the frisbee. The plastic disc glinted in the sun as it glided away from my suddenly quiet sanctuary under the tall trees. The far away voices were now only dim shouts in the distance as I was overwhelmed by the comfortable patch of grass in the dark, now almost black, shade.

I awoke a few minutes later to see Jessie, my cross-country coach, knelt by my side, peering into my face to see if I was all right. "Audrey," she said softly, prodding my arm in a not-so-gentle manner, "it's time to run back."

"What?" I said groggily, not comprehending.

"Practice is over, it's nearly 5 o'clock," she said. "We have to head back to the school now." As I slowly sat up I realized that my teammates had stopped playing Frisbee and were dispersed throughout the field, gathering up their T-shirts, socks, and sneakers which they had removed during the course of the game.

"Jessie," I began weakly, gingerly touching my nose and wincing subsequently due to the intense pain it caused me, "I can't run back! I can barely even sit up."

"The rest of the team is running back now," she argued sternly. "I expect you to join us, even with a bloody nose."

As I slowly began the surprisingly difficult process of standing up,

Lady Luck intervened on my behalf, saving me from the task of running a mile-and-a-half back to the school with my head exploding in pain.

"Audrey?" said a voice who I quickly identified as belonging to the mother of one of my best friends, who works at the nearby hospital as an Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor. "Oh my gosh, what happened?" she gushed in surprise as I turned and she saw my face spattered with blood.

"I, the frisbee, it—" I stuttered, unable to make coherent sentences.

"Oh, your nose!" squealed Dr. Fisher as she began studying my face

simply to rest."

Dr. Fisher finally seemed to acknowledge that I existed. "Audrey," she began dramatically and I felt my breath catch in my throat, "it appears to me that you have broken your nose."

Now this was the moment when my response differed from that of most people. As Dr. Fisher rattled on about how I should schedule an appointment with her as soon as possible, I suddenly came to the realization that I was strangely proud of the fact that I had a war wound from Ultimate Frisbee. I finally had an injury that required a

**“ These classes have been far better than any other classes I’ve had. They let you learn to tap into your creativity at will and come up with amazing pieces of work. The strongest aspects were relating to us at the equal level and giving us advice, but letting up choose whether or not to take it. This was an amazing experience. The camp was beautiful and inspirational and it was great that we got the chance to meet other kids with the same interests as ourselves who love writing. ”**

— *Laura Colaneri*

with the thoroughness of a medically trained professional.

She lightly touched the sides, the center, and—ouch!—the bridge of my nose with her experienced fingers. Among her under-the-breath mutterings, I caught the phrase, "it's broken."

Ignoring me, she turned to my coach. "This girl is in no condition to run right now," she said emphatically. "The best thing for her to do is

visit to the hospital. Although I was briefly upset that I would be missing the first high school dance, I realized that there would be more dances to come. And years later, when I was eighty years old and sitting in a rocking chair, I could fondly re-tell the story of the day I broke my nose during a game of Ultimate Frisbee. I smiled; I could already tell it was going to be a story I was not going to get tired of recounting. ■

# Patronization

By Liz Hennessy

“WHERE ARE STEVEN AND BREN?” Xylia asked suddenly.

“Oh, no,” Thomas said. “What have they gotten themselves into this time?”

The two of them had been preparing camp for the night, and Steven and Bren were out getting firewood. They had been gone for quite a while; the sun had already settled far beneath the canopy, casting ribbons of pink and purple across the slate sky. Besides their small clearing next to the river, which contained hues resulting from the mix of the pinkish sky and the green foliage, the forest was a deep blue-green as if it were deep within the sea.

Thomas and Xylia ran into the woods where they had last seen Steven and Bren enter.

“Just so you know,” Thomas said

to Xylia as they entered the forest, “it would be a bad idea to shout their names. Most likely, it won’t be them that answer.”

“Thanks,” said Xylia, “but I knew that.”

Once within the misty darkness of the forest, Thomas suddenly produced a small orb, which emanated soft blue light. Xylia came to the conclusion that Thomas was a mage—a human who has the ability to manipulate the matter around himself in any way possible by using up the respective amount of energy. Xylia, being an elf, had abilities similar to this human magic, but she believed the Elven magic was more sophisticated.

Suddenly, Xylia heard a noise coming from her right. She stopped walking and listened closely. She

heard the sound again; a low rumble that created vibrations in her bones, and realized it was the snarl of a beast.

“Thomas,” she whispered, signaling for him to come over. The two of them sneaked slowly towards the snarling. Pushing aside some leaves, Xylia saw a full-grown gryphon. The gryphon’s massive wings fluttered with every other step of its great paws. Its beak glistened in the rising moonlight that filtered in through the trees, and its eyes stared menacingly in the darkness. It was walking in a circle around two small figures: Steven and Bren. About three feet to the left was what appeared to be the gryphon’s nest.

“Those imbeciles,” Thomas said quietly. “Leave it to my brother and Bren to stumble across the nest of a



gryphon. You might want to step back.” Xylia did so, though unwillingly. She had the feeling that Thomas was patronizing her.

Reaching into his cloak, Thomas pulled out a foot-long white stick: his wand. Aiming his wand at the gryphon, he sent a burst of flames soaring past the gryphon’s head. While the great beast was distracted, Steven and Bren were able to escape out of the nesting site, but they didn’t have long. A second later, the gryphon had turned back around and started after them. She spread her wings and leapt a few feet into the air, just below the canopy. Steven and Bren broke out into a frantic sprint. Thomas and Xylia jumped out of the way as the gryphon flew towards them, chasing their friends.

“Thomas, do something,” Xylia said. However, looking over at him, she realized his wand had snapped. He no longer had the power to fight a full-grown gryphon.

When Xylia turned back, she saw that the gryphon had caught up to Steven and Bren. She reached with her talons and scooped Bren right off of the ground, who in turn started screaming at Steven for help. As the giant beast flew higher and higher, above the trees of the forest, Steven prepared to shoot the creature down.

“Do not hurt the gryphon,” Xylia said sternly. Steven looked at her in surprise and anxiousness. “Help your brother. I will take care of this situation.” Steven did not know how to respond, and so did as he was told.

“An lamb a bheir, ‘s i a gheibh,” Xylia whispered. That hand that gives is the hand that gets. The gryphon, only a second before, had let go of Bren, sending him hurdling towards the ground. At Xylia’s request, after her initial greeting in the form of an ancient proverb, the branches of the trees moved in order to catch him, and then to protect him from the gryphon.

“What’s happening?” Bren yelled from above.

“I am helping you,” Xylia replied calmly. “Now let me concentrate” The branches of the trees guided Bren safely to the ground, twisting and turning as if they were only thin and flexible vines, while keeping the

ing Xylia just standing there, unflinching, slowed down. Cautiously, the creature walked towards her. About two feet from Xylia, it stopped and stared at her.

“Be at ease,” Xylia said calmly. “No harm was meant. You and your eggs are perfectly fine, and were never

**“ The classes were very helpful. After the first two days I was picking out tons of things to fix in my writing... I wanted to get inspiration and to strengthen my writing. I’ve achieved both in a single week. ... The atmosphere was very inspiring. I can notice so many improvements in my writing, and I’ve met some incredible writers and friends. I hope I can be lucky enough to experience it again! ”**  
— Elizabeth Hennessy

gryphon at bay. Once Bren was safely on the ground, Xylia had the branches arranged so that a small clearing was formed containing only Xylia and the gryphon. Thorn bushes seemed to shuffle around, some going so far as to completely separate themselves from the earth.

Other bushes and shrubs did the same, forming secondary barriers on either side of the thorn bushes. Branches folded and crisscrossed to create an overall dome-effect where Xylia and the gryphon were standing.

Still in a furious rage, the gryphon began to lunge at Xylia. Behind her, Xylia could hear Steven, Bren, and Thomas start to run to her, but Xylia made sure that there was no way into the clearing. In her defense against the gryphon, Xylia simply put up her hand. The gryphon, see-

intended to be in danger.” The gryphon had slowly started walking towards Xylia again. She looked directly into Xylia’s eyes, as if testing if Xylia were trustworthy. After a moment, Xylia slowly raised her hand once more and gently touched the gryphon’s beak. The creature did not flinch or shy away, but stood there for a moment. Then, nodding her head, she walked back to her nesting site without so much as a growl towards Steven and Bren.

Xylia relinquished her control of the trees, and the forest resumed its previous shape. Thomas, Steven, and Bren instantly ran to her to see if she was all right.

“Thank you,” Bren said after a moment. Thomas and Steven nodded, and the group headed back to their camp. ■

# Pottery Wheel

By Rebecca Hodder

It's about balance,  
you must get it  
centered

or you will be off-kilter the entire time.  
If you get off center,

you'll be lucky to have some crummy  
cRoOKed little pot that looks like a second grade kid made it.

Most of the time, though,  
you have to wipe down the wheel

THROW  
the abused clay into reclaim,  
start over again.

You try, with your bare hands  
to force mud into the shape of your imagination.

It looks so easy to see someone else do it,  
but the strength you need to make it work  
astounds you absolutely

One slip, one careless moment of inattention,  
and it all

Spins  
Out  
Of  
Control

and you think there's nothing for it.

You'd better just scrap it all now  
until someone shows you that it is possible  
to make it all right.

Not exactly what you had meant to make, perhaps,  
But something.

A mug becomes a flowerpot,  
but at least it's yours,  
made by your hands,  
your dreams.

Only once you learned to let go

Did you see what you could  
do?

## Untitled Life

by Drew Keneally

THE FADING NUMBERS OF THE DIGITAL alarm clock flashed as it sat on the nightstand, and rang loudly, the man in the adjacent bed hit it with the palm of his hand, but rendered an unsuccessful attempt. Twice more and the alarm ceased, only to reawaken him five minutes later. The latter function was the only flaw that he found in the use of the snooze button. The man didn't even think of taking a shower, a task he knew would numb his skin and leave him in a desperate struggle for the remainder of the day in order to regain warmth. The small house he lived in rarely provided warm water during the winter, and last night was unfathomably cold.

When he returned from brushing his teeth he saw his wife heading into the kitchen. He felt sorry for waking her up at this ungodly hour. He pulled a turtleneck over his head with no need to stretch the collar as the shirt was well worn; he then stepped into a pair of jeans of a similar condition.

"I'm gonna take the dog out honey!" He grumbled while slipping on a pair of sneakers and struggled with clipping the leash to the collar of his old mutt.

Outside his steps crunched the hardened snow underneath, and he nearly slipped on a formation of ice on the walkway. He frowned as he thought of the arduous labor it would take to scrape that off, and of the ear-piercing sound of the metal shovel against slate—a sound that he knew all too well. Wrapping the leash around his wrist he brought his hands into a circle around his mouth and blew into them, his breath condensing in the thin, cold air. The streetlights sprayed a dull yellow light upon the ground every few houses creating an eerie atmosphere on the deserted street, as well as a long, disproportionate shadow of a man holding his dog, the former standing on his toes to see how big the shadow could get. His

puerile fun was abruptly halted by a howling gust of wind finding its way into every crevice of clothing, making the man feel as though he was immersed in a suit made of snow.

"Come on boy! Hurry up! I'm freezin' my cheeks off out here." The man's plea was answered with a blank, unresponsive stare, and then the dog turned and went on sniffing the rock-hard ground.

In order to combat the intense cold, he pulled a cigarette out of his pocket, and stuck it between his lips

and his father before him. It was the only McCormack family tradition that Gary knew about.

"Hey Gar?!" Gary's wife shrieked so loud he thought it would wake the entire neighborhood, as if his hadn't already completed the task. "Yeah hun?"

"What's all the ruckus about?!" The volume of her voice hadn't lowered and he wanted to stick a sock in her mouth.

"Nothin' hun, just stepped in some crap's all."

**“Three years ago my grandma clipped an article out to the *Times Journal* saying, ‘This sounds right up Becca’s alley. I’ve come back ever since. ... These three summers have changed my life, given me a place to belong, and have convinced me that it really is possible to achieve my goals in writing.’”**

— Rebecca Hodder

while he searched his remaining pocket for a matchbook. This was a ritual that he had followed every morning since he told his wife that he had quit. The wind threatened and quickly extinguished the flames of three matches. The fourth and last one was dimming as he furiously tried to keep it alive just long enough to transfer its warmth to the cigarette still hanging from his lips.

"Ahh! Ratfuck!" Reacting to the fourth and final failed attempt the man expressed his anger by shouting a term that would seem strange in comparison to the majority of the population, most of whom simply say a commonly used curse word that easily arrives in their mind after an unfortunate happening. His father had sputtered the term pro-

"Well breakfast's ready, come inside before you catch pneumonia. Oh, and take off your shoes before you come in, I don't want you trailing crap all over the house." Her shriek had lessened to more of a yell, but that was enough to make a few lights turn on. The noise had been accentuated by the proximity of the houses on the block; neighbors could hear fights, crying, and sometimes even the sinful sounds of bedroom escapades. If her shrill voice had only woken up some, the squirrel that darted out in front of his dog finished the job.

"Ah Jup!" Gary whined as he knew that he wouldn't be able to hush his dog as it defended its territory. "It's five-thirty in the freakin' morning, quit your barking and get inside!"



