PURPOSE:
It is the express purpose of Epiphany to provide a quality bi-annual nontraditional student literary journal to showcase and further encourage the creative talents of nontraditional students of Weber State University.

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When was your last *Epiphany*?
Carissa Hill, Managing Editor
Carissa is a senior here at WSU majoring in English Teaching with a Psychology Teaching minor. She plans to teach high school English after she graduates, but eventually would like to get her PhD and teach at a university. She loves to write short stories and poetry, most of which is based on actual events, and is currently working on developing a novel, but wrestles with her uncooperative muse daily.

Married to a wonderful man for 7 years, Carissa has 3 young children ages 6, 4, and 2 months. Being a mother and a student has been a challenge, but WSU’s Nontrad Center and Melba S. Lehner’s preschool made it possible. She currently lives in Clearfield but hopes to move somewhere near the ocean after graduation, if her family cooperates.

Favorite quote on writing: “Good writers define reality; bad ones merely restate it. A good writer turns fact into truth; a bad writer will, more often than not, accomplish the opposite.” – Edward Albee

Tracy Cummins, Review Board Member
Tracy is an English Education major here at Weber State University. She decided to come back to school as a non-traditional student and has come to enjoy the experience of the classroom. She has been writing all her life and had her first poetic publication when she was 15. Over the years she has had several short stories and poems included in magazines, literary journals, and anthologies. She has been married 27 years and has 5 children. Her love for words, music, and art give her a decidedly positive perspective on life and all it has to offer.

Jernae Kowallis, Review Board Member
Jernae is finishing up her senior year at WSU majoring in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing and a minor in Technical Writing. She currently has an
associate’s degree from Dixie State College, and she is an avid writer and reader. Her favorite books and authors being /The Count of Monte Cristo/, /Dracula/, /as well as anything by Gerald N. Lund/, /and Sophie Kinsella. Recently she finished writing her first comedic novel, and has also finished the editing process. She currently lives in Ogden and is working on the sequel.

**Special Thanks**

*Epiphany* would like to thank all the Nontraditional Students who entered into the contest by submitting their finest work. *Epiphany* is made possible by your talent. *Epiphany* would also like to thank Debbie Cragun and Dr. Judy Elsley for their support, patience and advice.

We would like to thank Weber State University Printing Services for making this possible. *Epiphany* would also like to thank the WSU Literary Coalition – *Metaphor*, *Weber Writes*, NULC, *ERGO*, the Writing Center, Purple Ink, and Nurture the Creative Mind. Each is a separate entity, but together we provide opportunities such as this journal to showcase Weber students’ writing talent.

For all of you nontraditional student writers and poets, keep writing your passion. This is just the beginning of your journey. Thanks also to any and all who come into contact with this issue of *Epiphany*.

**Please submit for the Spring Issue 2011.**
Editor’s Note:
Writing is my therapy. Unfortunately, I didn’t discover this wonderful outlet until my mid-twenties. I felt cheated, like I’d been missing out on something my entire life. I often lost myself in my favorite characters and faraway lands from books, but I never considered trying to create something of my own. Once I realized that I could, nothing held me back. Now, I tote around a seed book for all those little bits of information I may want to nurture into a finished piece later. I wake up and scribble incomprehensible notes from my latest and greatest epiphany, then experience the disappointment when I can’t read my own handwriting. I pull over to the side of the road and write a poem when the sunset inspires me. I hold up a finger to silence my children until I’ve finished writing my sentence. I write when I am happy, I write when I am melancholy, I write to release.

I am not the only writer who recently found my voice, and I know there are other writers out there who do not know they are writers yet. When I encouraged people to submit their work for this issue, most responded with “Well…I’m not that good,” to which I responded, “What’s the harm in submitting? The worst that could happen is a rejection letter.” I know what it feels like to receive a rejection and it physically hurt me to send out my own. To all the writers whose works did not make the cut into this issue, I apologize and encourage you to continue writing!

I would like to thank my husband for putting up with me while I devoted myself to this journal. I believe in Epiphany as a quality publication, and it has taken place of my husband and my children many long nights. I also want to thank Camie and Sara from the Melba S. Lehner children’s school for taking such good care of my children while I huddled in the nontrade center printing submissions.

This issue would never have gone to print had it not been for Tracy, Jernae, Lepa, Rachel, and Debbie. I thank each of you for your hard work! Rachel, I’m so glad I met you and I’ve had the joy of laughing with you. By the way, you are not a puppy, and keep that brain in your head! Debbie, you do such a good job running the nontrad center. Tracy, Jernae, and Lepa: you three are magnificent and I hope each of you succeed in your endeavors! Tracy, you will make a fantastic teacher; Jernae, I will come to your book signing when you’re famous; and Lepa, you make a difference with every person you meet. And to all the professors who share their infinite wisdom with us meager students: thank you!

To all the writers out there – keep on writing! Put your ideas down on paper for others to experience. We all know writers have big egos, and at the risk of making them bigger, I will say that you all have something to give to the world!

You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you. ~Ray Bradbury

Sincerely,
Carissa Hill, Managing Editor
Short Fiction
Paul fidgeted in his leather chair. This was it. The biggest moment of his life. He could hardly hold the excitement in. The event was about to begin and he could not help the exhilaration surging through his body. He felt like a child on Christmas morning, awaiting the goodies that lie in store. Rubbing his hands in anticipation his smile grew. Then, as with every big moment, the jitters set in.

He continued to fidget, shifting his weight from side to side. Rubbing his hands, he popped his knuckles several times, but this only annoyed those around him. Trying anything to quell his nerves, Paul began tapping his fingers to a nameless tune on the arm of his chair. It didn’t help. His stomach began to run a fitful roll. That’s the last thing I need, to lose my lunch in front of all these people! He leaned slightly over as to alleviate some of the building pressure in his abdomen. Sit up straight. The voice in his head was definitely that of his mother’s. You are always right Mamma, of course. Smiling, he pulled himself a little straighter.

Instead of focusing on his stomach, he pulled, picked at and straightened his new black suit. Black is definitely my color. He wanted the voting committee to see a man of impeccable grooming and class. He had been coached on what they were looking for, a man of moral fiber, a man they could trust. His smiled the smile of a politician. They’ll love me! How can I not win? They will see I deserve this award! He playfully punched the man next to him wanting others to join in his expectation.

Paul looked around the room as the cameras continued to burn their flashes. There were the reporters trying to describe the dimly lit room into tape recorders. There were the supporters of his achievements. And there were those trying to steal his award. He tried smiling for the audience. People taking their seats made eye contact with him from time to time; their looks unreadable.

The large room was abuzz with chatter. People had to work to be heard over the conversation next to them. The sounds seem to bounce off the walls, increasing the noise levels. It’s a packed house! Give them more of what they want Pauly. They are here for you and you only Buddy!

He had waited so long for this. Waited so long for the recognition of his peers. And now, today, he would have it. By day’s end he would have his reward!

Just then, the event started. People rushed to find an open seat, leaving conversation’s unfinished. A silent hush fell over the room. The Master of Ceremony for this event took his place at the front of the room. Paul continued to squirm with anticipation. Here we go.

He had been told that for this particular event, they would start with the roasting. Paul had never understood roasting. Years ago, he had watched a special on TV when his favorite comedian received a lifelong achievement award. He remembered flinching as friend after so called friend said deplorable things about the guest of honor. How did people find so much pleasure off others discomfort? Why was it
necessary at these events? Why did they have to be mean to him on such a big day? He didn’t know if he should laugh or at least smile at the uncalled for statements. What was the protocol for something like this?

Thankfully, then came his friends. Wow, they had thought of everyone on my big day. Each one approached the microphone with confidence as they recited their fond memories of Paul. This is almost touching. Though it was his life, he listened on with eagerness.

How sweet! They even thought to invite his mother! He was so proud of her as she stepped to the microphone to make her speech. She’s so nervous, how cute. She is probably worried she will say the wrong thing and embarrass me. He continued smiling to himself. There was not a dry eye in the house as she spoke of his childhood. From time to time, she would smile her words of encouragement as she looked directly at him. He knew how much she loved him. How could the voting committee not love her?

He knew he had this in the bag.

After what felt like days, the results were finally in. Paul stood in front of the packed room as they announced the winner. He held his breath until his lungs ached. This is it! When they say I have won how should I react? Should I throw my hands up in the air? Run to my mom and hug her? High five my friends seated behind me? The options were endless.

Paul watched with great trepidation as the paper was passed back and forth. As the results were read to the expectant room, you could hear a pin drop. The leader of the voting committee was asked to read the results aloud for everyone to hear. Paul wiped his sweating palms against his brand new slacks. As the votes were read, Paul gasped and hung his head in defeat.

What?! I lost! How is it possible? Paul kept shaking his head from side to side. All he could think of was all the nice things people had said about him. I don’t get it! The man next to him leaned in, smiling a sympathetic smile. “Don’t worry Paul, we will try again. There are always plenty of chances for an appeal.” With a click of a briefcase the man was gone. That’s it!

As Paul continued to stand there, awe struck, two large guards flanked him on either side. As he heard the clank of the metal chains as they were secured to his wrists he couldn’t help but think of the bus waiting to take him to his next engagement.

Well, there’s always next time. It was an honor just to be nominated.
I owe everything to Jeremy Fields and the night I helped him bury a corpse.

I was not always as I am now – congenial, attractive, and admired, as you well-know. I have a unique perspective on human biology which, on top of these personal traits, helps me to maintain a steady flow of students clamoring to gain attendance in my already overloaded class schedule. I obtained this perspective in my youth when I, myself, was a student.

Throughout my early years in school, I was actually quite the outcast. I disliked most people, and most people disliked me. I had few friends – except, of course, for Jeremy Fields – and I preferred it that way. The only trouble I encountered was that I was unsure of my destination and my purpose. I was drifting as many do, at quavering odds with myself and my fate.

All of that altered in one brief hour, however, during my third year in college. I hadn’t yet declared a major – I may never have done so had I not received Jeremy’s call.

Jeremy and I should have been roommates, we both knew that, but something deep in our psyches – likely an awareness of our too-similar souls – always prohibited that possibility. Besides, I had a way of driving away potential roommates, so I was accustomed to solitude.

