You of the finer sense,
Broken against false knowledge,
You who can know at first hand,
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:
I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.

Ezra Pound
Fallen Behind A Head

night swimming on John's Island
fallen below another crest
he watches from the resting trough
as unsheathed silver furls forward
spurred on by leagues of fallen generals
the unforgiving eyes of the deep
raised arms and the fore hooves of the saddled
wild horsehair and the whites of many eyes
ahead the black beach waits glistening
slick as whale skin
the collapse on the silence in the eye
overwhelming itself as if to final calm
but the shore will not be broken
so each retreats back behind the curtains of
the deep as if there were safety there or need
the bleached white rocks jut from the shallows
like the heads of salt blind ancient mariners
awaiting the mercy of moontide

swimming in these waters he feels as he did then
that there is no loss here but that there is no loss
over there he could see the stained purple sand
draw them in in a premature burial
seeping back to the one womb
red drawn back by the blue shift and he was sure
he was unsure of what he shouldered
but dying always and anyways
in a blood clouded marsh
he waited with lifeless stars and shells
till dawn cracked and he woke to the great fans
sounding in the sky and the bare feet
if only a tide would come now to raise this memory
to lift it away as another draped body
spread it to a thin film be
little it to just a shell in his shoe
he would shake it out so for once he could join
in the swelling

- Richard Croft '93
The Darkness Within

The old man stood completely clad in black, save the immaculate white collar clutching his neck and his sickly, pale face. His stern expression combined with cold and piercing blue eyes gave him an air of omnipotence. It was as if he alone claimed power over every object within his sight and no mere mortal could dare to oppose him.

The parishioners shuffled slowly into the damp and dark church. Candles were lit atop a spartan and colorless altar table to provide a feeble struggle of light against the growing autumn darkness. Deacon Holcomb stood with his hands crossed behind his back, watching his subjects file into the small room and take their seats on the dark wooden benches. Speech stopped at the doorway to the church as every head bowed respectfully to the ground upon entrance. Not a soul would dare to break the reverential silence and awe for both the deity they came to worship and the man which they came to hear. Deacon Holcomb frowned inwardly as he scanned his audience. The people set themselves up in a discordal manner: the young sat with elderly; the well-off with the paupers. Not an eye met the holy man's gaze, not a word was thrown his way.

As the last of the country folk took their seats, the deacon moved toward his podium. Slowly, all heads rose to meet the eyes of the elderly man. An unseen strength seemed to power his frail limbs to motion as he climbed to the speaker's podium. His eyes pinned down the parishioners and commanded their attention as the words from his throat boiled out of his mouth, "Sin is amongst us!"

His words seemed to shake the very foundations of the ancient church. The wind howled outside the doors as if it were mocking his words. "We must fight every day against the fell forces of Satan. He lurks in the most dear places, lest we weed his roots from our soil. I do not have to preach of the importance of piety in our day and age: war, strife, adultery... it makes me sad to call myself a man.

"I look to our people and ask myself, 'Where does Satan prey the most? Where are his evil tendrils breaching the goodness of our community?' More and more I see myself answering this pressing question with a solemn answer.

His final words hung in the air. Every mind tried to fill in the answer to his question and guess what the immortal deacon had discovered.

Slowly, the deacon whispered, "Our youth."

The gathering was taken aback by the surprising answer. Every parent silently looked at their children and shudderingly thought, "My child? Evil? Never!"

As if reading their minds, the deacon violently responded, "Yes! Your children breed the seed of hate and sin which will destroy our already fragile world!

The youth of today does not heed the words of their mentors. They flippantly press the spring flowers and play in the fields when work is to be done. Lessons rebound from their souls and they embrace the darkness within instead of calling to the light from beyond.

"You may ask, 'What is to be done? Is there any way I can protect my innocent lamb from the corruption around him?' Well... there is," his words slowly fell from his mouth.
The deacon's eyes scanned the audience as he violently returned to his speech, "There is something that can be done. We must stave the evil at its root! Seek it and banish it from our sight! No more will we live in fear of the ghosts from below! I command that Alicia Farrow step forward to confess her sin to the public eye!"

A collective gasp rippled through the small crowd as all eyes focused upon a small pitiable woman in the front row. The deacon's eyes narrowed as they focused upon her young and innocent face. She returned his gaze with a frightened and pleading look. Alicia was dressed in a less formal manner compared to the rest of the parish crowd. Her slightly torn clothing suggested her intense poverty. She brushed a mass of unkempt hair out of her face and her slightly dirtied hands as she tried to choke down sudden tears of fear. Deacon Holcomb stared at the suddenly dilapidated member of the church with a cold contempt as she shakingly rose from her seat and approached him. The church folk visibly shrank from her presence as she walked to the altar as images of demons seemed to replace her formerly neutral form.

"Confess, woman," the deacon spat.

"I have no crime to confess, deacon," she pleaded timidly. "My actions are not of my own will. Your relation of these actions is a crime! It is a betrayal of my trust!"

The crowd looked perplexedly at the deacon. Unmoving, he retorted, "You have committed a crime against this parish and this community. If you do not confess, I will openly charge you with this moral crime."

Alicia opened her mouth to speak but emotion tore through her body before the words could form. Tears came to her eyes and she collapsed to her knees in front of the deacon.

"Rise... rise, woman!" the deacon yelled, but Alicia did not obey.

"Very well, then. Miss Alicia Farrow harbors within her the child of Satan! She has no betrothed and she has no home, save her shack in the forest. She has resisted the community and receives no help from the noble people of our community. Therefore, how does she survive and where does her child come from? It is the doing of evil, I tell you! We must dispose of evilness such as this before it is too late for our good children. The lesson is done."

With those final words, Alicia ran from the church wailing her despairing cries to the black, open sky outside. Deacon Holcomb climbed down from his podium and began to extinguish the candles on the altar. The men of the parish put on their hats and the women tied their bonnets as they too prepared to leave. Two men of the parish stood forward to confess their sin to the public eye.
He was lost. No matter, though, town was not far away so he could always
walk back by one route or another and stay overnight at someone's house. The
deacon felt confident and smiled despite the fact that the wind was cold and the
gathering clouds foreshadowed rain.

"Father! Over here, father!" a boy shouted.

Deacon Holcomb's head picked up on the sound and he looked in the
direction of the voice. Unfortunately, he could not see anyone, but there were
two distinct voices.

"Remember, boy, the moss is always on the north side of the tree. That way
you won't get lost," an older voice called.

The deacon could hear leaves being trampled nearby but the darkness
obscured the shadows around him into a grotesque and chaotic mess. "Father, is it
true that the devil lives in the forest?" the boy called.

"No, son. He doesn't live in the forest. Where did you hear that?" laughed the
man's voice.

"I heard it from the deacon! The deacon said it! Does that make the deacon a
liar, father?"

Deacon Holcomb's eyes widened at the last comment by the boy. He tried to
run through the forest to the boy yelling, "I never said any such thing! How dare
you call the elder of your community a liar!"

The voices trailed off in laughter and the leaves swirled at the deacon's feet as
the wind picked up again. He stood alone in the forest, panting, as the faint
sound of laughter echoed through the forest.

"James, do not allow your wit to fool your nerve! Those two could not have
gone very far. Perhaps there is a farm house nearby," the deacon said calmly to
himself.

He began walking with purpose unknown even to him in a forward line
deeper into the forest. The trees grew thicker and older as he delved even deeper
into the forest. The wind swirled around him and the cold began to bite his
elderly face. The deacon did not know which direction he was walking in but
trusted that he would eventually find his way home. The encounter with the two
apparitions in the forest were still lingering in his mind when he thought he heard
another voice from ahead.

He slowed his pace and began to concentrate on the sound. He heard a muffled
voice coming from a dense copse of trees not more than a few yards in front of him.
He couldn't make out the words that he heard since most of the sound was drowned
out by the wind. Slowly, he began to recognize certain sounds and repetitions from
the voice. It sounded strangely like a prayer of some kind but he couldn't tell which.
Intrigued, the deacon made the decision to push aside the branches guarding the
copse and enter its darkened and mysterious insides.

Strangely enough, he discovered a small clearing inside instead of more trees.
The wind was much calmer in here and it gave an ominous silence to the scene.
The deacon scanned the area for the source of the mumbling he heard but, to his
dismay, could not see anyone. However, a particular tree caught his attention and
he stopped to examine its knotted and twisted trunk.

The ancient oak seemed out of place amongst the smaller trees as it rose to
unimaginable heights towards the clouded and black sky. Its thick, leafless
branches reached out towards the forest beckoning the deacon closer. The
magnificently twisted trunk defied the eye as the wood seemed to weave into and
out of the tree and around its sturdy base. The deacon looked in awe at this
incredible creation of God's magic in the forest as he quickly pushed his former
fear of the forest out of his mind.

He suddenly had an irresistible temptation to climb the tree and attempt to
reach the heights which would bring him closer to the being which he had
dedicated his life to glorifying. The deacon climbed onto the immense trunk of
the tree and attempted to grab hold of one of the great lower branches. No
sooner had he grabbed the branch when he heard a terrible splintering sound and
the entire branch fell off the tree and sent him tumbling to the ground. Shaken,
but not hurt, the deacon stood up again and went to examine the fallen branch.

