

# genesis

Spring 2010



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## Editor's Note

Nearing its fortieth anniversary, *genesis* has opted for a sleek new design. In an increasingly tech-savvy world, books remain tactile experiences treasured by many. During our redesign, we sought to convey the value of creative work in print by making our publication fit in your hands better. As exploration of identity is the foundation of much of what we publish, we looked back on *genesis* history to create our new design.

Identity plays a role in many pieces—from intercultural romances to personal Hoosier histories. The author of our Best of Poetry explores writing by contrasting his own creativity with that of his daughter. In prose, the Best of Fiction reveals the consequence of desire. And our Best of Nonfiction explores how something as modest as a wristwatch can provoke strong family memories.

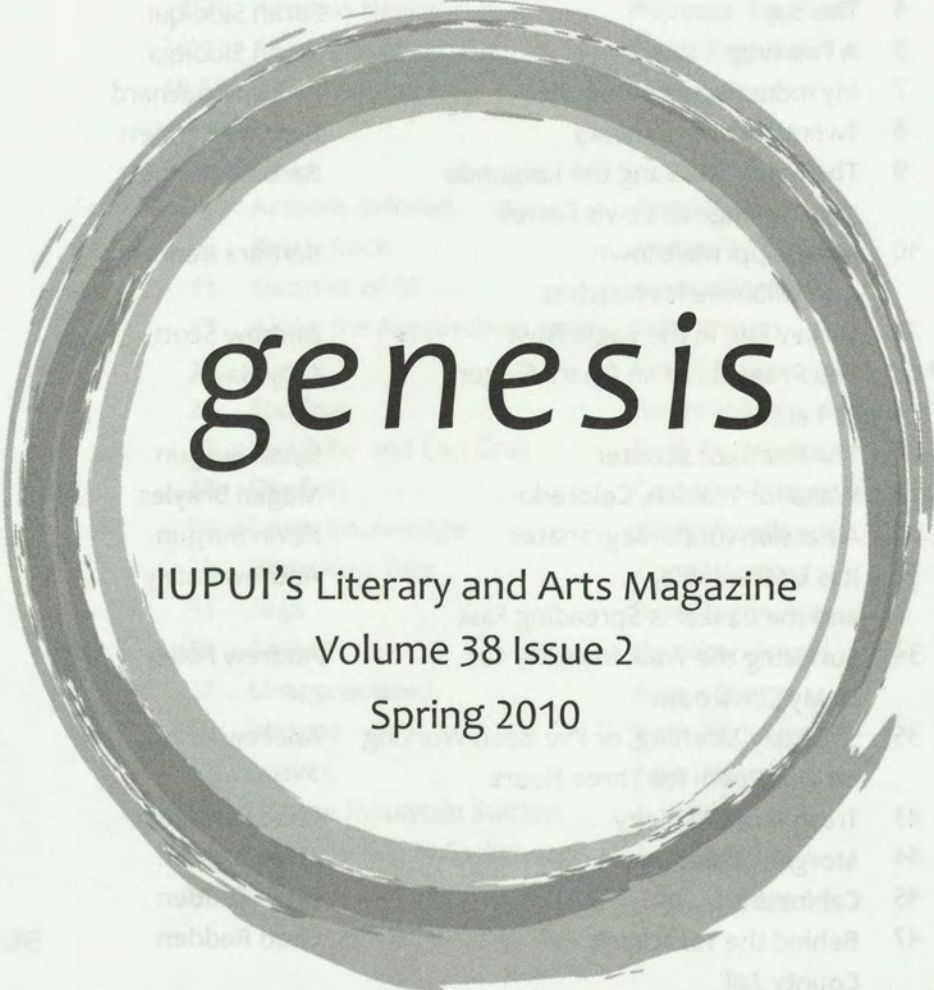
Readers will also notice the return of color throughout *genesis*. This allows our artwork to pop—as illustrated by the vibrant colors in “Artemis Beloved,” our Best of Art.

I think I speak for both our contributors and our editors when I say we wish to inspire readers to look within themselves.

Tanya Smith  
Managing Editor

Cover by:  
Anna Knabe

Artemis Beloved



# *genesis*

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## Poetry

Sarah Siddiqui

### The Bay

I went places.  
I saw people.  
I met sand,  
I met the ocean,  
I met the west end of America,  
I met a city in the clouds,  
I met 'looking for you and not finding you,'  
I met a lion-hearted wanderer who took her love  
and let it blindly lead her to the ends of rock  
and beginning of water.

I met wind so great it left rough all over my skin.  
I met bridges and trees and foggy afternoons that reminded me of places I've only dreamed.  
I met miles of highway stretched with smoke,  
and I met 'constantly watching the crowd, constantly looking away from the view.'

He said "sometimes I think you're in the sky and you just disappear."

## A Painting

I felt him once. Like stretching muscles, like a tendon pulled from the sole to the ankle. He must have felt me once, too. Like a falling drape, an entanglement of stiff thread dried out in summer sun. People from the dirt and dust-ridden crops, people who don't wipe their faces clean from the grimy heat, people from the coloration of stone walled markets, these people are cruder than the average Indian. The average Indian who curls her lips when she kneels or stands too close to the king's patron, her rescuer. The oil on their noses; their arms belling out like flames; their hands covering their faces in secret celebration.



Aaron Pierce

## Brat's Rock



Lauren Bouchard

## My Induction as a Hoosier

Our fishing poles jutted out the window  
like a hound's nose pointed at the pay lake.  
We slowed to a stop  
at the hum of the fluorescent "Open."  
Flies ricochetting lethargically  
off the penetrating glow.  
He, my seasoned friend and guide,  
led me into the world of fishhooks,  
live bait, and Styrofoam coolers,  
purposely aimed at the counter with the  
register.  
I squirmed as the night crawlers  
writhed in transparent cups,  
still apparently enjoying life,  
and not quite ready  
to lay at the bottom of the murky deep.  
We carried our prisoners to  
his self-proclaimed perfect spot.  
As he hunkered down skewering  
tiny shish kabobs to inaudible screams,  
I glanced around at the rusty trucks  
parked around the tiny lake.  
Their drivers are slumped next to  
cackling fires with poles secured.  
Reeling, these seemingly still  
silhouettes burgeon to life—some  
with a whoop of good fortune and  
others with muffled disappointment.

Across this Podunk paradise are lawn chairs,  
buckets, and Cheetos bags dispersed  
in an eclectic display of an alternate reality,  
where the distant noises of the highway were the only  
reminder of the pains and joys of everyday living.  
He heaves softly as he casts  
the third of our fishing poles out.  
My brand new orange Converse, soaked with mud  
paralleled a dead catfish on shore.  
But suddenly my mind was far from my shoes,  
my pole had begun to wriggle furiously  
against my hands!  
With the precision of a one-year-old with a spoon,  
I reeled in a way so as to say,  
"This fish is mine!"  
The tip of my pole seemed much too  
pliable to control  
a catfish weaving desperately back and forth  
to avoid, or, at least, try to stall his fate.  
My less than impressive biceps flexed longingly as  
I pulled it straight out of the water,  
swinging it in the air,  
and letting it flop mercilessly on the bank  
only feet from its watery haven.  
After the hook is pulled from its overeager lips  
and the fish is returned,  
I feel a surge of rich pomposity,  
for I had been inducted as a Hoosier.

Barbara Bennett

## Twenty-first of January

Obediently, from every direction,  
the flakes descend through deepening dusk,  
white-veiled novitiates awaiting first vows,  
chastened by the chiming of crystal vesper bells.  
They nod to one another in sacred silence,  
scurry soundlessly down starlit corridors,  
deceptively symmetrical, an innumerable congregation.  
Slowing at last, they alight in contrast  
on the sleeve of my black woolen coat.  
I examine the improbable complexity  
of these individual miracles for a moment  
until my warm breath melts them into nothingness.  
The night around me whispers  
holy — holy — holy —  
and I lift my voice in communion  
with the chorus of Midwinter's evensong.

## The Night She Sang the Largondo In homage to Lewis Carroll

In February's dedendume  
she still recalls that night last June  
when the megaron-colored quarter moon  
cardooned across an incalescent sky.

For there, by summer's salwynn light,  
her lover jawked, with all his might,  
the strings of a lambrequin with his bow  
and, dawklly, begged her sing the Largondo.

In larum, sweet and low, she crooned  
and nimbly rombled barefoot through  
the intricate steps of the Gardyloo,  
her long curls damp with dewy evening air.

Famished, they dined on fipple-rare  
from the springs of far Wallaroo,  
and rhatania sipped from crystal flutes  
till fitful daylight softened midnight's hue.

## Mississippi Meltdown A Villanelle for Natchez

It's two days by car from Nashville down  
the Trace, two nights in dilapidated B&Bs  
with faulty AC, to Natchez. We hit town

just as the outdoor cafés close. A round-  
bellied waiter flaps menus to fake a breeze;  
in a syrupy voice, says Try Magnolia's, down

under the hill. Hours to go till sundown—  
thermometer threatens one hundred degrees  
as we trudge vacant sidewalks. Downtown,

outrageous crape myrtle trees abound.  
Feels like Charleston, but frayed at the knees.  
Restorations stand proud beside rundown

wood shacks. In the yards, stripped-down  
cars on blocks succumb to rust and debris.  
At the casino-boat landing across town,

we join day-trippers who sip watered-down  
cocktails below deck on the Isle of Capri,  
stupefied by the mind-numbing sound

of buzzers and bells. We wander around,  
inhale the stale smoke, observe the sleazier  
side of this "charming Civil War town."

Two days of fun later, we've both grown  
tired of vacation sex and overeating to appease  
ourselves. Sweet talk borders on breakdown—  
we pack up and get the hell out of town.



Aaron Pierce

Summer of 08

Andrew Scott

## Turkey Egg in the Eagle Nest

Lost in what an honest man would call a learning curve  
The bilk the maimed the cured and lame  
The wild and tamed, diagnosed: insane

Cosmic shambles  
The baby teeth sprouting  
From an always open mouth  
Photosynthesizing paralyzed words  
Into infant-cooed slurs

Father like son  
And all possible inverses of such  
Their ears keen to the voice  
Of the mother's womb  
Soft-skulled not infallible  
To the harsh mutterings  
Of a weary habitat

Associated Press condemnations  
On grayish lies  
From lukewarm tongues  
Weathering the termination  
Of tomorrow  
And happily ever after  
The End.



Julie Wilson

## Along the Appalachian Trail

Rebecca Franklin

## Princess Nancy

Maude flipped the cooling rack over and placed it on the table. She lifted the round pan from off of the top, revealing the last layer of her intended three-layer cake.