So I sat, the sun gone down, lounging in my small studio apartment with its bare, brown-painted walls and decade-old furnishings, reading an inconsequential textbook, when my phone rang. It was late, and I didn’t expect – or want – any calls. I was about to lift the receiver and drop it abruptly when I felt for no identifiable reason that, if a time had come to care about a phone call, this was it. Irritated, I raised the receiver and spoke. “Yes?”

“Hey, Dorian!” It was Jeremy’s voice, self-satisfied and admirably confident, as always.

“Jeremy?” I raised up on my elbows. “What is it?”

“Hey, I know you’re busy reading tonight and you’ve got classes in the morning, but I’m in a bit of a jam. I could really use your help. Think you’ve got the time?”

He knew the answer; in those days Jeremy and I always had time for each other. “Sure, sure,” I said. “What’s going on? You just hear about a pop quiz in the morning or what?”

“No, no, nothing like that. Look, just meet me in front of Langley Hall. Be there as soon as you can. I’ll be waiting. Oh,” he paused. “And wear something warm.”
I wasn’t accustomed to Jeremy surprising me; until now we had both kept our schedules with pristine regularity. But he required help, so I had to help him. I threw on my running shoes and pulled a worn gray sweater over my t-shirt, and started across campus to Langley Hall.

Langley Hall was the sole science building of our small college, where Jeremy spent his evenings assisting Professor Jameson in the biology lab. Jeremy idolized Professor Jameson—he even wanted to succeed him as the lead professor of human biology at our college. He adored the study of the human body and its many intricacies, particularly at the microscopic level.

I passed between several buildings, finally arriving at Langley Hall. I was shivering vigorously by now; the very air around me seemed to carry with it an odd weight and an unseasonable chill. Jeremy stood in the parking lot adjoining the Hall, inclined against the passenger side of his small blue truck. A crooked half-grin decorated his face, an expression I had not seen on him before. He wore a button-up shirt and jeans, belted at the waist, and was still wearing his lab coat, which I assume was to protect him from the unusual cold.

―Let’s go for a ride,‖ he said, opening my door. I breathed a heavy puff of mist-laden air and got in. His truck was already started, its engine rumbling slowly, a soft tune issuing from the radio. The heater was on. I pulled the door closed as Jeremy quickly rounded the truck and opened his own. He sat down, tossed a tentative look my direction, and closed his door.

As we pulled away I glanced to my right and noticed in the rear-view mirror the shafts of two shovels inside the bed of the truck.

We drove for several minutes without a word passing between us. I knew something was bothering Jeremy, though I detected a hint of excitement in his face. The only lights outside of the truck were the dull bulbs of overhead street lamps as we exited the school campus. “So what’s going on?” I asked, poorly attempting nonchalance. Jeremy glanced at me and spoke.

“I’ve just done something, Dorian.” He chuckled uncomfortably. “Something that can’t be undone.” He kept shifting his gaze between me and the road.

I felt dread in the words, but I needed to ask them, for Jeremy could not answer the question unspoken. “What did you do, Jeremy?”

He laughed and wiped sweat from his forehead despite the cold. “I...hurt Professor Jameson. I...” He pulled swiftly to a stop. He looked at me, his eyes wide, eyebrows gathered in a knot above his nose, his mouth hanging slightly open as he looked for the words.

I knew what the conclusion to that unuttered phrase must be, though I was repulsed by the thought. I waited. He looked away. “Killed him,” I finally said. I stared
straight at him. “You killed him, didn’t you.” It was not a question. It was the answer.

He began driving again: around a turn, up a hill, toward a small canyon in the mountains near the campus. He said nothing for several miles. I watched him change as he drove. His body slackened against the seat almost instantly. He had been nervous moments before, but now I knew that his grip was not tight because of the tension that had seized him, but because of a slowly building rage. His eyes were wide, dark as if his pupils had grown to an enormous size, and it was as though his hair had suddenly become wild; flattened before, now it was raised from his head in untended clumps and wisps. He gritted his teeth between his thin lips and I could hear the softest moaning growl rising from his throat. We entered the canyon, then he spoke.

“Yes, I killed him,” he said viciously, fury contorting his face. “Him and his lies, they’re both dead now, both of them, forever!” We rounded a curve in the road and he picked up speed. The last hint of sunlight had faded into pitch, midnight black; we could see nothing but for the headlights and the moon above, but his eyes seemed to glimmer with a light not from this world. “Do you know why? Can you guess why I did it?” Though he looked my way, he was still somehow able to keep the truck on the road as his speed continued to rise.

I didn’t know how to answer, but he didn’t wait. “Because he dared, he dared to tell me that I, of all people, hadn’t the mind to succeed as a biologist.” He laughed loudly, glaring back at the road ahead. “He told me that, and when I told him I could, and that I would take his place, he doubted me then, too.” He paused. “So I hit his head with a microscope.”

I had never seen him like this before, but somehow the change in him seemed natural. He wasn’t different; he had simply shown the true self that had existed within him all along. He ran a hand over his head, smoothing his hair, and the lines in his face softened. He was, apparently, again in control, concealing as before his monstrous secret self.

He spoke flatly, without any of the passion of only moments earlier. “And now I have to bury him. Will you help me, now that I’ve trusted you with my secret?”

Though bile rose in my throat and the temptation to glance towards the darkened truck bed to confirm what was done screamed warning, still I could not deny my best friend. I had trusted him with my own follies before, and now I had to do the same for him. True, this single act was abhorrent indeed, but hadn’t the many acts of my own life totaled to the same magnitude of evil? I could not assume that my own friend Jeremy had done so much aside from this one indiscretion that his life was yet out of balance. My silence served as assent.

As we drove the last stretch to a place of Jeremy’s choosing, I began to feel somewhat more comfortable with what had happened. Perhaps this was due to my
complicity in Jeremy’s murder of our fondly-remembered teacher, but I no longer felt at odds with his actions, nor the sudden disclosure of his true self. By the time he pulled his truck off the road into a copse of trees, I found myself almost grinning with anticipation. I hadn’t, after all, seen the proof.

There it was, lying in the bed of the truck, beside the shovels: A long gray blanket with two feet protruding from one end, wrapped and tied tightly at the other.

We knew precisely what to do. Without a word to each other, we each took a shovel, pinched one side of the blanket near the feet, and pulled the body from the bed of the truck. It landed with a loud thump. We dragged it quickly across the forest floor, beyond the trees to a spot where the ground was clear but for a few leaves.

The moon shone down on us from above, a circle of pale light which seemed to burn with white flame as we set about our task. The anonymity of darkness had swallowed us whole and vomited out our new selves, black, rimmed with white silver luminescence as we were, the darkness itself united with us in the common goal to hide my friend’s misdeeds, which had now become our misdeeds, shared by intent, action, and secrecy.

It was a beautiful thing to see the way we became one in that turpitude of the night. Our shovels moved in unison, always opposite one another, to finish the task right and as swiftly as two persons might. Up and down the shovels swayed, dropping dirt in perfect piles, begging the earth to open itself, and I felt myself changing at once in the same way that Jeremy had. I was becoming as Jeremy was – or had this other person always been within me in deepest reality?

As we dug and, I suppose, as I changed, my body began to fill with genial warmth. It wasn’t, as I first thought, the result of physical labor, for I did not sweat and my arms did not weary, nor did I feel the warmth of my sweater compound overbearingly upon this internal heat. No, this was something entirely different, something like satisfaction that drove away the night’s unnatural cool. There was something sickeningly right about our occupation, digging a grave to conceal the ignominy this corpse represented for us, and I felt immense pleasure in it.

We dug long and deep, and at last the earth surrendered unto us her greatest gift and finest treasure – that of voiceless, visionless freedom from the justice of men. The corpse was maneuvered without a complaint into the grave. The moon was straight overhead by now. Its light illuminated what lay within the hole. Jeremy and I stood back, neither of us out of breath as we might have expected on any night other than this one, and gazed long and hard at our handiwork. Jeremy stood slightly ahead of me, transfixed to the image of our one-time professor in the grave. The blanket had shifted. The professor’s dull, gaping eyes glowed moonlight.

Looking at the corpse in its hole, I was at once filled with an unfamiliar numbness. This vision of death in repose, of a cadaver in the grave, was incomplete. Somehow
it was wrong, all wrong, and I had to do something to mend our error. In retrospect, it was fortunate that I did, for Jeremy, seeing as I was a future in those lifeless eyes, must have been thinking the same thing.

Something akin to genius seized me. Without a second thought I lifted my shovel and, swinging in a tall arc like Death with his scythe, struck Jeremy hard on the back of his head. The crunch of his skull comingle satisfyingly with the metallic clang of the shovel, and he fell to the dirt with a pleasant thud. Finally, he and I had become true partners in tonight’s crimes.

It was a glorious and exhilarating feeling, taking a life in my hands. And it was so much easier than I had ever anticipated. It was over so fast. I took Jeremy’s keys from his pocket and rolled his body into the grave. Two bodies in the same grave. Jeremy had wanted to emulate the good Professor, and now they were in every way the same.

I paused before I covered them with dirt. Looking at the bodies in the hole, the earth ready to hide the misdeeds that were now mine and mine alone, save for my sole accomplice, the night itself, I was struck with the beauty that only cadavers at rest can possess. Stopping only to gaze lovingly once more at my creation for one brief moment, I covered the grave and drove back to Langley Hall. I parked Jeremy’s truck exactly where it had been and threw the shovels away in a nearby dumpster.

When I arrived back at my apartment I threw Jeremy’s keys in the garbage and strolled into my bathroom. I splashed my eyes with water to soothe my pupils, for they had grown very large, and I smoothed my hair, which was now wild and unkempt. I felt a special kind of confidence – the confidence that I now exude – as I gloated in the mirror. I slept well that night.

It wasn’t until the next morning that I felt the first pangs of guilt. I pacified myself about the murder itself; after all, I could hardly allow someone who would kill another human being so easily and remorselessly to go unpunished, to keep on living while the murdered lay unceremoniously in a hidden grave.

I felt, however, that I had done the world a minor disservice. I had followed Jeremy’s aim to become a biologist quite extensively, and I had come to expect great things from him. If nothing else he would have the ability to inspire the lives of many a dwindling intellect, to bring many minds into the realms of his scientific discipline. I felt I had to do something to fulfill Jeremy’s life’s goal, to contribute much as I knew he would to the world, to understanding the complexities and sanctities of human life. I knew what to do.