The wood was cold and hard. It was tough and sharp. He felt his heart sink a
little as he realized that the majestic oak was completely dead. The branch was in
splinters on the ground and it left a huge gaping hole in its place on the tree.
Curiosity compelled the deacon to examine the hole, which he quickly regretted.
The insides of the tree were all rotten out and an innumerable amount of
verminous insects had taken up residency within the dead tree.

Just as the deacon realized the fell nature of the once-proud tree, the wind
picked up with a ferocious force. Caught by surprise and unable to hold his place
on the trunk of tree, the wind blew deacon Holcomb against the side of the tree.
Instinctively, the deacon reached out to the tree to prevent himself from falling
again. He plunged his cold and bare hand into the hole, forgetting the infestations
of insects contained therein. However, the tree was too rotten to even hold up his
weight and a large piece of the trunk came loose in his hand, sending both to the
ground, covered in beetles and ants.

The deacon lost all composure and jumped up trying to swat at the creatures
covering his body. The wind howled in the trees and further infuriated the
shocked deacon. He continued to stomp on the insects as he knocked them off
his clothes and yelled with all his might, "Infamous evil! Incestuous vermin! Go
back to Hell from whence you came!"

The wind stopped as suddenly as it started and the deacon calmed himself,
panting from his exhausting efforts to rid himself of the creatures he discovered in
the tree. The deacon closed his eyes and tried to regain his thoughts, completely
unnerved from the previous experience. A light breeze whistled in between the
trees and somewhere within it the deacon swore he heard a voice again.

"God's creatures, deacon... God's creatures," it whispered.

The deacon opened his eyes only to realize the fear that was massing in the
back of his mind: there was no one there. Instinct propelled him into motion. He
began to run madly through the forest to escape the voice. All the while, the wind
gathered strength again and began to blow mercilessly through the trees. The
wind whistled through the trees in such a manner that it seemed to laugh
hysterically at the frenzied deacon as he ran wildly through the darkness. He
knew not where to turn and panic swept through his body. Every tree was thick
and dark. Every shadow rose up against him and mocked his movements. Every
The forest was cruel and he was alone to fight it, except for one final hope. "Please! Please deliver me from this strife! I have been a noble servant and beg of You to grant me passage through this unholy night! I will sacrifice anything to his knees. Amidst all the chaos and howling winds, he closed his eyes and clasped the silver crucifix around his neck with all his might."

With the last of his words shouted into the cold night air, the wind ceased its bellowing and the laughter slowly died away with it. The deacon gradually opened his eyes and relaxed his grip on the cross. He looked up and smiled a thankful grin at the eerie silence surrounding him.

His exultations were met with a single, ice-cold drop of rain. His smile quickly changed to a frown as rain began to pelt his body from the heavens above. The deacon looked despairingly around as the grim vegetation echoes the sounds of falling rain and distant thunder rolled across the land. For a second, the deacon thought, "This is no haven; no shelter from my strife! Surely my deeds warrant a better solution than the cold rain of a contemptuous cloud!"

He then realized that his prayers had indeed been answered. No more than twenty yards away stood the dim outline of an old building standing in a nearby clearing he had previously failed to notice. He silently rose and plodded over to the gift bestowed upon him. He observed that the building was more a shack upon better examination. Its wooden walls were old and worn and there were no windows. A single door provided entrance to the small hovel.

Deacon Holcomb walked inside and surveyed the dwelling he had been led to stay in. He found a candle nearby on the floor and lit it with a dry match he had retained from services earlier that evening. The home was in disarray with chair overturned and some simple clothes lying on the floor. There were no aesthetic objects in the room at all. However, there was a straw cot in the far corner of the room and that was pleasing enough for the weary old deacon. He placed the candle next to the bed and laid himself down to sleep.

Outside, the storm beat upon the forest dwelling. Thunder shook the land and wind whistled through the trees. He silently shuddered at the thought of still being caught outdoors in that awful weather in that sinister forest. As he tried to rest, he heard the faint sound of laughter ringing in the trees and murmured voices echoing around the shack. The deacon smiled and put the sounds out of his mind, dismissing them as another trick of the imagination that night.

Still, the harder he tried, the harder it was to escape the laughter. It seemed to get nearer and louder at each heartbeat. Suddenly, a clap of thunder rocked the old shack and upset the candle, knocking it to the ground. The deacon leaned over to pick up the candle when he heard a quiet chuckling from next to his bed. He raised his eyes and met the gaze of a merry looking woodsman. The woodsman was standing over the deacon, smiling and laughing. The deacon sternly looked at the woodsman as he righted himself and asked, "Who are you?"

The woodsman was taken aback and said, "Who the hell do you think I am? Am I a friend or foe? Ally or axeman?" His eyes narrowed, "Fiend or Father?"

The deacon's reason returned to him as he halted in mid-flight and dropped to his knees. "Fiend or Father? Ally or axeman?" his eyes narrowed, "Am I a friend or foe? Ally or axeman?"
Waterhole

He skipped the flat stone across the quiet water,
I counted eight rings and looked at James with awe.
The rope hung from a dead branch of our great oak,
threads of fiber danced in the wind.

James will do anything, so I dared him to swing.
His eyes narrowed until only the blue pierced mine
own, his lips were tightened around a whole lemon,
the cords in his neck a child could play.

He knew dangling from the limp line was foolish.
He grasped the weathered board with one rusty
nail that couldn't penetrate the rings of the oak.
I saw his right leg jerk, hand over hand he moved.

His silhouette climbed through the patterns of the
leaves, the sun blinding all detail. Searching for
his freckled nose, his skin of dark, red berry full
of the juice, his wheat hair long from the summer.

He reminds me of a wild weed that you pull from
between the bricks in a long path. He's covering
the dead branch with his overgrown feet. I can picture
the white knuckles wrapped around the swing.

I feel that last breath he takes before the plunge,
I can see the white of his eyes. He swoops low over
the water and is pulled to the other side, away from me.
I hear the snap and see his fall, his head framed by rings.

- Heidi Mahoney '93

The Night I Was Conceived

Sheets of cool Carolina rain fall
into the red clay which gets pulled
inside and tossed across the patchwork
carpet, sewn together, laid in place like
pieces of a puzzle; the day closes, strewn
with flat tires, stalled engines,
chicken casseroles burned black and sinks
full of unclean dishes, and tall pines bow, holding down
carefully the night coming in: like the rain it might
fall, breaking across the floor and, too dark,
be lost in the red earth; and he holds
her as they dance, listening to the rain call;

he kisses her, for the first time, again
warm and smooth and silent,

and follows the rhythm of the storm;
while in his arms, she touches his neck, new,
tiny spurs of hair growing like shadows
cast from the moon of his eyes
which shine like fire against the rain descending
measure by measure in aquiline arpeggios;
and through frail evergreens the wind blows
as, in her arms, he smells the clean
of her hair, falling as if through rain, light
like dusk upon her shoulders,
it covers his hands and holds him, too,
in the light of the moon as night lowers calm.

- Anonymous
i haven't seen my generation

we fight because we are no longer pioneers together
ready-made homicide on every corner everywhere in between
not even one free beer motherless children

once we ran together like horses through open fields
our mane was our rudder keeping us straight according to wind
grass has been high

now the waves of love make houses crumble
and wind blows against us and our houses crumble
and we pick up the pieces and throw them at each other
and all is built again.

and jesus comes in 2005 as a homicide statistic
the believers stone him
the rest see nothing

and i walk on in six/eight through burning streets
pissing on hot steel stomping down excreta
and i do whatever i want and probably lose
most of the time sometimes all the time

and reason and phantasmagoria like buddies whose parents disallow hanging out
play flashlight tag on the walls of my dark soul never penetrating the flesh

— Michael Foley III '93

The Waiting Room

A wrenching cry came down from the apartment above me.
A baby's lungs expanded like the wings of a tree,
walking me like the sudden screams in that waiting room.

I could imagine its mother in disarray,
sweeping a solution to no problem. In a nearby chair, the teddy-bear smiled, suggesting

it enjoyed the effects of those volcanic eruptions.
On the wall, mama held dad- undisturbed. Sleep was in the forefront of my mind, but the pillow couldn't

stop the screams from ringing. Like a breathless beetle
I stared at the ceiling, trying to see through it,
trying to see the baby's pain. The screen above me flirted

with colorful images of baby chicks, fortune cookies, and eggs, one after the other. Then the waiting room. A right hand
follows a left across the baby's face. The baby now slumbers

in a corner, only with the walls watching, as blood runs down the baby's feather-like lips. If only
he could run. On the floor, where the fall was broken,

he screams more for his mother who receives his father's attention by the window, though the baby was still being tossed from wall-to-wall. I swung my head away

from the ceiling, but the sheets were less helpful than the pillow. I could still visualize the room. And like a telephone cord being cut, there was a silence,

just like the waiting room, where eyes pierced my flesh as I sat scared, opposite those who were there for a reason, those who now despise me, too, and those who weren't
there at all. I staggered through the many pamphlets and magazines that no one else read, as if I were truly interested in Parenting.

— Charles N. Brown '93
Losing Time on the Massachusetts Turnpike

He drove a 1967 Dodge Polara.
Pea Green consumed three fourths of highway from Cape Cod to Boston.

We fit three across, including Sam, whose haunches spread like warm mayonnaise across the middle.

He whipped drool from window to window like a crazed lawn sprinkler, inhaled the waning summer air and the pizza still warm on my legs.

