

Volume VI ~ April 2013

# TORRID LITERATURE JOURNAL

# Erosion



**SPECIAL INTERVIEW:** WALTER "WALLY B." JENNINGS

**FEATURED POETS:** JAMES SUTTON | KAYLA PUMPHREY | AND MANY MORE!

**MUST READ FICTION:** "WHO? WHAT? WHY?" BY LELA MARIE DE LA GARZA

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## Torrid Literature Journal

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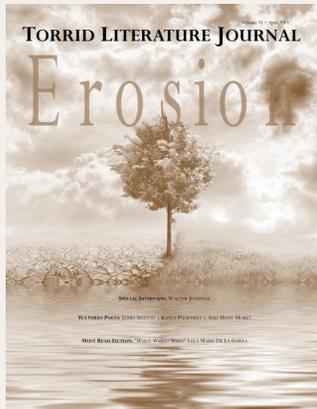
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# FROM THE EDITORS

## National Poetry Month

The release of our sixth volume falls on one of our most favorite times of the year: National Poetry Month. What better way is there to celebrate this holiday than by taking a walk through our literary museum where we have prepared a beautiful collection of artifacts for your viewing pleasure? We even have a special interview that will leave you motivated and inspired. Motivated to dive in and take part in the literary erosion that is happening everywhere.

Writing is a culture and a natural process. A process where putting pen to paper and fingers to keyboard is the same as the process of erosion. When we write and share our poems and stories we are transporting and depositing our experiences, dreams, hopes, and even rants, into the hearts of our readers. We are compelled by this need to recreate a realistic version of what we saw with our artistic third eye.

With that being said, our team at TL Publishing Group went on an excavation, a mission to unearth the pieces that have been spread around the world. We have collected these 'deposits' and have organized them into the literary museum that lays out before you now.

Inside this issue, we share with our readers the type of moves the Tampa community is making to support the growing spoken word scene. This is followed by a beautiful array of poetry and fiction material submitted by new and returning writers.

Since launching the *Torrid Literature Journal* over a year ago, several projects have descended from this publication. A month ago today, we kicked off our 2nd Annual Romancing the Craft of Poetry and Fiction Contest. Last year our contest was a success as we received over 100 submissions. This year we are looking for that number to grow as we plan to give away over \$200 in cash prizes. If you have not submitted your original work already, make sure you visit our website and do so today.

Our *Torridian Hall of Fame* is another exciting project that has our focus. Last year we revealed our desire to recognize a few of the writers we have published in past issues of the *Torrid Literature Journal*, Volumes I-IV to be exact. We created a Hall of Fame as a way to recognize the exceptional skills our writers displayed in putting together a well-crafted piece of literature. Then we asked you, our readers, to cast your vote based on our nominees. We asked and you voted. In February, we closed our online voting process with almost 300 votes. We are now in the process of calculating those votes and many of the numbers were very close. Inside our next issue, we will announce the official 2012 writers that will be inducted into our *Torridian Hall of Fame*. We look forward to continuing this new annual tradition in the years to come.

The excitement does not end there. Let us not forget this upcoming August we will release our first anthology of poetry called "Enter the Gateway". We are very excited about the release of this book as it adds another platform for the voice of our writers to be heard. This book also introduces our *Gateway Literature* line of paperback books that will provide readers with inspirational literature for contemporary life.

In addition to the aforementioned projects scheduled for this year, we also have several open mic events planned. Our open mic events are always family friendly as we provide our audience with a variety of performers, both experienced and emerging artists. In the past, singers, musicians, poets, spoken word artists, and storytellers have graced our stage with their talent. If you live in or near Tampa, Florida, we invite you and your whole family to come out and check out one of our events. We are very excited to have a special performer as our featured poet of the evening. If you are unable to attend our event, be sure to follow our Facebook fan page for photos and video clips that will be posted throughout the evening.

Moving forward, bear in mind there has never been a better time grab hold of your muse and get to writing then during the month of April. During these thirty days, we encourage you to support National Poetry Month. Try a new poetry format, attend a poetry reading or an open mic event, participate in a book signing, or purchase a subscription to a literary magazine. However you chose to support this valuable and timeless art, allow yourself to expand and be open to new possibilities. Allow this period to be a transformation point as you strive to grow fearlessly in your art, realizing the bigger picture. That you are contributing to the overall mission of ensuring poetry remains an integral part of society.

Also, keep in mind there are other literary events taking place during the month of April. The Office of Letters and Light (the creators of National Novel Writing Month) are sponsoring Camp NaNoWriMo and the Script Frenzy challenge. If you participated in NaNoWriMo this past November and you are looking for another chance to earn a badge, then these challenges are for you. This is the perfect opportunity to work on that stage play or novel idea you have been tossing around in your head for a while now.

In view of this exciting period that awaits us, I implore all of you to continue writing, journaling, and sharing. Be inspired and strive to touch and inspire others as you let erosion have its effect over you. Allow your work, your message embedded in your creativity to depart from you and make a home in the hearts of others who are ready to listen. People who are ready to receive the fuel - that added push they need to continue in their day-to-day journey in life. You have this talent for a reason, a specific purpose. Believe in your craft. Believe in yourself.

Sincerely,

*Alice Saunders*

Follow me on Twitter:  
@lyricaltempest

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A panel of open mic hosts from around the Tampa Bay area come together to discuss spoken word and the community.

# ONE COMMUNITY ONE VOICE

By Alice Saunders

One person can do a good thing. However, when you bring together several people or several groups, the ripple effect that occurs when these groups come together is amplified, especially when these groups agree as one. The effect is greater because people realize they are operating as part of a whole. Just as a choir consists of several singers, but the end result is one collective voice. This understanding works both ways though. Consider this: each part of the human body is vital. If you take away a bone or an organ, the entire being will no longer survive or function at its potential. Everything is apart of everything. You need one part in order for the whole system to work effectively. This is how a culture collectively strives and progresses. This was the underlying theme at the last Tampa Bay Poetry Alliance meeting.

When it comes to the arts culture in terms of spoken word and open mic events, Tampa is new to this scene. However, thanks to numerous pioneers who sacrificed their time and service to set up the foundation, the shape and scope of the poetry scene has, and still is expanding along with the arts culture as a whole. What started as only a handful of groups in Tampa has now increased to over ten open mic venues spread throughout the community with several more venues expected to make their debut and/or re-launch this year. This means about every day of the week, a venue is having open mic night.

The TBPA meeting, which was hosted by Walter “Wally B.” Jennings was set up as an open panel discussion with the focus divided between the open mic venues available to artists, the current condition of the poetry scene in Tampa, and the resources available to artists looking to grow and expand in their craft.

Sitting on the panel as representatives were hosts from the various open mic venues in Tampa. An open discussion commenced as the panel members conferred on current and upcoming events and what audience members and performers can expect. With the increase in venues, there is an open mic night for every type of artist, not just poets, but for singers, musicians, comedians, and even

storytellers. This meeting also gave the panel members the opportunity to converse about their intended goals and plans for this year. Various ideas and opinions were tossed around as everyone agreed the ultimate goal was to strengthen the cultural presence of poetry in the community as well as Tampa’s national representation. The panel members also talked about the upcoming spoken word events that would be taking place across the region. Although, several spoken word groups from the area participated in regional events in the past, the goal is to increase this frequency.

Further into the meeting listeners in the audience got the opportunity to learn about the resources available to artists. Tampa now has a regular poetry radio show and producers who carry experience in creating spoken word albums. Performers from the Tampa area have created albums and videos, along with touring across the country promoting their work and their vision. Poetry workshops and funding grants are also available.

This is what it all comes down to: one community, one voice. Each separate event, program, goal, mission, and idea should ultimately be a part of the same underlying vision: to raise awareness and collective support for cultivating the arts culture.

Is there a lack of the arts in your community? Are there no poetry readings or writing groups in your area? Consider getting a group of friends together to start a weekly poetry reading or writers critique group. The idea is, as Jennings said, “find out what’s missing and make it happen yourself.”

# 1 ON 1: WALTER "WALLY B" JENNINGS

By Alice Saunders



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"We have a poetry show almost every night of the week and some nights have multiple shows. We have a poetry radio show and several artists teach poetry workshops in schools. So, I'm extremely proud of how large and diverse the poetry scene in Tampa has grown over the years!"

- Jennings

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Tampa native **Walter "Wally B." Jennings** shares his passion for cultivating the spoken word community in Tampa, Florida.

**Alice:** Would you please tell us about yourself?

**Walter:** Well, my name is Walter "Wally B." Jennings. I am a 36 year old Tampa native and 1998 graduate of Florida A&M University (we are MORE than The 100!). I have been married for 12 years and my wife and I have two beautiful daughters (10 and 5) who keep us motivated and attentive!

**Alice:** Can you please tell us about your background in poetry?

**Walter:** Okay...this is somewhat of a loaded question because I can go WAAAAY back and we might be here a while! \*laughs\* But just to be as brief as I can: I started writing poetry as a 12 year old 8th grader at Bayshore Christian School. Our English teacher gave us an assignment of keeping a diary (guys call it a 'journal') which was a major part of our grade. I was reluctant at first, but once I started writing, it was like all of the issues and things I kept pent up inside of me finally had been given a voice. It was...very therapeutic for me. I've been writing since then.

**Alice:** At what point did you realize this was something you wanted to do?

**Walter:** I was always VERY reluctant to share my poetry because it was so personal. So, all

through high school and college, no one really knew I wrote or heard my work except for my best friend at the time, Leon "Breeze" Williams. However, a few months before I graduated from college (October 1998), I decided to read some of my poems at an open-mic show. Leon was attending Tuskegee at the time and he had shared his work there and told me how great of an experience it was. I figured since I was about to graduate and he was just as shy as I was, that I would give it a shot. If I was horrible, there was a good chance I wouldn't see most of the people I was performing in front of again. The people really enjoyed it and one guy in particular came up to me afterwards and said "Man, thank you for what you said because I thought I was the only person who felt that way about life!" That really encouraged me to share more of my work and experiences as an actual spoken word artist.

**Alice:** What has been your biggest motivation?

**Walter:** Honestly, 'life' influences and motivates me more than anything. Writing helps me to work through a lot of the problems and concerns that I'm not always comfortable talking about. The opportunity to share and perform my work is such a tremendous blessing,

because it gives me the chance to release my challenges into the atmosphere while hopefully encouraging others.

**Alice:** Who are some of your favorite poets?

**Walter:** Let's see...Langston Hughes, Robert Frost, Maya Angelou, 13 of Nazareth, Queen Sheba, Lamar Hill, Anis Morgani, and all the poets of Black on Black Rhyme and the artists in Tampa.

**Alice:** Please tell us about "Heard Em Say Teen Poetry".

**Walter:** Heard Em Say Teen Poetry is a show established in May 2007 to provide our community's youth with a healthy social outlet and platform to express themselves and promote growth in the areas of: self esteem, written and oral communication, networking, social tolerance, and cultural understanding through the art of spoken word poetry.

**Alice:** What tips or suggestions would you give to poets who want to become a spoken word artist and start performing?