This plea, in fashion with his earlier one left the dog unfazed, and did not in the least bit hinder the dog's excitement.

The squirrel, most likely tricked out of hibernation by a streak of warm weather a couple of weeks prior to his current run-in with Jupiter, froze in the light emanating from a window. He waited in a standoff with the mutt seeing who would make the first move. Impatient, he scurried into a nearby bush. Gary felt a hard jerk followed almost instantly by a face full of cold, wet, muddy slush, a sensation that soon engulfed his entire body. Without shouting any more obscenities, as he was already aware of the awake condition of the rest of the neighborhood, Gary mumbled to himself as he trudged into his house, stopping on the way to acknowledge his neighbor, (who had been shaking his head in the illumi-

nated window of his bedroom), with a less than friendly hand gesture. He stripped down quickly and braved the menacing shower that awaited him. After reemerging from the frosty water, he proceeded to pull on a double layer of long sleeve shirts and added a pair of long johns under another well-worn pair of jeans.

The cracked, inhospitable leather of the car seat was hard this morning and cold to the touch, proving to be most uncomfortable as the McCormack's '87 Chevy creaked out of the driveway and Gary began the long drive to Park City. The latter location, a Utah ski town that housed the store that employed him, was made famous by the renowned Sundance Film festival, thus turning the once humble ski village into a thriving resort that is now synonymous with wealth, and the faces of celebrities come directly to mind.

The establishment which Gary managed—not the most prosperous one in town, yet not the least—provided a stable job for Gary. His position handed him little authority, not that he desired any and was about as far as he would be able to go up the corporate ladder and earn more money, a fact to which he had resigned himself. The money he made did not allow him to lead a prodigious life, and the frugal proprietor paid him even less during the off-season. This money, along with the money his wife made in her baby-sitting ventures allowed them to live a rather moderate lifestyle; however, this life fell far below the expectations that Gary had ascertained when he had moved to Park City nearly seven years ago.

He could view the mountain around which the Park City Resort had been built; it taunted him day in and day out. Wanting to get the



capacious snowy hill out of his mind he set to work on opening up the store. He sighed and turned the sign on the door so that a fading orange print that said, "Closed" faced him. When he came out here, he had thought that the renowned mountain would be one that he would frequent; that was once his store took off, of course. Now the massive peak stood as a symbol of his failures, and the adulteration of his love for skiing by his regretful inability to create a thriving business. Now, as he was forced to work as many hours as he could in order to make ends meet, the fruits of the powdery slope could only be enjoyed on rare occasions.

He restocked the walls with some newly arrived skis, placing the price tag on each pair. Shaking his head, Gary wondered what he could do with the eleven hundred dollars somebody would pay for the pair in his hands. Would he purchase a glorious new water heater perhaps? Maybe he and his wife could have the financial stability to start a family? It was wishful thinking.

Now Gary tried on sunglasses, looking into the mirror on a rotating pedestal that housed his sunglasses. He had to bend his knees in order to look up to the mirror, which pointed down. His face was unshaven for several days, a custom he rarely enjoyed doing, and thus rarely took the time to do so. His cheekbones and chin showed definition in a stern triangular shape giving the impression of a stolid sage, not a child in a man's body.

The sunglasses looked stupid, he thought, they left a ring of white around them due to the goggle tan that darkened his face from the cheeks down; however, the tan was not as dark as he would have wanted. He felt a feeling of sophomoric embarrassment as he had difficulty navigating the glasses back into their holster. When he looked up he saw two kids staring back at him. They wore guilty expressions on their faces. Gary didn't mind, the two

belts that the kids had stolen would only be a blip on the inventory list. The owner was already wealthy beyond Gary's wildest dreams and also seemed to like him, almost more than a friend, as she subtly flirted with him during their last meeting. The twenty-dollar loss wouldn't make the faintest difference in her obscenely large fortune.

It was a few minutes after the boys left that Steve, the younger brother of the two that worked in the store, came in about an hour before Gary had expected him.

"Oh, hey Mr. McCormack." He was not as energetic as he usually was and there was a dull tone to go with his unshaven face, greasy hair, and sunglasses trying to cover his sleepy bloodshot eyes.

"I told you not to call me that, I'm Gary; besides I'm not that much older than you. Where's your brother this morning? Still on the slopes?" He didn't like being an authority figure as he had despised them most of his life. The title made him become something that he wasn't, along with making him feel old. But the politeness of the boys restrained them from calling him by his first name regardless of the months that they had worked for him and the innumerable times that he has had to reminded them what he wanted to be called. The question regarding Steve's brother seemed to have cheered him up out of his dreary attitude.

"Oh boy, you gotta hear this story Mr. Uh, Gary. So we went to a party last night, I have no idea how we got there because we were already a little buzzed, and it seemed like it was a nice fancy party, but when we got in there it was just a bunch of drunken high school and college kids. There was this huge round bar in the basement with every bottle of liquor imaginable. Some asshole came up to Eric and started giving him a bunch of crap about being there—you know to see who could.. ." Gary cut him off, only briefly impeding the young man's unbridled enthusi-

asm regarding his recanting of the previous night's events.

"Yeah, yeah I know what it is, like I said I'm not that old." He felt old just having to say that.

"So anyway, Eric and him are doing shot after shot when the guy just boots every where, I mean on the kids next to him, on the bar, puke was just everywhere. While all this is going on Eric just starts tilting back and forth, I mean I had to hold him up so he wouldn't fall down. Right after I got him to the car he's just mumbling randomly, then he starts shouting 'stop, you gotta stop man.' So I stop the car and he opens the door and just boots, couldn't even wait to get out of the car. I'm going to save you from the details but this morning I go to take a piss and his arms are wrapped around the toilet bowl, and he was sleeping upright with his head on the toilet seat. Funniest thing you'll ever see, I wish you'd been there." Steve had relaxed into his usual jovial attitude, seeming to forget about the consequence to his head from the exploitations from last night.

"Yeah, I wish I was, we have to give him hell about it tomorrow—that is if he's not still in love with the crapper!" They laughed as they pictured Eric's misfortunes; however Gary cringed as he thought of the times that such unfavorable events had happened to him.

Gary held Steve and Eric in a high regard. They showed complete apathy toward concern about the future, they worked a day and spent the money at night. He looked at Steve stretching out completely on the bench designated for customers to sit on while being fitted for boots. He hadn't bothered to take his hat off, or his sunglasses, and one of his legs dangled off of the side. His flat, husky chest moved up and down and he rubbed the hairy half beard that grew from his face. The young man was a mess, his boss thought, and Gary wanted to be a mess. ■

## Second Redemption

By Jared Kenyon

THE RAIN CAME IN SHEETS, CARRIED BY the wind, incessantly pounding the thatched roofs of the houses that lay below. It came on a howling wind, a long, low moaning groan, like the outcries of a suffering land. The downpour transformed the simple dirt streets into muddy riverbeds, the wheel ruts were the rivers. The weather made the poor little town seem even more dreary and run-down than usual.

Just on the edge of this depressing little town was a small stone building, a prison. There was one guard on duty, sleeping as usual, and armed only with a nightstick and a thin rapier. Next to him a small stone staircase descended down just underground, where there was a heavy locked wooded door, with a slot in the center for passing food through. On the other side the slop they fed as food lay untouched on

the floor, starting to smell as it had been there for a few days now and nobody was willing to come in and clean it up. In the corner a figure sat crouched, tracing symbols in the dirt with his finger. His symbols were created in a circular pattern; the last characters he wrote stopped just where his first symbols began. He took a pinch of dust from the center of the circle and stood up, walking over to the door. He had a slight limp and it looked like a painful effort. There was a small keyhole on his side of the door too, apparently just in case a guard got shut in he could let himself out. The man bent over and put the pinch of dust in his palm, leveling out his hand just in front of the keyhole. He blew on the dust, making it spiral and float into the keyhole. He stood up and a click was heard and the door swung open. His face glowed

in the candle light coming from up the stairs, illuminating his aged, scarred face and the cataracts in his misty eyes. He was blind but could see more than most people.

The city burned and flames licked the sky, a stark contrast against the black night. The rain continued, making the flames sputter and flicker, though doing nothing to stop the blazes. Wood cracked and split, sending up showers of sparks and smoke. The screams of the people in the village could be heard across the town as their lives went up in smoke and fire.

A man dressed in a black cloak walked through the village, oblivious to what was going on around him. A child ran up behind him, a small boy looking for his parents. The man in the black cloak stopped and turned around slowly, looking down at the boy. His eyes seemed to glow red as cataracts reflected the firelight. The little boy stood there, unsure of what to think of this strange looking man. The cloaked figure raised a hand and the boy was gone, all that remained was a pathetically small charred corpse, a perfect fit with the destruction of the rest of the town. Turning back around he continued his slow walk through the town, his eyes unseeing, burning with the same light of the fires all around him. His black cloak swirled around his body, as dark as the night sky now shrouded in smoke. He approached the edge of the town and looked up. There was a hill not far off, and the top of the nearby forest could be seen just over the crest. Nothing appeared. The cloaked figure was silhouetted against the burning flames. Then a shadow appeared over the hill, just cresting it and standing still at the top. The eyes of the cloaked figure flickered with a brief moment of recognition, a mix of fear and anger. The strange figure on the hill lifted his hand and there was a brief flash of light. ■



# The Ballet

By Carly L'Ecuyer

AS A CHILD I WAS NO STRANGER TO THE ocean. Instead of getting frantic warnings to stay near the shore and always keep by Mommy, I spent my summers being tossed into the waves by my stepfather at the beautiful beach my family had been visiting for fifty years. North Carolina was more than just a vacation: it was a home away from home, a place that reeked of sunscreen and burnt food, where I had grown, lost, and become blonder by the day.

When I was seven and my cousin Laura was ten, we spent most of those sticky-hot months joyously spinning in the ocean's salty waves. Ben, her five-year-old brother, usually came along. The scene was as pretty as a postcard that day: a small blonde boy playing in the sand with his father, Peak, while two sun-burnt girls in bright bathing suits shrieked as water crept up their waists. The day was steaming; I could almost see the heat waves crawling over my skin. The peaceful scene was interrupted, however, as an impromptu calling distracted one of the main characters.

"I'm going back to the cottage - just - for - a - minute," Peak called out. I scooped up a handful of sand from the bottom and watched it slide through my fingers. "Watch Ben, ok, girls? Laura?"

"Yes, Daddy!" Laura piped immediately, waving her arms. "Yes, we're watching him!"

"Just for a minute," he repeated, and dashed towards the direction of the cottages.

Laura quickly turned back to me. "OK," she said, "now we're going to lie in the sun and start singing and then a pirate ship will come along, and—"

"No-o," I protested, trying to float on my back. "Not again. That's what we played yesterday."

"I'm older, so I get to pick," she shot back, her soaking white-blonde hair sticking to her face. She scowled at me, arranging her features into such a horrid, twisted display that I

backed down. Anyone who could look that mean could definitely—well, I'd just let her win this one.

The two mermaids, first Annabella and Sierra, then Augustine and Leanna, drifted with the waves as Ben blissfully rushed ants on the shore. The water kept getting colder as we kicked with our ankles crossed, being tossed by the waves. Squinting up at the sun, which looked miraculously like Grandma's lemon drops, I suddenly wondered aloud what dinner would be.

"I don't know. Maybe barbecued chicken!" Laura said hopefully, dropping her

Augustine voice. "I'll ask Daddy."

She stopped dead. Staring behind us, she seemed to slip in the water; I whirled around and felt my heart sink to the black bottom below. We had, without knowing it, drifted much farther away from the beach than we had ever been allowed. The shore was barely the size of my finger, and Ben was only a pale dot against the sand dunes.

Suddenly, Laura's panicked, frozen expression changed to horror with the speed of a gunshot and a piercing voice exploded from her tiny body. "DADDY!" she screamed, though Peak was nowhere in sight. "DADDY!"

I watched, horrified, as Ben leapt to his feet and zoomed toward the tiny black square that was the parking lot, beyond which was our house. Laura's screams echoed around my head, clouding the purr of the ocean. The undertow suddenly yanked at my legs and I was pulled under, slipping out of chaos into a quieter world of browns and greens.

I burst into air again. Peak was on the beach, his barking voice mingling with Laura's horrified peals of terror. As though in slow motion, I saw Peak jab a finger towards Ben, clearly shouting, "Stay here!" and

plunge himself into the water.

With a swirl of salty spray I had been sucked under once more. I floated, blinking, jostled by the water, listening to the breath of the ocean, rolling where the waves pleased to push me. It never occurred to me to be scared, to panic, to fight against the powerful source that caressed me.

Peak was next to me. He fought against the waves, his sinewy arms cutting the water, his pink, bald

“It was like school but cool.”  
— Sabrina Lopez

head flashing in the sun, his face screwed up against the spray. He lifted me into his arms and I clung to him, but the water was over his head, too. He threw me towards the shore, panting, slipping towards the bottom, but the waves pulled me back. Even as he swam towards his sobbing, choking daughter, I was drifting towards the same circle of water he had saved me from.