While Dad molded the plastic steering wheel, I caught scoopfuls of wind with a Slurpee cup out an open window, and plugged AM stations.

Pieces of songs and commentary cracked through one screen speaker. I was waiting for the one about the rain to start even though the sky was blue forever.

The shell mosaic driveway we left behind gave way to the North in the same forgetful sweep as low tide: Tender ooze, sea grass and quahogs.

— Amy Hughes '93

Anatomy

I find something deep, penetrating about the blue lines of U.S.S. Nimitz wrapped around his forearm like gauze left on too long, the blood soaking through.

He walks along aisles, when the store is empty, the shelves full unlike the ship's blue-grey corridors. His son works for a roofing company and makes five seventy-five an hour; it's more than he makes, but he knows what his son is missing: the silence, rows of magazines, cold medicine at strict attention, the buzz of the security camera rolling like waves

She steps into the light of the diner, knocking snow from her boots, hair pulled back tight, streaked with enough grey and blue to fill the pages of a road map; varicose veins trace every place she's ever been, ever driven.

I see her alone at the counter, the jukebox casting line after line at her: ex-lovers, lost dogs, shots of whiskey; the notes, falling like the strings of a net, sweep across her hair and shoulders, the music draping like a shawl around her; her body rocks back and forth with the song as long lines of eighteen wheelers pull up to the truck stop, stacking themselves in the lot.

I sit here at my typewriter, blue veins driving through the backs of my hands, the silence of early morning ringing in my ears wondering what it is that pulls us together.

What is it in water that separates on hard ground then, running like veins, lines in a map, comes back into itself? I can feel the weight of my life. I can feel the roll of waters under my feet. I can feel strings like love around my shoulders full of tension driving through me; something hard and fast, pulling us together.

— Anonymous
She learned distance early
shivering under clutched covers,
a cocoon shield from the screaming,
a refugee from exploding emotion

Distance at the dinner table,
vacant sunshine smile to avoid
the anger in her father's eyes,
the defiant tilt of her mother's chin

She learned distance early
huddled in the refuge of a dark closet,
muttered songs protection from the flashing
red blue red blue chasing down her brother

Distance in the pew, spine stiff,
mind dancing with memories of silent prayers,
pride in each salty drop treasured on
the tip of her tongue

She learned distance early and remembered
alone in a crowd, cringing from the past
distance in her eyes, her smile
burning with shame and hurt anger

She learned distance early and remembers
the importance of covers and closets
the safety of the dark
the refuge of solitude
the importance of distance

— Beth Widmaier '95
Temptation

Awe caught
in the
thorns
of a rose,
in its
silky convolutions.

Riding
the sky
is a
tear-filled moon:
a glowing empress.

The winding howl
of a wolf
touches the moon's
stone hide
like a
baptism.

- Edward Shim '95

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The House

Warm afternoon sunlight
poured in through the window
in slanted squares
painted on the wall.

The two figures stood
still in heavy light. She
a step below could
feel his hips in
the small of her back.

As she shifted weight in her boot,
a small plumb of dust
danced
around her heel.
She studied the flies that had accumulated
on the blue,
paint-chipped sill.
Through the dirt speckled window
she saw a stoic tree-line
become a black silhouette with the
low red sun.

The hue of ochre
glowed across the field
as dusk settled behind
the horizon.

That field, with it's house, and it's stairs
carried voices I would never hear;
hid places I would never see,
held people I would never know.

The two figures were
stationary
on the dust covered stairs.
Their cheeks were yellow, and
their hair glistening.
The time weathered steps had another
purpose. The static bodies needed
not a direction to travel
on the worn stairs.
Rather
he cradled her head and neck
in those hands
that would never let go.
Their eye-lids were closed as
Warm afternoon sunlight
poured in through the window
in slanted squares
painted on the wall.

- Ellen Gurley '93

Shadowbrook Lane

This day, like every other,
I drive the same path,
a solemn road that delivers me
to my place of habit
and brings me back
when the sun is nearly done.

Each bump, twist and turn
etched into my mind
with countless traces.
The back of my hand
could only dream
to be so familiar.

I drive it again,
anticipating the sharp turn
at the big oak tree,
the pot hole caused
by the thawing and freezing
of countless years,

the slow, bending curve
at the rain-smoothed boulder.
The automatic actions
allow my mind to ponder
tasks and chores awaiting me.
Out of the corner of my eye

appears a darting shadow—
no time to stop, no where to turn.
Then it ends in the fashion
of all life.
I stop the car, turn my head
to see the fresh death,

too warm to call a carcass yet.
I stare for awhile
thinking of the wrinkles
around my white knuckles
still fastened to the steering wheel
and of a road never to be known again.

- J.B. Allen '94
Arriving On A Nightmare

Walking down 57th street,
I can see it,
and feel it
etched in the sweaty
brown-black faces of
the homeless, and the worker.
It isn't going anywhere,
it runs from the BMW driving,
Armani suit wearing "Negroes,"
to Mr. Greenwell walking
up the Cole Ave. hill after
another 15 1/2 hour work day
with holes in his boots,
and "lem-black" in his lungs.
It travels across the linear
boundaries of this place,
and the degrees of pigmentation
among us.
It is the reminder of that
moment, as fleeting as it may
have been, when we knew
we arrived upon a nightmare,
which closes the cracks in on us
even when we'd hoped that
we had slipped on thru.

- Derrick L. Pryor '93

Seasons of Change

I am a descendent of dreams
intertwined in a hardened man's thoughts.
I am a companion of compromise
swaying easily like minted fields of greenery.
I am a traveler of tides
moving meekly with the crowded waters of uniformity.
I am a moment of a memory
a fairy light image in the corner of a mind.

But times turn...

Like the shade of an old Oak's leaf in October.
Once lush, fragmented green
becomes victim to pattern
and in death displays
crisp uniqueness and absent partnership.

Times turn again...

And I become an image of a former image
releasing my shadow to the destiny of a wind-swept winter.
Now standing barren of influence,
shielded by confidence.
Thus,

I no longer am a companion of compromise.
I no longer travel with the tide.
I am no longer a simple moment of a memory forgotten.
But...
I am still a descendent of dreams-
riding the tail-spun tapestry of life.

- Lelei Jennings '95
For My Fiancé
That night beneath the wavering leaves, I felt
Your touch, the gentle breeze, a shelter,

One that moved me, caressed me, and hid the warm mist.
Three hearts, chipped into oak, positioned by the sweltering

Point of a dull blade, were reminiscent of your lips' moistness
When I first saw your words swim. They still tell

The story witnessed by the lightbulb of the night, the blind hoo,
wishing to welcome

Another bond like those carvings. Clouds rushed past our light
Like a hesitant blink. Hands of dark skeletons

Waved goodbye. Nervous shivers halted!
Finally, I clutched your hand in mine. And knelt.

—Charles N. Brown ’93

YHWH

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and
live."
—Exod. 33:20

The old woman sitting in the third row
of the presbyterian church where she
always sits her hands trembling from old age
and fear of God wondering if that time so long
ago she was thirty if it really mattered.

Her husband was away for a time too long
and the other was young and the way he touched her
running his hand up her back hesitantly asking
with his fingertips if this was all right and she
not really knowing if it was but such a change
and she letting it happen and when the lovemaking
came his lips so gentle on her lips on her breasts
in the place her husband would never place his own
feeling so good for the moment at least—her husband
died thirty years later never knowing
her so called moment of weakness that she forever
ached for yet never let happen ever again
because of fear of damnation and love for a man
that was developed from years spent sharing dinner
and walks together in a park on wednesday afternoons.

Now her hands tremble harder as the memories
flood in and she worries wanders if she is damned
or if that sin and her years of silent guilt
were really enough to cancel her promise of heaven.

Or a man he lives next to the old woman
though he’s never been to church sitting in a building
three stories above the world scribbling equations
rough drawings the like figuring stresses and strains.

In a fit of frustration he slams his pen down
and walks to the window his key to the world and looks
out at a man a person with ratted clothing asking
people out on lunch for a cigarette for a light
and he is filled with an abrupt quickening like the moment
before an orgasm or before the cars collide
and the glass tears into the skin dangerous territory
where there is more then the plan for a new plant.
He pulls quickly away experienced in these matters and grabbing his pen his calculator his handles on the world at his desk again he sits and works the page.

Or a boy his son sits with friends in a circle together in a park somewhere deep in the city and they look up to heaven feeling the communion of love but feeling that beyond their tight sphere is hatred.

Later that night he and the friends abandon trees and soft grass for the inner sanctum of a club filled with guitar riffs skinheads and girls with plum hair and he looks to his friends and looks to the stage and looks to the bar where he can't order a drink so he spends five bucks of the money he earned watching meat cook at a fast food joint and tries to find god in a slamdance pit and the end of an acid tab (on being tough they call it though it will bring him to his knees possessed by the moment his father so fears).

Only he has no pen and no calculator and no desk and no so called wisdom to block it out and the drug makes it seem so much more than it really is that he cries to the sky because like Moses he was given a glimpse but not allowed to see the face.

Petty Officer

In the distant sea, wishing for the voices of his children, he works below deck, beneath machinery sweating the same grease he breathes. The waves carry no messages—

the wind whistles no news.

Worry brings sleepless nights, so he thinks only of their smiles.