I guess it is the course of action that I knew must be taken that led me to the happy, fulfilling, and secure life I live now. It is this course that helped me to discover my true passion. I declared my major: Biology.

I really do owe everything I am to Jeremy Fields and the night I buried that corpse.

Dwight S. Adams
I can do anything, what a great preface. I am off like a shot; free flow and freeform. Damn it, I am an artist Jim, not a doctor, and so words are my medium! I am the author; I am cataloguing my journey into this maelstrom that is writing.

Ride the cyclone, tame the spiral; can you feel the excitement?

I could write about a scientist.

I could write about the end of the world.

I have the almighty hand of Zeus, and the infernal capacities of Hades. With a few pen strokes I could end life, and I could beget it. I am the virgin mother, and the all father. I am the reaper. I am all.

Anyway, have you ever noticed a lot of writers tend to share the same micromanaging God complex?

Funny, no?

I will show you my awesome power. For I can draw your eye here, with a solitary word. I could cause frustration with the untimely conclusion of a

However, that is not what I am all about. Writing isn’t all about me…me…me! Damn it all and such as seemeth it fit. I much prefer to create and speak of others in this language of audible inaudibility!

You see once upon a time, great beginning to any tale, I submerged myself in the head of one of my creations. Hell, I can’t remember his name now, but names are unimportant. Look at what art was created prior to the renaissance, all attributed to no name. So, the person I submerged now has a name, No Name. So No Name and me had a little spot of dialogue would you like to hear it, would you like to see?

Well you’re in luck ‘cause I’ll let you see, let you look.

Here is the inside of a head, the inside of a book.

** ** ** ** ** **

No Name is a Good Name
by Romanoff Parkwell

547 Pine View Terrance stood erect and reserved among its brethren in the vast cityscape. It was puffed up or haughty like other buildings around it, but it was
dignified none the less. However, the drapes do not always match the curtains, as the phrase goes, for within the prudent exterior lay more seedy innards. This is a story about the contents of a ventricle in 547.

Walter lay astride his bed made of dusty old magazines of dubious sorts. He had not thought to buy a mattress in years. Magazines were comfortable and readable at the same time. Plus if he passed out drunk and soiled himself again he could throw them out and get new ones, and at a cost that is would be cheaper than a new mattress. Plus people were always throwing out magazines, so he always had a bed.

Walter lay there semiconscious and sallow of breath while his liver tried to decide if cirrhosis happened to be right for it. He faded in and out of thoughts, ‘why did my girlfriend leave me back then?’ The predominating question on his mind.

‘I am a good person’, almost an answer, but more a self-imposed wish for credibility echoed.

These two self-pitying thoughts were Walter’s unending and unwelcome companions. Time had not been kind to him; it had not healed all wounds as the proverb said. He still was heartsick with grief for his ex after all this time. How could more time simply heal the pain?

―Hello, No Name,‖ a resounding and powerful voice suddenly spoke from out of the ether.

―Hunh?‖ Walter stirred, and raised himself on an elbow stirring from his pity-party, and seeking the source of the sound. “Who’s there?” said the dirty haggard shell of a man. Walter realized he was no specimen for company, and he tried to stand but came crashing down onto his magazines instead. They sprayed out in all directions in a chaotic orgasm of imagery.

He raised his head a bit. Below him lay the picture of a large laceration in the side of a pig. It was a random photo from a random magazine that had just opened in front of him during the crash.

He recognized the article. It was not about pigs at all, but about the sharpness of Japanese swords. He had for a time after his ex left sought solace in random magazine articles, consequently discovering their use as a bed.

Just as Walter was about to stand the laceration in the magazine, acting as a mouth, spoke to him, “I said, Hello, No Name; have you no manners?”

Walter stared in shock, and began to back away in fear. Sputtering consonants and not enough vowels as he stumbled to regain his voice. ‘This can’t be happening’, the phrase was fresh in his brain, but intangible to his lips.

“But it is,” said the laceration ending Walter’s thoughts.
Walter knew he was drunk when he lay down. Stone cold drunk in fact; he had drank enough to be. Paychecks were good for two things to him now since she left; and those were ‘Whiskey and rent’.

“Come now, No Name, food is adequate too, and what about a bath?” the cut pig seemed to smile. Then the image was still.

Walter began to laugh.

“Now quit that this instant!” came a voice from behind him.

He spun around to see a 16 centimeter tall woman standing atop one of his stacks of magazines that had not fallen. Upon closer inspection he realized the woman was the spitting image of Aunt Jemima holding a tiny rolling pin. He realized he inexplicably craved pancakes.

Suddenly she threw the rolling pin, hitting him in the left eye. He flinched reflexively but only felt a slight irritation like an eyelash in his eye.

He focused now on removing it. When he did, the lash melded into his index finger, and opened into a mouth, complete with tongue and teeth, to speak to him. It said, “Now don’t say this is absurd.”

“This is absurd!” Walter retorted.

“I said don’t say it! And don’t say…” the finger-mouth was cut off mid sentence by Walter.

“But it is! And my name is Walter not No Name!”

“Stop now! For a minute just be quiet! I have something to tell you!” The finger-mouth replied grinding its teeth.

“Hell no! I ain’t listening to a fool apparition!”

The eyelash fell from Walter’s finger, and he watched it fall to the floor. He was glad that his drunken stupor seemed to be clearing.

The eyelash landed and his whole cheap, piss-smelling apartment shook. Walter gasped as the wall broke open in the guise of snarled lips. “Will you listen to me now?!”

Walter did the only thing he could; he pissed himself and fell down to a sobbing mess on his knees.

“Now,” 547 Pine View Terrace shook as it talked to him, “get cleaned up, and sober up. You are going to be something, No Name.”
“What can I be if you won’t let me have my name?” Walter asked this despite himself.

“You will be the greatest artist the world has never known,” 547 said. “Now wake up, No Name and get to work!”

No Name woke up with a start, forgetting even if he ever had a name. It didn’t matter. He threw out his booze, and cleaned out his cheap piss-smelling apartment. That day was the sweetest breath he ever took, because now he had purpose. He was an artist after all, and today was a grand new day.

** My Critique is a Good Take **
submited by Solid.Jade.Mastiff2012@blowmail.com

“No Name Is A Good Name,” by Parkwell seems to lack several key human necessities. He divests the main character, Walter, of his free will even his name for literally no visible reason. What Parkwell has manifested in his work is that of a predestination of a man to be an artist of no free will or volition of his own.

The story robs very key human elements in the attempt to get a cheap laugh. It is almost as if it says that we are all a joke to a supreme being. There is no offer of escape in this tale, so my suggestion is to escape via not reading it.

-Frank Epsilon Gulliver-Galloway
aka Solid.Jade.Mastiff2012@blowmail.com
It’s fall again, maybe my favorite season of all. The leaves blanket our backyard. I look for green tufts of lawn between the mounds of dried burgundy leaves, which now individually curl up along their edges, only to find sad brown patches of blades sleeping sideways under fallen foliage. My kids do not see the big cleanup lying ahead; they only see the trampoline and head straight for it. My dad stands on our porch, rocking back and forth on his heels. With one hand, he shades his face from the lowering sun then bites into a crisp apple. I can hear the crunch all the way over here, and I am sure the apple came from one of our own many trees. “Let me change my shoes and I’ll be right out,” he says to me. The sun is still strong enough to cut through the new season’s cold and my bare arms tingle to its warmth. I begin to search our garage for rakes. Grandpa can get the wheelbarrow, I think to myself. And come to think of it, I don’t think he has a burn permit this year. What will he do with all these leaves?

My dad heads from around the back of the shed. The apple is still stuck in his mouth as if he is a pig ready to roast all while both his hands hold the wheelbarrow’s handles and he maneuvers it along the curb. We meet in the middle of the year; I armed with rakes and he with the barrow – but in the barrow is a big Costco size box of leaf bags. I freeze with panic; I can’t move. I only stare at the big box, reading the words “Black yard sized bags – reinforced for more weight.” My breath begins to escape me while my heart pounds. My numbing body becomes lethargic while my dad keeps moving; he doesn’t know what fear rushes through me with the simple toss of one of those folded up plastic squares from his big Costco box. How could he – he wasn’t there to protect us from using those things before. It wasn’t because he didn’t want to – he just didn’t know. He just wasn’t there when I first became afraid of big black garbage bags.

I sometimes wonder if anyone else feels the same as I and that black bags are the never-ending mind numbing realization that nothing you want will be there in the morning. Morning will bring something different – most often something worse. Don’t count on what is hopeful for tomorrow, for these bags will keep all in a constant season of turmoil. My very own misplaced season.

As I stand here watching my dad unfold these bags and then lay them along the grass every so often, readying them for their content, I realize that to this day I cannot buy these bags, this exact big black kind. To me they are the kind that you can stuff an entire life into, yet, they still guarantee not to break. Everything else is broken, why not the bag? I hate these bags; even though, I have long been removed from ever using them for the reason we did then.

I remember we used to keep them in our clothes closet, that way we never had to go into the kitchen. Any main living area was usually ground zero for one of my mother’s dramatic exoduses. Fleeing is what we had no other choice but to follow. My sisters and I usually shared a room, and somewhere hidden between our sweaters and above our hanging clothes was our very own box of black leaf sized garbage sacks. We could pack all of our clothes and any other personal belongings in under five minutes. Three girls and three bags was all it took to fill the backseat of
Mom’s car. When in the middle of night you move a lot, you never keep a memory of any kind for long, especially if it’s heavy.

Lines of moonlight shine through our blinds, lighting the opposite wall, creating streaky white to descend and tilt then wrap all the way around the half opened closet. I trace these midnight lines while I listen to them downstairs. Shutting out their sounds, I keep counting these lines, but then I seem to lose the number as they break and turn the corner just above my sister’s head. Over and over I try to figure out the curved pattern just above her sleeping head, but as they move from the wall across the top of her head, I forget where I am and instead watch her breathe. So much younger than me, by six years, she can sleep through the muffled sounds of fist pounding and door slamming and even the occasional breaking of glass. There is just enough light on her body, and I focus on her chest rising and the sound of her blow like a whale as her top lip flutters out her exhale. I wonder, can she hear in her sleep; is that why her breathing seems strained?