And over and over and over again he went, throwing each of us in turn only to have us drift back again, both of us occasionally plunging under the surface ... I caught flashes of frantically pedaling white legs, but it was overall much calmer and cooler out of the air ... the shifting shades of blues and greens, the seaweed gently being tossed with me in a tornado of bubbles ... and, powerless, I allowed the sea to carry me as it would, never believing that it would deceive me and never push me gently towards the surface again.

And suddenly I was climbing, exhausted, onto the shore, falling onto the sand, my quivering arms and legs covered with swirls of the fine particles of the earth, my heart-beat slogging in my ears, breathing in the air and the sea and the sand and the whispers. ■

# Profile of Samantha

By Sabrina Lopez

## Stalker Status

### July 1, 2006

I have followed her from Albany all the way to a place called Silver Bay. Strange name but it is a strange place. Now this girl I don't know, when I first saw her walking on the street in Albany I knew I had to follow her and get to know her. But I would never be able to actually talk to her. I'll wait until I have enough information about her to get her to be mine. Yes, well she is mine already and she loves me but she doesn't know that yet. I have been watching her for a while. With her small petite and happy little ways I mean who wouldn't. She is like a doll. The dolls my dad never let me play with when I was little. The ones he would beat me for. She even has blond hair just like mommy. I miss mommy. She used to make me feel special. But daddy drove her away... Stop! No more thinking. I must watch.

### July 2, 2006

I talked to her today! She makes me feel special just like mommy. She dropped her bag and I picked it up and she said "Thanks." Then I hid in the bushes to watch her. She went swimming and all her friends called

her Samantha and some were calling her just Sam. Sam, wow what a pretty name. I found her nametag too. She is with the young writer's group. I think that's why she went to that building on the hill. See Memorial. Do they have classes? I asked the receptionist at the inn and they told me they are staying at Paine Hall and they do have classes at See Memorial. I followed her to Paine Hall when she came back down from See Memorial but I couldn't get too close. There were too many people. But I know how to get over there. I went there today when everyone left to go back to See Memorial and found it empty. I copied the calendar on the board in the front hall. I walked around the whole house and found an easy way to get to the roof on the second floor. Maybe I will watch her at night in her room. I can watch her sleep and imagine myself sleeping by her. Maybe I'll even go in. Sometimes I feel like she already knows that I'm watching her and she likes it. Yeah, and she loves me.

### July 2, 2006 (nighttime)

I watched her while she ate dinner today. I stole someone's nametag to get in and sat at the table right

behind her. She eats slowly and neat not like the other sloppy girls. She told this girl that when she got her acceptance letter into the Silver Bay program she hoped it would get her answers. What does that mean? Well I'm going to figure it out so I can help her. Yes I can help her. OK. Then I followed them back to Paine Hall and found out she has a room on the first floor. I watched her through the window. The curtain was open a little bit so now I know where she keeps her clothes and everything. She has a nice sense of style. She dresses real pretty. Not like the other girls.

### July 3, 2006

When she went to breakfast I went in her room. I lay in her bed. She smells really good. Then I watched her in class. This girl interviewed her on why she was here and what she does. I learned a lot. It's so easy to listen in on people here. They are so trusting, so stupid no one pays attention to behind under the window when they open it or crouching in the trees. They are so stupid but it's easier for me to learn about sweet Samantha. Well I learned that she is so cool. She is fifteen and is pro fiction and is not a big poet. She likes writing short stories better especially science fiction. Writing for Samantha is a way for her to explore. To explore her ideas of what if's and could be's about what the world would be like if this happened one way or if it happened another way. She puts this exploration into her writing so her stories turn out to be open-ended science fiction stories. She puts her ideas, her never-ending curiosity of what the future could be like into her characters. And oh she really feels and connects with her characters. They are a part of her as she is a part of them. I would say she is the fire that lights all of her tiny character candles. She is so special. She brings the characters out of her mind onto paper and

“**For me, Silver Bay was like being a spoon in a spoon drawer. The only bummer was that it was SO SHORT.**”

— *Jason Fishel*

brings them to life. She's really smart. When she gets an idea she just goes with it. She simply goes with the flow and starts to write. She lets her eruption of questions and theories burst from her and fall onto the paper. She loses control. She is a natural. She'll make a perfect wife. Maybe she can play with me the way mommy did. Mommy made me feel good.

#### **July 4, 2006**

The girl that interviewed Samantha wrote a paper on her and she said that my Sammy came to Silver Bay Young Writer's Institute in search of an answer of some sort. I know this because I saw the girl throw out her paper in the garbage and when everyone left I went back in there to get it. It said she is in search of an answer to give her stories meaning and most important of all meaningful endings. She is trying and desires to give a message to her readers through her writing but she doesn't know exactly what message and how to go about doing this. See my Sammy is smart. But she wrote Sammy has a flaw to her open-ended questions that are embedded into her stories. But she doesn't have a flaw. She's perfect. She just can't finish her stories, that's all. She cannot find any kind of closure. To her, her writing is just a bunch of meaningless stories. Stories with no message in them, stories with no point in being read. The girl says she is a lost writer. She is the greatest writer and if she is lost I will help her find out where she wants or needs to be. And I will tell her, her writing means a lot to me and that's important. One day I'll talk to her. Well the girl also says the one reason she keeps writing is to figure out what she needs to say in her writing to her readers. She needs to find out exactly what she wants to tell the world through her writing. I know she'll figure it out because my Sammy is smart, really smart.

#### **July 5, 2006**

I went through the teachers' folders and found her story she sent in to get in Silver Bay and I also found out she is in group B. But group B is more special than group A. It's just that no one knows it, so she's not second rate or anything. Her story is really cool and the best. And it's the only story she thinks she finished. It was a science fiction story about earth in the future. It was about how us humans got so overpopulated that there wasn't enough oxygen because there weren't enough trees. So there wasn't enough oxygen to sustain us on the earth anymore. So instead of the people waiting to die out they decided to kill all the animals because they too were breathing air. They decided to keep two of each like a Noah's ark thing and kill the rest but they weren't going to tell everyone I think. Well the curiosity of the main character caused her to stumble upon this information because she never saw a dog before and she followed one and found out. The main character was a young girl who now had to weigh what had to be done in her mind. Should the animal killing be carried on or should a certain amount of humans be killed? But it overwhelmed her and with her age there was nothing she could do. But see she finished one story so she can finish another and she's smarter than I am but I'm smart too.

#### **July 6, 2006**

I watched her swim again and she looks really nice in her bathing suit. She works really hard. She was working really hard today. I watched her talk to her friends and eat and hang out and get dressed. I think she knows I was in her window and she wanted to tease me. But we aren't going to do anything until we're married. I watched her all day. I wish I were hanging out with her. Her friends don't deserve her. She's too good for them. I deserve her, ME.

#### **July 6, 2006 (nighttime)**

She read some of her work just now. It's way, way better than what anyone else read aloud. I think I'm going to sneak into her room tonight and talk to her when no one is around. It's time. I think she's ready.

#### **July 7, 2006**

I hate her! I hate her! Wait, I'm lying. I still love her but why did she do that? I thought she loved me. I went into her room last night, I lay down next to her and started petting her pretty blond hair and when she woke up, I said "Hey my little Sammy." Then she jumped out of the bed and screamed asking me what I was doing here and when I told her, "I love you. Don't you remember me? We talked before. We know each other." She just started screaming "I DON'T KNOW YOU! HELP! SOMEONE HELP!" I grabbed her and held her and tried making her quiet because if she woke up everyone else they would take her away from me like before. I told her "Shhh, Sammy, it's me, you love me, I love you, we're going to be together forever. Remember?" She kept on screaming and screaming and everyone came in and they started hitting me like daddy and she didn't help me. She didn't help me. She just stood there and didn't help me at all. Then the cops came and they took me away. Now I'm in a van, all alone, without my Sammy. Maybe she just didn't remember. Yeah, she must have just been too sleepy and forgot and I scared her. I knew I shouldn't have woken her up. It's my fault but I'll come back to her. I'll find her again. I won't keep my Sammy waiting. But I know she loves me. She really does. She does. ■

# Halley's Comet

By Emma Loy-Santelli

HALLEY COULD HARDLY REMEMBER HER parents. They were friendly...she thought. They had taken care of her, at least. After that she didn't have very many details. But they were gone. She thought they had died, but she wasn't quite sure about that either. Whatever had happened, she had ended up on the streets, and had been there for a while now. Who knew how long? She had managed to stay alive, fortunately, sheltering wherever she could in the winter, and stealing whatever she could to survive.

At the moment it was food. She knew where she could get it, too. The supermarket was always promising. No one noticed her in the crowd of people usually there. She strode in through the front doors, trying to appear confident, as if she had a perfectly lawful reason to be there. People glanced at her, but didn't ask questions. She grabbed some apples and stuffed them into her large pockets. She left with a large crowd. She never stole a lot of food. Getting away with a little bit to eat was better than getting caught. She walked down the street, pulling out an apple only when she was a few blocks away from the supermarket. She bit into it, savoring the taste of survival, sweet in her mouth. Food had saved her when nothing else could.

As she ate her apple, she happened to glance to the side. A particular shop caught her eye and she paused. The window was covered with a star chart, and the writing above the door that proclaimed the name of the shop was in the process of being painted, as if the painters had gone off to lunch half-finished with their job. She couldn't read what it said. She shoved her apple back into her pocket and pushed the door open. It seemed to have been newly oiled, and didn't make a sound as it swung inward. Halley closed it behind her, and looked around.

s

The shop was full of anything having to do with astronomy. Telescopes were lined up against the wall, with star charts spread out on tables. At least ten shelves of astronomy books stood against one of the walls. The place was very clean, despite its untidy appearance. The hardwood floor shone, as if it had just been washed. She walked carefully through the store, worried that she would end up knocking something over and getting caught. There didn't seem to be anyone there, but she had learned to be cautious anyway.

She slid past the bookshelves, and found that there was another room beyond the first. She made her way towards it. It was just as cluttered as the first room. She considered going back, and leaving the shop, but as she turned something in the second room caught her eye. She crept closer to it. It was a glass globe, which seemed to be a map of the solar system. Miniature versions of the planets moved inside, orbiting a small version of the sun. She looked closer, and saw that small comets and asteroids were swirling around inside as well. She carefully put her hand on it, and yelped as it slid right through the glass, as if it was water. She moved her hand around experimentally. Only one thing in the globe seemed to be affected by this. One of the comets moved slightly.

She moved her hand again and it moved again. She started experimenting some more. She found Earth and touched it, finding it to be solid.

Somewhere out around Mars, a comet suddenly sped up, moving faster than seemed scientifically possible, heading towards Earth.

Halley looked quickly around the shop. It was still deserted. She started to worry about her hand, still stuck in the globe. She yanked at it, but it didn't move. She saw the comet rapidly approaching Earth. How did they all seem to float like that, as if it really was space? She

yanked at her hand again, but it was a futile effort. It was thoroughly stuck. Why? She tried not to panic. If she was caught, there wasn't really anywhere for her to run. The shop was too cluttered to make a quick escape. Her hand was starting to fall asleep. She hoped the globe wasn't cutting off the circulation to it. She wiggled it around a little bit. The comet spun in a circle, then continued along its path.

Astronomers and sky-watchers all over the world had begun to notice a new celestial body in the sky. It seemed to be growing larger very rapidly.

Halley watched the miniature comet in the globe absently. It had almost reached Earth. She looked around again.

The door was so quiet she didn't hear it open, but she heard footsteps in the other room. She froze.

A large object entered Earth's atmosphere. Everyone had noticed it too late. It was moving far too fast for anything to be done. The human race could just look on in horror.

The footsteps were closing in. Halley considered smashing the globe with her other fist, but was worried that that would get caught inside. She looked around for a weapon, but everything was out of reach. Except... She reached into her pocket and grabbed one of her apples. She stared at it, regretting the loss of food, and flung it at the globe. It shattered. The planets disintegrated.

She leapt backward.

In an event that scientists would be debating for centuries to come, the comet disappeared. It just vanished, like a dream.

Maybe that's what it was. ■

# Invasion

By Wenkai Ma

WE HAD ARRIVED. MY MEN STARTED TO unpack as they set up camp. Dinner was prepared and we had toasted to our success. Merry mugs chimed, as if to congratulate us for our triumph. I played and replayed the same scene of our landing over and over again in my head. It was so fortunate, so perfect.

Jeremy was playing ball with his older sister, Nancy, in the backyard. It was a small cramped space, but Jeremy's family lived in a suburban area and there was nowhere else to play.

Nancy threw the ball to Jeremy. It went high over his head, and landed behind the tool shed. A few pieces of rusty sheet metal rested on the side wall of the tool shed. Jeremy squeezed in between the fence and the tool shed to retrieve the ball, now soiled by the mud that had accumulated there.

Eager to continue his game with Nancy, he rushed to squeeze through the space that separated the tool shed from the fence. This time however, he felt a sharp pain in his right arm. He looked down and saw the red cut on his white skin. The corner of the piece of the sheet metal was now stained crimson. Blood trickled downward and stained the hem of his vest.

We had waited on this piece of sheet metal for ten days now. It was moist here and we tried to enjoy the weather, but we couldn't because we were hidden deep within the sheet metal. If we came to the surface, the oxygen would kill us. But after today, it wouldn't matter anymore, because we would finally be moving to a human body. I watched it as it flashed past me. I alerted my squad. "Get up! We might just get the chance for an invasion today."

