





Epiphany

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WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT
LITERARY JOURNAL

Purpose:

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

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We would also like to thank the Literary Coalition –*Metaphor*, Weber Writes, NULC, ERGO, the Writing Center, and 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. As well as Weber State University Printing Services for making this possible.

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Editor's Note

It is unbelievable what can be done with a group of people who have positive energy, passion for their work, and a desire to achieve excellence. That really is what *Epiphany* is made of—amazing writing by amazing people. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “We are the change that we want to see in the world.”

We have had the opportunity this year to read some wonderful stories and learn a great deal from those of you who submitted to the journal. The great conversation we have had with each of our authors and the opportunity to share that with the audience of Weber State has been thrilling.

This edition, we had a student copy editor review all the accepted submissions. He made minor changes to most of the submissions while respecting the integrity of the work. For this, we are very grateful, for through this process, we hope that your writing has become more accessible and powerful.

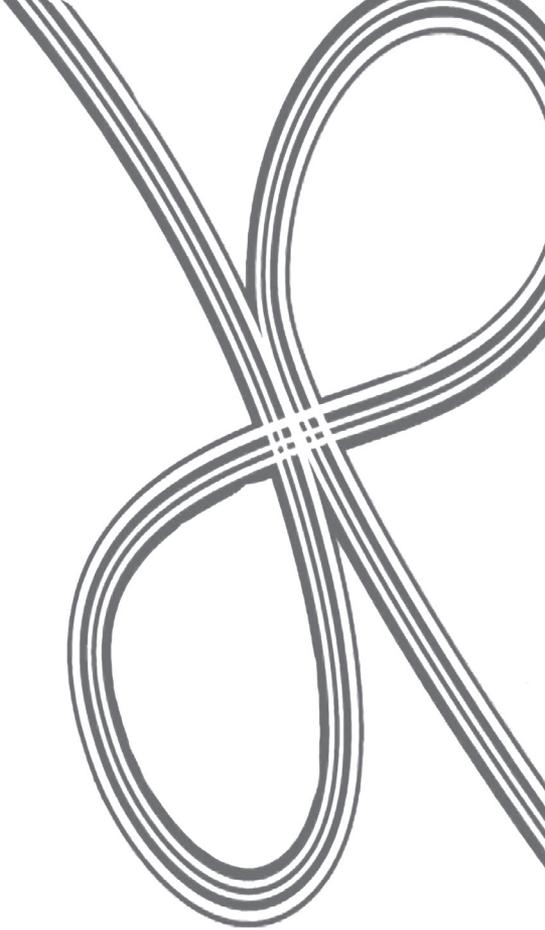
Many thanks go out to the various mentors and friends of *Epiphany* that make this journal possible. To name a few specifically: Debbie Cragun, Dr. Judy Elsley, Sarah Stanton & Elizabeth Dohrer. We are indebted to the faculty of the English Department for teaching and honing the skills which both the editors and writers needed to make this journal a reality. We must thank our colleagues of the Literary Coalition for their support this year, also. We hope to see many wonderful dreams come true through our association. Most of all, we wish to thank our various writers who submitted their art to our journal. *Epiphany* would not be here if wonderful authors working on their craft and preparing themselves to submit to professional journals and grad school did not take the time to submit to this growing student journal.

It is our pleasure to share with you this latest edition of *Epiphany*. As you read, we hope you will be inspired to create your own art. We know that art cannot be separated from identity. As we all strive to become better artists, we will become better people, better friends, and most important, better writers. Here's to your next *Epiphany*.

Sincerely,

Jayrod, Alex, Jennifer, Chontel, Molly, & Josh

P
O
E
T
R
Y



ALEX WESTOVER

Huckleberries

The air bit.

When we went to pick huckleberries,

the mud clung to our boots, our hands
starched with cold. The earth was full.

Our lips stained purple,
our tongues stained bitter.

Now I sit
where the chill does not reach,

thinking about the mud,
and earth, and huckleberries.

I write this to remember,
and want my tongue to stain bitter again.

Bad Hair Day

I got up that morning from a hard night.
Looking crazy, staring at whoever was looking at me.
Grab my cloth, grab my head rag, I got my backpack,
and surely I did not comb my hair.
I went out the door.
The car sitting in the driveway
Waiting for me to jump in and go.
Going through the stop lights
Flying like a bat out hell.
I see that my head rag is gone.
O My God!
My Hair!
I get to my painting class. I'm late.
I feel like I'm out of place,
My instructor is engaged in assignment.
He looks at me as if someone has scared him into next week.
Your assignment for today is to paint a self-portrait
reflecting yourself in the mirror,
O! and add a mask to make your painting interesting.
I looked myself in the mirror.
I looked at my instructor.
Painting myself with bloodshot eyes
droopy lips
dark skin tones and my cheek bones protruding outward.
O My God!
I got nerves to entertain my professor with my painting.
He looks
he observes and he says:
Bad hair day?

Differences in Focus

He and I are different; I cannot explain.
Inside the peanut lives a Chinese man with a beard,
It grows in grand succession, flows and twists in twain.

Silently we watched the moon, bloodless, wax and wane.
Why is the serene and deathly moon man so revered?
He and I are different; I cannot explain.

Sometimes we sit and get wet and watch sheets of rain,
Stir mud, worms, and grass into a little river, smeared.
It grows in grand succession, flows and twists in twain.

Seeing below water as through a window pane,
We climbed the fire-rocks, saw the marks, red and orange tiered.
He and I are different; I cannot explain.

We climb to feel the open air betray the waning rain.
It wears a white crown, beautiful and feared,
We grow in grand succession, flow and twist in twain.

I collected things, while crossing the vast terrain.
My pressed flowers, red stones, and memories, now appeared.
He and I are different; I cannot explain.
We grow in grand succession, flow and twist in twain.

Escape Attempt

This is reality because when you left,
I knew you weren't coming back.

So, this morning, wanting to fill your
haphazardly stitched void,
I walked,
nowhere specifically,
and found myself swinging in a park
springing with life
and remembered promises
where I chanced an encounter with my
second-best friend
who assured me that life would work itself out,
and made me remember a few of my
finer moments.

 It's impossible to breathe
 when you laugh too hard,
 you know.

But then,
even in what should have been
one pure, happy minute,
I thought of you,
and snapped back.

The scars of your absence still refuse to fade.

Hell

There is a place where writers go—
real Writers,
writerly Writers,
capital *W* *Wub*-riters—
where you might be allowed,
if you can produce
calloused fingers,
an angst-riddled face,
or a stack of letters:
“Thank you for...”
“We regret...”
“Not right for us at this time...”—
a checkered past or a broken heart are mandatory
for entrance here.
The unwounded can apply down the hall,
third door on your right;
knock on the door marked, “Nobody.”

If Softness is what You Seek

Vulgarity has its purpose

this is a new
harsh realism.

Four letters

repeated

over, and over, and

over.

The meaning of words

change,

as do you—

do not fear the

taboo.

Too harsh for some

ears

and minds.

Look elsewhere

if softness is what

you seek.

I See Him Every Day

this man.
The one who silently sits by himself,
waiting for the bus.
He always brings his pen,
and his notebook,
to set his thoughts free.
His thoughts are brilliant.
I know
because I've pulled his discarded papers
from the waste basket.
He often writes of his
loneliness,
his desire for something more.
He says he feels invisible;
I see him every day.

Of Vincent

Here amongst the Midwest grain,
vibrant yellows meet blue-gray,
Perhaps this is such a day
found on Vincent's palette.

Over a field, a murder of crows,
Like Auvers-sur-Oise some time ago,
a wind-swept field and beaten road,
sowed on Vincent's palette.

In the distance, a petaled sol,
perhaps worthy of an Arles home,
though not yet vased, it may have grown,
out from Vincent's palette.

On a Midwest river the moon has shone,
just like stars upon the *Rhône*,
deserving of an eternal stroke,

Alight on Vincent's palette.

On My Many Indiscretions

Along 2200 South, there lies a cemetery
on the West side of the street,
with two main entrances and a rarely-used North one.
All along the road, the
streetlamps shine a yellowish orange—
all but one, right across from
the middle entrance, which shines a pale white.
I don't know what this means,
if anything, but I sit under it appreciatively,
as it is easier light by which to read.
And the chat-chat-chat-shhhh of the sprinklers
in the graveyard, washing the beds of the dead,
who probably don't mind,
is likely adding a certain mood to my thoughts
as I write and read and
sit until my leg is slightly numb.
Graveyards need to be sterile, you know.
Whether it be with the
lifelessness of death or the
paleness of white light,
the evergreens that challenge the tombstones,
the chlorinated water that
keeps the grass looking the same,
or the grim faces of visitors.

I danced on a grave once,
and I think the lost loved one inside didn't mind.

But, I think, had I been seen by any but the dead,
I would have been promptly kicked out.

Pink Galoshes (For My Daughter)

Rain hits the ground
Pops and springs upward
Before it settles into the
Slickery earth.

I sit under heavy clouds while
My newspaper shelter disintegrates
Wet and wretched, I wait
For streaks of color to appear as
The day's only redemption

Until,

She steps out in her pink galoshes
Runs and stomps in the water that
Collects in the cracks and cavities of a
Dilapidated world and suddenly
I no longer see the drizzling,
Misery of rain.

Star Gazing

“Hydra, right?” you smile.

Light from the full harvest moon illuminates
your upturned face.

We trace our fingers on the giant V stretched over the
darkened horizon.

“Little Dipper,” you name with confidence.

Sprinkled stars shimmer above begging you to
name them all.

I take your hand, almost as big as mine now.

When did you grow?

“That bright one, a planet?” You struggle for the name.

I don’t look up, the solar system can’t compete.

You are all the wonders in the world, neatly wrapped
in a ten-year-old boy. Eyes bluer than far-away fiery
cosmos, a mind as big as the Milky-Way, and a heart
where all my love, worries, hopes and dreams orbit.

“Mom, which one?” you ask, gravity pulling me back.

“Jupiter, Saturn, Mars?” naming them, all miracles,
but none greater than you.

Time Marches On

Thrust into the light
I see the world old and new at once
My time begins and hands move quickly
Everyday something new, and fast

My life ticks forward
Always forward into the future
Racing along at breakneck speed
Children come and grow and are gone
Homes of their own, children of their own
Every day I love, I live, I laugh
Suns rise and set and I race along

Outwardly I move with long practiced rhythm
No one suspects, inwardly, the slow
winding
down

FLASH FICTION



BRITTANY REDFORD

“Guilty”

*Warning—inappropriate for some younger readers

He plowed through the kitchen doors as though the devil himself was after him. He scanned the room frantically, looking for any place to hide, but there was nowhere. How did I let this happen!? How could I have been so careless? He rushed toward the sink and pulled the water on with a hard tug.

He put his hands under the ice cold water and began to scrub frantically. Why was it not coming off?! The red on his hands clung there, stained to his skin, mocking his fear. How am I going to explain this to Carol? Images of his wife’s disapproving look flooded his mind. She is going to be completely crushed. He continued scrubbing until his hands burned. He shoved the water off and ran for a hand towel to dry them. HOW CAN THEY STILL BE RED?! He then took a deep breath, realizing he was losing it and they would for sure notice when they came to get him. Calm down. Maybe they won’t notice. Looking down at his red hands again, they seemed to come to life to laugh at his false confidence.

Just then there was the sound of heavy footsteps running toward him. How did they find me so quick? The call just went out!

“Have you seen him?”

“No, can’t find him, and I checked the library and the bedroom.”

“Keep looking, we’ll find him.”

He felt his palms start to sweat as he held perfectly still, not wanting to give away his location. They seemed to rush right past the kitchen doors, completely missing him for the time being. As he was exhaling a deep breath of relief, he saw it: the knife on the kitchen counter. There it sat mocking him, laughing a vindictive laugh, just as his red hands were doing. He threw himself on it when he noticed the evidence of his crime still stuck to the sharp

blade. Again he threw the water on with determined zeal. They are not going to find me. They are not going to find me. And if they do, all the evidence will be disposed of and they won't be able to prove a thing. Though, just as his hands, he could not seem to get the blade clean, no matter how raw his hands were becoming from all the scrubbing.