"Dad," she called out as she checked one of the other layers.

"Coming," Orville replied. Maude stepped back from the table, taking in all three pieces, and contemplated the amount of icing she would need for each and for the cake as a whole. Orville, her husband of eight years, appeared behind her in the back doorway. He closed the gap between them and rubbed the exposed bicep extending from the sleeve of her dress. He kissed her shoulder.

"All done?" he asked. Maude turned from the table and began drying her hands on the apron around her waist. Orville stepped to the sink and washed his hands.

"No, I need another pound of sugar for the icing. I needed to go into town anyway to look at that necklace I told you about." Maude untied her apron and handed it to Orville.

"The girls need to wash up before we go," he replied as he dried his hands.

Maude dusted off the skirt of her dress. "They'll need baths if they're as dirty as you."

Orville looked down at the dirt circles covering his knees. "You know what they say, you're never closer to God than when you're on your knees."

Maude smiled and walked past the back door into the bathroom. She unclipped the bun on the



back of her head and then brushed it back up, catching the spray of red hairs that had clung behind her ears.

"I thought you and the girls could stay here so Nancy didn't see the necklace," said Maude.

"What about Diane? She isn't much use at pulling stones," Orville asked, stepping up to the bathroom door.

"She isn't much for keeping secrets either. Besides, she'll keep Nancy busy. Nancy's been cooking up some escapade all day. She said she needs something special for the party."

"I have to get that field cleared by the end of the week, but I guess I can find something to keep her busy," he replied, raising his eyebrows for emphasis. Maude laughed, then kissed Orville.

"Just make sure that daughter of yours doesn't take off with Diane," said Maude. "The last time Diane came back with scratches all over her legs. She said they were picking berries."

"Don't worry, Mother. We'll be fine," Orville replied.

Maude stepped around Orville, gave him a peck on the cheek, and pulled her purse down from a hook beside the back door. "Well, just remember that the lake is probably swollen from the storms last week." She walked out the door.

**"She isn't much for keeping secrets either."**

The lake took up half the county and made for rough water even without flooding.

"We'll be fine, Mother," Orville said as he closed the door behind her.

Maude shifted the old Ford into gear. She couldn't help but look in the rearview mirror at the dark forest that lingered beyond the fields.

•

We hurried through the forest, beyond the fields, dodging fallen limbs and large puddles of mud. The Duchess whined the entire way to the sea. She begged on and on, without relief, to return to the palace. Her screeching voice served to push me faster, and farther, in hopes I might leave her behind.

When I reached the beach alone, I took a moment to close my eyes and suck in the chilled, damp air. I grabbed the crystal hanging from my neck and then began a prayer of thanks for this moment of freedom, but the moment was interrupted. The edge of the forest began to thrash and crack as the Duchess stumbled onto the beach. I winced.

"I hate it when you leave me," said the Duchess, panting and wilted. "What if the evil witch caught me?"

Her short legs were plastered with wet leaves, and mud speckled her pink socks. I reached down and grabbed her by the hand, and then led her down the beach.

"Come on," I said, irritated by her sullen face. "I don't want the witch to eat me, Princess."

"It would serve you right," I said. Her chin

sunk down to her chest revealing the crown of her head. "Jeez, you are such a baby. Besides, I already told you that the evil Maulice left the forest."

"Why did she leave?"

"O'reh said she went to a land far away to get sugar." I replied.

"Why doesn't she just go to the store in town?" the Duchess asked.

"Because," I said, trying to sound spooky. "She has to get special sugar to poison her victims."

The Duchess gasped.

"Don't worry," I said. "O'reh will protect us."

"Whose O'ra, I forget?"

"It's O'reh, and I told you he is my knight, sent by the gods to protect me from Maulice." I was becoming aggravated again.

The Duchess always forgot everything. I didn't understand how anyone could think she was so perfect when she couldn't even remember a stupid name. She was such a goody-goody, always acting like I made her come with me, but she liked going as much as I did.

"Where are we going? My feet hurt." she asked.

I wanted to tell her to shut up, but then I saw the treasure. "Right here," I said. "These magic sea shells will make the perfect decorations for my birthday." I let go of the Duchess' hand and squatted above the sand. There were thousands of them, poking out in every color imaginable.

"See," I said, "they must've been left here for

us to find!" I scooped up handful after handful of sand and shell onto the skirt of my dress.

"Those dirty little things?" the Duchess asked. "Mama says—"

"Maulice!" I shouted. "Her name is Maulice, and she is not my mother!"

"She said they come in a truck like the sand," the Duchess said with a whisper.

"They come from the sea!" I turned on her, but she hung her head down low and hid behind her hair. I grabbed her by the hand and pulled her down onto her knees. She wouldn't look at me, so I peered up beneath her hair. "It doesn't matter anyway. Are you going to help me gather the magic shells?"

"I want to go home."

"Fine, help me, and we can go!" I shifted off my knees and sat down onto the wet sand. The sky rumbled overhead.

•

Maude shifted the truck down to first gear and rumbled slowly back up the driveway. The crunch of the gravel under the tires rang like music in her ears, settling the worries that always came when she left the farm alone. When the Ford crested the hill, Maude noticed Orville off in the field bent over and pulling at the ground. Parking at the top, she pushed in the emergency brake and opened the door.

Maude reached across the seat and opened the glove box. Inside, a small blue velvet box sat centered on top of a pink envelope. She pulled the box and card onto her lap then unhinged the

lid of the box.

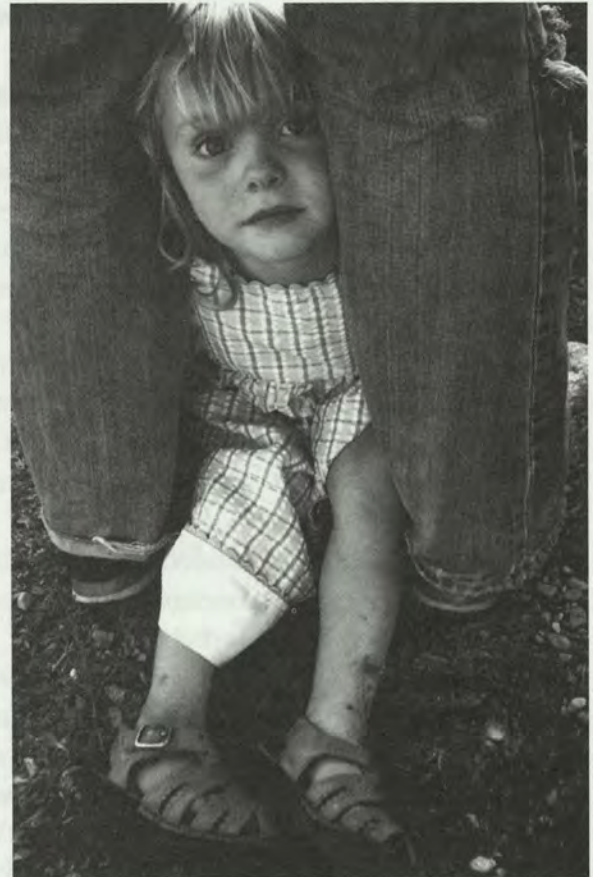
The corners of her mouth dimpled as her lips curled into a smile. She imagined Nancy's surprise, that old glow returning to her eyes. Tears gathered in Maude's eyes. She missed her little Nancy.

She had wanted to wait until Nancy's sixteenth birthday before giving her a diamond; it was tradition in Maude's family. A tradition she wanted to share with her stepdaughter. Orville argued that thirteen was too young to give her such a big responsibility, but he was only afraid of letting his little princess grow up. Maude hoped the necklace would show Nancy that Maude understood a young girls need to feel important, to feel like a princess, but Maude also worried that Nancy wouldn't understand the gesture.

Maude wiped away the tears that attempted to dribble down her cheek and stepped out of the truck. She placed the box and card inside her purse then grabbed the bag of sugar from the truck bed. As she walked toward the house, she looked up into the field. Orville, who was now standing up and stretching, caught sight of her and waved. Maude raised her hand and waved in his direction, but her eyes searched the field for Nancy and Diane.

•

My eyes searched the beach for a container. The hem of my dress became heavy with shells, and when I tried to stand, water drained through the fabric and onto my legs.



Ronni Moore

## Kyra 2

"Yuck!" I said. "Duchess, we have to find something to carry the shells in." We looked around the shore for some kind of bucket. A few feet in front of us, a wall of mossy trees and shriveled branches from the forest had been washed across the beach. Under a branch, near the bottom, there was a dirty old milk bottle.

"There," I pointed. "Do you see that bottle? Go get that."

"But what about all my shells?" she whined.

"Dump them out now, and when you come back you can put them in the bottle."

"Okay," she whined. She stood and dusted the sand off her dress and walked up to the wall, but before grabbing the bottle she stopped and stared into the forest.

"Come on, hurry up. I'm getting soaked," I said, but then I heard a voice echo out from between the trees calling my name.

"Princess," called the Duchess, her voice cracking with fear.

"It's Maulice," I shouted and stood, pouring my shells out across the sand. I ran to the Duchess and pulled her by the hand along the edge of the forest, looking for another path. The overgrowth was too thick. I pulled her back across the sand to the wall.

"What are we going to do, Princess?" asked the Duchess, looking back over her shoulder.

"We have to get around the wall," I said, then stepped into the sea. The waves were tall and cold; I clutched the crystal around my neck.

"Wait, Princess, I don't want to go in the

## "She cleared the water and hair from Nancy's face."

water. I'm scared," said the Duchess through broken sobs.

"The crystal will guide the way," I said. I pulled the Duchess in beside me. The waves pounded up our legs then overtook our waists. Maulice called out again. I looked back to the forest expecting to see her there on the beach, but she wasn't.

"Come on, Duchess," I urged, as we rounded the edge of the wall. I stumbled over branches sticking out into the water and fell; the Duchess was pulled under. I tried to find her hand, but the waves splashed into my eyes. I was washed into the wall of trees. I screamed.

"Nancy!" Maude screamed as she ran across the beach and into the water. She tried to trudge through quickly, but her dress floated up around her waist like a parachute. When she reached Nancy, all she could see was the back of her blue dress. Maude grabbed the muddled fabric and dragged Nancy up above the water.

"Dad!" Maude called. "Orville!"

"I'm right here," he answered, searching the water.

Maude stumbled through the debris back onto the shore and heaved Nancy onto the sand. Maude's legs gave way, and she flopped down beside Nancy. She cleared the water and hair

from Nancy's face. Nancy gasped for air. Maude looked back to find Orville.

Orville trudged through the water with Diane's lifeless body cradled in his arms.