Sometimes I can tell within the first few minutes of any argument if this is the time we are going to have to get up out of bed and have to leave, but tonight I am not quite sure. The fighting sounds like it is getting worse, but then all becomes quiet again, as if they can smell our fear from all the way up here and forgiveness cuts their hate, giving way to a single night’s reprieve. I begin to close my eyes, believing it will be okay to fall back asleep, just when my other sister, whose room is across the hall, crawls into my bed. She can hear them too. Now that both of us can hear, we began to make our plan, for fleeing in the middle of the night is becoming more eminent.

We began telling each other where certain possessions of ours are that we wouldn’t want to forget: Holly’s watch is on top of the microwave, Robin’s new ‘Speak and Spell’ is by the television, and my baseball cleats and mitt are on the back porch.

We learned many a midnight moves before that telling each other what precious things we want increases our odds of actually grabbing them. We never know exactly where and what rooms we might end up or cornered in, but at least this way if we are divided into separate areas and unable to cross the threshold of war, we can conquer at least the room we are quartered into. Holly begins to tell me that she can bag up the stuff in the dressers new if I get the clothes off the hangers and into the other bags. Just then, our door flies open – the light switch slaps on, “Girls, get your shit. We’re leaving.” Chocking down my own breath, the race is on. I throw the closet doors the rest of the way open and reach back into the sweaters to grab our big black box of garbage sacks. The ones we keep in our very own room just for moving. Robin starts to wake in an all our cry; I can only tell her to stay there. Putting clothes on ourselves is needless; no one we care about is ever out this time of night. Holly runs down the stairs. She’ll be the one to cut the path in the middle of the fight, offering for the rest of us to see the least as possible as we make our way to Mom’s car. I owe her one – next time I’ll go first.
My twenties – just six short years ago, I couldn’t buy any type of plastic garbage sack – not even the little ones used for office cans. I didn’t have napkins either because they were sold next to the bags; in fact, just to be safe I would try to avoid that whole plastic things aisle. Instead, I would stuff all my garbage in little plastic grocery sacks – the ones left over from grocery shopping. Some days, I would take six or seven trips to the apartment dumpster; each time with a carefully tied up tiny bag only filled with garbage. I didn’t care – to me this made more sense. These small, insubstantial bags surely couldn’t hold an entire life, and if an entire life couldn’t be moved because there weren’t any bags big enough to move it with, then life could stay still… Staying still, not moving, keeping the same phone number and living at the same address was my goal – this is success for security. This could all happen if I never bought big black garbage sacks, just like the ones we had on hand at all times as a kid.

Now, finally, twenty years later and in my thirties, I told myself it was okay to buy the thirteen-gallon kitchen sized bags – you know – the white kind with the yellow ties you can tie together. I could buy these because there was no way that all my kid’s stuff and mine would fit. They are really flimsy too, and any sharp edge could easily break these, spilling everything out. My safety lies in my mind picturing a lingering mess of possessions trailing behind a hasty getaway, and then of me ultimately having to turn back. But just in case this could have ever happened, I only keep my white bags under the sink cupboard and close to the kitchen garbage. They are far, far away from my bedroom closet or anything else I ever treasure.

But now, my dad, and after repeating my name a few times, says, “Is anybody in there?” I quickly look up at him and then in his eyes. Frantic and wondering if he could’ve read my mind, I reluctantly lean down and carefully touch the horrible garbage sack. I shake it out, opening up all that empty black space inside. Turning to the piles of leaves, I begin to bulldoze my bowed arms into the newly made pile. Darting my eyes to my kids and then back to my dad and then that scary black bag, I realize that no one knows what I am feeling. Nonetheless, I ready myself for the fire alarm of warfare from so long ago that I still believe might happen. I brace myself for yelling and running about and of trying to grab whatever will fit. The whirl of terror isn’t there – nothing happens. My kids keep swinging and my dad keeps whistling and raking. Catching myself and breathing deeply in that cool afternoon air, I chuckle – almost laughing at myself because nothing has happened. I begin to empty my bowing handful of leaves inside that spacious, black garbage bag.

These bags are used for leaves, I remind myself – just breathe. Everything is going to be okay. No one is moving. Come next season, we will all be right here. Spring is going to be beautiful.
“There is no point in running, Stephen. It’s too late now,” she says, but what else is left for me to do but run?

I run as fast as I can, my loafers trying to find purchase against the rain slicked cobblestone road. The buildings of historic Tammany Street don’t coincide with the terror clutching me. I feel as though they are mocking me with their charm. The dry cleaner’s cheery flower boxes, the florist’s bright pink awning, even the red and white striped barber pole seems to flaunt a happiness I will never know again. Only the dark desolation of the street mirrors my despair.

It is only eight o’clock at night, and the town is completely abandoned. She has done this. She has made sure that I am utterly alone. My heart is pounding in my chest from exertion and fear. There is no one to help me now. There isn’t a light on; no street lamps or windows glow. Only the unusually bright stars light my way as I run for my life.

The rain is starting to thin, leaving an eerie mist in its wake, which chills my skin as I race around the corner onto Heritage Street. My stomach sinks; this street is empty too. A knot forms in my throat that I can’t swallow. She is not going to let me go, and how can you possibly escape someone who exists only in your mind?

A couple weeks ago she began whispering things inside my head, terrible things. Telling me to kill my neighbor, Thomas Northman, sneak into his house and murder him in his sleep. She said it was my duty to end the old man; that I had been predestined to carry out the task.

I didn’t listen to her. Of course I didn’t listen to her! Northman might drive me crazy, I firmly believe that he has made it his personal goal to make me as miserable as possible, but kill him? Why would I kill a seventy-year-old man who can’t walk without the aid of a cane? Certainly I wouldn’t shed any tears at his funeral, but kill him? The very idea of it was ridiculous. At least I thought it was, until tonight when she began whispering gruesome things, which could be done with the shovel leaning against Northman’s shed. The very shovel he uses to fling his dog’s crap into my backyard. Perhaps, it was the image of that shovel that pushed me to the edge of sanity, but the things she whispered began to captivate me. I could picture myself doing them, and if felt good. I was halfway across his backyard before I realized what I was doing. Terrified of myself, of her and the things that she could make me do, I began running as fast and far from the situation as I could.

I am nearing the edge of the town, where the old cemetery rests. A cypress tree grows next to it. It stretches upward towards blazing stars whose colors are wild and vibrant: yellows and oranges, a white so bright I can’t look at it without blinking. Standing next to the tree is a man, the first person I’ve seen all night. Relief floods through me. I am not alone! I start towards him. I don’t know how I am expecting him to be able to help me. Maybe he can have me locked up somewhere, where I will no longer be a danger to anyone. I am halfway across the road when something makes me pause. He is a huge bulking man, well over six feet and thick as a tree, but that isn’t why I hesitate. Something about this man is off. I can’t put my finger on it,
but when I look closely at him the hair on the back of my neck stands on end. I decide I better keep moving. The man gives me a cold smile, as I swiftly change my direction.

The fog is becoming thick on the ground. It swirls around me, its finger-like tendrils reaching for me. She almost has me in her grasp. I press forward, constantly looking over my shoulder to see if the man is following. That smile of his was murderous. I consider that possibility for a moment, and I almost decide to run back to him. I would rather be dead, than the puppet of a killer. I am no murderer, and I will not harm a hair on Northman’s head, no matter how badly he irritates me.

“I won’t do it,” I whisper.

“Your decision is made then,” her voice comes from directly behind me. I spin around, thinking I will finally come face to face with the woman who has been lurking in my mind. There is no one there. I stare down the dark empty street, my hands shaking. I can’t see her, but I know she is here. She has come for me.

My eyes dart wildly around, searching. Something moves in my peripheral vision, catching my attention. The strange man I saw standing beside the cemetery is running towards me. His face is set in an expression of deep concentration. In the split second I have before he crashes into me, I realize what bothered me about him earlier. He doesn’t appear to be quite solid. He is more of a shadow of a man. I expect him to run right through me, like a specter in a cross-country race, but when we collide I am hit hard, and thrown onto my back. I skid across the road, pain shooting through me. Bloody and bruised, I try to stand, but something knocks my feet out from under me. Frantically, I look around, searching for my attacker. I can’t see him anywhere. My head is slammed against the street. My chest lifts upwards, pulling me to my feet. Then I’m hurled towards the ground again. Horrified, I realize where the man is. He is inside me! A scream rises in my throat, about to break free when my head finds the road again, and I’m knocked unconscious.

When I come to, she is there, starlight reflecting off her long white sheath, a wicked smile marring her beautiful face.

“There, there, Stephen,” she says. “This should make it a bit easier for you to do what is required of you now.”

“What are you?” I scream, barely able to make myself form the words. My arms and legs are twitching uncontrollably, a burning sensation sears through me. I can feel the man inside me struggling for control.

She tips her head to the side, and gazes at me for a moment. “A fair question I suppose, and at this point there can’t be any harm in answering it for you,” she says. “Think of us as guardians, protectors of destiny. All you humans have one you
know, a destiny. No matter how insignificant you may seem to the world. It’s usually easy to keep people on course, a little whisper of encouragement or disapproval is all it takes,” she laughs. “Conscience, I believe that is what you humans call it. But, sometimes one of you threatens to stray from your path in a way that could jeopardize the future of the entire world, and we are forced to take a more active role.”

As if to enforce her point, my left arm shoots up into the air without my permission. My head turns from side to side. Deep laughter rumbles in my throat as my toes point and flex, point and flex. A ripping sensation tears through me, like I’m splitting at the seams.

“Stop!” I scream, “Please!”

“Stephen,” she says. “Don’t you understand? Think of it like dominoes. Every tile has to align perfectly in order to tip the next tile, which tips the next, and so on. The balance between good and evil is more delicate than you think, and those bricks must tip in just the right way to maintain that balance. There is just no way to guarantee good will triumph over evil in the end, if you humans don’t stick to the plan.”


“I have no more time for this, Stephen,” she snaps. “I’ve wasted enough already trying to get you to do as you were supposed to, and you refused. That is what my friend burrowing his way inside you must do now; make the choices that you wouldn’t make. He will force you to fulfill your destiny. He will be your constant companion. Oh, don’t look at me like that, Stephen, I didn’t want this for you. Your destiny was written in the stars long before either of us ever existed.”