**Walter:** The main thing is just to start attending shows and signing the open-mic list. I meet so many people that are so afraid that they won't even allow themselves to go to a show! \*laughs\* But, that nervousness is nev-

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er going to go away. You're either going to confront it and conquer it or you're going to let fear silence you. Once you start performing, embrace the self-discovery that comes along with the experience. You're going to hear and meet a LOT of great artists, and by all means, you should be willing to learn something from everyone! However, know that you're meant to be different and bring something unique to the table. The more you find yourself as a person, the more you will find yourself as an artist.

**Alice:** In your opinion, how has the landscape of poetry changed in the Tampa community over the last few years?

**Walter:** Well, back in 2001, I started a poetry show in Tampa called "Black on Black Rhyme". It was an offshoot of the one created in Tallahassee by a group I was a part of called Back Talk Poetry Troupe. The main reason why I started the show (besides the love I had for my city and poetry) was because at that time, there weren't any consistent spoken word venues in the city. In my opinion, the creation and influence of "Black on Black Rhyme-Tampa" was one of primary catalysts in the contemporary spoken word movement

in Tampa today. Many individuals were so inspired by what they saw and experienced at Black on Black that they started their own shows and groups. Now, we have a poetry show almost every night of the week and some nights have multiple shows. We have a poetry radio show and several artists teach poetry workshops in schools. So, I'm extremely proud of how large and diverse the poetry scene in Tampa has grown over the years!

**Alice:** What would you like to see happen?

**Walter:** I believe that although spoken word poetry in Tampa has come a long way over the past few years, we still have a LOT of work to do! I would like to see more diverse and innovative poetry shows. I would like to see Tampa have strong and consistent representation at National and International Poetry Festivals and Competitions. I keep a list of poetry goals up on my wall at home. One of the goals is for "Tampa Bay to be internationally known and respected as a region that produces dynamic and exemplary spoken word artists and poets". I know for certain that we are on our way, and I am encouraged with what I've seen, but we still have a way to go.

**Alice:** Would please tell us about the "Poetry Is" radio show?

**Walter:** "Poetry Is..." is an interactive radio show that showcases and profiles historic and contemporary poets/spoken word artists, live performance samples, and provides information about local, national and international artists and happenings in the spoken word/poetry community. The show was originally founded in 2005 and hosted by international spoken word artist/poet/activist Lizz Straight. Anedra "Sugah's Baby" Johnson and I currently host the show, which takes place every Saturday night from 11pm-12am on WMNF 88.5 FM and [wmnf.org](http://wmnf.org).

**Alice:** Are there any other creative avenues you would like to explore (i.e. music, singing, painting, etc)?

**Walter:** You mean, me personally? \*laughs\* Well, I would still like to learn how to play the piano one day. It's always been somewhat of a dream of mine. I may try singing, also. I think art opens the door to more art. It's almost like going into a store you love for something. You went to get one thing and was only going to spend a certain amount of

# THE LAST FRIDAY NIGHT OF EVERY MONTH



## HEARD EM SAY TEEN POETRY NIGHT

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time. However, you find yourself getting caught up in everything offered and all the possibilities. Who knows what I'll end up doing next? I never really thought I would be doing most of the things I'm doing now!

**Alice:** Are there any non-creative avenues you would like to explore?

**Walter:** In my mind, I'm not sure how you can pursue something and it NOT be creative? I think 'creativity' is predicated on the individual, not the task. For example, I have been thinking lately about going to Seminary to get a Theolo-

gy degree. I don't necessarily want to preach or teach, more than I want to be educated, well-informed, and enhance my creativity with the gospel.

**Alice:** Can you share with us some of your goals for this year?

**Walter:** So, for the past 3 years, Heard 'Em Say has done a co-op with Orlando where we take a group of youth poets to the Brave New Voices International Poetry Festival. The Festival pulls together young people from throughout the United States and several international

countries who celebrate literature and empower themselves through the written and spoken word. This year, we are looking at taking an All-Tampa team to Brave New Voices in August, which is being held in Chicago! The teens are very excited, however, it is going to a lot of community support and resources to get these young people to the festival. That's the big goal I'm working on for this year.

**Alice:** What motto, quote, or saying do you live by? Why?

**Walter:** Matthew 6:25-34 I've (unfortunately) always been a 'worrier'. I was always under the impression that if graduated from college that my degree would ensure that I would always have a job, so I wouldn't have anything to worry about. So, you can imagine my surprise when I found myself unemployed a year after the job I secured coming out of college didn't work out. I 'discovered' this scripture and it literally changed my life. It helped me to understand that there is no full-proof guarantee or protection from life experiences. The two questions I have to ask myself are 1.) Do I trust the Lord and 2.) how am I going to respond to what happens to me? I can't always control what happens to me, but I CAN control myself. This scripture and a quote by John H. Johnson, the founder of Jet and Ebony magazine, are what have given me the strength and courage during tough times. Mr. Johnson basically said that "he didn't find Jet and Ebony with the objective of making money. He founded them to meet a need. The money and growth came in the pursuit of excellence within the parameters of meeting the need." If you stay true to yourself and what you love and allow that passion to guide you (and not money!), then it will lead you to a service that is both profitable to humanity...and also to yourself.

**Alice:** Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. What final thought and/or message would you like to leave with our readers?

**Walter:** I really want to let people know that what I've been blessed to be able to do and be a part of with spoken word and poetry in Tampa is special, but I am not. I don't mean that in a self-degrading way, but I was just a person that saw a need(s) and used the heart, gifts, talents, and energy I had to fill it. If you see something that needs to be done, you're seeing it for a reason. Don't wait to be asked. Yes, you're going to be scared and second, third, and fourth -guess yourself...but find the courage to do it. I promise that it will be a blessing to you and others.

**Open Mic Night**

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R.J. Kerker

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**Time:** 7 PM - 11 PM  
**Where:** The Bunker (f.k.a. Tre Amici)  
1907 N 19th St. | Tampa, FL 33605 | P (813) 247-6964  
**Contact:** Tiffani Barner | [tbarner@torridliterature.com](mailto:tbarner@torridliterature.com)

Join TL Publishing Group and the Tampa community as we celebrate poetry and the arts with our open mic event. Our open mic events are always family friendly and provide an open platform that welcomes all types of artists. In the past, numerous singers, musicians, bands, comedians, poets, spoken word artists, and storytellers have blessed our stage, leaving the microphone in flames.

At our upcoming event, we have R.J. Kerker as our special host for the evening. R.J. is a member of the American Song Box band and a long time supporter of the arts community in Tampa, Florida. He also co-hosted open mic night at Café Kili for several years before retiring to focus on other musical projects.

In addition to R.J. we also have Liz Prisley a.k.a. Kali as our featured poet for the evening. Liz performed at Women of the World Poetry Slam 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota last month. Visit us during open mic night to learn more about R.J., Liz, and our other performers for the evening.

There is no charge to attend this event. All performers, emerging and experienced artists, are encouraged to come out and participate. Sign up starts at 6:30 PM.

Please visit our website and like our fan page on Facebook to receive important updates regarding this upcoming event:

<http://www.facebook.com/tlopenmic>

[http://www.torridliterature.com/Open\\_Mic.html](http://www.torridliterature.com/Open_Mic.html)

Be sure to look us up on Ustream under “Torridian Entertainment” to see video clips of past performers.

If you interested in being a featured poet at one of our events, please contact Tiffani Barner at [tbarner@torridliterature.com](mailto:tbarner@torridliterature.com).

# ODE TO LITERATURE

“...crows talk and walk across  
the vacant road...”  
Storm

“...isn't old age customarily associat-  
ed with wisdom like the owl...”  
Twilight Reflections

“...I have to swim out to you, try  
and bring you back to the shore...”  
Swimming Ahead

“...anxiety rising up like a shaken  
bottle of carbonation...”  
Wednesday's Song

“...a theme of deliverance a  
quarter for his thoughts”  
Ghost in His Clothes

“...blood ran through the streets,  
evil lifted its head and smiled...”  
I Heard You Cry Again

“...Clotho teasingly spins my thread,  
adding knots to add struggles...”  
Control the Game

“...pain comes in idyllic tides  
Like rhythms of rolling toil...”  
Idyllic Pain

## IF I COULD SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF

By Kayla Pumphrey

Would there be a lesson you could learn  
Through your lies and deceit  
It is bridges that you burn  
The preciseness of your sins  
The sum of all the pain inside  
You're killing me and killing you  
And I can't find a safe place to hide  
I'm smothered by your weight  
Drowning by your lies  
Every time you chose self-destruction  
Another piece of me dies  
And still I want to help  
Maybe the lesson is mine  
I can't save you from this life  
This time you crossed a line  
To fix what is broken  
First you must understand the trade  
I don't understand this mistake  
Or any of the choices you have made.  
Now I must let go  
It's hard to say good-bye  
Dear Bi-polar twin inside  
This is the end of you and I

Kayla Pumphrey is a mother of three, a published poet, and a student of Secondary Education English Communications at Robert Morris University. She considers her poetry to be contemporary, echoing the taboo truths of daily life in society. She aspires to be a successful educator and author of birth poetry and prose.

“... wrap yourself in the s-sounds, dis-  
guise the piece in 2nd person, paint it as  
universal poetry for scorned lovers...”  
Love Letter to Yourself

“...I would give, my very last breathe,  
just to tell her, I love her...”  
Always and Forever

“...I tried not to let my  
sister see mascara seeping out like  
punctured blackberries...”  
Inadequate Goodbyes

“Splash” by Amelia Jane Nierenberg



**Amelia Jane Nierenberg** is a Junior at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in New York. She has participated in Les Tapis (affiliated with TASIS), the Art Studio Workshop Intensive Summer European Trip, and the Early College Program at SAIC. Her work has been shown in the Fieldston Summer Show and #artbecause and is forthcoming in Slash of Red. She spends much of her free time painting and taking pictures, and is an Art Major at her school.

**Allison Grayhurst** currently lives in Toronto with her husband and two children. Over the past twenty years her poems have been published in over 100 journals throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, and in the United Kingdom, including *The Antigonish Review*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *The New Quarterly*. Her work was also included in the Insomniac Press anthology "Written In The Skin". Grayhurst's book "Somewhere Falling" was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995.

### STORM

By Allison Grayhurst

Quickly the shadows come  
on the window sill and over the  
lilac tree.  
Soon it is the song of the wind chimes  
as birds fly low.  
Crows talk and walk across the  
vacant road. Flowers  
get ready to lose their colour as petals  
depart as butterflies would from their stems. The head  
of a child is peering around some drapes while grownups  
bring candles from the basement.  
City cats curl under cars and the bumblebees are still.  
There is a sharp curve of the sky and a streak of shocking white  
like a line across a blank chalkboard.  
Doors and screens are closed, as pigeons and squirrels  
cover their nests, blind to all but  
now.

**John Grey** is an Australian born poet who works as a financial systems analyst. Grey's work has recently been published in *Bryant Poetry Review*, *Tribeca Poetry Review* and the horror anthology, "What Fears Become" with work upcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Hurricane Review* and *Osiris*.

