



Lyriceist-2012

Acknowledgements:

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Thank you to Mr. Nathan Salsbury—you mean so much to all of us and we are constantly grateful for your guidance, leadership and enthusiasm. And finally, thank you to contributors and readers, who make this magazine possible and worthwhile. I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

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The 2012 Lyricist contains the poem "Lost and Found" by Trevor O'Neal, which was incorrectly attributed in 2011.

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Student Poetry Winners:

First Place- "Oceanside Oblivion" by Erin Overton

Second Place- "Beyond a Broken Sky" by Brenna
Jones

Student Artwork Winners:

First Place- Bryan Howard, pg. 35

Second Place- Ryan Howard, pg. 55

Student Short Story Winners:

First Place- "Spilled" by Victoria Berger

Second Place- "The Gilded Kingdom" By Erin Overton

Statewide Poetry Winners:

First Place- "Closeted" by Gwynhyfar Waters

Second Place- "Dancing With Santa Fe" by Paul King

Yellow Blue Bus Means, 'I _____ You'

Running a hand lightly over

her old friend,

feeling out the book's face

(as if years have passed), her lips

part—while reading the title—to say,

"it sounds like that in Russian,"

and,

"I've always had funny ways

of saying it."

Broken hearts are such

a tragedy;

how tightly we hold on

to the sinking ship, afraid

to swim alone. "Don't worry about me,

I don't regret him."

How often

we drown each other's desperate attempts

to stay

afloat, searching for constancy,

the way explorers look

to stars.

"Saying it
when you feel it is more important
than how it comes out."

This was on the way to the concert.

In the sunlight,
red hair
hung
and danced as petals of a flower
growing over
a corpse; pensive,
you sat holding the last
of your things.

I don't know why I remember
your face
shaded in deep rose and dark cherry
light bleeding
onto hundreds just like us:

lost, together, huddled
as survivors amidst a dark swelling
mass of dreamers.

We are saying it
quietly, holding you
 holding me. *The limits of language*
are the limits of the world,
 according to Wittgenstein,
 who probably struggled
to learn how

home is not a place,
 but a person.

-Austin Harold Hart



Jessica Bradway

"Closeted"

Your dignity drapes
Down from wooden hangers,
Next to your dreams—
Dusty and folded;
The gleam from your eye faded,
Pressed into wallpaper;
Your youth is a portrait—
Grimy, untreated;
Your way fell to the floor,
Embedded in carpet;
Your mind on a shelf,
Moth-eaten, molding;
And an armoire of girls—
Lost, not forgotten.

-Gwynhyfar Waters

"Encased"

If my heart were a rose,
In a magic, glass case
No petal would be loath
To dwindle from its place
What needs life wants death
And magic can't preside
Over life which resides
In, not a dome, but a chest
For my love of beauty,
I am cursed
Yet, from the love of beauty
I am saved
Am I an untamed beast
When the strongest part of me is caged?
My heart is a rose
In a magic, glass case
The transformation, I suppose
Isn't slightly out of place

-Jacob Berger

"I Love You"

Her first string
of meaning,
distinct pieces
of a hovering middle syllable
and a short vowel tone.
Lips sifting through inflections,
she said it three times
with r's and b's
as we rode the high peaks and low valleys
of the landmark-
content
about our maternal rhyme.
Upon muttering, she closed her eyes,
head heavy with phonemes
in the land of mimicry and discovery-
Even in speaking different dialects,
we heard the same message.
I pressed us into the pillow;
she responded by pressing against my chest
in harmony.

-Holly Grant Whistler



Jessica Bradway

"Counterfeit"

You tried to make magic
With secondhand smoke
And funhouse mirrors

You tried to make love
With yellowed sheets
And mothballed lace

You tried to make hope
With broken cages
And littered bones

You tried to make wishes
With unwicked candles
And melted wax

You tried to make me
Without asking
And without answer

Gwynhyfar Waters

Joking Around

That's all we ever do,
you and I:
play with each other's words
until our teeth are spent from
the dancing.

Then we string up puns so we can
make them do the dancing for us,
a circus of punch-line puppets.

Our jokes are kept exclusive, only for
we Elite. We've got jokes
on the inside
and that's where they'll stay.

We make nice with
clean-slate smiles, with cheeks drawn
back like curtains,
our faces strained and taut until
our wit helps us forget.

Don't get so upset, darling.
After all,
you know I'm just kidding.

-Elizabeth Grace Davis

Finally Over

I can say I love you
You can say you love me
But what would it all mean
Words hold no meaning unless held by truth
There is no point for sadness and wasting time crying
We have too little life to waste on false feelings
We both knew our relationship was dying
I can show all scars from false healings
All the things we never forgave
Hearts held in bondage by the mind
Mind caught in a zone between the hands of time
Standing alive while digging our own graves
I can drown in regrets
You can pour out sorrows
But the sun has set
And there is no tomorrow
The more our hearts break the longer it takes to mend
Please let's not hold on
Our pain is finally gone
It's simply the end

-Kenneth Simon

Watching the Swinging Girl

I do not envy them the pleasure
of the dance, as I would not do so
the peacock and the hen.

Having been there once
or twice, or -
I know the thrust
and parry,
the willful tarry
smiles from the eyes,
the few words that you hold
in your mind hoping
they mean, what they mean.

Like a child with golden hair
in a swing hung from the long branch
they take turns
revealing a little
then retreating-
a secret unveiled
the smile covered with a hand
a foolhardy foray
and panicked
retreat to the safe
small talk of the weather.

Daring, fearing
to give a little
in hopes of a grand treasure-
a giggle
or hearts traced
and retraced
on a napkin.
Gambling on a phrase
that maybe goes too far
but,
with a laugh,
tells you something unknown.

As the golden hair girl
traces the path of the sleeping crescent moon-
they can feel
the swell of the progress,
as each word
or appearance
of a cheek dimpled,
eyes lingering on unringed fingers
push out
into the world
something new
that only
the peacock and the hen
would comprehend.

Night walks up the lane
onto the garden path
dragging with it the end of the day.

So the golden haired girl,
sneakers digging, braking
into the worn low earth,
stops her rhythmic
backdrop
pausing only to smile.

They pull the chairs
away from their table,
the private realm
where the truth is safe.

Alone at last,
nervousness could never
miss such a chance,
their shoes are now of great
interest, and again tomorrows
forecast rudely imposes itself.

But as a gracious gift
the end of the day
bestows a moment
in time, when plans
must be made, and eyes
caught, a kiss considered.

Parting
she looks over her shoulder
to see if he is doing the same,
and he is wondering
if she knows
that in his pocket
resides forever
a napkin with hearts traced
and retraced upon it.

-David Riddle



Victoria Berger

Spring Says She Understands

"If I am not a world unto itself,
I need to know it."