We waited...waited...waited. But it was gone. General Howard had told us how humans were. They moved quickly. Always strike when contact is made.

Then we saw it coming back again. We were to strike when contact is

made. But it was a dangerous operation. Even if we had successfully landed, a chance of entering the bloodstream itself was minimal.

To our surprise, we watched as the human crashed into the sheet metal. Blood gushed out of the depression in the skin made by the metal. We jumped into the bloodstream one by one and it carried us into the body.

Jeremy was sitting on the ground; Nancy sat next to him. "Nancy, please don't tell mommy I went back behind the tool shed," begged Jeremy. "If she knows, she won't let us play in the backyard anymore."

"I don't know," replied Nancy. "It's a pretty big cut. Here. Let me help you put a Band-Aid over it."

Phase I of our operation was complete. It was now time for Phase II. We would dissolve toxin into the bloodstream. The toxic blood would disperse throughout the entire body, causing it to become rigid and unresponsive to the nervous system. Then we would take control of every single cell, organ, bone, and muscle of this body.

Jeremy was in gym class. His muscles felt stiff, especially his jaw. At lunch he found it hard to eat because it was just too tiring to chew. The cut on his arm was itching, but it was painful to scratch it.

Jeremy tried to do his homework, but he was too troubled by the cut on his arm. The scratch was becom-





ing increasingly painful, and occasionally, he could feel his limbs twitch; first his right leg, then his left arm, right leg again, right arm.

He peeled the Band-Aid off his arm. The gauze was soaked in blood and pus. He threw the soggy bandage into his wastebasket and went into the bathroom to see his cut in the mirror.

He stood on the footstool beside the sink. He raised his arm to see the wound. It was red in the center, with pus oozing out the sides. The skin around the cut was purple.

**“ I had a lot of fun encountering people who are actually like me. It was a deeply emotional experience. ”**  
— anonymous

“Jeremy! Dinner!” He heard Nancy shout from downstairs. Jeremy didn’t feel like eating, not after seeing that nasty injury on his arm.

“Jeremy!” Nancy shouted again. Jeremy felt sick. He tried to walk out of the bathroom and not look at the wound, but his legs became two planks of wood, his knees unable to bend. He grabbed onto the towel hanger for support. His stomach churned. He forced his stiff jaw to open just as vomit erupted and spilled on the floor.

He felt the ground shake a little. It was his mother, coming up the stairs.

“Jeremy, are you all right?” asked his mother. “Why don’t you come down to dinner?” She walked into the open bathroom door and saw Jeremy standing there, vomit all over the floor. The towel hanger he was holding onto had snapped, and he was doubled over, clutching a broken piece of plastic in his hand.

All is well. Phase III shall come soon enough. We poured quite a large amount of toxin in the bloodstream, and it all dissolved and dis-

persed well. Reconnaissance shows that many muscles are starting to stiffen including the jaw muscles that control the main entrance to the body. Soon, this body will be ours. Soon.

Jeremy was in a small white room. Plastic bags filled with liquid hung over him. He was tired. He was laying down and his eyes were closed. He could hear tires humming underneath him and a siren blaring outside. He inhaled the sterile air, and fell asleep.

When he woke up, he was in another room; this one was blue. He smelled the familiar fragrance of his mom’s perfume. He turned and saw her sitting on the chair next to him, fast asleep. He shook

her and she woke up.

Just then, the doctor walked into the room.

“I’m glad that you’re awake, Jeremy,” she said. “You’ll be fine, you just had some tetanus. We’ve given you a booster, some antibiotics, and muscle relaxants. You’re going to have to stay in the hospital for a few days, to make sure the bacteria are gone. Otherwise, you’re going to be just fine.”

Jeremy’s mother waited until the doctor walked out of the room, and then she faced Jeremy. “Why didn’t you tell me about your cut when you got it?” she asked.

“I told Nancy about it,” Jeremy replied. “She got me a Band-Aid.”

“Well then, why didn’t Nancy tell me about it? Did you tell her not to tell me?”

Jeremy looked down at his sheets. He knew his mother was right. He didn’t know that a simple cut could be so serious. Tears welled in his eyes.

“Mommy I’m sorry,” he bawled. “I promise I will always tell you if I get hurt. Mommy please, I’m sorry.”

Jeremy’s mother just smiled.

How could everything have gone so wrong? Yesterday, we were on the verge of commencing Phase III. Now everything we have done is all gone. The toxin in the blood has somehow disappeared, and the human’s muscles are moving voluntarily again.

“No,” I thought. “It can’t end now, it just can’t. We have already gotten so far.” I called to two of my soldiers. “Bring the rest of the toxin to me. We’re going to capture this body once and for all.”

The vat of toxin was lugged out and placed beside the river of blood. With one shove, the toxin was pushed into the river, vat and all. This was it. The war had already ended for us. It was either capture the body...or death.

Jeremy felt great. He got up out of the hospital bed and walked around slowly. He felt freedom flow into his limbs. He swung his arms in wide arcs around and around, up and down, side by side. Then a sharp pain reminded him about the cut on his arm. It was neatly bandaged; clean gauze stuck there with surgical tape. He sat down and turned on the television.

I am the last survivor in this body. Everyone else has been killed in an antibiotic attack. It’s over. The battle’s over. The war’s over. We have lost.

I didn’t know how I was going to report to General Howard that the invasion was unsuccessful. It would ruin his reputation...and mine. I was not going back. There was only one other choice.

I felt around on my belt and found the sheath that held my combat knife. I pulled it out. I stroked and caressed the cool metal one last time. I gripped the rubber handle tightly, and then plunged it into myself. My cell wall tore and I felt my cytoplasm pour out onto the ground. I lay down and looked at the dark ceiling. As I started to dissolve, I felt like I was floating. ■

## The Evidence

By Jenny Marion

Because I plow through so many mysteries  
I have given up keeping the evidence straight  
And it all sort of functions however I need it  
To support this or that theory  
Perhaps even the Big Explanation

The evidence I have gathered is portable and diverse  
Flower buds that burst open when you tap their husks  
The clouded moral codes of breakfast conversation  
That silver filament below your painted-china eye  
That I wrap around my pinky and hold up to the heavens  
When the clouds are dark

The mysteries are, of course, unsolvable  
No true detective would brag having found the right answer  
When the camera is off  
You'll find them sitting on the floors of their offices  
Building citadels out of teeth  
Empty "Property of such-and-such Police Department" bags  
Haphazardly strewn across the carpet.



# LEMONFACE

By Emily Nichols

The first time I bit off the head of a dandelion,  
I plugged my ears  
With fingers sticky with sandbox splendor  
So I wouldn't hear it scream.  
I didn't even chew, only swallowed.  
I swallowed the whole thing  
And felt it giggle its way down my esophagus  
While I spit bittersweet yellow from the  
Crack between my teeth.

Bitter dribbled down my chin  
And made cave paintings on my white shirt.  
The bleach was shouting profanities,  
But there was already a Mississippi rainbow;  
The bitter was just the stinkle of frown  
That dripped under their spurning scrutiny of those dirt-roading sunburns.

The rat-a-tat-tatting of their sing-song Chevy whine  
Made hotdog and lemonade marionettes  
Out of my dirt-encrusted toenails,  
Ragged and singed with Speedy sauce and mustard.  
Dancing on Wal-Mart bags to the inaudible din of  
Red-rust harmonicas and itching heels.



# The First Time a Cinderblock Fell on My Foot and I Smashed My Head into a Brick Wall Because it Hurt So Much

By Jimmy O'Higgins

I was helping my friend move out of his house  
He has so much weird stuff there.  
Like this big heavy cinderblock.  
He's my friend and all, but I'm only helping him  
Because his mom is paying me \$30.  
I pick up the cinderblock  
(Why the fuck does he have a cinderblock?)  
And I walk down the stairs  
Out of the apartment, and onto  
Atlantic Avenue with the cinderblock  
Cinderblocks don't look heavy  
But cinderblocks are heavy.  
It's really cold. I'm freezing.  
I drop the cinderblock on my foot.  
I am wearing flip flops  
(Why the fuck am I wearing flip flops?)  
So my feet are cold.  
After the cinderblock falls  
On my foot, my foot is cold  
And it is bleeding.  
I scream really loud  
And start running around  
But I trip on the cinderblock  
And smash my head into a brick wall  
Which is part of a funeral parlor.  
I black out before the paramedics come.  
My friend still has the cinderblock in his new house.  
Every time I see it, I say, "I hate you!"  
But it's a cinderblock  
So it can't talk back to me.



# Untitled

By Lily Ringler

MY FIRST FLIGHT TO LONDON WAS AN overnight one, and by the time we landed at Heathrow Airport at six o'clock London time, I was exhausted. Even though the flight attendants had dimmed the lights in the middle of the ride, it was impossible to get any real sleep in those awful upright plane chairs. I'd had no legroom and my neck ached from the few times I nodded off with my chin tucked into the hollow of my chest. And of course it didn't help that I was in the middle seat. Bob was snoring louder than usual on my left and Lily kept climbing over me from the window

But let me inform you, using my daughter's vernacular, that it sucks. A lot. Not only do you have no motivation to work, no job benefits, and no excuse to go outside, but your family also expects you to cook dinner for them after you're done. So all I wanted was a vacation—preferably an exotic vacation—where I didn't have to cook or clean or work or drive around like a mad woman collecting groceries. And I wanted to relax. But so far this trip had been anything but relaxing.

I desperately wanted to run out the door and get my first whiff of foreign

trip in December. This was what I'd reminded myself of as I'd endured the plane ride and the snoring and the constant jostling and stale airport air. Months of planning and saving had come down to just one thing: this moment.

I all but salivated as we started toward the double doors. Our family adventure, my new experience was about to begin. Finally, the Britain I'd dreamed about: the legendary land of castles, Jane Austin and King Arthur.

I felt like I was in a movie, in slow motion, slowly headed toward my fate. I could feel the camera zoom in on me as the reception desks and payphones and fluorescent lights receded and all I could see ahead were the double doors that were my goal. I didn't wait for Bob or Lily as the doors opened for me. I was only aware of my surroundings and myself as I took my first step into this new land.

It was bliss, it was euphoria, it was incomparable, and it smelled wonderfully like...car exhaust?

I surveyed the frantic buses and the swerving cabs—all careening through the streets on the left side of the road, of course. It seemed like I knew this scene, like I had seen the same slabs of concrete before and felt the same oppressive muggy air. And then it hit me. It looked like an airport. A goddamn American airport. The same sights, sounds, and smells.

This was not how it was supposed to be. Nothing in Britain was supposed to look like anything in America, and certainly nothing in this exotic place was supposed to smell like car exhaust. What the hell?

And then our rental car came. Two feet wide and two feet deep! Lovely, just lovely. And mother of God, was that snow I felt on my arm? Snow? Snow in England in January?

What frigging gives? God must be punishing me for not dealing with my bladder control problem sooner. ■

“**Coming to Silver Bay the past two years has been amazing. I don't think I will ever forget the two weeks I spent here.**”  
— Vivian Foug

seat because she was afraid she would get blood clots in her legs if she sat still for too long. I myself had to get up to use the tiny plane bathroom ten times during the flight—I'm really starting to believe people when they tell me my bladder is shrinking. And of course I couldn't help but watch the “Cheers” reruns on the fuzzy plane monitors—how could anyone sleep through the best television show ever produced?

So, suffice it to say that I was not the most cheerful of creatures when we stumbled off the plane into the bright sunlight, when it was really only supposed to be midnight at home. This trip so far was not going according to my plan. All I'd wanted in the months we'd been planning the trip was an escape from home and daily chores. My daily routine was boring as hell. Not many people realize what it's like to work at home.

air since my trip to Spain in ninth grade. But of course there were the usual duties: baggage claim, customs, car rentals, and the obligatory trip to the bathroom for a quick freshen-up. Bob, eyebrows furrowed, was in his intense let-me-iron-out-the-details state. Lily was more antsy than usual, sitting on a bench and wheeling her big black suitcase back and forth and back and forth and back and forth, her CD player vibrating her eardrums. I had to visit the bathroom a good four times—maybe I really should try some of that bladder control medication—before Bob finally walked over with a slight grin on his face and our very own set of car keys in his hand.

“We're all set,” he declared in a highly unrealistic faux-British accent. “You lead the way.”

This was the moment I'd been waiting for since we'd booked the

# Untitled

By Caitlin Sahn

SHE SITS ON THE FLOOR OF MY grandmother's living room, the basement door wide open and screaming out darkness behind her. She's running smooth fingers over old boards, once rough, now sanded down by feet tracing the same routes shuffling, weathering, day after day and year after year, sure as a force of nature. Her fingers follow the warped wood-grain and my eyes follow her fingers. I know them so much better than my own that I am more aware of the blood dripping off their tips than that drying in the rivulets of my own appendages, becoming part of my fingerprints.

"Some houses," my grandmother told me once, "are not residences. They are more than us. We are just travelers passing through, a chapter in the long, long story of their lives. Hear the old wood sigh?" I did and I do. I am thankful for the reminder of this moment's cosmic insignificance, only a moment, a single scene soon over, the page soon turned.

