



earthwinds

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post office box 4940 jackson, ms 39296
tel. 601.939.8611 • fax 601.939.4068
url: www.jacksonprep.net/earthwinds

from the **editor**

Earthwinds is contagious. You open it up, smell the fresh ink, and suddenly you're reading the pages over and over again, relishing the poems that stick in your mind, the stories that change it, and the art that fills it with inspiration. That's when you know you're hooked. All of us have been drawn in by **Earthwinds**; we've worked hard to make it a success, and have changed because of this magazine. We hope you enjoy **Earthwinds** as much as we enjoyed creating it.

editorial policy

The contents of this magazine represent the remarkable depth and variety of creative talent found among the students of Jackson Preparatory School. Selections are made by the staff on the basis of creativity, style, and artistic merit. Artists retain all rights to their work.

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colophon

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PENTHESILEIA

You can stop staring at me now.
Nothing to see here, just a dead
Amazon and her dead horse.
I'm flattered, really, but if you love
a woman, you're supposed to tell her
before she dies, and you're
certainly not supposed to be the one
who kills her. For Ares' sake,
go away! It's creepy, all this staring.
I'm dead. Go find someone else,
someone living, to fall in love with.
We would never work out.
We're enemies: I came here
to kill you, you killed me....
I suppose I should at least
be grateful you're not dragging me
around the city. Look, now
you're being made fun of—
even Thersites thinks you're weird.
Okay, he's coming to gouge out
my eyes now. With a spear. You can
stop him, you know. I won't be so pretty
with bleeding holes in my face.
No? Just going to wait until he's
desecrated my corpse to kill him? Thanks.
Hey, Hermes, it took you long enough.
I'll take the Underworld over this freak
any day. Farewell, son of Peleus.
No matter what Odysseus tells you,
long-distance relationships don't work out,
so this is goodbye. Please don't get yourself
killed—I'd really hate to see you again.

Sarah Adison Phillips



HorseplayRebeccaGarciaInk

Amelia

sits on the porch sipping her tangerine martini,
posing in the wicker swing with a magazine,
raven curls woven atop her head, carelessly
long legs, kitten heels, sizzling seventeen,

an old transistor crooning jazz hymns, Fitzgerald
raining from the rickety rafters, rat-a-tat,
August heat glittering on her forehead, peach-gold
buzzing of the harmony, bold, silvery blackjack.

Hannah Herrin



Charon

Robert Frey

I've met everyone before, or I will.
Some came to me sobbing,
pawing at me pitifully,
pleading to be left on the shore
with its ashen sand of shadows,
but I seized their trembling wrists,
pulled them too into the ferry
and carried them across.
Their tears stung my skin.

Others still burned with life
and flung their coin at my feet
as they stumbled into my boat,
boards half-rotted and groaning
like condemned men. Every last
one I carried over the Styx, gave
one last smile to those who could
stand my face, and left them there,
huddled on the opposite bank,
hoping for Elysium, most in vain.



Fleeting
emotions and
passing glances define
the relationship we have in
my head.

Dotsie Stevens



Poppies linger in her emerald dreams,
eyes of witches and wizard kings,
a fortune teller with a hot air balloon,
and silver slippers to be her wings.

Hannah Herrin

OVER THE TOP

ROBERT FREY

France was hot, but not in the same way his home in Tennessee was. There the sun spent every day glaring at the tobacco plants, trying to wither them before the next storm came and washed the roads into sucking pits of clay. But here, somewhere south and east of Paris, the heat was the breath of panting men with their tongues coated in the sulfurous smoke billowing from the guns and brush fires burning in the fields from stray artillery shells. Down in a trench, Luke crouched and pressed himself against the earthen wall, his feet steadily sliding out from under him in the sludge of mud and vomit. Bits of grass rained down after every shell whined and struck, and the commanding officer clambered through the maze of trench work, back stooped, pausing here and there for a word or nod. Luke patted his jacket pocket and felt the bulge from the folded letter and wondered how close he had come to an uninterrupted life in Tennessee.

He remembered the day it arrived he had been at Rick Strain's bar. As he lounged in a high-backed chair with the stuffing spewing from a gash in the arm, his smoke-stung eyes flitted around the room. Just like every other Friday night, men huddled around the tables, some stabbing at laden plates or draining their mugs, others leaning over the bar clutching newspapers. In a back corner thick with cigarette smoke, a poker game raged, the players more audible than visible. Luke closed his eyes, but his thoughts broke like waves with every hollow thud of boots on the warped wooden floor flecked with scuff marks. He stood up.

Ambling over to the bar, he picked up a discarded newspaper and scanned the crinkled front page. In bold type at the top sat the name of a French town he could not pronounce and the casualty figures. He started to read, but no more than a few sentences in the ink blurred into obscurity from a coffee spill; he tossed the paper aside, turning his attention back across the room. Striding in

through the door came a man in a faded flannel shirt and blue jeans with a few days of stubble on his chin. He paused, spotted Luke, and made his way through the labyrinth of tables, a half-smile on his face. The newcomer extended a dirt-caked hand, forked veins tracing up the underside of his arm until they disappeared under his sleeve. Luke shook his hand and smiled, saying, "What kept you, Josh? I've been here the better part of an hour now."

"A colt got out through a downed part of the fence, and it took me a while to get him back and fix the posts. The farm," he said, waving for a drink, "is falling down around my head." The wrinkles creasing his forehead spilled down around his eyes and the corners of his lips. For a moment he brooded and then abruptly continued with a feigned smile, "But enough of that. I doubt it'll collapse till I'm back."

"They say that they're having a drought out west, New Mexico area. The topsoil is blowing away in some places. Saw it in the paper," Luke remarked as Josh took the seat beside him. His cheeks shone deep red from sunburn.

"Did you see the casualty report in the paper, too?"

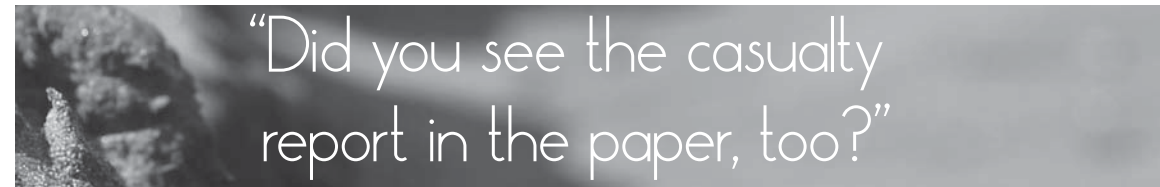
Luke nodded his head solemnly, the wrinkles now lining his forehead. After a moment, he muttered, "The whole affair is a fool's errand. War is about chemicals and machines now, not men. We should have left that for Europe to sort out."