Thud, thud. The running had just abruptly stopped at the swinging kitchen doors. They found me. His heart began to run at a painful pace. In a last ditch effort he frantically placed the knife under a stack of dirty dishes in the sink. He had just put his hands in his pockets when the doors burst open SWAT Team style.

“DADDY, DADDY Santa has been here already!”

“What are you two doing out of bed already? What if Santa wasn't finished and you scared him off?”

“No daddy, he was done, he ate all of the red sugar cookies I left him. I knew that would be his favorite!” His eldest daughter put her hands on her hips in deep satisfaction.

“No, it wasn't,” his son pouted. “His reindeer liked the carrot I left the best!!! You can even see where the deer bit into it!”

He was already pushing the kids through the doors back into the family room towards the presents, brushing the crumbs off his face. When his eyes met with his wife's across the room, she shot him a look of good thing you didn't get caught.

And he could not have agreed more.

Past the Rubicon

Early 19th century English surgeon's kits tend to have a grand assortment of blades and similar sharp objects. Anson's was no different. The only oddity was how meticulously well kept his kit happened to be. Anson always prided himself in the glistening cutlery; cutlery that looked as if it were primed for immediate employ. This fact was also odd, seeing how the parlance of the day required disposable medical supplies. Anson was a ball of oddities though.

Anson, with the almost tender touch of a lover, opened his kit with one hand while the other one held a cloth rag to the young woman's face. The room had the pungent odor of ether permeating throughout, so it was a good thing Anson had become used to the particular smell. The woman on his table did not know Anson. He preferred to keep things that way. He had abducted her in the dead of night from her studio apartment complex from somewhere near Hollywood Boulevard. She looked as though she had lived a hard life, not that it mattered to Anson.

Anson raised his favorite knife high into the air so that the dirty tungsten-yellow light glistened on the blade in the abandoned warehouse he had found about a month ago, and he sighed in ecstasy. Anson moaned as he removed the ether soaked rag from the now sedated young woman's face. She was not completely unconscious because that was how Anson liked it.

In the thrill of it all, he began to tear away the woman's clothes with brutish force, a force that distinguishes an animal from a genus and species other than human. He brought the knife near again, sensually.

Upon reaching that same crescendo in its climb to the tungsten-yellow heavens, the knife quickly descended and dug its way deep into the semi-conscious woman. She gurgled and gasped, the pain whipping away some of the ether-wrought semi-coma. She screamed, and he accompanied her. They screamed together to an

audience of no one, for the abandoned warehouse was considerably disconnected from the LA way of life.

As the pain and screams subsided into moans, one of agony from the woman and one of ecstasy from Anson, the woman mumbled something. This odd bit made Anson cock his head. After all, he had done this half a dozen times or so with no utterings, at least not such soft utterings. Sure, he got the customary barrage of cursings aimed at him, God, and no one in particular, but never soft utterings. Anson crept forward almost as if in reverence for this new experience. He leaned his head down as the woman muttered again.

“I...love...you...” she said weakly. “...I...love...you...” She just kept repeating it over and over again.

Anson did not know what to do, so he laughed and pulled out the rest of his equipment. He continued to laugh though his vision was obscured with tears as he commenced to perpetrate the unspeakable acts of madness that he felt kept him sane. He laughed hoarsely through tears as he finished with his entertainment. He sobbed sullenly as he ritualistically cleaned his blades and ordered them so they could be ready at a moment's notice. His soft, puffy red eyes stared blankly as he cleaned up the woman's remains and disposed of them into one of the vats of lye he had stolen from a small soap company in Iowa on his way to LA from Vermont. Finally, he sat in the shower at home, his gear stashed safely away at the warehouse, and he thought.

“I love you,” Anson mouthed over and over again. Finally he laughed hysterically one last time, and resolved to find another one like this woman again. He was past the Rubicon, as the old adage goes, and he wanted more of what was beyond.

Signed, Birchel Shepherd

Outside the window, birds and squirrels were perched on various branches—even they had grown old and stubbornly slow. At his desk, passing the day in a similar manner, Birchel Shepherd held his pen with less finesse in comparison to his former, younger self. A stroke upward—that familiar sound of fibers taking in pigment; Somewhere nearby, a table clock swung the lighter, syncopated *tick* against a larger time piece down the hallway; an inward breath was slow and deliberate, like that of the pianist before producing a practiced chord. And like that of a practiced chord, his wrist-led stroke of seventy-years-memory found finesse woven into the fiber-pulp – pulp that is as much the instrument as the pen—a syncopated *tock* punctuated the end of a particularly elongated down stroke; pigment was allowed to bleed from the edged brass tip into the parchment as his wrist perched like the things perched upon various branches.

Wet ink turned matte: Latent strokes retracing penmanship. Parchment readily absorbed dye; as did books, the pipe tobacco—yellow-edged upon various shelves passing the years, in that similar manner. Perhaps all is like pipe smoke: Released from things of immediate value; ever-ready to roll over upon itself, but always upward—into corners of rooms and bird cages; over tarnished things that should be the objects of flea market rugs. A lingering spice that demands an inward breath, slow and deliberate; it marries with natural smells: Worn armrests, slip covered cushions, book spines, and leather-topped desks.

He laid the pen across the dry parchment and considered his name. It's an odd feeling, a name straying too far from its host. It's much like staring at your mirrored image, familiar with that face, but only as a narrator is familiar with a character. Somewhere, that name rolled over upon itself into the corners of rooms; it touched tarnished things and chipped marble where kings have fallen. He

inhaled a slow and deliberate breath, and pushed away to walk from his chair. The table clock swung a syncopated tick against the sound of wooden floors, heeled, somewhere down the hallway.

The leaf of paper was lovingly abandoned on the leather-topped desk like a host lovingly abandoned by his name. The sun shone down through various branches upon the matte ink, and the fading began. Ink is faded only in comparison to its former self: There are distinctions between black, and charcoal, and storm cloud. There are distinctions between white, and ecru, and candle wax. But the meaning of a word laid by penmanship doesn't fail under the frailties of distinction. And it's that craft that offered Birchel Shepherd life's-learned lessons and endeavors to its reader: tarnished things, table clocks, and pipe smoke carried in a parchment vessel, ferried by a script-figure pilot—signed, Birchel Shepherd.

Through His Eyes¹

My grandmother used to say, “Szeretünk valakit, nem csak, hogy hogyan látjuk őket, de hogy hogyan látjuk magunkat a szemüket”—*We love someone not only for how we see them, but for how we see ourselves through their eyes.* That is probably why I fell in love with Mr. Homer.

Yes, I did love him, in a way. I was not foolish enough to think that he might marry me, of course. But I noticed how his eyes would stay on me longer than necessary, as if the desire to see my face were great enough to try to squeeze in just one more moment of sight. Then the touching, as if by accident at first—*Where are you, Julia? Oh, is that you, there?* Then one day, as I was walking by him in the hall, he reached out.

“Help me to my room, would you mind, Julia? I’ve seem to have gotten a bit turned ‘round here,” he lied—Mr. Homer knows every knot in the wood planks on the floor. So I helped him to his room, then into bed.

I loved how his hands explored me; touching not just to feel, but to know. Most American men favored the thinner ladies, but Mr. Homer’s hands lingered on my fleshier parts, working his fingers as if there were a message in the tiny bumps in my skin, like one of those books he read. He would trace the outline of my jaw, my nose, my lips, and ask me to describe myself. *My eyes are the color of the mid-day sky after a rainstorm,* I would tell him, though they were really the color of the mud-puddle. *My hair is the color of wheat.* I wanted to create a beautiful picture in his mind, one that I could see, too. If I lied, I lied only as a painter lies to his canvas.

Mr. Homer would close his eyes when we made love. Strange that he would do that, for you would think that it would not matter if they were closed or open. I noticed that he kept his eyes open when he wanted to see things that were there, but he would close his eyes if he was trying to see something in his memory or

imagination. So, maybe he knew that we were engaging in a bit of make-believe.

But it was our make-believe, and we were happy in it. It was only when Mr. Homer's brother had that horrible rich lady over for dinner that our illusions shattered. She objected to my sitting at the dinner table, and she chastised Mr. Homer for sleeping with a servant. She ruined the picture in Mr. Homer's head by smearing it with her judgment. Mr. Homer didn't respond. He merely turned to me, and I saw at once that her ugly picture had taken hold. I saw myself through his eyes, and I did not like what I saw.

¹Based on the character of Julia in E.L. Doctorow's *Homer and Langley*

Winter Bees

The only sound Ronnie could hear was the snow falling finely around him and his own frantic breathing. With every exhalation he could see his breath shrinking, his life seeping out of his lungs. He sat trembling with his knees pulled tight against his chest. Blood trickled from a wound on his left shoulder. Until now, the snow fell innocently, but the wind began to pick up as the storm built momentum, stinging Ronnie's eyes. Thoughts flooded his mind; they were as chaotic and random as the event that had just transpired. He needed to know what to do next. He struggled to compose himself and make his legs do what his brain was commanding, but the reaction of his limbs were hindered by either the cold or his sickness. He shook his head in an attempt to cast away his confusion. This seemed to work, and he was able to pull himself to his feet.

In checking his surroundings, he determined he was safe enough for the moment to make his way back toward town. With every step, his consciousness slipped further and further from reality. The only way he was able to focus was by concentrating on his destination and staunching his newly acquired injury with tattered strips of his shirt. He knew it was hopeless to go back. It was all over. Yet he moved on. Upon returning to town, he saw a mechanic shop. In gazing through the window, he saw a flicker of movement. Some sense, some new inspiration, told him he was not endangered by the shadow, and he advanced to the door.

As he lifted his uninjured arm to knock, the door swung open, and a scruffy man with dark circles under his eyes grabbed Ronnie's suspended arm and pulled him into the warmth of the shop.

"What happened to you, son?" The mechanic asked, gazing suspiciously at the wound and brushing the snow off Ronnie's shoulders.

"Some bees." Ronnie spluttered.

“What?” The mechanic asked, closing the door. “Ain’t no bees in the dead of winter, boy! Besides, they couldn’t do that to a man. Talk sense!”

“Thombeezz.” He moaned.

These were Ronnie’s final words. He then turned, grabbed the mechanic by the shoulders, and sank his teeth into his throat. The mechanic shrieked in shock and fell to the floor the same way Ronnie had when he was bitten. The mechanic scrambled to the door, reaching for the knob. His fingers slipped on the handle, and the howling wind thrust the door open. He fled hopelessly into the snowstorm. Ronnie watched him with distant, lifeless eyes—his mind blank. He followed the mechanic’s path out the door. There were no more thoughts now—only impulses. Impulses that made his leg pull up his foot and place it back on the floor, followed by the other leg and foot. The only purpose that drove Ronnie now was finding the lifeblood that no longer ran through his veins.



SHORT
FICTION

LYN BARDWELL

First Time Buyer

The salesman sits behind his desk, his fingers idly brushing the top edge of his brass nameplate. As I speak, he takes a deep breath through his mouth and nose, then purses his lips and knits his eyebrows together in concentration.

He's doing his best—but failing—to be interested in our situation. I don't mind, really. I know he's done this scores of times with countless couples just like us, and to be fair, he's probably not going to get much of a commission off us. But I've never done this before, and I'm determined to a good job of it. His indifference need not prevent us from making the best choice for us. I've done plenty of homework about the market and what we need to know as new buyers.

I'll admit it though, I *am* nervous. But I can honestly say that in spite of my jitters, I am optimistic and confident. The days and months and all the circumstances leading up to this purchase have forced a lot of adjustments on us, many of which we didn't want to make. But we've rolled with the punches and reacted the best we could. Now, in the face of this latest and most drastic change, I don't know about Sam, but today I can honestly say that I am ready to accept it and move forward. However, I still have a question or two before we get down to the business of buying.

Should we buy high-end and risk our budget? High-end often correlates with higher quality, but not always. Besides, this move has already cost us dearly, and it hasn't actually happened yet. Perhaps we could get by with something a little cheaper. After all, we really don't need much space or bells and whistles, and while lots of scenic landscaping would be nice, it's certainly not necessary. Plus, wouldn't it be nice to be able to pay it off quickly and not have to worry about payments for years down the road? Sam agrees it would, but he's willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure comfort. So that settles it, we'll start with the low-end models.