### SENSE OF PLACE

By John Grey

Switch  
all sense  
in its numbers  
as if all  
is no one  
as well as,  
you may be sure,  
the borders of our lives -  
boundaries of good taste  
and proper breeding  
build a monument.  
by another name  
but they all add up  
to where I'm sitting,  
standing, walking,  
lying down and sleeping ...  
Providence!

**Kayla Pumphrey** is a mother of three, a published poet, and a student of Secondary Education English Communications at Robert Morris University. She considers her poetry to be contemporary, echoing the taboo truths of daily life in society. She aspires to be a successful educator and author of birth poetry and prose.

### IDYLIC PAIN

By Kayla Pumphrey

Pain comes in idyllic tides  
Like rhythms of rolling toil  
Splashing against the mortal pride  
Producing the fervor of blood soaked soil  
Beauty rises amidst the ash  
A rebirth of yesterday's endeavors  
No longer the lost promises of the past  
But, finally of tomorrows treasures  
Anew with promise for breadth of life  
Erasing the scathed, the scarred, the forlorn  
Gated to reflect the revulsion of strife  
Deflecting the energies of those in mourn  
It is the hurdles of discourse,  
That from all pain spawns success  
Born with regal of victors force  
Crippling the tyrant to oppress.  
Finally the end comes round once more  
As all things have a season of life and rest  
It is now as it was before  
You must jump hurdles to pass life's test.

**Christine Stroud** is currently a candidate for an MFA in Creative Writing from Chatham University and works as an Assistant Editor for Autumn House Press. She lives in Pittsburgh with her boyfriend and two cats.

### I THREW YOUR SHOES IN THE RIVER

By Christine Stroud

and I am not sorry.

I was sorry to get caught  
and sorrier to lose a month's  
allowance. But I

stood at the end of the pier  
and watched your day-glo orange  
flip flops float down the White Oak  
until they were nothing  
but a burnt smear on the water.

**Bailey Schatte** is a 15 year old writer who writes to express his emotions. Schatte has been writing for the past year and a half.

**ALWAYS AND FOREVER**

By Bailey Schatte

When I look into her eyes,  
I see my whole life,  
I see what makes me strong,  
I see what makes me live,  
And I see my love.

I feel warm inside,  
As If I were sitting in,  
A cradle of love,  
With her by my side,  
And as we rock back and forth,  
The love we share for each other,  
Grows.

I would give,  
my very last breathe,  
just to tell her,  
I love her,  
And without her,  
I would be nothing,  
As a plant without sunshine,  
As a soul without a body,  
Or as a bee without a flower.

So when the day comes,  
That nature rips us apart,  
I will be right by her side,  
Holding her hand,  
Kissing her cheek,  
And explaining how much she means to me.

She will know that,  
My love for her,  
Will be,  
Always and Forever.

**Darrick Thomas** is a poet from Washington, D.C. Thomas has been writing since he was 16 year old.

**EROSION**

By Darrick Thomas

I began  
but not  
as I am  
The multiplicity of the layers  
I have been  
Have been stripped away  
Just like  
a hard hammering rain  
Pounds the sea shore  
Erosion  
Systematically takes away  
A good cry  
Deep thoughts  
Keep  
the emotional pounds off  
Erode away  
Erode away  
Erode away  
My true core  
I liken to a sea shore  
I seem  
Sure  
But to you  
My erosion is hidden  
You seem to see  
the old me  
The beginning  
How I started off  
Well time and growth  
has peeled me  
I'm being revealed  
The old me  
Is eroding

**Rebecca Wright** is a 22-year-old graduate of University of South Florida with her BA in Creative Writing. She wants people to analyze why she wrote something and what it means, when in all actuality, she wrote it because she could. She has been published in *Torrid Literature Journal*, *The Delinquent*, and *The Writing Disorder*. She currently resides in St. Petersburg, Florida missing her polydactal cat, Huckleberry Fynnigan. She plans to receive her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and in the future, change the world.

### CONTROL THE GAME

By Rebecca Wright

Laughing, gasping, crowing  
with mirth. The crowd of  
deities watches and stares.  
I hear them shouting in my  
mind, amused at the trouble  
in my path. I don't know why  
they cheer, they already know  
what is coming.

Past, present, and future are  
catalogued in folders that sit  
in the filing cabinets in the  
Moirai's office. My folder, black  
in color and blackened in  
hope, sits among the numerous  
white folders. A pale pink sticky  
note clings to the front stating  
"give her hell!" in bold letters.

Clotho teasingly spins  
my thread, adding knots to add  
struggles. Lachesis grins and  
lengthens the thread, ensuring  
more problems than necessary  
for a life. Atropos stares, trying  
to decide when to make the  
cut with her abhorred shears.

**Jerred Metts** studied Creative Writing and Psychology at the University of South Florida. His work has appeared in (*ěm*): *A Review of Text and Image*. He resides in Jacksonville, Florida, and is currently torn between the pursuit of his three greatest passions: writing, clinical psychology, and ice cream.

### LOVE LETTER TO YOURSELF

Jerred Metts

Wrap yourself in the s-sounds,  
disguise the piece in 2nd person, paint it as universal  
poetry for scorned lovers. Alliterate  
and assonate your heart out.  
You've always considered nautical  
analogies to be lonesome. Try one.  
She sailed away on a separate ship  
long before your vessel's sinking.  
You just want the reader to know  
that you were drowning.

Title it

"Love Letter to Yourself" but  
show your readers some respect. Be honest  
like your significant other wasn't.

Speaker is seldom less  
than an implication.

Accept that no one will be fooled  
by a veil of self-deprecation.

Dissolve the obvious mystery,  
in metaphor if you need. This is what happened:

Your better nature was abused.

You had an anchor once, but you didn't  
see the rust, didn't know it had sunk  
to the bottom of the sea.

Enough ship talk.

Chin up. Move the pen.

Remember.

Words don't dance for her,  
not like they do for you.

First,

write to purge. Burn it out  
with lead and friction.

Then write something better.

**Elise Born** grew up in Centerville, Utah, and spent most of her time outside. She has always loved the way that words sound and feel when they are put together. She considers poetry a huge stress reliever and her tattered notebook is now a friend. Born is happy wherever she can find a bit of nature to enjoy, and finds new ways to write about it.

### INADEQUATE GOODBYES

By Elise Born

Standing by the kitchen sink,  
cups, and cereal bowls overflowing.  
stiff hugs, the muscles in my arms ridged,  
my hair catching in Joe's scratchy beard.

Another, by the curb on a December night.  
The mist of my breath hanging on my lips.  
The Stumbled words "T-take care of yourself"  
into a thick jacket.  
"What did you say?"  
"Never mind"

The airport asphalt, the yellow lines  
pointing everywhere and no where.  
My swollen eyes; I tried not to let my  
sister see mascara seeping out like  
punctured blackberries.

My neck incapable of turning,  
body locked, unable to twist and take  
one last look at Cody in the parking lot.  
My eyes only seeing white shoes  
against the black pavement.

Balancing tiptoe to clear Lainey's shoulder,  
not quite making it, my chin running  
into her in our side-embrace.  
People jostling, and squeezing past us on the street.

Sitting on a South American bench,  
custard yellow houses with ocean green doors  
behind me.

**Stacy Thowe** is a fiction writer who is still trying to make her footprint on to the literary world. She writes about what moves her and hopes to capture the heart of the reader in such a way that they take a piece of the work away with them. She is a writer, mother and wife who resides in Topeka, Kansas where she is constantly inspired. Please feel free to visit her website, [stacythowe.net](http://stacythowe.net).

### I HEARD YOU CRY AGAIN

By Stacy Thowe

I heard you cry again.  
The last time, years ago,  
cries lifted up and floated,  
over oceans, through forests,  
over mountains and plains,  
around the corner,  
where a grocery store stood,  
next to a playground,  
the sound of laughter  
silenced by the cries of loved ones,  
of victims, of onlookers.  
Blood ran through the streets.  
Evil lifted its head and smiled,  
“The weak ones, target them.”  
Heroes stepped out into the  
light crying, “No more.”  
And Evil receded,  
only to rise again,  
yesterday, when sorrow rang  
out around this nation  
letting out another screeching  
and howling cry.  
The cry of parents, siblings,  
grandparents, neighbors, and strangers,  
as innocents were silenced.  
Evil prevailed again.  
Once more, Heroes of the light  
were called on and reacted but  
not before the precious babes were  
taken. Left were only shadows,  
images of innocence,  
futures that would never be  
known, leaving an empty hole  
in space, as the laughter  
suddenly ceased, and the  
cry of a nation was heard again,  
throughout the world.

**Clemencio Montecillo Bascar** is a writer who currently lives in the Philippines. Bascar writes poems, articles, and columns.

### TWILIGHT REFLECTIONS

By Clemencio Basccar

There is a point in one's life when everything seems  
To come to a standstill; a feeling of uselessness sets in  
Paralyzing your whole being

This is exactly the situation I am in at present; it's like reaching  
A crossroad unable to make any choice as to what direction to take; the  
Whole landscape appears to be completely made up of the same element  
Leading to nowhere; honesty, in all my 72 years of living, I never experienced  
This kind of emptiness, dullness, loneliness, unworthiness, and utter alienation  
A dreaded outcast of the world which prefers me to be elsewhere

Is this the price  
That one has to pay for a gift of longevity?  
Shouldn't heavily wrinkled face, dark spotted skin, hair completely  
Grey all over

Be a crowning glory, a rare occasion to celebrate  
And be proud of? Isn't old age customarily associated with wisdom  
Like the owl? Do I not deserve any iota of care and love anymore?  
Doesn't the value of man appreciate with time like artifacts?

Then why am I here at this crossroad? What does heaven  
Have to say about this injustice of society against me? What have  
I done to deserve this solitary destiny?

**Carly Maloney** is a Junior Communications major from Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania. She uses poetry as a creative outlet. Maloney also enjoys traveling and documenting her travels through unique poetry.

### WEDNESDAY'S SONG

By Carly Maloney

Anxiety rising up  
like a shaken bottle of carbonation;  
with the sudden realization  
of things I cannot do.  
Minds shutting down  
like stores closing up  
dumping out the cup  
of good memories...  
Walls closing in  
problems upon problems,  
and it's too tough to solve them.  
They lie there in piles.  
Concerns thrown out,  
right out of the window.  
Whatever happens I won't know.

**Jacob Erin-Cilberto**, originally from Bronx, New York, now resides in Carbondale, Illinois. Erin-Cilberto has been writing and publishing poetry since 1970. He currently teaches at John A. Logan and Shawnee Community colleges in Southern Illinois. His work has appeared in numerous small magazines and journals including: *Café Review*, *Skyline Magazine*, *Hudson View*, and others. Erin-Cilberto also writes reviews of poetry books for *Chiron Review*, *Skyline Review*, *Birchbrook Press* and others. He has reviewed books by B.Z Niditch, Michael Miller, Barry Wallenstein, Marcus Rome, musician Tom Maclear and others. "Used Lanterns" is Erin-Cilberto's 12th book of poetry and is now available through Water Forest Press, Stormville, NY. Erin-Cilberto has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in Poetry in 2006-2007-2008 and again in 2010. He teaches poetry workshops for Heartland Writers Guild, Southern Illinois Writers Guild and Union County Writers Guild.