"Eventually you have to do something," disagreed Josh amiably enough.

Luke pointedly changed the subject. "I have something I need to tell you." Pushing his drink aside, Josh turned in his seat and cast a quizzical look at Luke. "I'm going to sell my house and move. I've arranged to buy some land in Oklahoma, and I'm planning on leaving in a fortnight, if I can find a buyer."

Dumbfounded, Josh chewed his lower lip, eyebrows raised. From the table in the corner, a chorus of groans drowned out the one triumphant cry as the poker game drew to a close, and the cigarette smoke wafted through the room. At last he responded, "Well, that's something then. What made you decide to leave?"

"You know what they say, 'Go west, young man.' I figure I'll start over and see what there is to see in the world while I can still see it." Cracking a crooked smile, Luke leaned forward over the counter and glanced back toward the poker table, already sitting empty but for a few smoldering cigarette embers and a heap of cards. His cat-green eyes, which usually roved ceaselessly, as though discontent to settle on one view, were strangely still when he turned his gaze back on Josh. "Let's see



how our luck holds out in poker tonight," he said as he slid from his seat, ending the conversation. The night wore on.

A few hours later, the bustle had died. While the bartender methodically swept a cairn of empty bottles from one table into the trash, a lone man sat on a barstool and thumbed at his guitar. The few stragglers were bidding each other goodbye as they sorted out whose hat was whose and ambled out the door. Rising from their table, Luke and Josh put back the pieces from their last chess game and joined the exodus. Outside, the fingernail-sliver moon shone cold on the clustered town buildings, and the night breeze danced through streets, tapping at the windowpanes of the houses. For a moment, the two stood

in silence until Josh extended his hand. Luke shook it, feeling Josh's calloused palms grip against his skin.

"I guess this is where we part," Josh said. "I'll be working like an ant for the next month to gather and store the harvest. I don't know if I'll get to see you before you go, but drop in on me if you get the chance."

"I'll see you before then," Luke assured him. "You'll hear from me, in any case. At the least, I'll send a postcard around Christmas." Luke never remembered to send letters, even when he did write them.



"The dream of Oklahoma shattered like a pane of glass struck by a rock."

With that, Josh slapped him on the back, turned right, and began strolling down the street, hands in pockets. Luke watched him go until the shadows swallowed him further down the road, before turning left and starting towards his own little house. When the street forked, he stayed left and went deeper into town instead of going out towards the farms, though he didn't know why. He passed the restaurant, dark and closed for the night, behind which he'd fought Thomas Turner in high school after he called his family "trash." He remembered the ring of frenzied boys spectating, placing bets and shouting encouragement as they hammered each other with their fists. Luke went to bed that night with a broken knuckle and the taste of blood on his tongue, but nobody said anything about his family after that. The memory made his face flush.

Walking faster, he skirted the deserted town square and turned into a park. A bed of purple crocus was in bloom, and

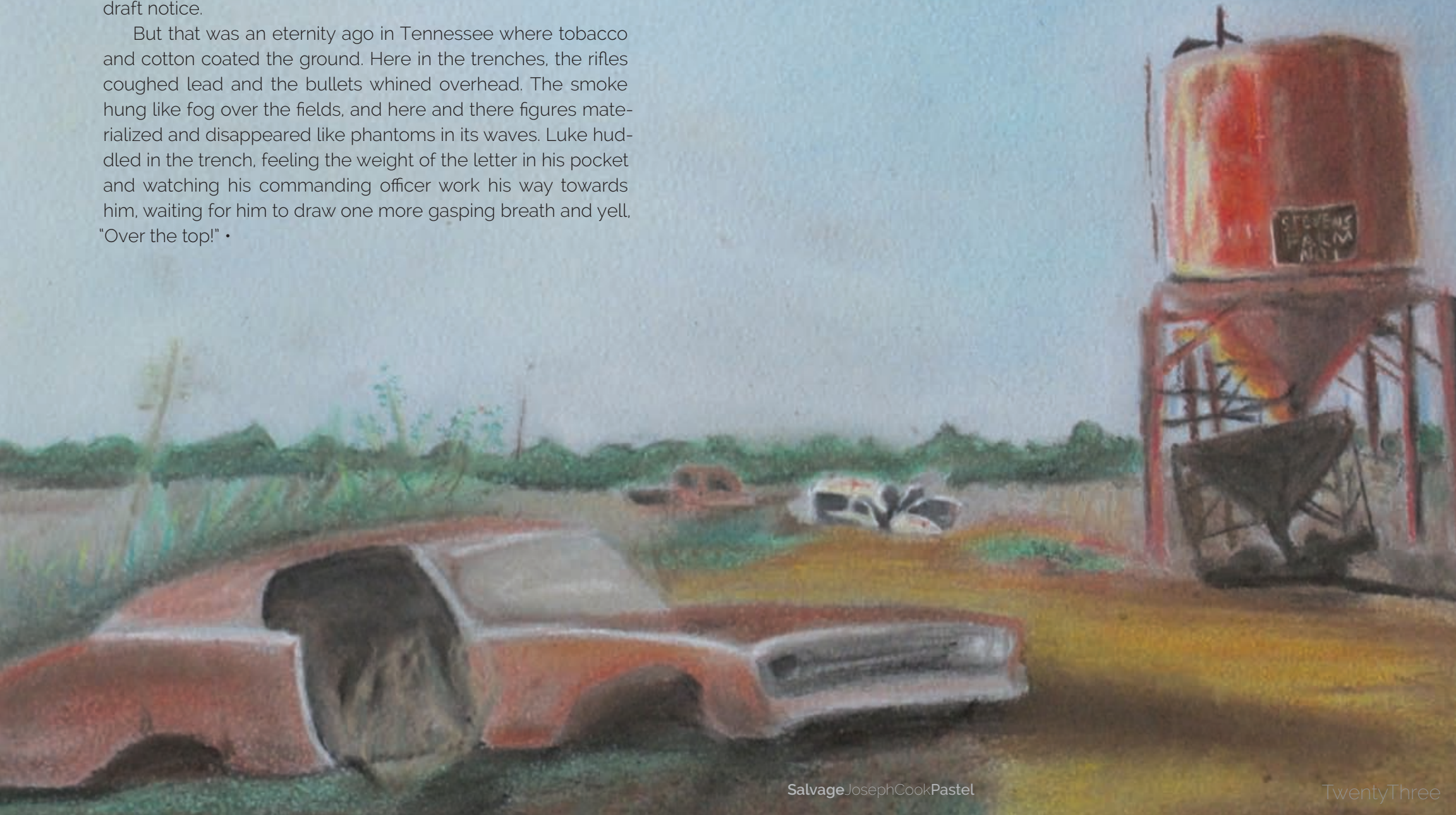
the gravel path crunched under Luke's feet. The first of the leaves were tinged pumpkin-orange at the edges on the elm tree that shaded the bench where he'd had his first kiss, nervous and fifteen with shaking hands. His heart beat faster as he passed. Further on, beyond the muddy pond, half-obscured in the darkness, was the hill crowned with magnolias where he used to play with his dog on autumn afternoons once the harvest was in. He thought about climbing the hill one more time, took a hesitant step towards it, then turned away and sped out of the park.