I try to yell at her, tell her that I’m not going to permit this to happen, but my mind can no longer connect with my body. They are two separate things now. Anguish and hopelessness fill my soul. I think a string of obscenities at the man who has taken over my body.

“Be nice, Stephen,” she says. “After all it wasn’t his choice to be stuck inside you. It was yours, remember that. You two better be on your way now, you have a job to do.”

My head nods, and my body turns around. I can see the town, which has come alive again. The stars hovering over it have shrunk to their normal size. My legs begin moving with a terrifying purposefulness, and I go into a frenzy, battering against the edges of my mind, trying to regain control. I put every ounce of will power I possess into overthrowing the monster, but he is strong. Stronger than I am, and I cannot beat him. I am exhausted by the time we reach Northman’s house. I try to shout a warning to him, but I can’t get my lips to form the words. All I can do is watch as my hand picks up the shovel leaning against the shed, and my feet walk towards his backdoor.
Most love stories have happy endings, but in real life, love usually has a happy beginning and an unhappy ending.

The greatest love story of my life began before my first birthday. I was exactly nine months old on April 12, 1971, when my mom’s best friend had a little girl.

The beginning of the end came the day after my sixty-second birthday. I walked into the office that day and saw my cow of a secretary masticating an over-sized mouth full of my left-over cake, plate inches from her chin and a white frosting smear on the left breast her royal blue poly-blend blouse. When she saw me, she shoved the cake in a drawer and quickly tapped out something on her touchpad.

She stood as I approached. “Good morning, Mr. Farraday. I just transferred your agenda and the paper to your PICS. Also there was a note in your business mail that looked personal, from a hospital, so I copied it on to a file sent it to your personal folder.”

I threw her my coat as I walked into my office. “Ping the Koreans for our conference in ten.”

I sat at my desk and opened up the e-note right away. Under the official stamp of Bristol Hospital were four lines of spidery handwriting:

Bear,
Need a big favor. Please come.
FC2G,
J

As I walk out of my office and down the hall to the elevators, I tell my secretary to put my associate on the call with the Koreans and make arrangements for one of the jets to fly me to Connecticut. Within three hours, my plane touches down at Bradley. I call my wife from the car on my way to the hospital. I tell her that I have to be away on business and I will check in with her tonight. Brynne doesn’t mind being lied to as long as I don’t humiliate her.

I have to be buzzed into the pulmonary ICU, which takes an absurdly long time. As I stepped through the oak-paneled door, I was met by the smell of disinfectant and urine, as well as a doctor younger than my daughter.

“I’m Dr. Connelly,” she said while keeping her eyes on a clipboard. “I was told you might come. What do you know about Mrs. Hammond’s condition?”

“Nothing,” I replied. “I just found out that she was here this morning.”

“She has extensive stage small cell lung cancer, which means that an aggressive cancer has spread to several of her organs. Right now the best we can do is keep her comfortable.”
The gravity of the earth suddenly increased tenfold; I had to actively engage my muscles in order to remain upright. I recall at some point the doctor took me into see Jenny, but I’m not sure how I managed to coordinate my feet to perform the required action.

The woman in the hospital bed looked like a colorless, deflated version of my Jenny. Her hair was a dull ivory—she doesn’t color it, never has. In her youth her natural color had been a light brown that bordered on dark blond, shot through with reddish-gold highlights. Her eyes, once sky-blue, now clouded over, fluttered open when I touched her arm.

“Bear, you came!” Her voice was wispy, but her excitement came through. She was happy to see me. She always was.

It was my fault she was here. I started smoking at fourteen and she followed. She was always trying to impress me, never thought she was good enough. Even when we were kids—when she learned how to ride a bike, she insisted that her mom take her the three blocks over to our house so she could show me. Of course, I had to point out that she still had her training wheels on, while mine were off. The next day, she showed up with her bike again. The training wheels were off.

I was eleven and she was ten when we had our first kiss. There wasn’t a whole lot for us to do in the small, New England town of Bristol except hold hands as we walked our dogs around the neighborhood. We would go to the dog park and let them run around while she sat on my lap and snuggled against me. It felt amazing to wrap my arms around her. She was tiny and soft and warm, so I took to calling her my teddy bear. She said I was like a big teddy bear; I was always a big kid, broad in the shoulders, a little chubby when I was young, so she started calling me Bear, and it stuck.

When I started high school, football transformed my baby fat to muscle. I thought I was hot shit and nobody told me any different. Girls came on to me and my dad encouraged me to play the field, said I was too young to get tied down to one girl. I listened to my dad’s advice and decided to play the field.

Instead of getting angry, Jenny just tried harder. I would make out with other girls at parties, so she let me make love to her. Nothing in the whole wide world has ever felt as good as making love with Jenny.

But I listened to my dad once again and broke up with Jenny before going away to school. Dad said I owed it to myself to have the experience of being single while in college, and besides, I was sure to meet some “high caliber” girls at Yale. So, the day before I moved into the dorms, I dropped the bomb on her.

“What do you mean, you don’t want to be my boyfriend anymore?” she asked through a throat full of tears. “I don’t think of you as my boyfriend. You’re my life, my love, my…” Her face was stretched tight, and was marked with red splotches.
and smeared black mascara. “From cradle to grave. I meant it. Didn’t you? Please, say that you meant it. I think I’ll die if you didn’t mean it.”

“From cradle to grave” was something that we said to each other. We signed letters to each other with an “FC2G.” I meant it every time, too. I didn’t tell her this, though, because I was angry at her for laying all of the responsibility for her happiness at my feet. I just said, “You won’t die.”

Yale is only about a forty-five minute drive from Bristol, but I avoided coming home all semester. I missed Jenny so much—not that I wasn’t taking full advantage of being single. In the late eighties and early nineties it was even easier to get laid than it is today. But by the end of my first semester I had grown bored of partying and bedding random women. I decided that it was time to get Jenny back.

I drove to Bristol right after my last final and went straight to our favorite park. I got a long spool of white ribbon and wound it around trees, playground equipment, and light posts. I tied one end to the fence of the area where dogs were allowed to go off-leash, and tied the other end to our bench. I clamped an empty ring box on to the end of the ribbon and lay it on the bench. I kept the ring in my pocket; in the slot where the ring should have been I slipped a note: FC2G.

When she saw me Jenny was beside herself with excitement, but as we drove to the park, she started to cry. “I’m so sorry,” she wailed over and over before I could finally any information.

She was pregnant. With Danny Haskell’s baby.

I was cruel. “So, how long did it take after I left for you to open your legs for him?”

“I’m so sorry. I just hurt so bad after you left. I just…I don’t know.” She cried so hard, I couldn’t get a coherent word out of her after that. I drove back to her house. I didn’t even look as she got out of the car—I drove away before the door closed fully.

It was several years before I returned to that park. I always wondered who eventually unwound all that ribbon.

I cried like a child on my mom’s lap that night. My dad said I dodged a bullet.

Jenny’s nurse got her water, propped up her pillow, and made sure that the controls for the morphine drip and the nurse’s call button are easily within Jenny’s reach before she left the room.

“You said you wanted a big favor?” I reminded her. The wording in her note had been exactly the same as she had used before. The first time was in nineteen ninety-five, when Danny Haskell left Jenny. Jenny tried to put a life together for her two
daughters, but inside she was a wreck. She was absolutely sure that she was on the verge of a complete mental collapse, and she was equally sure I was the only one who could keep it from happening. She scrawled a note on a Post-It, drove to the nearest Fed-Ex and had them overnight it to my office. When I opened the envelope, at first I thought it was empty. Then I saw the yellow note stuck to the side.

I drove seven-hour trip from Richmond to Waterbury in five, with one bathroom break. Within a week I had filed papers to divorce Brynne and had asked Jenny to marry me. I even had the same ring; before I left town I dropped by the bank to get it out of my deposit box.

Brynne said that divorce didn’t fit in with her “self-concept” and she promised to take everything. She promised that my visits to my children would be so limited that they would forget what I looked like.

Jenny cried quietly as I kissed her goodbye. She told me not to feel bad—she understood. She loved me for being a good dad.

“Yes, I need a very big favor,” Jenny says with a little smile dancing across her pale lips.

“Anything.”

“You were the first boy I ever kissed. I want you to be the last.”

“Don’t talk like that—I bet you will be better soon and you’ll kiss a hundred more boys.”

She manages a laugh like the breaking of a dry leaf. “Well, just in case.”

“It would be my honor,” I say. “Just in case.”

I slipped off my shoes and jacket, then I lowered the rail on the side of the bed. As I slipped under the thin blanket next to her, I carefully slid my arm under her weightless body, being sure not to disturb any tubes or wires. I roll her towards me and hold her for several minutes before placing my lips upon hers.

As tears rolled quietly down my cheeks and settled into the nape of her neck, she smoothed my hair and told me not to feel bad.

I’m not sure how much time has passed before the nurse wakes me up. It’s dark outside, but it is still the same nurse, so there has not been a shift change.

“Mr. Farraday, would you please just sit over here for a minute so we can check her?” the nurse asks as she guides me into the chair. She is strong—she is nearly lifting me up before I find my feet and take over the task for her.
The doctor briefly examines Jenny, who remains asleep. The nurse looks from me to the doctor, who nods.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Farraday, but she’s passed,” the nurse tells me.

I am tempted to crawl back into that bed next to her and see if I could, by sheer force of will, die right now, too, next to her. If I could catch her soul on its way up to heaven and we could finally be together.

I imagine that being widow would fit in really well with Brynne’s self-concept. It would be easy enough for her to come up with an appropriate story.

But my daughter-in-law is pregnant with my first grandchild. And we are almost done with the remodel on the master suite—I’ve been waiting a year and a half to sit in my own sauna. Plus, I need to deal with the Koreans.

I put on my shoes and jacket before I give Jenny one last kiss on the cheek.
Flash Fiction
The railroad crossing arm drifts down in front of my braking car. Flashing lights. Other vehicles stop behind me. We form a line; a caravan of sub-compacts and SUV’s. Headlights from the other side flicker as the train clanks by. In times like these, there are no wrong side of the tracks.