With that decision made, we look to our options. The salesman brings out his stacks of brochures advertising various models and thumbs through them. He pulls out what must have been at the lowest end of low. It appears cramped and void of creature comforts. I request that he aim just a bit higher, so he goes back to thumbing until he sees something he thinks may work. He shows us a lovely cream-colored model with a bit of light ornamentation. It's breathtaking. It stirs sentimentality in me and makes me remember my grandmother. On the other hand, it's decidedly old-fashioned, so probably not the best fit.

The salesman pulls out a few more brochures advertising the best the market has to offer within our price range, but I find fault with all of them. We volley back and forth for a while when it occurs to me that Sam hasn't said anything about any of them. I turn to him and fully take him in. He's slumped back into his chair, fingers pressing at the discomfort behind his temples, eyelids blocking out the world. I ask what's wrong. He is apprehensive and hesitant. I wish he would voice his opinions more, but I understand. He's extremely uncomfortable with decisions of this kind, so I take his hand in mine and turn again to the task at hand.

The salesman resumes play until I see exactly what I'm looking for. For a second I can say nothing, so I smile. I am content. It's perfect, and I tell him so. It has the right price, the right size, the right amenities and accessories. I especially love the slightly rustic look of the outside view. Lots of wood trim handled just right to allow the beautiful natural grain to come through.

Then we see the location. It is on a hill, surrounded by a few evergreen trees and a giant oak, overlooking a quaint little pond. How decidedly picturesque! Just right for two of us. It appears to be all but hidden from the road, and such privacy would be nice. When Sam visits, we will lie outside together, stare up at the sky, and not worry about eavesdroppers or nosy neighbors. I can envision how it will be. He will have lots to say then. He'll talk about all

our friends and his work with the children who depend on him for so much.

I turn again to Sam, but it's clear that he doesn't want to be involved. Perhaps if we were going to share our new home immediately he would be more excited. This purchase forces the realization that we must be apart for a while. I remind him that this is not the end for us. He will join me when circumstances pronounce it reasonable.

I hate what this is doing to him. He has resisted this move and struggled so much with the idea of change. I wish we could stay here together, but we can't. My job here is finished. There's no other work I can do here and no prospects open to me, so we must move on. I quietly remind him of our lack of options and ask him to see the positives associated with this.

At any rate, I am satisfied with our choice. I think it will be a very comfortable place to wait until Sam can join me. I'm ready to buy it now, sight unseen, but Sam begs me to be patient before we commit financially. He says after we see it and thoroughly inspect the location in person, we'll have to think it over for a few days before we make a decision. No need to get too hasty. After all, one can't be too careful when making final arrangements.

The salesman nods, we make the necessary viewing preparations, and all shake hands. I'm tired after so many decisions, so my weary Sam wheels me out of the office, past the chapel, and out into the parking lot. He helps me into the car, and I sit and wait while he returns the mortuary's chair.

I can see the hearse from where I sit. I wish my upcoming ride weren't so impending, but with nothing to delay it, I must find solace where I can. I am comforted by the elegance of the vehicle. It's a beautiful blue and chrome affair, very dignified, but not too ominous. I believe I shall feel just like a queen riding in a carriage when it ferries me in my new home to my tree-covered hill by the pond.

Colder Now

The wind's been blowin' a gale. The sea's been spittin' its spray of tiny arrows at my frozen face for days. Thought I couldn't get any wetter. My clothes were long-ago soaked through to my chafing skin, but everything feels colder now.

I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that they would leave me alone on deck. I couldn't believe my ears' tales of banshee screams and the moans of Cyclops. The sounds of the water sizzle and roar. There is thunder of crashing, boiling, churnin' waves; shrieks of the omnipotent, omnipresent wind. I couldn't believe that blackest night was getting darker as rogue giants raced down upon us.

The screaming wind disappeared. I felt the boat drop into a silent pit as the inky night drove a mountain of water toward us. Minutes before, I had been wishing that the screams would stop, fearing that they would drive me mad, but in the silent shadow of that unbelievably big wave, I knew maddening terror. We had just rocketed down the back of one wave and started climbing another, only this wave wasn't rolling or breaking. It just kept going up and up, becoming a cliff several times as high as the boat was long.

It taxes the imagination to understand the enormity of this wave, an Everest of seawater, thrust up thirty or forty or fifty times as high as our mast. *Work your thoughts* and imagine a devouring, murderous, seemingly endless wave.

The wave got steeper and started to break. The wind ripped away the monster's boiling top and sent it streaking into the night. The boat slowed, grinding away her speed on the wave's dark face 'till she started slipping backward. Her helm went dead, stalling under her half-buried stern. Her tail dug in, making her wallow and roll like a maddened mare in a foaling gone wrong.

I screamed out, but the wind's icy fingers, probing deep in my throat, snatched away my panicked voice and flung it into the

night. Shoving on our nose, the wave muscled us back down into the trough, and like a great, benign whale, it rolled harmlessly under our keel and off into the night.

I started wonderin' how in God's name we were going to keep the boat under control. You couldn't climb these waves. You couldn't turn and run from that wind. It would only chase you, driving your craft faster and faster, eventually capsizing or even tripping the boat, sending her tumblin' end-over-end, scatterin' what was left of us across the face of the sea.

To me it seemed only seconds before another giant, a hateful and murderous wave, started to rear-up between us and the wind. The night's hellish screams faded into an ominous hush as we fell into that rogue wave's dark hell of a lee. The skipper stuck his head up to see what was happening. Then, out of the night, I could see the monster comin' on our starboard quarter. I screamed down at him, "Close the hatch for Christ's sake!" In the sudden silence, as I felt the boat start to lift below my boots, I heard the hatch bang shut, its lock and bar click secure.

Time collapsed, exploded, then collapsed again, a pulsating black hole, a toy manipulated by demons in the night. It seemed an hour that the boat was rising on the monster's swelling face. Up and up the wave we went as the hateful killer forced its toes under our hull. The boat was listing hard and climbing the wave. Then I saw a mighty wall of jet-black seawater reaching out, arcing over us and obscuring the comfortless night sky. I grabbed and clung to a lifeline. The only sounds in that timeless silence were the explosions of my pounding heart and the frenetic struggle of my racing breaths. I could hear my life paying out like yards of line with every heartbeat and every breath.

The titan wave clutched us to its chest, curled itself around us, and vomited tons of ocean on top of the boat in a malignant effort to force us under. The violent deluge tore me clear of the lines and away from the vessel. I wasn't scared for the first few seconds, but then I could feel the mighty wave's tons of churning brine forcing

my body down and away from the boat, drawing my tether tight. I gulped down my rising panic, held my breath, and waited for this lackey of Satan to either let me go or to kill me. Time stretched out again, ballooning like my aching lungs 'til it seemed the wave had held me down for hours, its irresistible force burying me alive. All the while, the boat fought on the other end of my harness and tether like a mighty fish, rolling, tossing and jerking. Then, all at once, the line went slack.

My head still hadn't broken the surface and I needed air, badly. I couldn't tell which way was up. Which way should I swim? I started to lose my mind in a panic then remembered the Co2 cartridge on my vest and gave the line a pull. My life vest inflated and I felt its newfound buoyancy shooting me to the surface.

The cold, black, hellish air burned in my lungs as I sucked in breath after gulping, coughing, choking breath. My head cleared and I looked around for the boat. I couldn't see her. I pulled on the line but found only the ring I had been tied to dangling from the rope's end, mocking my disbelief.

I went completely insane in panic's grip, I slapped at the strobe light on my vest and switched on its explosive flash, flash, flash, flash. Fumbling at my survival whistle, I shoved it to my mouth and blew and blew and blew. Neither light nor whistle had magic enough to conjure a boat amidst this night of screaming wind and stinging spray.

I had been left alone in the wind and the water and the black, black night. Tormented spirits became my misfit companions in a hell of hopelessness. It's much, much colder now.

Glimmer

A glint of silver light shined as a long spear reached its apex in the sky and began its decent toward the ground. Time stood still in that moment and then returned with full strength. The thrower of the javelin kept his keen eye upon it until it came down in full force upon a great beast. It pierced the creature's skull above its right eye, forcing its head to the ground, and fastened it there with a great "pong!" Its body thrashed for a few moments before it gave up its life and let its final breath escape. The champion walked toward the giant carcass to examine it. It was about twenty feet long with two great twisting horns protruding from its head like a crown. Thick brown fur covered almost every inch of its body, and in some places, green moss had grown into the fibers of its hair. It walked on all fours and had massive razor sharp claws protruding from its great feet.

As the warrior approached the beast, he paused. His heightened hunting senses warned him of danger. He saw a rustle of movement on the opposite side of his kill in the forest beyond. Without taking his eye off of that spot, he grasped both hands on his weapon and yanked it out of the beast. Hot blood steamed off the tip of his spear as he surveyed the trees, anticipating an attack. His hawk-like eyes were all that moved.

He decided to head back for assistance; the beast was now dead and his village could live in peace for a little while. With extreme caution he made his way back. He finally reached the place where his horse should have been, only to find the reins snapped and dangling from the tree he had tied them to. That horse had been his great aid and companion for years. It was as adept a hunter as the warrior, and it infuriated him to think something might have happened to it while he was gone.

He followed its tracks into the forest with the spear in hand and let out a loud whistle for the horse. He could tell that what had

been spying on him in the forest earlier could have easily snuck to his horse while he was waiting for it to attack. As stealthily as he could, he continued tracking the horse into the woods. Every flicker of movement and snapping twig made him uneasy. He wasn't afraid; he was simply more aware, his senses on fire. Sweat dripped from his brow as every muscle in his body twitched with anticipation.

He stopped in his tracks when he heard the gallop of the horse. A great surge of relief fell over him; his companion was okay. Then he heard a faint whinny and a "phwump!" as if it had fallen over. There was a clearing to his left. He pushed through the foliage and cast his eyes on a grisly sight. In the middle of the clearing lay his horse, mangled. Blood covered most of the grass in the small area, and his own blood began to boil. He heard the galloping again. It sounded much like his horse, but now he knew it was dead. He realized it was something else, and it was headed in his direction.

As before, he saw a twitch in the woods beyond, but this time, the creature was running full speed toward him. It seemed to be a flashback to the moment that he was about to kill the other beast. There was a glimmer of light that reflected off of the new monster's coat. It was wolf-like with glossy white fur. It stood as tall as a bull. A smear of blood ran from its maw down its chest. The man stood intentionally in its path with his spear at his side. He wanted it to appear as if he did not know that he was about to be attacked. Then at the last moment, as the beast leaped out of the woods, the warrior braced the butt end of the javelin into the ground and aimed the business end at the creature's heart. The creature overshot him though; he underestimated its jump by mere feet, and it came crashing down behind him. He swirled around to defend himself, but the creature was too fast.

"B! B! B!" A godly voice called. The warrior blocked with his spear as the beast swiped with his massive paw. It was deflected by the spear, but then the creature leaped to the warrior's other side.

“No!” Came the unearthly voice again as the creature swept the man’s feet from under him, pinning him to the ground as it clamped its jaws around the warrior’s throat.

The world went black. A flash of light shone. The game controller glinted in the rays of the sun pouring through the window and came crashing back to the ground. A giant “Game Over” sign blinked on a glossy television screen.

The Read Scare

The problems started all because I wanted my kid to be smart. A noble cause, right? Obviously. So when Russ turned three, I took up reading books, because I never had before. I'd read magazines, read the sports section, read stuff on the internet, fortune cookies, bathroom walls, etc., but never a book all the way through. In high school, in order to pass English class, I'd ask friends what our books were about to pass the tests and to write the papers. I just didn't have the glue-on-my-butt-pockets personality to stay put long enough to get through more than two pages of a book at a time. But my kid, I wanted him to start early. I wanted him to learn by example. So that meant me cozying up on the La-Z-Boy with a book while he played with his toys, occasionally looking up at me—his faux-scholarly dad—and thinking about how he wanted to be like me—the reading part of me, anyways.