—Shara McCallum ("My Mother As Penelope")

It is not the comforting blue
(soft and autumn as open sky)

iris making me trust
you enveloping dark of winter—

behind your face, beneath the pupil—
telling me, *it's okay to not know*

yourself—uncertainty is just
another season. The sound of me

saying *I know* is hustled across
the café terrace in the late-summer

evening breeze, onto the city street,
drowned out by a passing yellow

cab.

—Austin Harold Hart

Overwhelmed

The ravenous yelps and snarls scale the ridge
then cradle between walls of a sapling hollow
like a chambered shell of lead and powder
the finger becoming familiar with the trigger
as my scent is searched for and discerned
among the wild violets, heather and holly

and so I flee before the pack
in a dwindling distance
measured in muddy footfalls
slipping on the mossy rocks
that hug the curves of the stream

briar thorns snatch at my skin
and mark my trail in blood and sweat
a tell-tale sign of my passing
and the surety of my demise

yet I still run
pursued by promises and guarantees
I hand out like Halloween candy

without counting the cost
for when each one must be redeemed

'til finally, I will face the feral dogs of my own
making

-Paul King



Bryan Howard

Pointing
at low brush,
only his nose
could smell
that covey.

Once flushed, fleeting
into the waning
light
while soaring, fleeing
do they expect
the report
of my Browning?

There is a feral twisting
to their fall
like gravity & surprise
fighting.

When I was a boy
my first kill
became a sack of stones.
Some things
are hard to lay aside.

Pa saw the tears
I could not force inside.
Bending to one knee
with dirty hands

he wiped them away
leaving my face
a muddy smudge.
His advice, silence.

A floppy feathered bundle
of iron gray & brown feathers
drop by my clay-covered boots.

Daniel jumps & whirls
nuzzling my palm
for a reward.

(No Break)

He leaps & nips
at fireflies, pleasing
himself; he storms
another covey & scatters
quail into the crucible
of the sun.

In my sack are seven quail
as light as if they still flew.

My pickup, parked
by the tallest tree
reminds me of a story.

I kick the clay
from my boots
and remember

my father's wisdom
and the young boy
who's tears turned
mud into clay.

The other sack
that I have been filling
for years, slips my grasp,
soundlessly falls
as if it was carrying
nothing.

I lean against my truck
pull a piece of fruit
from the tallest tree
and wish I was
as wise as Daniel.

-David Riddle

teeth grind; brows wrinkle
windswept straw; embedded shards
weathered oak tree

-Bill Boyle

"Duke of the Mountain"

Black coat drags over pine-needed hills and the
forest echoes

the shake, shake, shake of the tree-mover.

Native cave-scrawlings paint the legend
of the swat that gave the chipmunk its stripes.

When winter softness descends,
creates a new image,

wide, toe-pronged prints in the snow lead to
dens of quiet darkness where
folds of warmth clothe blind cubs
and conceal clumsy round paws.

-Jubilee Meehan

The Water

Give me a soul
on the rock of ages;
give me a soul
on Jerusalem road;
I'm mind to sin
and death is the wages;
gonna walk on the water,
I'm told...

Give me a taste
of the holy filling;
let me bathe
in the holy flood;
soon my feet
will stray to killing,
gonna walk on the water
and blood...

Give me those words
from the day we married;
give me those words
when we spoke that vow;
by nighttime she'll be dressed
to bury;
gonna walk on the water
somehow...

Give me a drink
'fore I go avenging;
taking toll
of what is mine;
a witch is for lynching,
an adulteress, burning;
gonna walk on the water
and wine...

Give me a song
fits David running;
give me the fire-cloud
for my guide;
my woman's dead;
now the hounds are coming;
gonna walk on the water
tonight...

Give me a song
that I'm want for singing;
give me a song
that'll ease my head;
tomorrow death bells
will be ringing;
maybe I'll walk on the water
instead...

Give me some land
that is free from weeping;
give me that room
where the sun shines low;
they'll hang me
in the town this evening;
gonna walk on the water,
I know...

Give me quick steps
o'er eternity's fording;
give me quick steps
to eternity's bay;
lake of fire
or Lake of Jordan -
gonna walk on the water
today.

-Daniel Rollins

"Oceanside Oblivion"

In the tall, seaside grass by the sand and the waves,
my darling picnics with the afternoon
'til the light of the sun is the light of the moon,
he spends all his daydreams in June.

As the ice-teal Atlantic contrasts with the warmth of the sun,
my cold life is frantic while his life is carefree and fun;

For I am alone in this towering town,
built up of wishes that never left the ground.

On the long, seaside pier in the salt-sundried air,
my darling watches the sailboats pass by;
sandwiched between the saltwater and sky,
he never utters so much as a sigh.

Yet go on sighing in wistful remembrance of him,
in his absence, crying; my wishing is only a whim;

For I am alone in this towering town,
built up of wishes that never left the ground.

Oh, seashell that he will hold up to his ear,
in your wave whispers, tell my darling dear
of my makeshift Atlantic from tear after tear—

For he left me alone in this towering town,
built up of wishes that never left the ground.

-Erin Overton

THE LITTLE SHELL

I walked along the beach this morn;
Down where the waves lap the shore.
To see what new the sea had borne
From the tempest the night before.

The wind a might brisk so early be,
Waking whitecaps seen doffing afar.
Tossing to greet with parting glee,
Ships by chance crossing the bar.

The breakers have surely for ages kept
Their destined mission this day;
Reclaiming that taken by step;
Smoothly sweeping my prints away.

Shore birds up a step ahead;
Maybe one, then again a pair.
Their flight so brief of wing;
Certain not born from fear.

A little shell from depths of sea
Lies still upon the shore.
Its coat a clue to the newness be
Against those washed there before.

I hesitate to pluck it clear,
So briefly it had come to lay.
Maybe tomorrow I will pass again;
For tomorrow is another day.

-Clarence Bailey



Bryan Howard

BLUE BELL WOOD

Through camera's eye I behold
nature's quiet hideaway
far out in Lancashire County.
A verdant wood dressed in flowing
grass, bordered by bouquets
of pinks and purples growing wild,
beyond that, hills. A distant cottage
holds conversation within.
Surrounding fields, a checkered cloth
of green and yellow everywhere.
Another view gives way to river,
running through woods, with trees
on either side. Close by,
a splendid sprinkling of blue bells
swaying over layers of grass and ground.
These bells are not in need of sound.

-Sandra Ervin Adams

"Little Scarecrow"

My little scarecrow's on the porch
In his wicker chair
Overalls and brown plaid shirt
as if he doesn't care
That orange and golden leaves
are whirling in the air
with his corn shuck hair and little straw hands
hanging by his side
His only friend a pumpkin round
from the garden side
Painted eyes and smiling lips
what do you see or know?
Can it be that Mother Earth
is giving you a show?
Of mountain grandeur painted bright
and rays of sunshine dancing light.
Enjoy your days, my little friend
autumn days will too soon end.