### GHOST IN HIS CLOTHES

By Jacob Erin-Cilberto

stuttering down the street  
my shaky hands posing the question  
will you give an indigent some words  
to save his dignity  
will you write him from your safe curb  
a theme of deliverance  
a quarter for his thoughts  
then a dime for a cup of coffee  
his body is mechanical nuts and bolts  
creeping along with concrete despair  
wishing his metaphorical life  
made more sense in literal air  
while his pocket filled with more cents  
'cause that coffee is fleeting warmth  
but at least when it burns his lips  
he knows he's alive.

**Anthony Ward** has been writing in his spare time for a number of years. He has been published in a number of literary magazines including *Enhance*, *Word Gumbo*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Speech Therapy*, *Thousand Shades of Grey*, *Ginger Piglet*, *Torrid Literature Journal* and *The Rusty Nail*, amongst others.

### BOXED IN

By Anthony Ward

I step out of myself,  
Leaving the door wide open  
To allow others to walk in  
And put themselves at ease,  
  
So that I no longer want to return,  
And remain outside myself,  
While they cause havoc,  
Discerning no respect nor regard for my personal space,  
Desecrating everything that once made me.  
  
Then I close the door on them,  
Locking them in-  
Unwilling to release them.  
Preferring to keep them restrained,  
Rather than let them out.

### SWIMMING AHEAD

By Anthony Ward

Don't you know me?  
I'm the guy who held back from you at a distance.  
Don't you remember?  
I'm the guy who got closer to you—asked you for a date.  
Can you recall the date? When we got married?  
I remember it as if it were yesterday,  
While you only live for today.  
For you everyday's a new day.  
For me it's ongoing,  
  
I have to swim out to you,  
Try and bring you back to the shore.  
But you keep drifting further away,  
So I can no longer reach you,  
Knowing eventually I'll have to let you go.  
But for now I'll make myself a vessel so I can get closer to you.

**Marcelo Muianga** is a poet residing in Elsburg, South Africa . His work has appeared in past editions of the *Torrid Literature Journal*. His poetry is a dialogue with the self about his experiences in life. It is inside poetry that he believes he is free to be whomever he wants to be, not bound by any morals, nor ethnic codes. He mostly tells stories of occasions he has seen, heard, and touched physically, yet sometimes just mentally. His stories include people that are currently part of his life, although they became simple memories of people he once knew.

### DOORS

Marcelo Muianga

Open wide,  
let me out.  
I am done concealing,  
let me loose.  
Remove these shades from my eyes  
So I am no longer blind to my gift.

Break these shackles  
these tattoos of procrastination  
from across my feet and wrists,  
that have left me captive to my own insecurity.

A murderer - today I become,  
a part of me I assassinate.  
I would be compassionate  
and allow it to have room in me,  
but, I have been feeding a parasite  
while dreaming of reaching a paradise.

Windows have been dimming  
failing to inlet light waves  
that were mine to harness.

Doors have been shutting  
while I held the knob fast and steady.  
I crumbled and wept,  
while another door shut,  
only bangs echoed,  
shocking me cold.  
I feel arms embrace me,  
they aren't angelic  
lacking warmth and electricity.

Corridors have been turning into crevasses  
this might be my last stand  
I drag across a field of almost dead dreams  
A blinding light  
yet, fair in its essence  
during my transcendence  
a graveyard of burdens; behind I left  
I can now afford to reminisce  
on a past of opened and shut doors  
a gift I long ignored, today I embrace.

### MEMORIES OF LILACS

By Jeanne Moua

In the pink glow of the early bird sun  
Covered in powder white and crimson smears.  
The gaudy boots kicked off into the air.  
The murky, camouflage suit tossed for the mosquitoes' content.  
The crisp lilac field glistened with the morning dew.  
The man silently stared to the sky above.

His hand folded in the form of prayer,  
Two hands, palms glued to each other.  
The fingers interlocked onto a crumpled photo hidden too long in the pockets.  
Sides bent yellow, grew dark against the woman's smile starred within.  
"To my beloved, I will always wait for you ~Lilac" smeared the back.  
His eyes peered down at those words, so long ago written.

Vengeful adrenaline of anger  
A kick to the lilacs sent purple petals of golden tips for the wind to carry.  
The photograph laid in his tweed jacket once more.  
Angry of his stupidity, the fists reached for the lilacs but—  
The gentleness, the beauty overwhelmed him.  
The tears flew down in rivers and he cupped his mouth wanting to stop.

Five years of flashing bombs and rains of bullets.  
Frozen winters of death's bite and yet he remembers  
the sweet locks of lips and the hands in the hair,  
the backseat affairs and the sneaks into the night life.  
Hands stretched to the ground he kissed the lilacs.  
The gentleness, the beauty overwhelmed him.

### HALLWAY SECRETS

By Jeanne Moua

the' crow's squawk marked the end of the hallway secrets  
a dewy-eyed squirrel headed to class with a bag of acorn snacks to munch  
stick thin hyenas snickered with puffs of weed stuck in their mouth  
their black tails swung in swirls, eyes locked on their bushy friend  
along came the mother turtle with thick-rimmed purple glasses perched on the nose  
marked by age the green-scarred hand snapped its fingers and the tigers came with roars  
run run the hyenas ran but not before the bunny was slammed by the immense crowd  
the tigers followed in pursuit with their stripes of justice  
the turtle turned back into the classroom, pointed at the kangaroo to pull up its sack  
the squirrel tenderhearted helped the injured  
its bushel of gray tail twitched right for the bunny to wipe the tears  
before long the cotton tailed albino's red eyes shone bright  
the acorns were offered as the bark tree classroom door open wide  
right before the crow's squawk ended the hallway secrets

**Philip Jackey** has been reading and writing poetry since he was 13 years old. His work has been published in *The Write Place At The Write Time*. This is his second acceptance into a literary journal. He lives in Elkhart, Indiana with his wife and two step children and a baby on the way.

### THE AFFAIR

By Philip Jackey

Wives cheat; it's a proven fact.  
Right here in this very house,  
the blade still plunged in his heart  
tightening like Vise-Grips.

But bloodshed is sadder than tears,  
which now mixed with  
yesterday's mascara crawling  
down her cheeks like  
legs of a tarantula.

Three hours she lay dead  
as roadkill in the parking lot  
of the old farmer's market  
with a hole through her skull and  
one in her hand  
(defense wound most likely)  
from a hollow-point at close range  
where the echo of the blast  
still stretched the sky.

And my father-in-law wept  
like a toddler when he went  
in the morgue, identified her remains,  
said the stained blood smell  
made him think of  
a sweaty palm  
squeezing copper pennies.  
Reminded him of a bottle bank  
he once had, a Budweiser filled  
with over six-hundred coins  
he traded for a bag of weed, that  
he smoked with her that  
August night of '94,  
their own little summer of love but  
that was then.

For years his wife's been pissing  
on inhibitions, on herself when  
she's drunk,  
marking anything and everything  
she took for granted.

Less and less this looks of a home,  
family pictures a fading reminder  
of how things used to be.  
Walls have become dividers that  
muffle the sound of secret lives  
and phone conversations.  
And she kept her phone by  
her side every night,  
under her pillow  
a veiled dagger destined for  
her husband's heart.  
And at this time tomorrow,  
things will never  
be the same.

**EVERY MACHINE GUNNED WORD (STUTTER)**

By Kate Ladew

every machine gunned word  
from my mouth is evidence of their failure,  
tongue spattering against clenched teeth, syllables splayed in two,  
blood dripping down my chin, watching them watch me,  
forced twin smiles ripped in half,  
clenched teeth, clenched fists,  
clenched teeth, clenched fists,  
weary heads nodding along to the clips and starts, eyes blurring,  
hoping to reveal a prettier picture--  
my mother took me to classes after school  
waiting with other dumbstruck kids, the room filled with distractions  
anything to keep the hands occupied, limit speech  
my life has been stutters and stumbles to compensate,  
afraid to say what I want when nothing comes easy  
I've managed to become nothing, and been so slow doing it--  
but what have I done to them?  
this beautiful little girl they once had,  
reduced to close lipped mutterings  
this beautiful little girl grown up, unable to look anyone in the eye,  
afraid to see the pity, the nervous laughter.  
I will never give an acceptance speech,  
never wave at my mother, my father from a stage  
all my words have bled out, there's nothing to reward, and all I am is afraid  
curled up inside myself, waiting for the gunfire to die down--  
hands grasp mine, old hands, tired hands, veins coursing with matching blood,  
we three are dying together,  
felled at the knees and I'm sorry.  
if only I could tell you, if only my lips could form the notes--  
the rat a tat tat of consonants and vowels hits your chest,  
leaves blood like a star over those old hearts, those tired hearts--  
I didn't want to fail, I wanted to give you something, anything at all,  
if my breath would only fill my lungs completely for just a moment,  
I could tell you what I've been saving up all my life--  
I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry

**THOSE MORNINGS ON THE BEACH**

By Kate LaDew

those mornings on the beach  
were like growing young one step at a time,  
a little girl again  
craning my neck for animals you saw in the clouds,  
our feet sprinkled with salt and sand,  
we never let the water cover our ankles  
but I felt its cold  
five years old in a blonde ponytail  
your arms a barrier between me and dark, dark things,  
couldn't have felt safer if I tried  
and every time I think of way back when  
I raise my eyes--  
the horizon is a mirror, reflecting oceans,  
and I still look for sharks in the sky

**Shelby Brooks** is a reader for Polyphony H.S., editing poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. She writes mainly poetry and short stories and has several novel and novel-la projects. Her work has been published in *Speak Up Press*, *Lit Fest Magazine*, *Dallas Writer's Journal*, and *GREYstone Poetry*.

### ON DOWN 44TH

By Shelby Brooks

I met a young man on the streets of New York,  
nestled into the glossy clothing store windows.  
I knew what he wanted, though his intentions  
remained to me as amused yet guardedly unclear.  
I noted the clean-shaven chin, those high cheekbones;  
he sported a long black coat to ward off cold.  
Handsome in features and nonchalantly self-assured,  
he drew my attentions most to his devil-quick hands.

The fingers of those hands pressed the keys  
of his golden tenor saxophone in rapid motion.  
Soft-shaped hazel eyes intent on the spectacle,  
I watched in flabbergasted fascination.  
O, for no sound issued forth from the metal;  
no note descended or ascended upon the hot air.

Blink; the sax burst into thousands  
of tiny black eighth notes cascading down  
onto dirty, scarred 44th street.  
Each one bore a thin, straight stem  
attached to a perfect sphere of shiny black.  
I bent to examine these mini-music emblems;  
at one glance up, the magician was gone.  
A strawberry rose in his place  
graced the concrete with her presence.  
Rose in hand, I strolled down 44th  
with pockets bulging from eighth notes,  
humming Honeysuckle Rose.