He hurried through the streets and felt the darkness closing in behind him, hurried by the post office where every year on his birthday he found a letter from his uncle in Georgia, hurried past the wooden bleachers of his high school football stadium where he'd played every fall Friday night those years ago. First job and childhood home alike disappeared behind him as he followed the road out of town. He relished the freshness of the night air in his lungs as the first of the tobacco fields spread out on either side around him. Under the moon, he felt clean and confident. When he looked back from his house, all that was visible of the town beyond the leafy fields was the lightning-blasted steeple of the church. And suddenly he didn't want to leave, and the dream of Oklahoma shattered like a pane of glass struck by a rock. Home was the night noises of the bugs and the breeze, the smell of tobacco curing in barns over a smoldering fire, the little town crammed corner to corner with memories like ghosts lingering just out of sight.

He paused on his front porch, rickety but built with his own hands, and gazed one more time over his little plot of land. At last he opened the door and grabbed the day's mail from his letter basket as he went in. Luke tossed most of the letters aside

as he rifled through them, but one near the bottom with a dull yellow envelope caught his eye. Pulling it out, he tore it open without looking at the stamped return address. Inside was a draft notice.

But that was an eternity ago in Tennessee where tobacco and cotton coated the ground. Here in the trenches, the rifles coughed lead and the bullets whined overhead. The smoke hung like fog over the fields, and here and there figures materialized and disappeared like phantoms in its waves. Luke huddled in the trench, feeling the weight of the letter in his pocket and watching his commanding officer work his way towards him, waiting for him to draw one more gasping breath and yell, "Over the top!" •





Lovesick

Baby, I'm crazy about you. Do you love me?
Do I come to mind as you sit sipping your coffee
on the red park bench by my favorite fountain,
as you cover your face with the book in your hand,
and cross your right leg over your left knee?

Darling, it's not comfortable behind this tree,
but what's the point of hiding? You've seen me,
and if you didn't feel our connection too, then,
Baby, I'm crazy.

Please, don't try to run away from me,
and don't call the police. I didn't care, sweetie,
when you told them about my letters and when
you complained about my calls. Tell them again.
But if you love me, you won't tell them, Baby,
I'm crazy.

Morgan Hydrick



On Being
DROWNED
by the
MERMAID

I wish I could say the last thing I saw was
her face surrounded by a halo of light.
I wish I could say our lips touched
and she stole the last bit of breath I had to give.
I wish I could say she rushed me to the surface
and did all she could to save me.
I wish I could say I didn't see only her tail
rising back to the surface to find
another swimmer, another lover.

Morgan Hydrick

Invisible Ink

Candles flicker, casting our swaying shadows
black against the mirroring floor; my fingers
slowly etching messages, secrets, on the
tip of her shoulder.

Robert Frey



They *Never* Saw it *Coming*

She laughed along at jokes they'd thrown,
'cause faking it was all she'd known.
It wasn't funny, being blind
to lights and love and things that shine.
She couldn't make it on her own,

but even so, she stayed alone,
and wore away to brittle bone;
The scars she hid were all aligned,
and she laughed.

And all she ate was stale as stone;
she heard the words but not the tone.
The ropes pulled tight—they tugged and twined
around her heart and choked her mind.
In wheezing breaths—I can't atone—
she laughed.

Gracie Hubacek



Welcome to the Night

The stars, the foggy, blacking sky, the moon,
the groan of buzzing bugs surrounding lights
on empty city streets, the chill, the croon

of somber wind, all welcome lovely fright.
The shadows whisper evil things in ears
of shaking kids. Their cunning lies ignite

the terror locked inside, releasing fear.
The flames unchain the sickly stench, invite
the icy grip, and bring the monsters near.

But demons only sing—they never bite.
They hold your hand and whisk you off to night.

Gracie Hubacek

Do I Bore You?

Do my words drip out of your ears
and puddle on the floor?
Do my sentences fall scattered like leaves,
crackling under your feet?
Is my moving mouth a light in the back room,
silently flickering on and off?
Are my eyes the red traffic light
you wait for to turn green?
And are you searching for the signal
that you leave?

John William Creel



DA MI
BASIVM
VNVM

Give me not a thousand—a single kiss is worth as much if burning with languid passion fueled by longing, mutual desperation, knowledge it's goodbye.

Sarah Adison Phillips





Rust

I am rusted at the edges,
iron crumbling into red dust,
red like the skin of Mars,
bloodshot and distant and cold.
I dissolve like ash shapes
that melt into nothing when
a warm breath stirs them.
Iron heart, iron arms, iron will—
all water at the trace of your thumb
along my lower lip.

Robert Frey

Too Many to Count

Morgan Hydrick

One...two...three, four, five...

Robby's neck was bent, and his head was still on the cracked sidewalk. He was only able to stare at the sky above him.

...once I caught a fish alive.

Peter's taunting sing-song stood out above the jeers of the other boys not only because he was louder, but also because he was the one holding Robby by his ankle. Robby was the fish.