-Loretta Carter

a black cat strolling
soundlessly through fallen leaves
beneath the full moon

-Jerry Gill

Ghostly Graveyard Warning

When the pumpkins turn orange and maples turn red -
When the full moon is yellow and huge overhead;
When October night winds bring a chill to the air -
Never walk in a graveyard at midnight - Beware!
When the crickets stop chirping and bats screech and fly -
When a black cat appears in the wink of an eye;
When the trees look like figures that both point and stare -
Then avoid every churchyard at midnight - Beware!
For if you see these signs and you still pass that gate
Then you've dug your own grave and you've sealed your own fate;
It's because in sepulchers there are ghosts with the power
To arise from the dead in that bewitching hour.
They are ruthless and restless sending chills as they moan,
And will scare you to pieces as they walk through each stone;
They will float over graves, they will fade, then appear -
Then the next thing you know they will wail in your ear.
You will scream and be frightened as long as you stay
In that special ground haunting and don't run away;
For the one hope you have that will set yourself free
Is to get both feet out of that cemetery!
So the next time you hear a bat screech in the night,
With an October moon that is yellow and bright;
And you pass by near midnight a grave while trees stare -
Then I say it once more to remind you - Beware!

-Paul Ray

THE ENCOUNTER

She preened in the sunlight,
A beauty, dressed in red ruffles.
Her body swayed in the gentle breeze.

Surrounded by others, she was the one that caught his eye.
Silently he approached her, ever aware that others were present.

Deftly he held her, parting her ruffles until he had drank his fill;
Her silent screams unheard.

His insatiable thirst quenched for the moment,
The bumblebee flew away.

-Ann K Belmont



Kyla Edwards

Little Wren

Little Wren darting to and fro
Your nest is almost complete.
Marvelous how with gathered twigs
You fashion something so neat.

Little Wren darting to and fro
Wee chirping your nest does bring.
Adding to the new life found,
Each year in early spring.

Little Wren darting to and fro
Your nest sits empty and grim.
Little ones have flown afar;
The leaves have departed the limb.

Little Wren darting to and fro
Is that a twig in your beak?
Well bless my bones how time flies;
It'll be spring in another week!

-Clarence Bailey

TUSQUITTEE

Through a tunnel of fire,
walnuts plop on the footprints
of the ancient Cherokee,
a season of magic.

Walnuts plop on the footprints
breaking the chains of darkness.

A season of magic,
star-studded asters hug Tusquittee Creek.

Breaking the chains of darkness,
light ricochets through the foliage.
Star-studded asters hug Tusquittee Creek,
gold glitters on the mountains.

The finger moves across the land
of the ancient Cherokee.
Before winter's rage, it races
through a tunnel of fire.

-Brenda Kay Ledford

Rockport

Three hundred eighty years
Your face has changed. Slowly,
Deliberately, and with a
Patience unrequited.

The harbor glistens with
The sun and angers with
The gales. Dead men from
Here still recount their tales.
Boats voyage in with the
Evening tide and the
Ocean beckons them
Back.

The cold of winter tingles
Your bones, but not
Your spirit. The soul
Beats on, yearning for
One last trip.

As the waves take
You down, you know
You've lived a
Good man's life.

-Justin Creed

Slieve League

Seamus ran and he reached his last mile
Finished the rat race of life for a while
Under distress, he makes his way forward
Without explanation, fell on his sword
Floated away from the bright Emerald Isle

Poison or gunshots just weren't his style
Drowning in whiskey would not be worthwhile
He plunged on his blade, his one last reward
Seamus ran and he reached his last mile

Down to the bottom, without want of wile
His weight plugs the bottom, the sediment riled.
The gulls shriek 'Havoc!', and she cries in accord
Makes her way down to where her boat is moored
And looks to the sea, dry eyes and hostile
Seamus ran and he reached his last mile

-Justin Creed

3 Floors

I learned a lot
riding up three floors.
She and I were separated by two generations,
and about two feet.
One part of her relationship was over
while another one was growing in her womb.
College is her income,
her sanity,
her connection to others.
College was my income,
my sanity,
my connection to others.
The smallest classroom,
I taught about breastfeeding and potty training
while she taught about insecurity and honesty.
Trapped in that box
we were freed from our
class,
race,
address.
Free to travel up three floors,
through glass ceilings
and out of that trap
our forefathers had set
Free to be
people
women
mothers.

-Holly Grant Whistler

On My Arm

My sister Amelia brought honors home-
Athletics, music, painting, scholarship -all.

Amelia was splash, dash, parties and fun.

I was more quiet, shy. But

I did notice other quiet people with
Their eyes, their smile lines, their limps.

She would dance under the chandeliers. People clapped.

I would walk outside into a star sky,

Or listen to the old folks' stories.

Amelia's Stephano was tan and elegant,

What a wedding.

My Jacques read books. We were married

More quietly. More privately.

Stephano and Amelia had two boys and a girl,
Ski vacations and private schools all the way.

Jacques and I were like Abraham and Sarah.

Long ago I prayed that were I to have a child,
I would only praise and celebrate. I'd subject no child
To the insulting comparisons I'd known.

We disbelieved the medical test at first, but, yes

Then our Edward, was born.

Edward is a warm, loving child.

He holds my hand when we walk and sucks his thumb.

He's handsome and grows tall, my darling child.

Not athletic or scholarly, but neither was I.

Today, Amelia's grown children have no time for her.

My tall Edward holds my hand and sucks his thumb

As he has for forty years,

I do not walk alone.

-Peg Russell

OF CHILDREN AND PROPHETS

When you were small I read Gibran
And vowed to be all that he proffered.

"You will be children of space,"

I promised,

As I watched you run and play.

"Ye shall not be trapped or tamed,"

I repeated,

As I encouraged you to learn.

"Your house shall not be an anchor, but a mast"

I declared.

As I tucked you safely in bed.

You left me yesterday..

I wonder if prophets have children.

-Sharon Carter

Mother

often at night,
I hear my mother weeping
from behind her bedroom door...
she laments the advancing years
and the time wasted on little-girl dreams
that never came true.
In disjointed prayers,
she pleads New Testament mercies
for her wayward children,
utters Old Testament curses
on ex-husband memories.
and lies huddled,
fetal,
in a contortion of sheets,
dark under her blanket
lightless -
airless -
in a wet, laborless womb -
stillborn and finally silent.

- Daniel Rollins

Army Men Memories

When I was young in my youthful years -
On days when the rain came to stay;
I'd pull out a bag of my army men,
And sort out the green from the gray.
Getting the blocks from the old toy chest,
I'd start to build thick fortress walls;
Then taking the tanks I would spread them all out,
While placing some jeeps in the halls.
Turrets stood up with majestic views
As armies were laid on each side;
Marksmen were placed standing high and tall,
While all below stood up with pride.
When I had finished my battlefield,
I ran for some old rubber bands;
Then sitting on bed I would one by one
Shoot down all the men with my hands.
Over and over I'd set, then strike,
The men in my towers and shoes;
Cherishing childhood with sweet innocence,
Removed from the world with its blues.
Pleasures back then were a simpler thing,
Requiring no plug-ins or phone;
Board games and puzzles were then the big craze,
Which everyone played in their home.
Decades have passed but whenever it rains,
I now and then see green with tears;
Memories now of a sweet childhood past,
I'll treasure in my grayer years.