### THE MAGIC OF LOVE

By Shelby Brooks

the First Kiss  
should taste of purity  
should symbolize goodness  
should emphasize Life and Love  
eternally linked  
in a swirl of  
pink petals  
and fuzzy blue lights  
the whisper of Dreams  
the murmur of Fantasy  
the caress of Romance

the Second Kiss  
should linger on the lips  
should touch a softness  
should elate one into ecstasy  
should reiterate the First Kiss  
and the ones to come after

Love speaks in a world of light  
about rejecting a room of darkness  
and lifting human souls into the heavens.  
Love whispers a sweetness  
that captures humanity  
in a red haze of feeling  
and hoping  
and wishing  
and loving  
and longing  
and passion  
rich and deep.

Allow yourself to fall under  
the whimsical spell  
for many believe the  
magic of Love  
cures the disease of  
Time.

**Jim Landwehr** enjoys writing creative non-fiction, fiction, memoir, and poetry and is enrolled in the AllWriters' workplace and workshop ([www.allwriters.org](http://www.allwriters.org)). He is currently working on a memoir of his travels to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota with his brothers in the late 80's. He's had nonfiction stories published in *Boundary Waters Journal*, and *Forge Journal*. He's also had poetry published in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Echoes Poetry Journal*, *The Ampersand Review*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, *Heavy Bear magazine*, and others.

**CAN'T BE BEAT**

By Jim Landwehr

HE worshipped their work  
and all that they stood for  
the Beats  
the Burroughs,  
the Kerouacs,  
the Brautigans  
of days past  
How they changed the world  
Or at least HE thought they did

HE wanted to go back  
Go Trout Fishing with Rich  
Hit the road with Jack  
And Howl with Al  
It grieved HIM that he'd missed it  
That HE couldn't drink port with them  
Listen to Jazz or go to New York  
On a moment's notice  
To sleep in flophouses  
And pickup floozies

But HE couldn't now  
Jack took himself out  
Al and Willie passed long ago  
Of course Big Sur was still there  
And so were New York and Mexico  
But they weren't the same

It was in wishing these times back  
That HE realized  
If he wasn't careful  
HE would overlook the fact  
That this was HIS beat  
Right now was  
HIS shot at beatnicism  
That through penning his words  
And changing his attitude  
And stretching his life  
HE was presently living the past

And he almost missed it.

**Smita Sriwastav** is a M.B.B.S. doctor with a passion for poetry and literature. Sriwastav has published two books and has published poems in journals such as the *Rusty Nail*, *Pyrokinecton*, *Jellyfish Whispers*, *eFiction India*, *Daily Love*, and many others. One of Sriwastav's poems was also published in a book called "Inspired by Tagore" published by Sampad and British Council.

### THAT NIGHT IN NOVEMBER

By Smita Sriwastav

That night in November sleep deluded me and I sat gazing at the embers breathing cedar-smoke into the lungs of chimneys. The fire was dormant, embers winked in the night's shadows as glowing beetles. The rain tapered on the roof tiles – a sound like the incessant tattoo of a type writer writing manuscripts in Sanskrit—ambiguous yet intriguing. This rain was the swansong of lingering traces of the wistful autumn of October as its flavors and scents were diluted, erased, washed away leaving a legacy of frost prints on window panes. Somewhere an owl hooted diligently on nocturnal vigil despite the brewing tempest storm. The moon and stars played truant to hide shivering realms beneath the quilts of clouds. Loneliness was palpable and I refused to breath loud lest the silence be disturbed. Thoughts in turmoil sought to befriend my solitude. Sienna moments floated vaguely before the eyes as memories became the phoenix, being reborn from the past's pyre. I as a little girl trying to hide in your arms scared of a thunder storm long ago. Your laughter echoing in lilting, faint notes, from when you tried to dispel my fears saying it was but nature's musical concert. And years later as the eerie storm evokes those memories I feel the warmth of your presence cocoon me diluting my illogical fears with the same laugh that was so contagious...

### ANONYMOUS RELATION

By Smita Sriwastav

They were not just friends keeping in touch by phone calls and sharing the occasional lunch together. They were not lukewarm acquaintances, scribbled names in some address book, a smile shared on mutual sidewalks, a hand waved in greeting. They were more, much more, sharing a more close knit relation. They were not lovers, sharing intimate gazes over flickering candlelight and their lingering touch scribing poetry on the skin of another. Their realms did not spoon together to make one perfect whole. They were strangers bound together by cords of loneliness; as the lonely moon becomes acquainted with the bay, yet their existences are destined to be separate. They fill the vacuum of their haunting silences with innocuous words, just to make those moments more palatable, but it is not a communication, a sharing of thoughts, a blending of ideas—just meaningless tirade to fill empty hours. They recognize each other, are familiar with their habits and idiosyncrasies but the thoughts of one are not reflected in the gaze of another. Understanding is elusive, for they are just archipelagos disjointed and separated with no bridge joining them but the frail threads of necessity.

### THE ALARM'S SCREECH

By Smita Sriwastav

The shrill screech of the alarm clock echoed to tatter the gossamer veneer of a fuzzy dream or was it a hazy memory replaying as some old mute movie on mind's canvas in swirls of grey and sepia? They had held me mesmerized as languidly unfolding fairy tales that breathed their fragrance into my thoughts, like orchids sighing scented vowels into stained glass flutters of butterflies. The alarm's wail was the chime of the bell of consciousness that drag reluctant thoughts away from alleys of Morpheus. I tried to recall that scene vivid moments before and now strangely vague, almost forgotten, lost in amnesic depths of unconscious thought. I wondered if I closed my eyes silently would those faded realms be revived, in swirls of sienna shades, alluring, intriguing and unworldly. Lurking at the edge of the eyelashes, those scenes refused to replay themselves, a poignant medley of faded scenes refusing become completely lost as well. The adamantly ticking hands of time denied such reincarnation, simply earmarking those moments in the ambiguity of nostalgia. They dispersed like fickle friends in adversity, for they were like carmine sighs of withered rose scattered on soil never to feel the kiss of pollens. The window gilded in morning's grin beckoned as dispelled with traces of languor, dreams died and consciousness soared high like dove's feathers over heights of a newborn day.

**James Sutton**, a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop, studied with John Berryman, Marvin Bell, and George Starbuck. Never having had an academic appointment, he had no need to publish anything before its time; so his poems are more, rather than less, the way he wants them. He earned his living as a lobbyist, for teachers at the Iowa Legislature, and lives in Des Moines, which has never known war.

### DÆDALUS IN EXILE

James Sutton

At first, this island with its strange religion  
allowed me almost to enjoy my exile.  
I built its Labyrinth, whose technical decisions  
engaged some of my talents for awhile.  
There was some satisfaction in my knowing  
that I ranked high within the king's esteem.  
The courtiers' reports of me were glowing;  
I was the one perfecting public schemes.  
But as the years went by, I grew more weary  
of living with an island's limitations.  
The isolation here makes people leery  
of spirit that endures in inspiration.

This is no place for those who can create.  
An exile here can't be my final fate.

They are not excellent. They live for war  
or war conducted by another means,  
which they call "trade." Forever wanting "more,"  
they carry their religion to extremes.  
A labyrinth was needed, for example,  
to counter arrogance & royal greed;  
In lieu of sacrifice, their Royal sampled  
improvement to his herd through thoughtless deed.  
So venial a sin explains their ways:  
They do not dare enough. Stability  
is what they yearn for, slow unchanging days—  
with labyrinths for their monstrosities.

Whatever art I give won't be enough,  
because their applications are corrupt.

In thirty years, I've seen them all transformed  
from recklessly demanding to be free  
to worshiping a god who is deformed,  
whom they embrace for his deformity.  
Deeds without feeling now control their lives.  
That will suffice as answer. They grow hard.  
Some beat their children; others kill their wives.  
From families, dominions, foreign parts,  
their king demands increasing sacrifice.  
A kingdom, like a ship, may deviate  
when stars are missed for lack of some device;  
but "lack" cannot explain this kingdom's fate.

They have the best of ev'rything, yet sail  
into a fog, because their eyesight fails.

They live now to get by, not to get on.  
They manage risk instead of taking risk.  
They do not see how doing this is wrong.  
Ships without headway make their sailors sick.  
Not they sink to pleasure: They're austere.  
They do the best they can, raise cries to God,  
pay for a strong defense, live to revere  
prosperity, just gover'nment, good laws.  
But righteousness that will not graft with love  
engenders only trees with bitter fruit.  
A time will come when those who stand above  
will haff to set a course & brave the truth.  
A ship without direction cannot be.  
A bitter fruit is useless, endlessly.

I'm weary of these faces I must see  
day after day. I can't abide their power.  
They've shut me up, in perpetuity.  
Living with islanders makes living sour.  
Always the same old stories, ev'ry night.  
What they call "comedy" bores me to tears;  
they never get the ancient stories right.  
Day after day, they stuff wool in their ears.  
As far as I can tell, it bores them, too.  
Why they put up with it I'll never know;  
unless they think there's nothing they can do—  
which makes them prisoners. But I can go.  
I can be free, because I dare to dream  
& have the wit to perpetrate a scheme.

He'll never let me go. I know his plan;  
the secret of his labyrinth is mine.  
But I will go. I'll fly to my own land  
& leave his bloody arrogance behind.  
His children will betray him. I must go  
before he tries to heap his guilt on me.  
But he controls the sea. Invention knows  
the sky is where escape will have to be.  
I'll fashion some perpetual device  
that lifts me & my son beyond this ground.  
Art need not suffer endlessly through life  
that shows discomfort when art is around.  
My exile here is over; two shall leave.  
I wonder what else Fate has up Their sleeves.

“Working” by Ben Gabriner



**Ben Gabriner** lives in Yonkers, New York. He is 17 years old and has been taking photographs for about 2 years.

# FICTION

## WHO? WHAT? WHY?

By Lela Marie De La Garza

**Lela Marie De La Garza** was born in Denver, Colorado in 1944 while her father was serving in WWII. She now lives in San Antonio, Texas with three and a half cats.

“Hi...” I say tentatively.

“Hi. I’m Kevin. We’ve met before.”

I didn’t remember of course. “I’m Joan. But you probably know that if we’ve met before.”

“I do know that. You don’t realize it, but there was a time you didn’t remember your own name.”

“Do I have a last name?”

“Hutchinson.”

“Hutchinson. Hutchinson. Hutchinson.” Sometimes repeating a thing several times helps me to remember it. Mostly not. “I’m Joan Hutchinson. And you are?”

He sighed. “Kevin.” He must have told me that before. But everything flies out of my mind as soon as I hear it.

“Hi. I’m Joan. And your name starts with a... ‘K’, doesn’t it?”

That makes him look happy. “Yes. It’s Kevin.”

I try to concentrate. “Kevin. Kevin. Kevin.” They keep telling me about an accident. I don’t remember it. I don’t remember coming here. I don’t have any short term memory or any long term memory—but sometimes I get a flash. A picture in my head of something that happened yesterday or last month or five years ago. For just a few seconds now it’s clear: I’m sitting across the table from Kevin in Banjoles, a small restaurant painted a weird pink colour.

Our waitress is named “Salli,” at least that’s what it says on her name tag. She has short blonde curls. “What can I get for you?” I order a bacon club. Kevin has a seafood salad and a baked potato. He’s wearing a blue plaid shirt open at the neck...