She goes on tracing wood-grain and I cross to the shelves on the far side of the living room. I lift up a statuette of a pious woman's hands together so no one can read the secrets in the lines of her palms, blowing the dust off with a dandelion-wish puff of breath, more for theatrics than anything else. The Virgin Mary, I turn her over—no, it says she's Saint Clare. Clear and bright. Light. She had visions. I'm not sure if she was a virgin, is that a requirement for sainthood? If I had stayed at Mission Academy like my grandmother wanted I would know.

She's expecting me to speak, I know this rather distantly. We have done this great and terrible thing and it should feel over, the book should close, we should ride off into the sunset to our ever-after, happy or no. They never tell you about the aftermath in all the epilogues and news broadcasts aside from a few brief sketches: she had two daughters, divorced her husband, and

moved to L.A. He had a drinking problem, never quite recovered but oh well we're done with them now. Not our concern. I place the statuette back on the shelf and half-turn, keeping a focal point so as not to get dizzy the way they teach in ballet. I open my mouth but my throat has become a monstrosity of barbed wire that would shred any sound attempting to escape. I close my mouth again and swallow around the edges of it all.

We have to leave. I brush her bare shoulder with my finger-tips trying to convey it all with that one ges-

all down Allen Street.

"She had a statuette of St. Clare on her bookshelf?" The gears or whatever it is that lives in cars chug a bit in place of her answer. "She's the patron saint of television."

A short half cough half laugh, "Bitch was a hypocrite all along." I remember: Wringing her hands, loose skin twisting almost all the way around bird-boned fingers. "Lauren, Lauren, it's the television that gives you these...this...affliction, that spreads the sinful urge through you like a virus. Just repent, just turn back to God. Once you're away

“**I feel like a more experienced writer after a week at Young Writers. Silver Bay is probably the best summer camp I have been to so far.**”  
— *Wenkai Ma*

ture: grief, triumph, freedom, uncertainty, time-to-go, and gosh-it's freezing-you're-wearing-that? She stumbles awkwardly to her feet and I keep one eye on her as we slip out the back door and scuffle around a clump of hedges all puffing breaths and shaking hands.

"Shit," I whisper, "Shit, I locked the keys in the car." I make a face but she doesn't laugh, just works some magic (I wish literally) on the front door of the Toyota and we're in and we're off. She's driving and I'm shotgun and I keep expecting someone to slam a book closed on me. We're done, we're done, sum us up and give the facts to the readers and let us rest. We do two wheeled turns

I know...it's her influence, it's this toxic society, oh I pray for you, you've such a struggle ahead."

Blood pours between teeth, smile literally exploding in fragments of bone and nerves and so much blood down in the dark sinking in to the earthen floor to the roots that have begun to encroach upon the cellar. I press my lips to hers needing tactile reassurance that there wasn't some mistake, God isn't punishing me for what I've done, the choice I made, taking both away, but she's whole and pulling away from me, has to keep her eyes on the road. I'd rather we go out now, crash and burn, but we don't. We just keep on driving. ■

# W's Secret Love of Scooby-Doo

by Daniel Savage

GEORGE W. BUSH STOOD BEHIND A blue curtain at the air-conditioned Army War College in Carlisle, PA, on May 25, 2004. His palms were sweaty and his suit clung too close to his fattening middle-aged body. He calculated that there must be at least five thousand people standing in the crowd, waiting for him to make another speech about Iraq. It seemed to George that all he did now was eulogize the war effort. He was always defending his decision to invade Iraq, always talking about how hard his corrupt officials were working, and always trying, fruit-

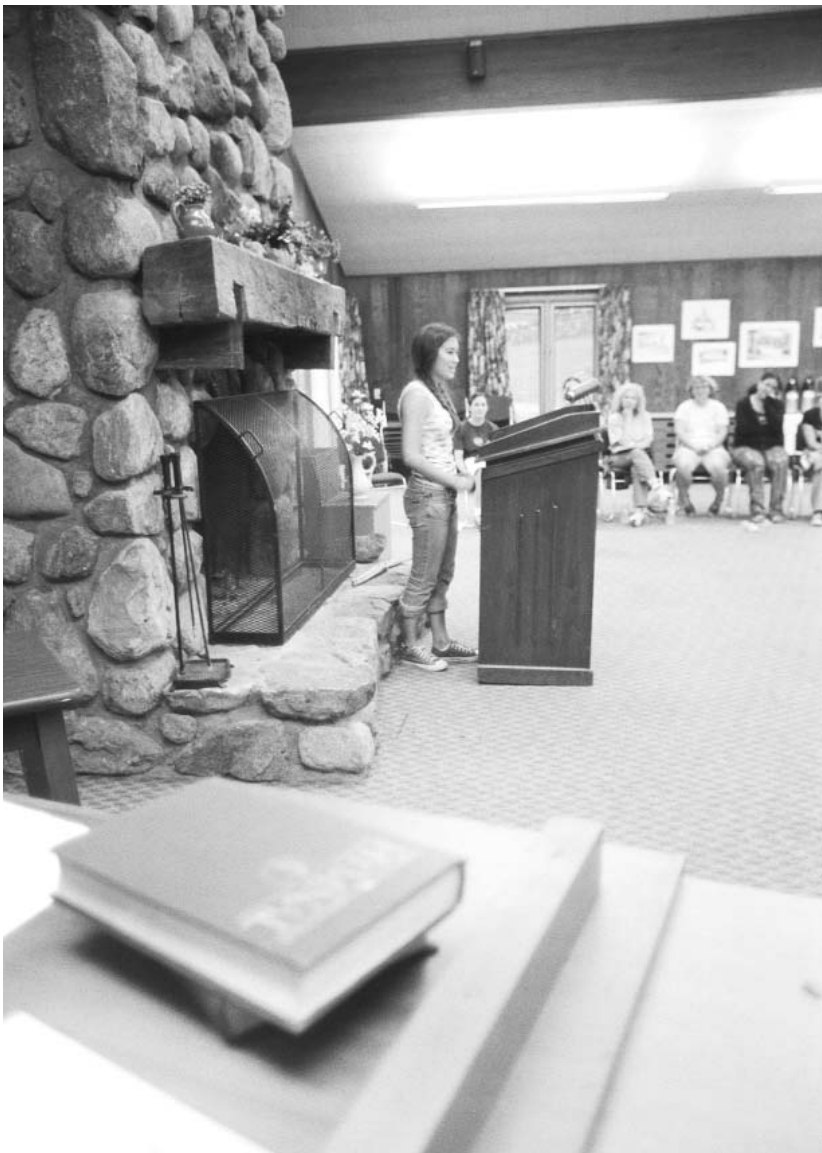
lessly, to make a terrorist connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden. He was tired of making hackneyed speeches that all sounded the same, not being with his wife, and having to talk to air-head reporters who only wanted to crucify him before the election. No one cared about the words that he would speak today, but he had to produce speeches at several military bases to prove to his political enemies that he cared about the troops. The perfunctory speech that he was making today was about the new committee set up to attempt to pla-

cate the insurgents in the Middle Eastern country. Even though he didn't want to make this speech, he knew that he'd have to make it, because that's what you do when you're the President.

He would rather lie in bed and watch his favorite cartoon, "Scooby-Doo." He loved the meandering path that every "Scooby-Doo" mystery followed. Each episode promised Fred proclaiming, "Let's split up, gang," Scooby and Shaggy dashing away from a supposed monster, Velma finding clues to prove who's behind the mask of the monster, and a villain muttering those legendary words that George knew by heart, after being unmasked: "And I would've gotten away with it if it weren't for you meddling kids and your dog." His favorite character was Shaggy, who reminded George of himself in his groovy party days. "Scooby-Doo" was more than a cartoon show for George, it was a time machine into his much happier past. He missed his cocaine filled days that filled him with bliss. Now all he ever did was absolve himself of responsibility, while being persecuted by people on Capitol Hill, and badgered by unhappy Democrats.

George also loved the consistency of "Scooby-Doo." It was so simple. Each episode adhered to a strict formula. All the supporting characters, all the settings, all the treasures were merely variables interjected into the equation of "Scooby-Doo." "Scooby-Doo" was an anchor in the whirlpool of a life that was the President's.

The crowd cheered and he haughtily entered the stage. He pretended like they loved him more than they did. He latched on to the podium and entered into a trance. He started to talk and let the words flow out of him without regarding them. He had practiced this speech for hours on his tour bus, and yet he made a mistake within the first minute, but that didn't bother him. He was day-dreaming about more important





things. He thought about how beautiful his wife, Laura, was even in her elder years (certainly more gorgeous than Hilary Clinton was). He wondered what his daughters were doing. They partied like George had in his youth but his paternal instinct convinced him that more Secret Service men should be enlisted to monitor them.

George looked at the crowd and all he could see were blank faces. All of them looked at him with stony expressions. He was a zealot; he had to pretend like things were going well, but the crowd knew better. The cool dry air flowed through the vents. George liked the fresh air of the outside in contrast to processed air, but it was logical that the people with manufactured emotions

breathed in manufactured air.

George finished his empty speech, and the audience complemented him with deaf claps. He retreated backstage followed by his stolid Secret Service cronies. But at least he would have his daily “Scooby-Doo.”

He entered the presidential tour bus ready to get to one of the ten twenty-inch TV screens that were located on the bus. It was 3:52 p.m.; “Scooby-Doo” was going to start at 4 o’clock on the WB 34. Bush turned on the TV and waited but when the clock changed the show that appeared was the dry “Frasier.” George was bewildered, it was the correct time, day, and station and still no “Scooby-Doo.” George panicked and called the Vice President for guidance.

“Dick, it’s George,” the President said in a nervous voice, “We’ve got an emergency on our hands.”

“What is it George?” the Vice President asked anxiously. “Have the terrorists attacked us again?”

“No, “Scooby-Doo” isn’t on the television,” George whimpered.

“Mr. President, I’ve already been briefed on the situation. “Scooby-Doo” has been taken off the air,” Dick said annoyed.

“Why?”

“Because the network heads must have realized what a stupid show “Scooby-Doo” is.”

“Those bastards, let’s nuke them,” George said excitedly.

“No Mister President I don’t think we should do that,” Dick said calmly, “With all of the money that your family has you could buy the rights to “Scooby-Doo.” In fact, Mister President, you could hire everyone from that show to have your own private “Scooby-Doo” TV shows. Heck, they could even write you and your family into the script.”

“You mean it Dick?”

“Yes,” Dick said snidely, “And if you ever give me another call like that...I’ll have you assassinated. You may be the President, but I’m the one who’s really in control.”

Dick hung up the phone and George was left to listen to the dull tone of a telephone not being used. He was alone now no friends, no family and no “Scooby-Doo.” But at least there was hope that someday he could bring “Scooby-Doo” back. Until then he would have to live a listless life.

George flipped through the channels of the television until something caught his eye. He was entranced by this new TV show that he was watching. Never had George been able to comprehend so much action, drama, and cool special effects on a 30-minute television show. From that day forward the “Mighty Morphing Power Rangers” became a major part of George’s life. ■



# A Beck Tangent

By Hana Segerstrom

I'VE DEFINITELY MADE PEOPLE CRY before. But when I think back, one of the worst times was the day before April vacation this past year. I had never expected it. Even now I can see her broken brown eyes cry, and I immediately wish they would stop and she would smile again. Perhaps I've related this to you as more dramatic than the scene actually was. But if I was to pinpoint one moment that changed my relationship with a student of mine, this would be it. I am a high school orchestra teacher. She usually refers to me as Beck.

This specific day before a vacation was exceptionally warm and spring-like, which was unusual, for the entire previous week it had been continuously raining. A sour sweet wind was blowing with a pollen flare through the windows in the sweltering band room that day, causing my shirt to become plastered to my sweating flesh. Of course, being a teacher, one can only make so many changes to the wardrobe ensemble, and my nostrils were flaring from my allergies from the heat, and from a particularly rowdy period earlier in the day. Why should anyone else be happy? I was miserable. My purple collared shirt was stuck to my stomach. That was not flattering in the least, and sweat stains were blatant—a problem conductors have battled for hundreds of years and, to my dismay, I have never been one of those who has solved it. I think they can sense when I am angry. The older ones know me too well, they can tell my mood by my ties. Today's was an angry tie, a mauve sort of color with a generic pattern, no designs, no bright colors.

I perched myself upon the stool reserved for the lazy or the elderly. Conductors use it when they can't stand up any longer. The room filled with a slow trickle of kids jumping out of their pants at the thought of vacation as the damn bell announcing the period blared. I glanced

down at my pants. They were too short. I can never find pants that fit. All of my pants just ride up when I sit down. Then I find I'm self-conscious, as the notion of whether my socks match finds its way into my mind. Shaking it off, I switched my gaze to the mob of teenagers flooding the room, shouting, fighting their way to lockers, blocking, pushing, laughing, yelling, and banging. Much as I hated to do this, I found myself completely angered that they could be so carefree the day before vacation. We had a rehearsal, one of the few rehearsals until the spring concert and no one seemed to care about that except me.