- Paul Ray

Arachne in Bradenton

In a corner seat, bent over her lap full of rags
Which her wide-nailed hands knotted into rugs,
The small, white-haired woman in the black dress
Is a faceless, silent presence.

I have no memory of her speaking, standing, or eating.

I have no memory of her voice.

There is only the growing rug across her lap,
Spilling to the floor, covering her feet on the little stool.

That generation is all gone now,
Leaving sepia pictures, Grandmother's cookbook,
Granddaddy's wonderful stories, and
Great-Aunt May's soft rugs beside our beds.

-Peg Russell

A Poem for Mom

Mom I don't know where to start;
Like back-to-school shopping at Wal-Mart.

Always there for me when I'm in need,
You are always there to take the lead.

Leading me in the direction I should go,
Even when my stubborn-self says "No."

Never scared to lighten the mood,
Yet never forgetting to say "I love you."

Always telling me to clean my room,
And to get a shower when a smell starts to loom.

You are never afraid to speak your mind,
Yet somehow it always comes across kind.

Perpetually pushing me to do my best,
Knowing till I do, you won't rest.

Endlessly helping with the last minute details,
Doing your best to make sure I don't fail.

It's easy to see that God is inside of you,
Even when we're late and sitting in the last pew.

You're always working like a colony of ants,
And as your boss said "You do wear the Pants."

Thanks for everything you have done for me,
And remember this poems for the best mommy.

- Caleb Partee

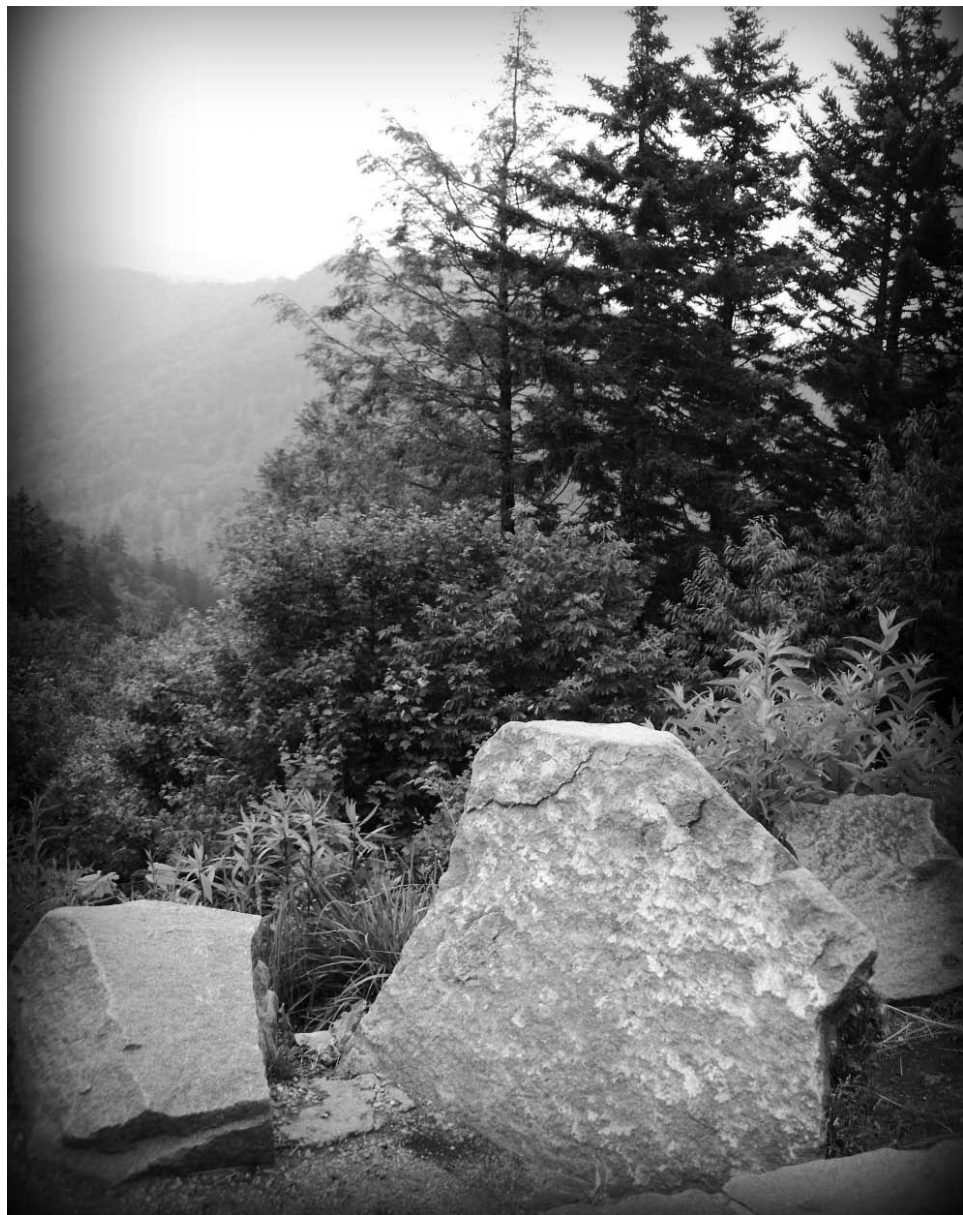
Lost and Found

Look to the sky,
Look to the sea,
Look at the canyons wide and deep;
Look at the fly,
Look at the flea,
Lost in the vastness like a sheep.

Taken by You,
Taken a hold,
Taken captive into the fold;
Taken anew,
Taken from cold,
Found by richness purer than gold.

Lost like an ear without a sound,
Found like precious, buried treasure;
First lost, then found--now lost and found
Within You I'll stay forever.

-Trevor O'Neal



Ryan Howard

The Old House

Year after year after year
she stands on the granite
arms of Shewbird Mountain,

a symbol of strength,
surviving the storms of decades.
She holds secrets in her heart,

the strife and life
of the family she sheltered.
Tears shed, joys shared

beneath her tin roof,
seasons fading into seasons,
the children leaving an empty nest,

old folks passing away;
the red plank house is
faded and worn. She

waits in the morning fog
for the heirs
to decide her fate.