"Oh god, Diane!" she screamed.

Orville sank to his knees and laid Diane down in front of Maude. He leaned over to listen to her chest then felt for a pulse in her wrist. Orville tipped Diane's little head back and breathed into her mouth. He flattened her chest with the palms of his hands.

"Please Diane," Maude whimpered, as Orville pumped the child's chest. She sunk away; the wilderness around her went silent. All she could hear was the panting of Orville's breath between the rushes of air each time he placed his mouth over Diane's.

Diane spit up, and Orville turned her onto her side to let the water flow. He gathered Diane into his arms and stood.

"Come on," he said. "She has to get to a hospital." Orville didn't wait, or look back, but ran into the forest.

Maude did her best to pull Nancy onto her hip, then followed after Orville. She struggled through the trees with the weight of Nancy on her side. Broken branches crowded the forest floor and tried to trip her, but Maude managed to reach the edge of the field above the house.

•

I had been dreaming of lying in the field with the sun streaming across my face, lighting up the inside of my eyelids, when I woke in a strange

place. Stone walls surrounded me. There was a dank smell hanging in the air. I tried to move, but a heavy red cloak lay across my body. It was the witch's cloak.

"Duchess!" I tried to scream, but my throat was sore. I reached for the crystal around my neck, but it was gone. Wherever it had gone, I prayed to it for freedom. O'reh appeared at my side.

"Help me, O'reh. The evil witch has trapped me under her cloak."

"It is just a coat," he said.

"No," I argued. "I can't move! She must have put a spell on it."

O'reh picked the coat up off of me, as if it were made of feathers.

"Thank you, O'reh. We must find a way out of this dungeon." I leaped up from the bed, but stumbled. My legs were like jam.

"No," he said, "you're still tired from the accident. You need to lie down." O'reh stroked my hair out of my eyes and then brushed a hand across my cheek. It felt nice, too nice. It must be a trick.

"O'reh, listen to me. She has you under a spell. We have to go. Someone has stolen my necklace," I said, but he did not listen. Instead, he leaned over me and started to cry into my lap.

"You have to stop this, Nancy," he said between sobs. "Diane is really hurt this time."

"You always take her side. I bet she's the one who stole my necklace, didn't she!" I wiggled out of his grasp and onto the floor. There was an

open door across the cold room.

"No, she doesn't have your necklace," O'reh said. I turned back, but he did not look at me.

"Then where is it?" I screamed.

O'reh looked away into a corner. I think he was still crying, but I couldn't see for certain. I started to cry.

"You let her take it didn't you, that evil witch, you let her take it," I screamed.

"Stop!" said O'reh. He had never yelled at me before.

"No, she has no right," I cried. "It's mine, and she has no right!" I turned to run out the door, but Maulice moved out of the shadows of the hallway. She had been listening the whole time. I ran at her with both fists raised. "Give it back!"

•

"You want it back!" Maude screamed. She grabbed Nancy by both wrists, stopping her in mid-stride.

Nancy tried to pull away, but Maude towed her into the hallway and headed past the nurses' station.

"Maude, stop!" Orville said, coming up behind Nancy.

"Help me, O'reh," Nancy begged. Orville stepped around Nancy and stood in front of Maude.

"Please, Maude, you need to take a moment and calm down," he said.

"I know exactly what I'm doing, Orville," she said. Maude wasn't asking for understanding but demanding acceptance; this was going to happen

her way. She wasn't going to let Orville stop her this time. Maude put her free arm against Orville's shoulder and moved him aside. She lugged Nancy the rest of the way down the hall, stopping in front of a large window.

Inside, the room was dark. A nurse stood in front of a bed in the middle of the room. She stepped to the left and revealed little Diane covered in blankets, a tube running from her mouth into a machine.

Maude looked down at Nancy. Nancy was staring into the window at Diane, her face turning white.

"Do you see this, Nancy?" she said, trying to squelch the scream building in her throat.

"This is real," said Maude as she tapped the window.

Nancy didn't move or make a noise.

Maude turned Nancy around, so their eyes met. "This is what your fantasy land has done; there is no magic spell that can help your sister!" Maude stepped between Nancy and Diane.

Nancy shook her head to agree, but her eyes were caught, stuck in Maude's angry glare.

Maude pulled Nancy across the hall to a chair facing the window. She removed the blue velvet box from the purse hanging on her shoulder. Maude opened the box and then handed it to Nancy.

"Look at it," she demanded. Maude thrust the box into Nancy's hands.

Nancy lowered her head to the box.

"That is a real crystal, Nancy, a diamond

**“We are going to help her  
fight a real battle.”**

like real princesses wear. Do you know why they wear them?” Maude asked, not wanting a response. “They aren’t magical, Nancy. They don’t have special powers, but they can be special. They’re special when someone gives you one as a gift—like my mother gave me this necklace.” Maude tugged at the diamond around her neck and began to cry.

“I bought this for you to show you something real, to show you my love, that you are special to me.” Nancy was looking up at Maude, but Maude couldn’t tell if she understood. Nancy still seemed more frightened than aware. “Diane is real, Nancy. A real girl fighting for her little life in that room.”

Maude pulled the plastic diamond from her pocket. “Your father and I are going to stay here with Diane. We are going to help her fight a real battle. You can stay in this chair and be a princess if you want, but Diane needs a sister.”

Maude handed the old necklace to Nancy and then walked across the hall and into Diane’s room, passing Orville on the way.

Orville looked at Nancy and then followed Maude.

I looked down into my lap, one necklace in each hand. I thought of the Duchess, and then of Diane. I ran away, down the hallway of the

hospital looking for an exit. It was my fault, what had happened to Diane.

I found my way outside into a small courtyard in the center of the hospital. I knelt to the ground and opened my fists. Each hand held a necklace. I threw the diamond into the grass and clasped the crystal with both hands. I prayed to the crystal to make Diane better, but I knew it wouldn’t work.

“Please!” I begged the crystal, but it didn’t respond. Somewhere above, a cloud burst open and poured down. I looked to the diamond in the grass; the rain splashed mud onto its glassy surface. I crawled across the lawn and plucked it up; it was a gift from my mother. I set the crystal down between some blades of grass.

“She isn’t my real mother,” I said, but she is the only one I know. Diane is half my sister. They both need me. I stood up from the grass and walked to the door. Inside, I stopped and looked back, but I couldn’t see the crystal anymore.

Amy Hayes

## The Progress of an Opera Singer: in 4 acts

Mabel, The Pirates of Penzance

untried lady, flushed  
the skin whispers its message  
the inexhaustible dawn awakes  
glowing embers  
illuminate the fear  
unfounded  
the lines so easily memorized  
repetition, repetition, no thoughts in her head  
happy in ignorance  
in the fervent rhythm of acceptance  
approval  
beautiful girl with all the promise of the caterpillar  
taking wing  
blissful

The Fire, L'enfant et les Sortilèges

to the infant I sing  
mistreated  
consigned to the grate  
poked with the ashen spear  
disembodied trill  
slashing at the detractors  
childish lines scorch bright  
circles on my cheeks  
ebullient cruelty  
their hateful lungs expel the putrid truth  
the hands point their blazing spots  
burning away your mask of importance  
the mast  
dead on the horizon  
like my countenance  
steam rising from my weakened body



The Countess, Le nozze di Figaro

ensconced in my privileged cage  
my love loves love  
hateful heart  
I know no other but you  
your master laughs at my withered soul  
encased in gold and silk  
diamonds are born in your hands  
they melt in jealous fire in mine  
whose temperature once tempered our tenuous bond  
who will once more reconcile me to my fate  
pooling heat between lovers  
us on an illuminated podium  
and them in fickle shadows  
the pantomime, the shadow play  
in welded, wedded bliss

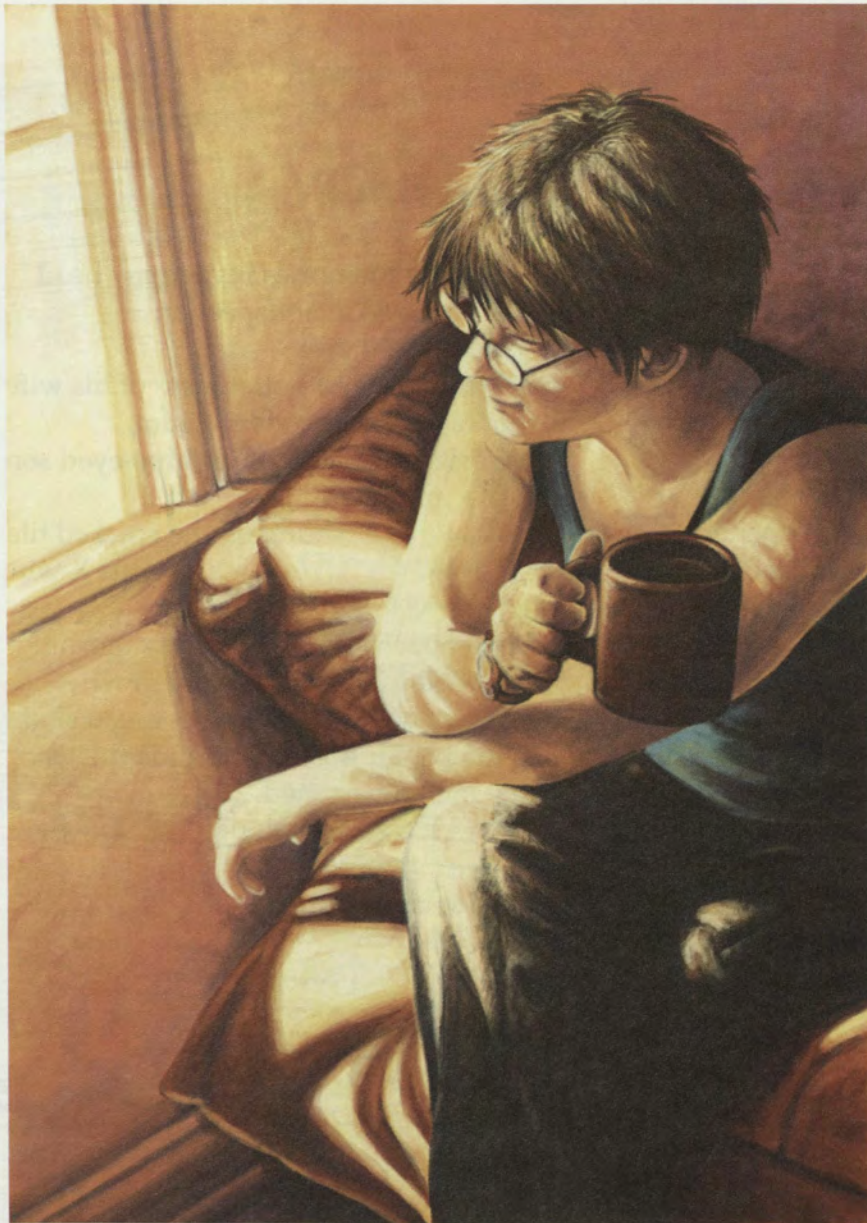
Antonia, Les contes d'Hoffmann

alone on the tar-black pond  
nothing  
but smoldering dust  
floating on the insistent light  
encompassed by iron papers  
a world in its gravitational pull  
brushing my hand across the staff  
mesmerized  
to live without melodious existence?  
she breathes no more  
I breathe ever  
expiring for the public  
an exhibitionist  
sugary release



Ronni Moore

Tomboy



Beth Zyglowicz

## Sunshine and Earl Gray

Kevin Burgun

## The Death of Scooter

He would have preferred to die  
piloting an X-wing;

we always teased him,  
crammed into the car on the way to the drive-in,  
that he was a Y-wing pilot at best.