He dreams of wrapping his thick arms around his love, for comfort and security:

her head throbs from playful screams of children and she's frustrated by the smell of ash in the oven.

The chill she feels leads to the summer windows not yet dressed for winter and she thinks of him who curses while he practices war.

— Molly Cruikshank '93
There

cold steel cuts your feet
the tendons trail through daffodils
as you run towards a dark, soft place
you step into the plush black
wanting to heal your open sores

you lay down behind the headstone
with the closed-faced forms
who cannot see your eyes
their hands are rough tough and cold
and horribly arousing

(your brain disconnects itself)

when you are ready to leave
you get up from the dirt
and brush the beetles to the ground
they crawl quietly, gingerly
inside the wounds on your feet

(your brain does not healed you)

Here

(the light cuts on inside)

your pupils grow big, then small
you shake your head, the pain spins
don't look into the mirror—
you skin is shifting and cracking
and you will soon be old

(your eyes will wilt like theirs)

the sun is shining and slicing
and when you let in the light
you will be burned by god
his luminance heals nothing
his lightning will split your spine

you do not want to see
you burrow down and wish for maggots
they eat only the dead tissue
and they will help you to heal
when they fly away you will be shiny

— Anonymous
In Irkutsk,

our train pulling us through,
a woman bowed low
to the platform and held to her back
bundles of branches and sticks
pulling them close
like a blanket held against
the cold of the early morning.
At home, we would gather bundles
of twigs, setting them ablaze
inside a small ring of stones
in the backyard, and huddle close
pushing our hands near the center,
next to the flame, while flakes of ash
rose between us then carefully
descended like a snow
falling against her cheek.

Outside,
the stars, now full of dawn,
mixed and fell with new
flakes and the black smoke
of our train, settling like
dust across the station, filled
the air between us with thick
greasy light. As our car rolled
past I could see the lines of her
face, twisted and rough like the
branches she carried, set around
her blue eyes, which, lit softly by
some unseen hand against the cold,
made their way home
to a backyard and a circle of stones.

- Trey Dunham '94
The clock in the bus station was busted. Minute hand hung limp and bent as if someone reached inside the glass and physically tortured it. The clock was not alone. The interior of the bus station was chipped everywhere. The deserted lunch counter was lime green with worn brown patches; the stools bright orange. The lounge chairs were low and plastic, perhaps once blue. Definitely left from a time gone past. From where he sat you might of thought he was part of the decor. He was awkwardly hunched in his chair with his head in his lap. His hair was partly caught in a ponytail and his denim jacket was covered with the handy work of Harley Davidson. The only two visible possessions were seated next to him, a scabbed up dog and a flat pack of reds. The college student entered from the side and stood in the center of the room. The interior frightened him. He spoke to himself, "Shit. What the hell am I supposed to do now?" His echo bounced off the tiled surfaces, only the dog responded to his imploring question. He jumped from his perch and stretched his way over to the student's bag, sniffing the brown canvas.

"What do you want mutt? I haven't got a thing." He moved over into a chair first checking for any weird objects that might be stuck to the surface. He then removed a tattered bus schedule from his jeans and began searching for a way out. The dog had followed and jumped up on the seat next to his. The young man ignored the possibility that this dog was his new found friend. When he finally located the time of his ride, he immediately began to grind his jaw. "I can't fucking believe this shit. If I had known the short cut dropped me off here I would have taken the other route. God fucking dammit!"

The next bus wasn't due for eight hours. He immediately glanced at the snack bar and realized the last sandwich they had probably served was when Lennon took that bullet. As for any attendants, they were most likely hiding in the shack outside pulling on a bottle. His only chance at entertainment was the lost soul hunched over in his chair. He did the only reasonable thing and pulled out his book which he had already finished. He started over.

The buzzing of the flies awoke the college kid as one of them landed on his open mouth. They had wandered over from their tired exploration of the Harley man. He rubbed his eyes and glanced around out of habit, but knew it would look pretty much the same. The dog was still staring at him. He retrieved his book from the ground and opened his sack, placing it back inside. He then removed a cellophane sandwich and slowly undressed it. The dog leaned in to inspect the merchandise. Shifting away from the animal he removed one half and took a bite of warm roast beef that had turned an off brown color from age. The dog jumped off his stool and came around for a better look, and also to remind the student that he was still waiting.

"I can't give you anything mutt, this is my last bit of food until I reach Santa Fe." The dog licked his nose and scooted closer.

"Aw, come on now, why don't you go bug your owner." He then glanced over at his object of advice and realized just how desperate the dog must be. The man was still in the exact same position. He looked down at the dog again, ripping the sandwich in half he placed the larger piece on the ground and watched the dog devour what looked like his first bite in days. He scowled in the owners direction and muttered to himself, "People shouldn't fucking take on animals when they can't even take care of themselves. Just another drunk shit taking up space."

He decided to get up and take a few laps around the room, all the while shaking the blood back down into his toes. The dog stayed by the bag perhaps thinking he was guarding whatever food was left. As he circled the room he began to check out the owner more closely. A fly had landed on one of his hands that lay palm up on the floor. His feet were stretched out in front. The student shook his head and imagined just how much he probably had to consume to find his position sleep worthy. He then looked out the window at the vast wasteland of brown chalky earth that stretched to the horizon. For the sake of verbal stimulation he held his own conversation.

"When I get to Santa Fe the first thing I do is find a shower without having to pay for it. Put on my clean underwear and head for her doorstep. If she is excited to see me then, no worries."

He was now testing out the water fountain to clear his throat and had to settle on a few swallows of his own saliva. A good deep clear of the vocal passage and he was off again.

"On the other hand, if she isn't that thrilled, well, then I head for Corpus Christie, Texas and visit John. Now he'll be excited. We'll talk about the coming fall and drink golden margueritas by the pool. Quitting that landscape job early was a good idea, now I can explore the west and fantasize about all that could happen. Definitely."

He was now being followed in his endless circling by the mutt, who was obviously interested in what he was saying.

"What do you think old dog? What the hell do you know anyway, you don't have enough sense to ditch your owner and opt for a new life. I guess the saying is true, man's best friend is man's best friend. And what a friend I might add."

The student decided to check out the man a little closer, however, the fear of a lurking disease kept about five feet between them. His one visible hand was pale, that blue pale you'd imagine on a ninety-five year old grandparent, who moved in with you just in time to say goodbye. There were flies trying to burrow under his straw hair, wanting to lick his neck. The student didn't voice his opinion loud in case the thing awoke, but he thought about the impossibility of a life similar to this whinos. How does anyone reach this plateau? And once there, why don't they slit their wrists? He knew the thought was evil but couldn't prevent the opinion from forming. Standing over the body he spoke to create a bigger distance between their two lives,

"I'm on my way to Santa Fe to get some loving from a beauty. She doesn't know this of course, it's a surprise. But don't you worry your soaked head over this, she'll be excited to see me, you wait and see."

By this time the dog had wandered over. He licked his owners hand and stood there waiting for the pat that usually follows.
"For Christ sakes, wake up you wino and pay attention to your dog."

With that the student pushed the denim shoulder. There was no give, just rigid, hard bone. The college kid swallowed slowly as a hard realization set in. He had to know. Leaning over the cowboy, the kid prayed his chest from his knees until the Marlborough man was sitting up, as if waiting patiently for a bus. He ran out the front door with tears falling out of his eyes and found one scruggly bush to empty his stomach. The roast beef was hardly digested. Wrapping his hands around his chest he sat over his sacrifice, silently violent. The dog's nose touching his flesh brought him back.

Later, when the sheriff came to retrieve the lost souls he picked the student up off the ground and placed him in the back of his car. He did the same for the dog. The sheriff had to fetch the kid's bag because he'd refused to enter the station. The college student had left the man sitting there alone, unable to stare into his grin, his alcoholic grin. As the sheriff climbed into the car he volunteered the information anyone would want to know.

"Dehydration and a very bad liver most likely. Nothing anyone can do for these people, they do it to themselves." He didn't even look at the sheriff, the brown empty landscape held his attention.

- Heidi Mahoney '93

- Anonymous
Snowless Winter in New England

Puritan homes from the outside,
Glued with salt from the keel of some fisherman's pram
Bend wooden bodies to align with
Raw albumin pavement slick from late fog.

Black earth stretches between sidewalk and doorstep.
Dampness seeps through rubber soles of boots and
Person leans into light fingers from lamp poles
Burning heatless spheres of white-washed electricity.

Inside, low beamed ceilings breathe orange warmth
Through windows —nostrils of sleepings dragons—
Steaming ice puddles on frame and clapboard into
Wishful spiralling clouds of nothingness.

— Amy Hughes '93

The Shouting Floor

Sister McNab would start
the “Holy Dance.”
Her hat with its feathers
and sequenced beads,
would fly off
during the praise.
All of the Saints
would edge her on.
One by two they
would come.
Shouts of “Amen.”
and “That's all right!”,
would echo throughout
the halls, as they clutched
their long polyester skirts
and let their hats fly off
as well.
Only those with true faith
would come.
Others stayed in the pews
and yelled,
empty heartless screams
of acceptance.
But the floor absorbed the cries
of those with true faith.
A week's worth of hardship,
poverty, pain and
"negritude" was thrown down
and left there for a week to renew
the Saint who came to
the shouting floor.