-Brenda Kay Ledford

Family Tree

You can take a group of people
With collective expertise
And create a strong committee
That can solve a need with ease

You can take a group of athletes
And build a team of skill
Commitment to a common goal
Yields victory of the will

You can take likeminded citizens
And change a nation's course
Their dreams and aspirations
Turn their passion into force

You can take melodic voices
And build a famous choir
Whose message is a moving song
That may your heart inspire

You can take a group of learned folk
And teach the young in school
Its treasure they will take from there
Since knowledge is a jewel

You can take a group of lifelong friends
That shared their lives with you
And they will bring a joy to life
That rarely leaves your view

All these groups are special
As they serve us over time
But none of them can substitute
For the last one in this rhyme

A family tree is grown not made
It rises from its roots
Its branches grow from blood lines strong
And families are its fruits

Sometimes new branches come from grafts
As marriage takes its place
Our family tree expands with life
As new growth we embrace

A tree can be a simple thing
But complicated too

And as I note the ones that last
I find one thing is true

The trees that seem to flourish
Draw strength from one main source
They drink the life that's offered free
From God's Almighty voice

When storm winds blow our branches
And the night is dark and long
We trust our roots to hold us firm
This family tree is strong

As time moves on some branches fall
The tree may shed a tear
With healthy roots and branches
Its future has no fear

From time-to-time our tree may find
A branch is in deep need
With love and strength we lock our limbs
And stand as one indeed

We will not yield our standing
To any outside force
We live to love each other
Throughout our journey's course

We share the joy of sunshine
When the day returns at last
And we celebrate each added branch
Whenever there's a chance.

Our family tree stands tall and proud
She's weathered many years
I do not see a weakness there
To warrant any fears

As long as all her branches
Still remain true to the tree
I think her fruit and beauty
Will outlast you and me.

-Bryce Pursley

Four Friends

Molly, Polly, Benny and Dean
Walked in the heat to a Dairy Queen;
School was out in the middle of June -
They'd frequent there in the afternoon.
Bosom buddies since they were born,
All raised up growing pigs and corn;
Once each week, with permission they'd go
To eat ice cream, and a movie show.
Molly ordered a giant shake,
Polly bought a small ice cream cake;
Benny grabbed a banana split,
But Dean got a Coke, and that was it.
Sticky fingers grew while they ate,
Creamed up noses dripped on the plate;
Laughing and burping came with each smile
As each would talk just a little while.
Then they left for their movie treat -
Buying tickets, each took a seat;
Lights went down as the curtain raised -
Each got still as they fixed their gaze.
Screams were heard as a monster breathed fire -
Then, applause as it dropped to retire;
Earth was saved at the movie's end,
Then they left with no more to spend.
Slowly walking toward home, they'd share
All the great times as they grew up there;
Such friendships are deeper than deep -
Treasured moments these four will keep.

-Paul Ray

DANCING WITH SANTA FE

I watched her slip away
in the rear view mirror
while the taste of her terracotta kiss
still lingered on my lips
and her perfume of piñon
smoldered playfully around my head.

The old Buick wheezed hard,
climbing the narrow winding road
chiseled in the mesa wall
among the prickly pear and
stout juniper trees
past Madrid to Tijeras then east.

She blushed shyly in that morning sun.
Her flowing blanket of earth and stone
gathered at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo
into deep folds of the Tesuque village
where she kept her millionaire lovers
in houses of mud and straw
to court her with gifts of canvas, coral and clay.

She gently reminds me of our walks under
the cotton wood trees in the plaza square.

A soda at Woolworth's after mass

her arm in mine,
the buzz of a mariachi trumpet
on her breathe.

But I'm prodigal and drunk on youth
in search of an adventure in the world
unknown past her arms.

I tear away from the comfort of her embrace
leaving an "adios mi corazón"
to echo on her canyon walls.

She waves goodbye in tie-dye rays
over the shoulder of Cristos.

I press hard on the accelerator
and she is swallowed in shadows and dust.

That night,
I look to the stars,
Sequins in a fiesta sombrero.
I close my eyes
and dream of dancing once more with Santa Fe.

-Paul King

Going to the Fischmarkt on an Early Winter Morning

Sunday dawn, crisp and cool;
Tangy dew. The winter sky
Withholds its light another gray hour,
While sleep rests heavy on our eyes.
Together, we pull across the cobblestones
Our market bags and trolley cart,
Admiring the dirty, icy islands
Floating in the swollen Elbe.
The smell of fish; the faintest notes
Of music from the Fischhaus
Where die Jugend drink away
Their week and fill their liquored stomachs
With fischbrötchen and scalding, Turkish coffee.
A sweaty vendor catches our eye.
"Drei von zwie! Frischer Rhabarber!"
He waves the red stalks, face contorting
In a clownish mask of bartering fever.
Two euros later, our baskets heavier,
We wander on, dodging seagulls
That dive at scraps with honed precision.
When the sun finally breaks
The edge of the horizon in orange-pink rays,
We head home. Elbchausse 97.
Fischmarkt, die Jugend, the Hamburg Harbor,
Remaining a picture-perfect memory
At our backs.

-Alyssa Klaus

The Widow

She stands, clutching the unstable rail.
Paint flaking off against her knuckles.

White.

Snarled hair whips her back in
in silver thrusts.
Violent winds of the sea
hum a baleful lullaby.
The song that carried her love
to sleep, seven years ago.
The song, that echoes among the halls
every time her eyes close at night.
The sea was lovely,
before. . .

Its gentle breeze
sweet to caress her face
as she walked about the balcony.
It was lovely. . .
Until that day,
it drew her lover into its grasp,
greedy.

Now it laps up at rocks.
Wanting, waiting.
She falls, setting free the rail.
Slivers of paint float wildly
to touch the foam upon the sea.

White.

-Morgan Soulantikas

So Little To Say

So little to say but so much time, dear,
The grass beneath our backs pressed flat and green
Against the coarse, woven Indian blanket.
Translucent castles in the dawn blue sky
Remind us of what we could've had.
They'll disappear behind the tree line,
Replaced by something so less divine:
Crumbling ruins in a deserted side-street.
Your hand is next to mine; we don't touch.
The memories have built a wall too thick
For anything more than quiet, whispered words
That caress forbidden memories.
And when the rain begins to sprinkle down
We stay where we are; frozen, paralyzed, cold
Because there's so much time, so little to say.

-Alyssa Klaus

God Is There

The grass is green, the forest tall,
The berries are ripe, the mouse is small,
A sweet fragrance in the air,
All in knowing God is there.

-Clarissa Mitchell, 11 years old

I Wonder If God Is There

Whenever I'm out during a storm,
I wonder if God is there.
It's dark and I'm out in a maze of corn,
I wonder if God is there.
Whenever I'm sad and all alone,
I wonder if God still cares,
When on the floor is my ice cream cone,
I wonder if God still cares.

-Deanna Mitchell, 8 years old



Victoria Berger

Lately

I am folded
both halves empty
distance has its way
of turning people
into fools

the crazy ones who wait for
rain sitting at window sills
until I see pieces of myself
falling

thats when it all makes sense

these days I measure
my life
in ashes

vices have a way
of reminding me
of my humanity

-Joshua Phifer

My preacher pauses for a mint during invitation

He does it for the unsure
sinner at the altar,
pin-locked and chewing
on a heavy choice.