Then the picture clouds and closes.

The man sitting in front of me was looking happy, and now he isn’t. “I was driving,” he says.

I don’t know what that means, but I do know what to say. “It’s all right.”

He shakes his head. “I had the green light. The guy plowed right into me. But maybe if I’d been faster—maybe I could have stopped in time—”

“It’s all right,” I say again, helplessly.

He looks at me. “Maybe it will be. They say you’ll get your memory back. They say I’ll walk again. Then we can start over.”

*Start what over?* I think. I don’t say it, because I don’t want him to look any sadder.

A bell rings somewhere. He takes both my hands in his. “It’s time for me to go.”

I cling. “I don’t want you to go. Because if you do, I won’t remember you were ever here.”

He looses my hands gently. “I’ll come back. I’ll always come back.” Then he wheels himself away. A nurse comes in. She looks familiar, but of course I don’t recognize her.

“Did I just have a visitor?” I ask.

“Yes you did.”

“Was his name K-K-Kenny?”

“Close.” She smiles. “That was Kevin. He’s your husband. Did he tell you that?”

“No...” I look at my left hand and see the gold band on my finger. I wonder what it’s like to be married.

“Lunchtime.” I don’t know the way to the dining room, so I follow the nurse. I do what the others do, getting a tray, putting it on a rail, sliding it along. Someone puts a piece of meat on my plate; someone else a dollop of mashed potatoes with brown stuff (I should remember what it’s called, but I don’t) on top. A woman ladles out a helping of little green things. She has short blonde curls. There’s a flash across my mind. “Is your name Salli?”

“No,” she answers. “It’s Norma.”

The flash is still there. “Do you know Kevin?”

“I’m afraid not. Do you?”

“I used to,” I say, concentrating fiercely. “And I believe...someday...I’ll know him again.”

## FORBIDDEN

By Connie McDonald

**Connie McDonald** is an 18 year old writer from Dunedin, New Zealand. She is in her first year of a Bachelor of Design majoring in Photography at Massey University in Wellington and this year took a paper in Creative Writing. McDonald enjoys the world around her and documenting her feelings and observations through photography, poetry and pieces of writing which she sometimes develops into works of short fiction.

I had only kissed one other. He had cream skin with strawberry cheeks. The strobe light stole his face twice a second, each time returning closer. I could feel his smile on my mouth, his cheek smelt delicious like apples, and a hidden forest. Felix. I liked the way his name bound through my mouth. We shared the same air, I allowed a stranger so close. But then he was gone, he was holding someone else and smiling into another mouth. I wanted to go home. That was the only boy I had got so physically close to, part of me wanted to get really drunk and do everything, just to see; but the other part wanted to retain my sanctity. I wanted to stay special. That is my problem, I think and think. I am not a normal teenager, whatever that means. My head speaks the colours I see. The pedestrian crossing: black, white, black, white; the car indicator: red, red, red. Sometimes I seek to project my mind onto paper.

I carry a notebook where I try to write poetry. I have always loved English. Mr. Thompson was welcomed to our school this year in assembly. Giggles and whispers strung through the audience of teenage girls, his chocolate curls thrilled us and his Ph.D. in English Literature thrilled me. I liked his words, each sentence composed with heavy and light sounds which danced from his mouth through the air, and touched me, a little bit like rain. I am a gazer, I have always enjoyed admiring from afar. Mr. Thompson announced we were studying *Pride and Prejudice*, one of his favourites. His overlapped front teeth glinted. I have always found a great beauty in imperfection; crooked teeth, scars, scabs and bruises. They are all stories. One time I fell into our coffee table and the bruise on my thigh intrigued me so. It was like a theatrically dying star; green, purple, pink, blue, larger than necessary. Each day I'd outline it with my finger until it was just a pencil smudge fractionally dwarfing the mole beside it. I always tried to catch his eye. To feel that snap of contact. Each day our eyes would perch on each other's for a bit longer. One day he brushed his hand over mine as he was walking back to his desk. I quickly looked up at him and my cheeks felt pink. Then I wanted him to say my name, not Matilda, I wanted him to say Tilly. I read *Pride and Prejudice* in four days, all the while writing quotes in cursive across the light blue lines of my notebook. That day I stroked my finger up and down my spiral binding until everyone was gone.

"How are you finding the book?"

"It is delectable."

"You should give this a read. It's another classic."

He passed me *Jane Eyre*. I liked the feel of the folded cover, with the colour cracking and the edges soft. 'Jasper Thompson' was written in blue ballpoint above the title. I like the name Jasper.

"You're very intelligent, Matilda. I'd love to hear what you think of the book sometime."

I read it in three days. I returned it to his desk. On page 71, Chapter 9, above "I like to have you near me" I stuck a scandalously pink post-it. In fairy-sized script I wrote: 'Captivating. But I liked *Pride and Prejudice* more - the representation of a romance so delightfully challenging to each.' I have never really fit in with the girls at my school. I mean, I am kind to them and they are kind to me, but I never really 'got' them. I just felt on Mondays when they discuss the weekend 'hook-ups' at the beginning of geography there was this absolute distance between me and them.

"...and then I went back to his flat-" Effie told Libby.

"-you slept with him didn't you?"

"No! We just... did stuff," she giggled.

I wondered if Effie cared that Nathan did not see her for anything but her body that night at that party, that he didn't know she plays hockey for her region and that she pushes her hair behind her ear when she gets stressed. Perhaps it is my wandering mind that differentiates me. I want someone to know that I smell of raspberries and vanilla, and that I do watercolours of little birds perching on teacups.

I walked past the staff room and lazed my eyes around the room and found him. His mouth and eyes were silently animated. I just wanted to know him, and all his secrets. I wanted to know what his face looked like when he was walking in the rain, I wanted to know his scars and his moles and every hair on his arm. I wanted to feel the skin on his back, and rote learn the dips and dives of his body. He saw me looking and smiled his beautiful imperfection for just a moment and stood up. He opened the door.

"Tilly, did you want to talk to me?"

Oh goodness, I wanted to hear all the words in the world spoken by him.

"I was just wondering if you would read over my essay?"

"I only set that yesterday. You're already finished?"

"Yes, I printed it at two-fifty-six this morning."

"Student of the Year!"

"Thank you... Jasper."

My face warmed to red. I bit my lip to fight my smile.

In the second paragraph of my essay I had written: 'Just checking you actually read our essays. Meet me at Café 47 on Melrose at two tomorrow (Tuesday) to discuss the origins of the universe.'

Then just like a sunset, it happened slowly then all at once. On Tuesday we got deliciously spicy chai lattes, Wednesday he got my number and I got his, Thursday he walked me home and he grabbed my hand and squeezed it four times and then told me that it means 'you are perfect'. It feels lovely to have a code. On Saturday we got passionfruit sorbet and he pushed me on the swing, and then I pushed him. On Sunday I walked him home, to his apartment with white walls, stained-glass shadows, and polished wooden floors. His bookcase looked like twisted sedimentary rock with layers of beige lying flat and tall. The Great Gatsby, Pride and Prejudice, To Kill a Mockingbird. You can tell he is an English teacher.

"Tilly, what goes on in that mind of yours? You're like a breath of fresh air."

"My mind is like an appreciative but lost cat." I laughed.

I stayed after class on Monday and I told him to meet me on the corner, by the iron gate, at lunch. He wore a grey suit, my green and red kilt hung heavy, and navy tights hugged my legs. We walked past the park, past the dairy, to the river, safely distant from school. Its water was ruffled by the wind, as were his curls.

"Tell me something interesting." I said. My hair flickered.

He paused and he picked up a grey stone, outlined its quartz vein, then threw it into the water.

"I collect crystals and rocks. I have this favourite one, I bought it when I was on holiday on the West Coast. It looks like an oil spill with purples and greens circling into each other. It's called bornite, or peacock rock."

"That sounds divine. I don't know much about rocks. Perhaps you could teach me?"

"Well, you know how I love to teach. Especially inquisitive and curious ones like you."

He dragged his fingers across the bones on the top of my hand.

Two days later at four-thirty he drove me to his apartment. The bornite was really beautiful, Jasper was beautiful too. We lay on his bed and he told me about his ex-girlfriend Julia. He told me they were together for five years. Five whole years. In five years I will be twenty-two and Jasper will be thirty-three. I told him about Bella, that we had been friends since we had matching bobs and loved Winnie the Pooh. And I told him about my only kiss, he told me I am a treasure. His bed is soft like spring grass, we lie amongst its daffodils. My collarbone is an albatross with spread wings, his fingers trace it; then they walk up my arm to my neck, then across my chest. He is illustrating my body, and my tummy blossoms. This must be what it is like, I think, to be in love.

"A girl without freckles is like a night without stars," he says.

I used to lather my face in an ivory liquid, then line my eyes, and choke my lashes in black. But I did not wear any of that with him, I felt naked. Not an embarrassed kind of naked, but a free kind. The kind that children and puppies have, the unconditional love, kind of freedom. My phone vibrated me out of spring. It was Bella, she kissed four boys last night. How does one function out of such temporary love? It all seems so artificial to me. The hair, height, eyelashes, the push-up bra. But, I guess, all we really want to be is somebody's idea of perfection.

All of a sudden I'd been seeing him four weeks. I had kept him and me a secret, 'we' were a secret. We watched music videos on mute and discussed the objectifying of women, and gay marriage, and euthanasia. He taught me big words; they tasted lovely on my lips.

"Impertinent," he said, "means insolent or rude."

"You're so clever, Jasper."

"I've had a lot more time to learn these words. When you're my age you'll know far more than me, just you wait. Just keep being curious."

"Okay, say we've just won a holiday anywhere in the world for three days! Where are we going to go?" I asked.

"You are so deliciously unpredictable," he smiled and bit on his bottom lip, "Kiribati or Azerbaijan."

"I haven't even heard of that second one!" I laughed, "I like the sound of Kiribati."

"Tilly, we could drink coconuts on the corally beaches."

"That would be so beautiful."

He cannot plait, but he twisted my hair. The golden strands grew dizzy. We lay on his couch in his white apartment. The har-

bour was outlined with a string of yellow. When lights are far away they seem to quiver, I never knew why, something to do with atmosphere, I suppose. On the wall was a painting. Jasper told me it was a gift from his grandmother when she was ill. From the couch, it is a cream jug with berry sorbet-coloured roses. But close up, each stroke is traceable, each sweep of the brush and each mix of colour sing the painter's existence, the painter who died one hundred and thirty years ago. I told my mother I was at Bella's house. She trusts me so much.

At two-thirty the next morning he messaged me, 'Hello treasure.'. My phone jaggered off my bedside table onto my pillow and I awoke. The light was bright and my eyes became small as I read it.

I wrote back 'I'm coming over to say hi'.

The house was asleep; even the fridge and television were softly snoring. God must turn up the volume of life at night; that creak in the stairs warmed my face and I looked behind me into dark. The wind played with the leaves and with my hair, it billowed behind me like a sheet drying on a clothes-line. I liked the way it highlighted my body under my dress; I could see my waist and my thighs. And then begun the splutter of rain. It heaved my hair and clothes and they clung to me. I ran through navy with pin pricks of light playing above me.