I turn the radio off. Just morning talk shows consisting of bad jokes and hand-me-down headlines. Sponsors who can’t afford better advertising. Theme music that fades in from a commercial break, teasing you with the thought of actual music.

The train slows, giving me enough time to study the backyard murals. Poetic slang from faraway places. Silly slogans; gangland symbols. Little glimpses of the American dream. Tee-Bone was here – there – somewhere with his aerosol cans of blue paint. As was Red Dawg. Profanity seems to be the only thing spelled correctly.

Drivers behind me get anxious, inching closer together. Sardines, individually wrapped in our own tin can containers. Some pull out and drive back towards the interstate. Tardy timecards on a Monday can curse the entire work week. Some people care.

An ill-fitting plastic lid loosens tiny trickling streams of brown streaks down my cardboard to-go cup. I sip at the lukewarm coffee as it spits a few drops onto my pants. Khaki slacks, already rumpled from seatbelt creasing. I roll the window down as the train settles to a stop. Another morning cigarette.

Dust – and ash – has collected on my charcoal-colored dash. Someone should vacuum the crumbs and dirt up off of the seats and floorboard. Someone should care. You can hardly tell in the morning twilight anyway.

Wristwatch says it’s a quarter to six. People are already at the office, flipping on computers, warming up printers and copiers. America Incorporated is being roused from its weekend nap. Some people are worried; in a hurry to join their coworkers. Me-well, I’m fine right here with the train.
When I was in seventh grade my father, the band director, gave me a Tuba. That simple coil of brass tubing changed my life. As a socially awkward teenager who found his own reflection intimidating, that Tuba was shield from the world. Being approximately my own size, the tuba was able to block my entire field of vision. With the slightest motion, I could obstruct my view of the audience, the music, or anything else that seemed intimidating. In fact, I would spend hours just perfecting the art of holding my tuba, its brassy goodness filling my embrace like the wheel of a diesel truck. I was certain no one could ever take its place.

That was when I met Katie.

Skipping ahead a few years, I was able to join the college band was where I first met Katie. She seemed like all the goodness in the world mashed up, liquefied, and injected into the skin of a forbidden fruit. And I knew that somehow, I had to date her. But, boy was there a waiting list. And everyone knew that for Katie, the most important thing on a date was the first kiss. If the kiss was bad, then she took it as a sign of bad things to come.

When Katie walked through the band room door on our first day of class, she immediately began making her rounds. The first week she started with the trumpet players. Rumor had it she would have tried dating the woodwind players but avoided the clarinets out of principal – she played the clarinet and it’s like dating someone you work with, generally not a good idea. The flutes and oboes were out of the question because they were all girls, and she just wasn’t into that kind of thing. That left the saxophones -- who had all been arrested several times for drug abuse. So, weeding out the lesser fish of the gene pool, she began dating the brass section -- starting with the trumpets.

Trumpet players are not your average cookie. When you or I are at home watching Myth-Busters, they are sitting on a padded gym floor bench pressing twenty pound plates with nothing but their lips. As you might image the all important kiss did not go well. Katie later told me that those some puckered persimmons that you don’t want to go smooching.

Feeling disappointed in the Trumpets, she spent the next week with the French horns. Again, asking her about the experience, she told me that the dates were beyond amazing. They ate at the most prestigious restaurants in town. They spent romantic nights out under the moon. Her every wish -- whatever it was -- was granted. Yet, at the end of day, when it came down to the kiss, they too failed the test.

I didn’t have to hear her explanation to know why kissing a French horn player was not a good idea. Pavlov proved that dogs could be taught to salivate at the sound of a bell. French horn players are very similar. When they play their instrument it produces large quantities of spit which they expel through a “spit valve.” Yes, that is what it is called. Most French horn players will practice their music in a private green-house – keeping the plants alive on nothing but their own salivation. Katie’s experience seemed to corroborate this horrible truth. According to her the act of kissing, like a ringing bell, excited the French horn player in the same way that

How Playing the Tuba Got Me a Wife

Alan Park
music normally does. In the end, it was like trying to take a drink from a fire hydrant.

Finally, she made her way to the Tuba section. And, as a living example of happiness, I am here to tell you that we were engaged on the very first date. A few weeks ago I happened to ask her what it was that made my kiss so much better than all the others. You know what she said? Holding her arms out, in what can only be called a Tuba player’s embrace, she said, “It wasn’t so much the way kissed me, it was the way you held me.”
Non-Fiction
I was 4. Nolan was in his 30s. I perched on my rusty trike with my feet suspended in the air, flew all the way down my slanted driveway, and veered right at the bottom. I coasted along the sidewalk until I stopped just across the street from Nolan in his driveway. He waved with two hands: one raised, one not. He told me about the race car he was planning on buying soon. I expressed my amazement and genuine admiration.

I turned 10. Nolan was probably still in his 30s. I held my book with one hand and steered my brand-new 10-speed with the other. Nolan called too loudly from his driveway, and I waved with my book. His head was much smaller than most grown-ups, but his features were not. My mother explained we were alike, but technology intervened in my natural course.


I turned 19. Nolan was in his late 40s. I walked out to the road to dutifully retrieve the newly emptied garbage can. Nolan ran over to crush me in his large arms and confer a wet kiss on my head. He proposed to me. I smiled and squeezed his hand before I walked back in my house. We started to lock our doors.

I am now 29. Nolan is starting to look old. After a visit with my parents, I pack my baby and my 4-year-old into the backseat of my sedan, slide into the driver’s seat, and fasten my seatbelt. I back out into the road and stop just in front of Nolan standing in his driveway. He waves with two hands: one raised, one not. He tells me about the race car he’s planning on buying soon. I express my amazement and my genuine adoration.

As I drive away I can see him standing in his driveway, waving still, getting smaller and smaller. I am thinking how unfair life can be.
I never learned her name. I didn’t exchange a single word with her either, yet during a brisk walk across the Weber State campus on a sunny October afternoon I feel that I became more intimately acquainted with her than most of her closest friends. In the brief minutes that our paths ran parallel, I listened as her life underwent one of the most dramatic changes a person can experience.

Class had just let out and as I followed the noisy mass of students exiting Elizabeth Hall, I narrowly avoided bumping into an attractive twenty-something who had stopped in the middle of a doorway to retrieve her cell phone from her purse. Aside from noting her apparent lack of consideration for those around her, I paid little attention and continued on my usual route back to my truck. The walk to the parking lot was uphill and passed several buildings along the way and although I usually began the trek as a mere drop in a sea of students, by the time I reached the top of the hill, the crowd had always dissolved to only a few scattered and disconnected individuals.

With the first set of stairs behind me, I noticed that the same twenty-something I had nearly collided with only moments ago had somehow passed me and was walking several steps ahead of me. In perceiving this oddity, I also noticed just how truly attractive she was. She was slim and blonde with legs that seemed almost too long for the rest of her body. She wore a black vest over a white blouse and tight hip-hugger jeans. Large silver hoops dangled from her ears, peeking out from behind her yellow hair. My mind’s eye saw her image on the cover of a fashion magazine sporting the latest apparel from whatever brand was the current range.

Although puzzled by how she had outpaced me, and somewhat taken with her physical beauty, it was her phone conversation that drew my interest and kept me searching for a glimpse of her eyes. I couldn’t help but listen as her stressed but hushed voice spoke earnestly to the person on the other line. The first words I overheard were, “Yeah, but you don’t have to deal with it! I have to deal with this. I’m going to have to quit school, Shane. I haven’t been to class in two weeks.” During the brief pause, my mind raced through the possibilities of what “it” might be, but was unable to venture a conscious guess before the conversation continued.

“You’re not taking this seriously.” Another pause, and then, in an elevated tone, “I have to kill it, Shane!” I looked around it, almost embarrassed, to see if anyone else had heard. I was alone as I followed the girl up the last set of stairs leading to the parking lot.

She was silent as she shook her head before nearly yelling into the phone, “Yes it is! I’m sorry, but once it’s in there it’s a living thing! Damn you, Shane! You don’t know. You can’t know because it’s not growing inside of you.”

On that note we parted ways, heading to opposite ends of the parking lot. Her next words were drowned by our increasing distance and I was left with only my
thoughts. As I neared my truck I felt the pit of my stomach stir with emotion. I want to say something to her, do something for her. I wanted to help. Instead, I stopped and watched her climb into her car and drive away to a life that would never be the same.
Speaking in broken English, and with an Arabic tongue, he professed over and over his innocence to me. Where the English he had picked up over the last two to three years failed him, an interpreter making three times my salary relayed what he was saying.

“I worked in an office,” he was able to say. “I went there every day. One day some men came to see me. They asked, ‘Are you this man?’ I said yes. They said, ‘You have done this thing.’ I told them I did not. They said, ‘Yes you did,’ and they brought me here. I have been here for over two years. They will not tell me when I will be tried. They will not tell me when I can go home. I am a young man. These are the better years of my life. Everything is ruined.”

How do you justify the principle Casualty of War to a person who is one? How do you diplomatically win the heart and mind of this man and show not all Americans hate him when all you want to say is, I don’t care? I just want to go home, too.

This is not my job. I am not here to counsel him. I am the over-watch for the Program Services and Vocational Technologies School the Army has set up for detained Iraqis who have the desire to spend some of their incarceration outside their compound and in a classroom environment, and who are considered to be in good standing with the Sergeant of the Guard. All I want is to get these detainees to and from school without having an incident that would require filling out paperwork at the end of my day. I have no training for this.

So, I sit there waiting patiently for the detainee to finish saying what he has to say. Then I listen to the interpreter give the translation of what he feels the detainee is trying to say. Then I ask the interpreter to repeat my message and he does so, with what he believe I am trying to say. All the while, I wonder how all this information getting passed is being received by the three parties. Do any of us truly believe our message is being made? Has the Iraqi derived sympathy from his captor? Has the soldier made his way through the ingrained defenses of this devout believer? Is the interpreter accurately portraying the messages he is given; and why does it have to be so hot in here? Are we simply filling time in our painfully monotonous day?

We continue to push through and the conversation takes up the remainder of free time given to the class. What all passed through the revolving door of our conversation? If you were to ask me then, I could have honestly said, “At this moment I have no contempt for this man.” If you were to place us a thousand miles away and remove all chains, I believe he would have honestly said the same to me; yet less than two-hundred yards from the place we sit, if each had a gun in their hand, it would not be long before one of us no longer remained.