My preacher kneels,
his lips close to ear lobe.
He takes the hands of the Shaking
and whispers in pain. He's in love
with this stranger.

He flips to Romans and
places the peppermint
On his tongue. Take, eat,
this is my body.

He knows
both Heaven and Hell
can wait one more moment
to make words sweet.

He knows his own,
knows that a small thing
like a foul mouth can
stop all thoughts on God.

For now, only sweet mints
get to breathe Grace.

- *Elizabeth Grace Davis*

Another World

Step into my swirly whirley world of darkness.

Where the fly eats the spider.

And the monster fears the girl.

Where skipping out into the daylight
means being ferociously devoured
by a ten-legged feral beast.

Where you drown in the sand
and die of thirst in the river.

And when you look down, you see the sky.

The humble looking businessman
pulls down the zipper to his skin,
and out emerges a blue stranger.

A lone widow in her early twenties
invites someone into her lonely home.
Then devours their soul without witness.

Where a gargantuan spider
turns out to be a noteworthy shield,
and the only help to be found.

Come now, friend.

There's nothing to fear.

Unless you fear the bizarre.

If you can keep things straight and stay out of danger,
you'll suffer an enjoyable night.

Once you come in,
you'll never get out.

So step into my swirly whirley world of darkness.

- *Samantha Lilly*



Ryan Howard

Beyond a Broken Sky

I'm cutting through all binding ties
 I'm giving up on final tries
I cannot see through the misty veil
My gaze cannot see through the pale
 I know this is our last goodbye
 Beyond a broken sky

 I know not what beyond me lies
 But I must rest these weary eyes
Life slips through my weakened grasp
 Like sand through an hourglass
 And yet I hope that I may fly
 Beyond a broken sky

 Dry the tears from weeping eyes
 Lift your gazes yet on high
And for my own sake, do not mourn
 Don't wander lonely and forlorn
 Though this is our last goodbye
 Beyond a broken sky

 Try me not with troubled sighs
 Or reassure me with pleasant lies
I know that this is the end I dread
 To join the ever-silent dead
 But yet I hope that I may fly
 Beyond a broken sky

- Brenna Jones

Hiram Grice's Deathbed Repentance

Holy breath of Heaven's Son,
come and cool these cancer lungs.
Let your song embrace my tongue,
Holy breath of Heaven's Son.

Holy dove of Heaven's peace,
draw me to my humbled knees
and let earth's inmate find release,
Holy dove of Heaven's peace.

Holy breeze, cool my hot breast.
God, at Your bosom is there rest?
And will I there be cursed or blessed?
Holy breeze, cool my hot breast.

Holy Father, Heaven's judge...
Will God forever hold a grudge?
Why will this knot of sin not budge?
Holy Father, Heaven's judge.

Holy Sibling, Nazareth's child,
never was your flesh defiled
or by a woman's touch run wild.
Holy Sibling, Nazareth's child.

Holy God, can I be damned
when you have made me what I am,

a foolish, stubborn, 'passioned man?

Holy God, can I be damned?

Holy Ghost, thou Heaven's hand,
let grace absolve this guilty man
before they plant me in this land.

Holy Ghost, thou Heaven's hand.

Holy Angels, are you close?
I've taken death in fatal dose.
Will you guide me, Heavenly host?

Holy Angels, are you close?

Holy, holy, holy night...
Forgiveness, come embrace my life...
That tranquil passage now in sight.

Holy, holy, holy night.

-Daniel Rollins

A Crucifixion

There was a crucifixion

We all gathered around our Internets and social networks

Street corners and bridges

Alleys and parks

To witness the falling pieces of God in this world

Some of you will call it

Brian nelson

Juwon Osbourne

Quantell Braxton

Rayjon Gomez

Some of you will call it brother

And Son

And Baby

And Boyfriend

And Father

We go through the muscle memory motions of funerals

People who walk away once the last tear is as old as the sirens

Pastors who plead with the youth to find peace in a world built on the cusp of war

Mothers whose praying arthritic hands have been broken into permanent steeples by late nights and empty beds in their wombs

Hardened faces dripping the tears of revenge from memory stained retina's

Young ears not sensitive enough to the soundtrack of the sequel

So gun riddled lullabies break beats across the fencing of adolescent skin

And neighborhoods spin the same track on repeat

Repeat

There was a crucifixion
Some of you will call it
Troy Davis
Sean Bell
Fong Lee
Aiyana Jones
And Brother
And Fiancée
And Son
And Baby girl
And what happens when uniforms take precedence over
humanity
When the truest gang in our cities walk 40 feet taller
than those not willing to pledge to the precinct
Artistic bullets that specialize in the graphic de-
signing of backs, chest, and sides
And sometimes 7 year old girls like Aiyana in the mid-
dle of house raids to add feng shui to the cracks of
our streets
The execution of strange fruit
And the institution of paid administrative leave
They continue to spill blood
across our flag to accent the broken nations we call
stars
Nail our hands to the crosses of our chest
To pledge allegiance to the flag our system will cover
their crimes with
While our families sit at home and hope to spine, and
spirit that justice won't be just-us
Remove the nails from the hands and feet of our people
Oil their coffins with vain
And add them to the collection we have been building
on since the birth of this nation

God,

They pretend to play you, putting death in Russian roulette courtrooms tied to emotional trigger fingers that fidget when brown is present in the case file

But release a Casey Anthony when it is full of evidence duck taped on a the lips of a child with a kiss Goodbye from Mommy on it

It's black and white

And when it's too much of that...It's the color of Supreme Court accented with bloody finger prints and power complexes that don't have enough time in their constitutional date books to schedule in saving the lives of the innocent

There are so many crucifixes now

Too many reunions happening at memorials

Too many babies dying with the scar of umbilical cords still present on their bellies

Too many guilty for being innocent

Peace, world.

The time to be angry was yesterday

The time to be active is now

The time to save our babies was yesterday, today, and tomorrow

NO MORE

No more crucifixions

No more gathering around our internets and social networks

Street corners and bridges

Alleys and parks

To witness the falling pieces of God in this world

It is time

To pray their feet

Back to the ground

-Mercedes Walkie

Clock.

Waves beneath a ship's hull.

Keeping time afloat it
ticks. A solitary beat.

One, after another, after
another it
ticks.

A beautiful rhythm
always. Until
the batteries die.

- *Morgan Soulantikas*



Jessica Bradway

The Dome of Shards

They have imprisoned me.

Their sharp words of glass shards have gathered to encase me.

I am like a statuette inside of a snow globe.

My world is often shaken—
even turned upside down.

I am surrounded by frigidity—
even immersed in it.

I am in my own little world,

My own little bubble,

Confined,

Staring through my domed prison,
on the inside looking out.