I bought these books I'd heard were supposed to be smart and I situated Russ's building blocks next to the La-Z-Boy. I sat down and flipped through *Moby Dick*, letting the breeze from the hundreds of pages cool me off because I knew I was in for the long-haul. I started reading: *Call me Ishmael* . . . and by the third paragraph I was out and Russ woke me an hour later, hungry. I made us peanut butter sandwiches and decided the armchair was way too comfy for reading and that the appropriate chair for reading a book was a barstool. I sat down and picked up *Moby Dick* with one hand and the sandwich with the other and before I knew it I came to thirty-seconds later with peanut butter smeared across my face and my kid laughing from his highchair at the spectacle that was my bobbing head. *Maybe it's the book*, I thought. I tried a different book. Snooze. Another book. Snooooooوزه. *Maybe I didn't get enough sleep last night*. I tried reading the next day and the one after that, each time resulting in snoozes.

Try—fail. Try—fail. That was the pattern for a week, but I wouldn't give up. Russ needed me as an example. I didn't want him working the nightshift, stocking shelves at a grocery store, like me. I was hell-bent on him being smart, so I came up with a system. I'd read a page of a book and then I'd solve a couple of crossword puzzle clues and read another page, then some more clues and another page then some more clues. The trick I used was to tear the crossword puzzle from the newspaper and sneak it into my book and my kid wouldn't even know. He'd just see me reading a book the whole time. I hated it, the manipulation, but what was I supposed to do?

The plan kind of worked, except I'd get so wrapped up doing a puzzle that I'd forget to read for like a half-hour and then I'd forget what I'd just read so I'd have to reread. Long story short, I tried a number of ways to keep me entertained while reading -- crossword puzzles, Sudoku, doodling, counting the number of words on a page, etc. There were so many alternatives to the novel, so many things that were more interesting, that I gave up on reading altogether. But I still kept the book in my hand. I figured that was enough. All Russ really needed was to see me looking into a book. He had no idea if I was actually reading, consuming the information. So my reading experiment ended, but the outward gesture remained. I'd be happy, not bored, and my kid would get an example out of me. Win-win.

I began thinking of more creative ways of sneaking entertainment into books, which conveniently became larger. I'd read comic books, the newspaper sports section, and I'd even wear sunglasses and sleep. All these different forms of entertainment culminated with me watching sports games on my cell phone behind a book, leading me to cut out the pages of a book and placing the phone into it as if it were contraband—like the way they hollow out books to sneak things into prisons in the movies. Now I could spend up to three hours at a time looking into a book and Russ would think

his dad the book-smartest person ever and never be the wiser. It was the stuff father-of-the-year awards are made of.

One day, my wife came home from work early. I looked up from my book/game-on-phone and began trembling. She'd told me to wash the dishes first thing in the morning and now it was past noon. "You read books?" she asked. "I've never seen you with a book."

I snuck a finger into the book and turned off the game. "I just started," I said. She smiled this deep smile. She walked into the kitchen and I expected a scream at the sight of the dirty dishes, really I did. She could sometimes sound like what I imagined one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse sounding like. But there was no scream. She simply strolled back into the living room and gently reminded me about the dishes.

"Don't worry about them," she said. "You should keep reading. It'll be good for you." My eyes widened as if I had just witnessed a miracle, like a blind man being healed type of miracle, so I opened the book and continued watching the game.

Well you can probably guess that my "book-reading" extended into the nights or whenever I needed to get out of a chore. I'd still do a crossword or Sudoku puzzle and my wife would just think I was taking notes in the book. I'd still watch the game and she'd just think I was really into the story. I knew what would happen if I was caught. I knew the penalty—something akin to a torture generated by high-pitched screeching lectures about work ethic and maybe even some physical abuse. Until then, I was free.

But my freedom started to disappear one evening in July over dinner—lamb chops and mashed potatoes, I believe. "How's your book?" she asked between mouthfuls.

"Good, good," I said, and shoveled a pile of potatoes into my mouth.

"What's it about?"

Now the real dilemma wasn't so much that I didn't know what the book was about, but it was that I couldn't even remember

book's title I'd been pretending to read. I exaggerated my chewing and pointed to my mouth, an indication that I couldn't answer her at the moment. My mind was failing me. What the hell should I say? I was sure the jig was up. "It's about a guy," I said. "Kind of a love story. . . cough, cough . . . and he . . . cough, cough . . . excuse me, some potatoes went down the wrong tube." I left the table and glanced at the title of the book on the Lazy-boy where I'd left it. Then once inside the bathroom I looked up a plot synopsis of the book on my phone. I was saved. I just couldn't get caught in that circumstance again, so each time before I started a new book I made sure I knew the basic plotline. Just in case.

But this only worked for a time because my wife kept going on about how this guy at her work, Rick, was looking for people to start a book club with. "You should join. It would be good for you to socialize about something you love to do." Or she'd say, "Please just help me out by helping Rick out. He's a good friend." After three weeks of this I really had no choice. Now, I should mention that this Rick guy was a pretentious bastard, so I knew he'd probably pick novels of brutal drivel written by some killjoy guy in the 1700s. That would have been terrible, except that old books are analyzed on the Internet more than any other books. I read website after website of analyses of each novel we read. I knew everything about these books and was clearly the cleverest member in our book club. Whenever there was a question, I had the answer. Whenever an allusion or metaphor was misunderstood, I knew the reference. If someone wondered about a theme, I elaborated. And I'd never read even so much as a word from the books we discussed.

Life was great: I was an example to Russ, no more chores, and I even did this great thing for my wife by helping out her friend; all while I was watching sports on my phone. No harm, no foul. That is until Rick asked me to edit the novel he'd been working on.

"What?" I said. "Seriously?"

"You're the best person I know of. I'd pay you of course."

And what could I say to that? I had let on that this was my passion, reading and analyzing novels. I nodded my head silently and at the next book club meeting he handed me a four-hundred page brick of a manuscript and a check for three-hundred dollars. “Don’t be afraid to change anything,” Rick said. “I trust your judgment.”

Trust? Me? What were people thinking, trusting me? *How could I have let the charade sink this deep?* I thought. I was sick. My stomach literally started turning over and over like a way-too-full washing machine. I felt horrible, and after two weeks with the manuscript, I picked up my phone, ready to confess to Rick. Then I saw the check he’d given me poking out of the manuscript and I smiled. I rushed to the computer and typed into Google, “novel editing service,” and the results were my salvation. I could continue my game. But how much was I willing to pay in order to keep the illusion of my genius? I mean, at the book club meetings, I was the brains. I didn’t want to give up that. I thought about it, went to the attic, took my guitar and my amp and drove to a pawn-shop. That money along with the three-hundred dollar check was enough to afford a pretty good online editor, and two months later I handed Rick the corrected manuscript with “my” notes. I could finally rest and go back to the way things were. You’d think.

But no. Nothing’s ever that simple. God forbid. Somehow the worst imaginable scenario came about: Rick got published. Great for him, yeah? But now I had to hope that the editing service I used never saw the book. Because if they did, I don’t know, I might be sued or the service might call Rick wondering why he listed me as an editor instead of them. The situation seemed volatile and there was nothing I could do but wait and see—and hope.

What happened next, though, was completely unpredictable. “My publishers were so impressed,” Rick said, “that they want you to interview for an editing job.” Now you think I’d be scared, but I figured I’d go into the interview and they’d see I hadn’t spent a day in college and they’d reject me. So I agreed and went to the interview. But Mr. Egan, the owner of the publishing firm didn’t care

about experience and in fact wanted, “a fresh opinion” and “not someone indoctrinated by the staleness that was the university.” He even told me that I did such a great job on Rick’s novel that he wasn’t worried about me at all. I was hired on the spot. My wife, upon hearing the news and the fifteen-thousand more a year, sort of, with the doom lurking in her eyes, intimidated me into taking the job.

So, like the final steps a criminal takes before he’s executed, I gave the grocery store my two-week-notice and I started working for Mr. Egan. “Let me ease you into the job,” he said and slapped a five-hundred page manuscript into my hands to be edited in a week. I went back to the cubical they had set up for me and I started to pray—and cry. What could I do? I couldn’t pay for an online editor every time I needed a manuscript edited. In fact, I couldn’t even afford to do it once.

I sat at my desk for hours and thought up different plans. Nothing came to me. I searched the internet for answers. None. I thought about going to a university and enrolling just so I could take advantage of students who might help. Too much work. I even considered posting the pages of the manuscript in an online chat rooms, hoping people would edit them for me. Unrealistic. I stared at the manuscript. “Looks like this’ll be the first book I read,” I said to myself. I took a deep breath and plunged in.

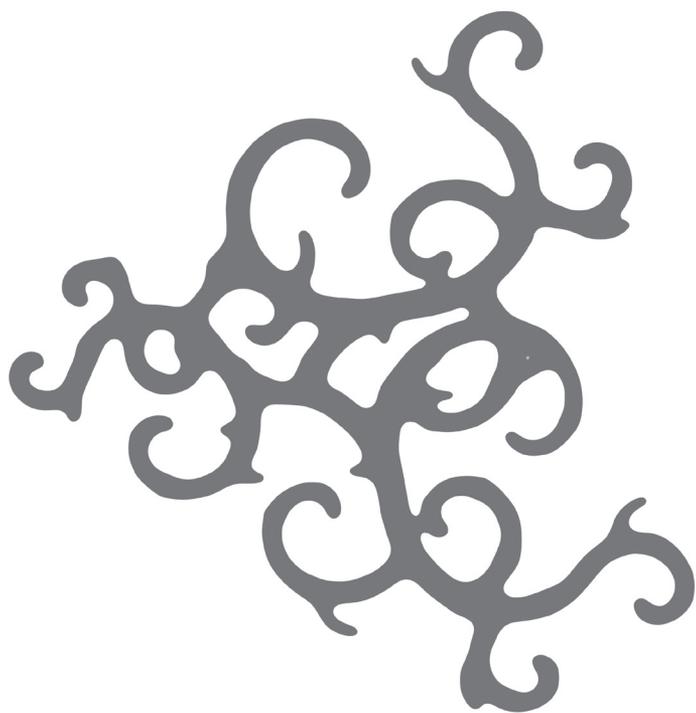
The book wasn’t half bad. I actually enjoyed it and my heart was pumping so much from my nervousness I couldn’t fall asleep. Perfect. My red pen flew across the pages every time I spotted something I didn’t like or didn’t make sense. The story was engaging, so much so, that I would forget to make corrections for dozens of pages at a time. I relished this experience. I soaked in every word and phrase. I cried at the sad parts and laughed when it was funny, and by the end of the week, I turned in the manuscript.

It didn’t take long for me to get called into Mr. Egan’s office. I shut the door, sat down and he stared at me with a look so indifferent there was no way of decoding it. In front of him was the

manuscript I'd worked on, just lying on his desk, a testament to my competency—or, heaven forbid, just the opposite. I stared back and nodded my head as if coaxing a response from him. He set his mouth to a false smile. "What the hell is this?" he said, lifting up the manuscript. "Is this a joke?"

It was strange. I just sat there silent and winced, and the wince turned into a smile. I knew I should've been thinking of some excuse to throw back at Mr. Egan. I'd grown quite good at excuses lately, and it wouldn't have surprised me at all if I had come up with one that satisfied him. I knew the consequences of my silence and my smile, how I'd be unemployed, maybe an investigation into who really edited Rick's book, scorn and ostracism from the book club, an endless screeching fury from my wife and maybe even a disappointed look from the future grown-up Russ. All of this I knew. But as I sat there, the object of Mr. Egan's wonder and anger, I was all right. Everything was okay. I was happy, because I'd finally read my first book.

CREATIVE
NON-
FICTION



CREATIVE NON-FICTION

AMY TOWNSLEY

EPIPHANY OVERALL WINNER

L'art Véritable n'est pas Apprécié en son Temps
True Art is not Appreciated in its Time

*Dear Bird,
I found your feather,
Your tickly blue feather,
And I'm going to keep it forever and ever and ever.*

-Amy Mayo, age 7

This poem, my poem, which I had penned under the picture of a bluebird in flight, was displayed on the wall of my second grade classroom amongst the more puerile scribblings of my classmates. It was a good poem. I knew it was a good poem. It had that feeling as I wrote it—the feeling that my pen was gliding as effortlessly as an expert skater across the ice as the ink flowed onto the paper, forming just the right words. Though the poem had come easily, I had taken pains to draw the bird, one feather falling to the ground, using two colors of blue to capture light, texture, and shadow. The person—the speaker in the poem—was not represented because it was not a poem about the person. It was a poem about the bird. And it was a good poem.