We didn't trust him with the can opener,  
let alone four wing-tipped laser canons.  
2 a.m. ABC's and 123's with meatballs  
and once with his fingertip.

Playing the I remember game  
over: double ham, double pepperoni, extra sauce  
pizza—his favorite. We despised it;  
eaten that night only to honor his memory.

I remember  
handing out fliers for the big kegger—  
with our poetry professor's address.  
I remember  
the Saturday 7 a.m. phone call:  
I'm at the store, there's a ramen sale! How much do you want?!

Now new memories invade my head  
like Jawas on a landspeeder:

The tremble and hollowness of his wife's voice,  
the frayed sheet covering him,  
the bright laughter of his blue-eyed son  
too young  
sitting on the cracked tile floor  
making his X-wing fly.

God cooperated that late July morning;  
we stood in a circle looking down—  
He gave us rain and clouds and a slight chill  
to match our insides and hide the tears  
that men never shed.  
What I have never figured out is why  
later that day  
the sun come out.

Megan Broyles

## Waka for Walden, Colorado

I.

The waves of the lake  
lapped softly at the cougar's  
track, pulling it grain  
by grain down to the deep black.  
A silent conspiracy.

II.

Orange evening sun  
catches golden-brown fur slipping  
past green pine branches.  
The calf strays from its mother,  
death pads across dry needles.

III.

The bones of the moose  
carcass glinted in the sun.  
Skin remained tented  
between pelvis and shoulder,  
the gut hollowed by the cat.



Cameron Frazer

## Dry Sun



Jiang Wenting

Learn Knowledge

Kevin Burgun

## A Passion for Pomegranates

It has been six weeks  
since the last fruit withered on the vine.  
It will be six weeks  
until the juice trickles down my chin again.

I have been laying fallow  
allowing the blue light of the TV  
to nourish me as blinds are drawn  
against the sun and all its harshness.

There are two hundred thirty-six and a half bricks  
in my fireplace. I am certain.  
I counted them every night this week.  
Thursday's count was different, but only by one,  
most likely a result of a momentary distraction  
caused by a small piece of dust, captured in the light.  
Perhaps I should move, or stand  
or dust.

On Tuesday of this week I ventured outside  
once making sure the sky was menacing and rumbly.  
As I stood on the corner, waiting for the crossing light,  
I looked to my right and wondered if the rain  
would wash the huddled masses of men away,  
down a drain somewhere, out of sight—like blinds.

This morning I went through the mail  
and discarded it all.  
Including the pledge reminder from public radio

the result of three day withdrawal from them,  
hoping to get a fix  
from anything, anyone, anywhere.

Upon examination of my life  
it seems that I only have one passion;  
a passion for pomegranates.  
And they are not in season.



Andrew Polley

## It Is Untreatable, and the Cancer is Spreading Fast

December 22nd. The Monday before Christmas.

Our water pipes freeze in the house we rent from my grandparents.

I go to work with bed head, chewing gum crushed between my sweater-covered teeth,

hoping the holiday shoppers are too frazzled to notice I didn't shower

or shave. I call my 82-year-old grandfather on my break, Bing Crosby Muzak

shoved in the silence between rings. I feel guilty and inadequate, but it is his house after all.

We arrange a time to meet with the plumbers. He is waiting in his

Lincoln Town Car when I get there. He slips on the icy driveway, just catches himself. I wince.

He built a successful trucking company from scratch, and sits in my recliner like he's riding a Freightliner down Route 66. It could be 1964 again.

His memory is the sun slipping slowly into the horizon, so now would be a good time to ask if I ever want to learn anything about the way beyond, before I was born .

He was an Army man in the Second World War. His job was strictly funeral detail, pulling bodies out of mass graves. My mother was named after his Italian whore.

Jiang Wenting

## Bless New Year





Beth Zyglowicz

# Jinja

Andrew Polley

## Surviving the Walk from My Car to My Classroom

The crunch-ride of my boot sole on snow  
as my car door is slammed shut  
and then silence.

It is not the silence of the coffinrowinggrave, or that  
of mountain peak riding high  
along the arctic blue horizon.

It is the hush  
of muffled mufflers  
and barely hissing  
tires that usher me to the doorway  
of a snow-cloaked campus building.

Warmth welcomes the closing of the door behind me  
and I start down the stairs  
leaving puddles behind me,  
squeaks echoing from my boots down the corridor.  
In the folds of my coat and the fringe of my scarf, I am  
carrying the load of Winter, the weight  
of silence, the burden  
of triumph.

| Best of Poetry |

## Saturday Morning, or I've Been Working on This Poem for Three Hours

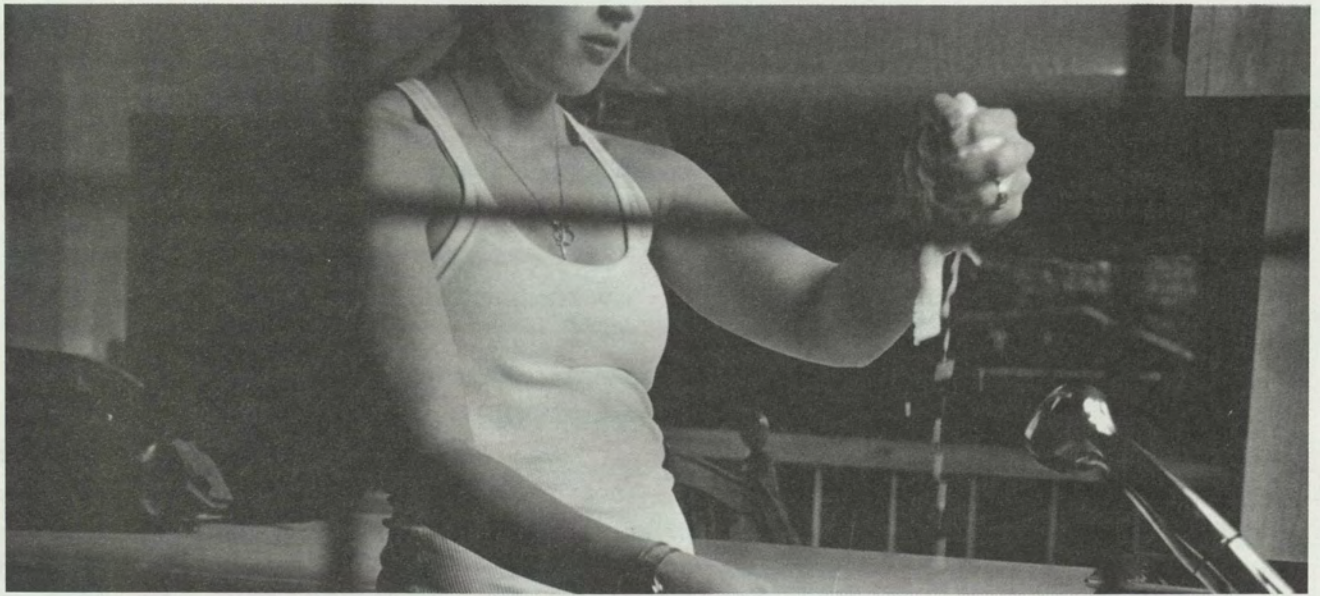
In the time it takes me  
to write a single poem for my daughter,  
she has created six drawings of our family.  
They are complete with the house we are yet to have,  
the pets we are yet to care for,  
brothers and sisters she desperately wants,  
and a rainbow in every picture.

She reminds me, daily,  
that the only things it takes to create perfection  
are wax crayons  
and cheap watercolor paints.



Cameron Frazer

Amore



Aaron Pierce

## Unappreciated

Laura Ketterer

## Shark Fin Soup

When I first met his parents we had lived together for two months and dated for four. I had no idea what was going on. His fumu didn't speak much English, and I had only taken an introductory course at SFU. After four months I could only produce phrases such as "nice to meet you," "where is the bathroom?" and "that is delicious." But it didn't hurt to have a human dictionary at home.

They decided to take me to a restaurant in Chinatown. It was his parents' favorite place, but I couldn't read the name. A framed newspaper clipping on the wall by the entrance read "Rachael Ray Approves of the Oriental Pearl Restaurant." His parents noticed that I was reading the article. They studied me for a moment.

"Have you heard of Rachael Ray?" they asked.

"Yes," I said and nodded. This seemed to please them, and they smiled at me. Rachael Ray is becoming more and more like Oprah. I hate Oprah.

His parents looked at me and spoke rapidly in Mandarin without facial expressions. I shifted my weight and glanced down. His mom was wearing green flats with an intricate gold pattern stitched onto them. They were the same type of shoes that I saw on several stands that we had passed walking to the restaurant. Three pairs for ten dollars.

I could only pick out a few words in the conversation. I noticed an old couple shuffling down the street holding hands, and I smiled. I hope that Da Wei and I are like that some day.



The night was overcast, and it started to sprinkle, so his father quickly ushered us under the restaurant's awning.

I had only heard a few things about Da Wei's parents since we started dating. He didn't seem to be very close to them, but he always remained respectful. His parents had lived in San Francisco for twenty-five years. His mother had been eight months pregnant when their ship docked at Angel Island. They moved in with relatives in Chinatown, and Da Wei was born seven days after they arrived.

From the way he talked about them, life had been tough. He was constantly scrutinized for his grades and forced to succeed in everything his parents thought would get him into a good college. He could play the violin like a pro, but he hated it. He was forced to practice for hours each night from the time he was five until he turned eighteen and went away to college.