Six...seven...eight, nine, ten...

Robby braced himself.

Then I let him go again.

Releasing his tight grip on Robby, Peter watched as he fell to the ground, and he relished the pop of his joints and the one sound that could've been his bones breaking. Robby stared at the sidewalk and held his arm, gritting his teeth. The surrounding boys looked at each other and smiled before saying in broken uniformity:

Why did you let him go?

Peter smirked and bent down to yell in Robby's face.

Because he's stupid, weak, and slow!

Just as he always did at this point, Robby began to wonder if there was any way he could get out of this, if he had enough strength to get up and knock Peter out, if he just had the strength to run away. As usual, the answer was no. All he could do was tuck his legs in as the boys screamed:

But how did you win the fight?

Robby closed his eyes. Got ready. Peter smiled.

I kicked his gut with all my might!

The blow did not disappoint the onlookers, and Robby let a noise escape his lips that was louder than he had intended it to be. The boys cheered, and some patted Peter on the back and

said, "Here fishy, fishy," to Robby.

As the boys left and Peter gave him a final smirk, Robby stayed still, staring at the darkening sky, hoping that someone who cared about him would come soon. But nobody cared. Everyone just minded his own business, especially when it came to Peter. As long as his father was giving money to the school, none of the teachers would complain about him. Nobody thought twice about the skinny, greasy-haired boy who was so small and weak he got kicked off of the basketball team. Nobody had ever been kicked off the basketball team.

He placed his left arm over his face and covered his eyes as he tried to remember how he managed to run into Peter anyway. It was after school, and Robby usually didn't stay late after the final bell so he could elude Peter, but Mrs. Turner kept him after class to discuss why his grade was slipping. She gave him the whole spiel about how he was such a good student, and he had so much potential in chemistry, but he barely heard a word she said. His mind was set on getting home quickly. He lied to Mrs. Turner and told her that he had been battling a video-game addiction and was staying up until the wee hours of the morning, and he promised he would be better. He didn't feel like explaining to her that he didn't sleep because he had nightmares about Peter and he woke up in the middle of the night because of his mother's counting.

His mother counted everything: thirty-eight ceiling tiles in the bathroom, twelve white dishes, six blue cups, four light switches in the living room. And every day he would come home and be reminded that there were eight panels on the front door, three hundred and twenty-seven threads fringing from the left side of the antique rug in the hall, but only

three hundred and eighteen on the other side. He had learned a long time ago to get used to tripping over her as she counted the kitchen tiles again, seventy-four; waking up in the middle of the night to hear her counting the words on the back of the shampoo bottle, two hundred and twenty-four; seeing people stare at her in church as she gazed at the ceiling during the whole service counting the circular rings at the bottom of each chandelier, twenty-seven. Peter knew all this about his mom. That was the reason why he sang the rhyme as he pounded Robby. It was Robby's special beating.

After he left Mrs. Turner's room, Robby ran as fast as he could down the sidewalk, trying to get home before he could run into Peter. He even took the long way home. Robby was a block away from his house and his safety when he saw Peter standing there with five other boys, all looking slightly pleased now that Robby had come around the corner. Robby thought about turning around to run away, but he knew it was pointless. One of Peter's friends would catch him eventually.

"What's wrong, Robby? Where are you going?"

"Will you move? I need to go home."

"Well, that's rude. Why don't you ask me nicely? Say please." Peter's friends laughed as he said this, and all at once they began to ask Robby to say please.

Robby stared at the ground. His chest felt heavy. He said, "Will you move, please?"

All of the boys laughed, and Peter looked satisfied as he looked down at Robby and then looked over at his friends. Suddenly, Peter snapped his head back and shoved Robby to the ground.

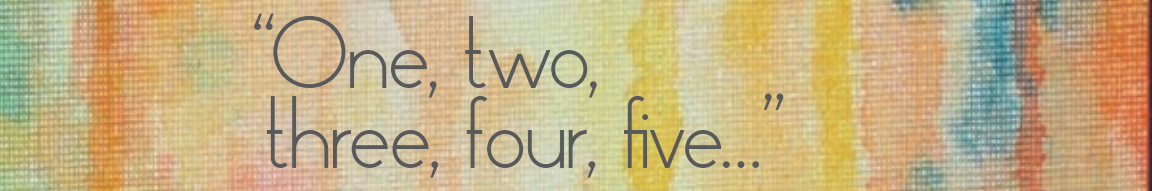
"No. I will not move."

He grabbed Robby by his ankles, and that's when the

counting began.

Robby's arm was starting to hurt again, so he eased himself up with his other arm to assess the damage. It was a miracle he escaped broken bones again. Head spinning, he managed to pull himself up but not before he looked around to make sure Peter and his friends were gone. It began to rain, and Robby stood there for a few minutes, allowing the cool water to wash away the dirt and blood from his face. His clothes would be another story, and his mom wouldn't like that. She hated things that were dirty. Everything had to be "clean, clean, clean."

On the way home, he held his head high and halfway hoped



“One, two,
three, four, five...”

someone would notice his misshapen nose and bruised jaw through the window of his car, and pity him. But he knew nobody could see him because of the rain. He liked to think that God felt sorry for him and the rain was God's tears. That's what his grandmother used to tell him, anyway. Now that she was with God, Robby thought maybe she was the one crying for him. Whatever the cause, the rain cleared his head and washed away the blood and dirt.

When he finally reached his house, he unlocked the door and slowly made his way inside, wondering what his mother had been doing today. He found her knelt down, cleaning the windows and mumbling under her breath, "Clean, clean, clean."

"Hi, Mom."

She didn't even look at him. She got up and stood in front of the large bay window in the living room holding a bottle of Windex and an old rag in one hand and counting the window panes with a steady finger on the other hand. "One, two, three, four, five..." Robby couldn't take his mother's counting today. He quickly ran up the stairs to his room. Taking off his wet clothes, he noticed just how bad his injuries really were. His right arm was black and blue in places, and he could barely make out marks on his ankles where Peter's fingers had been. After a few minutes, he began to count, just as he always did, just like his mother.

One, two, three, four, five...

He cringed as he moved his left arm up and down his right. The pain raced along his arms and danced along his veins.

...six, seven, eight, nine, ten...