- *Erin Overton*

Crocodile Tears

Somewhere a crocodile cries tears

Deserved tears

In another place the chemicals

Are burning away blemishes

And being recycled for the chore

Somewhere there is an oily fish

Twinkling

Elsewhere there are lidless orbs

Waste to be ground

Into the eternal cycle

Somewhere there is a factory line

Punching holes of a uniform size

Attaching rivets to a polished shine

Somewhere else a crocodile cries

A crocodile mommy grins but is sad

For her little five foot baby she did all that she
could

Her shining teeth would make it seem she is glad

The wildlife officer asks you, can a crocodile's
smile do good?

Are the little birds that perch on the crocodile's
teeth

Just like those other little birds

That visit *our* mommies to tell *them* secrets

Do those birds twitter the crocodile's breath deep
into people's ears?

Infiltrated ears instantly message to the brain
about how

Crocodiles cleanse away rotten things and balance
the equation

Yet the crocodile goes unheard claims the green,
crusted man

And people go on brushing their teeth
Erasing muted prayers, bleeding from the gums
Trying to escape the knowledge of bad breath
Cleansing the bacteria of equilibrium

Many are the woes of the crocodile's tears
Many the blinks and many the years

-Will Griggs

The Guardian Angel of Lot # 111

With each shift of the lurching car, my senses reeled. The colors of winter rushed past my view in a blurring whirlwind of beige and grey. Ahead, peeking out of a cluster of skeleton trees was the corroded tin roof of a horse barn. A sign painted in sloppy letters hung above the entrance and read 'Horse Auction Today'.

I saw pickup trucks filled to the brim with bales of moldy hay and large trailers stained with grime file into the gravel parking lot. With a squeak, the car halted, the doors opened and my family stepped out in a flurry.

Immediately a double-decker horse trailer seized my attention. It was marked with the words 'Factory Twelve', but as my eyes strained to see the horses contained within, it disappeared behind the barn.

A wave of heat hit me as I stumbled into the dank building and took my seat on a rusted bench, my mother and father to my left. I curled my nose up at the stale scent of horse sweat and manure. Glancing around the desolate room made a shiver slither up my spine. The barn was desolate, far from the glamour commonly seen at the Keeneland or Fasig-Tipton sales.

I stopped fumbling with my hat when my mother tapped lightly on my shoulder and pointed ahead. She said nothing, but smiled as palomino stud entered the arena. The colt was beautiful, gleaming in the dim light. But he was not for me. I had my heart set on taking home the horse that needed my aid the most.

"He's a nice looking colt," my mother said, pulling her brown sweater closer around her neck.

"You should bid," prodded my father, who was flipping through his program, "he's got good bloodlines."

"He's not for me," I said forlornly, standing up to move outside. "I'll know him when I see him."

I quietly dispersed from the crowd for a moment and watched the stream of horses waiting quietly at the rear of the building. They were a sad lot, marked

with coarse coats and matted manes, or jutting hips that could have easily been used as coat racks. I strode over to where the cluster stood, but something drew my attention back to the auction ring in an instant.

With a single glance, my heart leapt up to my throat when I saw a modest bay colt, with a shredded blanket covering his hide, ram through the gate. He was carting three men after him in a raged fury. His deep hazel and crimson-rimmed eyes glowered and his hooves weltered an assault to the open air.

"Lot one eleven," the auctioneer began. "A bay colt fresh off the range. He's good enough to obliterate somebody, you can use him as an weapon, he's more powerful than a tank, and has probably exterminated more people than the US Army. We can start at one hundred," he joked, amused by the broken horse. "Do I hear one hundred?" he scanned the crowd. "Fifty? Well, I guess nobody would happen to want this sad lookin' fella? Going once, going twice. Okay guys, bring him to the back. The meat factory will collect him later. You know? Factory Twelve?" The colt's handlers nodded in response, hinting to the animal's fate.

The auctioneer mumbled and gave the men a thumbs up signal to take the colt aside. The horse let out a bawl that would thrust the soul of any human being, horse devotee or not. In his eyes, there was an unforgettable sadness, as if he knew that he had fought his last struggle.

In a final effort, the horse cast himself against the gate and collapsed as if a wave had crashed upon him. With a frail nicker, he hustled to his overgrown hooves, perchance in an attempt to dispatch himself or maybe he was finally satisfied. Crimson blood and beads of sweat condensed upon his matted coat and he limped toward the exit. I was struck still at the sight.

"Hold on! Wait a second!" I said slowly at first, then with a rushed tempo, flailing my arms in the stagnant air.

Maybe it was the look in that colt's eyes, or the sway in his walk that had got me to raise my voice.

It could have been pity or it could have been my determination to help save what was once left of his shattered spirit.

"I'll take him! For goodness sake, if no one else has the heart to take this poor horse I'll take him!"

"Honey," my mother's voice cooed at my side, "we don't have the money for *that* kind of a colt."

"So you would just let them kill him?" I looked her in the eyes and she turned away.

I marched down the bleachers, swung open the gate, walked up to the auctioneer's stand and smacked a twenty-dollar bill in his hand. I snapped him an ill felt glance and stepped forward to the horse with my palm reaching for his whiskered muzzle. I felt the steamy air rush onto it as I ran my fingers along matured scars.

"How could they send you to the killer's like that?" I whispered to the colt. "How could no one want to save you? How could there be people like that in this world?" My new purchase swiveled his ears, listening to the hum of my voice. "You nearly lost your fight boy. Your guardian angel must be looking down on you today."

I looked into the colt's heartbreaking ivory eyes and saw my reflection pooled in them.

-Kathryn Lindquist

"Spilled"

"What are you doing?!?" Jon yelled.

"It's so hot," Keri moaned, squishing her feet into the fallen Cook-Out shake on the sizzling pavement.

"You are not getting back into my car with those sticky feet," Jon declared, wrinkling his nose. "I mean, what's wrong with you? You don't even know whose shake that is and you're slathering their spit all over your feet."

Keri plucked a maraschino cherry from the puddle, balancing it on her toe.

"Seriously, twerp, what went haywire in your brain?"

Keri's cheeks, already rosy, burned even brighter, but still she didn't answer. Jon seemed to watch in horrified fascination as Keri's feet colored red and the wasted ice cream turned to clouds at her feet.

"Who does this, Keri? Really," burst Jon, swinging away. "I should leave you here to walk home since you like being barefoot so much."

Keri swished her feet around in the Cook-Out shake, wondering if the pool was large enough to dive in. Jon kept walking away, towards his car, but Keri wasn't bothered. She knew what he didn't: that it was people like her, the "special" people, that cooled their feet in fallen desserts and brothers like him who would always come back.