I often wonder about what happiness would look like in physical form. Would it be a daisy chain, or bubblewrap? Perhaps, it would be a warm cup of tea. But, I know one thing, happiness weaves through you. Sometimes it is thick, like wool, and then other times you must find its silver thread. At that moment my body was wound in its colour. I arrived at Jasper's jittering. He held my hands and his warmth felt so gorgeous. He squeezed them four times and we both smiled. He piggy-backed me to the bathroom and touched my cheek and kissed my lip. I lifted my arms and he took off my jersey. I took off my dress and then I was standing in nothing and he was kissing my forehead and my nose and my chin, and it all felt so right. He told me I was special again and again. We showered together, our bodies naked and velcroed with goosebumps. The water was loud and hard on the black and white tiled floor. I encased our bodies in bubbles, each perfectly spherical.

My towel was twirled like a croissant on my head. Drips snuck out and darkened my red tee-shirt to burgundy. He kissed my raisined toes one by one. I took off my towel; my hair was dreaded with wet. He pushed it behind my ears, then his fingers circled my thigh. I closed my eyes, is this love? Jasper, with his intelligence, his curls and his blue, blue eyes; is he mine? He kissed my mouth, my neck and then my chest. His arms felt strong but kind and his hands were so soft. And then my virginity slipped away with the hands of the clock. I walked home at four-fifty.

On Wednesday we re-learned nouns and adjectives and prepositions. I had been penning a poem about Jasper over the last week, each day scribbling and scripting strings of words. I wrote it with my heavy fountain pen, the midnight blue lacing across the page. I stayed after class and passed it to him. He read the first line and put it down.

"Matilda, I can't..." he looked down, "It's wrong. All this..." he swept his arm around the room.

My eyes prickled. I crumpled the paper.

"But I..." I whispered, picking at my nail polish, "I thought... I thought we were special. Jasper?"

"Mr. Thompson, Matilda. Please, I'm Mr. Thompson." His eyebrows met and the skin there folded like origami.

"Why did you... why did you do this to me?"

My words hung in the air.

I left the classroom. My feet felt heavy. I bit my shaking lip. I went to the toilets and I cried until my skin was sore and my throat was small and my cheeks were crusted river-beds. I stayed in the toilet through maths and painting. A shivered clang marked the end of the day. I walked to the park, to the swings and sat on its black rubber smile. I swung like a Grandfather Clock. Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Perhaps if I let go, I would fly. I would soar back and snatch my innocence from his white apartment. This is what I never wanted, to feel used. Why did I give away what I valued most? The climbing wall was a wooden 'A' painted brunette. I crawled inside and crossed my legs like I used to on the mat in year two, and opened my notebook. It felt soft but with tiny valleys where my pen had travelled to try keep up with my mind. I tried to write something but my hand jolted. I threw it onto the emerald grass and it bounced, a piece of paper scurried to the swing. I clenched my fists and dug my nails into my skin to form eight crescents, and I crumpled my face tight. I brisked my tears away viciously and I scratched my hand until roads of white formed and the skin lifted. The sun was cookie-cut through the half-circle footholes. I allowed Jasper, Mr Thompson, my English teacher; a window into my mind and I thought I loved him. I pulled at my arm hairs and the skin lifted to a hill.

WHITHER  
By Benny Dorris

**Benny Dorris** is a Public Relations & Creative Writing student at Southeast Missouri State. His work has appeared in *The Cross & Crescent*. Benny grew up on a family farm in Southern Illinois, where his best friends were his dogs and an overactive imagination.

Rachel sat in a staunch-white hospital room with her husband, John. The faceless doctor muttered numbers and symptoms for a while, but all she heard in a cold, mechanical voice was “Cancer.”

Nothing changed much in the following weeks; Rachel wouldn’t allow it. She occupied herself with house chores, but always glanced at John over her shoulder, who kept his face fixed on his books. She carried on as usual, hoping life would forget the fatal card it had dealt her. One day, Rachel glided into John’s study and plopped some pamphlets in front of her husband.

“Surprise,” she beamed as she massaged John’s shoulders. The wool in his grey cardigan felt scratchy and nice against Rachel’s smooth hands.

“What are these? Travel brochures?”

“I thought we could go somewhere in a couple months. You know how we’ve talked about traveling for years and years,” said Rachel. She was watching John peruse through the brochures, attempting to pick up on his subtle expressions.

“These are nice, Rach, but you heard what the doctor said.”

“Yeah, he said no strenuous activity, but we can work around that. See, look at this one,” she picked up a brochure for an Alaskan cruise. “It’s a cruise. We’ll be on a boat, and we can just sit on the deck and, and talk.” She felt nerves tingling in her stomach, as her head grew lighter. She noticed her husband wince, but convinced herself otherwise.

“No, the other thing he said.”

Ignoring his response, she moved on, “He said a lot of things, John.”

“Rachel, I probably won’t be here to go on that cruise.”

The bottom fell out of Rachel’s heart and shattered on the floor, along with her hope, her faith, and her spirits. She choked back the lump in her throat, and straightened some creases in her light blue Oxford shirt. She had imagined a cool breeze greeting John and herself as they boarded the boat—a breeze that was now nothing more than an icy blade that cut through her dreams. Her eyes began to twinge with the heat that signals tears, but she kept her face straight, emotionless as she could muster. In that moment she hated John with fiery intensity.

“Well,” she stammered, searching for words, “It’s only a couple months away, and the doctor said you could have up to six before—”

“He said I could have six months. Look at me, Rachel, I’m weak.”

“It’s from the medication, that’s all, it’s taken away your appetite,” Rachel pleaded. “Once you get used to it, you’ll be able to eat more.”

“Don’t be stubborn, please,” he muttered, “I just want to go peacefully.”

Rachel’s shoulders tensed, and she tightened her face. “It’s not like you, John. Don’t do this to me. Don’t give up,” she struggled to choke back her emotions. “You don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

“I’m not sure that’s how life works, Rachel,” John placed his hand on hers, but she couldn’t feel it. She pulled away, grabbed the brochures, and threw them in the trash next to John’s desk.

Rachel’s speech became stern, “Well, in that case you think you could do something other than read your damn books. You just sit here, day in day out, never lifting your eyes from your desk.” Her voice shook. “You have a daughter. You have a wife. I’m aching, and I don’t think I’ll make it once you—”

Pressing the thought any further would have meant admitting John’s mortality, but Rachel’s wringing hands and broken eyes expressed what her heart could not. She rested her left hand on the inside of John’s elbow, her right hand on his opposite shoulder, and nestled her forehead against the crease of his neck. After a moment, John turned from his chair to face Rachel and pulled a folded Polaroid from his cardigan pocket.

“Remember this?” John said, standing up and placing his fragile arm around his wife. Rachel was both relieved and enraged at his attempt to change the subject.

“How could I forget?” she responded, unsure where he was going.

“How long has it been?”

“At least 25 years. Ellie was a little girl when we took her to Coney Island.” Rachel smiled as she viewed the picture. When their only daughter, Eleanor, was six years old, they had taken a day trip to Coney Island. Rachel could still recall the salty ocean air that had felt fresh in her lungs, and she could hear the noises of the crowd as they walked up and down the boardwalk. The vivid reds, yellows, and blues of the games and rides were alive—just as Rachel, John, and Ellie were alive.

“Remember the fight we had that night?” asked John. Rachel shuddered as he gave a raspy chuckle and began to cough.

“I think it was the next day. But yes,” Rachel clarified before moving forward. John shrugged his shoulders and turned his eyes downward the way he always did when Rachel was right. “We fought about whether Ellie would go to public or private school.” Rachel had refused to send Ellie to public school, but John insisted.

“Looks like public school wasn’t so bad,” John smiled at Rachel, “look at our little Ellie now.” Rachel knew John was right; Ellie received great scores throughout school and wound up with a scholarship to a state university. Now, Ellie had a successful career and a wonderful husband. Rachel received weekly calls from Ellie, just to check in.

After a pause, John continued, “You were furious that night. About as furious as you are right now.” Rachel’s heart began piecing itself back together as John continued, “You threw this photograph in the trash and stormed out of our room.”

Rachel rubbed her fingers along the aged edges of the Polaroid. They had turned yellow and worn over the years.

John touched his wife’s hand, “This picture’s rarely left my side since.”

Rachel's eyes lingered on the creases of the folded image. Then she shifted her focus to the wrinkles next to her husband's flickering green eyes. Her arms were soon wrapped around John's shoulders, and she wept. She also laughed, even bellowed, at times. She was overjoyed with sorrow, and pained with bliss. She knew what must happen, and she would see it through. Her worries did not leave her side altogether, though, for she still had to watch her husband's decline, unable to help—a spectator of death.

In the following months, she watched as his cheeks hollowed, as his hair thinned, and as his stride grew shaky. She listened to his labored breathing and his coarse speech. She could feel his strained heart and his weakened embrace.

She lifted her spirits with the smell of his fresh laundry that she folded and the scent of biscuits and gravy on Saturday mornings. They spent days and evenings lost in talk of days gone by. Rachel and John revisited their college days, their wedding, the birth of Ellie, and all the quirky days in between.

"Remember that one Christmas, when you were putting lights up outside the house, and you—" Rachel began.

"I know where you're going with this," John replied, smiling big. Rachel noticed that even though his green eyes looked tired, they still flickered like they had so many years ago.

"You were on that old, shabby ladder. You knew it was uneven, but always used it anyway," Rachel had to pause to laugh, "and when you fell, you pulled down all the lights that you had already put up."

"Then I bought a new ladder the next week," the couple's laughter filled the room and warmed Rachel's heart.

"I can still picture you lying in the snow, lights wrapped around you, looking confused, as if the ladder had broken some unspoken agreement."

"How about Ellie's twelfth birthday, when you burnt the cake and the entire house was filled with smoke?"

"And the neighbors called the fire department," Rachel said with an embarrassed smile. "That's why I've always let you do the cooking."

"You've really improved the last few months, Rach," John smiled.

"In more ways than one, John," she returned his smile, feigning the strength she wished she had, the icy blade always looming over her heart. Silence followed, but Rachel thought it was a full silence. She felt her heart expand, and for the first time in weeks, she felt at peace.

"I don't know how this whole, this whole cancer thing works, Rachel, but when my time comes," Rachel noticed John's voice tremble, "I'm going to miss you."

"I know, John. I'll miss you too," and with that, Rachel accepted the inevitable. Her shoulders loosened, and the icy blade over her heart melted. "But I promise I'll be okay," her eyes met John's, and she was comforted by that familiar flicker. "I'll be okay."

Rachel lost a part of herself with John. The flavor of life was less bold, and colors that were once bright and vivid seemed to go grey. She noticed her feet shuffling a little more, and every morning she thought she saw an extra wrinkle when she looked in the mirror. The aroma from her coffee wasn't as refreshing, and the voices of friends became muffled and distant.

Some days were better than others though. Ellie's weekly calls turned into weekly visits on the back porch. Mother and daughter would watch the sun plunge into dusk, sipping on unsweetened tea and discussing every topic and subject under the moon. One of which always returned, no matter what conversation they started.