After we were seated, the waiter took our drink orders and handed us our menus. The menu was in English, but I wanted to try something that would impress his family, so I let Da Wei order for me. He ordered in Chinese and assured me I would love it—without telling me what it was. After his parents ordered, he raised an eyebrow and smiled.

**“I glanced at the menu and widened my eyes. It cost forty dollars a bowl!”**

He leaned over and said, “They ordered shark fin soup.”

I glanced at the menu and widened my eyes. It cost forty dollars a bowl!

“It's a sign of respect for you,” he said. He patted my hand under the table.

How can I decline the soup without offending his parents? The sharks are finned and tossed back into the ocean to drown. I wish it wasn't too late to say I'm a vegetarian, but I heard Da Wei order rou, and that means meat. His parents are very old-fashioned. That's why we haven't told them we're living together. Da Wei said they will disown him.

After a few of minutes labored speech, the soup came. The waiter placed the bowl in front of me. It smelled fishy, like the shark had been dead a week before they decided to boil it and put it in a soup. I tried my hardest not to cringe. His parents looked at me with hopeful eyes, and I smiled back at them. I lifted my ceramic white spoon and scooped some broth up to my lips. It tasted like ammonia mixed with chicken broth. Then I scooped up a piece of waxy shark meat. It took me about five minutes to chew the meat and swallow the broth. I placed my spoon on the table and smiled at his parents.

“Hen hao he,” I said and forced a tight-lipped smile.

My stomach rumbled at my lie. I doubt Rachael Ray will have that as her snack of the day.

They replied, “Dan ran shi hen hao he.”

I thanked them. I reached to take another

Beth Zyglowicz

## Matcha



taste, but Da Wei grabbed the bowl from me to try it himself. He told his parents that it also tasted excellent and then passed the bowl to them. We shared a tacit sigh, and they finished the soup while we waited for our meals. His parents would ask a question, and then he would translate it into English. I would reply, and he would have to translate my answer into Chinese. I felt bad that I couldn't speak more Chinese, but he just smiled at me and mouthed it's okay.

We left the restaurant and decided to do some shopping. His parents wanted to take me to the oldest bakery in Chinatown to buy moon cakes for the fall festival. I wanted to buy almond cookies.

Da Wei had taken me here on one of our first dates and bought us some. That night we strolled down to the pier, holding hands and talking. I learned that he had a sister who passed away when he was seven. She was four. A cold turned into pneumonia overnight. By the time she got to the hospital she was in such bad shape that the doctors didn't think she would make it through the night. She went into a coma and never opened her eyes again. I saw tears well up in his eyes, and he looked towards the ocean. I couldn't say anything, so I squeezed his hand. When he kissed me that night it tasted like sweetened almonds and salty tears. We haven't talked about her since that day.

The outside of the bakery was run down. The pink awning was ripped and faded. An unfamiliar Chinese character had been spray

painted on it in black. He took my hand and pulled me into the shop. There was only one table in the far corner. His mother rattled off a few phrases, and the shopkeeper handed her a brown sack heavy with pastries. Da Wei ordered some almond cookies for me, and we left the shop.

On the street, his mother handed each of us our own yue bing to eat as we continued to admire the colorful window displays and two-for-one T-shirts that said I ♥ San Francisco. His parents decided to take the trolley home.

"Wo renshi ni hen gaoxing," I said.

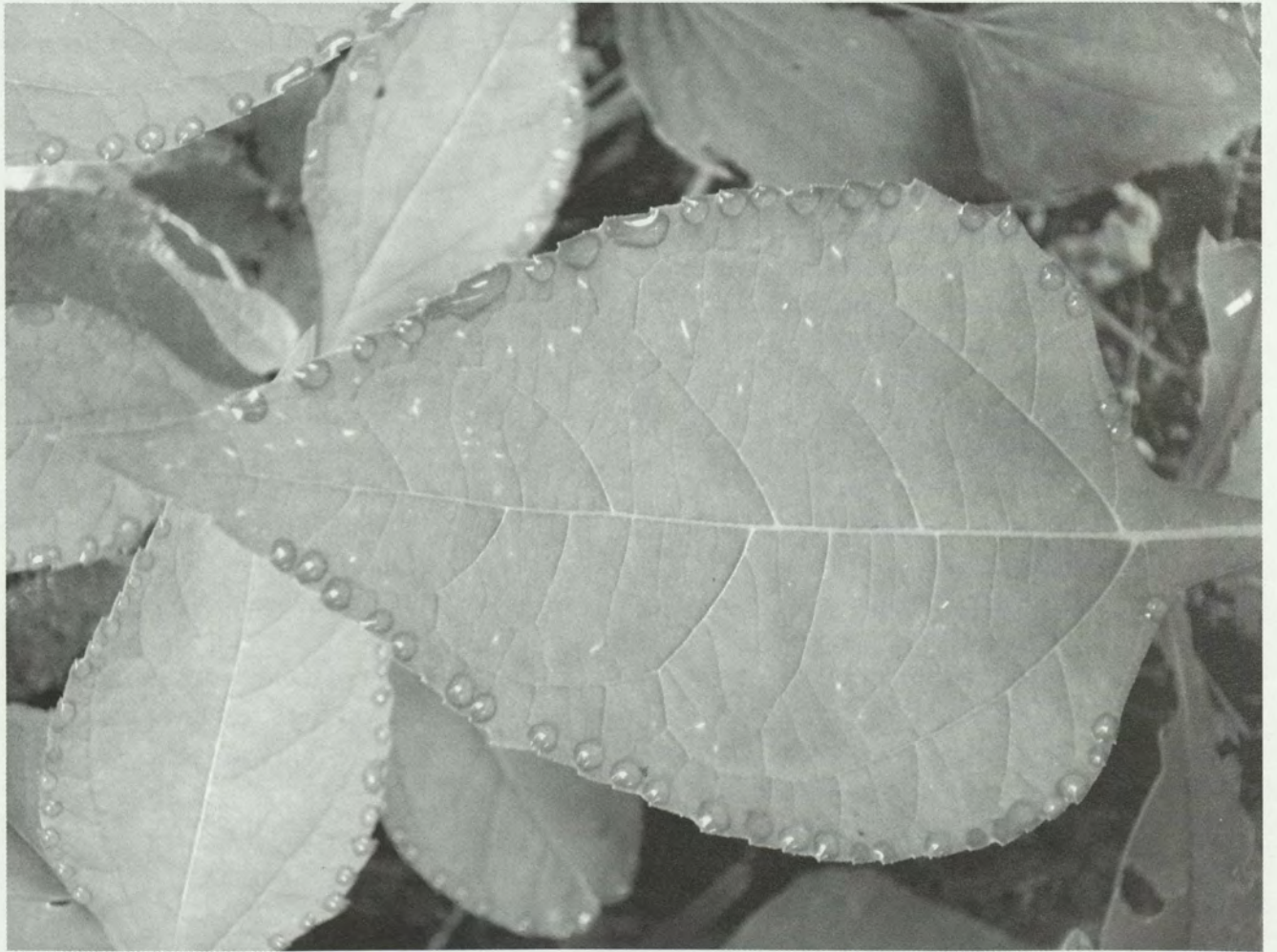
They nodded and said goodbye.

After they left, he turned to me and said, "Wo ai ni."

At first I didn't understand. "I something you," I said.

He pulled me close and said, "Ai means love."

Da Wei grabbed my hand and gave it a kiss. We strolled down the street lined with red lanterns.



Julie Wilson

## Leaves

Chad Redden

## Trash Burning Elegy

The rod had once held up the clothesline  
Granddaddy pressed its end into the barrel  
Got to squash it down  
    Make sure nothings living in there  
The old oil barrel had lost most of its paint  
Fire wore it to rust and was thin as cornhusk  
A sliver of paper plate fell out a crack  
He pressed the rod down into the trash again  
Tell you once I didn't check  
    The damn cat was in there  
When I lit the thing  
    the whole barrel shook and fell over  
Damn cat ran out screaming  
    just screaming  
I couldn't put the fire out fast enough  
    to catch the cat  
Don't know where it ended up  
    Hand me that jug of fuel  
He pulled out the rod, dropped it behind his feet  
Ash and brown spotted lettuce stuck to the end  
Then he poured gasoline from a plastic milk gallon  
so generously it dribbled out holes in the barrel  
Stand back now or you'd end up like that cat  
    screaming and screaming  
Your back on fire  
    tail lit like a wick

## Morgan Street—1989

A cousin of the neighbors  
had discovered their bodies.  
After reading details in the paper  
Father threw out our televisions,  
even the broken one in the garage.

We went to church that Sunday.  
I cannot remember the last time  
we went to church. That afternoon  
we went to a neighborhood cookout.

Like us, no one recognized  
the sound of gunshots, or  
no one had been home that night.  
Maybe they had karate lessons,  
or some other practice.

I followed father and joined  
the other men who gathered  
around the grill and talked  
of property values.

Who would mow their yard?  
Who would deal with the dog?  
Who would talk to the paper boy  
when he came to collect?

## Cabinets

A cabinet is awarded  
to each of us at birth  
and placed where we  
need them, mine within  
my chest. Skin opened,  
then sealed with common  
household appliances. Yours  
above the bed where we laid.  
Streetlight from the window  
shining on my scars for you to finger.  
They're wonderful, you told me.  
Inspired, you took down  
your cabinet. With my help,  
we made it your new belly.  
You began to favor pants  
with elastic waistbands.  
I worried when you spoke  
of the connection you had  
to what was inside. When  
it began moving, you pulled  
my head down to listen.  
I heard hums and water.  
I rose and tapped my cabinet.  
I had the perfect name for a child,  
but first we needed to find a knife.



Julie Wilson

## Greene Mountain Station



## Behind the Texarkana County Jail

Our train stops  
for a hoist crane  
and county deputies  
on the tracks maneuvering  
fifteen-foot wooden poles  
pushing a harness  
around a headless palomino  
tangled up in razor wire  
and electrified fence  
surrounding the yard  
where an overpopulation  
of inmates sleep outside  
in surplus medical tents  
where the basketball courts  
should be. They stand and joke  
shirtless at how the fence  
is cooking tonight's dinner  
and while they rub their bellies  
the remainder of the horse  
tries to kick itself loose.

# | Best of Fiction |

Joyce Lee

## Dirty Glamour

Spittle flew from Mother's lips. Her eyes blazed red and filled with tears. She picked up the statue of Guan Yin from the small table and hurled it at me. I closed my eyes, lowered my head, and tucked my limbs closer to my body. The statue struck the wall behind me, separating the tranquil head from the robed body poised on a lotus. Its serene smile rolled next to my foot. Biao zi. Bitch. Whore. She charged towards me, screeching with claws intent on ripping at my hair. Father caught her by her wrist and she howled curses at him to let her go. She even turned her fists to him. He held her like a constant stone, refusing to be worn away by the blows she rained down.