— Derrick L. Pryor '93
The Favorite

On Friday night he is the life blood
Of this two stoplight town.
Under pale purple lights,
On the only field in the county that isn’t plowed under
With corn or beans
The Favorite dominates.
Diving off tackle
And kicking up dirt,
He runs, tackles, scores,
Punishing all takers for failing to be as magnificent as himself.
And the overawed fathers nod,
Arguing over bellies swollen with lukewarm booster hotdogs
And twenty years of beer,
Whether tonight’s star
Runs more like Nate Washington,
Or Butch Westin,
Or some other forgotten hero,
Who clocked out at five
And made the game tonight.

There are those people,
Goddamn liberals, everyone of them,
That are fearful and envious of his confident swagger,
They bemoan his attitude, asking
Why can’t he hit the books,
Like he did that kid from Easthills, the one whose chinstrap broke,
And helmet twisted half way ‘round?
You know, the kid who lay on the thirty
Until Bob from the life squad
Gave him the salts.

The Favorite won’t even play ball again,
College will rust and die
Like the Malibu behind the garage,
And tonight’s hero will be another mechanic,
Or broken back farmer,
within three years.

Long ago I would have
said How right those teachers were.
And how the horse should have been reined,
If not broken.
But then,
If I were made God
Before I could drive,
And fathers lined up their daughters for me,
And poured me their beer
While their young sons fought to wear my number.
What would I care,
About Trigonometry?

– Andy Heckert ’93

– Colin Mack ’94
I. Waiting for Venus

You stand on a carpet and wait for your feet to sink
Into the pile. You look at the artwork placed there
And there like quicksand. Venus lifts a garland to the sky,
Her eyes fixed on some god-awful horizon. She seems
To have a purpose. Her hair, sliced into her back
And shoulders, curls on her neck and molds itself
Around your ears as you stand. So you blink, and walk
To the next room, where you hear chanting and smell
Incense. Your body opens, breathing in sandalwood
And honey. You have to go back to her. Her waxy
Gray skin is the color of your bones, and its chill
Corrupts you, so you fall to your knees and conjure
The Lord to heal her. She falls lightly from the pedestal
And your arms surround a statue. Water condenses
And yields over her solid eyes, rounded torso, the stony
Rips of her breasts. And you pray that Venus has
Broken her marble cage and is free, you lying on your side
Next to an empty pile of shards, she a soaring blaze,
Intact and unshed in your veins. But you know the
Difference between life and dreams. So you shake her
Water from your body, wipe lamb's blood from your eyes.
And you leave that place of imprisoned, powerful ones
Whose bodies fit into your hands as if shaped for you alone.

II. Pallas

Every day is a rebirth of the one before.
Grass shivers. Atlas blows clouds over the sun.

He sees the world gravely. With her body
Athene circles me three times

And we fight, a dance of metallic clash and breathing,
There an angry roar, then we love.

With every cut of her knife I further swoon
to death. My skin slips off, an outgrown tunic.

III. Psyche and Eros

Her skin shines in the moonlight as if spun from gold.
She twists her hair all the way around her neck until it's
All there is. The gods talk about splendor: look here. She lifts
Her head, straightens her shoulders: the stars are your eyes.
She rubs her lips with oil, goes home to dream of you.

She sleeps: eyes turn into your face, submit with a smile,
your neck slopes to shoulders with arms cut into the sides.
Your fingers grace her body. Speak into her mouth, forget
About prophecy. Remember the danger of beauty without
Love, and then dream only with her. Don't worry, Eros,

She could fill the box with a pyramid of wax, a mound
Of earth, tiny chunks of myrrh. You could wed under the sea,
Two fragile fish like the swimming ornaments in her hair.
Fall into her now as into blackest night, and stay, immortal,
While she lifts the lantern to your face, to see how

You change into ever-lovelier shapes under her fingers,
While your eyes are jewels under the lids, perpetually
Growing. She will find you. The moon shines purer
Than skin, even colder than the dreams of her god:
If this were not true, you would never have woken.

IV. Achilles Speaking to the Nereid Thetis

The day falls like rain under your grief.
What are the tears of a nymph
But a mere wet breaking of the old
Gray clouds on this ground of war?
Remember how falling, screaming,
(I stub out a cigarette
to watch it
scatter
exhale a last blue
cloud of smoke
I'm dead
warm
I walk to the door
and open it for air)

Huge, I tried to be born of you,
And how these fists held air
Until you grabbed my fat limbs
Like fruit and I choked and gagged
On water and life. Mother,

(in the silent urgency
of late night I am
enchanted by the
sound of dead leaves
in the wind
I think no longer of loving
it never even touched me)

Lover, destroyer of faith and men,
The water of Nereus eats stars
Like dates, then glows in the black
Black of a destroyed sky. This is
Why one waits and sees.

(sunrise
a hot star coming
with easy regularity
encroaching on a body
that will not await
a new rebirth
of wonder)

Howling to be made a man on this
Stretched, war-littered battlefield,
Bitter and mottled as the old
Gold filigree on my royal chariot,
I surrender to your immortality.

- Kristina Kruse '93
Vedauwoo
(vee-dub-woo)

She might as well push
the groceries to the car
herself, she'd done all
the pushing before—
the vacuum, the furniture,
the baby born after ten
hours of labor—by herself.
Now squeezed between
the Charmin and Quaker
Instant Oats, she muffles
his cry with a pushed-in
pacifier.

She nudges
the check forward with the same
thin fingers which, at half-time,
had twirled a baton, then returned
to full-time, wrapping blankets
around him and trudging home
through the wind and snow
and the blare of laughter
and cars, horns streaming from
the lot
towards
Vedauwoo and a bonfire
and music and a keg of beer:
And Johnny
pulling her close
and the weight of the moon
holding him down
onto her, thin, naked
fingers too light
to drive him away.

She
pushes the cart into the parking
lot, holding on against the wind
and the slope of the land, retracing
her way to the car.

— Trey Dunham '94

— Jeannie Wienke '93
PART II
AWAKENING

i have heard from my grandmothers mouth
of why her skin is so light
why her hair is so straight
how her mother was the same
and how she got that way and the evil man that found his
way into our blood
(who was that man I would think to myself?)

i have heard my grandfathers story of
leaving the eighth grade
never to go back
to sweat under the fiery North Carolina sun
so that he could help feed eight hungry mouths
all of them family
but none his children

and i hear the cautious whisper of my grandmothers voice
when she says "black"
and in 1993 will still say
"colored"
without a wink and with a sense of pride

and i think of the story my mother told me
of cleaning bathrooms
in the department store downtown
because in 1965 that was what she could get

and i hear the stories and
watch the tears of my family,
their pain, their deaths, the opportunities lost
and the bodies set aflame
and i see the stories of my family
becoming real again when i see
Tawana Brawley, Rodney King, the wino in my neighborhood
even when i think of the bullets that ripped open
Malcolm's chest
or
Martin's neck

and i think of all these things
as i lay here
and i ask why am I lying here
next to you
letting your blue eyes pass over my brown face
and your pitifully suntanned hand slide over
my hip.
can you tell me why I am still here... naked with you?
do you really hate me after all these years?
can I really love you after all the scars?
are you that man from so long ago?

-N.N.C. '94

Jamie Oliver '94
Lucky Boo

Diamond earrings illuminate back alley New Orleans,  
Where freak show drags and college girls play naked voodoo queens.  
Swamp mud scars the azure skin of rock ‘n’ rollers’ shoes.  
The vacant suitcase molds as Lucky Boo plays the blues.

Satan waits in the reeds with Alaskan Brother Ben.  
Confetti buries Mardi Gras with biker czars of Zen.  
The box folk sell their children to switchblade pimp gurus.  
The vacant suitcase holds the rain as Lucky plays the blues.

Polaroid perverts line the street ‘neath Gunsmoke overhangs.  
Pretty girls trip leg-hole traps of slicked-up, night-wolf fangs.  
VD sinners ask God to guide them through their colds and flu.  
A cigarette hits the suitcase as Lucky plays the blues.

French cuisine is garnished with an honest mask of black.  
A Cajun bites a crayfish, a mosquito bites him back.  
A blind Indian draws spirits from an Irish flask of booze.  
The suitcase is as naked as the howling six-string blues.

The French Quarter is full of clowns and priests in jackal hoods.  
The sweaty chemist shows the gray suit his crystal goods.  
Black men bowl in crowded dives with Pollacks and with Jews.  
The winners tie, the losers die, the lucky always lose.

Torch jugglers build shadows from the fading iron lamps.  
Tap-dance echoes beckon ebony sheet metal camps.  
The starving suitcase decays as Lucky plays the blues.

A gun spins ‘cross the rooftop, a fists goes through a fan.  
Down below some colored kids kick their lonely can.  
A raven on a Gothic wire can watch the evening news.  
The brimstone blasts are eaten by a funeral marching band.

Uncreation

He had her lie down, naked, unashamed in darkness. He called Phoebus to dissolve  
the veil of shadows, “Illuminate her.”  
He could not believe what the darkness hid;  
But she had warned him of what would evolve if he would not be pleased with a darker  
love. He decided, then, to betray her for art. Now loving her more than ever, he took the soil of the earth and began  
to shape it in her image; with his hands he ribbed her, then moving his thumbs from her  
eyewells, he smoothed the apple of her throat and hung from his own tree, eyes stabbed out.