Diagonally to the upper left of my poem was Stephanie's poem, and it was attracting a large crowd. Stephanie was one of those neat, little girls with a neat, little chin-length bob haircut that was the *de rigueur* style amongst the daughters of the American military stationed here in Izmir, Turkey. Stephanie was in the highest reading group—Rabbits, or something like that—along with three other neat, little girls with neat, little bobs. By some *blague cruelle* I had been placed one group lower, another group with another animal name, as though giving the groups animal names

would lessen the sting of being labeled stupid. Rabbits, Hamsters, Goldfish, Special-Needs Turtles. I was certain that my aesthetic was wrong for the tiny little Rabbits; what other reason could there be for keeping me out of the highest reading group? My wavy tresses tumbled mutinously down to my waist, my long legs forced my head a full six to eight inches insurgently above my peers', disallowing conformity. I could overhear the Rabbits' lessons, each one reinforcing my belief that I had been misplaced. One lesson required them to figure out a simple code: B stood in place of A, C for B, and so on. When they got to Z, not a one could figure it out. *A, you dumb bunnies.* The teacher tried to guide them to the answer, but they all sat mute, twitching their noses. Finally, I could stand it no more. "A," I said under my breath, just loud enough for my teacher to hear. Instead of being impressed that I had solved the puzzle that had eluded her star pupils, she shot me a look that clearly said, *This lesson is for my prized Rabbits, it is not for the likes of mere Hamsters.*

Stephanie's *poème avec l'image de l'art* rankled me. It was a Rabbit versus Hamster moment, and I was unfairly disadvantaged once again. Her piece was placed at an adult's eye level, plus my teacher was cooing over it as a curator would adulate a Picasso or a Monet, though it was clear to even the most novice dilettante that this work was the artistic equivalent of a Thomas Kinkadee accompanied by a dirty limerick. She had thrown one lazy rhyme into a rough ABAC format with no thought whatsoever to meter or assonance. For goodness' sake, she had written a poem about a bug *around* a drawing of a ladybug! How trite! How cliché! A complete bastardization of the concrete poetry form— uninspiringly derivative of Herbert's "Easter Wings." Talk about pandering to the bourgeoisie.

I simply could not let this stand. "Look, she misspelled 'cute'! She wrote 'cut'. 'I think bugs are cut'," I stage-whispered to my mother, loud enough for Stephanie's fans to hear. My mother hushed me, but her single gentle squeeze of my shoulder clearly

communicated her understanding of my *échec* at having this Twinkie of a poem upstage my literary *Cerises Clafoutis*.

I am not sure if Stephanie's sycophants were able to hear my mumblings over their rhapsodizing about the ingenuity required to write a poem *about* a bug *around* a picture of a bug (in retrospect, said sycophants were almost certainly the parents of the *veulent être* artist, but that's really no excuse), but my teacher did. This time her glaring look told me that I had failed where Stephanie had triumphed. Nobody wants to read a *good* poem by a second grader on Parents' Night; people want to read a cute poem by a second grader. Or, in this case, a cut poem.

It was a crushing lesson to learn at such an *âge tendre*, but it is a lesson all writers must learn eventually. *L'art véritable n'est pas apprécié en son temps*.

RACHEL A. ROBBINS

The Composition of a Lie

There is always that one girl. The girl that has everything--looks, popularity and an adequate dose of brains. Jessica Jewkes was *that* girl and a member of the school band. Bands rarely produced the popular kids, but it did spit out Jessica: the flute-playing heroine of the eighth grade. And I wanted to be just like her.

Although we had never met, the summer after my seventh-grade year would intertwine our fates. Ms. Leeman was a Diamond-Level premier patron of our local symphony and had taken it on herself to bring better music education to all local student musicians. She sponsored, organized, promoted and was named CEO of the first annual Southern Utah Young Musician Music Camp.

I hesitated as I stepped into a building at the community college and looked for the flute room. A high trill caught my ear as I turned the corner and saw Mrs. Brown, the flute teacher, gazing heavenward in ecstasy. I knew immediately who she was smiling at: Jessica Jewkes. Jessica swayed side to side as weightless notes poured out of the instrument, creating sparks and shimmers across the room. She was perfection personified. I tripped over the coarse carpet beneath my oversized feet and shattered the mood like a baseball nailing a window. I received an insincere smile from Mrs. Brown and melted into the nearest chair.

Our first exercise was to partner up and tune by playing the same note and making the appropriate adjustments until our flutes merged as one. As luck would have it, I was paired with Jessica. I had never actually spoken to her before and I felt like a child approaching a Disney Princess. My throat tightened, and I felt my palms become moist. I murmured a timid hello and felt my fingers grip my flute like a lifeline.

Jessica looked at me and gave a snide laugh with a big eye roll:

“How boring is this? I can’t stand spending days with Mrs. B. She’s such a loser.”

I gasped audibly, my mouth falling open in shock as all my pre-conceived notions of sweet Jessica drifted out the window as fast as a stack of sixteenth notes.

With another smile, she asked my name and suggested I tune to her because she had perfect pitch. Of course she did. Sharla Carter from the rival school watched Jessica through narrowed eyes as Mrs. Brown called on Jessica to demonstrate. The only male flutist, Danny Gibson—skinny with bright red hair and wire-rimmed glasses that were only held up by his large nose—clenched his fists as Jessica shined. Danny played technically as well as Jessica, but with a fierceness that didn't look pleasant coming from fingers on a flute. While Jessica swayed to the music, Danny convulsed in rapid jerks. If there was a woodwind-abuse hotline, I would have reported him.

The morning moved on until the bell sounded, announcing lunchtime. We sat outside together in the sweltering sun as I surveyed Jessica between nibbling bites of peanut butter and jelly sandwich from our pre-packed camp lunches. She had dark-blond hair streaked with highlights that fell upon her rounded shoulders. Her brown eyes were illuminated with pastel colored eye shadow, eyeliner and thick mascara that my parents had forbidden me to wear. White teeth glistened as she made fun of everyone in sight. I choked on my perfectly cut carrot sticks as she mocked Mrs. Brown's praise.

Patsy Smith caught my eye and shot me a disapproving stare. Patsy was in my church congregation and obviously wanted to remind me that I knew better. I felt a pinprick at my conscience, which was quickly dispelled by laughing even harder as Jessica poked fun at Patsy's "pizza-face" and Sharla's "flat-as-a-pancake chest". Jessica rolled her eyes in Patsy's direction and began walking towards the campus. I followed like a lost puppy.

The fierce June sun beat down on the parking lot, creating mirage waves in the distance, obscuring my vision of what was ahead. The parking lot had a gentle slope. We climbed to the top

and found a sun-bleached golf cart with the college logo emblazoned on the side. Jessica's chatter tapered off as she surveyed the golf cart.

"Who's the moron who left it parked here? Let's take the brake off and watch it roll!" Her brown eyes lit up in anticipation, and a giggle bubbled out of her throat.

"We'll get in trouble for sure," I replied, "and it belongs to the college," I said reverently.

Jessica leveled her eyes at me and said the word that no teenager wants to hear. . .

"Chicken."

I felt a trickle of sweat roll down the back of my Young Musicians T-shirt.

"No, I'm not," was my shaky reply.

Jessica took a step back, dropped her chin and looked at me with her penciled eyebrows arched in a question.

My sand-coated throat became a vice, shutting off all oxygen. I could feel my hands shake as Jessica's eyes bored a hole into my back. My eyes darted back and forth as I scanned the area for witnesses. There was no one. No students, no college staff, no campus police, and no Patsy Smith shaking her head.

My heart pounded against my chest so loudly I could drown out a marching band.

Ba-bump. Ba-bump-bump. Ba-ba-bump. The rhythm of crime wasn't catchy.

My feet slowly inched forward on the pavement. It felt like I was walking on steaming lava rocks. The oppressive heat beat on me and sweat began to pour off my forehead in buckets. I was suddenly assaulted by the sharp smell of alcohol from my melting hairspray.

The golf cart was just out of reach. Jessica hissed at me to hurry. I loomed closer, placing my damp hand on the bumpy exterior of the cart. I felt the scraped paint, the damaged door, the worn leather on the steering wheel. The interior was spotless, and

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the sharp smell of Windex lingered like a ghost. I peered under the steering wheel and saw the emergency brake. My hand shook as much as Doug did when he played a Bach Air. I reached down. I lifted the lever and backed up as the cart began to roll. I stumbled as my hands flew out to protect me.

The heat from the pavement felt like a brand.

A male voice in the distance shouted. Jessica swore softly and told me to run for it. Our feet beat on the hot pavement until we reached the cluster of cars on the opposite side of the lot.

I hid behind a blue Grand Am and raised my eyes to see the cart careen down the parking lot. I hid my face and heard the loud honking of a car and the scream of tires on the road. Bile rose in my throat as my peanut butter and jelly sandwich fought its way out of my churning stomach.

Jessica reveled in the excitement and gave me her whole-hearted approval, but her long-sought praise sounded out-of-tune and hollow.

As class began, I gazed at the painted-wood door that was propped open as the air conditioning blew in a heavily-scented perfume. The air grew thick with the strong scent that reminded me of Saturday shopping with my mother at the JC Penny perfume counter. A wrinkled jeweled hand pushed the door open and Ms. Leeman stood before us. She wore tapered black slacks and a peach frilly top set off by diamond earrings and red lipstick. Her mouth opened as she spit out tightly clipped words informing us that the college security claimed someone from our music camp caused a golf cart to roll. Ms. Leeman would question us individually until the culprit was apprehended. A manicured finger pointed at Jessica to interview first.

Jessica flipped her hair and threw a pointed look my way as she walked confidently out the door. I stared at the mud-colored carpet, guilty thoughts playing in my head like a stuck record. They returned quickly. Ms. Leeman smiled as Jessica sweetly patted her shoulder.

“Not a word,” she hissed under her breath as Ms. Leeman signaled for me to follow. The carpet caught me again, and I barely missed knocking Ms. Leeman over. Her red heels cut into the floor as I followed her across the hall. Her heavily-lidded eyes held mine as she asked if I knew anything about what happened.

My heart beat faster than a snare drum solo.

“Well?” she questioned. A fermata of silence quivered in the air.

Against all my instincts, I met her gaze and lied.

Lied with the effortless rhythm I should not have possessed.

The words wrote themselves and flew out of my open mouth.

I lied.

Lied.

Lied.

I don’t remember much else about the music camp, but I do remember the guilt. I remember the guilt that ate at me like a starved flesh-eating African piranha. The loud clap of knowledge thundered in my ears that Jessica was no friend. She had played me far better than she’d ever played her flute.

I never spoke to Jessica again. The next spring she was caught smoking and was suspended from school. A couple years ago, I saw her arrest picture in the newspaper for shop-lifting to feed her drug habit. She must have traded her flute for a different kind of pipe...

The day the golf cart rolled changed me. I began to form my own identity outside the shadows of others. Like a fledgling bird, I learned to fly, and when true friendship came—I was ready. I learned I could only hear perfect harmony when I was at peace with myself, and that was a lesson worth more than the Diamond-Level symphony patronage.

Life Summed Up

Beep! Beep! Beep!

I open my eyes and look at the alarm clock. 6:00 A.M. Another day, no not yet, I hit the snooze.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Open my eyes a second time, a little frustrated this time. Look at the alarm clock: ten after six. Should I get up? Not yet. I hit the snooze another time.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Damn the alarm is going off again. I open my eyes for the third time; I think it's the third time. Look at the alarm clock. Seven A.M. How many times have I hit the snooze? I've got to get up now. I'm late.

The morning is a rush of panic and chaos. Hit the bathroom, take a shower, find clothes and get dressed.

"Carrie, I don't have clean socks."

"Yes you do, they're in the dryer. Try looking next time."

Put on shoes and socks, find my coat, and pack my backpack.

"Carrie, have you seen my wallet?"

"It's on the microwave."

I give kisses goodbye.

"Have fun at school," or "have a good day at work."

I rush out the door, no time for the car to warm up. I've got to get going. Mental note, don't hit the snooze so many times tomorrow.