I wished I could make the words fly back into my throat. With one small sentence I destroyed my small and content world and stepped into a tumultuous wasteland. The perfect equilibrium of my separate lives collapsed. I wished my past actions could be changed.

●

Glance at your open datebook before you put on that black dress. The name scrawled in the day will confirm the client. He is forty-six years old and unmarried. Rather than a relationship that would potentially lead to marriage, he told you on the Internet that he was only looking for entertainment. He is old. He is boring, but you will hang on every word he will have to slither out of his thin lips. You might even take off that black dress. For him, you will endure everything for each HK\$ he waved in front of you. Slip

into the 941HK\$ dress and stand in front of the bathroom mirror, determined that your fifteen-year-old cleavage isn't too exposed. Open your quilted makeup pouch and fish out Lancôme, Estée Lauder, and Shiseido. You won't remember the days when you lusted after each company. Glide Pink Parfait across your lips and powder Splendid Sapphire on your eyelids. Brush and contort your hair with a hot curler until satisfaction warms your heart. Lift sparkling earrings after another to your cheek and reject each one until a silver chandelier fits your mood.

Dusk will paint the smoggy sky a bland dark. It will bring a chill cool enough for you to wear a jacket, the one with a brand tag on the sleeve you haven't bothered to remove. Walk three blocks towards the street you asked the taxi to pick you up at and wait, arms crossed. Know that the pavement and the old vendors oppose your youthful, wealthy façade. Think about the girl on the news who was chopped to pieces and flushed down a toilet by that crazy man. She was doing the same thing you were, only she was a year older. Judge her for her lack of caution. She went to the man's apartment. Such a stupid thing to do. No smart girl would do something like that. What a shame. Get into the taxi that will arrive minutes after your thoughts. Tell the driver the name of the restaurant. The old Chinese driver listens to prevent conversation. When you reach your destination, thank the man and pay him.

I wasn't ungrateful for the job. ZhenYu always had nice things, and at times I was jealous

**“No smart girl would do something like that.”**

of her, just like the other girls were. We had been to her apartment many times to study; she couldn't afford those things. My family wasn't necessarily writhing in poverty, but we weren't wealthy. I saw the products in magazines, shiny Louis Vuitton purses and Prada heels. They always sparkled so bright in the glossy pages it hurt to want them so badly. When I asked ZhenYu where she had gotten such things, she told me that she had a job where she met older men for money. She showed me the website, told me how much the average pay was, and what to expect on dates. Sometimes we went on double dates with our clients. A month later, she pulled away, telling me to ditch the lifestyle or see how it would bring me to ruins. She tried to get me to see a social worker, but I laughed her off and told her that it was easy money, and I could quit whenever I wanted. I just wanted to be like everyone else. I wanted to be happy and beautiful. If the latest heels made me pretty, I would pay for them. It was always worth the price.

Sit at the reserved table and greet your client. The small talk will quickly dissolve into a nuisance. Wet your fingers with the sweat from the glass of ice water. The cold will draw attention away from the sweaty paw on your

pale hand. Look back into his eyes, but not too deep out of disgust and fear, and remind yourself to crinkle your eyes when you smile. Mimic interest as the balding man complains about his desk job. Slide a stray lock of your black hair behind your ear, drawing attention to your exposed wrist and neck. Notice how his eyes shine with a sloppy hunger. Mask your revulsion with a smile again. This will be worth the 2715HK\$ you will obtain by the end of the long night. Dinner will be uneventful, and the Japanese fusion cuisine will be so bland you will scarcely remember what went down your throat.

He will open the door to the guest house. The lights he will turn on will flicker until they build up into clear light. He will take off his jacket and drape it over the chair or hang it neatly in the closet. As he sits on the bed, he will try to make small talk, ask how many times you had done this, why you had chosen to turn to this, but give him answers so vague, they say nothing at all and discourage him from asking more questions. Crawl up onto the bed, unbuckle his belt, zip down his pants, and pull down his underwear. By the time you are ready to place your lips over his cock, he will stop you. He will ask for you to have sex instead. Refuse, because that was not part of the deal that you had made. Know that you refuse because you had promised yourself that you would stop having straight sex and limit dates to blowjobs. He will offer 1300HK\$ more for sex and demand it without a condom. Calculate what you could spend

that money on as greed shines in your eyes. It is not as easy to hide that reptilian desire. It will pull on you so hard that you cannot resist anymore. Decline. How difficult it is to say such a small word. It will stick in your mind and stay there. Give in, and he will envelope you like a hairless animal. He will grab too rough, tug too hard, and bite too viciously. Feel the aches your body complains the next day. Switch to the top position because his weight was smothering you. See how he enjoys it as he continues to use you. To him, you are nothing but a pretty doll. He will grab you tight and make the noise that would keep others awake. Do the same, even if it isn't true. Sound like you mean it.

•

The expected date of my period passed. I waited for that crimson to begin flowing so I could forget it until the next month. It never came. I felt fear. In concealed panic, I went to buy a pregnancy test. Along with it, I bought sanitary napkins and a fashion magazine to make the grocery bag less empty. Worry nauseated my intestines as I sat on the cold white seat and reread the directions. I almost threw away the test, trying to convince myself that nothing was different; that my lack of red mess was due to stress. But I didn't. I took the test and sat, the air stuck heavy in my lungs, my underwear and pants at my ankles. Two lines. I was pregnant. I would have given back my Louis Vuitton bags to make it go away. I hid my face behind my hand. Concealing weight gain after an abortion was



Julie Wilson

## Morning Fog in Gatlinburg

not an option. I knew I would have to tell them. I would rather die than tell them. I turned on the shower faucet as I formulated the words I would say, and, as I stepped into the warm water, I rehearsed and edited my pleas.

The church held few and all were silent. I glanced at my mother beside me in the pew. Her eyes were closed, hands clasped in prayer. I looked to the crucifix, Jesus frozen in glossy wood, hanging in front of the stained-glass window. I looked back down out of shame. His eyes seemed to weep for the things I had done out of nonchalance and greed. I had pushed aside my conscience to obtain what I had longed for so persistently. My material pursuit was so easily funded, it was difficult to pull away like ZhenYu. It was not prostitution. It was a job. I had the power to turn men away. I could quit whenever I wanted. Father slid next to me on the bench, and I nearly jumped. He had invaded my thoughts, and I held a brief illogical suspicion that he might have overheard my silent reflections. He whispered, asking me to tell Mother that he was back from the temple and the car was right outside. I told him that we would be no longer than five minutes. When we left, I felt the itching sweat on my palms as I planned.

At home, five minutes passed before I asked them to sit down. I sat facing them, a coffee table separating us. Worry plagued their faces, and I imagined them wishing for good news about my exams. When I thought I was brave enough to tell them, the words nearly choked me. All my

“The words slipped through my lips like a bitter syrup.”

rehearsals were fruitless. I felt my brow furrow, and I saw dread seep into their dark eyes. I couldn't contain it anymore. The words slipped through my lips. Mother's face went white. Father asked me how this happened. I told a story they never should have heard. My words repulsed them. Mother was already crying, wringing her pale hands. Father looked to the floor, unable to look at his broken daughter. The moment I finished my tale, a heavy silence filled the room like incense.

As if time had returned to replace the silence, Mother screamed, and a torrent of harsh Mandarin flew out and struck me. Spittle flew from her lips. She closed her red eyes against me, but opened them again, deciding that she could not hide from my situation. From a young age, I became acquainted with this sting of guilt from my mother. She screamed at my father—how could they not have seen, this was their fault for being failures as parents. He remained silent. Mother snatched a statue of Guan Yin from the table and threw it at me. I drew myself in, hoping her aim would be as bad as I imagined. The statue struck the wall behind me, a tranquil, severed head rolled next to my foot. Biao zi. Bitch. Whore. She stormed toward me with loose fists. Father caught her by her wrist, and she howled like a possessed cat, demanding her

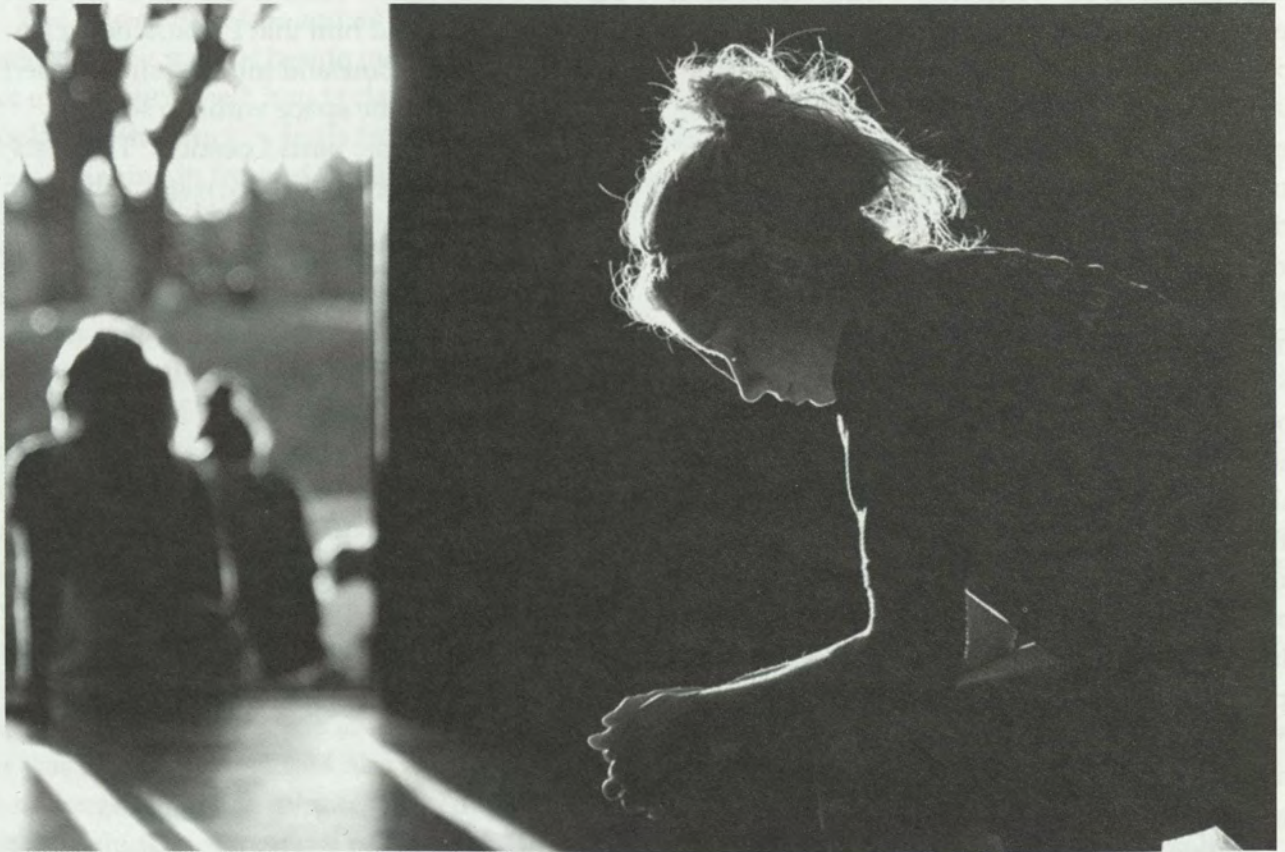
freedom. But he held onto her, asking her to be quiet because the neighbors will complain.