Then this all too happy kid, Hana Segerstrom, clad in some ridiculous outfit that did not involve dressy shirts, burst into the room, an ear to ear grin overwhelming her face and a cluster of abnormally large wilting dandelions clenched in her fist. I figured I'd let her calm herself before rehearsal actually started. I watched her cavort about the room, happy as a clown, even in the pollen-rich air. It made me bristle like an aggravated cat. She was flushed and looked like the wind had just blown her in the door, excitedly relating some stupid story to whoever she came across, gesturing with her hands.

Usually I would shake off mild annoyances like this animated raconteur, Hana, now flinging her violin case in an alarmingly wide radius. When she finally took her seat I was thoroughly annoyed. After one of my frightening speeches of intimidation involving the rapidly approaching spring concert, the noise level and the lack of people at their seats when the bell was ringing I leapt off the podium to accentuate the fear I was instilling. I know how to work these kids. I overheard one of them once say that I thrive on intimidation and tangents. Sometimes they time them.

Now, I am a pretty fun guy. I view teaching orchestra as my tool for teaching something far greater than

key signatures and seating auditions. I teach life. I like to intimidate freshmen by asking them what they think I teach. They are always wrong. Everything is a lesson in orchestra. One lesson I have spent my entire career trying to get across to them is to refrain from talking while tuning. If there is one thing that I absolutely cannot stand, it is that. It is this one thing that Hana has never seemed to want to learn. She never seemed to think I would kick her out of class. She whispered something to Karen after lowering her violin, a bizarre instrument painted with flowers. I don't know what she had to say or how long she had been whispering but I felt some strange vein in my neck burst and that made me mad.

It was as if things were in slow motion the way my temper flared—a small flicker of flame burst into a campfire which turned to a bonfire that gave me that strange teacher sense of authority which justified the superiority behind my course of action. Mustering an image of Leonard Bernstein behind my eyes, I flared my nostrils and abruptly whirled my hands about in a C shape formation to cut off the strings. Sound stopped. I felt good.

"Pack your instrument, you're done for the day." My voice was frigid. It tasted sour, something foreign against my tongue that was never used when addressing her. As I expected, she wasn't even paying attention. She'd stopped only because Karen next to her had stopped.

She was actually now obliviously rummaging through her backpack, which always seemed too full for its capacity. I assumed it was her lunch as she had some ritual way of eating lunch at the beginning of rehearsal every day. And it was always a ham and cheese sandwich. The orchestra was silent as everyone waited for her to realize that it was for her that the tuning had stopped. She yanked out the usual sandwich. Suddenly her head snapped upward at attention. I looked at her expressionless. The

goofy smile vanished the minute she met my glare. I repeated myself. "Pack your instrument, you're done for the day."

"What?" She was not accustomed to being the one I corner. The whole orchestra was silent. I wondered if they were shocked that it was her being singled out before them all. The first stand, it wasn't common, they're always well behaved. But Hana was too unpredictable and spent most rehearsals taping pictures of the music theory teacher, Jason Dashew on her folder rather than paying attention.

"You heard me, pack your instrument, you're done for the day." She sat, frozen like a stone. "What is my number one pet peeve in orchestra?" My voice was foreign even to myself, and she was looking at me as though I had just ripped her throat out. The look vanished and in an effort to preserve some dignity, she shrugged and casually responded, "Talking while tuning." She sounded as though she was trying to pitch her voice correctly in an effort to appear nonchalant.

"Yes. And you continue to refuse to listen to me. You insist on doing this at every rehearsal, you refuse to listen, you're not setting an example for your section so you're done for the day." It was an instrument of humiliation. I usually let them come back midway through the period, but this one had never before been whipped into shape. I'm not sure if anyone was shocked or not. The sound of a paper rustling on a stand blown by the sticky wind was the only audible sound in the room as she sat there packing, color filling her cheeks like a thermometer thrown in a volcano. I resumed rehearsal, ignoring her. Everything proceeded normally except that she seemed to not have any idea what was happening. Having finished packing, she sat for a minute and whispered something to Karen who ignored her. Awkwardly she rose and fumbled about for her case that she

picked up and began to trudge to her locker. "Where are you going?" It was all too perfect. I called all attention to the scene by the door. She turned around to face the mass of eyes boring holes into her forehead. She looked as if her insides were shriveling up.

"You said to leave." She looked very small.

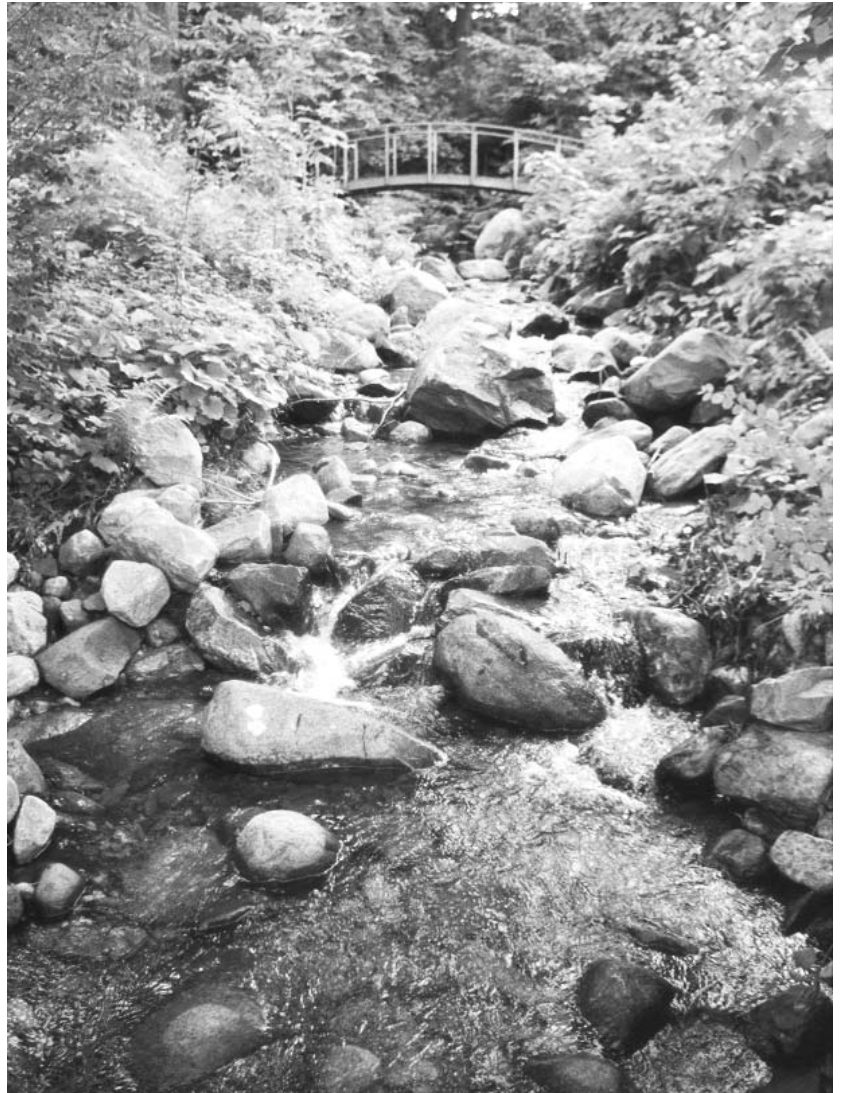
"I never told you to leave. Where are you going? I don't remember telling you to leave." Unskillful. I was inwardly kicking myself.

"I thought you said to go." Her voice was shriveled now as well. I really know how to work these kids; she'll be all right in the end. The spring in her persona was withering away like dried flower petals in the wind, or raisins in the sun as she slowly began to take another walk of shame back to her seat. I had to do

something about it. I puffed out my chest, "You know what," I began, "I don't care. Get out. Just go to lunch." A flash of horror passed over her eyes. It was gone as soon as it came and she whirled on her heel and clomped off toward the door.

"See me after the period," I barked after her. All we heard was angry clomping of flip-flop sandals down the hall. It was at this time that I thought her name should be Natasha. Natasha backwards is "ah satan." I turned back to the orchestra. They were all looking bored again.

She was late in returning after the period. I waited for ten minutes perched on a desk with my hands clasped, white knuckled atop my knees, replaying the scene in my head wondering if I had actually told her to leave. Finally there was a slow clomping and the door creaked



open. Her pony-tailed head popped in the crevice until she saw me on the desk. "Hello Hana."

"Hello Mr. Beck." It was a civil, blunt tone.

"Have a seat." I gestured to the chair cleverly placed below my desk. It was a short chair compared to the desk. Perfect. She stomped over to the chair and flopped down sideways, refusing to look at me, a damper on the effectiveness of the speech I had planned. To make matters even worse, she was angrily eating two particularly large chocolate chip cookies she had somehow come across when she left.

"Did I really tell you to leave today? I don't remember ever saying you should leave."

"You said get out." She had smeared chocolate on her shirt.

"Did I say get out? I don't remember. Well I didn't mean for you to leave. I was going to have you play after five minutes or so, but you didn't give me the chance." I was hoping she would be cooperative during this speech but at this point she shoved the entire cookie in her mouth and with difficulty, chewed the mass, looking like an angry, hairless chipmunk. "I wasn't going to have you sit out the whole time. You know why I did that, don't you?"

It was mainly a rhetorical question. She chewed the wad of cookie. Nothing came except for the squeak of her toes curling up with frustration against her sandals. "I know it takes two to have a conversation, so Karen must have been involved too, but you were the one that I caught." I tried.

She swallowed. "Karen wasn't talking." It was the most I had gotten out of her. Annoyance itched behind my ears. I scratched my balding head. Hana once referred to it as a Night on Bald Mountain.

"You realize you're not setting an example for your section, don't you?" I said haughtily. "You're in the first stand and you are going to be concert master next year. If I let you

talk, then they will all think it's all right. You don't even pay attention!" It was then that her face began to contort into a dried apricot. I wasn't really sure what was going on within her. She looked as though she was fighting some sort of inward battle. "You know that you haven't stopped talking during every other rehearsal even after I tell you, right?"

Nod.

"Well, has this made you not do it again?"

Nod. Nod. Her face was scrunching up and twitching at this point, eyes beginning to blink.

"What? What's wrong, you seem like there is a lot going through your head right now, what is going through your head? What do you have to say about it?" I was trying to fill silence, looking at her sitting below me crumpled into the far corner of the chair, clutching another of the school's chocolate chip cookies until it crumbled in her lap. Now there was melting chocolate on her pants. She was eating at my conscience. Blinking, blinking. Tears streamed down her cheeks and dripped off her. She began furiously wiping at her eyes. Her frustration seemed to give way to still more enormous tears, the kind that you cry when you cry for something so stupid that you are frustrated with your own crying.

"It was. . . embarrassing," her voice choked. Something like this would not normally have bothered anyone I had thought, but when she finally turned to face me, she was a clear picture of a broken spirit. She wiped the back of her arm across her eyes, the soft brown there now reserved and defeated.

"Embarrassing. Well, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to embarrass you. You know I don't think any less of you, right? I just want to forget about this and let us move forward. We won't mention it again." We sat in silence for what seemed like hours. She didn't even bother eating the cookie. "Are you mad at me?" She

didn't answer. "It's all right, you can be mad at me." The bell rang. She nodded and shook her head at the same time as though unable to speak. "Do you need a pass?"

The look she gave the wall by the lockers was ferocious. Obviously I had to write the pass. "Where are you going next?"

"Art."

"Well, come to my room. I've got a book of passes." I tried for normalcy. "So now the real question is, what were you talking about?" I let out a forced chuckle as she muttered something about project adventure. It seemed as though I was thinking that the longer it took me to fill out the pass (I was using my best handwriting) that the better relations would be between us. She was looking so unlike herself it was frightening.

"Do you need a few minutes?"

"No."

"What class was this again?"

"Art."

"Are you sure you don't want to stay here a few minutes? You don't want tissues?"

"No."

"Would you like some water?"

"No."

"Would you like more cookies?"

"No."

That scared me. "You just want to go straight?"

"Yes."

I ripped off the pass slowly and handed it to her. She took it.

"Thanks."

She flounced out of the room, fresh tears rolling down her cheeks. Though the scene was necessary, it really took a toll on my sense of authoritative right. Her red, scrunched face was so full of humiliation and pain that I knew things would not be the same between us for a very long time. I took the lacrosse ball I stole from the gym and sat in my lesson room flinging it outside the door until I hit the music supervisor. ■

# Bleeding Kansas

By Ryan Skrabalak

THERE WAS IMMENSE ELECTRICITY IN the cabin as the plane approached Kansas City. The flight from Pittsburgh to Kansas City on the large but curiously cramped Boeing 737 aircraft had been nothing short of the epitome of tedium. The captain ordered the flight attendants for landing procedures: check the tray tables, hassle the passengers for their lack of listening skills with regards to the “seatback in the upright position,” shit like that. One exceptionally ugly stewardess would not leave me alone until my back was perpendicular to the floor and my seat made its typical swiff-click when finally in the default position. After the garbage bags and assorted last minute items were passed through the aisle, we all heard this announcement of light rain in Kansas City. No

big deal, I guessed. I’d been on plenty of airplane trips before, and the initial fear of soaring in a metal tube 35,000 feet in the stratosphere had basically dissipated. The kid next to me was wearing a Phil Lesh tour shirt, and was kind of grooving along to his iPod. It kind of made me nervous. I mean I was still wary of the “cease all electrical activity” warning that had dinged overhead about five minutes ago. I was sure he would come to his senses; he looked like a reasonable kid.