He slid his hand over to his stomach and felt the tender skin that looked inflamed and discolored.

...eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen.

He surveyed his body and decided to stop there. There were too many bruises to count. Robby sat down carefully on the bed and thought about what he had done to deserve this. It didn't take him long to come up with an answer. It was his fault he couldn't keep his mother sane, his fault that he made Peter mad every day, his fault that he was skinny and weak. He couldn't fix anything. He made everything worse. For the first time, Robby felt like he finally realized why Peter was allowed to beat him up every day. It was because Robby let him. Robby thought he needed it. Robby thought he deserved it. •



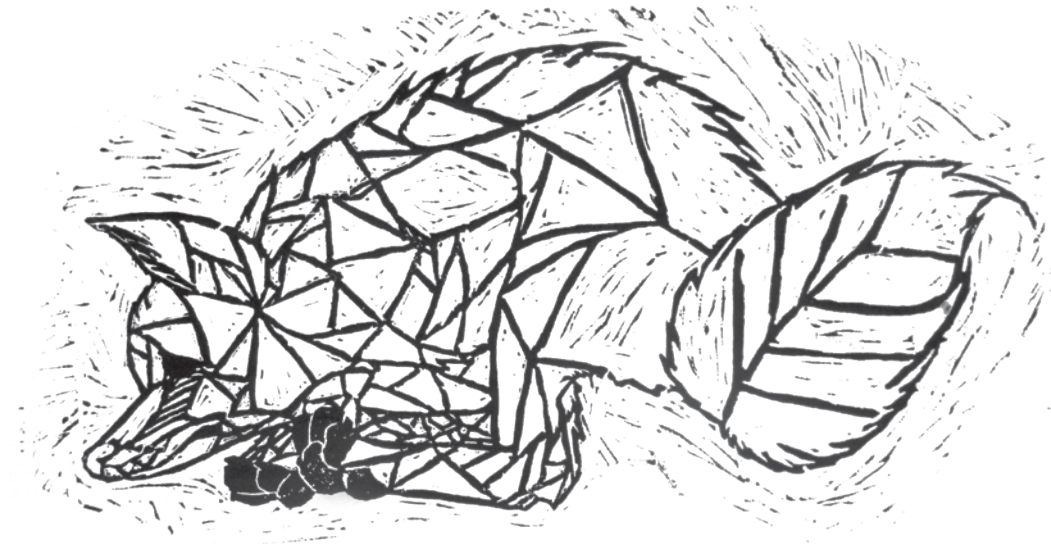
The *Affair* of Penelope

Her lips whisper songs against my breast,
mourning the sweet taste of flesh on her teeth.
She sings like the coming of winter
and weaves her robe from silver threads

of moonlight which gleam from the sky
and catch in her long waves of hair.
She rises with the falling of the tide
breaking to shore with slumbering waves.

Hannah Herrin





SlyAsaFoxRebeccaGarciaLinoPrint

the insomniac

She begged the stars for their soothing symphony
made of milk and honey—a poem to pacify
her drowsy desire for celestial harmony.
In agony, she thirsted for sleep to satisfy

her heavy, worn body overcome by lethargy.
Listening to low beats of her own heart amplify,
she found herself wide-eyed in midnight misery,
and she begged the stars for a lonely lullaby.

Morgan Hydrick

Caught in the Wild

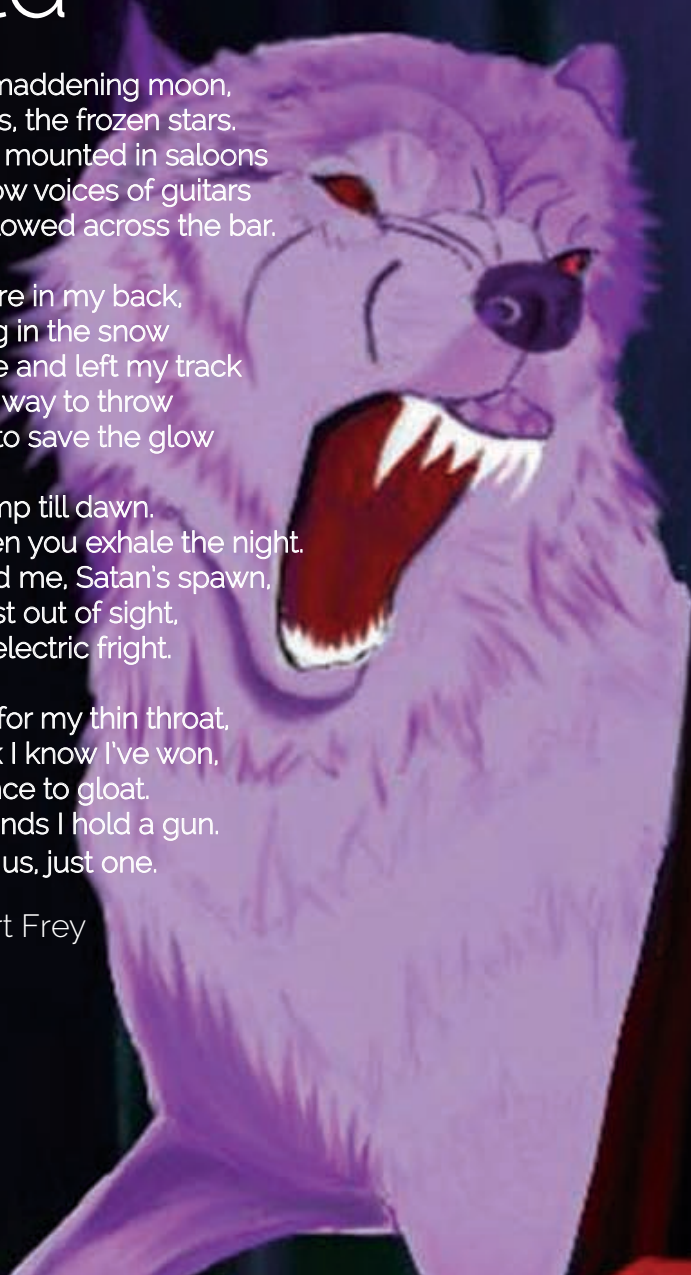
Howl! Howl at the sickly, maddening moon,
howl to your heathen gods, the frozen stars.
I've seen heads like yours mounted in saloons
where air hummed with low voices of guitars
as gossip, boasts, drinks flowed across the bar.