He lives yet, moving amoebic through cold darkness. Is this just the way things would be?  
The clay is cold and wet, his fingers swim through shadows, groping, like a man returned  
to the place he called home to find nothing, nothing there for him but a smug fool’s dream,  
a bartender’s story when closing lights dim. How to paint one whose canvass is barren?  
She cannot nurse him for his universe is created in dust, and his love verse, the second testament, he had written  
by men, but his last vow is best and still, and no one knows how long his silent vigil.

Thumb hooked in pocket, a poor boy’s fingers keep the time.  
As he listens to the naked truth he pulls out a faded dime.  
Walking to the suitcase he says, “Here’s something you can use.”  
Lucky tilts his weathered hat, and then he plays the blues.  

— Matt Wanat ’95

— Richard Croft ’93
(untitled verse)

thrown scattered about
(once pressed close to a young lover's breast)
the pages of a shrivelled memory
brush the gritty pavement
of the sidewalk
at the heart of the dozing metropolis

in this midnight lull,
the blurred verse
advertised by the
artificial glare of the lamppost
guarding the corner of Fifth and St. Clair

vulgar, now,
in the grimy hands
of the ever-so-public night,
The poet's soul
tossed into a gutter by the wind,
his voice
lost forever to the callous city streets

— Jen Rudgers '96

Encore

Read between my line.
The one you've heard so many times before.
Like the time in Paris with Dexter, our man,
blowin' so hard we thought the roof would cave in, or was it
the stars that were shining

beneath us, with their fine cut suits and furs,
smiling and posing, on display for the bored
to watch. But not us, as we sat in the cheap
seats, drinking scotch smuggled in through the
flask pressed to my skin.

Listening to his horn and feeling the warmth pass through us, I turned to look at you, on the edge of your seat, eyes shaded from the stars. When I opened my mouth you turned to face me, and as you looked away, I knew my blank was already filled.

— William DeNardo '93
Forever looking for understanding
Endless country roads
And waves along the shore
Baby blue eyes that captivate
Even a child—
Your protocol.
A side of you
You wouldn't dare to show another
Unique
Contrast is not always black and white
Forever trying to solve the mystery
Clouds loom and the rain—
The pitter patter of pain
The child possesses something
Others do not.
A no risk guarantee
Pacified easily
By some red and green paint
And a two dollar picture with Santa
Forever mastering the simplification of complexity,
The resilience of a child
Who has not been beaten by society
You try to make life better for him—
Than it was for you.
Your baby blue eyes captivate me—
And I try to understand.

— Katherine Campo '94

Meditation on Darts

A man aims, desiring to pinpoint his goal, then casts away, hoping to hit the circle among circles—

A miss.

He clamps another and contemplates: a moth transforming to a caterpillar, an object caught in the gyre of a tornado (revolving, twisting), stuck in a cycle with an end at its start.

One last shot, tangled in the momentum of motion.
In childhood it was easier; now he is older wanting to begin again when it ends. The throw spirals to its target.

Bullseye.

— J.B. Allen '94
Feeding Betsy

My momma says we're gonna be here forever. I guess that's pretty fine. Daddy takes me out in the truck just about every Sunday, calls it his Fiery Old Red Dump. Sometimes we go to feed Daddy's pigs, which I like because they make funny noises and rub up against your legs a lot. Daddy's pigs live down the road some from the house, Momma says they stink and I guess that's why they're so far away. Daddy feeds them himself every mornin', 'cept on Sundays sometimes he waits 'till after church and takes me with him. Daddy used to take me with him mostly just to see old Able. Able was Daddy's favorite pig 'cause he was the smallest (even though he was really big) and he liked it whenever Daddy scratched him behind the ears. Whenever Daddy took me to feed the pigs he'd call out "here Able!" and Able'd grunt and come chargin' up to Daddy like he was some stud bull or somethin'. Daddy sure loved that pig.

Sometimes Daddy takes me fishin' with him, but not mostly 'cause Momma says it ain't ladylike to go fishin', 'specially on Sundays when we're s'posed to be thinkin' all about Jesus and what bad people we all are durin' the week. Whenever Daddy takes me fishin' we just tell Momma we were pickin' flowers along the river, and she kinda smiles her momma smile and tells Daddy he shoulda been a polly tition 'stead of a farmer. Then Sandy laughs with Momma and we all think it's pretty funny. Sandy's just like Momma is. She's real pretty with curly hair and she likes to cook big pots of stew. Momma and Sandy always cook dinner together 'cause sometime real soon Sandy's gonna hafta pick a nice fella and settle down. That's what Mr. Piker keeps sayin' anyway, every time him and Mrs. Piker comes over to play cards with Momma and Daddy. I like it when they come over 'cause then my best friend Mildred comes with 'em and we play barbies and dress up.

Mildred's about my best friend in the whole world. We both take the bus to school and me and Mildred play hand slaps on the way to school in the mornin', but Mildred's Momma (Mrs. Piker) picks her right up from school after lunch so she can help out with the housework. I have to stay there all day and Jimmy Johnson just bugs me to death! He sits right behind me in school and pulls my pigtails everyday! I asked Momma to let me stop wearin' 'em so he'd stop pullin' 'em. But Momma says pigtails are very ladylike and proper. I guess she's right, but I still don't like 'em, they pull my head too tight, and then boys like Jimmy Johnson pull 'em in school. Mildred doesn't have to wear her pigtails any more, guess her Momma don't think they're ladylike and proper. Course, Mildred's daddy don't have a truck like my Daddy's, no Fiery Old Red Dump. His truck's green and Daddy says it's no good 'cause it's got a foreign motor. Mr. Piker doesn't take Mildred for rides in his green truck, not like my Daddy takes me for rides in his, but I sure wish I didn't have to wear these pigtails, and I'd sure like to come home early like Mildred does every day.

Mildred's got seven Barbies, and she's even got a Ken doll. Momma won't let me have a Ken doll 'cause she says that Barbies should only play with other Barbies and that Ken dolls would only make the Barbies act silly. Sandy told me she wasn't ever aloud to have a Ken doll either, so I shouldn't have one just 'cause I'm the youngest.

Daddy always laughs whenever Sandy calls me "the youngest" and he says "Hell, Sandy, there's only the two of ya." and then Momma tells Daddy, "For
heaven's sake Jacob watch your language, do you want to make my daughters into nutters?" Daddy just keeps laughin' and I think it's pretty funny, but Sandy says "Oh, Daddy," and then she and Momma go into the kitchen to cut up some pie or do the dishes. I always wanna help, but there's really only room for just the two of them at the sink, and I'm too clumsy to dry off the plates, so I just stay at the table with Daddy and he tells me stories about Old Uncle 'Cephus, who was Daddy's favorite Uncle when he was a little boy.

I think my Daddy's just about the best talker in the whole world. Whenever he takes me for a ride in the Fiery Old Red Dump on Sundays he tells me lots of really neat stories 'bout Uncle 'Cephus and bears, and times when he went huntin'.

Daddy doesn't hunt anymore 'cause Momma says its 'trocious and tells him he can't look at his hands when he comes home. Daddy told me he was gettin' tired of huntin' anyways 'cause one time he shot this one fat doe right in her eyeball, and she just kept runnin' and runnin', and Daddy was tryin' to chase her cause he shot her and didn't want her to get away. But she was just too darn fast, so she got away and him and all the other hunters had to look for her blood on the ground and try to find her that way. "It took us all day," Daddy said, "and when we found her she was layin right on her side, crying like a baby with the whole left side of her pretty face missin', and I thought to myself, Jacob, you done created this wrong, and now you got to set it right. So I lifted my rifle, and I shot her right in the heart. And I didn't take none of that venison home with me, I gave it all to the other fellas and said "fellas, I'm out, my huntin' days are over," so then I walked back here to your momma and showed her my hands and said "Violet," (I think Momma's name is just about the prettiest I ever heard. Sometimes when me an' Mildred play out in the field I find violets for Momma and she wears 'em in her hair) "you can look at my hands now sweetheart, they're clean."

I think about Daddy's stories sometimes when I'm layin' up in the old hayloft in the barn. I really like it up there a whole lot. In the summer time the hay smells real sweet and soft, and you can lay up there smellin' the hay and listenin' to the flies and bees buzz, and close and open your eyes real slow 'til ya feel kinda like when ya first wake up in the mornin' and you yawn and stretch like a warm cat. My cat Betsy always stretches and yawns like that whenever she's been layin in the windowsill for a long time. She's not allowed in the house, but I pet her outside sometimes and she even lets me stroke her tail, which the other farm cats won't let me do.

Sandy won't pet the cats at all, she says they gots fleas and stinky mouse breath. I think Betsy's pretty nice though, so whenever I yawn and stretch up in the old hayloft, I pretend like I'm Betsy and I gots fleas and chase mice.

One day I was layin in the hayloft, thinkin' how nice it was to be up there in the barn with all the rusty nails and creaky boards (that's the things that Momma always tells me to be careful of when I'm goin' up into the old hayloft) I was just closin' and openin' my eyes real catlike when I heard Daddy's Fiery Old Red Dump pull up outside. So I yawned and stretched and twisted round to peek out the window up there and then I narrowed my eyes just like Betsy so I could see Daddy better when he got out. And then I waited for Daddy to jump down out of the truck and holler my name. But he didn't jump out like normal, he just sorta climbed out slowly and I knew he wasn't happy, 'cause Daddy always jumps out when he's happy and climbs out when he's sad. So then Daddy walked around to the back of the truck and I thought he was cold 'cause he was shakin', but then I saw he was cryin', and I got real scared 'cause Daddy never cries, 'cept for the time when Sandy got hit by the car when she was eleven and Momma went with her in the ambulance and Daddy took me with him to the hospital in his truck. The road was all dusty and Daddy was drivin' real fast so it seemed like the whole world was a cloud of dust. He was cryin' when we drove there and I was cryin' too 'cause I was just real little and didn't know what was goin' on.