Mother wrenched away from him and beat upon her breast. She wailed to Mary, Jesus, the saints on the floor. When they would not answer her, she turned her attention back to me. She condemned me, her hand clenched in a terrible claw. Leave the house. My heart withered and began to acquaint itself with a cold known only by winter. I sent her my plea in a golden-winged letter. She took it and consumed it with fire. Get out of the house. I won't have a biao zi for a daughter. Father placed a hand on her shoulder and spoke to her calmly. He asked her to reconsider and think of their only child, but she ignored him and jerked free. With my heart thoroughly pierced, I was able to let my tears fall. I had been so afraid, I had forgotten to cry. The tears would not change her mind. She had turned her face away from me. I trudged to my room and looked at my belongings through blurry eyes. Taking the largest bag, I filled it up with the things I had worked for, now so worthless to me. In the end, I filled three bags and left nothing behind. They would hardly notice that they once had a daughter.

Mother had retreated into her bedroom and was praying very loudly. I knew the neighbors would complain. I walked out of my home and looked down the hall, not realizing how empty it was until I heard the echo of the door closing shut forever. Only my tears and I occupied the dimly lit hall.

The door opened again, and my father called my name. He gave me an envelope of money and told me to stay at a nearby motel. My father planned to change my mother's mind and to have me back home. He told me not to have an abortion, and I told him that I would never do that. We stood a thousand miles of silent desert apart, but closed the space within a second. His embrace was the oasis I needed. The oasis was no longer bitter with salty water. I began a solitary journey down the hall to the stairwell. Even when I reached the stairwell, he was still standing there with the door open, watching after me.

•



Ronni Moore

Kelsey



# | Best of Nonfiction |

Barbara Bennett

## Horologe

hor • o • loge \hór-ə-lōj,  
n: a time-keeping device

Inspired by a collection of Timex wristwatches,  
and by the woman who wore them



*Timex watches achieved icon status in mid-twentieth-century America thanks to their affordability and clever advertising. Sports greats like baseball's Mickey Mantle, boxer Rocky Marciano, and Olympic figure skater Barbara Ann Scott demonstrated the brand's durability and shock resistance in a series of "torture tests." The watches emerged triumphant, prompting astonished newscaster John Cameron Swayze to declare the company's famous slogan, "Timex. It takes a licking and keeps on ticking."*

**Timex #1** Dial: white, raised-chrome  
Arabic numerals  
Movement: mechanical  
Hands stopped: 1:09 a.m.

*Dial: the face of a timepiece; graduated to show the hours*

By the summer of '64, I was tired down deep in my bones from raising four kids in a rented house five miles outside of town. I wanted better than that for them — for me — so I signed up for nurse's aide training at the hospital. For six weeks on the day shift, the RNs taught me the basics of patient care. I changed beds, gave baths, served meals, checked vital signs.

By the end of training, I'd found us a house in town. I started work full time on the third shift where I learned to do it all for two-something-an-hour. I typed up admissions, tracked down missing patients, mopped the delivery room, cleaned the instruments, and doled out the meds. I was a fast learner, a hard worker, and pretty soon I could do my own chores and the nurses' too. Let's say they got as much out of me as they could. We always needed extra money at home, so I volunteered to work weekends and holidays for double and triple pay. I filled in whenever the staff was shorthanded.

Seventeen years I worked night shift. Felt more like thirty-seven. I'd catch a few hours sleep in the morning while the kids were at school, a few more after supper. I left my husband in charge of overseeing homework and putting our kids to bed. Sometimes I'd come downstairs at 10:30 to find him snoring in front of the television, the kids dozing on the floor. But the sleep I lost, the family time I missed, well I paid that price rather than leave my children with babysitters or by themselves. They were never home alone. Not ever.

**Timex #2** Dial: white, black Arabic numerals  
Movement: quartz  
Hands stopped: 10:46 p.m.

*Balance wheel: a wheel that regulates the rate of movement in a machine; especially a wheel oscillating against the hairspring of a timepiece to regulate its beat*

Countless nights she made that drive from home to hospital, the rhythmic strobe of streetlights through the windshield rousing her from the chronic fog of never enough rest. It was hard for her to leave the quiet house where her husband and children dreamed, unaware of what she faced. Harder still to enter the artificially lit world of the 11:00 p.m. report; of crying babies to soothe and endless call-bells to answer; of the sudden blood of childbirth, the sallow skin and sour odors of the old, the dying; of every accident and illness that happened in between. In that nether space of city blocks that separated her days from her nights she found the strength to keep going, embraced the night-quiet that surrounded her, told her secrets to the slice of moon that had stolen some sky from the stars.

**Timex #3** Dial: gold, slim gold bars called "chapters" marking the hours, gold hands  
Movement: quartz  
Hands stopped: 7:25 a.m.

*Shock resistance: a watch's ability to withstand an impact equal to that of being dropped onto a wood floor from a height of 3 feet.*

During my teens, my mother often woke me when she came home from a night at the hospital. Pushing open my bedroom door with a loud “crack,” she’d startle me conscious then tell me a girl from my school had delivered a baby, or a woman from church had died from a stroke. One morning in 1968, she woke me to say Bobby Kennedy had been shot in the head. Thank goodness for days when she shared a funny story, or simply said “Rise and shine, lazy bones,” before she headed down the hall to her own bed to sleep, emptied of the night’s adrenaline.

I dreamed, like most teenage girls, of dating the quarterback, hanging with the popular crowd, sporting the latest fashions. In the reality of daylight, I kept my dreams small to prevent disappointment. I rarely dated or went to parties, and wore mostly home-sewn clothes. But in the fall of my senior year, I was nominated as one of nine candidates for Homecoming Queen. For a few improbable weeks I lived a fantasy I’d never foreseen.

Above the caption “One will reign...” a front page photo in the local paper framed nine smiling girls. I knew the crown would never sit on my curly head, but I rode the wave of excitement that carried us toward the big game nonetheless. On the night of the parade, I perched on the back of a GTO convertible,

smiling and waving like the other girls, as we headed through town to the bonfire and pep rally.

At halftime the following night, Randy Wise, a senior football player, escorted me across the fifty-yard line to center field. Standing there in the plaid wool suit Mom had sewn for me, I allowed myself a moment of hope. The corsage and ribbon streamers pinned to my jacket fluttered in the cold night air. “And the 1972 UCCHS Homecoming Queen is...” Not me. But we beat Southern Wells 70 – 0. And later, at the dance in the gym, the most popular boy in the senior class shimmied over to shout above the rock band’s racket, “You looked beautiful out there on the field tonight, Barb!” I danced every song with my friends ‘til midnight and went home to relive it all in my dreams.

On Saturday morning, the crack of the bedroom door yanked me from the depths of what had been a happy sleep. I sat bolt upright, breathless, waiting. In a voice both cool and clinical, with no hint of the bedside manner she practiced on her patients, Mom delivered the message of the day. “Your escort, Randy Wise, wrapped his car around a tree after the game last night,” she said. “They brought him into the ER. Dead on arrival.”

**Timex #4** Dial: white, black numerals,  
luminescent hour/minute hands,  
red second hand  
Movement: mechanical  
Hands stopped: 3:02 a.m.

*Hand: a rotating pointer on the face of a  
timepiece*

The hardest part of working nights had to be the quiet that came at mid-shift. We settled all the new moms into their rooms, then fed, burped, and diapered all the babies in the nursery. The surgical patients slept until four when we made the rounds and checked vital signs again. We fought sleep when work got slow by keeping our hands busy.

We crocheted layette sets, doll clothes, and toy animals. Some of us embroidered designs stamped on pillowcases or dresser scarves, others learned to decorate the borders of linen towels with Swedish huck weaving. We made those towels in every color, for every season of the year. Each of us taught the other women the crafts we knew. We traded favorite recipes and played euchre.

But whether we were halfway through a row of chain stitches or dealing a hand of cards, we had to be ready to drop everything if the ER bell rang. Any nurse or aide available would run

down that hall. We never knew what we'd find when we got there: a drunken teenager who'd fallen off someone's roof, a man having a heart attack, a woman in labor. We faced it together, looked after each other. It's just what we did.

**Timex #5** Dial: white, Indiglo feature,  
black Arabic numerals,  
gold second hand  
Movement: quartz  
Hands stopped: 4:24 a.m.

*Escapement: mechanical device that regulates  
the movement in a horologe*

We blamed it on the phases of the moon, the rise-and-fall of barometric pressure—some mysterious force of nature that brought pregnant women through the night entrance between eleven and seven at our thirty-five-bed hospital in Union City, Indiana. I wish I knew how many births I attended; how many soiled sheets I stripped from labor beds and delivery tables; or how many seconds ticked by while I waited for that first cry to tell me a baby was breathing. Numbers mean nothing now. It's the moments that stand out.

I remember the screaming Mexican woman who came in through the ER with "stomach pains." She didn't speak English, so her sister translated

for us. She swore to us that her sister couldn't be pregnant; she wasn't married. But I'd had enough practice to feel the contractions when I put my hands on her belly. The doctor lifted an eight-pound boy from her thighs in less than thirty minutes.

We all cried, relieved, when a diabetic woman who'd survived several stillbirths gave life to a healthy, full-term girl. But shock seized us three days later when that woman's worn-out body gave up and orphaned that new baby.

I wondered for years what happened to the brown-skinned, sandy-curled darling we called "Clementine," whose white mother left her behind. Six weeks we'd all fed her, fawned over her, wished we could take her home. Then one night I came to work and found she'd gone.