I feel your ember eyes bore in my back,
I know your nose is sniffing in the snow
in the steps where I strode and left my track
but a moment before. No way to throw
you off my scent, no way to save the glow

of my fading kerosene lamp till dawn.
Winds bite my bones when you exhale the night.
Your baying haunts behind me, Satan's spawn,
a chilling cry that floats just out of sight,
tightening my chest with electric fright.

Your ravening teeth thirst for my thin throat,
but with my lone, last trick I know I've won,
stealing forever your chance to gloat.
In numbed and frostbit hands I hold a gun.
The bullet will end one of us, just one.

Robert Frey



Road Signs

They're always telling me what to do,

U Turn—no, you turn!

Don't go past this speed—well, why not?

Slow children at play—that's not very nice. Apologize.

Rest stop—if I want to rest, I'll go home, thank you.

Curve—no thanks, I think I'll drive into this tree.

Fork in the road—well, get it out before it pops my tire!

Road slippery when wet—duh.

Slight right—why can't I just turn right?

Stop—okay.

Dotsie Stevens



The Black Art of the Drink

In a school with big
red brick walls, a line of kids
shuffles through the halls.

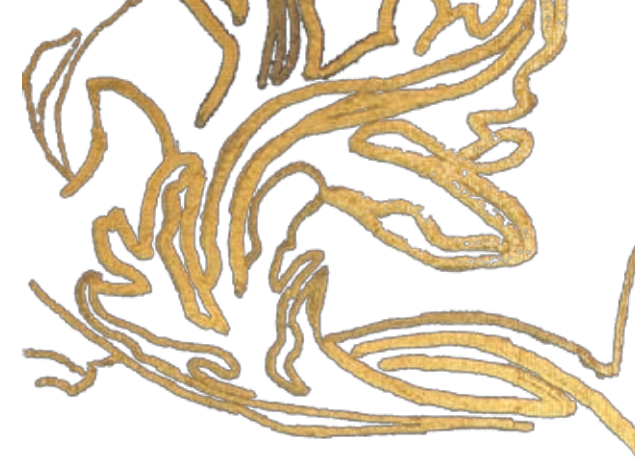
The girl with braided
hair who flinches at shadows
tries not to smear the

makeup on her cheek,
masking the purple rum bruise
her sweet Daddy made.

Gracie Hubacek



MobocracySarahNealSecretPhoto



Meli

Your eyes like blossoming storm clouds
over heavy boughs of weeping violets,
broken by the wrath of a salty tear down the
parted creases of your honey-swollen lips,

you suckle from my breast a sweet bee's song
and strum the silver strings of a lyre beneath my bow,
breaking the dead curse of night with longing's muse
and drowning with the flickering flames of my candle.

Hannah Herrin

Apple

You start with the stem,
pinching its top until it yields with a snap.
Then you take away its green-yellow peel
dashed with brown specks.
Take a knife and deprive it of its color,
leaving its glow in a singular, twisting ribbon.
Next take out its meat in chunks,
slowly ripping your way to the core.
And now pluck out the seeds,
the hope that all of this did not go to waste.

John William Creel



FOR ANDROMACHE

Hector wept for her that bitter night
when wintry winds full of brooding snow
whispered of days that would never see light.

The walls of Troy stood gleaming on the height
above the Grecian ranks in rigid rows,
and Hector wept for her that bitter night.


He tossed in tortured sleep—he and she might
have seen the seasons wheel and then grown old
and dreamt of idle days beneath the light,

days in ages long since lost to sight
when he tamed a dappled horse inside his fold.
Hector wept for her that bitter night

while she lay asleep, head on his arm, moon bright
on her fate-worn face, and she shivered, cold
from the whispers of days shunned by the light.

He read Troy's doom in embers glowing white
and heard the tramp of hooves within the hold.
Hector wept for her that bitter night
and whispered of days unborn to the light.

Robert Frey



Black clouds arise from
gray buildings, robbing the world
of a once-white sky.

Hanson Woo

NarniaTaylorStricklandPhoto

DeepTaylorStricklandPhoto



snow piled high around
a light pole, half-burying
a rusted green bike

Sarah Adison Phillips

Natural Selection

Gracie Hubacek

As Mr. O'Shaughnessy passed out the test, the sighs of the students flooded the air. A fretful student swept her tongue across her dry bottom lip, and her right middle finger immediately began scratching at the callous on the inside of her thumb. Packets of papers passed down her row, the silver staples glinting in the fluorescent light, the black print sprawling across the front sheet.

With numb fingers, she plucked her packet out of Jeremy's hand, curling her lip at his sweaty palm. She'd sat behind Jeremy all year, and she could have sworn she saw a bug crawling around his greasy black hair once. She'd gagged, and she'd been unable to look up for the duration of the class period. She'd never told, though. Not even when she heard the "popular girls" whispering about him in the hallways. She didn't step on him to pull herself to a higher social status. She just walked past them, keeping her information about Jeremy a secret.

Her name was already written in the top right corner for her. She squirmed hesitantly in her desk, unnerved. Her name was the only thing she was sure of, and Mr. O'Shaughnessy hadn't even given her that. It wasn't Mr. O'Shaughnessy's fault, she had to remind herself. How could he understand? He with his two-year-old little girl displayed in picture frames throughout his classroom, with his gorgeous wife without a single brain cell, with his measly salary and class of hellion high-schoolers who couldn't give less of a damn whether they passed or failed. He couldn't understand how it felt to know absolutely nothing.

It might not have been her heart, but **something** was in her throat, making it harder and harder to breathe. She scanned the first page: question number one was about natural selection. She'd read about natural selection in seventh grade to explain evolution to the Bible-beating fundamentalists she'd gone to middle school with. Instead of gently recognizing her opinion,

they'd pushed her into a wall and punched her in the eye in the name of Jesus Christ.

"Oh, sweetie, what happened to your eye?"

"Nothing, Mama. I just fell down is all."

Natural selection situated itself as the defining point in her life where she became labeled as **that kid**. The kid who didn't go to church. The **heathen**. Nameless and destined for Hell, she was kept out of everything. Three years ago, in eighth grade, Travis Donahue held a huge party for the grade, but she hadn't been invited. According to anyone she asked, it was actually a church party, not a school party. They would let her come if she went to church and confessed her sins, though. But they couldn't have someone who didn't go to church at their party; she understood, right?