How strange that the longing each one of us feels is for the place that each one calls home. If he never saw me again and I never saw him again…from what better place could we possible start? But for now, class is over and it is back to his cage; and for me, it is back to mine. The next day our labors will march on their way with neither a look nor a glance between us. In two months or more, I will be going home with a
year’s worth of savings in the bag. What I did not know then, and what he did not know then was that we would be leaving before me. Released and set free and with a no-harm-no-foul wave. What has become of this man? Who knows and who cares? I, too, was sat free. The Army no longer has hold of my hand. I am so much like him. He is so much like me; yet only our differences we see. We work, we sleep, we hunger, we need. We were but born on opposite hands. I thank God for mine, and he thanks God for his; and so on forever it stands.
Poetry
The last to bed, but the first to rise,
he’s on the scratchy couch, eyelids heavy like velvet curtains,
gazes at the talking box for the goings-on out-
side this small town, ready to watch—as he opens
a new box of Honey Nut Cheerios—the Tears
for Fears reunion on the Today show. Emergency Signals
interrupt. Reels, like a Bruckheimer movie, feature smoke signals
that look like a Degas ballerina on pointe making a quick rise.
The scene changes, shows the Statue of Liberty with tears
of ashy sod and her sky veiled with curtains
of black like a mourning mother after she opens
the casket, sees her child really is there, dead. Out
of this electrical window facing the Atlantic, we see life turn inside out.
This savagery is unlike the ancient holy wars where signals
of chivalry were honored reflecting respect for humanity. He opens
his eyes wide—two brown islands in a sea of white—as a plane begins to rise.
Metal against metal, like the clanking of two swords, unleashes wet curtains,
my eyelashes against my just awake face. Again through tears,
cheeks salty like the ocean, we stare at an emotionless screen. More tears
would come later, as more details come out
on CNN, Fox, CNBC, those detached thespians who act out life until curtains
drop and reality begins again. Rubbing his forehead (which signals
to me his stress level) I see his face flush as his heart rate begins to rise.
I think he is visualizing me, the person who he opens
doors and jars for, on that plane of terror. Then he opens
the battery compartment of the remote and tears
the batteries out, thinking if he could just turn off the T.V., the high-rise
now falling to the ground would stop—but it’s two strikes and out.
We stop and look at each other—non-verbal signals
saying more than the three words left unsaid. Anger now curtains
sadness as I look at the Oquirrh’s, dark like drawn curtains,
and think about how as this new day opens
so much is now closed for families who call and keep getting busy signals.
Someday, in the not too far future, they will take down missing signs and tears
will fall, an overflowing tributary, until they drain out
the rawness and things will be okay unless they hear an early morning siren.
Emotions rise
and it all starts over again—like it does for me the next day when my curtain-skirt
tears
and I slip away from the festivities and think about all the candles blown out
too soon. Returning, I signal a kiss to the man I love, open another gift, as spirits
continue to rise.
In the midst of Soviet soil
   miles of fields landscaped with emptiness
billowing smoke chokes the blue sky
   landlocked in misery
what does God think of his creation?
walls filled of secrets
piercing eyes of sadness
scraps of wishes
   toss your penny in

_there’s no end in sight_
_only the dead of night_
_too many angels_

intoxicated with laughter
   with hope
scattered mistakes
   abandoned
hearts vacant
violated
and still
   they smile
The rain falls.
   feel it fall.
breathe it in.
It falls upon the pages, one
   then
another.
Will you turn the page before it's full?
or finish the poem that you began?
The raindrops leave so small a mark,
as poets leave their marks—
they ruin almost nothing.
Besides, a rich fall of rain can be a rainbow,
but dunt give up the time between the sun’s shining
just to save your paper.
Letters can be lost here and there,
words smudged,
but the poem writes itself in the rain.
and the notebook
is full
of raindrops and poems,
   poems and raindrops.

The rain will end itself, you know.
   You need do nothing but
   enjoy the parade.
The paper’s hurt, but that’s no tragedy;
   rain grows the trees—
and paper can be made.
Just punctuation,
   really—
the world the editor,
   its red marks like a chilly tear;
and at the end the birds will chatter,
to let you know what they think.

Life is a raindrop spattered with raindrops;
a forever feeling;
a mar entirely pleasant,
irrevocable,
unpleasant, though, to reverse.
The poem can be written;
   the raindrops can fall;
the marks can be made;
and who will let them stay?
and who will forget them?

and who will tear you off and rewrite

the poem, make a life into a failure—

a pain once beautiful,

now despised for a worthy imperfection;

how beautiful the rain, the page,

how precious the mar.

Breathe, then.

and feel, too.

the rain falls.
I speak to old men in the trees,
their answers coming on the breeze
in voices crisp and cracked with age
becoming of the wisest sage.
They tell me that the seasons pass—
I know this truth, yet, still, I ask
of them to share the mysteries
of seasons gone and reborn leaves;
the sole response the wind blows through:
“The seasons pass, and so shall you. . .”

I press them on, still wondering
on oceans, mountains, brooks that sing,
on stars and hopes and shattered dreams,
on old clichés (and newer things);
I press them on, deep into Fall
and close my ears and try to stall
to please not hear that same refrain,
the answer I can’t hear again;
yet, still, I hear those words that blew:
“The seasons pass, and so shall you. . .”

I beg them “Please, oh withered men,
just tell me as you would your kin—
share with me the secrets few
of root that grew and re-grew you.
How can you live and die so young
and live again, yet keep your tongue?”
Desperately I cry and din
into the trans-eternal wind.
Yet, still, reply they all they knew:
“The seasons pass, and so shall you. . .”

The last one fell and in my hand
I saw it crumble all to sand;
his brethren, strewn all on the land
broken, aged, and weather-tanned;
and though were dead, blown to the ground
I yet heard that vexatious sound
that told of our impending Fall—
the words had not been theirs at all!
It was the breeze that said it true:
“The seasons pass and so shall you.”
Dangling between the depths
Happiness
    Sadness
Community
    Individuality
Accelerated by
Times of distress and
    an abyss of trauma and frustrations

Beliefs control
Or
Empower

Swinging back and forth
Searching for the storehouse of power
Perception
    Judgment
Patterns
    Direction
Blind conformity travels through
Artificial choice and
    suppressed avenues of self-development

Agency escapes
Or
Remains

Only by desires
Conscious forces
Deliberate freedoms
    embodied by knowledge and wisdom

Behavior is questionable
While the demands present narrow roads to choose
Individuality furnishes the guide
    instituting the swinging to stop
Voices come to call
illusions, delusions
Pockets full of pain
ruby rain

Forsake my wisdom
oozing, abusing
Lonely thieves of time
misery crime

Promise no tomorrow
reprieve, relieve
Blade of acid embrace
solitary place

Fragment scars linger
weeping, seeping
Prisoner of the well
senses fail

Secrets draped beneath
crucify, glorify
Bareness of the soul
empty hole

Solemn ceremony
dissection, rejection
Raven of despair
crying prayer
The room in shades in black and white –
Staring long in the darkness causes this.
Colors of the day melt into charcoal and midnight
I look to my right – my second pillow – a queen sized bed split in two
He is still there, present,
he does not understand –
His mouth opens and closes
while his arms and feet jerk with uncertainty.
He dreams.

He breathes heavily and my eyes remain opaque.

I want to block the airway with my thumb and index…

The knife is still in the drawer, holding
The colors of early morning.
He was a simple man with a routine life
No dogs, no cats, no burdensome wife
But what gave him pause for a glowing reflection
Was the immensely large size of his pet rock collection
Many years back it began with a few
One of a frog, one a mouse painted blue
Soon he progressed to include
All of the other animals too
And kind of like Noah, lined them up two by two
Creating a sort of pet rock stone zoo
Tens turned to hundreds, then more through the years
A jealous ex-girlfriend left, crying sad, bitter tears
Pet rocks filled his house, filled his yard, filled his car
Numbered more than the universe with all of its stars
And one afternoon with nothing to do
He went out and soon got some pet rock tattoos
Years passed, lightning flashed late one foreboding night
Casting silversun shadows and ethereal light
The quiet army of pet rocks, so placid and tame
Awoke with a start then prepared for their game
Unsuspecting he slept in his lone double bed
Dreams of pet rocks filling his old haggard head
They soon gathered round, thousands in all
Each in obedience to their dark master’s call
He slept all the while they carried him away
Beyond where the devils and seraphims slay
Beyond where the grey clouds and cold rivers run
Beyond where the mountains reach up to the sun
Beyond where the shadows flee from the day
‘Till they reached an old boulder all sober and gray
An angry mad God, not at all nice
Demanded from them their lone sacrifice
Pet rocks gathered round to bury the man
All in accord to their devilish plan
The heavens exploded, the earth shook and quaked
The man began to think pet rocks a mistake
And as he prepared for his impending doom
A loud blaring beeping emerged from the gloom
He awoke with a start at the breaking of dawn
Pet rocks as before in his house, on his lawn
A firm thought caught hold and with resolution
He realized quickly the only solution
The rocks hauled away in an old U-Haul van
Then dumped off a cliff according to plan
And with a smile of self-approval
Went in for the sessions of tattoo removal
When all this was done he paused for reflection
And three days later began a small stamp collection
Today I found what I wrote
That day. That day when
I fought my way to the bottom
All the way to the bottom
Of the bottle.
We have danced our dance,
Danced for a long time,
A long time, that bottle and I.
But this time,
This time it cheated.
Cheated, and brought a friend,
A friend who fought dirty.

No one knows.
Let them
see your soul (one way or
another they'll see
it anyway). Let them
read the story of
your life written on
your chest. Let your soul
speak for you. Let them
create your story from their own
lives (they'll write you a better
introduction than the original).

Then shatter it.
Let them
see what your soul really means
and don't let them
own you.

Give them
just a taste, leave them
wanting more. Make them
grasp for it. Make them
struggle to see the rest
of your picture.
It was slow, while the rain and wind was fast;
Slow, as the rain progressed to snow,
the temperature dropped to twenty-eight degrees,
and the drenched clothes started clinging to the body.  
And we recognized the moldering smell
that the rain made on our house boards,
the sigh that came as we realized
we must leave early the next day.

But enough about the weather.