I get three blocks away and check my rear view mirror. I notice the car seats for the kids in the back seat. *Shit!* I pull into Maverick, turn around, and pull out heading in the same direction I came from. My phone rings.

"Um, you took the car seats with you. I need them. I have to leave right now or I'm going to be late."

"I know. I'm sorry. I already noticed. I'm on my way back right now."

We hang up the phone. She sounded irritated. That's okay, I'm irritated too.

I pull in front of our house. Carrie is standing in the driveway with the kids standing under her heels. She's pissed.

"Here you go. Sorry Care."

"It's okay," she says as she kisses me goodbye for the second time.

It's confirmed, she's extremely irritated. Not good, her bad days end up being my bad days.

I flip the car around and head off to school. *Traffic, of course.* I have to park on the west side of Harrison Blvd. or the "Street of Death" as I call it. The school is on the east side. I cross the Street of Death. *Not this time, still standing.*

Only fifteen minutes late for my first class, not bad. I stumble over people already in their seats on my way to mine. I make it.

"Hopefully you guys didn't struggle too much with the homework last night. I don't want the assignment to discourage you," the Professor says.

Wait a minute, there was homework last night? *Well at least the assignment can't discourage me.*

Class get outs, a long uphill walk and a cigarette later and I'm in the next one. Now I know I didn't finish the assignment for this class, just no time. Is college always associated with this feeling of unpreparedness, or is this just reserved for me? Who knows?

My last class ends at 2:45, work starts at 3:00. Another close call on the Street of Death, but again, miraculously, I make it. I walk over to work, leaving the car where it's parked.

Three to eight: that's what I have to be excited about. Three to eight. Get to work at three, work on the phones, telemarketing. Thirty year-old telemarketer. Sad.

"Get some sales today."

"Fix your rejects."

For five hours I call unsuspecting families in the middle of their dinner, relaxation, or family time. I try everything in my power

to persuade, or push them into buying something that I know is no good for them and extremely overpriced.

“They’re great!” I lie. “You’re gonna love them,” I lie again. “Your children are gonna learn so much from these; mine did.” Yeah right.

Work ends at eight after a successful day of getting Americans deeper in debt. No time for that now. I need some dinner. I haven’t eaten all day. I drive home. *Traffic again, what’d’ya know.*

I get home, 8:20. Kids are running around everywhere. Kid’s bedtime, 8:30. Ten minutes.

“Hey Girlie.”

“How was work?”

“Good. Have the kids eaten yet?”

“No, we were about to eat now.”

Ten minutes? Math: 8:20 plus twenty minutes to eat if they’re fast, probably more like thirty-five. This puts us at 8:55. Add ten minutes, three girls and one boy to their wash hands, face, and brush teeth. Now it’s 9:05. Add ten minutes, the time it will take us to tell the girls to get to bed because we will forget all about them while we are cleaning up the kitchen. 9:15 now. Add five minutes, the time it takes to tuck them into bed, now it’s 9:20. Add fifteen minutes of Carrie and me yelling and screaming at them to stop playing around in their room and go to sleep. Kids actually asleep at 9:35.

We fall a little behind my initial estimate. I read the kids a bedtime story before bed. 9:45 becomes the actual bedtime. Maybe we’ll do better tomorrow. Yeah, right.

Carrie wants to cuddle on the couch. I have a paper to write. I try and write my paper, but the temptation to sit with her and relax is too great. I know she is warm, I know she will make my body relax and take away the stress of the day. I give in. I will have time to complete my paper tomorrow in the computer lab before class.

We watch *Desperate Housewives*, or *Grey’s Anatomy*, or some reality TV show that I could care less about. I don’t argue with her

over what we watch, I'm just glad to be sitting next to her.

I start to doze off, just to be woken up at 11:00.

"Hey sweetie," Carrie says as she gives me a sweet little kiss on my cheek. "You fell asleep."

"I wasn't sleeping. I was just resting my eyes," I lie.

She smiles at me. She knows I'm lying. I must have been snoring.

"It's time for bed anyways," she says.

It's all worth it, I think to myself. We go to bed. Thank goodness.

Beep! Beep! Beep!

I open my eyes and look at the alarm clock. 6:00 A.M. Another day, no not yet, I hit the snooze.

Seventy-nine Cents, Plus Tax

Like most moms, my life is ruled by the clock. And, like most moms, I'm usually running a little late.

School for my youngest begins at 8:20, which means I need to drop her off by 8:10 if she is going to get in any good playground time before the line-up bell rings. However, if drop her off before 8:00 there is no adult supervision, so I have a ten-minute window Monday through Friday mornings. If I time this right and luck is on my side, I will arrive at the university where I go to school in time to get a decent parking spot. This particular morning, luck is not on my side; I have a good hike between my car and my first class.

As I pass by the campus pond, a gang of geese approach. The tallest one has a bump on one side of his bill—my left, his right; he is the spokesman. “Uh-nck,” he says confidently.

“Uh-nck,” a few of his followers murmur in agreement.

“I have nothing for you,” I apologize. “I’ll come back later. I promise. I’m good for it.” As I walk away, I notice that some of the rank and file take a few uncertain steps forward, but none pass the spokesman, who stands stoic, meeting my eyes with his.

I run carpool later that day. After dropping off the last kid, I notice that there is about a half hour before my oldest is due at her babysitting gig.

I decide to make good on my earlier promise. I pull into a convenience store, buy a soda for myself and a snack for the kids, then hunt for food appropriate for waterfowl. I pass on the white bread, affixed with a sticker unashamedly declaring that yes, they would charge three dollars and forty-nine cents were anyone to be so stupid to actually buy bread from a convenience store. I pass on crackers and chips for the same reason before grabbing a bag of pretzels.

I have no idea if geese like pretzels, but for seventy-nine cents, they are gonna try.

I don't tell my bewildered kids what we are doing as we drive onto campus. They assault me with unanswered questions as they follow me out of the car.

I see the spokesgoose—I know him by his size and the bump on his bill (my left, his right). As I approach, he pokes up his head. “Uh-nck?” he asks.

“I told you I'd be back.” I wave the bag of pretzels seductively.

“Who are you talking to?” my oldest asks.

“My friends.” I hold out the open bag. “Want to feed them?”

As my daughters and I begin to mete out the pretzels, we are swarmed. Ducks, seagulls, and pigeons materialize, forming a greedy ring of feathers and sharp beaks. By far the most aggressive are the geese—when my youngest accidentally steps on a pretzel, spokesgoose looks as if he is fully prepared to go through her foot to get it. I move her as I admonish him for his bad manners. He looks at me and says, “Uh-nck,” which roughly translates to *Hey, nothing personal, but a pretzel's a pretzel, you know.*

We quickly run out of pretzels, so I upend the bag, spilling crumbs on the ground. This distracts a few, for a moment. “Run for your lives!” I tell my girls.

We run for the car, laughing. As we reach the van, my youngest yells out, “This is the best time of my life!” which my cynical teenager remarks is highly unlikely, as we have done many things far more grand than feeding geese.

Maybe, I say, but now is now, so now wins.

NON- FICTION



CLINT RICKETTS

One Lonely Night

Sitting at the kitchen table alone, he drinks from his 32 oz. glass of Rum and Dr. Pepper. Singing the song “In My arms” by Mark Wills: *in my arms I wish I could hold you forever; in my arms I would give you shelter..... But I swear this much is true, there'll always be a place for you in my arms.*

The tears come and he tries to hold them back, but there is no use. The pain is much too deep. It has been six long years since he held her in his arms. Riley was just two weeks old that day. Two weeks old and as beautiful as they come. That day was the second of the three times he had seen her. The first, at the hospital and the third, an unexpected run-in at the grocery store when Riley was about two which had almost completely taken his sanity.

Six years, he thought, my baby is six years old. I have no idea what she looks like, what her favorite color is, what she likes to do. Shit, I don't even know if she is healthy.

He'd never allow his other children to see him like this, but the rest of his family thinks it's just the alcohol that makes him this way; maybe because he tries not to talk about it much outside of his drunkenness. He believes nobody could really understand anyway. He longs for the day when he doesn't feel the pain from the moment he wakes up to the last conscious thought before he goes to sleep. He wonders if this is some form of punishment for the mistakes he has made in his life. As he exhales the last note of the song in his slurred voice, he looks up and says, “What the fuck have I done to deserve this? Half the goddamn country is running around fatherless because some dead beat asshole doesn't want the responsibility, and you choose me to take a baby away from, you son of a bitch!” He's never really been on speaking terms with the man upstairs. In fact, since he was eight years old his communication with god has been a one-way screaming match that he knows he can't win.

As the next song starts to play, he guzzles down the rest of his drink and heads to the kitchen to make another. He has been drinking more and more lately, yet he can't figure out why. It never even puts a dent in the pain he feels each day, yet it is all he's ever known. Drinking was the cure for his parent's problems, so he figures it will work for him too, or at least that's what he tells himself. Unfortunately, he is a very intelligent individual who knows better but doesn't always want to.

Three hours and a half gallon of rum later, the pain hasn't gone away. In fact, it's only gotten worse, like a knife sticking directly into his heart. He mumbles in his drunken speech, "Maybe she's better off. Maybe that's what you get for being such an asshole".

He had the affair. He made the decision to cheat. He couldn't help but think he didn't deserve her.

The only thing in this man's whole life that he had been proud of was the fact that he had always been a good father to his other children. After all, he had five other kids he had loved, cared for, and supported. He had been raising his children his entire adult life, never giving a second thought to the nightlife he had traded in order to be a good father.

His marriage had ended five years ago. He had spent some time as a single father until he met the mother of his youngest son who accepted him and his four children. He had done a fine job, or so he heard from everyone in his life. Now he sits here in this dimly lit room, and with every swallow, he loses more of his dignity. The music plays on. Only now, his mind, crippled by the alcohol, can't formulate the words fast enough to keep up. The singing, if that's what you would call it, sounds pathetic. With the realization of his inebriated state, he continues his conversation with his punisher.

"Why didn't you take me? All the people you have taken from this world, from this family, why didn't you take me? You fuck!" His speech is so slurred his own family would have a hard time distinguishing the words.

The tears continue to pour down his cheeks. He falls to his

CLINT RICKETTS

knees, not knowing whether it's in submission to God or just that his equilibrium is so thrown off from the alcohol that he can't stand. Either way, he looks up one last time. Only this time, his cries to God are those of desperation.

"Please God, what must I do to make things right? Please just let me know that she's OK. That she is safe and happy without me in her life."

It takes all the strength in his body to pull himself up and keep his balance. He gets to his feet, wipes the tears from his face with his sleeve, picks up the glass, and motions as if to say cheers to the picture of his dad.

"To the head pops, bottoms up." He guzzles the last of the drink and picks up the picture of his father.

"Sorry Pops. I know I've let you down, but hell, I guess that's like the family motto," he says with a chuckle.

As he staggers to his bedroom with tears still in his eyes, he clumsily rips the clothes from his body and climbs into bed. His eyes close and he wonders, *If I saw her tomorrow, would I recognize her? Would she recognize me?*

He lies there wondering if something in their DNA will pull them together one day, and if it did—if he saw her again—what would he say? Are there any words that could mend the wounds of a father and daughter that have been separated for so long? He tries to shut his mind off, but it's no use. The thoughts won't go away. He tosses and turns, battling the fear of the unknown until the light of his consciousness finally dims out.

Tomorrow is another day, and not a day goes by that Riley isn't on his mind.

Carlos Santana's Guitar Heaven: The Greatest Guitar Classics of All Time

There may be others whose guitar sound is as smooth, reckless, and fat, whose licks are as blistering, whose Afro-Latin rhythms smoke the house, or whose roots are as deep in fecund blues, but when even a casual fan of American rock hears all four together, little doubt remains that the player is Carlos Santana. That same casual fan will also know *Back in Black*, *Riders on the Storm*, and *Smoke on the Water*, all covers on Santana's new album of covers, *Guitar Heaven: The Greatest Guitar Classics of All Time*.

Released September 21st 2010, *Guitar Heaven* is fourteen tracks from Rolling Stone's *100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time* (Serpick). Santana says he sought to do justice to these masterpieces by honoring what the original artists had achieved. He says he worked to digest and give new life to each tune (a process he calls, "Santana-size") and to elevate each song to even greater heights (Santana).