Once a woman was ready to push, the doctor played beat-the-clock. He'd rush to glove up, to catch a crowning head and guide tangled arms and legs through the tight passage between "unborn" and "newborn." One night, the doctor shouted, "Stop pushing!" But the woman bore down, and we saw her baby rocket into flight. His umbilical cord stretched to the limit, then tore, and that slippery child got a ride across the cold, tile floor. We anesthetized his mother, and before she came around, we checked that flying boy head to toe—not a bump, or scrape, or bruise was found.

**Timex #6** Dial: green, luminescent silver hands, Indiglo® night-light and date features  
Movement: quartz, water resistant to 50 meters  
Hands: 2:55 p.m. and counting

*Water resistance: the ability to withstand splashes of water. Terms such as "water resistant to 200 meters" indicate that the watch can be worn underwater to various depths.*

For five days, I'd followed my elderly mother from the ER to the Intensive Care Unit to the nursing home and back to the ER. When the doctors let me in to see her, she lay limp on the exam table, eyes closed, respirations at only four to six per minute. "Do you know who this is?" the nurse shouted at her, and pointed to me. Mom raised her sweaty head from the bed to stare at me. "Barbara," she said through the oxygen mask; then "I love you," as she sank back again. "I love you, too." Would it be the last time we'd say those words? She'd come too close to death so many times already. "Any idea how much pain medication she's had today?" the doctor asked me. "Not a clue." She'd been at the nursing home less than twenty-four hours. He exchanged looks with the nurse, who injected a syringe of clear fluid into the IV port in Mom's right arm. "That's Narcan," the doctor said. "We'll know pretty fast if she's been

overdosed." The narcotic antidote entered Mom's bloodstream. She stiffened up, lurched forward, her eyes wide. "O-h-h," she cried. "It stings! It stings!" She drew several deep, raspy breaths after that. The doctor's expression reflected smug self-satisfaction. "That'll buy us time to run a few tests," he said. Then he was gone, and the nurse with him. Only I sat with Mom, stroking her arm as she jerked and moaned. My sister was on the interstate somewhere between Columbus and Indianapolis, calling for updates.

The pattern of our ER visits was well-established. First we'd rush to get there, to sign all the paperwork, to agree, once again, to Mom's Do Not Resuscitate directive. Then we'd watch the staff insert IVs, draw blood, take Mom for CT scans or EKGs. And we'd wait—for lab results, for doctors to decide to admit her or to send her home. She hated the waiting and couldn't get comfortable on the stiff bed, thought for sure they'd forgotten about her. Sitting under the harsh fluorescent lights, my sister or I would remind Mom about the years she'd worked at the hospital. Didn't she remember how long it took to get things accomplished in the ER? But Mom had done everything in a hurry back then, at home and at work. She'd have been bustling around in her white uniform, doing the work of three women at once—not resting till she'd finished every chore. I couldn't imagine her padding around in the bright rubber clogs and patterned cotton scrubs that made the doctors and nurses at St. Vincent's hard to tell apart.

Three fifteen—it felt more like midnight in the windowless time warp of that cubicle. A phlebotomist pushed the privacy curtain aside and explained that he was there to collect an arterial blood gas specimen. "It's crucial that your mom doesn't move while I do this," he said as he inserted a long needle into her radial artery. Mom jerked from the pain, and blood ran down her wrist onto the sheet. My stomach turned. "You have to hold still!" he told her. Half out of her mind, she comprehended nothing. I grabbed her other hand and held it. "Squeeze my fingers as hard as you need to. It'll be over soon," I lied. Finally the guy withdrew the needle and taped a wad of gauze to Mom's wrist. "Let us know immediately if a bump comes up in that spot, all right?" When I didn't answer, he looked up at me. Hot tears spilled from my eyes, fell onto the paper-thin skin of my mother's bruised arm and hand where every accessible vein had been jabbed, tapped, and drained in the past five days. "You OK?" he asked. "Hell, no, I'm not OK," I said, "It's been a rough week." He gathered the paper wrappers, the syringe full of Mom's dark blood, and slipped back around the curtain. We waited.

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# Contributors



# Contributors

**Barbara Anne Bennett** will receive her B.A. in English in May, 2010 and hopes to work in publishing. She proudly served for five semesters as a senior editor of *genesis*. Previous publications: Fall '06, Spring '07 *genesis*; Fall '07 *Canvas*, IU Bloomington. Barbara thanks her instructors and classmates for their contributions to her development as a writer and editor.

**Lauren Bouchard** is currently a freshman studying psychology. In her free time, she enjoys reading and writing with a chai in hand. She is grateful for her wonderful friends and family as well as the opportunity to showcase her work.

**Megan Broyles** was a thirty-year-old English major who finally received her bachelor's degree in December of 2009. She started taking her poetry seriously a couple of years ago and is glad to see it finally pay off.

**Kevin J. Burgun** has studied poetry under Br. Tom Murphy, Jack Ridl and Mitchell Douglas. He is also a playwright whose work has recently been seen in IndyFringe.

**Rebecca Franklin** is a senior concentrating in creative writing. She is also working towards a minor in business and professional writing. Her goals after school are to find work in the web writing industry and to write fiction.

**Cameron Frazer** is in the CGT (Computer Graphic Technology) program and has done work for a few companies. Right now, he is working with Zing restaurant to produce a banner in front of their building—if the zoning goes through.

**Amy Elaine Hayes** has been cheated on, bewitched, stabbed, guillotined and later, died from consumption. She looks forward to bringing unknown operas to the public, by starting her own company, and teaching unsuspecting high school students to think for themselves.

**Anna Knabe** has always loved animals and art, especially in a very whimsical way. Her favorite pieces of art are the ones that have a romantic and classical feel to them.

**Joyce Lee** is a first-time contributor to *genesis*.



**Ronni Moore** is a first-time contributor to *genesis*.

**Aaron Pierce** was exploring the idea of running for president in the last issue of *genesis*. After putting some thought into it, Aaron would like to announce his 2024 presidential campaign. If elected, he would expand NASA's manned exploration of space and increase educational funding. Campaign buttons will be colorful.

**Andrew Polley** is a secondary English education major. He is humbled to be included with the amazing collection of writers and artists in *genesis*. He would like to sincerely thank the editors for their long hours in putting together this literary journal.

**Laura Ketterer** is a senior majoring in creative writing and minoring in film studies.

**Chad Redden's** work has appeared in analog and digital publications such as *Angelic Dynamo*, *Biannicle*, *SixSentences*, *Fiore*, and *Escape into Life*.

**Andrew Scott** is currently a freshman English education major. His first collection of poetry, "Hymns of the Vagabond," is due out in late spring of 2010. He is also a staff writer for HEAVEmedia.com.

**Sarah Siddiqui** was born in India, but grew up in Indiana for most of her life. She is studying to become a special education teacher, but also plans on pursuing a career in animal welfare.

**Jiang Wenting** grew up in Eastern China and came to America in the spring of 2009. Her major is marketing, but she loves photography.

**Julie Wilson** an English major and will graduate in 2011, at which time she hopes to enter graduate school and go on to teach writing at the college level. She has hiked 2,200 miles on the Appalachian Trail, and will complete it in 2011.

**Beth Zyglowicz** is in her final year at the Herron School of Art. She plans to get her degree in illustration in May, and then work on freelance illustrations and children's books. More of her work can be seen at yumekistudios.com

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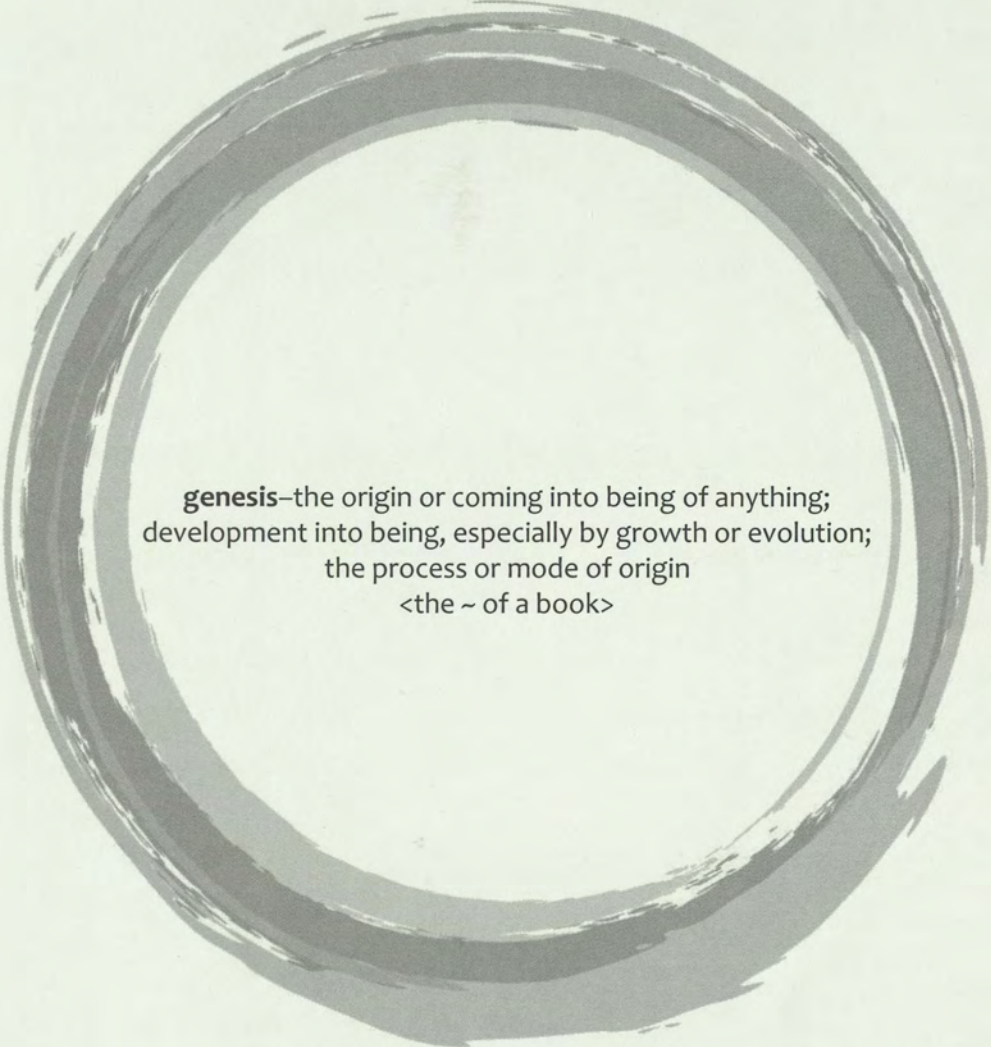
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**genesis**—the origin or coming into being of anything;  
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# genesis



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