"Her name was the only thing she was sure of, and he hadn't even given her that."

She hadn't understood, but she'd begged her mama to go to church. If she could just go to church, she'd finally have friends and be invited and have a **life**. Her mama told her that fitting in was not a reason to become religious, so until she came up with a better reason, she was going to spend her Sunday mornings working practice math problems. Unable to come up with a better reason, she got very good at practice math problems.

As she read the first question again, she heard someone flip to the next page. Her brows furrowed. Focus, she needed to focus. The question wasn't tricky or difficult. It was a definition question. "What is natural selection?" She grabbed her bottom lip viciously with her teeth. What was natural selection? Natural selection was... Natural selection was her classmates excluding her from every single stupid school function because her mother didn't want to wake up early and drive on Sunday mornings.

She skipped the first question. The second question was about Darwin. "What was the name of his most famous publication?" She glanced at the answers, but she couldn't recognize any of the names. She knew Darwin better than she knew herself, better than anything. She owned this book, she could see it sitting, spine-straight, at attention on her bookshelf.

It was called the rustling of more kids turning the page, and she hadn't answered a single question yet. It was called she wasn't going to get this question right, even though she knew the answer. It was called the ticking of the second-hand on the clock as the time passed faster than time was supposed to pass.

Focus.

She skipped the second question too. When she was thinking clearly, she'd go back to them. Question three asked her to analyze pictures of birds and match them to their probable habitat. Matching. Child's play. She could do that.

The first bird had long feathers and a long beak and beady little bird eyes. It had a long beak for plucking out bugs from the ground or from inside tiny little crevices, for picking and poking. The picture only showed a profile, only one black marble eye. She'd had a black marble in her eye once because Erin Willinger threw it at her when she said she didn't like the Republican candidate. It had just bruised, so she never told her mother.

"Sweetie, you'd tell me if something was going on at school?"

"Of course, Mom."

Focus! She had to focus! What sort of habitat would a long beak suggest? It had a long beak for picking on poor little atheist girls and poking them relentlessly to get them angry, to get them riled up. To get them to lash out and, consequently, to get them in trouble. A bird with a long beak meant an afternoon in detention because she'd "raised her voice with rude intent."

"Hon, detention again?"

"I'm sorry, Mom. It won't happen again."

The second bird was stocky with a short, sturdy beak. Stan was stocky, and his lips were kind of beaklike. He transferred out of school last semester after getting the crap beat out of him for being a "queer." As far as she knew, Stan wasn't homosexual. He was very heterosexual, and she had gotten proof in the form of his lips, dry and hard, pecking her own. Birds had short beaks to be the only person who didn't immediately alienate her. Birds had short beaks to be the only person to treat her as if she had a viable opinion. Birds had short beaks to be snatched from her trembling arms, given a whole gallery of bruises and cuts, and scared off to some state all the way across the country. His goodbye had been a cheesy letter and one final kiss, on her cheek, in front of the school building. Hers had been a broken confession of love and a soft wave as he climbed into his family's Cadillac and drove away forever.

The letter still existed, pressed in the pages of her sophomore-year journal. It was wedged in between poems about being in love and losing a loved one, nice and snug. Sometimes, the urge to read it plagued her, but she never gave in. She was strong enough to feel good about herself on her own, or so she thought.

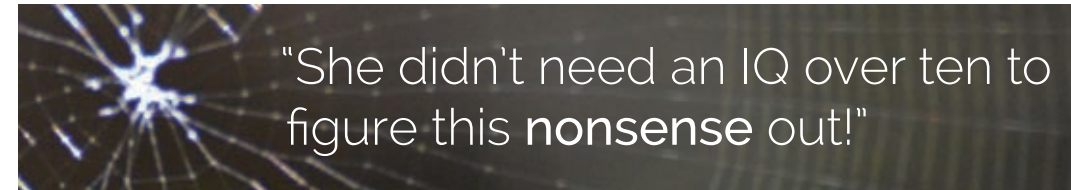
Focus!

She dropped her pencil as her hands flew to her hair, digging and yanking. The test was so easy, she could take it without a brain! She didn't need an IQ over ten to figure this **nonsense** out! It was the stupid evolution test that the curriculum required, not that any of the idiots in her school believed in it, despite the scientific evidence. The Bible didn't say it specifically, so it couldn't possibly be true! That would be absolutely ridiculous.

Her wooden pencil rolled off of her desk and onto the floor, slamming onto the grimy tile with a distracting clattering noise. A few people in her class raised their heads and glanced over, but no one cared enough to stop their test or get Mr. O'Shaughnessy's attention. Her stomach churned at the thought of her class star-

ing at her. They were judging her. They would sneer at her as she brushed past them to get to her next class. They would murmur about how stupid she was as she passed. They would snicker when they saw her trip over her too-big shoes. Her mother had said she would grow into them, but her feet never grew after that day.

Her eyes darted to the clock: thirty minutes left. She should have been done with this stupid test. It was pathetically easy, but just looking at the words and drawings caused the blood to leave her brain. Everything duplicated and triplicated all at once before her, and she felt the need to grab something, even though she was sitting down. She forced herself to look up, but tears started streaming down her face. It was silent, though. The only sounds permeating the classroom were the sounds of pencils scratching circles around probably-incorrect answers.



"She didn't need an IQ over ten to figure this **nonsense** out!"

She grabbed the top of her test. She was just going to turn it in blank. Maybe the school would find it a religious statement and fix her grade to at least a seventy, a passing grade. Her grip crumpled the top of the papers, and she slowly let go. No, she wasn't that weak. She would guess. She would circle "A" for every answer and turn it in. Then she would go home, because she was feeling very ill. That was all she could do at this point.

So she circled "A" for every answer. She grabbed the test and stood up, stumbling to the front of the classroom. With a choked gasp, she dropped it on O'Shaughnessy's desk.

"I feel very ill, sir," she whispered, hands trembling. The teacher frowned, moustache mimicking his mouth's movement.

"Do you want to be excused?" he asked, as if she would pos-

sibly answer no. What idiot would tell the teacher they were sick and then request to stay in class? Who could possibly be that stupid?