-Victoria Berger

The Gilded Kingdom: an Allegory of the Reason for Rain

*"How can you trust somewhere the sun is always shining?"-
Singer/Songwriter Matthew Thiessen of the band Relient K*

The sun yawned as it stretched its arm rays over the golden castle with the blue turret-tips. The picturesque structure crowned the mountaintop right across the valley from the little cottage where my father and I had lived all my life. At last I had reached the top of the rocky clefts ascending that opposite mountainside, which functioned as steps to the west wing entrance of the castle. For a few moments I could do nothing but stand and gape my mouth open in awe of the grandiose palace which would soon be my home. An overwhelming sense of magnificence had stopped me in my tracks. The stunning, sundrenched world around me seemed to become a blur: my vision was reduced to a mere perception of colors that bled together into one big blob. That castle was almost *too beautiful* to be real. But, after reluctantly tapping the lowered drawbridge before me with my foot, my ears welcomed the resonation of a knock on wood. To further confirm its actuality, I saw my dashing prince, who would be my husband as of that very evening, a few feet ahead, waving for me to continue walking. He had somehow crossed over from dreams into reality and was standing right before me now. But despite my longing to enter the castle with him, something made me turn around and gaze back across the valley to Father's cottage, greyed by an overhead cumulonimbus cloud.

All the way from here, I could still see the window of my childhood bedroom. The place where I had dreamed of the prince who lived in that castle just beyond my mountain for years upon years. Anyone who lived in that wonderful palace must be just as wonderful. But I knew he was out of my reach, for I could *never* get up the nerve to leave the boundaries of our lawn. I remembered reminiscently gazing at all my childhood pictures that Father had framed on my wall and wishing I could go back to those days when I had more freckles than cares. Back when I was content, rain or shine.

I envisioned the pink walls, the plush carpet, and the bed in the corner right across from the window through which the sunrises had kissed me good morning, right on the face, day after day. I remembered cheerfully jumping out of bed to open my window and hear the birds' accompaniment to the spectacle before me. After a few moments I would tire of merely seeing it: I would always have to wander outside to be a *part* of it. My bare feet parted the lush, cushiony grass. My beauty-stricken eyes gazed at the sky through the buds of my backyard dogwood tree and admired the intense greenness

of the leaves as they sifted the descending rays into dozens of columns of gold. Wide quilts of pastureland, patched with every shade of green imaginable, blanketed our landscape for miles. But the crowning glory of it all was Father's garden. He grew rainbows upon rainbows of every color of gerbera daisies one could imagine, just for me, because he knows they are my favorite flowers. The remembrance of that breathtaking vista gave me chills, not only because of the utter beauty of it, but also because I knew I was going further and further away from it with every step toward the castle.

But I had to. The sunshine in my bedroom window never lasted forever. Following it were perpetual dark, stormy days where the sun dared not show an iota of itself. And how I detested those days. Every time the rain thwarted my morning ritual, I longed for the kingdom across the valley even more. For on those rainy days, while glaring out my window, I would notice that the sky surrounding the castle was *never* gray. The place where I could find everlasting warmth and light was right before my eyes, but the thought of leaving the security of Father's cottage frightened me.

It turns out I did not have to leave all alone. On this rainy day at the cottage, the prince of the golden castle, the fulfillment of all my childhood daydreams, happened to wander to our yard. We fell in love almost at first sight. As soon as he vowed to rescue me from the drear of my sun-forsaken cottage and carry me away to his land where there is never a dark or cold day, I was sold. Upon my arrival to my new mountaintop, I could already see how much brighter the sun shone on it than it did on my old home. The sunbeams ricocheted off their matching golden castle towers and created prism upon prism of sheer, shimmering light. It cascaded down into the back courtyard of the castle: light so extremely pure and powerful that it revealed every little particle in the air. The sight fascinated me so much that I momentarily put off going inside so that I could meander among the beams. They gave each inch of the ground its own golden sheen. The whole world seemed fourteen karats. I walked slowly, awestruck by this incomparable corner of the world that I had never seen from my mountaintop. This fairyland had been just beyond my line of vision all this time. I had found everlasting light and warmth at last.

I threw myself onto the ground to bask in the glow of this unequalled brightness. The grass will surely be just as

lush as...dirt.

Cold, hard dirt.

I sprang to my feet and perused my surroundings.

There was not even any grass.

For the first time, I noticed that there was absolutely no vegetation whatsoever on the entire mountaintop.

Not even the slightest sign of life.

It was a desert.

No pastures, no dogwood trees, no daisies.

My new paradise had none of my beloved plant life.

Tears of shock watered the wasteland as I ran back to the castle as fast as my wobbling legs could take me.

I finally reached the drawbridge, where my prince was still waiting for me to accompany him into the castle.

"Darling, where have you been? What ever is the matter?" he inquired, seeing my tear-drenched face. He began walking toward me.

"It' just-well-shocking... Th-th-there are no plants here!" I exclaimed as I grasped his hand.

To my utmost horror, his skin felt cold and firm and glossy. He then fell over at my slightest touch. He was made of cardboard.

I suppose that I was just so stricken by him and his kingdom of fool's gold that I did not even notice its lack of greenness or his artificiality.

My tears began all over again. I darted down the tower stairs out into the courtyard, appalled by the exposé I had just experienced. How foolish I was! How did I not notice that he was fake? I suppose I was blinded by the radiant beams of the sunlit kingdom more than I realized. When he came to rescue me at my cottage, I suppose I did not even give *him* a second look-I only paid attention his *words*, which were all empty, I now see. He became my hero just for his promise of never-ending sunshine, yet he failed to inform me of the costs of that constant light. A real hero would not fall over the

moment I needed him most.

"ISN'T THERE ANYTHING REAL IN THIS KINGDOM?!" I cried in exasperation. The only response I received was an echo from across the valley. A new cycle of tears began.

As I was sitting with my legs dangling over the cliff, suddenly I saw a column of smoke rising out of the chimney from a house on the opposite summit.

Immediately I took off down the valley slope and eventually ascended the craggy mountainside to reach the cottage that I had earlier forsaken, returning to the one trace of trustworthy reality that existed in this world. I should have known that I could not have even lasted a day away from that beautiful, real place called home. As I ran up to the yard, I saw a figure dash out the front door towards me.

"FATHER!!!" I yelled in an almost unintelligible cry. I flung myself into his arms and leaned against his *sturdy* frame.

"Oh my beautiful daughter! How I have missed you! Where have you been?"

"Father, I am so sorry for leaving you! I was so stupid-I-I went to the golden castle because it was..."

"Sunny?" he finished my sentence in a gentle tone.

I replied with an ashamed nod.

"Was it what you thought it would be?"

"Not at all, Father. For a few moments it seemed to be wonderful, but then I realized that the castle, the prince, everything, were just facades. It was a desert wasteland."

"Do you know why, darling? It never rains there. The land around our cottage is so beautiful because it gets the water it needs. It may not always be sunny, but it must rain for you to enjoy your grass and trees and daisies. My daughter, what were you doing at that place?"

"Pursuing in vain a place more beautiful than this, for there is none, Father."

-Erin Overton

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