When we got to the hospital Momma was in the waitin' room and Daddy went runnin' up to her and hugged her for a long time and they were both shakin' and then I started cryin' louder and Daddy picked me up and Momma kissed my face and squeezed me tight and that scared me even more but then the doctor came out and said everything was alright and Sandy could come home in a few days. So then Momma started cryin' even harder, and so did Daddy, and we were all cryin', but I didn't know why.

And when Sandy came home she couldn't walk for a while so she let me get her lemonade and magazines and stuff. I like Sandy alot and I wish I could be as pretty as she is. Momma says I need to be more ladylike, but I don't think I could ever be as ladylike as Sandy is. Sandy always giggles when she talks to boys, and sometimes her face gets red whenever they look at her funny. She thinks boys are cute, but I think they're gross, 'specialy boys like Jimmy Johnson.

When I saw Daddy cryin' it made me think of that time in the hospital and I started to feel like I was gonna cry, and I didn't feel very catlike at all. Then Daddy started walkin' to the back of the truck and he pulled somethin' out of it that was pretty heavy 'cause Daddy couldn't hardly lift it and my Daddy's pretty strong. And when I looked closer I saw that it was one of Daddy's pigs, and I guess it was dead 'cause it sure didn't move, but then, Daddy didn't move none either. He just kinda stood there for a minute, and then he stopped the pig into the woodshed, and then he didn't come out of the woodshed for a long time.

I stayed up in the hayloft for a long time, even though I wanted to go down and talk to Daddy. It still smelled sweet up there and I could still hear the flies and bees, and sometimes dragonflies buzzin' around outside. Dragonflies always sound just like big motorboats from far away. They look scary though, so I don't ever get real close to find out what they sound like then. My eyes felt really heavy and I tried to think about Betsy and chasin' mice, but all I could think about was helpin' Daddy feed those pigs, and how they all grunted and rubbed up against our legs when we walked into the pen.

I thought about that while the sun was goin' down and the bees and flies were changin' places with the mosquitoes and lightning bugs. I knew that the light and the noise was changin' but I was closin' and openin' my eyes real slow, picturin' Daddy and Able out in the pig pen. I just knew the dead pig was Able. Able was the only pig that Daddy could've carried, so I knew why Daddy was sad, 'cause Able had died.

Then I heard Momma callin' me in for supper. Her voice was clear but it seemed really far away and it sounded like she might have been callin' for a long time. So I stretched and yawned just like Betsy and I thought I was really hungry, so I climbed down out of the old hayloft and ran into the house to wash my hands.
Momma was in the kitchen mashin’ up the potatoes. She always waits ‘till we’re sittin’ at the table to mash ‘em up, cause she says that makes ‘em taste better. Daddy tells her she should sit down and enjoy supper with the family, ‘stead of jumpin’ up and down every five minutes to mash potatoes or get more biscuits. Daddy was sittin’ at the table and he looked real happy, he was laughin’ at somethin’ Sandy just said, probably somethin’ bout me bein’ the youngest, and he didn’t look like he’d been cryin’ at all. So then I thought that thing about Able must have been a daydream, and then Daddy called me over to sit on his lap and asked me where I’d been all day, so I told him I’d been up in the old hayloft, and then he laughed and said, “takin’ a little catnap?” and winked at me ‘cause he knows how I like to act like Betsy and listen to the bees and flies. Then Momma told me to sit at the table and I sat in my chair.

My chair’s always the one closest to the sink. Our kitchen table is big and round, but my momma don’t have one of them red and white checked tablecloths for it ‘cause she says they’re too cleeched. Our table cloths is always white, ‘cept on special ‘cations like Easter or Daddy’s birthday. Momma puts out the pretty tablecloth with all sorts of pretty pink roses and daisies on it. Whenever Momma puts out the pretty tablecloth I like to pretend like I can smell all the flowers. The daisies always smell ‘specially nice.

This time our tablecloth was plain old white, and I couldn’t smell no flowers. I put my napkin down on my lap and Sandy went and got the biscuits off the stove, and Momma brought the mashed potatoes to the table in a big steamin’ bowl with thick yellow butter running down the sides, and my stomach started rumblin’ and I was lickin’ my lips, thinkin’ how good dinner was gonna be, when Momma set down a great big steamin’ tray of porkchops, right in the middle of the kitchen table.

I looked at Daddy, and I thought he’d be startin’ to cry, but he was smilin’ his great big happy smile, starin’ right at those porkchops and suckin’ in a great big breath like he was gettin’ ready to dive into a swimmin’ hole. And then I looked at Sandy, but she was smoothing her napkin on her lap and foldin’ her hands to say grace. But then I saw that Momma didn’t have that great big proud look on her face she always get whenever we sit down to a table full of good, hearty food. Momma looked like she looks when old Eddie, the mailman, brings a big thick stack of env’lopes and says “sorry m’am” as he hands them to her. Momma wasn’t smilin’ at all, she was just scoopin’ the mashed potatoes onto our plates, pourin’ us all great big glasses of ice-cold milk, and pretendin’ like she didn’t even see the tray of pork chops she just set down on the table.

Then Daddy said, “Well, Violet, this looks like a fine meal, I guess you outdone yourself.” And Momma looked at Daddy and told him, “I’m sorry, Jacob, but the family’s gotta eat.” And Daddy didn’t say anything, he just planted his fork into the biggest, juiciest porkchop, and he set it down right on my plate. Then he put one on Sandy’s, then Momma’s, then his own. I just sat there with my hands in my lap, starin’ down at that great big porkchop, thinkin’ how I wasn’t very hungry anymore. Momma and Sandy were eatin’ real slow, cuttin’ their food up into little bites and chewin’ it up real good before swallowin’. Daddy was eatin’ like a combine, shovelin’ pork and potatoes into his mouth so fast I was afraid he was gonna eat the plate. I just kept sittin’ there, lookin’ at my porkchop, wishin’ it was on someone else’s plate.

“Eat your dinner.” Daddy was lookin’ at me across the table as he dug his fork into another greasy porkchop and dropped it onto his messy plate.

“I’m not very hungry,” I said, ‘cause really I wasn’t and I didn’t know why Daddy was.

“I don’t care if you’re hungry or not, I want you to eat that porkchop.”

Daddy wasn’t smilin’ anymore and I knew he was gettin’ mad, so I picked up my fork and scooped up some mashed potatoes, and then I took a little, ladylike bite, just like Momma and Sandy.

“Now eat your porkchop.”

“Daddy, I don’t want any.” Momma and Sandy had stopped eatin’ and they were all lookin’ at me, Daddy still had his fork in his hand, and he was pointin’ it at me just the way old lady Wiliker points her chalk at the class when somebody just made a fartin’ noise or somethin’.

“Young lady if you don’t eat that porkchop I’m goin’ outside and cuttin’ a switch from the rosebush.”

“Jacob, if she’s not hungry I think she can just be excused from the table.”

Momma had picked her fork back up and was chewin’ up a small bite of porkchop, as if to show Daddy how the whole thing was really just silly. But Daddy didn’t even look at Momma.

“Am I gonna’ hafta cut me a switch?”

Now I was startin’ to cry, ‘cause Daddy never whipped me anymore, even when I did somethin’ really bad like trippin’ Jimmy Johnson on his way off the schoolbus. And I just couldn’t eat that porkchop, even though I knew I’d get in trouble if I didn’t.

“Jacob, leave the girl alone.”

“Goddamnit Violet, I told her to eat that porkchop, and she’s gonna eat it if I have to shove it down ‘er throat!”

Momma looked at me and smiled, “Honey, why don’t you take your porkchop outside and eat it on the porch?”

Daddy looked right at Momma, and he was madder than I’d ever seen ‘im before. His face was all red and his eyes were real wide and watery. Sandy didn’t know what to do, and I sure didn’t either, so I just did what Momma told me and picked my porkchop off the plate and carried it out of the kitchen. It felt all wet and slippery in my fingers, but I wouldn’t drop it, even though it was still hot and grease was drippin’ off it onto the floor. Sandy watched me get up and leave, but Momma and Daddy just sat there lookin’ at each other like they was both fixin’ to cry.

I walked real slow to the front porch, drippin’ hot grease onto the shiny wood of the hall floor, cuppin’ my hand under the falling grease as I passed over the homemade yarn rug in our livin’ room, swingin’ open the screen door with my hip, steppin’ out the summer twilight with a steamin’ porkchop in my hand. Once I got outside I didn’t know what to do, so I went runnin’ over to the barn and climbed up into the old hayloft, catchin’ my skirt on a rusty nail as I climbed up the knotty old ladder with one hand.