Wow, the view from my window was simply astounding. The air was an electric purple, and the city lights sprawled out below me like a giant mass of glowing phytoplankton. Each yellow light shone beautifully, jeweled in the night, and at this height the skyscrapers stared back at

me with a thousand brilliant golden eyes. I sat back and buckled my seatbelt—it had still remained unclasped—and sat back, gazing at the man-made nebulae below me.

The descent began differently: there was a greater angle of decline in comparison to my previous air landings. If I remember correctly, the angle was much steeper than usual. It didn’t bother me much, but it was one of those things that kept popping up in the back of my brain at the worst possible times, like back problems or the fear of an overdose when you’re really high. The Ear Popping Phase of an airplane landing commenced after a sharp nudge downward, and I asked the kid next to me for a stick of gum to ease the pain. He had his iPod off by now, and was more than happy (I pre-



sume) to give me a piece. Instant relief in the form of chewy winter-green organic.

The plane was cruising smoothly again after that slight spook at the start of the decline. The engines were whining (normally, I guess) and the acrid disinfectant and barf gaseous cabin concoction seemed insignificant as I prepared for landing. Suddenly, the airplane dropped.

**“ I love this place because when we’re here we’re all writers, allowing us to be ourselves . . . crazy and creative, ”**  
— Ben Taylor

The tail end of the craft slammed down as we hit a pocket of dead air. The plane, which had been quite literally listing in a pocket of nothingness for a few seconds, hit the normal atmospheric composition of nitrogen, oxygen, argon, and trace elements and thus hit a wall, a cushion of air to thump into. I almost shat myself with anxiety; this was the airplane nightmare that had left me in a cold sweat on nights where plane travel was a bright new world to me. I looked around the cabin, which was filled with apprehension and concern. Mothers comforted their children while simultaneously looking to husbands for a warm, comforting glance; a shelter for their air travel fears. Although terrorism had nothing to do with this incident, the deaths of thousands through air travel had freaked enough people into accepting uneasiness as the primary emotion while on a plane. I looked to my seat comrade, who was disheveled yet calm in his chair. Must have been the iPod.

I braced myself for more, and looked to the window for some kind of comfort. My fears were extrapolat-

ed when I glanced out towards the city; the sky, which had been a majestic, kind purple, had turned into a cancerous, malignant dark purple, a Crown Royal hue that really fucking freaked me out. The clouds were thick like tire smoke; an evil ebony instead of an inviting gray or even graceful polar cumulonimbus. The eerie pulsating green light on the tip of the plane’s wing made the entire

scene too much to bear. I closed the shade, but not in time to miss seeing a brilliant spider crack of lightning strike a spider webbed radio tower in the distance. Fuck.

The landing gear droned down to its default position for landing, creating a whistling sound that really added to this haunted excursion. I just wanted to get home, and now I’m going to die literally yards from my home in a god-forsaken aluminum sardine can with wings. Wham. Almost as soon as the landing gear stretched out for use, the plane tilted severely to the port side, wings nearly forming right angles with the ground below. A few overhead compartments popped open, burping up their contents and scattering them about the cabin like regurgitated food. Bags stowed underneath seats slid across the cabin and scraped loudly. The plane hobbled for a brief moment on its side, wavering and shaking like a pre-volcanic explosion. The plane finally leveled out, but not before a few people in the cabin literally began to bawl. I was crying as well. It was too much to bear—visions of my family began running through

my head like a vintage film reel. It would have been different if they were with me on the flight, but they were probably in that fluorescent terminal right now, waiting with sweaty palms and kisses for me. The thought of them waiting for me to walk through that Fiberglas arch at 10:34 really pained me inside. I kept envisioning them standing there, waiting for me with empty hands for my luggage, empty cheeks for embraces, and empty arms for hugging. I asked the kid next to me, the nice kid, if he could hold my hand before I die; I needed that comfort, that closure of bodily contact before I die. Dying empty handed was a long lasting dread of mine. Unfortunately, the kid next to me declined to hold my hand. This made me cry even more, salt streams flooding my mouth and making my cheeks shiny with grief.

Fortunately, that was the last bit of turbulence that we experienced until touching the ground, which was slick and glossy from the copious amounts of rain that had fallen during the apparently serious storm that hit Kansas City. The pilot came on the PA as the tires connected with the tarmac; he suavely spoke “touchdown” as a collective breath of relief was uttered throughout the cabin.

I walked out onto the marble terminal, smiling the widest I ever have. A drift of cold, hard air passed violently through the narrow hallway of the terminal, and at that moment I saw my family. I looked over to the boy who sat next to me on the plane, and he glanced back with an assuring head nod. I was home safe.

Kansas City endured one of its most severe and damaging tornadoes that night, with rainfall reaching around one and a half feet in some towns in the metropolitan area. And I was in a fucking airplane. ■

## Winter Sun

By Ari Sobelman

THE WINTER SUN HAD ALWAYS BEEN A merciless foe, but today it was particularly sadistic. Her hoe raked over the cold earth, scraping away at the thin layer of ice that made her job so difficult. It was early January—the Year’s End Festival had finished nearly a week ago. The second sun had not yet risen: if it had, she thought in annoyance, this wretched frost would have melted already.

So, frozen, the young farmer continued her labor. Her hair was down to shield her skin from the harsh weather—but as time wore on, she swept it over one shoulder in hot frustration. With the sun beating down on her, it did not take long for the perspiration to start. First it was just at the back of her neck, where the skin that had become pale and delicate over the past few months began to burn. Irritated, she continued her hoeing in silence. The sweating increased profusely as the sun rose higher and higher, and soon the under clothes she wore, hidden beneath bulky winter-wear, were soaked most uncomfortably through.

As the inhabitants passed her by, though, few saw her ire slowly rising. Instead, they saw the heavily clothed, simple farmer girl, a plain young woman who could never pass for one of those soft, supple court ladies. Her arms were muscled from years of slaving away on this small, failing farm. Her hands were rough, coarse with the calluses that protected her from the shedding wood of the hoe’s handle. If she had a figure that could be coaxed out by a proper bodice, it was hidden away beneath long tunics and coats, covered by layers to protect against the biting chill—layers she rather regretted by now.

She cursed her allergy-free body, wishing her nose were clogged by pollen. The manure that her cousins had laid down stunk now, and she nearly swallowed her tongue in the effort not to gag. It was disgusting, but this was her life, and had been for the better part of seventeen

years. She knew nothing else, and desired it only in the few places she could go to be alone: the grove, a small clearing hidden away from prying eyes among the Heartland Forest, and the Blacktop Cliffs, just outside the village. There, she imagined herself as one of the pretty girls who were brought to the country’s capital to join the court, one of the thin, lovely young women who

ended up in all sorts of intrigue, surrounded by mystery and, when they were lucky, sorcery.

But here, at her family’s tiny farm, Wyrelle continued down the line, her face set in plain lines, as she hacked away at the frost-covered earth. Nearly grimacing, Wyre realized that they’d have to drop the seeds quickly, before the earth froze over again. Hopefully Airagon would



**“ I started coming here three years ago and in that time so much of my development as a writer and even as a person has been due to one week every summer on the Silver Bay campus. I hope the ‘next generation’ enjoys this place as much as I have. ”**  
— Caitlin Sahn

rise during this next week. The dual heat of the second sun would be help, for once, instead of a hindrance. Sighing inwardly, she paused in her work and ran a sleeve over her sweaty brow. Cath, she didn't remember this work being so hard in past years! Leaning against her hoe, Wyrelle stared at the ground, keeping her head down to stay away from the few passers by. They either saw straight through her, as many of the other working men and women did, or sneered, like the high-class—or nearly high-class—women usually did. Wyre wasn't interested in seeing it.

Swooping down out of the trees, a brown blur sped toward the young woman. She didn't look up, didn't notice the muddy shadow as it shot towards her. Just before it would crash into her, wings sprouted from the dark flash, and the little, lizard-like creature banked, circling the girl's stocky figure, before landing on her shoulder. A muddy colored tail snaked out, wrapping around her sweaty neck and matted hair. Smiling slightly, Wyrelle reached up a callused hand to run across the muddy dragon's rough hide. "Iluyan," she said. "You didn't bring anything back."

The brown little dragon squeezed his tail around her throat, and squeaked a response. Sighing, Wyre patted the soft hide of her odd friend's back. "Oh well," she said.

Where people had walked by without looking at her before, they now paused, curiously looking at the duo of farmer and lizard. Each on their own was bland and unimpressive. But together, they gave off a glimmer, a hidden hint at something nobler, something nearly regal.

Anyone who saw this, though, shook their head with a derisive snort and moved on. Noble, here? No one here was noble, and certainly not regal. Tiriac was a hick community—one of the bigger farming towns, but nevertheless, it would always be a backwater place.

Finishing the rows, Wyrelle swung the hoe over her free shoulder, and trudged through the melting snow and dirt, careful not to ruin the day's hard work. She was sweltering in the thick wool sweaters, and her hair was sticking infuriatingly to her sweaty neck. Entering the shack that served as a communal family home for her very large and very extended family, Wyre plodded past the dinner tables, heading for the room she shared. The tables were big enough to seat the whole family if they sat on top of each other, though they usually ended up eating in shifts. She set the hoe down against the wall adjacent with the door, where several other tools leaned. Chewing on her lip, the girl opened the door to the room she shared with six other girls: her two older sisters, a younger sister, and three cousins.

Seven girls shared three shaky bunk beds and a straw stuffed pallet.

Grimacing inwardly, she headed for the small corner she'd claimed as her own storage place. Tugging off her outer shirts as quickly as her tired arms would allow, Wyrelle stripped down to her sweaty undergarments. In a moment, she was shivering and sweating again, this time from the cold. Biting the inside of her cheek, she pulled her clothes on again. As much as she'd have preferred clean clothes, if she took them she wouldn't have enough to last the week, and she'd be too tired to take her things down to the river to wash before its end.

Sighing, Wyre shrugged into the damp and sticky clothes, leaving off the extra clothes she wore to protect herself from the outside chill. Slipping past a pair of young brunettes, alike enough to be twins, Wyrelle shook her head to herself as she entered the open area that served as sitting room and dining hall. The girls—she wasn't even sure who they were. Sisters, cousins—she couldn't keep track of them all anymore. Her entire family was the same: dark hair, dark eyes, and light, plain features. They were a giant family of bland, unimportant farmers and workers, men and women. And every one of them was nearly identical.

The chirp in her ear as she sat at the empty table reminded her of something important. Well, maybe not every one. Smiling slightly, Wyre lifted a hand to reach for the stunted dragon that had buried itself beneath her matted, sweaty hair. No, she certainly had something to set her apart. Iluyan had come to her when he was hurt, when he could have gone to the brawny men of the family, or any of the other girls: but he had chosen her as his healer, then companion. And though sometimes it proved a great annoyance, Wyrelle wouldn't trade him for anything.

"Except maybe for a bigger house," she mumbled with a wry smile. ■

# Untitled

By Ben Taylor

## Chapter 1

Everyday someone is born, someone is killed. Everyday something happens. Everyday a story is formed.

However, this story is not about the druggie shooting heroin in Central Park or the pretzel vender trying to make a few extra dollars to support his family. This story is not about the smog that blocks the twinkle, twinkle of every little star nor is it about the litter that covers the street like a bad case of acne or the closed storefronts covered with bars, shop to shop until a long prison corridor is formed.

No. This is the story about the man sitting alone on his bed, in the dark. To reach this man, one must travel to Samaritan Apartments, to the 17th floor and travel to apartment number 17H. Inside is Mark Patrick. A man with a problem and a semi automatic Colt .45 cradled in his hands. One shot fired.

## Chapter 2

Rick Mazlano. New York's finest. Right now he is sitting behind his desk, a cold cup of coffee in his left hand and a chocolate donut in his right. He does not hear the phone ringing at the next desk or the low, murmured voices immersed in conversation. He is aggressively focused upon the report lying on his desk.

All he notices is the report. He sees only the words and smells, only the fresh ink typed upon the paper. The report is a maze of words, causing his thoughts to chase each other around his mind like a dog chasing his tail.

"Ricky! Still at it? Yo, Ricky stop sleeping!"

Jolted out of his induced trance, Rick blinks and glances around, trying to learn his surroundings.

"Ricky I'm over here you crack-head! Geez. I know you're not high or anything but try to act normal. If the Chief sees you like this you'll be

peeing in a cup to prove you're clean!"

"Okay, okay. I'm all here. No need to chew my dick off?"

"Still grinding over the case huh?"

"Yeah Ted. It's my job."

"Well, the Chief wants to see us so shake a leg and get over to him pronto!"

Standing up, Rick shook his legs to quicken the circulation of blood flowing through them. Then he stretched while yawning and rolled his shoulders a couple times. Finally, feeling loosened up, he followed Ted, who was tapping his foot impatiently in time with the music that Rick could now hear coming from the radio next to the dirty coffee pot.

"Wow, good thing the Chief gave me five minutes to find you. C'mon, we've got a minute to spare unless you would care to stretch again for

another fuckin' minute or two," Ted asked in a tone that Rick knew better than to be smart with.