Guitar Heaven is the gold nugget idea of long-time music-business brain, Clive Davis. Davis discovered Janis Joplin, Blood Sweat and Tears, and Santana himself. Idea man Davis said his concept was to showcase Carlos Santana's virtuosity and let the world hear him at his "blistering best" (Santana). The seventy-eight year-old Davis says that he was looking to implement a template of making, "radio-friendly songs and still capture the integrity, the virtuosity of Carlos. . . .I wanted people all over the world to hear Carlos soar." His only concern was whether Santana could re-create these tunes and integrate them into his own folder. "Real question is . . . can (Carlos) make these songs his own," Davis said (Santana).

Santana says that the idea of making an album of already-famous tunes was intimidating. "These [songs] are what we call the *Mona Lisas*, songs done by the DaVincis of our time—Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, people who they actually call them god for a reason" (Santana). Many cool guys are intimidated by great ladies,

but Santana says he dealt with it like this, “So I dated the ‘Mona Lisa’—and I found out she’s a freak! [Freak being a positive term, I presume]” (Greene).

My favorite cut is “While My Guitar Gently Weeps.” Unfortunately, it opens with a kitsch, faux-baroque, electro-harpsichord motif, but somehow Yo-Yo Ma’s ocean-deep cello manages to buoy the tune to cruising altitude. This cover sways sensually along, much slower than the Beatles’ version. Santana himself comes in, his guitar wailing mournful blues while the harpsichord continues to peck like a mechanical chicken. Finally, somebody finds the off-switch for the harpsichord and the on-switch for the piano. This is where the tune really begins.

A speaker-rockin’ bass downbeat kicks off this haunting song proper. Santana switches to a classical Spanish guitar sound. The rich flugelhorn-tone of India.Aire’s [*siz*] (pronounced India Air) voice becomes palpably evident when she suddenly leaves an empty, obvious silence in the viscous and smoky groove. Singing, she clips the word “guitar” short and inhales a poignant, barely-audible breath, a stylistically savvy move that clearly marked her territory before she sang ten bars.

Santana and company colored the chords of this piece darkly, making them sound and feel sad. They’ve voiced the choruses a little brighter, making them sound like captions to each verse’s tableau and intensifying the dark flavors of the verse. “While My Guitar” offers vocal harmonies that really turn me on. Close, dissonant, exquisitely rich, India.Aire sings her own back-up track and intertwines both her lead and harmony notes brilliantly with Yo-Yo Ma’s continuing, enormously-present cello. After the second verse, Carlos Santana launches on a rampaging, fire-and-brimstone sermon of a guitar solo on the song’s message: things have been pretty messed up by your love, twisted and suppressed, but together, we can make them better.

Next to “While My Guitar’s” hokey intro, “Back in Black’s” (BIB) finishing lyric is my pet peeve with this project. Rapper, Nas

(pronounced Nahz), who touts a “gansta” fist full of Grammy Award Nominations and numerous nods from MTV Video Music Awards, lays down the vocals for “BIB.” In his last-verse departure from the original, Nas says, “It’s just too bad, and I’m just too real, too authentic. I’m just too raw to judge me.” His whole performance is lack-luster. His delivery craves energy. It pales and struggles to stay in front of Carlos Santana’s bombastic, heavily-distorted, wah-wah guitar. Santana delivers a dissertation of smoking licks and blistering runs full of relentless, fiery renditions of some of rock guitar’s holiest verses. After Nas’ self-proclaimed authenticity, he cops to a trite cliché saying that Santana’s playing makes him visualize and so it’s Carlos Santana “who I’m gonna ride with, in any conflict. That’s not a threat. That’s a promise.”

I’ve never liked The Doors, their screw-the-world-just-because mentality, their tone-deaf front man, or their perhaps-best-known tune, “Riders On The Storm.” I do however like what vocalist Chester Bennington and Santana have done with this song. Santana’s guitar shrieks and howls a wind-blown intro until Chester launches his surprisingly melodic take on “Riders” (The Doors’ Jim Morrison did this tune like an enormous, drunk karaoke singer in a biker bar). Chester’s voice flies through this piece like papers in a dust daemon before a threatening rain. On this track, Santana’s guitar punctuates and then replies to Bennington’s vocals. The guitar phrases eventually grow into a statement-and-response solo that conjures swaying trees, banging doors, and breaking tree limbs and culminates in a haunting, authoritative rock cadenza fit for All Hallows’ Eve.

Santana’s defining strength is his sophistication, his ability to generate and convey emotion, and his ethereal musicianship that verges on psychedelic. Guitar Heaven collaborator Jonny Lang (sometime cohort with the likes of The Stones, Aerosmith, B.B. King, Clapton, and Jeff Beck) encapsulated Santana’s work saying, “Carlos, he’s one of the great emotors of the guitar” (The Making).

Casual rockers will certainly love this album. But if you're looking for the sophisticated music of jam-band Santana, you won't find it here. I do think, however, that even Santana's hardcore fans will enjoy this record—if they can approach it with open minds. This is largely radio music—but brilliantly done. Carlos Santana's solos, comps, and fills are strong, even if you have to listen carefully to catch them sometimes.

The Christian Science Monitor says that this album concept is “a hot idea after all,” and that Santana “plays with taste and fire.” For the faithful, there are also more erudite tunes in Willie Dixon and Howlin' Wolf's “I Ain't Superstitious” and Jimi Hendrix's “Little Wing” (beautifully sketched by the incomparable Joe Cocker). But remember, Davis did say that the idea here is to get Carlos Santana's music out to the masses.

Not everyone is tuned up about this record, however. Even its detractors don't fault Carlos Santana's playing, only the fact that he's playing a more song-based portfolio of tunes that will get air-time. Phil Gallo, music editor at SoundSpike.com, said, “Carlos has such a distinctive sound that none of these songs are mere covers, but there are varying degrees of inspiration” (Cava).

USA Today called the album's subtitle, “dubious.” They said, “This set of covers squanders the guitar brilliance of Carlos...” and “The gimmick of enlisting an army of stars... only exacerbates the battle-of-the-bands tedium” (Cava).

Hang in there, hardcore Santana musicologists, Billboard says Santana has a new, all-instrumental record called *Shape Shifter* set to release after Guitar Heaven has run its commercial course (Graff).

Tune after tune, Carlos Santana's ownership, collaborative leadership, creative mastery, and musical domination come streaming out from my speakers. It is as if each of these cuts were an original Santana song. I haven't made a list and checked it twice, but I think Guitar Heaven has captured Carlos Santana in his virtuosity, has elevated these great tunes of popular rock, and Guitar Heaven is getting him out to the masses—just look at its gangbuster chart

sales. I also think that *Guitar Heaven* may be one of the greatest albums of rock covers ever made. *Santanasing* these songs and featuring Carlos Santana on these tracks was like lifting a giant on the shoulders of other giants.

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The *Lonely* Wood Pile

Robert Frost's "The Wood-Pile" has three distinct portions which, together, tell a story of loneliness. A narrator, who refers to himself as "I," is the voice of the poem.

The first portion of "The Wood-Pile" describes the narrator's experience alone in the woods. His tone during this portion is difficult to place. He speaks of how he is "far from home" but does not specify whether this is positive or negative. At this point he has no purpose.

In the second portion, the narrator negatively speaks of a little bird he sees. The narrator is upset with the bird because it does not trust him; it stays continually behind a tree and out of reach. Frost goes as far as to say, "Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought. / He thought that I was after him for a feather—" (13-14). He likens the bird to a hypersensitive individual who takes everything too personally, yet he continues to watch and follow the bird.

The narrator then spies a neglected pile of wood: the final topic. He decides that the cutter must be "someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks." (35). However, this optimistic statement contrasts with the final lines: "to warm the frozen swamp as best it could / With the slow smokeless burning of decay." (39-40).

The narrator does not truly believe the cutter had something better to do. He believes the cutter must have come to a lonely end (like the wood-pile) to waste the product of so much effort. The three topics come together to form an omen. If the narrator has no purpose and a distrust of companions, he will suffer a lonely, unsatisfying end.

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EDITORS' SECTION

JAYROD GARRETT

As the Rising Sun go you and I

I hold these truths to be self-evident:
That I was created to become whole,
Endowed with power to be resplendent,
To defend our lives, liberty, and soul.
That injustice everywhere will fall,
That man may forget their fear of shadows,
That love will arise in the hearts of all,
And each remember why we have rainbows.

Lest our worlds, hopes, dreams, and memories
Diminish in our walk—daring us to fail.
Harmony and truth become forgotten sundries;
Leaving our children a dark and barren trail.
For as the rising sun go you and I
With beauty brilliant or a desperate sigh.

Bio:

Jayrod Garrett is a Junior Majoring in English with an Emphasis on Creative Writing. He loves reading and writing and has served in the Utah Army National Guard for the past eleven years.

Face to Face

The first date Marian was asked out on was by note. It happened in fifth grade math class as she was feeling frustrated over the pointlessness of calculating triangular areas. On a particularly annoying problem, Marian felt a tap on her shoulder. Relieved at the distraction, Marian was surprised to find a folded paper pressed into her hand by Mellie, her best friend in elementary school.

The note read, "Meet me behind the cafeteria at lunch?" It was signed, "Austin G." Her heart pounding, Marian met Austin's eye from across the room. She nodded her agreement eagerly. Austin barely could acknowledge her answer as Mrs. Collins inconveniently looked up from her desk at the moment Austin's friend elbowed him in the ribs excitedly. Austin was assigned an extra page of math for horsing around. At lunch, Marian gulped down her food and left the minute she saw Austin leave his table. Meeting outside the cafeteria doors, the two walked silently around the grassy field, smiling nervously at each other when their eyes accidentally met. Marian asked Austin about his extra math assignment and he said it was easy. Marian said she hated math. Neither of them could think of anything else to say for the rest of the period. Austin never asked Marian to meet him at lunch again.

Marian's first boyfriend came through Hannah, her best friend in eighth grade. After science one day, Marian was practically tackled by her friend's enthusiastic arrival. Breathing hard, Hannah could barely relay her message. Marian had to force Hannah to take a swig from her water bottle before she got anything out of her.

Grinning widely, Hannah exclaimed, "I was in English and heard Chris Walker-you know the guy you met at the assembly last week- and he was talking about this girl he had met and I realized he was talking about you and I told him you liked him and he asked if you had a boyfriend and I said no and then he asked if I could

ask you to go out with him and I said you would probably want to and then...”

“Wait,” Marian blinked in confusion, “Hannah, what are you saying? That Chris Walker wants to go out with me?”

Hannah glanced at her friend triumphantly, “I’m saying that Chris Walker already is going out with you.”

Following Hannah towards the gym’s entrance, Marian felt her stomach clench as she recognized Chris and his two friends waiting. Standing in front of Chris, Marian suddenly had doubts about her previous affection for his green eyes and checkered shoes. Both positives seemed outweighed by his acne covered face and stringy brown hair. The two sat together at lunch for three days, an arrangement that allowed them to listen to the prattle of Hannah and her friends as they remained equally mute. Over the weekend, Marian got a call from Hannah.

“Chris doesn’t want to go out with you anymore,” Hannah said meekly.

“Okay,” Marian hung up, feeling relieved. She didn’t want to go out with Chris anymore either.

Marian’s first kiss was instigated by text. At a football game her junior year, Marian was in the stands next to a group of boys from the opposing team. As Marian and Renee, her best friend in high school, filed slowly out of the stadium, Marian heard one of the boys yell for her number. Feeling elated due to the last minute win by her team, Marian shouted it back to him. A week later, Marian received her first text from the football-game boy, whose name turned out to be Jeff. The text conversations got progressively longer in the following weeks as Marian got bolder in her electronic flirting. Jeff never called, but surprisingly Marian didn’t care. She liked how texting gave her the ability to think carefully about what she said to him. She wasn’t sure she could be as verbally alluring face-to-face. Finally, after a month and a half of texting every day, Jeff dropped the bomb.

The first message Marian saw when she woke up was, "I want to c u. When can we meet?"

Feeling increasingly anxious, Marian answered, "I dunno. Friday's good 4 me." It felt like an hour until Marian's cell beeped in the answering message, "Can't wait."