"No, I just... I'd just like to keep my head down, if that's okay."

Oh. **She** was that stupid.

O'Shaughnessy nodded and waved her back to her desk, and she staggered down the row, barely making it before collapsing. She buried her head in her arms, unable to contain the tears that continued to pour out of her eyes. Why? Why had she said that? Why had she said she didn't want to be excused? Why had she said she didn't want to go home?

She choked out a muffled gasp—she didn't want to go home.

She didn't want to face the disappointed stare of her mother, because she was failing another class. She didn't want to hear her call her father, ranting about how their stupid daughter failed another class—science this time, actually—and maybe if he actually came home once in a while, she'd be doing better! What did he mean it was her responsibility to make sure that dumbass passed school? It was both of their responsibilities and he knew it! He knew it! Oh please, the only thing he didn't know was how **obvious** his affair was!

She burrowed farther into her baggy jacket-clad arms. She'd heard that phone call one too many times, she supposed.

But staying at school only worked until 3:15 p.m., and her mother would be waiting to pick her up. She had no extracurricular activities to hide in, and her mother refused to get her a car, or even a license.

"When you can afford a car, you can get one."

"I can't get a car without a job, and I can't get a job without a car!"

She trudged out of the school building, anxious to see the Chevy Malibu waiting in front of the school for her. Like clockwork, there it was. Like clockwork, she moved towards it at a snail's

pace. Like clockwork, her mother asked her how the test went. Like clockwork, she lied and said it went well.

As the car pulled off and headed towards the road, she glanced out the window. She wondered if the car crashing would constitute as natural selection. Elimination of the weak. She wondered if her dying would advance the progression of the human race. Let the strong survive. She wondered if her mother would even notice if she just...disappeared.

"What are you thinking about, sweetie?"

"Nothing, Mom. Nothing." •



SubterraneanRomeKennadyGallowayWatercolor



HITE WINE

She gave up when her nail polish chipped,
put her hair up in a messy bun and sipped
straight whiskey instead of chardonnay,
and she laughed when her pantyhose ripped.

She turned on the tv and watched a cliché
about how to be a lady, how to behave.
She thought she could write a better script.
Who would want to be a lady anyway?

Morgan Hydrick

MANIKIN

Here I am
staggering, stumbling,
stuck in the ground,
shoe full of dirt,
regretting the day I saw you,
stupid, selfish girl of sixteen
spinning furiously at your wheel
for an unattainable treasure.
But I helped you.
I spun your life,
your gold,
your kingdom,
your child.
She was a beautiful baby
with your eyes:
placid, still, a soothing blue.
Idiot miller-girl, could you not see
that the child was mine?
I spun her hair, her head,
her fat, fair cheeks.
I filled rooms full of gold for her,
bargained and bribed for her.
I called her Daughter, but
you called her Baby, Princess, and me—
sneaky, swindler,
Rumpelstiltskin.
And you stole her from me.
Now here's another riddle for you:
I pulled my leg 'til I split in two.
How long would it take
to do the same
to you?

Morgan Hydrick



THE Gypsy

Do you fear me?
What do you have to fear, my dear?
I am the unknown.
I have no home, no roots.
I just have the road, my stories, and you—
the occasional passerby.
Are you curious, child?
Love tried to trap me once, but I showed Her.
With the flick of my wrist and the glint of the blade,
I was free to go wherever I pleased.
No one controls me. I am my own master.
Men fall at my feet, and I step over them
like a master steps on a servant girl's fingers
as he passes, laughing at her pain.

Dotsie Stevens



Rivulets of rain
drip down the cracked window,
racing to the bottom.

Dotsie Stevens



cigarette embers
in a pool of ashes by
the mug of tea dregs

Robert Frey

It's funny how I
get colder in hot showers,
like when you hold me.

Morgan Hydrick





Through ^aChild's Eyes

John William Creel

Among the hardwood trees,
I'll romp until it's dark,
in the crackle of the leaves.

The trickling ponds are seven seas,
fragile birds are giant fiery larks,
among the hardwood trees.

As I play, I battle fiercely
against foes imaginary and dark,
in the crackle of the leaves.

Forest sounds surround me,
the cicadas give me a start,
among the hardwood trees.

The forest is home to me,
the walls are made of bark,
in the crackle of the leaves.

The sun sets and the day has ceased,
I've romped and now it's dark,
among the hardwood trees
in the crackle of the leaves.



ConformityMatthewDrennenPhoto

Invincible

The hazard sign wasn't enough for us. The dangerous curves made no difference to our driving. The blasting zone made us chuckle, and there was no way we were going to slow to 15 mph, even if school was in session. I was sure the ice on the bridge would have no effect on us. The exit was in one mile; we were invincible.

John William Creel

Poetic Forms

Cinquain

(American)—Five-line poem with two syllables in the first line, four in the second, six in the third, eight in the fourth, and two in the fifth.

Dramatic Monologue

(English)—A single fictional or historical character other than the poet speaks to a silent audience. Such poems reveal not the poet's own thoughts but the mind of the persona.

Droighneach

(Irish)—Quatrains consisting of lines up to thirteen syllables, each ending in a trisyllabic word. Stanzas are rhymed **abab**, with cross-rhymes in each couplet, and alliteration in each line. The poem ends with the same syllable, word, or phrase with which it begins.

Haiku

(Japanese)—Seventeen syllables in three lines (5, 7, 5), presenting a moment of intense perception, an image, spare and condensed.

Rondeau

(French)—Fifteen lines divided into three stanzas (a quintet, a quatrain, and a sestet), with an interlocking rhyme scheme and a refrain.

Rubaiyat

(Arabic)—Interlocking quatrains rhyming **aaba, bbcb**. Lines are either tetrameter or pentameter.

Sapphic Stanza

(Greek)—Quatrains built on a strict metrical pattern consisting of three lines composed of pairs of trochees separated by a dactyl, and a fourth line (the Adonic) composed of a dactyl followed by a trochee.

Terza Rima

(Italian)—Tercets, often in iambic pentameter, with an interlocking rhyme scheme (**aba bcb**). The final stanza is usually a couplet.

Villanelle

(French)—Five tercets followed by a quatrain. The first and third lines of the first stanza are repeated alternately as the last line of each remaining tercet, becoming the last two lines of the final quatrain.