"I really miss Daddy, Mom."

"I do too, Sweetheart. I think about him every second of every day."

"Have you ever thought about moving in with Kevin and me? I worry about you being in this big house all by yourself."

"As long as I can still take care of myself, I'd like to stay here, Ellie. This home means too much to me," Rachel would reply. "It's the last piece of your father that I have."

On these days, once Ellie left and Rachel had the house to herself. She would enter John's office, pull open his desk drawer, and pull out the old, folded Polaroid. For a moment, she would rub her fingers along the yellowed edges. Then, she'd gaze into her husband's flickering green eyes looking back at her. Her chest would puff out as she took a deep breath; the must of aged furniture entered her nose and surrounded her as a blanket. Both hands cradling the picture, she'd bring it to her chest and close her eyes.

Finally, she'd relax her shoulders, and in no time she was back on Coney Island. Gliding down the boardwalk with the loves of her life, breathing salty ocean air, a parade of bright colors surrounding her—Rachel was alive.

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## FAR AWAY

By Chase Cline

**Chase Cline** is an English major with a concentration in creative writing at North Carolina State University. Cline has been published in the *Marathon Literary Review*.

She just lay there, unaware of the world around her; her chest rising and falling with each shallow breath. One would hardly be able to tell that she was alive. I felt lonely with nobody to speak to, but that was no excuse to wake her. She needed to be in a perfect world. After all that I had put her through, she deserved peace for a little while.

Minutes passed, then an hour. The only sound besides her breathing was the water dripping from the bathroom faucet. *Galoop. Galoop. Galoop.* I hoped it would stir her or maybe just arouse a guttural response. Her body jumped slightly, and her head moved once to the side. Maybe she was having a nightmare. I wanted to wake her, hold her close, and tell her it would be okay. It was just a dream, I would have said, I'm here now. But before I nudged her with my hand, her body settled, and she smiled, still asleep, as far away from me as she had ever been.

# COMING SOON

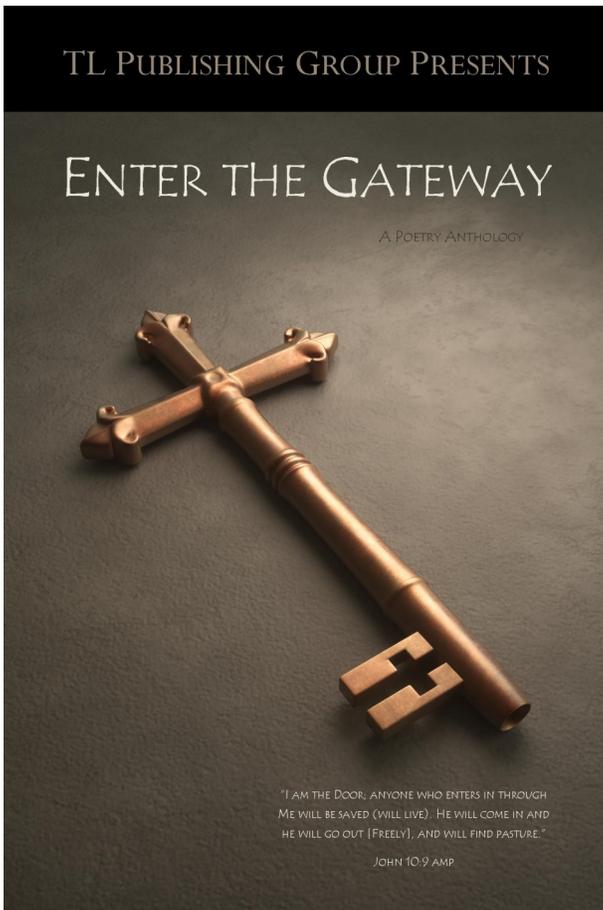
## ENTER THE GATEWAY

Jesus is everything. He is the execution of God's promise concerning His people. Jesus is the key that gives us access, that brings us into favor and right standing with God. Through Jesus, we receive the Spirit of Adoption where we become apart of God's family, gaining full access and right to His inheritance.

Inside this book readers will find a collection of poetry where the underlying theme is hope, encouragement, and praise. Readers will discover they are not alone in the day to day struggles they deal with. These authors have struggles too, but after the test comes the testimony, which is the message conveyed herein.

These authors had a revelation concerning hope. They realized what would happen if they grabbed a hold of that Hope ("Jesus") and never let go. They knew the access it would provide because they went through the experience of constantly pressing forward with reliance on the Word of God despite the appearance of the situation they were facing. This takes practice and strength so we must constantly encourage ourselves and one another to not give up or lose Hope. We must praise our way through every situation.

These poems will inspire readers to seek out this 'Hope' so that they may personally experience what this Hope can do for them and those they love.



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## TORRIDIAN HALL OF FAME

In an effort to do more for our writers, we created a Hall of Fame. Our Hall of Fame allows us to recognize to the writers we have published in past issues of the Torrid Literature Journal. Writers who displayed exceptional talent and skill in their poem and/or story.

Voting for the 2012 Hall of Fame nominees has ended. We would like to thank everyone who participated and supported our nominees. Based on the votes received, eight writers will be awarded a permanent spot in our Torridian Hall of Fame. Want to know who received this honor? Stay tuned as we announce the inductees in the July 2013 issue of the Torrid Literature Journal.

We are very excited about this new annual tradition. The next season of voting will begin October 1, 2013 for the writers published in Volumes V-VIII of the Torrid Literature Journal. The chosen inductees will be based solely on the writers with the highest votes.

Questions or comments? Contact Alice Saunders at [asaunders@torridliterature.com](mailto:asaunders@torridliterature.com).

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

TL Publishing Group is now accepting submissions for the Torrid Literature Journal Volume VII.

We don't look for a particular theme. We look at the work itself, specifically its message and structure. We accept a variety of submissions including: poetry, fiction, artwork, and editorial.

All submissions may be uploaded by visiting:

<http://torridliterature.submittable.com/submit>

We encourage everyone to become familiar with the Torrid Literature Journal first by reading previous editions. This will give writers a general idea of the type of content we look for. Our submission period for the Torrid Literature Journal is year round. Our response time varies depending on the volume of submissions received.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Alice Saunders at [asaunders@torridliterature.com](mailto:asaunders@torridliterature.com). We look forward to the reading experience.



Dear Reader,

Literature is much more than entertainment. At the end of it all you have to step back and look at the bigger picture in order to get the full effect each individual color adds. This is what fine literature does. Whether it's the first poem written by a 15 year old or the 100th poem written by a veteran poet, it all adds color to the ever expanding picture. The picture that gives us clarity, that helps us cope with the day to day struggles we all contend with in this jungle called life. Literature takes life's happenings and turns them into a keepsake. Well-structured literature reminds us how to breathe with ease. It teaches us how to dream again, how to believe and do so boldly. It creates worlds wherein we can find the passion we have been lacking in reality.

This is why we strive for diversity and not a mainstream theme. One of you reading this publication right now may need a laugh because you have not laughed all week. One you reading this publication right now just relived a favorite memory brought on by one of the poems in this publication. Or one of you just wanted help, inspiration for that poem you have been working on for a while now. The point is, we all need something and that 'something' is different for all of us.

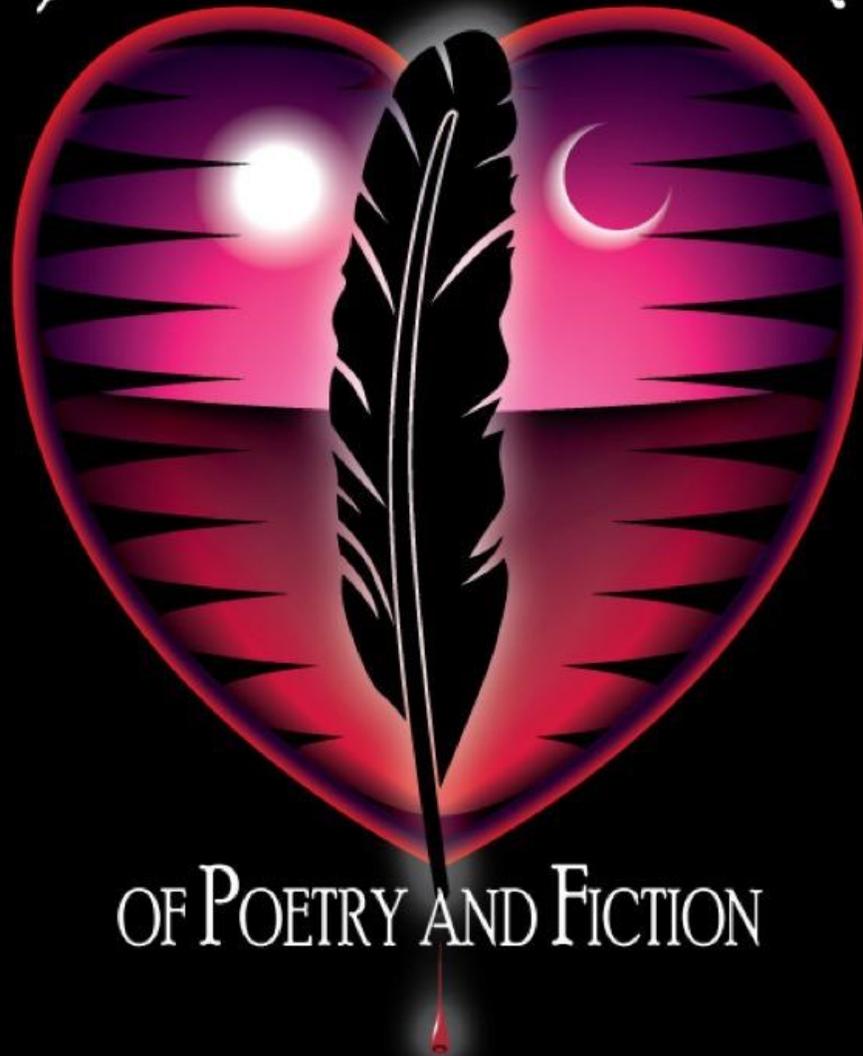
Therefore, all of our publications, projects, contests, and events are diverse channels broadcasting the finest voices in literature to help you find that 'something' you are looking for. Tune in to one, two, three, or all of them. We guarantee you will get hooked on the Torridian content.

As always, thank you for being a part of our family. Thank you for taking another walk through our literary museum. We hope our collection of notable poems, stories, and articles left you motivated and eager to go out and celebrate National Poetry Month all throughout April and beyond. We look forward to next encounter together in Volume VII of the Torrid Literature Journal.

- Editorial Staff



# Romancing The Craft



## OF POETRY AND FICTION

In 2012, we successfully launched our first annual contest where three contestants were selected as winners. The new year has arrived which means our second annual contest will soon take off. Get your submissions ready!

Submission Period: March 1, 2013 through June 30, 2013

Entry Fee: None

Genre: Poetry & Fiction

Submit: [torridliterature.submittable.com/submit](http://torridliterature.submittable.com/submit)

Please visit our website for full details and submission guidelines.