The week passed at a snail's pace and when Friday rolled around, Marian was in shambles. Jeff had told her via text that he would pick her up from school since he was going to ditch last period. As Marian waited for the message saying he had arrived, she felt physically sick. After all, she really didn't know this guy. She had only seen him once and briefly at that. However, when her phone beeped indicating his arrival, Marian was surprised at how quickly she raced out of the bustling school and into his waiting car. She smiled at him in what she hoped was a sexy way as she slid into the passenger's seat. He smiled reassuringly back, but Marian felt chills as his gaze greedily snaked up and down her figure. She stared nervously out the front windshield for the rest of the drive.

The date was not spectacular. It seemed as if Jeff had done everything possible to ensure that he would not spend a dime on his or her comfort. After driving aimlessly around for forty minutes, Jeff finally pulled into a fast food parking lot where he grabbed two soggy peanut butter sandwiches from his backpack. Marian nibbled hers, trying to remain upbeat. He hadn't even brought water. Finally, once his sandwich was gone and hers had a corner chewed off, Jeff shoved a mint in his mouth, offered Marian one (which she gratefully accepted) and pressed his lips against hers. In between choking on the mint which was not yet swallowed and the overwhelming heat of his non-air conditioned car, Marian only registered one thing about the actual kiss. It was very wet. When Jeff tried to shove his tongue in her mouth, Marian pulled away. She didn't speak again until she was inside of her own house.

Marian first fell in love through Facebook. During her third semester at college, Marian received an online request from a

sandy-haired boy with dimples named Ryan Dish. Marian realized she knew him vaguely from a history class she had taken the previous semester. He looked much better in his picture than in class. Within a few weeks, Marian had gotten into the habit of checking his profile every few days to see his changed status. She liked his literary references and commented on the ones that she picked up from her own experience reading. Eventually, he started replying back and Marian would laugh at the ridiculous conversations that went on for days at a time.

Soon, Marian and Ryan would plan times to be online simultaneously. The live chats would go on for hours until one finally threw in the towel to do homework. During one such session, Ryan abruptly switched the topic from Robinson Crusoe to more personal matters, the first time he had ever done so.

“K weird question, but r u dating anyone?” Ryan’s message popped up like a sign from heaven.

Laughing out loud, Marian replied, “Not at the moment. Who wants to know?”

She tried to imagine Ryan’s voice as he answered, “The extremely handsome and brilliant writer of the enlightening status updates that made u so fall madly in love with him lol.”

A pause elapsed as Marian realized how close to the truth he was. Another message popped up, “So...u wanna go out? =)”

Marian was too stunned to say anything other than, “Yes. I would love 2.”

The first date turned into a second and the second into a third. After a month passed, Marian was somewhat surprised to find she was still enamored by Ryan. It was the longest she had ever liked a boy. She knew they were official the day that Ryan changed his relationship status from “Single” to “In a Relationship.” Marian changed hers the same day. As the semester drew to a close, Marian felt hollow when she realized Ryan would be going back to his hometown over the summer. The last day of finals, Ryan hugged Marian to his chest and whispered that he would miss her more

than anything. He promised to visit as soon as he made the money to do so.

Marian's first heartbreak came over Facebook. The summer passed slowly, but was bearable at first due to Ryan's consistent texts and calls. However, once July rolled around, Marian heard from him once a week, then twice a month and finally not at all. She knew something was wrong when she got nothing but his voicemail for three weeks. Eventually, her only method of communicating with him was through his online profile. When he did not reply to her messages, she resorted to checking on his updates like she had when they first met. One day, Marian saw a comment by a girl named Lucia from his hometown. The next week, his status changed to "Single." Two days later, his profile picture was of him and a beautiful dark-haired girl, her arms wrapped amorously around his neck. The look in Ryan's eyes as he stared at Lucia was the final death sentence to Marian's slim shred of hope.

There was a change in Marian after Ryan left her. She stopped chatting online, opting instead to immerse herself in textbooks and papers. She picked up longer shifts at work. She stopped giving out her number to cocky boys who asked for it on campus. She used her cell phone for family and work calls and very rarely for anything else. When Renee, who Marian ran into at the mall, asked her if she was dating anyone, Marian said no. She didn't elaborate when Renee tried to ask what happened with Ryan.

The summer following the breakup, Marian got an internship at a big-named company headquartered a few cities away. As Marian sat nervously on the brink of the cushioned office chair, waiting for her first day on the job, she was surprised to see another college age student walk in. Although the office was empty with open chairs, the young man walked directly to the available seat adjacent to Marian's. Eying him curiously, Marian smiled automatically when he caught her gaze. When he didn't look away, she diverted her attention to the magazine opened on her lap.

“New intern?” the young man grinned disarmingly as Marian looked up in surprise.

Nodding sheepishly, Marian replied, “Pretty obvious, huh? What about you?”

He shrugged, “Yeah, first day. My name’s Myles.” He stuck out his hand.

Raising her eyebrows at the formal gesture, Marian took his hand, surprised by his grip, “Marian.”

The intern named Myles laughed, “M ‘n M.” When Marian looked blank, Myles elaborated, “Our first names. Together they make up M ‘n M.” For some reason, his dumb joke made Marian giggle.

The first time Marian was asked on a date face-to-face was on her first day as an intern. Myles and Marian were able to work within a few feet of each other for the rest of the day, making the time completing dull office jobs fly by. As Myles walked Marian to her car, he asked if she wanted to have dinner with him the following night. There was no handwritten note, busybody friend or unfeeling screen. There was just a boy asking a girl a question.

It made it all that much simpler for Marian to say yes.

Bio:

Alexandria Waltz is a senior at Weber State University with a double major in History and English and a double minor in Technical Writing and Linguistics. Alex has been involved in various campus organizations, including the Honors program, Writing Center and *Metaphor*, and is excited to be involved with the Spring 2011 edition of *Epiphany*.

Thanks for the Help

Can you help me please?
I think I am lost
I need to be found
No matter the cost
I took a wrong turn
Way back in the blue
It's not my fault
I was following you
But then you changed
Alone there I stood
I tried to leave
Tried hard as I could
Then my heart tore
It split right in two
It ached and it burned
With hurt caused by you
You may be right
I may be wrong
It makes no difference
We sing the same song
Thank you for helping
I'm forever in debt
The strangest thing is
We've never met.

Bio:

Chontel Hyde just transferred to Weber State this semester from USU. She is a Social Work major who plans on dedicating her life to preventing child abuse. Although she is pursuing a career in social work, she is also passionate about creative expression. Whether using her hands or her mind makes no difference to her.

The Afternoon of June 12, 2008

I came home that day to find out you were lying
About the happiness you promised, forever, to share.
Instead, you lay on the floor, cold and dying.

Running to you, I could not begin crying.
The shock grasped my heart, felt too much to bear.
It was about this that I hoped you were lying.

I sat by your side, screaming, shaking, trying
To bring you back to consciousness. How dare....
How dare you lie here and leave me by dying.

Unable to move you to give what could be buying
Time by filling your lungs once again with air,
I sat there, watching, wishing that my eyes were lying.

From around the corner, the ambulance came flying.
Medical personnel rushing in to give the proper care,
And all I could do was watch as you lay cold and dying.

The world around me was slowly quieting
As I thought about how this was not fair,
Wanting to understand why you were lying
On the floor so still, dead, not dying.

Bio:

Jennifer has had a love for the English language her entire life. She has been writing poetry and short stories since elementary school where she was involved in an after-school writing group. "Being on the Epiphany staff this semester has been a treat," she states. "I love being able to experience and enjoy other's works and give them the opportunity to be read by a larger variety of people!"

Thoughts Found on a December's Night

The wind has slowed, and silently—
breathing, yet hardly moving—
the snow gathers over the heaving earth,
while others have left me to my solitude,
which suits ponderous musings,
wreathed in the half-light
of colors splashed upon the wall.
They mix and mesh with the shadows
Cast by the restless flames;
Now dying, shrinking, yet remaining
In the thin blue film that whispers
In hushed tones to frantic minds,
And makes a companion in the night,
issuing inspiration to musing thought.

As I gaze, my wand'ring mind is turned
To sacred sentiments held in the heart
That create limitless possibility,
And give wings to the spirit,
Rising above this mortal plane
And revealing light to usher understanding.
To walk in that pastoral scene
And be with those worthy men
Who held no pomp or laud,
Remaining dedicated to their task
Throughout the night by their charge's side.
They heard the word in the still of night,
Shattered by a coming and growing light;
And the Eolian harp did accompany
The celestial sound of a thousand voices,
Rising in a tune that resonated their souls.

JOSH BROTHERS

Tonight I hear that tune.
As the frost works its silent ministry,
Quietly assembling without my window,
That same heavenly chorus shakes my soul,
Causing memories long forgotten to stir
And coalesce into a tangible emotion
That reminds me of veiled experiences
When the voice of One led me to truth
And gave me courage to live,
Knowing that if I might stumble, I will rise;
And if I perish, I will return.
Led by love to walk without fear,
And to live by listening with the inner ear.

Bio:

Josh Brothers is a Junior in the English Creative Writing program at Weber State University. He grew up in Park City, Utah, where he learned to ski, play the violin, and developed a great love for reading and writing. He hopes to one day own a small bookstore and a dog.

Tim and the Worms

It had just stopped raining. It was a warm rain. The sun was out. Suzie grabbed Tim from his car seat, plopping him down on the ground.

“You excited to see the elephants Tim?” Suzie said.

Tim paid no attention to what his mom just asked him. He was staring at the ground. He could still smell the rain. I need to save the worms, I need to save the worms, he thought.

Bill started to talk about what his favorite animals were when he was three. Tim paid no attention to his dad, who was trying to get Tim’s attention off saving every worm that he could see, and then asked Tim if they should go fishing.

Tim looked up mortified, “No fish save worm.”

Suzie started to laugh. Only a three year old, would take the life of a worm seriously. Tim ran ahead of his parents. He was looking for worms and every worm that he saw he would gently pick up and hold in chunky little hands.

As they stopped and paid to get into the zoo, Tim saw a patch of dirt; he ran off to the distress of his mom and gently laid down all the worms underneath a bush. Suzie ran after Tim, and sighed, when he stopped and put it down. I’m not as young as I used to be; she thought with a laugh, I am only thirty-two.

Tim was still looking for worms, they walked towards the where the elephants were. The elephants trumpeted and sprayed themselves with water. Tim didn’t even look up. He needed to save all the worms.

Bill just laughed and looked at Suzie “We should’ve stayed home, he doesn’t care.”

“Give him time Hun, pretty soon he will not see any worms, let’s go into the monkey house,” she responded.

They walked into the monkey house, and soon Tim’s eyes widened, the monkeys sat right at the glass, and when Tim waved

they waved back. He ran from cage to cage laughing at all the funny antics. They soon ran after Tim as he scampered from cage to cage looking at all the different animals. The bears fascinated him. But it wasn't until they got to the lions and tigers that he changed.

"Mommy, big kitty come home now," Tim said.

Suzie explained that the big kitties couldn't come home with them and Tim burst into tears. He didn't want to be comforted he wanted a big kitty to play with when he got home. His dad spotted a worm on the ground and told him that he needed to be saved. Tim looked at the worm and smashed it to the surprise of his parents.

"Yucky worms, big kitty!" He screamed.

They tried to bribe him with candy and a stuffed animal that was a lion. He threw everything that was handed to him across the store. They finally just went to the car to go home. Tim still screamed for the kitty. Suzie just looked at Bill, shaking his head.

"Do you really think it's wise?"

She just shrugged her shoulders as she sighed. "I don't know, I just don't know."

As they drove to the pet shop, Tim was still screaming for his big kitty. Bill took him out of the car, and headed for the door. Tim continued to jump on all the worms that were still out on the sidewalks and already had died. Tim's eyes were red and puffy, nose running. He was going to get his kitty after all.

Bio:

Molly Hertig is a senior and is working on her second bachelor's degree. Sometimes she wonders why she is back for a second degree. Her major is Early Childhood/Elementary Education. She has been writing poems and stories on and off since she was able to hold a pencil or a pen. This is her second semester at Weber State. She has two spoiled rotten cats.

WRITER'S GIFT

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