"Shots fired! Repeat, shots fired," the voice crackled over the Chief's scanner.

"Good. You're here," the Chief said as they entered. He was a middle-aged man already with a full head of gray hair. His sharp, blue eyes contrasted greatly with his steel gray hair.

Though you couldn't see them now, when he smiled, he revealed a full set of caffeine-stained teeth. His nose was slightly squashed and crooked. It had once been broken when during a robbery the butt of a shotgun had been smashed into his face.

Now as Ted and Rick stood in the Chief's office, the light from the bare overhead bulb reflected off his many medals with the ceiling fan whirring gently and creating a light breeze.





**“ It was another great week and it should be longer. Five days is way too short. ”**  
— Jimmy O’Higgins

“Well. I called you here to ask you to handle a domestic disturbance, but it seems cars 1, 3, and 8 need back-up. Apparently five bastards are holding up Union Bank on 58th Street with fucking AK-47s and Uzis. There are 19 confirmed hostages including bank employees. Negotiators and S.W.A.T. teams are already on their way. Get the station suited up. Leave cars 4, 10, and 2 at the station. Everyone else will be under your charge since you two are the senior officers. Good luck, God’s speed. Go shoot yourself some motherfuckers.

“Car 12, on the scene,” Ted said into the walkie-talkie. Over the next few minutes, more squad cars reported, their sirens giving final yelps before being shut off. As the “Caution” tape was lifted permitting Rick to maneuver Car 12 into position among the vehicle barricade—a row of cold, shiny metal seemingly ready to charge the bank doors.

Captain Traulis from Car 1 approached Ted and Rick as they stepped out from their car, keeping their eyes upon the bank’s glass doors. Their eyes searched for the slightest trace of danger, the murderous reflection of light off steel.

“What’s the situation, Captain?” Ted asked.

“At about 9 a.m. this morning, five armed hostiles posing as painters entered the bank. They have disabled the video feed and the doors are chained from the inside. Along the inside of the doors they have assembled one-way glass plates, allowing them to see out, but we can’t see inside. We believe the hostages are being held in the basement, but we aren’t positive. Also,

was about.”

“Doors! Doors!” A voice over the radio yells. Rick quickly looks up and draws his police standard issue Berretta 9mm as he sees the doors swing open and a solitary figure shoved out.

“Hands behind head!”

“Down on your knees!”

“Keep a gun on those doors!”

These cries and many others fill the air in a state of semi-chaos as each person tries to keep everyone else alive.

“Do not kill me! Please!” the man that has come out begs. He is dressed in regular office clothes and is blindfolded. With each word he speaks, his Russian accent can clearly be heard. Once he has been half dragged, half guided to safety he hands Rick a cell phone before being led off for questioning.

Opening it, Rick sees a single phone number on the screen. “Find a negotiator,” he says. When the negotiator arrives, Rick quickly checks him over. He is average height, probably about six-foot. He has light green eyes that seem to blend with his shaggy, mouse-brown hair and his pale skin. His skin covers his muscular frame like a polka-dotted blanket. Rick has never seen someone covered with so many freckles. “Hello,” he says and Rick hears his voice, a low voice that rasps slightly on the ears. He is wearing khaki pants with a T-shirt advertising Tampa Bay, Florida. The shirt seems to be the perfect match for the man’s sandals. Noticing Rick’s appraisal of his attire he says, “Yeah. Sorry I don’t look so professional but I wasn’t even supposed to be on today. I’ve been on some sick

about 10 minutes ago, shots were heard inside. We still don’t have a line in yet so we don’t know what the shooting

leave and Joe Fisher was filling in for me.” As if to emphasize this, he pauses to give a few dry coughs. “But for some reason, Joe never showed up today. Probably just felt like playing hooky or something. I’m one of the most experienced negotiators on the force so I got called in unexpectedly. Is that the phone I was told about?”

Rick hands him the phone. Without wasting any time the negotiator dials the number. Rick can hear the rings echoing from the speaker. “Hello this is . . .”

“I do not care who you are. Come to the doors in one hour, unarmed, unwired.”

The phone clicks off.

Snipers have their eyes seemingly glued to their scopes. Policemen stand behind their cars. Pistols, rifles, and shotguns at the ready. S.W.A.T. teams move along the street, running parallel to the front of the bank, with bulletproof shields and assault rifles poised to strike.

The voices of crowd control can be heard yelling at onlookers to get back. Inside a S.W.A.T. truck, the negotiator is going over his plan while strapping on a bulletproof vest over his shirt.

“Are you sure about this,” Ted asks the negotiator, “Without a wire we have no way of telling if you’re in danger.”

“No,” the negotiator is adamant, “They’ll definitely search me and when we disobey them . . . Well things get bloody. We have to play their twisted game for now.”

The negotiator steps out of the truck and makes for the door surrounded by a small army of S.W.A.T. He reaches the door and waits there for a minute before being allowed to enter. The S.W.A.T. team is forced to retreat.

Suddenly Rick realizes something. Turning to Ted he asks, “Did he tell you his name?”

“Yeah he did,” replies Ted, “He said his name was Mark Patrick.” ■

# Slapjack

By August Toman-Yih

JAY SAT, STARING INTENTLY AT A SMALL notebook lying on the table in front of him. He lowered his pen to the paper and began to write. After a few minutes, he stopped scribbling and began to erase furiously. A small brown-haired girl who had been watching him carefully walked over and tapped him on the back, causing him to jump

“Wha-what?” he said, looking nervously at her.

“Weeeelllll,” she said, deliberating, “we sorta want to play cards... but we don’t have enough people, so...”

“We?” he asked, questioningly, looking around.

“Those guys,” she said, pointing at a group of people seated around a table. They waved back. “Well?”

Jay looked over at them uncertainly and they waved again.

“C’m on,” said the girl impatiently. “Just try it.”

“But I have to finish writing my bo—,” he said helplessly as she grabbed his arm and dragged him over to them. She stopped in front of them and let go. He looked around nervously.

“Yo,” said one of them, sticking out a hand. Jay looked at it for a moment, then grasped it and was immediately pulled towards him. He’s going to kill me, thought Jay, remembering this had happened in a book he had read. He struggled desperately to free himself, then slapped the guy holding him on the back in an attempt to get him to let go. He returned the slap and suddenly released his grip saying, “What’s up, dog?”

Jay looked around for the dog, then realizing the question was probably directed at him, said “Um ... the ...sky?”

The guy grinned appreciatively and Jay realized he was wearing a piece of thin, white cloth wrapped around his head. “You’re a funny one. So, you gonna play or not?” Jay sat down nervously, watching the last occupant of the table, who was

sitting with his feet resting on the table, and nodded noncommittally at Jay.

“We’re going to be playing Slap Jack,” said the girl. She looked doubtfully at Jay. “You do know how to play...right?” He shook his head silently. She sighed, then looked around at the other people. “Does anyone want to tell him how to play?” When no one volunteered, she sighed and looked back at him.

“Well, basically, you deal out cards and then slap the jack.”

“Slap the jack ...why?”

The boy with his feet on the table and had, up to this point, been silent, leaned forward, a gleam in his eyes. “Why slap the jack? Well,” he said as though savoring every word, “because it’s a jack...ass!” and fell back, laughing madly.

“Randolph,” the girl began.

“It’s Randy,” he muttered, disgruntled.

“Randolph, here,” she said, ignoring him, every word dripping sarcasm, “is our in-house comedian, gracing us with the finest in sophisticated humor.”

“Anyway,” she continued, “deal the cards.”

“Um,” said Jay, still indecisive.

She turned her gaze towards him. “You’re playing, right?”

“Um ... I ...” He struggled to remember what it was that was so pressing. “I need ...” But for some reason it didn’t seem to matter now.

They were all looking intently at him, “Well?”

He cleared his throat, then grinned at them. “Never mind. I’ll play.” ■



# Memoir in the Third Person

By William Young

A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN WILLIAM WAS in the seventh grade, he was assigned an English project that he didn't want to do. It was to write poetry on a humongous poster

“**The teachers allowed me to express myself in my own style and didn't make me write a specific way.**”

— *Francis Dieterle*

board, and draw a picture based on the poem. He did the project all right, but the problem was: it was dead night when he did. William set an alarm, and woke up as silently as he could. He didn't think anyone was awake from the alarm, but I am always awake. When he came down, he turned on the lights and pulled out a poster board.

I saw everything, but I didn't say anything. I don't have much of a voice with him. I just sat there and watched. I don't know if he saw me awake or not. He probably figured I wouldn't tell. I never did. It was pitch black. The only sounds in the house were the rumbling of the plumbing system, and the laundry dryer. The time was what I remember most. As I lay awake, with one eye open, minutes were hours, and hours were days. William came in with a curving energy. At first he was ready to work, but quickly suffered fatigue. I did too; watching him made me sleepy. I just thought that I should watch over him in case something bad happened, or if he needed help. Well actually, I probably would not have been much help to him. He does things that I don't know too much about. My life is in an idle state at the moment.

William first sketched out words, and pictures with a pencil. He was unsatisfied with most of his work. Turning his pencil over and over again, he erased what displeased

him. If I were him, any job would be good enough. Sleep is more important than school. The truth is, however, I have never gone to

school, and don't know what it's like. I guess it's too complicated for me.

As William started to sketch, he heard a moaning floorboard scream. Startled, William feared that someone would send him back to bed. He shut the lights, and hid in the darkness. He looked for a shadow against the white window blinds on the opposite wall in the living room. When he saw no one, he turned back to his work, but sweating, and tenser. He started to work faster, and harder. The sweat curled in his armpits, and on his skin. His brain chilled, and as I watched, with one eye open, I felt myself slowly drifting to sleep...

But soon, I was awake again! Boom! There was a crashing sound sharper than the one before. Not the crashing of pots and pans, however. William whirled around and put his sweaty fingers on the light switch. Would someone come down? William tried not to upset the old floorboards. They are so grumpy. They complain when you step on them in the wrong spots. Now, most of them are made of these bad spots. I never creaked one, but William, especially with his intense fear, creaked one or two while reaching for the light switch. Who made a

bang? The backyard shone with light from above! Who, (or what) could be awake at this hour? The lights are so bright, and revealing. Now, the sound of running water, and then a slam, and creaking, and then more noise, and a scream. The lights went away, and we, William and I, saw an airplane crossing over our house to the airport. Thankfully, it was not an alien abduction as I thought at first. William froze, but he didn't get as startled as I did. I am always scared.

William returned to his work when the danger was gone. Whatever danger it was. Only William will know. It remains a mystery to me, but even still, I was scared awake for the rest of the night. William was just working, and working away. He filled in his stencils, and darkened them with markers. He colored in his illustrations, and he finally came out of this with a masterpiece. Now, he rolled up his creation, and prepared to go fetch the sleep he so desperately needed. There was, however, more moans of the floorboard in the stairs. The floorboards warned William that someone was coming down the stairs. William quickly shut the lights, and crouched behind the door. William finished his work, but now he had to get past whoever was coming down. At the right time, when the basement door closed behind whoever came down, William went back upstairs where he saw his mother, father, brother, and sister lying asleep in their beds. He whispered good night to them all while they snoozed.

When William got to bed, he felt relieved. He was calm, and not scared anymore. But wait... who went to the basement? And who am I? I can only answer the last question. I am William's Djurian hamster: Ghost. The first question is shrouded in mystery of memory. At least that's how I remember it. ■

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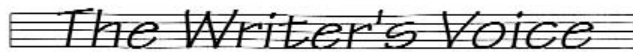
**William Toung**  
Flushing



In 2004 the New York State Writers Institute celebrated its 20th Anniversary. Created in 1984 by the state legislature to draw attention to writing and the artistic imagination across the state, the Institute has emerged as one of the premiere sites in the country for presenting the literary arts. Over the course of two decades the Institute has sponsored readings,

lectures, panel discussions, symposia, and film events which have featured appearances by over 800 artists—including six Nobel Prize winners, and 90 Pulitzer Prize winners—and has screened more than 550 films, from rare early prints to sneak previews of current releases. The Institute is a major contributor to the educational resources and cultural life at the University at Albany, where it is located, as well as the surrounding community. It is also identified by the writing and publishing communities as a place dedicated to promoting serious literature, where writers and their work are held in high esteem, where being an invited guest is considered an honor, and where talking about books is celebrated as the best conversation in the world.

Further information about Writers Institute programs may be obtained from its website at: [www.albany.edu/writers-inst](http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst).



The Writer's Voice of the Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks is a member of the National Writer's Voice

network of literary arts centers located at YMCA's across the country. Established in 1991 through a major Lila Wallace Reader's Digest grant, the Writer's Voice has created a permanent literary arts center in the Adirondack region of New York State. The Writer's Voice provides public programs that enrich all sectors of its community. The Readings by the Bay reading series, workshops with accomplished writers, and Writers-in-the-Schools arts in education programs are the main components of the Writer's Voice.

Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks is a century-old YMCA conference and training center situated on a 700-acre campus on the western shore of Lake George in the Adirondack Park in northern New York State.

Further information about the Silver Bay YMCA may be obtained from its website at: [www.silverbay.org](http://www.silverbay.org).

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