Once I got up to the top with the hay and dusty pitchforks, I sat next to the big window, and pretended like I was a starvin’ man in a desert, who had a big juicy apple in his hand. I closed my eyes and it got so I could feel the burnin’ hot sand...
under my feet, just like when you run barefoot across blacktop in the summertime. And the greasy porkchop in my hand started to feel hard and round, just like a fresh handpicked apple. But I didn’t get to bite into th’ apple, ‘cause soon’s I brought it up to my face it smelled just like a porkchop. And then I started to cry again when I heard this tiny sound in the barn below. And I looked down and there was good old Betsy, cryin’ for me to stroke ‘er tail. So I called her up into the loft “Here kitty, kitty, kitty, kitteeee.” And she jumped up right next to me all soft and ladylike, then she stuck her pretty little nose right into the porkchop, and she looked right up at me and let out this long “meeeowww...” like to say how she really wanted some porkchop.

And then I looked down at the piece of Daddy’s favorite pig that I was holdin’ in my hand, and I ripped off a little chunk of it and held it out for Betsy. Then she took it gently ‘tween her teeth, just like she was some kinda princess, and she chewed it up with a bunch of quick, tiny bites. And then I ripped her off another piece, and then another, and Betsy just sat there, purrin’ and chewin’ and I thought about how when Able was alive he prob’ly woulda scared Betsy to pieces, but here she was, eatin’ Daddy’s favorite pig and lovin’ it just like it was a baby field mouse. And when the meat was all gone from the porkchop, and all that was left was a sticky pig-bone, Betsy licked off all my fingers, all the time soundin’ like a big, happy tractor truck.

Momma and Daddy had a big fight that night, and I didn’t go back into the house ‘till I heard Daddy get into the Fiery Old Red Dump and drive away. I walked in through the screen door and Momma was sittin’ at the kitchen table, drinkin’ a cup of coffee which she didn’t hardly ever do.

“Don’t forget to wash your hands honey.”

“They’re clean Momma.”

“Wash ‘em again sweetheart, I always want my girls to have clean hands.”

“Okay Momma.”

And then I went and washed my hands in the sink with lots of hot water and lathery soup, washing off the smell of the porkchop and the rough, pink feelin’ Betsy left on my fingers with her tongue. Then I kissed Momma goodnight, and I layed in my bed for a long time, listenin’ to the crickets and waitin’ for Daddy to come home.

I woke up in the mornin’ to the warm sun comin’ in my bedroom window, and the birds chirpin’ and the smell of bacon fryin’ in the kitchen. I opened and closed my eyes a few times real slow, and then I yawned and stretched and pulled on my skirt and blouse. Then I picked up my brush and my rubberbands and I walked downstairs to the kitchen where Momma and Sandy were already sittin’ round the table. And Daddy was settin’ down a big platter of eggs and bacon right on top of a bunch of pink roses and daisies. And the flower’s smelled real good that mornin’, and everyone was smilin’, and I took some bacon off the platter and put it in the napkin on my lap. And after all the plates were cleared Daddy brushed out my hair and put in my pigtails. And then I kissed him on the cheek and I took that bacon up in the old hayloft. And I sat up there feedin’ Betsy, as Daddy drove out to the fields, and Momma did the mornin’ dishes.

— Carey Christie ’95

The mahogany floor suffers
From repeated stamps
Of beer-bellied grandpas
Watching a T.V. locked
On Monday night Boxing.
They jab their clenched fists
Through cigar smoke.
Riley hollers a belch
Adams blows his nose,
Dropping his Tom Cat cap
On a drunken bear skin rug.
In this rundown basement
Beer cans and pretzel sticks stuff therips
Of sofa cushions
Every Monday night.
But that never matters
To them, as long as Mrs. Adams
Doesn’t step In front of the set.

— Kerry C.R. Picket ’96

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— Kerry C.R. Picket ’96
Tattoo

He tells me how he never got touched by the flames, sitting there eating lunch, in the truck, the other men outside trying to outrun the explosion.

How he felt only the heat wrapped around him like a blanket, squeezing, him off like a tourniquet, searing the keys in his pocket to his thigh and so much weight he wanted to die.

His watch gripped tight tattooing his wrist with time and place he would never forget—like his first kiss that, too, had scorched his lips.

How his face turned red, then bubbled in the places he couldn't cover, heat burrowing under skin, a fever no one could ever cure; how he wanted to die like those men running outside.

I just stand here as he tells me, through bandages wrapped around seventy-eight percent of his body, about the new truck he'll get from the insurance company; and I think, what a lucky guy.

—Anonymous

Mandarin

Orange pachydermal skins, thick with white fibers lie scattered on the floor.

My bare toes wander through their oily, pitted textures and I lick dried juices from my yellow-skinned fingers, pick whitish half-moons from under my fingernails.

I press the spongy white to my lips, cradle it on my tongue. As my teeth's slow grinding releases its bitter oils, my mouth savours the passages of other similar fruits, hand-peeled and quartered, shared between us.

In the ceremonies of Kyoto, nimble-fingered Geisha carve the beauty of the fruit into the blossom of its mother, scenting tea-house rooms orange in afternoon, silent willow-women kneeling beyond rice paper walls, slight shadows in lantern-glow.

The final crescent, soft and seedless, waits, warming in my palm. Cautious, my hand closes over it, ginger-list pressing dark pulp. My nails puncture clear membranes, rupture tiny oblong chambers of juice. The pale liquid drips into the thirsting carpet, quenching tribute to momentary ghosts.

New friction against dark yarns, my bare heels rub out the stains.

—K. Lynn Rogers '94
elegy one: about that fateful fall

Forest lay like an acorn that lay like six inches from his nose; like all of its brothers, who lay there rotting around on the ground, like the stick clenched for dear life in his death-gripped hand beneath the broad, proud boughs of the Oak which laid them all there, lying together, just like they were supposed to.

Forest was feeding his small, greedy pail, plopping pod persistently after pod until the ground grew bare, but his bucket remained half-empty; when with covetous eyes he spied some seedlings still secure, which bobbed about the Oak's upper branches, and with one big bounce he too hung among twigs.

Clambering, scrambling, he worked his way up towards the top to where the acorns grew thick and the limbs grew thin; just then a Wind blew bye, so the old Oak waved, which forced poor, careless Forest to step back upon solid air where Winds cannot care, clutching a lifeless limb which would not bear the boy.

Down he dropped, clinging to his broken branch through wood which could not break his fall, but break he surely would, across the Oak's hard roots, ribs jutting through the Earth's cold breast; yes, a break he took, that fateful fall, from things like tree climbing and such, for what seemed like forever to Forest, who did like acorns.

Shelter

“My Daddy won't find me here,” he states, monotone in his little boy voice.

The pale face stares up, a distrustful moon marred purple on the left temple.

I restrain my hand from smoothing the cowlick, from gathering the fragile frame to my heart

And get out the worn wooden blocks: “Help me build a castle.”

He builds it as high as his thin shoulder, fierce concentration on the wise elfin face.

“My Mommy cries alot,” he whispers, sending it crashing down with sad satisfaction.

Round ravenous eyes plead, defying my anger or punishment, as I walk past

the smoking mothers slumped at the dining-room table, wearily asking “what now” with their eyes.

“Are you leaving me too” the dead voice asks, like wind sighing against my ear.

And I turn to hug the little man, who cringes reflexively, remembering the pain in love.

The door slams behind me as I enter the winter sun outside the shelter, leaving a ghostly face staring back from between the sheltering bars.

- Beth Widmaier '95

- Craig Bowers '93
Battleship

A pink sunset at night,
sailors delight.
The blue skies overhead
are expected from the forecast.
The S.S. Saratoga slices a continuous path
three hours from a pre-selected destination.
Ocean swells play as if they would
eject the boat off the surface.
Sailors finish duty, checking
rechecking and cleaning the weapons.
Their time is now, full alert
requires incessant concentration.
The Battleship, their warship, sculpted by perfection
is ready to react in a seconds notice.
The siren wails, the sound
snaps it’s crew to attention.
Final destination is near;
battle has begun.
The Commander sends his order,
“Switch to guns.”

– Dave Fox ’93

Revolution

Diana slashes through the asphalt navy night,
Dragging tide legions from sincerity’s seas,
Dueling the dark shroud with her battery of light,
To part the purple blood of the blighting blind disease.

Her torch sets fire to the petrified trees.
Ashes forge the Phoenix forest wild and untamed.
The rain-washed ruins are swallowed by the seas.
Life bursts from its cages new and unashamed.

The hunt burns onward through the blanket of cement.
The prey are lies and the penance is sight.
The predator pleads for focus from the Babel government.
The Phoenix paints the smog dome rainbow with its flight.

The locusts scream through bullhorns to help Diana fight.
They institute what the institution maimed.
The harnessed Phoenix is maneuvered like a kite.
The droves of chirping chanters charter black hills left
unclaimed.

Diana spots the virgin hills beyond the tenement.
Power lines crack one hill like the liberty bell.
It is the boot hill where the burnt out lords of light are sent,
Where catalysts dubbed eclectic find a refuge from the spell.

The half-dead firefly climbs from the screaming locust well.
The drowning idiot bugs are crushed beneath her feet.
They bite her blisters and tug her towards their hell.
She seeks a sanctuary from the screams of her defeat.

They fall in layers, a new blanket of fresh blood.
They break their covenant to the promise land.
At the base of the mount the prophet slips in the red mud,
And feels fulfillment slipping through her hand,
A dinosaur in the crimson quicksand.

– Matt Wanat ’95

– Peggy Ryan ’93