It was slow like the heaviness of sheets the next morning
that drowsed and drew us down
like a hen beckoning that we stay
beneath her wings;
that we breathe deeply and sit still;
that we contemplate the grey-orange of the day;
that we think of fish,
the waters of creation,
and other great and terrible things.

It was in this slowness only that
we came to recognize
the half-heard violin tones drifting
from rooms we could not see;
that the tides that they created gave us sway;
that we had to begin to walk with that inherited give and take rhythm;

to suffer generously.
I
It was like any other Thursday, except you were in a hospital bed and I was driving forty miles to see you. I see you, cheeks weighed by creased lines, eyes closed like half-walnut shells. Small moving needles indicate the seismic activity from some recent eruption in your mind.

II
Balancing on your walker, feet scraping the ground, pulled down by some force that laughs at sinew. Your tibia, fibula, and femur—the good old boys club, now dissolved—is now a titanium replacement. It threatens to be around long after you’re gone.
Why must my words flow so freely by pen?
Is it there that I glisten or do I just pretend
That these words are the feelings I have built up inside?
But if they are fake or dishonest, I have lied.

So what if they are real and these feelings are mine;
And can only be expressed by letter, by rhyme?

And what if one day I lost all my limbs;
Would these letters stay with me?
And what if one day all the paper ran dry;
Would my feelings commit me?

If no one ever reads what I write with my hand,
How will I know that they know who I am?
If when the pages are full I just put them away,
The affect is the same as the words I don’t say.

No one left knowing the things that I know
But a pen on a paper flowing row after row
Epiphany
Staff
Section
The alarm shrieked. He woke to a throbbing pain behind his eyes and heavy, uncooperative limbs. He willed his limbs to move, but they rejected his brain’s authority. Lying still, his arms eventually regained their ability and his fists rubbed grit from his eyes.

*God, why did I drink so much last night? Why did I...*

He remembered – his baby girl is getting married today. The thought of his sweet daughter marrying that bastard lowlife who knocked her up hurled him to the nearest bar. Last night, Ned supplied endless rounds of cheap vodka.

He hauled his body out of bed and shuffled to the shower. His head swam and his body shivered under the beating stream of heat. *Maybe just one shot to take the edge off. That’s all I need.*

He towel-dried and shrugged into his tuxedo shirt. Regardless of his feelings, he knew his baby and she matched his stubbornness. She’d walk that aisle. And he knew she loved that kid.

8:47 – he’s late. He caught sight of himself in the mirror and halted. When did the grey overtake the youthful brown on his head? Smoothing his hair, he wondered how he could hide the bags under his bloodshot eyes. If she saw, it would ruin everything. She knew him better than anyone. He understood the unhealthy dependency, but he needed her and she needed him.

*I can’t let her see me like this. She’ll know.* Something caught his eye from across the room and he rushed to the sink. His fingers curled around the small piece of metal. For a second, he allowed the cold to relieve him, then he hurled his 12-month pin across the room. Wrenching the faucet up, he splashed cold water on his face, doused his eyes with Visine, but nothing hid his betrayal.

He held his head high as he strode into the reception hall. He plopped into the nearest chair, fingers pressed to his temples. The wedding coordinator materialized at his side.

“Want me to show you where the bridal room is?” She chomped her gum in his ear.

Voice steady, he replied, “No, I want to be surprised. I’ll give her some time.”

“Well...” she smacked. “Alrighty-then.” The strings of saliva threaded through her blindingly white teeth. He resisted the urge to punch her pretty face and shoved his fists under his thighs.

The music pierced his head, but he forced a grin. The door opened and she emerged, dressed in white. The audience gasped and she grinned. Her teeth were natural and beautiful, drilling deeper into his conscience. Grateful for the noise, he choked back a sob.
He met her at the staircase, extending his shaky hand to hers. She reached out and clasped his, uniting their nervous sweat. He noticed what only a father could see – her smile waivered, broke at the end for a moment. She knew.
Blood. Blood everywhere. I hate the color of it, the taste—the smell of it; like old metal and salt and the dirt near the tree. It’s on my shirt, my favorite shirt. When I wipe it away there is always more. I’m leaking. And my shoulder hurts. And there is a weird lump on that bone by my neck. I just wish they would stop yelling, and throwing things. I curl into a tighter ball, hoping that they won’t see me here, behind the couch. I can’t help crying, but I’ve learned not to make noise when I do, it’s just better that way.

This is all my fault. They were fighting and I just got in the way. She threw the frying pan at him. I should have been back here in the first place. Dawn keeps looking over the couch at them, but Jill and Melanie are hiding, like me. They’re big and they’re brave, but they’re hiding this time. My eye really hurts now, almost as much as my shoulder. I think that is where the blood is leaking from. They’re still yelling, but someone is pounding on the door. There is so much noise, so many people, so many grownups. They are all yelling and I’m scared. I shut my eyes so no one will see.

Mommy and Daddy go outside with the people but they are still yelling. It’s raining out there—I can hear that too, like the whole world wants to cry today. Someone pulls out the couch. They are talking to me, but I don’t want to hear them, I don’t want to talk to them. I don’t want to talk. One of them tries to pick me up, but it hurts and I cry out. I squeeze my eyes tighter, pressing my hands over them, but they won’t go away. They say something about stitches and the hospital.

Dawn sits on the floor next to me and tells me it’s all okay. She keeps patting my hair like I’m a puppy. I open my eyes and see that it’s a policeman who is trying to talk to me. I’ve met him before; he was nice then, I try to sit up to talk to him, but I can’t; I can’t say anything; maybe it’s better that way.

Jill is telling another one that Mommy hit me with the frying pan. That policeman asks if she means that Daddy hit me; the last time it was Daddy. It’s always Daddy. Jill is just mad and tells him that Mommy was trying to keep Daddy from hitting her when she threw the pan. The policeman says they’ll take us all to the home again. He says it will be better that way. I remember that place. It’s scary there; they don’t let me sleep with my sisters.

Now the ambulance man is here. I met him the first time I needed stitches. He just did them right here on the front porch that time. This time he wants me to go in the ambulance. I just nod and let him pick me up. He is very careful not to hurt my shoulder. He put a big cloth over my eye. He says I’ll have an interesting scar.
The ball bounced down the sidewalk like a giant red meatball running away from cheesy spaghetti. In the ball's case, the spaghetti was actually six-year-old Lewis Strausshopkin; all seventy pounds of him. Lewis's curly brown hair bobbed around on his head as his marshmallow legs jiggled with each step on the concrete.

Watching Lewis chase something down the street was usual for the people of Cart Street, but today was different. Lewis was wearing a tutu, and a large oversized 49rs football helmet.

"What are you doing Lewis?" Mrs. Diamond called after him as she looked up from her flower garden, brushing dirt off her pants.

"Just...running!" he panted. Sweat gushed from beneath the helmet, soaking his tight fitting boy's A-shirt like a hose. Little rolls of fat peeped out from underneath.

He continued to run as fast as his stumpy legs could move. The ball seemed to have a mind of its own, curving around trees and under parked cars. If it had its own way, it'd be in Shanghai by nightfall so it didn't have to go through with it. Everyone knew Lewis was different, but this! The boy must be nuts!

Lewis scrunched his face up as his gluts started cramping. You would have thought by looking at him that he was enduring a bout of mild to moderate constipation. He grabbed at his left cheek, hobbling, and stopped when he saw the ball roll into the street. Finally! The ball was free. Maniacal laughter would have been appropriate had the ball been given a mouth. Free from the paws of the marshmallow arms, the ball would be...

Lewis's mouth dropped open in flabbergasted shock. The flattened ball lay lifeless on the road as the large white van that ran over it, drove down the street without care. Lewis carefully approached the ball and kicked it with his toe.

"Aw.." Lewis whined like a piglet and straightened the large helmet on his head. "Now I can’t do my ball-ay." And he stalked back up the road.
**EPHANY STAFF**

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Review Board Member: Tracy Cummins
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**SPRING 2010**
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**FALL 2009**
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Assistant Editor: Tom Hughes

**EPHANY FOUNDERS**

Rachel Cox
Rachel Anne Cox spent the first 25 years of her life in Baton Rouge, Louisiana before moving to Utah in 2006. She studied English and musical theater at Weber State University, graduating with a BA in Creative Writing in Spring 2010. During her time at WSU, Rachel won first place in the 2009 WSU College Writing Contest for her short story “One Leaf” and founded the *Epiphany Literary Journal*. On the days that she gets too frustrated with the novel she is writing or when her characters just won’t cooperate, she writes short stories, poetry, a blog, journals, letters, and anything else in which pen and ink are involved.

Brianna Kent
Brianna Kent is a transplant from Colorado. Since she was old enough to hold a pen, Kent has been writing and illustrating stories and poetry. She was first published when she was in third grade. Since that time, her work has been published in a collection of poems *A Surrender to the Moon*, *Folio*, *Notebook Wisdom*, a book of her poetry: *Through a Keyhole*, and in *Epiphany*. In February she was invited to participate in a reading series as part of the Creative Writing Emphasis program at WSU. She received honors in the National Undergraduate Literature Conference last spring. Her poetry won 1st Prize in the WSU English Department’s Annual Writer’s Contest. As one of the creators of *Epiphany* she was able to use her graphic and layout design experience on the first two volumes. She currently is finishing another novel.
In silence
speaks the wounded heart
    the wounded mind more loudly cries.
    Wounded bones through broken time
tell stories never meant for words.
And in the hallways dark and still,
    The doors are shut—
All save one.

Creaking open,
    rust of time too caked and frozen
with the years.
The light shines dimly through the dust
    And darkness runs to hide.

More open now, the hinges pried,
    Rays pour through the muted
    Shade.

When tears are shed and wounds are healed
the hush will be the only
    sound.
We hung,
    fingers gripping the branch
    as did the oranges,
    being pulled down.

We kicked our feet
    trying to see who’d fall first,
    shaking the world,
    being pulled down.

We fell,
    racing towards the soft grass
    showered in oranges and giggles
    on the ground.

We feasted,
    littering the green carpet,
    dribbled juices and peelings:
    gravity’s reward.

We clung,
    embracing the trunk and scooting
    higher, climbing higher,
    away from the ground—

to hang
    and play it again
    (our gravity game),
    again and again.